

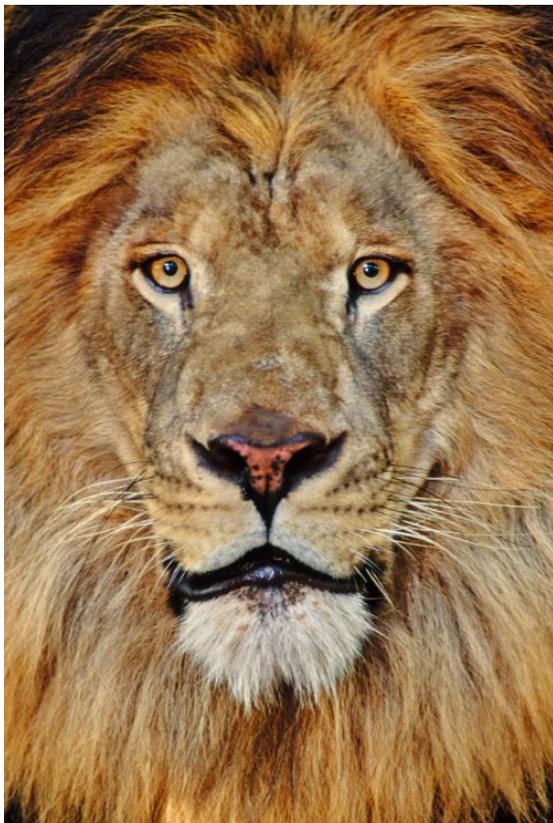
# THE TIMES

## LUXX gift edit: the best Christmas presents to buy

The most glamorous, clever and beautifully made Christmas presents, compiled by Sophie Goodwin – with a little help from our experts

By Sophie Goodwin

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## Mane attraction

[The Explorations Company](#) matches its clients to adventures that get the heart racing while also contributing towards vital research and conservation work. In Tanzania's Saadani National Park researchers have studied elephants and the prides of lion that roam this small yet astonishing park. It is the only protected area in Tanzania that is right on the coast, which means that guests can watch elephants roaming around the savannah, but also see green turtles shuffling up on golden sands to lay their eggs.

The three resident prides are unique in Africa because they den in mangroves, sometimes only metres from turtle nests, and have adapted to their saline surroundings. They spend a significant amount of time on land belonging to villagers, so collaring and monitoring the lions helps to keep them safe.

Guests can head out with researchers and a vet in open vehicles to identify and separate a specimen from the pride, watch the vet dart and tranquilise it, then assist with blood tests and measurements. It's a thrillingly feel-good way of getting up close to a predator.

Guests also have a fabulous safari experience. On days when no collaring takes place, they go on game drives. There are salt flats, mangroves, evergreen forests and acacia-studded grasslands – the royal flush of African landscapes – as well as the Wami River, along which one can cruise to see fish eagles, hippos and crocodiles.

Accommodation is in a 20m-high stone research tower built to monitor wildlife on Elephant Island, which is a favourite route for passing herds. The tower has two suites, a little restaurant and a rooftop crow's nest. Evenings can be spent out on the salt flats, having a campfire supper beneath extraordinary stars, or watching game wander past the crow's nest, with an icy G&T in hand. All this makes a trip that would be a Christmas present on an epic scale. **FK**

*The Explorations Company ([explorationscompany.com](http://explorationscompany.com)) offers a five-day safari to Saadani from £3,180 a person, full-board. Lion collaring experience from £11,600 for three.*