

## #ELEGANCE

# René Lalique's Art Nouveau Walking Stick

The Art Nouveau movement exemplifies the fusion of beauty and functionality that characterized Parisian design around 1900



René Lalique (1860-1945) is one of the most celebrated names in the history of decorative arts, renowned for his mastery in glass, jewelry, and metalwork. His work, deeply intertwined with the Art Nouveau movement, exemplifies the fusion of beauty and functionality that characterized Parisian design around 1900. One of his most intriguing creations is his Art Nouveau walking stick, a piece that reflects not only his craftsmanship but also the movement's reverence for nature and organic forms.

### Art Nouveau and Lalique's Vision

The Art Nouveau movement, which gained prominence in Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sought to break away from industrial mass production and traditional forms of design. It celebrated fluid, natural shapes, incorporating elements from the plant and animal kingdoms into everyday objects. This aesthetic resonated with Lalique, whose works often featured sinuous lines, intricate detailing, and nature-inspired motifs. His work was driven by a desire to integrate beauty into daily life, and the walking stick is a perfect example of how Lalique elevated functional objects to the realm of art.

### The Walking Stick: A Synthesis of Art and Utility

Lalique's walking stick stands as a remarkable synthesis of form and function. Crafted from a combination of materials such as metal and glass, it showcases Lalique's signature mastery in glasswork, where the handle, often the focal point of walking sticks, is intricately designed with natural motifs, flowers, leaves, and the delicate play of light and shadow are common themes, reflecting Lalique's passion for organic designs that mimicked the flow of nature. The Art

Nouveau style's hallmark is its sweeping curves and sinuous lines, and the walking stick embraces this aesthetic fully. Its graceful handle and fluid design are meant to evoke natural elements, from the gentle undulations of a flower petal to the movement of water. Lalique's ability to capture the essence of nature in such a functional object speaks to his skill as a designer who could elevate everyday items to the level of fine art. What sets Lalique apart from many of his contemporaries is his ability to harmonize beauty with utility. The walking stick is not only a statement of elegance but also a highly functional object, designed to be both practical and aesthetically pleasing. The balance of these elements reflects the broader ideals of the Art Nouveau movement, which sought to create a more harmonious relationship between art and the everyday environment.

### Legacy and Significance

Today, Lalique's walking sticks are highly prized by collectors and museums alike, valued not only for their aesthetic beauty but also for their historical and artistic significance. These pieces offer a glimpse into the luxury and creativity of early 20th-century Paris, a period when the city was a hub for innovative design. Lalique's walking stick encapsulates the artistry of an era that valued craftsmanship, individual expression, and the beauty of the natural world.

The enduring legacy of Lalique is evident in how his works continue to inspire designers and artists around the world. His distinctive approach to materials, forms, and the integration of natural elements has left a lasting imprint on decorative arts. Even today, Lalique's influence can be seen in modern glass and metalwork, as his mastery of creating art from functional objects remains an ideal for contemporary artisans.



Safari land-artefacts shop owned by Indian.



An inside view of the eco-friendly farm of dreams, Karatu.



Sunayan Sharma IFS (Retd.), Ex-Field Director, Project Tiger, Sariska & Keoladeo national park, Bharatpur

It was our 2nd day in Tanzania and we were enjoying the pristine wilderness beauty of Tarangire National Park, known for a high population of elephants and warthogs. Unlike India, this huge park allows camps for wildlife enthusiasts in tented accommodations, scattered all over the reserve. Alas! I could not avail this opportunity for time and budgetary constraints. And had to compromise with whatever the park could offer during the mid day hours, certainly not ideal for wildlife watching. Still, I was happy to see several species including a cheetah, which was my top priority. In fact, being a wildlife enthusiast and a conservationist, I always missed this fascinating mid segment predator from our Indian jungles and have always wished to see the species back in our wilderness.

In the last three decades, much has been written and talked about the prospects of reintroduction of cheetah in Indian jungles. Several



Elephant herd after cooling off in the river.



Giant Baobab trees in dry meadows is identity of Tarangire NP.

forest tracts have been explored by the wildlife experts to rehabilitate them, which have been its natural home. Reports and photographic evidences prove its presence in jungles of Madhya Pradesh till 1950s. Sadly, indiscriminate hunting for trophies and trapping for coursing is responsible for its decimation from our jungles, stretched from western arid planes to Deccan plateau. Other Asiatic countries too have lost it for varied reasons and presently merely some twenty individuals of this Asiatic Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus) are

left with Iran. But its close relative, a subspecies called 'Acinonyx jubatus jubatus', though 'Vulnerable' in the red list of threatened species, published by IUCN, still roam freely in good number in African jungles. The wildlife lovers, conservationists had been demanding revival of Cheetah population in Indian jungles, since independence, but unavailability of free ranging Asiatic cheetahs was what put the matter on back burner every time. Tiger, the top predator, was another species, which was diminishing fast from our jungles those days and a group of highly influential wildlife conservationists, pressing hard to recoup losses, ultimately succeeded in bringing the high profile Project Tiger at National level. And this project, right from its inception in 1973, started giving desirable results.

