



FRIENDS OF
SERENGETI

**Membership
Information**

Those of us who use and benefit from the Serengeti need to give back.

Tour companies and their travelers represent a huge reserve of goodwill, funding, and long term support.

Things are changing. It's especially important we come together right now.



Serengeti at a Crossroads

The ecosystem is facing growing impacts from people, livestock and a changing climate.

- Human and livestock populations are growing exponentially. Tourism arrivals are increasing yearly.
- Wildlife is being squeezed into the core of the ecosystem, increasing vulnerability to droughts, soil degradation, and disease.
- Water catchments are being degraded by deforestation. The Mara River, lifeblood of the entire ecosystem, is at risk.
- Climate change is causing devastating droughts and severe flooding, affecting both local communities and wildlife.



Cattle in Kenya's Maasi Mara Reserve.

Maasai Mara – a case study and warning

Kenya's Maasai Mara Reserve, the northernmost section of the Serengeti ecosystem has lost nearly 70% of its wildlife, the result of human and livestock growth, fencing and overbuilding of tourism.

The seasonal migration of wildebeest in the Loita Plains has collapsed, and the incoming migration to the Mara from Tanzania has dropped by 73%. Other wildlife populations have similarly declined.

Maasai Under Threat

Culturally and economically, they face severe threats from climate, forced relocation, even tourism.



Maasai cultural identity and traditional life is being eroded due to changes in population, climate, and restrictions on their livelihood. Some try to make a radical change from pastoralism to agriculture. Some leave altogether for impoverished lives in the city. Others are left behind to struggle.



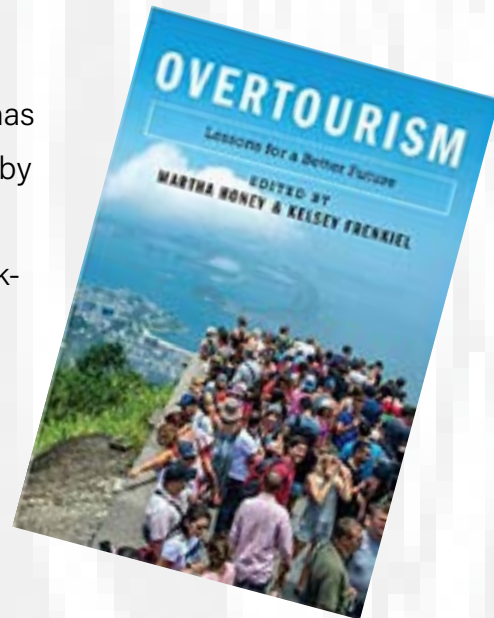
June, 2022. Maasai confronted government officers over land evictions, resulting in violence. It's caused an international backlash. Government officials see Maasai as a threat to conservation and tourism. Many Maasai see conservation and tourism as a threat to their survival. Tourists often see them only as colorful addition to their wildlife safari, unaware what's really happening.

Tourism Impacts

Part of the problem,
or part of the solution?

Overtourism

The government of Tanzania has set a goal of 5 million tourists by 2025, up from a million and a half at its recent peak. It's seeking new markets in China and India. An influx of this magnitude would transform the ecosystem and the safari experience itself.



FOS Director contributed the chapter on the Serengeti in the new book, *Overtourism*, published by the Center for Responsible Tourism

Tourism and Fortress Conservation

Tourism is coming under increasing attack as an ally of "fortress conservation," something antithetical to the needs of local communities. This is clearly the perception of the Maasai, who feel abandoned, threatened, and angered.



Regenerative Tourism

This concept expands the idea of sustainable tourism, affirming that tourism should give back more to people and places than it takes. It must add more than economic value; it must actively enrich communities and help protect and restore the environment. It means looking critically at what's happening and creating new approaches and funding.

Recent studies and reports tell the story...

