

Kenya Eguide 2006

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Kenya

Kenya is a country of wildlife, landscapes, lakes, tropical coastline, culture, history and friendly welcoming people. Kenya has geographical diversity from snow-capped peaks, a Rift Valley with extinct volcanoes and hot springs, wide open plains, forest and coastline with reefs and magnificent beaches. A well developed tourist infrastructure with hotels, lodges, campsites an efficient transport system and lots of activities make Kenya a popular tourist destination.

Kenya has a land area of just over 500,000 square kilometers which is about the size of France. The equator cuts through the middle. To the east is the Indian ocean, to the south Tanzania and Uganda in the west. The north borders Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. The capital is Nairobi and the other major towns are Mombassa on the coast and Nakuru in the centre and Kisumu in the west on the shores of lake Victoria.

The Rift valley runs the length of the country from Lake Turkana to Lake Natron on the border with Tanzania. The Rift Valley has a series of lakes, arid and rugged landscapes and volcanic landforms and in areas active hot springs and geothermal activity. The land above the Rift Valley in Central Kenya is over 1,500 metres which creates a pleasant climate.

In the centre is Mount Kenya the second highest mountain in Africa and in Tanzania but on the border is Kilimanjaro the highest mountain in Africa. Good views of Kilimanjaro can be seen from Amboseli national park.

The north of Kenya is a large desert and home to nomadic tribes. The gateway is Marala and Marsabit an oasis in the middle of the desert. The Kenyan coast has many beaches, coral reefs, creeks and coral islands. The coastal strip is largely flat and then rises inland into rolling hills.

Game viewing is the big draw card for visitors. Kenya has 16 managed national parks, reserves and game reserves. Tsavo East and Tsavo West National parks between Nairobi cover a land area that is about the size of Wales. The most visited park is the Masai Mara and borders the Serengeti plains that lie in Tanzania. In July and August the annual wildebeest migration takes place. Along with open range, and Kenya has forested reserves that include the Aberdares and Kakamega Forest in the west of Kenya.

A second draw card is the Kenyan coast along the Indian ocean. Extensive coral reefs that are very close to the shore line, palm fringed beaches with white sands and world class resorts make for a perfect holiday. The entry point is Mombassa and beaches are found to the south and north of Mombassa and finish in the north in the Lamu archipelago a world heritage site.

Kenya is mostly dry with 75% of the land area arid or semi arid. The coastal area is warm and humid and cool and humid in the central highlands and hot and dry in the north and east of Kenya. Rainfall is seasonal with most rain during April to July due to the

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southeasterly monsoon. In the central highlands there is additional rain falling in October to December. The peak months for rain are April and November.

The Republic of Kenya is a multi party democracy having a National Assembly. The President is both head of State and head of a Government consisting of 224 seats. Kenya is a secular state primarily Christian with about 6% practicing Islam. The Kenya flag is made up black to represent the people, red to symbolise independence and green for the land and fertility.

Kenya History

Kenya's history dates back many centuries. Dr Leakey found a skull near Lake Turkana that is dated 2.5 million years old. The initial tribal groups developed their own religions, traditions, and ruling systems. The Cushtic tribes came from Ethiopia; the Niltic tribes from the Nile valley and the third group the Bantu were agriculturists and now the largest group of tribes.

Islam arrived along the coast in the 9th Century and over the next 5 centuries a large trading network developed along the coastal areas. The Portuguese captured Mombassa in 1505 and in 1593 constructed Fort Jesus in Mombassa which is open to visitors. The Portuguese left in 1720 following battles with the Omanis.

The first white settlers arrived in the late 1800's and development started with the construction of the railway from Mombassa to Kisumu in 1885. Kenya became a protectorate in 1905 and in 1920 a British Colony.

The period of liberation started in 1948 with the Mau Mau freedom fight. Kenya gained independence on 12 December 1963. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president used the slogan "Harambee" to motivate the process of national development.

Jomo Kenyatta died in 1978 and was followed by Daniel Arap Moi who remained President for 24 years. In 2002 Moi resigned and Kibaki became President under the National Rainbow Coalition. Elections are due in 2007.

Kenya is now actively developing and fast becoming a hub for surrounding countries. A population in excess of 30 million with the majority living in rural areas. A country with a strong industrial base, developed banking system, good communications, free press and some world leading companies means that Kenya is poised for significant development during this century.

Gedi Ruins

The Gedi ruins are just south of Watamu. A collection of palaces, houses and mosques that was a busy town in the 13th Century. The city was abandoned in the 1800's and the reasons are not entirely clear but probably due to attacks from the tribes in Somalia and Malawi. The site was only rediscovered in the 1920's as forest had hidden the city. The ruins cover an extensive area.

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Hyraz Hill Museum

Louis Leakey discovered an iron age dwelling and Neolithic burial mound here in 1926, just outside Nakuru.

Oloorgesaille Pre – Historic Site

This 50 km pre- historic site of the Middle Pleistocene Age is 70 km from Nairobi on the Magadi Road. First discovered in 1942 by Mary Leakey and now being excavated by the Smithsonian Institute. The museum exhibits some of the stone age tools and fossils of extinct mammals. Four cottages can be booked via the National Museums of Kenya.

Jumba la Mtwana

Just north of Mombassa is this 13th Century Swahili settlement

Kariandusi Pre –Historic Site

Dr Leakey made some of his discoveries here during the period 1928 – 1947 and the museum displays some of the finds. Located on the road to Nakuru close to Lake Elmenteita.

Koobi Fora

On the east side of lake Turkana a site of human evolution made famous by the discovery of a skull of Homo habilis. Camping facilities can be booked via the National Museums of Kenya.

Minarani

A Swahili settlement on the south side of the Kilifi Creek on the North coast.

Thimlich Ohinga

An example of a dry stone enclosure in South Nyanza, Western Kenya.

Reaching Kenya

Kenya is well connected with Europe, the Middle East, Africa and an increasing number of direct flights from Asia. Most visitors will arrive at Nairobi and some at Mombassa. Jomo Kenya Airport (NBO) is about 17 kilometres south east of Nairobi city centre. Moi International Airport (MBA) is about 12 kilometres from Mombassa city centre.

It is advisable to have pre booked your transport into the city, but if not taxis are available at both airports. An airport bus operates to the city centre from jomo Kenyatta Airport and departs back the airport from just outside the Hilton Hotel.

Overland entry to Kenya is possible from Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. The border crossing to Uganda is at Busia and Malaba. And for Tanzania at Taveta, Lunga Lunga and at Namanga the main entry from Nairobi. Shuttle buses operated by Riverside Shuttle (020 229618) and Davanu Shuttle (020 316929) travel from from Nairobi to Arusha with a transfer time of 4 hours. Sea entry is by the port of Mombassa. Visas are required for entry to Kenya and nationals from certain countries can obtain on arrival.

Kenya is reasonable well served by international airlines and includes South African Airways with daily flights to Johannesburg; Emirates with twice daily flights to Dubai and with extensive connections making Emirates a popular choice; Air India to Mumbai and from Europe a number of carriers including British Airways, Swiss International, KLM SN Brussels Airlines. Kenya Airways has been voted the best airline in Africa many times and works in partnership with KLM and offers a high quality service on many routes. Kenya Airways has flights to other African destinations, Europe and increasing frequency to main cities in Asia.

Kenya Essentials

Kenya Banking

Banks are open Monday to Friday from 0900 - 1500 and from 0900 - 1100 on the the first and last saturday of the month. Banks at the international airports are open 24 hours. ATMs are common in the main cities and generally work well. Credit cards are widely accepted.

Kenya Business Hours

Business hours are generally 9 - 5 and lunch is from 1- 2pm from Monday to Friday. Banks are open from 9 - 3 from Monday to Friday and some banks are open on Saturday morning from 9 - 11am. Banks at Jomo Kenyatta airport are open 24 hours.

Kenya Climate

The coastal area is tropical and the higher altitude areas are cooler. Rainfall can be expected between April to May (the long rains) and again between October and December. January to March is the dryer season and temperatures are generally higher. Snow is possible on Mount Kenya and frost on the other high mountain ranges. On the high lands around Nairobi temperatures are in the range 25 - 30 degrees and nighttime temperatures can do down to 5 degrees. On the coast daily temperature is between 27 and 31 degrees with high humidity.

