



Lake Eyasi in Tanzania is located at the southwestern end of the **Ngorongoro Conservation Area**, between the escarpment of the **Great Rift Valley Eyasi** and the Kidero Mountains. It is a salty lake that during the dry season is greatly reduced but still provides an important source of water.

During the dry season the lake is practically non-existent and the animals are forced to share the remaining water, which makes the wildlife observation easier. The lake can become quite deep during the rainy season and attracts hippos that love to cool off in its brackish waters.

The scenery of Lake Eyasi differs greatly from that of the surrounding areas. If compared to the highlands of Serengeti and Ngorongoro this area looks decidedly tropical with palm trees lining the lake and a **climate that is almost always very hot** and intense due to the fact that the lake lies at the bottom of the Rift Valley.

The area surrounding Lake Eyasi is the territory of numerous tribes. Among these, the most interesting are the Hadzabe and the Datoga.

The Hadzabe people

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The Hadzabe people are among the last few examples of **hunter-gatherers** existing on the



Earth: they neither cultivate the land nor raise livestock.

For their subsistence they rely entirely on nature: women collect baobab berries and fruits while men collect honey and hunt the local fauna.

The Hadzabe people hunt pretty much anything they can hit with their poisonous arrows, including birds, giraffes, wildebeest, zebras and buffaloes but their favourite dish is the baboon, which is hunted at night in groups and by whose skins the Hadzabe people obtain the garments they wear.

Everything they use is also made from local materials, including their bows made with giraffe sinew and their arrows coated with lethal poison obtained from a succulent plant.

The language of the Hadzabe people is reminiscent of that of the San bushmen tribe of the Kalahari with numerous clicks and pops.

Lake Eyasi has been home to the Hadzabe people for over 10,000 years and during the centuries they have kept unaltered their primitive lifestyle. They live in caves and don't wear any kind of dress but rather the skin to cover their private parts.

The Hadzabe people often change the place where they live to get the most out of the land, so they don't build huts or shelters. They fit in what they find and do not have any social organization whatsoever; there is no leader as well as no weddings or other ceremonies.



Lake Eyasi: Hadzabe and Datoga



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The Datoga people

The shores of Lake Eyasi are the territory of the Datoga, a people of Nilotic origin living by following the ancient traditions.

The Datoga people are shepherds and skilled blacksmiths, they build villages following the techniques of their ancestors and trade with the neighbouring populations.

They are a very interesting people: women still wear the traditional clothes and flaunt the typical tattoo around their eyes.

The tattoo is actually a scarification, that is some small cuts are practiced around the eyes forming a kind of mask that gives women a singular appearance.

The reason why this ancient body modification is practiced dates back to the times of the German occupation: it seems that scarification made Datoga women unattractive to



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Europeans.

Visiting a Datoga village is interesting, they are very hospitable and proud to tell you their traditions and their lifestyle.