Human Activity is Disrupting the Heart of Africa's Serengeti Ecosystem

Humans Putting the Squeeze on Serengeti: Population explosion fueling rapid reduction of wildlife on African savannah, study shows

Wildebeest migrations in East Africa face extinction. What must be done

Cross-boundary human impacts compromise the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem

Tanzania's population is on track to more than double by mid-century, from 60 million people in 2020, to 100 million in 2038, 129 million in 2050

Upstream land-use negatively affects river flow dynamics in the Serengeti National Park

No Water No Serengeti

Are Tanzanian National Parks affected by the water crisis? Findings and ecohydrology solutions

Amnesty International: Stop Violent Forced Eviction of the Maasai

Oakland Institute: Losing the Serengeti

Maasai protesters shot, beaten as Tanzania moves forward with wildlife game reserve

Overtourism: Lessons for a Better Future. Chapter: The Serengeti Ecosystem

The elephant in the room: Overtourism in Africa

Is Conservation Becoming Colonialism in Tanzania?



Membership

How Membership Works

Travelers are a huge potential resource for the Serengeti. Tour companies are the key to mobilizing their support.

A Proven Model

We're patterned after the International Galapagos Tour Operators Association (IGTOA), which has raised over a million dollars in conservation funding, primarily through traveler donations. Our director founded that program.

Serengeti Traveler Conservation Fund

Members ask their travelers to make a \$50 or more donation when they pay for their trip. We'll provide you with an e-brochure branded with your logo to send them. Donations are periodically transferred through our secure online portal. It's simple, and it works! Experience has shown, travelers are happy to contribute, as you've already earned their trust.

Member Dues

Dues are \$600 a year. In some cases, we will waive or reduce dues upon request from a smaller company with fewer travelers and departures. But it must fully implement a Serengeti Traveler Conservation Fund program.

Q&A See a list [here](#).



Our Members...

Join with other members to form a lobby of support and advocacy for the Serengeti.

Commit to best practices of responsible tourism.

Educate travelers and the public about issues affecting the Serengeti ecosystem and ask them to observe best practices on their safari.

Monitor best tourism practices by local operators and guides, and give them feedback and support.

What Your Membership Supports

Since 2010, our nonprofit has supported grassroots community conservation and fought large scale, destructive development, like roads and dams.



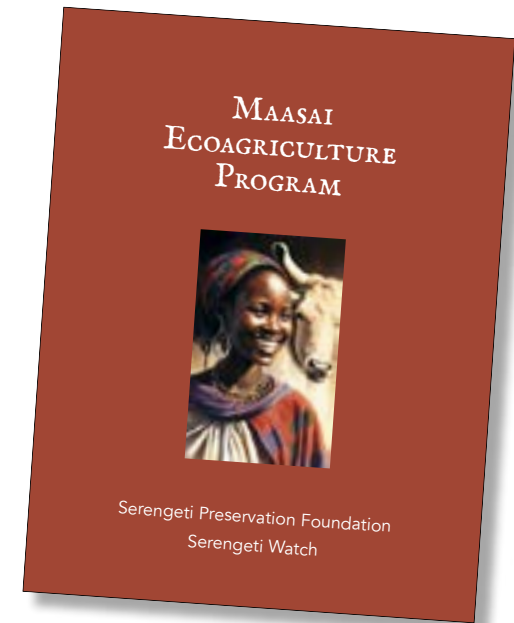
Projects have included: a legal case to stop a disastrous highway bisecting the park, conservation radio, support for women's groups, water supply, school education with field trips, and tree planting. See more [here](#).



Our new initiative focuses on Maasai livelihood. It introduces higher quality cattle and improved land management, reducing pressure on the wildlife, empowering women, and improving welfare of Maasai pastoralists.



We advocate for responsible, tourism development that reduces impacts on ecosystems, and that also protects the human rights of local people, and ensures that benefits flow equitably to them.



An important new program, originating from within the Maasai community. Learn more about this [here](#).

More on what we've accomplished...

Dairy program / Women's empowerment: Our current program is deeply involved in improving the welfare of Maasai through training, forage production, and improved cattle breeds. This can take pressure off of the ecosystem as well. Our partner in Tanzania originated this program and administers it with our support.

Funding for Serengeti Preservation Foundation: We helped form SPF in 2014 and have funded it yearly. SPF handles our programs on the ground, and we support its initiatives.

Serengeti highway: The reason for our founding, we brought world attention to this disastrous proposal and funded a successful legal challenge in the East African Court of Justice

Radio programming: Since 2015, we've funded conservation radio programs in the Maasai language through FM Loliondo. Hundreds of hours of programs have been broadcast to communities around the Serengeti and Ngorongoro.