Kenya Clothing

Lightweight clothing is generally required but cold nights can be expected in the high altitude areas which includes some of the game parks so bring a sweater and long sleeves for the evening. If you are in Kenya in the rainy season you will need a waterproof, a hat is advisable and walking shoes. It is not advisable to bring expensive jewellery and watches with you.

Kenya Currency

The currency is the Kenyan Shilling (KES) divided into 100 cents. Notes in denominations of 1000, 500, 200 and 50 are produced. Coins are 5,10 and 20 shillings. Only change currency at official bureaux de change, banks or authorized hotels. The best currency to bring is UK pounds, US dollars or Euros but other currencies will generally be exchanged. There is no restriction on the amount of currency that can be brought into Kenya. However the limit for taking out Kenyan Shillings is 500,000 unless written authorisation is given. Do not deface or destroy Kenyan currency.

Kenyan Customs

For visitors over 17 years of age the allowances are 200 cigarettes or 250 grams of tobacco (not exceeding 250 grams in total), one bottle of wine or half a litre of spirits and 250 millimetres of perfume. Cigarettes must be labeled correctly with the health warning conforming to Kenya standards, failure to do so will result in a fine and or imprisonment. and so best not to bring any cigarettes into Kenya! The import of firearms, agricultural or horticultural produce and pets is prohibited.

Kenya Electricity

Kenya operates a 220/240V service. Plugs are three point square plugs as used in the UK. In rare cases such as old buildings and in the town of Kisii the large two round pin plugs are used.

Kenya Emergency Services

For Fire, Ambulance, Police dial 999.

Kenya Health

Consult your doctor for advice on the latest vaccinations to be taken. The common ones are vaccinations for Tetanus; Diphtheria; Polio; Typhoid; Hepatitis A; Hepatitis B; Yellow Fever; Rabies and Meningitis. A Yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for visitors arriving from infected areas.

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Malaria does exist in Kenya and protection is required and advice must be taken as to choice of tablet and which areas are deemed to be high risk. Try and reduce the chance of being bitten by mosquitoes as other diseases such as dengue fever are carried by mosquitoes. Use insect repellents and spray your room each night.

Bilharzia is a potential risk and comes from tiny flukes that live in the water. Check with locals on the safety of the lakes and rivers before you swim. Don't drink tap water and use the readily available bottled water. Rabies is common and if bitten by an animal seek immediate medical attention. There is a very high risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

If you join the Flying Doctor Service you will be covered for an evacuation flight but will also be supporting the work of AMREF which provides medical support in rural areas. It is not expensive to join (020 315454).

Nairobi Hospitals are good and the main ones are: Aga Khan Hospital (374000); Children's Hospital (763474); Kenyatta National Hospital (726300); Nairobi Hospital (722160). In Mombassa the Aga Khan Hospital (041 312953); Coast Provincial Hospital (041 314204); Mombassa Hospital (041 312191) and Pandya Memorial Hospital (041 229252).

Kenya Language

Swahili is the national language and English the official language. Additionally there are over 40 tribal languages. Visitors will have no problem communicating in English.

Kenya Newspapers

The two main national English language papers are the Daily Nation and the Standard and both provide good local and international news. International magazines are readily available in the main centres.

Kenya Public Holidays

1st January

Idd il Fitr (changeable dates)

Good Friday and Easter Monday (changeable dates)

1st May Labour Day

1st June Madaraka Day

10th October Moi Day

20th October Kenyatta Day

12th December Jamhuri Day

25th December Christmas Day

26th December Boxing Day

Kenya Post

The postal system is reliable and stamps can be purchased from hotels and many shops. Post Restante service is available in Nairobi and Mombassa.

Kenya Safari Code

Whilst on Safari please follow the Kenya Safari Code:

- Keep to designated roads or tracks;
- Minimise disturb to animals;
- Stay inside your vehicle at all times;
- Keep to the speed limit;
- Support eco-friendly accommodation facilities;
- Never feed animals;
- Take care not to disturb the ecological balance:
- Take all your litter with you.

Kenya Safety

Crime is a risk in Kenya and is well reported in the local and international press which tends to exaggerate the risk. Huge numbers of tourists come to Kenya each year and have no problem at all. Just be sensible and do not walk around at night, use taxis, do not carry large amounts of cash on you and make full use of the hotel safe for all valuables. Do not carry a bag that identifies you as a tourist.

Watch out for con men and ignore people who come up to you with offers of services. Do not accept offers of food or drink for strangers in the street or on public transport as it could be drugged. In the unlikely event of being mugged do not resist and remember if you shout "thief" the mugger will be set upon by the crowd and most likely be killed and so best to move quietly away from the incident. If you go the police you will be involved in a lot of paper work and may have to spend time assisting the police find the criminal through an identification process.

Car jacking is a potential crime if you are driving yourself. Be aware at stop junctions, check your rear view mirror that you are not being followed, maintain a distance between you and the car in front. If you are car jacked do not resist, do not scream, follow instructions to the letter, do not argue, keep your hands in view and be polite. If you remain calm and helpful then no harm should come to. In the event you are locked in the boot, try and break one of the rear lights and wave to the car behind you.

There have been well reported terrorist incidents in both Nairobi and Mombassa. These have led to travel advisories being given. As in any country there remains a risk of terrorism but is a situation that is well monitored in Kenya and not representative of instability in Kenya but part of a world problem.

The area on the far north west and north east is a dangerous area due to bandits and should not be visited.

The Kenya Tourism Federation has established a security control centre to help ensure safety for visitors. They arrange assistance in the event of an incident involving visitors to Kenya. The centre operates a high frequency radio network and a tourist help line 02 604767 which accepts emergency calls 24/7. Please use this number if you require assistance and advice in case of a security incident.

Kenya Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in ALL public places and carries very heavy fines and a possible jail sentence. Smokers must take local advice as to what counts as a public place.

Kenya Telephones and Internet

The telephone system is good and continually improving. Mobile services are excellent and local SIM cards can be purchased from the airport and at many locations. Internet services are to be found and many hotels improving the level of internet service they provide guests. The international code for Kenya is 254. The outgoing code is 000.

Kenya Time Zone

Kenya is three hours ahead of GMT and has a single time zone.

Kenya Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory but is expected for tour guides and drivers, waiters and hotel staff. Where a service charge has been included then tipping is not really required but it does depend if you think the charge is going to the staff. Ask the waiters if not sure.

Tipping is normally at the rate of 10% and about 25 Kshs/bag for a porter. It is normal practice to tip the driver and safari guide. Old clothes that you want to dispose are always appreciated by people like watchman or housekeeping staff. If you give to housekeeping staff do provide them with a note so that they are not accused of stealing your clothes!

Kenya Tourist Season

The high tourist season is in the dry season. That means December and January and again in July and August. The dry season makes it easier to travel around the game parks. July and August are normally the best times for game viewing and is the season for the Wildebeest migration in the Masai Mara. The sea is clearest from October to January and the best times for viewing the coral reefs that line the coast. Travel is still possible in the rainy season, between the rainfall the sun does shine! The landscape is very green during the rainy season and lodges are cheaper.

Kenya Visas

Nationals of the following countries require visas prior to arrival into Kenya: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Nationals of all other countries will be issued visas at the port of entry or at any Kenya Consulate, Embassy or High Commission. Visas regulations do change at short notice so please do check with the Kenyan authorities. The current cost of visa at the airport is US\$50, payable in cash and a good idea to have in US dollars. Visas can be extended and renewed at the immigration office in Nairobi located on the ground floor of Nyayo House on the corner of Kenyatta Avenue and Uhuru Highway.

Kenya Wildlife Service Smart Card

If you are driving yourself into the National Parks you will need a KSW Smart Card. The card is loaded with money and then at each entry point entry fees are taken from the card. Smart Cards are issued at the main gates for the main parks. The Smart card can be loaded with US dollars or Kenyan Shillings.

