

Essential Swahili words for safari beginners

Greetings and polite words

- Jambo / Hujambo – Hello
- Habari? - How are you?
- Nzuri - Good / Fine
- Asante (sana) - Thank you (very much)
- Tafadhali - Please
- Karibu - Welcome / You're welcome
- Samahani - Excuse me / Sorry
- Pole - Sorry (offering sympathy)
- Pole pole - Slowly / Take it easy
- Ndiyo - Yes
- Hapana - No
- Kwaheri - Goodbye
- Safari njema - Have a good trip
- Lala salama - Sleep peacefully / Goodnight
- Shikamoo - Respectful greeting for elders
- Marahaba - Reply to Shikamoo

Safari animals (wanyama pori)

- Simba - Lion
- Tembo / Ndovu - Elephant
- Kifaru - Rhinoceros
- Chui - Leopard
- Nyati / Mbogo - Buffalo
- Twiga - Giraffe
- Punda milia - Zebra
- Kiboko - Hippopotamus
- Duma - Cheetah
- Mamba - Crocodile
- Fisi - Hyena
- Nyumbu - Wildebeest

- Ngiri - Warthog
- Swala - Antelope / Gazelle
- Nyani - Baboon
- Tumbili - Monkey
- Ndege - Bird
- Nyoka - Snake

Action & game drive words

- Tazama / Angalia - Look / Watch
- Twende - Let's go
- Simama - Stop
- Endesha pole pole - Drive slowly
- Mbali - Far
- Karibu - Near / Close
- Nzuri sana - Very good
- Moto / Baridi - Hot / Cold
- Picha - Picture / Photo
- Tafuta - Search / Look for
- Hatari - Danger
- Punguza mwendo - Reduce speed
- Harakisha - Hurry up

Food & drinks

- Chakula - Food
- Maji - Water
- Maji ya kunywa - Drinking water
- Maji moto - Hot water
- Chai - Tea
- Kahawa - Coffee
- Maziwa - Milk
- Nyama - Meat
- Kuku - Chicken
- Samaki - Fish
- Matunda - Fruit
- Mboga - Vegetables
- Bia - Beer

- Sukari - Sugar
- Chumvi - Salt
- Kiu - Thirst
- Njaa - Hunger

Time, basics and numbers

- Leo / Kesho / Jana - Today / Tomorrow / Yesterday
- Sasa / Baadaye - Now / Later
- Usiku/ Asubuhi / Mchana - Night / Morning / Afternoon
- Kubwa / Ndogo - Big / Small
- Rafiki - Friend
- Mtu / Watu - Person / People
- Hapa / Pale - Here / There
- Wapi? / Nini? / Nani? / Lini? - Where? / What? / Who? / When?
- Moja / Mbili / Tatu - One / Two / Three
- Nne / Tano / Sita - Four / Five / Six
- Saba / Nane / Tisa / Kumi - Seven / Eight / Nine / Ten

Useful conversational phrases

- Habari za asubuhi? - How is the morning?
- Unaitwa nani? - What is your name?
- Jina langu ni... - My name is...
- Bei gani? / Shilingi ngapi? - How much does it cost?
- Naomba maji ya kunywa - May I please have drinking water
- Nimefurahi kukutana nawe - Nice to meet you
- Sielewi / Sijui - I don't understand / I don't know
- Unaongea Kiingereza? - Do you speak English?
- Tafadhali rudia tena - Please repeat again
- Kuna wanyama gani hapa? - What animals are here?
- Tunaenda wapi leo? - Where are we going today?
- Asante kwa msaada wako - Thank you for your help
- Choo kiko wapi? - Where is the toilet?
- Nimechoka sana - I am very tired

Updated August 2026