Mara River protection: The river is the lifeblood of the entire ecosystem. We've monitored threats from dams and pollution and convened a conference in Nairobi among NGO's.

Teacher and student education: We've done school education programs in communities near the Serengeti, reaching 3,500 students in eight schools. We've taken more than 500 students and teachers on field trips into the Serengeti. And we've given out 1,500 mini-books and calendars. We provided 40 water filters to schools.

Tree planting: In conjunction with local schools, we've funded two tree nurseries, and children have planted thousands of indigenous trees.

Women's enterprise: We've given support to the Olmaa Women's Group in Loliondo with beehives as a micro enterprise.

Covid response: We donated \$3,000 for mobile health education provided by Loliondo FM Radio to local communities. We funded video production of game drives in the Serengeti during the height of the pandemic.

Journalist training: We've conducted three journalism training workshops, including field trips to parks.

Constant monitoring and communication: We monitor issues and send regular reports to our supporters,

Q&A

Why Friends of Serengeti?

The travel industry and travelers have enormous potential for good. However, tourists largely come and go without understanding their impacts or how to support the people and places they've visited. Friends of Serengeti's mission is to harness this potential of tourism as a force for good, and it can't come too soon. Things are changing fast.

Who is FOS for?

Membership is open to international travel companies sending travelers to the Serengeti ecosystem (Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro, Maa-sai Mara, and neighboring reserves). Travel companies in East Africa are welcome to apply. Applicants agree to certain best practices.

How do travelers help?

Travelers can give back by (a) funding programs that support conservation and community development and (b) continuing their advocacy for the destination well after their travel. FOS is a way to reach these travelers, create awareness, and get them involved. Your company is an excellent conduit for this, as you've already earned their trust.

What is the Serengeti Traveler Conservation Fund?

We provide you with your own branded e-brochure to send travelers before their departure. It explains the issues and asks them to make an optional donation (usually \$50 per person) when they pay for their trip. It is a model patterned after our sister organization, the International Galapagos Tour Operators Association (IGTOA). It works! Experience has shown travelers are more than willing to donate, and many give more than the suggested amount. We'll explain how to implement this.

Why do we ask travelers to donate before their trip?

It's important for two reasons: (a) they are already paying for their trip, and a donation can be easily included, (b) after their trip, travelers are swept up with daily life and move on. It's tough to get their attention.

Aren't park fees enough?

Fees for entering parks and reserves are a considerable part of the safari cost, but much of it goes into a general fund, siphoned off for other needs unrelated to conservation, much less local communities.

What are member dues?

For tour companies outside of East Africa, dues are \$600 a year. These support operational and communication costs. In some cases, we will initially waive dues upon request from smaller companies with fewer travelers and departures. But each must fully implement their Serengeti Traveler Conservation Fund program. However, most members are able and willing to pay dues and traveler donations.

When and how are payments made?

Member dues are paid each October. If you sign up before then, dues are pro-rated for the year. Traveler donations are paid in October and April each year. Payments are easily made online through a secure portal set up by our fiscal sponsor, Earth Island Institute. We'll send reminders.

Where does funding go?

Traveler funding goes primarily to programs supported by Serengeti Watch and our Tanzania partner, Serengeti Preservation Foundation, a nonprofit conservation organization registered in Tanzania. Serengeti Watch works to counter risks from road and dam development. 15% of traveler funding and dues go toward operations and communication.

What benefits come with membership?

More and more, people are looking for environmentally and socially responsible tour operators. We'll give you a member logo to display. Seeing your involvement may make a difference to prospective clients when they decide on a travel company. But the benefits really go to the Serengeti – you and your travelers can rightly feel you are part of the solution.

How can I apply for membership?

Email us for an application form: info@serengetiwatch.org



Friends of Serengeti is a program developed by Serengeti Watch, a fiscally sponsored project of [Earth Island Institute](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Tax ID 94-2889684. Founded in 1982 and located in Berkeley, California, Earth Island supports provides the administrative and organizational infrastructure for individual projects.

To apply for membership, contact us at:
info@serengetiwatch.org

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