Kenya Transport

Kenya Air Transport

Kenya has a good network of domestic flights, with carriers including Kenya Airways (020 32074747); Air Kenya (020 601727); Mombassa Air Safari (041 433061) and Safarilink(020 600777). Regular flights connect the major cities and in many cases fly direct to the lodges in the national parks. A flight to Masai Mara for example is not just one stop and may involve many as the plane drops passengers off at different lodges.

Chartering your own aircraft is easy and an option to avoid long drives. Most charter companies will charge a set rate for a journey, regardless of the number of passengers. The main domestic airport for charters and transfer to game parks is Wilson Airport (501943) located on Langata Road. Luggage on local flights out of Wilson airport is restricted by weight due to the small planes used.

The main air charter companies are:

African Sky Charters (020 601468)

Air Adventures (020 884258)

East African Air Charters (020 603858)

Lamu Air Charters (042 633475)

Mombassa Air Safari (041 433061)

Safarilink Aviation (020 600039)

Tropic Air Helicopters (062 32890)

Phoenix Aviation (020 606425)

Kenya Buses

Within Nairobi and Mombassa buses operate on set routes and schedules throughout the city and suburban streets. Buses can be boarded at any stop and tickets purchased on board. Buses also regularly run between most cities and towns. There are several bus companies with extensive inter-country networks. Buses also run into Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Buses are an inexpensive way to travel the country, but carry some risk due to overcrowding and speeding. Most of the Kenya Bus offices are found at River Road. Akamba (020 222027) has the most extensive network and reasonable safety record. The alternative KBS (020 229707) is owned by the Government tends to be cheaper but buses are older.

Kenya Cycling

Long distance cycling is done in Kenya but the roads are hazardous. Off road mountain biking is possible. Hell's Gate National Park in Naivasha is a popular place to cycle and bikes can be hired locally to use in the park.

Kenya Driving

Hiring a car is easy and all you need is an international drivers license or for most countries your national licence. UK drivers should bring both their licence and the paper counterfoil. Driving is on the left and kilometres are used for distance marking. Driving at night is not recommended due to the high risk of accident or potential road crimes. The maximum speed on open roads is 110 kph and 50 kph in urban areas. Seatbelts must be worn by all persons and driving licence carried. The police enforce traffic laws and are active on the highways.

Kenya Matatus and shared taxis

The most popular form of public transport in Kenya is the Matatu, which is a minibus. Matatus operate on set routes and passengers board and alight whenever and wherever they choose. Matatus are cheap but potentially dangerous due to speeding and poor driving. The Government is enforcing speed and passenger numbers to increase safety but accidents do occur too often for comfort. Matatus for up country depart from Accra River.

A faster alternative to the matatu for travelling around are the Peugeot shared taxis which operate on a number of routes and cost more than the matatu. One of the larger companies is Crossland Services (020 245377) that operate from the Accra River area.

Kenya Taxis

Taxis are a safe and convenient method to travel around Nairobi. Only use a licensed taxi, distinguished by the yellow band on each side. Taxis do not use meters so do fix the price before you start. In Nairobi and Mombassa several taxi companies can be called by telephone (Kenataco 225123; Jatco 4444714;). In Kisumu cycle rickshaws are found.

Kenya Safari Tours

Most tourists will travel in safari vehicles which is either a minibus with a roof that lifts up or adapted 4WD vehicles. In the parks the open 4WD drive vehicles offer good viewing experiences.

Kenya Trains

A passenger rail service operates between Nairobi and Mombassa . The overnight train from Nairobi to Mombassa leaves on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7pm and from Mombassa to Nairobi on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday also at 7pm. and arrives between about 8am and 10am.

A luxury train that takes two days is run by East African Steam Safaris and uses the the original Beyer Garrat train and has accommodation for just 48 passengers. The railway was completed in 1903 and had a troubled construction earning it the nickname "the lunatic line". Mombassa Railway Station (312220); Nairobi Railway Station (221211)

Nairobi

Nairobi is a lively and busy city. An altitude of 1800 metre provides a pleasant climate. Nairobi serves as the starting point for most trips to Kenya. Nairobi is a Maasai word which means 'cool water' so named after the clear Nairobi river, less clean now but is in the process of being cleaned.

Nairobi started life in 1899 as a supply depot for the railway being constructed from Mombassa to Kampala. It's original name being just "Mile 327". In 1905 Nairobi became the capital of British East Africa Protectorate and the capital of Kenya at independence in 1963.

American Embassy Memorial Garden

A small garden next to Haile Selassie Avenue that marks the location of the destroyed American Embassy. The new vast American Embassy is now located close to the UN headquarters in the suburbs in Muthaiga.

Butterfly Visiting Centre

A landscaped garden in a greenhouse with a diversity of butterflies and aims to promote conservation practices. Located in Karen on the Dagoretti Road (020 884972)..

Bomas of Kenya

The Bomas of Kenya are a display of traditional homesteads and regional dances. Performances take place every afternoon (2.30pm on weekdays and 3.30pm on weekends). Located at Forest Edge Road just beyond the main gate to Nairobi National Park and entered with an admission charge. (020 891801).

Central Nairobi

The main street is Kenyatta Avenue with high rise buildings, shops and touts. The Thorn Tree Cafe at the Eastern End of Kenyatta avenue is a very famous place for travellers to meet and a name now used by the Lonely Planet for their on line forum. The city centre is fairly compact and easy to walk around. Be very careful if walking around this area at night.

Cinemas

The latest films are shown in comfortable at Sarit Centre in Westlands; Village Market in Gigiri and at several locations in the city centre. Tickets are good value, do remember to stand when the national anthem is played at the start of the session.

David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust have an elephant and rhino orphanage at the Mbagathi Gate to Nairobi National Park and is open only between 11am and noon when the feeding takes place (020 600800).

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Giraffe Centre

The Giraffe Centre at Koitobos Road which is off Langata Road is a project run by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife to increase the population of Rothschild's Giraffe. Giraffe level observation towers make it easy to take some good Giraffe face shots.

Jamia Mosque

An Arabic style Mosque in Banda Street.

Karen Blixen's House

A house with gardens restored to its original form to remember Karen Blixen. She moved to Kenya in 1918 and wrote "Out of Africa". Located on Karen Road about 20 minutes drive from the centre of Nairobi.

Kenya National Museum

The national museum houses an excellent pre history section and a collection of marine life and birds. A good display of plate tectonics and volcanic life cycles. The Gallery of Contemporary East African Art has changing displays of local artists. Tribal portraits done by Joy Adamson are on display. In the grounds is the snake park and a Kiluyu homestead. A collection of Located on Museum Hill Road (020 4448933) close to the city centre.

Kenyatta Conference Centre

Distinguished by the saucer on the roof the KCC stands tall over the city and a symbol of modern Kenya. There is a viewing platform which you can pay to visit and provides views over the city.

Mizizi Cultural Centre

Designed to promote Kenyan culture and often used by school groups. Performances are arranged but you do need to check first when they are on. Located on the corner of Bogoni East Road and Langata South Road.

Nairobi Snake Park

The Nairobi snake park is part of the national Museum and a popular Nairobi attraction.

Ngong Hills

The hills to the south of the city make a good backdrop to Nairobi but no longer safe to walk on unless you have armed escorts.

Nairobi National Park

Nairobi National Park is the only city centre national park in the world where you can view game. It is not a fenced park and the animals are living in a wild environment and home to about types of large mammals. However the game to be seen is limited but for those short of time and want to experience a game drive animals will be seen.

At the entrance to the park is the Nairobi Safari Walk which offers visitors an educational boardwalk. The Animal Orphanage is for wild animals that have been abandoned and the aim is to release them back into the parks where possible.

Nightclubs

There are many dance based night clubs that have a long history and well patronised. Pavement (020 4441711); New Florida (020 229036) and many more.

Railway Museum

A good collection of railway exhibits and stories of building the Ugandan railway in 18th Century. Located beside the Nairobi Rail Station and admission is charged.

Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple

A Hindu temple with carved stone, pillars and lots of visible carvings, located on Forest Road.