But for translocation of such big cats from one to another wilderness had not taken place any where world over and cheetah project depended upon such translocation; therefore cheetah fans voice still remained unheard. But after successful relocation of wild tigers to Sariska, to repopulate; voices in favour of cheetah translocation could no more be ignored and rightly gained momentum.

Consequently, in 2009, a meeting of a consultative committee, comprised of experts, met at Gainer (Bikaner) and recommended cheetah reintroduction from Iran/Africa jungles. 10 sites pan India were suggested to be surveyed immediately to adjudge their feasibility to rehabilitate foreign origin wild cheetahs.

Exhaustive reports were prepared by the expert group after survey of the shortlisted 7 sites. Shahgarh bulge, the arid grass-savannah land (Jaisalmer-Pakistan border) was found most suitable, but for certain non-ecological reasons, Kuno National Park (Madhya Pradesh) was chosen to start the project, ignoring Shahgarh. Kuno, located in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh, though more suited to lions, was prepared to welcome this new guest, learning management techniques from foresters of Namibia and South Africa, the countries that agreed to

# Tanzania! The Land Of Cheetah And Savannah!

I think it is ecologically desirable to grow meta populations but there must be corridors to link these populations so that dispersal of individuals may take place as and when required. Keeping this phenomenon in mind, the experts have chalked out huge landscapes around Kuno and Gandhi Sagar to facilitate free interaction between these meta populations. On map, the landscape seems to be providing ample room to accommodate and flourish a reasonable size of this population but the ground realities are pretty harsh presently.

provide free-ranging wild cheetahs. The project took off with 08 Namibian cheetahs flown into Kuno in Sept 2022 and released into some specially designed enclosures called bomas in Africa. Next year, 12 more cheetahs joined this fleet; this time flown from South Africa. As envisaged, it was a difficult task before the Kuno forest team to cater to the needs of these very special wild guests, despite the technical support made available by the African experts. Of these precious cats, some died too but several others bred litters. But it is not all, because the real challenge is to see them establishing in open jungles, which is different from their homeland, Africa. Inadequacy of prey base and fragmented grass-savannah lands is the chief factor to be addressed by the enthusiast Kuno team. A free ranging cheetah needs several hundred square kilometer grass-savannah area to itself, whereas Kuno National Park is just 789 Sq km and that is not all grass-land, but a large chunk is woodland,



Tarangire River is lifeline of the NP.

unsuitable for cheetah, which hunts by chasing the prey. Indian wildlife experts have worked hard to address these two primary shortcomings. This effort reflects in the Action Plan prepared for cheetah rehabilitation. It recommends raising meta populations of this predator in Kuno like several other areas. A decision to incorporate a small population of 3 cheetahs (2M & 1F), offspring of these African cheetahs in Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, falling under Neemach District of Madhya Pradesh, was taken to raise cheetah meta populations. So far, no death reported after their arrival here on 20 April 2025.

