

# Remembering Kulula: Safari West Honors the Life and Legacy of Its Most Beloved Giraffe

*Kulula, the beloved giraffe featured in Growing Up Giraffe, passes at 21. Safari West honors her life, legacy, and unforgettable spirit.*

SANTA ROSA, CA, UNITED STATES, June 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Safari West](#) Mourns the Loss of Kulula, Star of Animal Planet's \*Growing Up Giraffe\*

Safari West is deeply saddened to share the passing of Kulula, one of our most iconic and beloved residents, who passed away peacefully on Saturday, June 14, 2025, at the age of 21. Kulula first captured the world's attention as the star of the acclaimed Animal Planet documentary \*Growing Up Giraffe\*. Her story introduced Safari West's conservation mission to a broad audience and inspired people worldwide.



Kulula featured on Growing Up Giraffe

She lost her mother while still a very young calf, at an age when survival without maternal care is rare. Her survival became a labor of love — a collaboration between our dedicated animal care team and the giraffe herd itself. Through sleepless nights and quiet moments of connection, Kulula was raised by human hearts and the companionship of giraffes.

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Safari West is for everyone — people of all colors, all walks of life, no matter who you love — just as wildlife and wild places should be. Kulula embodied that spirit in every way.”

*Dr. Nancy A. Lang*

Over the years, she continued to inspire generations of guests, staff, and conservationists with her headstrong spirit, notable presence, and extraordinary life. Kulula was known for her bold personality and memorable quirks. Affectionately nicknamed “Kudroola” by the team, she was unmistakable to anyone who visited Safari West — especially those who experienced her impressive (and

occasionally messy) drooling firsthand. She had a way of making sure everyone knew she was around, often with a well-timed head turn that kept her caregivers on their toes.

Two of her longest-standing animal caregivers were Nikki Smith and Erika Defer, whose passion for Kulula guided every aspect of her care. Alongside the entire giraffe team, they ensured her world was always one of trust, dignity, and love.

"Kulula was more than just an animal in our care," says Dr. Nancy Lang, founder of Safari West. "She was family. She grew up here, and in many ways, she helped shape the heart of Safari West."

#### More to Kulula's Story

Kulula's full legacy includes raising six calves and even becoming a grandmother. She was a mother, a matriarch, and a personality who left an impression on everyone she met. In our upcoming tribute blog, we'll share the stories that didn't fit here, including her influence on Safari West's giraffe care program and the moments that made her truly unforgettable.

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