

## The Sunrise Safari : A Special Perk for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge Club Level Guests

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There are many benefits to staying in the [concierge level at Walt Disney World's Deluxe Resorts](#), but when it comes to the concierge option at Animal Kingdom Lodge, they offer some of the best possible perks.

□ After all, where else can you take an exclusive early morning safari in Disney's Animal Kingdom park?

I'll be honest here. That's one of the main reasons I wanted a concierge room at Animal Kingdom Lodge. We wanted to experience the Sunrise Safari for ourselves. As you'd expect from Disney, the service beforehand is phenomenal, with a lovely note the night before, explaining exactly what to expect. We were told to be in the concierge lounge by 6:15am so they could check our park tickets, as we'd be heading for Animal Kingdom shortly. It was certainly a hugely popular tour, with nearly 60 of us in total, requiring two separate buses.

□ We headed outside at the appointed time to buses bearing the wonderful sign "Sunrise Safari," which made us feel like celebrities! Before boarding, we went through the regulation bag check, as we'd be taking a backstage route into the park. Alighting by Rafiki's Planet Watch, we walked through to Kilimanjaro Safaris, savouring every second of the empty park in front of us. If we felt like celebrities before, now we felt like world superstars!

□ Soon we were on our own special truck for the morning, and setting off, albeit very slowly, as our driver's instruction was to stop for every animal opportunity along the route. If you think the ordinary Kilimanjaro Safaris offers more than adequate time with the animals, then prepared to be amazed on this! We would stop for a good five minutes or so at various locations, allowing us to learn more about what we were seeing, and of course to take any photos that we wanted.

One of the highlights came very quickly after we set off, when we saw a hippo happily enjoying some one-on-one scratching time on a tree. I don't think I've ever seen an animal look so content! We were told so many fascinating facts by our guide, as we went round, but of course, there's only so much the human brain can retain, and much of the information left me almost as soon as we were done. However, I do

remember the fact that hippos sleep all touching each other, to try and reinforce their group. This was very cool to know.

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□ I was surprised to find the keepers out with the animals. It was all beautifully timed, and as we arrived at various areas, we would see the animals being let out. We were delighted to see a keeper feeding the monkeys as they emerged from their night indoors. The vast majority of the animals do go indoors at night, for one simple reason -- it's how they get fed, but if they prefer to stay out, that's their choice. It was lovely to see the interaction between the keepers and the animals, and you could see the pride in the face of the elephant keeper, who watched as his charges, including the not-so-small baby, hurtled out, ready for another day on the savannah.

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□ Even the animals that you rarely get the chance to see on the safari, like the cheetah, graced us with their presence, prowling the rocks, allowing us some wonderful shots. And, the warthogs, another difficult one to spot, were happily munching on their breakfast, eyeing us up with some of the cutest eyes I think I've ever see. But then, I have always had a soft spot for Pumbaa!

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□ The only disappointment on the whole tour was the King of the savannah. The male lion, as ever, was lying on his rock, refusing to move for anyone. I have to say, if that's the only disappointment on this tour, that's not bad going! Those animals that are easier to spot were, of course, still in evidence, with the giraffes happily munching right in front of us, stopping every so often to stare accusingly at us, as if wondering what we were doing there.

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□ Although the safari took a long time, probably the best part of an hour, it was still over far too soon, and we were heading off, watching the stream of people headed our way, with the park just having opened for business. The final part of the Sunrise Safari takes you to Pizzafari for a private breakfast, with a buffet boasting items such as pastries, fresh fruit, hot items like French toast and syrup, and plantains. It was a superb spread, although my only criticism was that, with 58 of us, it was a mob scene at first, with everyone diving in. Once that died down, it was a much more comfortable experience.

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□ The only real shame to this great experience was that everyone just drifted off after they were done eating, as we were now free to enjoy the park. I would've preferred a more definite ending to it, but apart from that, I cannot fault the Sunrise Safari. If you're an animal fan, then this is an absolute must-do. If we're lucky enough to get into Animal Kingdom Lodge's concierge level again, then this will be something we'd be more than happy to repeat. The Sunrise Safari is only available to

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concierge guests at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge and takes place on Sundays and Thursdays. It costs \$65/adults and \$32.50/children.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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