Theatre

The Kenya National Theatre in Harry Thuku Road near the Norfolk hotel tends to put on Kenyan Drama and African theatre. The Professional Centre in Parliament Road has a number of shows.

Kenya Coast

The coast is an area of extensive sandy beaches with coral reefs. Hotels line the coast both to the North and South of Mombassa. Mombassa is the major entry point for the Kenyan Coast. Diani Beach is the main resort area south of Mombassa and Malindi and Lamu to the North of Mombassa.

The reefs on the coast make for calm waters on all beaches. Travel along the coast is easy by hire car or using taxis, matatus or buses. Many of the coast hotels operate a shuttle service to Mombassa.

Diani Beach

Diani Beach is the most developed beach on the south coast with many hotels. A palm fringed beach with white sand and clear waters. The coral reef is a 10 minute boat ride from the shore or can be reached by swimming out from the beach. Diani Beach is a well developed tourist area and lots of restaurants, tours and tourism infrastructure. South of Diani Beach is Kisite Marine National Park with coral reefs and a good chance to see dolphins and whales between August and September. Lots of accommodation is available to suit all budgets.

Kilifi

Kilifi is an estuary and popular yachting haven south of Malindi. Kilifi is the place to charter yachts.

Lamu

Lamu is a small island some 200 km north of Malindi with a strong Muslim and Arabic tradition. Now a world heritage site. There are no cars on Lamu and the buildings are built in a distinct Lamu style two or three stories high. Lamu is a popular tourist destination and donkey rides, dhow trips, snorkeling and walks around the island will keep you busy.

Lamu was first settled in the 14th Century and over the years been influenced by the Portuguese, Turkish and Arabs from Oman. This has led to the development of its own unique culture and buildings.

Lamu is vehicle free and foot is the normal method of transport but if walking is too much donkeys can be hired. Dhows can be rented and provide trips to the islands of the area with villages, ruins and resorts on Manda, Siyu, Pate and Kiwayu. Dhows also ferry people between Lamu and Shela an old Swahili village. Manda island is across from Lamu and famous for the Takwa ruins on Manda Creek reached by. Dhows or motor launch. Pate Islands is visited by Dhow and has historical sites to view.

Lamu is easily reached by air from Nairobi, Mombassa, Diani Beach and Malindi. The airport is not on Lamu island and on Manda island but transfers are organised using the dhow ferries.

Malindi

Malindi has been a major trading centre for many years dating back to the 10th Century and now a major tourist resort. Malindi forms the centre of a number of beaches with Watamu to the south. Malindi National park has some easy to view coral using glass bottom boats which can be rented from Casuarina Point, but do bargain for a fair price.

To the north west of Malindi is the Marafa depression called Hell's Kitchen named because of the sandstone gorges and sheer gullies. The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama landed in Malindi in 1498 and erected the Vasco da Gama Pillar which still stands. Malindi is connected by air to Nairobi, Lamu and Mombassa.

Malindi has plenty of attractions and very geared towards tourism. There is a snake and crocodile farm at Casuarina (042 20121); the Malindi Museum includes the House of Columns; Falconry of Kenya (0722 346491) with falcons and eagles and the old and small Portuguese Chapel of St Francis Xavier.

Mombassa

Mombassa is the second city of Kenya and on the coast. Mombassa itself is an island connected by ferries and bridges to the mainland. Mombassa has a large commercial harbour. Mombassa is named after the arabic word "nabas" meaning to speak in public and reflects Mombassa's original role as a trading and meeting centre.

The heart of Mombassa is the old town with its Arab influence. Fort Jesus is a famous and historical sight that protected Mombassa Harbour and scenes of long running battles between the Portuguese and Shirazi Arabs. Mombassa is a mix of cultures and in the city Mosques, Temples and Churches thrive together.

Mombassa is reached easily by train, bus or air from Nairobi. Mombassa International Airports has a number of direct international flights. Bus and matatu transport to the North and South coast beaches is easy to arrange.

Fort Jesus

Designed by an Italian as a European style fortress. Spacious inside with high walls and views across the harbour. Fort Jesus was built by the Portuguese in 1593 and is one of the best examples of 16th century Portuguese military architecture. The Fort has changed use many times and was used as a prison until 1958 after which it was made a national monument and now open to the public. A sound and light show takes place every day except Tuesday and Sunday at 7.30pm.

Haller Park

A reclamation project of waste quarry land to create gardens and a habitat for a number of animals including giraffe, crocodiles and hippos. Located next to the Bamburi Cement Factory on the road to Malindi. (041 5485901)

Mamba Village Crocodile Farm

A crocodile farm at Nyali with a daily later afternoon show (041 475184).

Mombassa Marine Park

Glass bottom boat trips are organised by hotels and local tour operators to view the coral.

Mombassa Old Town

Near Fort Jesus is the Old Town is a collection of buildings that are worth exploring.

Mombassa Dhow Harbour

A few Dhows are to be found and Dhow trips can be arranged. Dining is possible on the Tamarind Dhow Restaurant (041 475074).

Jain Temple

The temple on Digo Road is open to visitors who enjoy the design and scents and atmosphere.

Kenya Marineland

An aquarium at Mtwapa village.

North Coast Beaches

There are a few beaches between Mombassa and Mtwapa Creek with many hotels. Resorts are found at Nyali, Bamburi, Vipingo and Kikambala. Nyali is the closest resort town to Mombassa with a number of hotels and long beach.

Shelly Beach

Shelly beach is south of Mombassa and the closest beach to Mombassa.

Tana River Delta

At the far northern end of the coast the Tana River forms a delta and is an expansive wilderness area. An abundance of wildlife, birds, crocodiles and hippos can be seen. The Tana River Delta takes about three hours to reach from Malindi. Accommodation is very limited and the only place to stay is the Tana Delta Camp. Boats can be hired from the camp.

Tiwi Beach

A quiet beach on the south coast beyond Likoni. Popular with locals in the holiday season and often quiet the rest of the time. Accommodation is available at Maweni Beach Cottages (041 3300012) ; Coral Cove Cottages (041 3205195) and Tiwi Beach Resort (041 3202801).

Watamu

Watamu is popular due to the snorkeling in the marine national park and is 25 km south of Malindi. Easy to snorkel off the beach, but do make sure that you have purchased a marine park ticket, normally available from your hotel. Nearby is the Arabuko Sokoke Forest with bird life enjoyed from walking trails. The Kipepeo Butterfly project where 150 community butterfly farmers collect butterflies from the Arabuko Sokoke forest and then breed from them and export the pupae. The farm is open daily and butterflies can be seen and the work being undertaken. The Bio Ken Snake farm is a not for profit snake farm that also provides day safaris looking for snakes.

The Gedi ruins are just south of Watamu. A collection of palaces, houses and mosques that was a busy town in the 13th Century. The city was abandoned in the 1800's and the reasons are not entirely clear but probably due to attacks from the tribes in Somalia and Malawi. The site was only rediscovered in the 1920's as forest had hidden the city. The ruins cover an extensive area.

Kenya National Parks, Reserves and Conservancy Areas

A main attraction to Kenya is to visit the National parks and Reserves. There are many and they are listed below. The list includes Government, local authority, private and community managed reserves. Some are very remote and not easily reached, others are very popular and busy and some world famous such as the Masai Mara which is an extension of the Serengetti Plains in Tanzania. The mountain national parks are listed in the Kenya mountains section of Kenya Eguide.

Aberdares National Park

The Aberdares is northwest of Nyeri and about 100km from Nairobi. The Aberdares serves as Kenya's main water catchment area. The eastern slopes are covered with forest and at the higher altitude changes to bamboo. Both the Ark and Treetops are in the Aberdares, Treetops gaining fame as the location where Queen Elizabeth became Queen during her stay in 1952. The Aberdares can be visited all year but during the rainy season the roads are difficult.