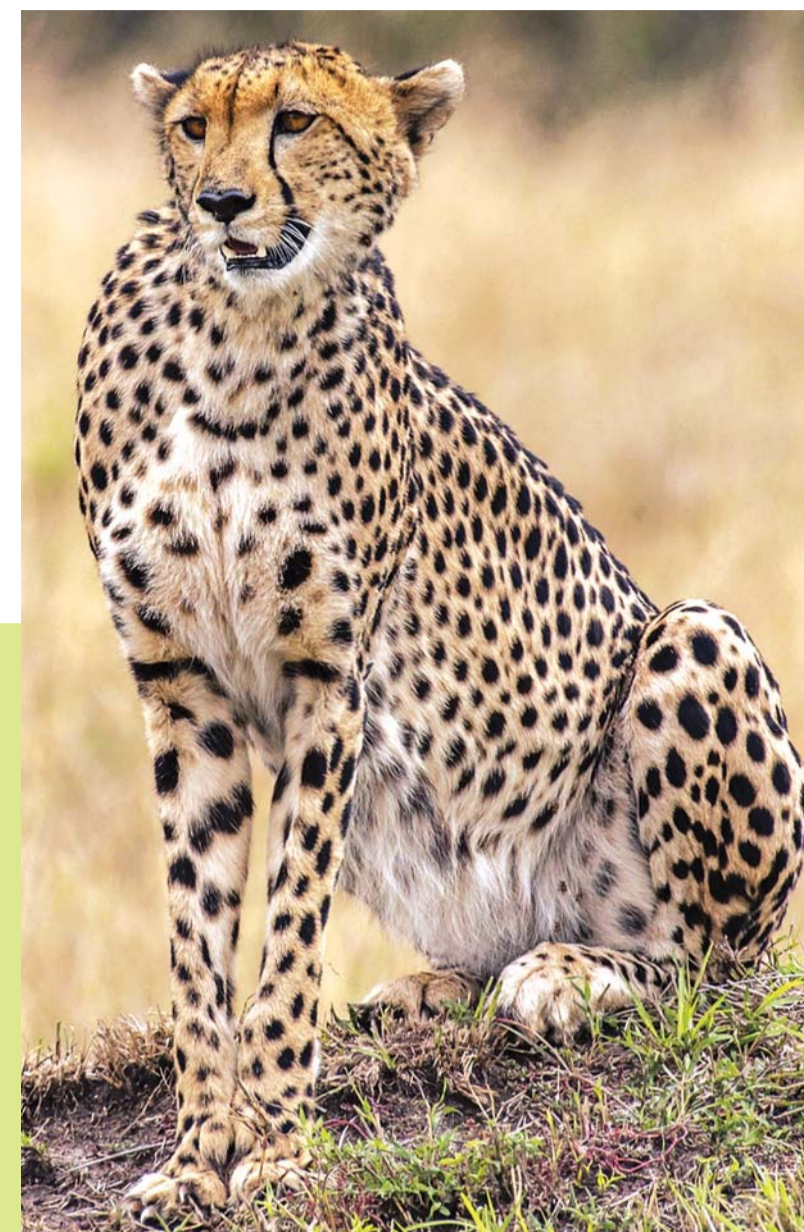
This Sanctuary is approximately 300 kilometers from Kuno. I think it is ecologically desirable to grow meta populations but there must be corridors to link these populations so that dispersal of individuals may take place as and when required. Keeping this phenomenon in mind, the experts have chalked out huge landscapes around Kuno and Gandhi Sagar to facilitate free

interaction between these meta populations. On map, the landscape seems to be providing ample room to accommodate and flourish a reasonable size of this population but the ground realities are pretty harsh presently. As far as reintroduction of big wild cats is concerned, Sariska pioneered the project at world level and taught that rehabilitation of large wild cats is a huge challenge; still over period of time, wild creatures too learn to adapt to new habitat conditions. Though basically, this trip to East African wilderness was to satiate my desire to enjoy the serenity of the world's best wildlife reserves, but the old wildlifer in me was all the time on observation mode to understand critical habitat requirements of cheetah, in order to gather some tips to help get them to Indian jungles.

Serengeti National Park, located at the Northern border of Tanzania, undoubtedly is gold standard for Cheetah, lion, elephants and several other animals but is drier comparing its neighbour

## Protecting Our Planet: The Spirit of Earth Day

Observed annually on April 22, Earth Day highlights the urgent need to protect the planet and promote sustainable living. First celebrated in 1970, the day has grown into a global movement involving millions of people across countries. It raises awareness about environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Governments, organisations, and individuals come together to support conservation efforts and adopt eco-friendly practices. From tree planting drives to clean-up campaigns, Earth Day inspires collective action. It serves as a reminder that small, everyday choices can make a significant impact in preserving Earth for future generations.



Cheetah in the yellow-dry meadow on high perch, looking for shikar.



Zebras searching edible green grass in dry savannah.



Giraffe looking for food in typical dry savannah.

## #WILD



At Farm of Dreams, Karatu.

Maasai Mara of Kenya. And this dryness keeps increasing as you advance further south. I was keen to see the extent of the dryness and heat cheetah can withstand in order to understand its tolerance to dry-hot climate of arid-semi arid regions of India especially western Rajasthan. This motivated me to start my trip from Tarangire National Park (the southern most part of the huge Serengeti landscape) I described in my last Arbit article; the 1st of this series. Tarangire has a mosaic of habitats; majorly grass-savannah stretches support myriad wildlife. It is a happy home for cheetah, suggesting that this cat can survive well in the semi arid-arid region of western Rajasthan, where huge open grass-savannah lands are stretched.

