

A Night On the Savannah at Animal Kingdom Lodge: A Disney Resort Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I don't know about you, but whenever I hear about something new at Walt Disney World, my interest is always piqued.

When I heard there was a new night-time safari around the savannah of Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge Resort, available only to Lodge guests, I just had to try it.

The tour is so new, with the first reports of it only appearing online in October 2012, that it doesn't even really seem to have a real name to it. Certainly when I did this tour, a lot of people thought it was the Wanyama Safari, a very different beast, as this is a much earlier tour, rounded off with dinner at Jiko.

□ The night-time tour is not for early birds. On the night I took it, it was leaving Kidani Village, from outside Sanaa, at 9:45 pm, and was due to last an hour. We were escorted out to the front of Kidani Village, where a safari truck was waiting to take us out to the savannah. I had been warned on the phone that it was open top, but really it wasn't. It was covered above, although you could stick your head out through the side. I have no doubt that if it was tipping with rain, you would still get pretty wet though, so if the weather's not on your side, you'd need to dress accordingly. The seats are padded, and you can kneel on them, so long as you have at least one hand on the vehicle at all times.

□ We were lucky enough to have two guides who told us that they were the ones who first came up with the idea of a night-time safari here. It's fair to say that it's not well advertised at all. I can still find no mention of it on the official Walt Disney World website, but despite that, it seems to be selling well. We were told that it was completely sold out between Christmas and New Year, so word is obviously out!

A quick word here about booking the tour --because there's no official mention about this, it's hard to find out who to call to book it. After being passed around from one department to another, I found out it was the itinerary planning team at Animal Kingdom Lodge you need to call to book this.

□ We set off from the Lodge, and stopped before we got to the savannah itself, so that we could all get our night-vision goggles. To be honest, I

didn't use them much during the tour, as there was enough light from the Lodge surrounding the savannah to see most of the animals, but it was nice to have them in case we needed them.

□ We first drove through the pregnancy barns, which as the name suggests, is where they keep the pregnant animals, as they don't want them getting into problems giving birth on the savannah. Our guides also explained that, as part of their regular night shift, they also have animals that come into the barns out here when it's cold, as some aren't used to the weather in the winter months. Equally they keep an eye on the temperature, and if it dips below certain levels, they will go on to the savannah to encourage some species to come in.

□ Beyond this are a set of double gates, so that if an animal does manage to get past one set of gates, then they can't get any further. From this point onwards, we then followed the trails around the savannah that you can see from your room at the Lodge for the next hour or so.

□ I really wasn't sure about how many animals we'd see at this time, but I was pleasantly surprised. A couple of minutes after we set off, we found two Ankole cattle, but better was still to come, with two giraffe sitting down. Our guides explained how, despite their appearance, they weren't really sleeping, as they only nap for a few minutes at a time, because in their natural habitat, they wouldn't be able to sleep properly for fear of a predator finding them. The only time they might is if they're surrounded by a group of other giraffe, and feel safe enough to do so. It was fascinating information, and shows just how much knowledge the Cast Members have about the animals in their care.

□ Perhaps the most amazing giraffe sighting we had was the one who literally walked right past the truck, almost within touching distance. Sadly, my camera didn't want to cooperate with taking a photo of him.

□ Another wonderful moment was when we found two zebras on the trail right in front of us. Just like Kilimanjaro Safaris, we had no option but to wait for them to move on, before we could continue our journey.

□ Other sightings include an elderly eland, who was almost 15 years old, and the Marabou storks, which was certainly more than I'd expected to find. I was also pleasantly surprised by how light it was out on the savannah, thanks to the fact that it's surrounded by the Lodge on most sides.

□ The time on the savannah literally flew by. I was staggered to find we'd been out for over an hour, as I honestly thought we'd only been out there for half an hour, which is always a good sign! I'd certainly do this

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again, particularly as my husband was ill, and sadly unable to come with me, but I do feel it's a tour that will be best appreciated by those who love their animals, and who know how to spot them. A lot of the time, as well as the Cast Members, it was those on the safari spotting animals in the dark, which was a fun challenge.

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□I'll say something quickly here about the age limit here, with children aged eight and upwards allowed on it. It is a very late night. I didn't get back to Kidani Village until 11:00 pm, so children need to be able to cope with that. It's also, for obvious reasons, a quiet tour, as you don't want to scare the animals, so that's something else to keep in mind.

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□The tour costs \$70/guest, and there is a 10 guest maximum. Originally available on Wednesday and Saturday nights, we were told on our tour that this has now been extended to Friday and Sunday nights as well, due to its popularity.

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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