Amboseli National Park

Amboseli National Park is at the foot of Kilimanjaro and 240 kms south-east of Nairobi. Amboseli borders Tanzania. Kilimanjaro forms a majestic backdrop. The best game drives are around the swamps and there is a good lookout on Observation Hill. Amboseli is a four hour drive from Nairobi. The nearest town is Namanga. Scheduled flights operate to Amboseli from both Nairobi and Mombassa. Accommodation is available both within the park and outside the park (Amboseli Lodge; Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge; Amboseli Sopa Lodge; Ol Kanjau; Ol Tukai Lodge; Porini Camp; Tortillis Camp). Good to visit after the long rains finish and before the short rains which means June to October.

Arabuko Sokoke National Park

A small pocket of tropical forest between Kilifi and Malindi on the coast.

Boni National Reserve

A reserve to protect the coastal vegetation north of Lamu and good for elephants.

Chyulu Hills National Park

South west of Nairobi and accessed from Mtito Andei an area of recent volcanic action. A few select camps operate: Campi ya Kanzi; Ol Donyo Wuas and Nyati Safari Camp.

Bisanadi National Reserve

Next to Meru National Park an extensive hot and dry reserve that is remote and rarely visited.

Dodori National Reserve

An area of woodland close to Lamu on the coast with a chance to see elephants, lion and leopard.

Hells Gate National Park

Hells Gate lies to the south of Lake Naivasha about 90 km from Nairobi and is small park with numerous animals. The main feature of the park is the high red- rock cliffs that form a wide gorge. In the hills overlooking the gorge are hot springs and steaming geysers which is the reason for the name "Hell's Gate" given to it by the German naturalist Dr Fischer. A good park to visit as part of a day trip that includes a stop at Lake Naivasha. The drive from Nairobi provides some good views of the rift Valley. It is possible to use the fast road one way and the old road now used for trucks in the other direction

Laikipia

Laikipia lies in the northern part of Kenya and is a wild sparsely populated area with a number of large private ranches. The ranches manage the wildlife and have created their own private reserves under the umbrella of the Laikipia Wildlife forum. Laikipia has become a major wildlife conservation programme and breeding sanctuary for Rhinoceros. Laikipia hosts the highest diversity of large mammals in Kenya and the big five will be found. The area is vast, quiet and a contrast to the busier national parks with a number of luxury lodges to stay in.

Being privately managed there is more freedom for tourism operators to offer adventure based activities along with game viewing. The main entry towns are Nanyuki, Baringo, Eldoret or Isiolo but most guests fly direct into the ranches on private charters or on scheduled flights to Lewa Downs. Accommodation is available in Laikipia at the ranches and many luxurious lodges.

Kakamega Forest National Reserve

Kakamega is accessed via Kakamega which is reached from Kisumu. An equatorial forest with big trees and wet undergrowth provides a habitat for monkeys and bird life. Nighttime brings out the bats, frogs and forest squirrels. Kakamega has marked walking trails and local guides are available.

Kigio Wildlife Conservancy

A small conservation area located just off the main Naivasha to Nakuru road that is home to zebras, hippos, impalas and other animals. Day visitors are not allowed to enter and is only open to guests staying in the conservancy at one of the campsites or at Malewa River Lodge (050 2030312).

Kimana Wildlife Sanctuary

A community managed reserve just east of Amboseli and off the Amboseli to Tsavo West road. Accommodation is available. including camps operated by African Safari Club. Commercial flights to Amboseli do land close to the camps .

Kora National Park

A large remote wilderness next to Meru National park.

Malindi Marine National Park

The park lies between Chanoni Point and Leopard Point and protects the coral reefs that are easy to view.

Marsabit National park

An extinct volcano about 560 km from Nairobi. The mountain rises out of the desert with forests and lakes on the top. Lake Paradise, a volcanic crater attracts game and bird life.

Masai Mara National Reserve

This world famous game park is part of the Serengeti – Mara ecosystem in south western Kenya. On the expansive plains a full range of animals will be seen and makes for some of the easiest game visiting in Kenya. Crocodiles and hippos live in the Mara river. The most spectacular attraction is the migration of nearly 2 million wildebeest and zebra from July to early October and the busiest time in the park and the best.

The Mara is host to many lions and easily spotted in the grasslands. A visit to the Mara is likely to result in seeing the "Big Five", the elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and leopard.

Surrounding the park are Maasai villages many of which can be visited on tour programmes. The Maasai are likely to be seen close to the park boundary with large herds of cattle.

Lodges and camps are found all over the park and in the surrounding areas. The drive from Nairobi is three hours and nearest town is Narok. Flying is very easy with many regular flights to the lodges and camps in the Masai mara both within the reserve and out of the reserve.

The Masai Mara is held in trust by the local district council. A proportion of the fees paid as you enter the park go to the local Maasai communities.

Meru National Park

Meru national park is 85 km east of Meru. It is a low lying semi arid park and has a good road system which makes for easy game drives. Meru is a quieter park than the others. The Tana river is home to hippo crocodile and a variety of animals. This is one of the best Parks to see cheetah and lion. Elsa of "born free" was returned to the wild in Meru. Access to the park is from Meru town or by regular flight from Nairobi. The ecosystem is open plains with rocky outcrops and reverie forest. Accommodation in Meru is available at Leopard Rock Lodge and Elsa's Lodge.

Mombassa Marine National Park

A small marine park 13 km from the city.

Mwea National Reserve

A small reserve 200 km south of Nairobi where the Tana and Thiba rivers meet. Accommodation at the Masinga Dam Lodge (020 341781).

Nairobi National Park

Just 8 kms south of Nairobi. Both migratory and resident animals are observed but no elephants. Near the main gate is the Animal Orphanage. The main point of entrance to the National Park is through Main Gate where there is animal orphanage and Safari Walk which offers visitors an educational boardwalk. The park covers 117 sq km and has recorded over 100 species of mammals and 400 species of birds.

Oi Doiyo Sabuk National Park

Close to Thika and about 60km from Nairobi, Oi Doiyo Sabuk National Park is a forested hill that rises to 2146 metre. Driving to the summit is possible and on clear days good views of Mt Kenya will be seen.

Rahole National Reserve

North west of Garissa, very remote, very wild hot dry bush country.

Ruma National Park

In the west of Kenya 190 km from Kisumu and 30 km from the shores of Lake Victoria a reserve created to protect the roan antelope.

Saiwa Swamp National Park

Just north of Kitale an area of grasslands and woodlands with antelope and giraffe.

Samburu and Buffalo Springs National Reserve

Samburu and Buffalo Springs are two reserves that are linked together and about 300 km north of Nairobi. It is the river Ewaso Nyiro that brings the wildlife to escape the arid landscapes. Unique to this arid landscape are gerenuk, Somali ostrich and the reticulated giraffe, and dik-dik. Crocodile are found on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro River. Elephant can be sighted, as well as leopard, lion, oryx and cheetah. The forest that line the river provide habitats for many birds including the local Palm Nut Vulture and Vinaceous Dove. Road access is from Isiolo or by scheduled flight from Nairobi. Samburu and Shaba have a number of lodges and camps (Samburu Intrepids; Elephant Watch Camp; Samburu Lodge; Samburu Serena Safari Lodge and more..)

Shaba National Reserve

Shaba is in the north of Kenya close to Samburu and is a dry arid landscape. Game viewing is harder than in most parks but there are several species that are only found in the north. Shaba is where Joy Adamson who wrote Born free lived and was also the home for the reality show Survivor Africa. Access is by road from Isiolo which is about 6 hours drive from Nairobi.

Shimba Hills National Reserve.

This reserve is 40km south of Mombassa and inland from Diani Beach. It consists of rolling hills and grasslands and was established to protect the Sable antelope. Good bird viewing and large concentration of Palearctic migrants. There is a good chance that you will see leopards and almost certainly elephants. Forest walks are organised by KWS starting at the Sheldrick Falls KWS office. Accommodation is available at Shimba Rainforest Lodge (040 4077).

Sibilo National Park

Nearly 1000 km from Nairobi on the Eastern shore of lake Turkana makes this a very remote National Park. Good for crocodile viewing in the lake and site of remains of homo erectus estimated to be 3,000,000 years old makes this area the "Cradle of Mankind".

Solio Game Reserve

A private reserve just north of Nyeri that has been successful at breeding the black rhino.

