

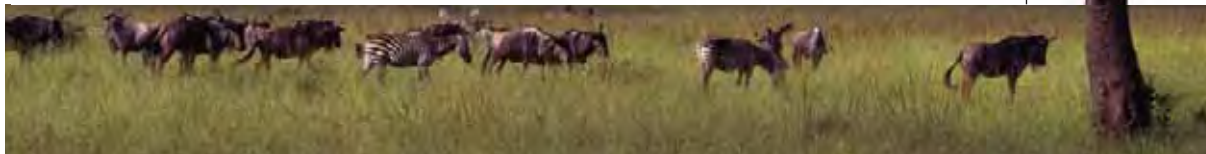
Mikumi

MIKUMI



Swirls of opaque mist hide the
advancing dawn. The first shafts
of sun colour the fluffy grass
heads rippling across the
plain in a russet halo. A herd
of zebras, confident in their
camouflage at this predatory
hour, pose like ballerinas, heads
aligned and stripes merging
in flowing motion.





Mikumi National Park abuts the northern border of Africa's biggest game reserve - the Selous - and is transected by the surfaced road between Dar es Salaam and Iringa. It is thus the most accessible part of a 75,000 square kilometre (47,000 square mile) tract of wilderness that stretches east almost as far as the Indian Ocean.

The open horizons and abundant wildlife of the Mkata Floodplain, the popular centrepiece of Mikumi, draw frequent comparisons to the more famous Serengeti Plains. Lions survey their grassy kingdom - and the zebra, wildebeest, impala and buffalo herds that migrate across it - from the flattened tops of termite mounds, or sometimes, during the rains, from perches high in the trees. Giraffes forage in the isolated acacia stands that fringe the Mkata River, islets of shade favoured also by Mikumi's elephants.

Criss-crossed by a good circuit of game-viewing roads, the Mkata Floodplain is perhaps the most reliable place in Tanzania for sightings of the powerful eland, the world's largest antelope. The equally impressive greater kudu and sable antelope haunt the miombo-covered foothills of the mountains that rise from the park's borders. More than 400 bird species have been recorded, with such colourful common residents as the lilac-breasted roller, yellow-throated longclaw and bateleur eagle joined by a host of European migrants during the rainy season. Hippos are the star attraction of the pair of pools situated 5km north of the main entrance gate, supported by an ever-changing cast of waterbirds.

MIKUMI

Mikumi National Park

Size

3,230 sq km (1,250 sq miles), the fourth-largest park in Tanzania, and part of a much larger ecosystem centred on the uniquely vast Selous Game Reserve.

Location

283 km (175 miles) west of Dar es Salaam, north of Selous, and en route to Ruaha, Udzungwa and (for the intrepid) Katavi.

How to get there

A good surfaced road connects Mikumi to Dar es Salaam via Morogoro, a roughly 4 hour drive. Also road connections to Udzungwa, Ruaha and (dry season only) Selous. Charter flight from Dar es Salaam, Arusha or Selous. Local buses run from Dar to park HQ where game drives can be arranged.

To do

Game drives and guided walks. Visit nearby Udzungwa or travel on to Selous or Ruaha.

Best time

Accessible year round.

Accommodation

Two lodges, two luxury tented camps, three campsites. Guest houses in Mikumi town on the park border.