African jungles, especially Maasai Mara and Serengeti landscapes, including Tarangire full of grasslands, are bereft of deer species but support a huge biomass of some sixteen species of antelope, ranging from massive eland to tiny dik-dik. Key species here include

wildebeest, gazelles, topis, hartebeests and waterbuck. Of course, zebras are found here in very large number but they belong to horse family (Equidae) and are closely related to horses and donkeys. Cheetah although resembles leopard, but is anatomically quite different. It is lighter in weight but slender bearing long tail. It bears solid black spots all over unlike leopard decorated with complex rosette-shaped spots. The black tear-like markings running from eyes to mouth is the special feature of a cheetah which makes a clear distinction from leopard even from a distance. Interestingly it is these tear lines that act as natural sunglasses to fight sun glare during day hours' hunting.

Cheetah with semi-retractable claws is poor at climbing trees unlike leopard but can jump several meters and within seconds catch a speed as good as about 100 km an hour and finish at even more. But unlike leopard, it cannot prey upon big animals because of its lighter weight and shorter canines. As per the African wildlife experts, a full grown cheetah cannot prey upon an animal heavier than sixty kilos. It prefers preys of 15 to 35 kilos. In Africa, it can be seen hunting mostly on Thomson's/Grant's gazelle, impala and springbok. But duiker, steenbok and dik-dik like small antelopes are frequently lifted.

In Indian context, spotted deer, blackbuck, chinkara, four horned antelope, wild pig, hare, peacock can serve as desirable prey for cheetahs. As per our schedule, we were to reach Serengeti National Park the next day, passing through the Ngorongoro Conservation Reserve, a world heritage site and the huge dry Serengeti plains. It was difficult to overcome the temptation of roaming some more in Tarangire to enjoy its evening, but the driver-guide insisted on leaving the park early, to reach our night halting place, 'Farm of Dreams', located at Karatu, a small township, in time. Serengeti from there is a full day journey; therefore, Karatu in recent past has developed into a favourite night halting station for tourists.

Heading towards Karatu, we took a stop at an Artifacts shop, named 'Safari Land', owned and run by an Indian origin Tanzanian

western side of the town, was barely few kilometers from the highway but the non-metal dry road was full of red dust which was being blown off by the vehicles passing by. Our young driver, bit impatient, wanted to escape the dust by speeding out of it, but it had just the reverse effect. We were behind closed windows, safe but the vehicle faced the brunt and had to be given a thorough wash, marring the driver's evening. Our resort was a nice place, full of greenery. Thatched cozy cottages were set in an eco-friendly environment. By the side of the swimming pool were a bunch of local artists, men-women, playing music on their traditional instruments and displaying martial arts. Fire eating, breathing-limbo and walking on fire like circus games were being performed with great skill. Quite exciting. The traditional African dances exhibited extraordinary energy and typical music. Little local booze added further charm to the lovely evening; beating out the exhaustion of the day-long drive on the dusty, bumpy jungle tracks.

The zero pollution serene environments could keep me awake for long but next day's schedule to explore Ngorongoro Conservation Reserve, a world heritage site and camping in side Serengeti National Park, meant leaving the resort early morning.

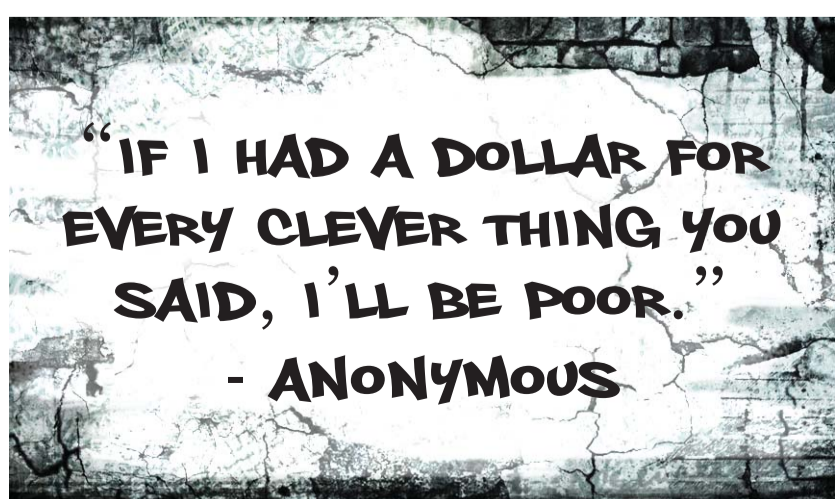
Local tribal with Ornaments, at Safari land.

national. Looking to the size, expensive interiors and high cost artifacts on display, it was more like a museum with bars and restaurants. The guide shared that Indians in Tanzania owning varied businesses are mostly wealthy. They enjoy acceptance among these Africans, for contributing to creating jobs for locals and adding to economy of the country. By the time we reached Karatu, still, there was some sunlight left to figure out not only length and breadth of the town but also to feel the pulse of the vibrant place. The resort, set in the

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Herd Zebras, Tarangire Park.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