South Turkana National Reserve

This is a very remote reserve in the north of Kenya.

Taita Hills Game Reserve

A private game reserve off the Voi to Taveta road with accommodation available at the Salt Lick Safari Lodge (020 30270) or the Taita Hills Safari Lodge. Being privately owned night drives are allowed and a feature of this reserve as in other private game reserves in Kenya.

Tana River National Primate Reserve

Located 250km north of Mombassa on the Malindi to Garissa road, a forested area alongside the Tana river and a conservation area for the Red Colobus monkey and other monkeys.

Thomson's Falls

A 70 metre high waterfall just outside the town of Nyahuru with good walks beneath the waterfalls.

Tsavo East National Park

Tsavo East National Park is large with 11,747 sq kms and located in South-east Kenya, and 200 km inland from Mombassa. Only a small area is open to the public. Within Tsavo East, one of the largest lava flows in the world, the Yatta Plateau, is to be found. Another attraction is the River Athi which near the Manyani Gate forms the Lugard Falls. The main Mombassa - Nairobi highway splits the parks into the east and west Tsavo park. The main access town is Voi. Tsavo east has a number of lodges and camps (Crocodile Camp; Galdessa Camp; Kilalinda Lodge; Ngutuni Lodge, Satao Camp and more.)

Tsavo West National Park

Tsavo West National Park is a very large park of 9000 sq km and 200km from both Mombassa and Nairobi. A diversity of plants and animals and well maintained all weather roads makes it a popular park. The Mzima Springs attracts many animals and an underwater observatory to view hippos. Mtito Andei is the headquarters town for Tsavo West. Tsavo West is more visited than Tsavo East. Tsavo West has both camps and lodges (Finch-Hattons's; Lion Rock Safari Camp; Voyager Safari Camp, Severin Safari Camp and more..)

Watamu Marine National Park

The park is 24 kms south of Malindi and 130km north of Mombassa. A main attraction are the tree caves at the entrance to Mida Creek. The rock pools at low tide are an easy way to view the marine life in the ocean. Snorkeling and glass bottom boats are available to view the coral reefs.

Private Game Parks

There are a number of private game parks around Mt Kenya with some excellent lodges and well protected wildlife.

Kenya Safari

"Safari" means journey in Swahili. Now word used to describe tours of Kenyan parks and natural areas. A huge Kenya Safari industry has developed and can be by plane, by cycle, by camel, by walking, by horse and most commonly by vehicle. Some Kenya safari operators use lodges and permanent luxury tents and others are mobile and set up camp each night.

All safaris can be booked on line before you arrive and you do not need to use an expensive overseas wholesaler or international travel agent. It generally works out much cheaper to buy your own ticket and then book your safari direct with the company in Kenya. Do browse our list below and see what they offer. Prices vary considerably between Kenya tour companies and depending on the standard of accommodation you choose.

The Kenya Association of Tour Operators (020 713348) is an industry regulatory association and will help out in the case of conflict. Most of the reputable safari operators are members. The Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (020 609355) has an accreditation scheme. For those concerned about using operators with a strong commitment to eco tourism the Eco tourism Society of Kenya (020 2724755) has a list of Kenya safari operators that follow their guidelines.

Accommodation for safaris is either in lodges, permanent maps or camps set up for the night. In the main National parks permanent accommodation is normally used. Around the edges of the parks and on private land movable camps may be used. The standard of accommodation is excellent and of course depends on the budget you have to spend. All budgets are allowed for in planning a safari.

Travel to the parks and natural areas is either by road or by plane. Many visitors fly to the parks and then met by the safari operator at the airstrip. This saves time and it is fair to say Kenyan roads are slow and somewhat hazardous to drive along. However, by flying to the parks you will miss Kenyan daily life and is quite possible to see nothing of the people of the country if you fly into Nairobi and then transferred direct into the safari area using air transport. Air transport is by regular domestic flights which connect all the main parks and natural areas and coast or by private air charter.

The country code for Kenya is 254 and the city code for Nairobi is 020. Unless otherwise stated the telephone number is for Nairobi.

Kenya Safari operators

Abercrombie and Kent
6 95 00 00
Across Africa Safaris
3327446

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Africa Expeditions
57 83 13
Africa Safaris
245 901
African Horizons Travel & Safaris
581406
African Road Safaris
891386
African Quest Safaris
273 4868
African Touch Safaris
25 05 08
African Tropical Safaris
21 54 32
Art Safaris
271 8205
Balloon Safaris
60 50 03
Best Camping Safaris
22 96 67
Big Five Tours & Safaris
22 51 67
Bike Treks
4446371
Bushback Adventures
712 1505
Dallago Safaris
33 15 62
Destination Kenya
861340
Discover Kenya Safaris
375 4190
Eastern and Southern Safaris
242 828
Express Travel Group
020 273 4973
Gametrackers
210 024
Gamewatchers Safaris
523 129
J.H. Safaris
22 81 68
Kenia Tours and Safaris
223699
Kenya Bush Trippers
323231

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Kenya One Tours (Mombassa)
41 228 578
Kenya Wildlife Trails
57 44 04
Ketty Tours
231 51 78
Kimbala Kenya
891288
Kuldip's Touring Company
22 37 89
Let's Go Travel
340 331
Lindberg Holidays and Safaris
60 67 31
Micato Safaris
220 743
Mombassa Air Safari
433061
Nature Expeditions
020 4347417
Nature Trek Adventure Safaris
22 90 62
On Safari
891736
Origins Safaris
312 137
Paws Africa Safaris
020 3872658
Planet Safari Adventure
22 97 99
Pollmans Tours and Safaris
337 234
Phoenix Safaris
020 522254
Primetime Safaris
21 57 73
Private Safaris
554150
Rhino Safaris
2720610
Safari Camp Services
22 89 36
Safaris in Style
387 6127
Safari Seekers Kenya
222290

Saferide Safaris
253129
Savage Wilderness Safaris
0733 793524
Savuka Tours and Safaris
225108
Special Camping Safaris
35 07 20
Somak Travel
53 55 08
Southern Cross Safaris
88 47 12
Sun Trek Safaris
442982
Sunworld Safaris
4445669
Tobs Kenya Golf Safaris
2710825
United Touring Company
24 87 77
Vintage Africa
3742450
Wildlife Safari Kenya
38 71 703
Wild Trek Safaris
249865
Yare Safaris
21 40 99

Kenya Travel Companies

Bunson Travel Service
22 19 92
Flight Centres
21 00 24
Lets go Travel
44 71 51
Muthaiga Travel
3 75 00 36

Kenya Mountains

Mount Elgon National Park

Mount Elgon is the second highest mountain in Kenya and is an extinct volcano. Mount Elgon is in the far west of Kenya on the Ugandan border. The woodland on the south eastern slopes merges into thick mountain forests. In amongst the forest and caves you will find elephant, buffalo and other animals. Kitum cave is famous as the place where elephant herds enter deep into the mountain each night where they excavate salt. It is possible to drive up to 12,000ft and then hike across moorland to Koitoboss Peak. Access to Mt Elgon is from the town of Kitale.

Mount Kenya

Mount Kenya is the sacred mountain of the Gikuyu people. Mount Kenya is the second highest mountain in Africa and can be climbed. The walk is relatively easy but you have to be careful of mountain sickness and time is needed to acclimatize. The actual summit is 5199 metres and is only reachable by climbing. Walkers can reach Point Lenana at 4985 metres and takes between 2 and 5 days. The nearest towns to Mount Kenya are Naro Moru and Nanyuki which is connected by air to Nairobi.

Naro Moru route

The Naro Moru route is the most popular and easiest route. At Naro Moru Lodge (062 62212) all the equipment you need can be hired, porters arranged and accommodation for the mountain sorted. The route starts at Naro Moru and you first have to walk to the met station, a distance of 25km. It is possible to drive as far as the met station at just over 3000m and save time. From here you can walk to Mackinder's Camp in one day. From here is 2 – 4 hours walk to the summit. There are basic huts at Mackinder's and camping is allowed. The danger with doing the climb so quickly is that you may suffer from mountain sickness and a good idea to stay two nights at Mackinder's to acclimatize.

