

Five items to leave out of your safari suitcase

Packing lists are usually about what to take, but since safaris are a special breed of tour, here are five items you should consider keeping home.

1. Sweets and gum for the children. It's fun to take something for the kids especially when visiting a Maasai or Samburu village, but more often than not these children have very poor dental hygiene with no access to dental care. An alternative: pencils, crayons, notepads or coloring books.
2. Perfume. Tourists will be in close confines with one another, either in safari vans, small planes or tight lodge spaces. Strong perfume or cologne of any kind can trigger someone's asthma or allergies, and can attract insects.
3. Any shade of blue, black and bright colored clothing. Bright colors can attract bugs and be distracting, shades of blue and black attract those evil tsetse flies. If a walking safari is on your itinerary, khaki colors are essential for blending in with the bush. White - well it will turn brown pretty quick.
4. Expensive shoes. Nice shoes have an uncanny way of disappearing. Instead pack worn tennis shoes or something comparable and a pair of flip flops, then gift them to someone before you leave. They will appreciate it, and it leaves more room in your luggage for more important things like Maasai jewelry, Kazuri beads, batiks, Kenya tea or coffee.
5. Electronics. They are everywhere, but not on safari. Laptops, ipads or tablets need to stay home. Some lodges will allow computer use for a fee. Please turn off your cell phones on game drives. Please see my previous article regarding game drive guidelines.