The Sirimon Route

On the north side of Mount Kenya it starts at Timau. There is no ideal base at the start of this route.

The Chogoria Route

The Chogoria Route starts at Chogoria but you will need to camp.

Specialist companies that organise Mount Kenya and other high mountain expeditions are Mountain View Tours (062 62088); KG Mountain Expeditions (062 62403); Sana Highlands Trekking Expeditions (020 277820) and the Naro Moru River Lodge (062 62212)

Mount Longonot

Mount Longonot is 2777m high and rises out of the Rift valley and has a distinct volcanic shape. The name comes from the Maasai word "olonong'ot" which means 'mountain of many spurs'. Whilst dormant the waters just a few thousand metres below the surface are over 300 degrees and one of the hottest on earth. The climb up passes laval fissures and canyons and some game can be seen. The views of the rift Valley are spectacular. Mount Longonot is 60 km north of Nairobi on the old Naivasha – Nairobi road. From the park gate to the summit will take about 6 hours return. There are two campsites at the at the base of the mountain.

Western Highlands

The Western Highlands are around Eldoret which has an international airport. Within the region are a number of other airstrips. The main towns are Kericho, Kitale, Kaptagat and Kabaranet. The highlands are a group of hill and ranges with views across the Rift Valley. The Cherangani Hills rise to 3581 metres and lie northwest to Kapenguria. The hills are popular with more adventurous hikers and long hikes are possible. The Tugen Hills provide views across the rift valley to Lake Baringo. The hills around Kericho are covered in tea estates. Saiwa Swamp National Park allows walking and home of the Sitatunga and semi-amphibious antelope that lives in the swamps. Roads are good in the Western Highlands and buses and matatus connect most towns.

Shimba Hills

Shimba Hills National Reserve is just 50 kms inland from the coast and is an area of open grassland and rainforest. Easy to spot Elephant, Giraffe and Buffalo and if lucky the Roan and Sable antelope. In the forest are found the Black and White Colobus, Red Duiker and Suni Antelope. Access to the Shimba Hills is from Kwale.

Taita and Chyulu Hills

The Taita Hills are part of the Tsavo area and accessed from Taveta. The Chyulu Hills are young volcanic mountains and formed just over 500 years ago. A black lava known as Sheitani is found lining the hills. Home to elephant, cheetah and plains game and Masai villages. In Taveta are the Jipe and Chala lakes.

Kenya Forests

Kenya has a range of forests from tropical to high mountain.

Kakamega Forest

Kakamega is accessed via Kakamega which is reached from Kisumu. An equatorial forest with big trees and wet undergrowth provides a habitat for monkeys and bird life. Nighttime brings out the bats, frogs and forest squirrels. Kakamega has marked walking trails and local guides are available.

Aberdares

The Aberdares are a mountain range in the centre of Kenya not far from Nairobi and accessed from Nyeri or Mweiga. Between the forest is open moorland giving views to Mount Kenya and the Rift Valley. Large herd of buffalo and elephant live in the forest and colobus monkeys thrive in the canopy. Nighttime brings out the hyrax and sounds of the leopard. Within the Aberdares are tracks and trails.

Kenya Lakes

Lake Bogoria

Lake Bogoria is 80 km north of Nakuru. Hot steam geysers and holes with boiling water line the lake shore. At times hundreds of thousands of flamingoes can be seen on the lake shores. Accommodation is available at Lake Bogoria Hotel (051 2216441).

Lake Baringo

Lake Baringo is north of Lake Bogoria and home to hippos and crocodiles. Full of fish making it an ideal habitat for Pelicans and some 400 bird species. Lake Baringo is a possible stopover location if making a trip to the north of Kenya. It is possible to stay on the island of Ol Kokwe at Island Camp Baringo (020 4447151) and take boat trips on the lake.

Lake Challa

A crater lake just north of Taveta in the southern area of Kenya full of crocodiles.

Lake Elmenteita

Home of flamingoes with a strong local history. Good views can be had from the main road to Nakuru. Accommodation is available on the lakeshore at Delamere's Camp and Lake Elmenteita Lodge (051 8508630).

Lake Nakuru

Lake Nakuru lies just south of Nakuru. Forests line the lake shore. The shallow lake encourages microscopic blue algae to thrive and provides food for the flamingo. Huge flocks of flamingo can be seen although the flamingos do move from lake to lake. Lion, Waterbuck and the White Rhino can also be found in the park. Accommodation is available in Nakuru town in the park at Eldorado Lodge or Lake Nakuru Lodge (051 850228) and Saraova Lion Hill Lodge (020 2713333).

Lake Magadi

Lake Magadi is 100km from Nairobi and is a very alkaline lake that covers 100 square kilometers. The concentrated salt makes it look very white and around the lake are a number of hot springs. The southern end of the lake is home to a number of birds.

Lake Naivasha

About one hour north of Nairobi the lake is good for bird life and the lake is home to many hippos. Numerous birds are likely to be seen on a visit. The second largest lake in Kenya and has no outlet which is a fairly unique feature for a lake. Boat trips are available and provide a chance to see hippos and the bird life on the lake. There are a number of lodges and cheaper places to stay along the lakeshore. At the end of the lake is Hell's Gate National Park.

Lake Turkana

Known as the jade sea is the largest lake in Kenya. It is located in the middle of the desert. The lake is rich in fish and crocodiles. A very remote location and home to the Turkana tribe. The lake has been termed "the cradle of mankind" due to the many fossils discovered in the area. The east side of the lake is reached from Maralal and Marsabit and the west from Lodwar. It is advised to visit this area with an organised safari operator.

Lake Victoria

Source of the river Nile and the largest freshwater lake in the world at 67,493 sq kms. Lake Victoria is on the Western border of Kenya. Kisumu lies on the north eastern corner of the lake. Lake Victoria provides a boundary between Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Kisumu is about 350km from Nairobi and takes a full day to reach.

Kenya Restaurants

Kenya offers excellent dining opportunities. The blend of cultures that have existed in Kenya and still do has led to a rich diversity of food. The abundance of seafood, fresh vegetables, fruit and meat provides excellence in raw materials a number of which are exported to Europe.

Nairobi has a large diversity of restaurants and well used by locals and tourists and some having achieved international fame. Most types of cuisine can be found in Nairobi.

Kenyans are great meat eaters and Nyama Choma which is roasted meat is consumed by millions every day in the Choma Joints and cooked over a fire of charcoals. Ugali a porridge of maize is the traditional staple. Vegetarians are well looked after mainly due to the large number of vegetarian Indians who live in Kenya and operate some excellent vegetarian restaurants.

Kenyans enjoy beer and is served warm or cold. Local beers are White Cap, Pilsner and Tusker sold in brown half litre bottles. Guinness is also widely available. Wine is not really produced in Kenya although there is a local vineyard, at Lake Naivasha. South African wine dominates but wines from many other countries are available.

Nairobi Restaurants

Nairobi African Restaurants

Bonhori Bistro, Adams Arcade, Ngong Road
57 06 24

Nyama Choma Ranch, Safari Park Hotel, Casino Thika Road
3 63 30 30

Pool Garden Restaurant, Kenyatta Avenue
2 27 08 22

Jacaranda Hotel, Westlands Way, Westlands
444 87 13

Nairobi Chinese Restaurants

Bangkok Chinese Restaurant, Rank Xerox House. Westlands
75 13 12

China Garden Restaurant, Gigiri
52 11 69

Hong Kong Restaurant, Koinage Street
22 6 12

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Kowloon Garden Chinese Restaurant, Koinage Street
31 88 85

Mister Wok Chinese Restaurant, Capital Centre, Mombassa Road
55 93 76

Panda Chinese Restaurant, Fedha Towers, Muindi Mbingu
21 30 18

RO - RO Chinese Restaurant, The Village Market
52 30 82

Spring Garden Chinese, James Gichuru Road, Lavington
34 85 58

Winner's Pavilion Restaurant, Kasarani, Thika Road
80 24 93

Nairobi French Restaurants
Alan Bobbe's Bistro, Koinange Street
22 49 45

Le Belvedere, Grand Regency Hotel
21 11 99

Le Rustique, General Mathenge Drive, Westlands
375 30 81

Nairobi Indian Restaurants
Anghiti Restaurant, Rhapta Road, Westlands
44 12 58

Bhandini Restaurant, Inter-continental hotel
23 2 00 00 00

Bhatia, General Mathenge Road, Peponi
58 22 97

Chowpaty, Shimmers Plaza, Westlands
44 35 27

Haandi Restaurant, The Mall, Westlands
44 82 94

Open House Restaurant, Mpaka Road, Westlands

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3 74 58 24

Sitar Restaurant, Grand Regency Hotel

21 11 99

Nairobi International Restaurants

Cafe Maghreb, Nairobi Serena Hotel, Kenyatta Avenue

2 82 24 67

Flame Tree Restaurant, Panafric Hotel, Kenyatta Hotel

2 72 08 22

Pavement Club n' Cafe, Ring Road, Westlands

4 44 17 11

Tamambo, The Mall, Westlands

4 44 80 64

The Ibis Restaurant, Norfolk Hotel

25 09 00

The Lord Delamere Restaurant, Norfolk Hotel

25 09 00

The Moonflower Restaurant ,Palacina Residential Hotel, Dennis Pritt Road

2 71 55 17

The Terrace, Hotel Intercontinental

3 20 00 00

Zen Restaurant, The Stanley Hotel

33 32 33

Nairobi Italian Restaurants

La Salumeria Restaurant, Dhanjay Apartments, Gitanga Road

57 52 26

Mediterranean Ristorante, Pamstech House, Woodvale Grove

44 74 94

La Piazzetta, Safari Park Hotel, Thika Road

3 63 30 00

La Prugna Doro, Hotel Intercontinental

32 00 00 00

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Osteria Del Chianti, Lenana Road
2 72 31 73

Pizza Garden, Jacaranda Hotel, Westlands
4 44 87 13

Roberto's Restaurant, Grand Regency Hotel
21 11 99

Ristorante Il Casale, Mpaka Road, Westlands
44 08 92

Taverna Restaurant, Woodvale Grove
44 52 34

Trattoria, Kaunda Street
34 08 55

Nairobi Japanese Restaurants

Chiyo, Safari Park Hotel
89 24 93

Furusato Japanese Restaurant, Karuna Road
44 70 89

Misono Restaurant, Lenana Road
56 89 59

Tokyo Restaurant, Rhapta Road, Westlands
44 46 51

Nairobi Seafood Restaurants

Tamarind, National Bank Building
33 89 59

Nairobi Thai Restaurants

Thai Cuisine, Village Market
52 03 81

Nairobi Theme Restaurants

Carnivore, off Langata Road
60 59 33

Mombassa Restaurants

Mombassa Chinese Restaurants

Galaxy Chinese Restaurant, Archbishop Makarios Road
041 31 12 56

Hong Kong, Malindi Road

041 5 48 54 22

Mombassa Indian Restaurants

Bollywood Bites, Main Nyali Road
041 47 00 00

Haveli, Mombassa Road

041 65 19 33

Maharajah Restaurant, Mombassa - Malindi Road

041 5 48 58 95

Shehnai Restaurant, Fatemi House, Maungano Street

041 31 24 92

Mombassa International Restaurants

Kisima Restaurant, Nyali Beach Hotel
041 48 50 05

Jahazi Marine, Mombassa

041 54 8 50 01

Pavilion Restaurant, Whitesands Hotel

041 5 48 59 11

Mombassa Italian Restaurants

Claudio Italian Restaurant, Mombassa - Malindi Road
041 5 48 52 08

Minazi Trattoria Pizzeria, Whitesands Hotel

041 5 48 59 11

Mombassa Seafood Restaurants

Lido, Whitesands Hotel

041 5 48 59 11

Tamarind, Nyali

041 47 46 00

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Malindi Restaurants

Baby Marrow
0733 542584

La Malindina
042 20045

Lorenzo's Restaurant
042 31758

Diani Restaurants

Ali Barbour's Cave Restaurant
040 3202033

Kenya Shopping

Expect to bargain as everything is marked up for tourists. For serious bargains go to the City Market in Nairobi. Biashara Street in Nairobi is good for fabric shops. Karen has a selection unique items from all over Kenya.

There are big malls are at Westlands "The Sarit Centre"; the "Village Market" near the UN complex and "Yaya Centre" in Hurlingham. A recent addition to Nairobi shopping is the "The Junction" which features designer boutiques and found on Ngong Road. The main city market is on Koinage Street.

Kenyan products include traditional artefacts, jewelry, coffee, cloth and art. Baskets are always popular and they vary in design throughout Kenya. The carvings you see use different styles around Kenya. Lamu is famous for furniture carving. Wood carvings of animals are found in Wakamba in the Eastern part of the country. The dark ebony carvings called Makonde were traditionally coastal products but now produced in many locations. The stone carvings are from Western Kenya. Well known is the beaded jewellery produced by the Maasai. Drums are also a popular buy.

Book Shops

Looking for Kenya guide books and Kenya souvenir books then try Book Villa on Standard Street; Text Book Centre in the Sarit Mall in Westlands or Bookstop on the top floor of the Yaya Centre in Hurlingham. Magazines are found everywhere and you can support street vendors by buying the Economist direct form vendors on the street.

House of Treasures

Collections from Bali, Sri Lanka, India at 70 Dagoretti Road, Karen (020 8883224).

Kazuri Beads and Pottery

Beads and pottery made and designed by local women as an employment creating project. Retail outlets are in the Village Market and in Viking house in Westlands. The factory and shop is in Karen.

Kitengela Hot Glass Limited

Studio is on the Magadi Road at Kitengela uses recycled glass to produce a full range of glass ware (045 24181)

Kerongerlou Workshops

Candles and rustic furniture displayed a 10 Langata South Road (020 891331)

Maasai Markets

The Maasai Market is held every Tuesday near the roundabout on Murang'a Road and Kijabe Street in Nairobi. On Fridays the Maasai market is held at the Village Market shopping mall and on Sundays at the Safari Park Hotel on the Thika Road. Prices are good if you bargain hard and the selection of jewellery, baskets, carving and other artefacts is excellent.

Matbronze Wildlife Art

Bronze sculptures made using the "lost wax" process. The foundry and gallery is on Langata South Road (020 891251)

Nairobi City Market

The City Market is at Muindi Mbingu Street has drums, carvings, jewellery. Do bargain hard and expect a crowded area and watch your pockets.

Nairobi Post Office

The main post office is in Kenyatta Avenue close to Uhuru Park.

Sandstorm Africa

Leather and canvas bags made by local craftsmen using camel and calf hide with a strong Kenyan style located at Lenana Forest Centre on the Ngong Road (020 567568).

The African Art Shoppe

Located in the Nairobi Hilton Arcade and collection of carvings, antiques, fabrics, furniture, paintings and more. (020 222074)

Triangle Curios Market, Nairobi

A group of stalls in Westlands with a good range of artefacts where good bargains can be found.

Kenya Language

English is widely spoken and no language will be experience. However a few words of Swahili will be welcomed if you use them.

Greetings

Hello - Jambo

How are you? - Habari

OK/fine - Mzuri

Very well - Mzuri sana

Goodbye - Kwahere

Useful words

Yes - Ndiyo

No - Hapana

Good – Mzuri

Guard – Askari

White person - Mzungu

Please - Tafadali

Thank you- Asante sana

Water - Maji

Ice - Barafu

Cold - Baridi

Tea - Chai

Coffee - Kahawa

Milk - Maziwa

Meat - Nyama

Lion - Simba

Buffalo - Nyati

Elephant - Tembo

Rhino - Kifaro

Leopard - Chui

Giraffe - Twiga

Hippo - Kiboko

Antelope - Swala

Numbers

One - moja

Two - mbili

Three - tatu

Four - nne

Five - tano

Six - sita

Seven - saba

Eight - nane

Nine - tisa

Ten – tisa

