

**Top 10 Reasons**

to Visit Kenya  
in 2026

**Why Nairobi**

**Is Africa's**  
Bleisure Hub

**Stride for Stride:**

Training Sports  
Champions



*Magical Kenya*

THE ORIGIN OF WONDER



# Jambo!

KARIBU KENYA PARKS



**EXPLORE • EXPERIENCE • CONSERVE**



# EDITOR'S NOTE

There are moments, like when the sun is setting, that Kenya seems to float between different worlds. The light softens, the air holds its breath, and everything — from the jacaranda blossoms on some Nairobi streets to the herds roaming the Mara — glows a little brighter. It's in these small, luminous pauses that Kenya reveals its true magic. And it feels fitting that our first 2026 edition arrives in such a season.

Last year has reminded us that Kenya is a destination that constantly reinvents itself without ever losing its soul. Wellness hideaways have sprung up along the coast like little sanctuaries — places where mornings begin with sun salutations and evenings melt into candlelit Swahili massages. Up north, stargazing has taken on an almost spiritual dimension. Standing beneath the Turkana sky, guided by elders who understand the constellations as family, you realise how ancient this land's relationship with the universe truly is. We've seen conservationists quietly rewriting the leopard's future. We've followed birders through forests, lakeshores, and savannahs as they chased some of Kenya's 1,100+ species — each sighting a tiny triumph. We've wandered through tea and coffee estates where farmers are blending experiences that blur the line between agriculture and storytelling.

This issue is a tribute to the grand, the intimate, the unexpected. It's a reminder that Kenya is a place that seeps into you. It lingers in the scent of coastal spices, in the crunch of volcanic soil beneath your feet, in the easy warmth of strangers who become guides, then friends.

If travel teaches us anything, it's to stay curious. Kenya rewards curiosity more than most destinations. Wander a little further, pause a little longer, and the country opens up — its wildlife, its cultures, its landscapes, its flavours — each a doorway to a deeper story.

***Here's to Kenya's magic. And here's to wherever it takes you next.***

**— Adonijah Ndege**

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# A Welcome Message



**Hon. Rebecca Miano, EGH,**  
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Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife

Kenya's Heritage of Champions



**A**s we continue welcoming the sunrise of 2026, I take great pleasure in presenting this edition of the Destination Magazine, which aptly captures the leitmotif that distinguishes Kenya as special port of call.

Admittedly, at the heart of Kenya's story is her living heritage. To begin with, Kenya is touted as the cradle of mankind. It is right here in Kenya where the thunder of the Great Migration happens as millions of wildebeest cross the Mara. That very heritage is visible in the quiet authority of elephants ambling majestically across open plains. In this origin of Magic and Wonder one encounters the soul of our country that manifests best in the resolve of the men and women who protect our heritage, oftentimes at significant personal risk.

No wonder notable dividends have been realised in our conservation circles in the recent past. For instance, Kenya's elephant population has grown to over 36,000 after decades of decline. Meanwhile, Black rhinos, once endangered, more than doubled to over 1,000



Lake Nakuru Flamingos

by 2024 from fewer than 400 in 1990. This progress is a result of sustained investment in ranger training, innovative use of technology, enhanced enforcement, and communities that live side by side with wildlife.

Meanwhile, an estimated 65% of Kenya's wildlife lives outside protected areas such as parks and reserves. This reality has illuminated a defining shift in the ideology of the management of our wildlife making our conservancies an integral part of our overall conservation strategy. Today, over 230 community and private conservancies occupy nine million hectares of land, protecting our wildlife and supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans.

The National Wildlife Census of 2024-2025, backed by Ksh 300 million, has yielded a comprehensive picture of our wildlife populations. Together with the National Human-Wildlife Coexistence Strategy and Action Plan, it reflects a com-

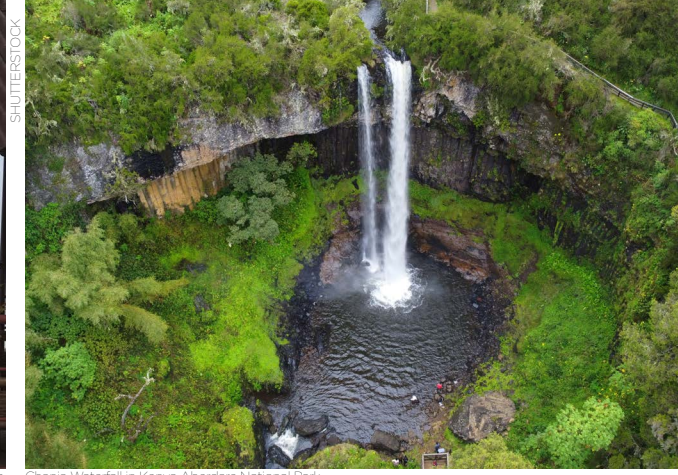


**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
AND WILDLIFE**





Port Pier to Victorian Lake



Chania Waterfall in Kenya Aberdare National Park



Turtle beach, Watamu, Kenya



Cloudy View of Mount Kenya



Nakuru national park, black rhino, *Diceros bicornis*



Elephants and sunset in the Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Park in Kenya

mitment to policies grounded in evidence and policies through which nature is protected while recognising the economic realities of the people who live alongside it.

As global tourism trends evolve, it is apparent that today's travellers want more immersive experiences. They want to learn, participate, taste, walk, listen, and connect. This shift matters to Kenya because experience-driven tourism encourages people to prolong their stays, venture beyond popular destinations, and engage more with locals. This helps spread tourism benefits to new regions while appealing more to younger travellers.

Technology has, in the meantime played a key role in the transformation tourism has experienced lately.

Kenya's ranking as fourth in Africa for digital tourism innovation at the 26th UN Tourism General Assembly in Riyadh was a significant milestone. Aside from that recognition, we have introduced the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system, digital marketing tools that travellers can access wherever they are, and platforms that make planning and booking easier. These technology add-ons are expected to power our ambitious plan to welcome over five million international visitors by 2027.

To encourage the spirit of exploration, Kenya is introducing the Destination Souvenir Passport. The idea here is to reward curiosity, encourage repeat visits, and turn travel into a discovery mission rather than passive

sightseeing. It is especially relevant for domestic and regional travellers, who are increasingly central to the sector's growth.

Equally important is ensuring that Kenyans themselves remain at the heart of tourism. The "Hapa ni Wapi" campaign under Tembea Kenya is a call for citizens to rediscover their own country as they travel, explore, and take pride in our shared heritage. A strong domestic tourism base creates year round demand and provides stability when global travel faces disruptions.

Investing in infrastructure makes travel possible and therefore road networks such as the Rironi-Mau Summit transport vein are meant to open up Western Kenya and the Rift Valley. Once operational travel times and road hazards will be reduced dramatically over and above unlocking new tourism and economic opportunities. In aviation, JKIA is undergoing modernisation to expand its passenger and cargo handling capacities. Upgrades of several domestic airstrips will also improve connectivity and strengthen the country's position as a regional hub.

So, this is our invitation to you! Come and experience our Magic and Wonder and discover why Kenya remains Africa's most alluring destination.

**“Our elephant population has grown to over 36,000, marking steady increases after decades of decline.”**

Opening  
word

# Beyond Known Roads



**John Olottuaa,**  
Principal Secretary,  
State Department for  
Tourism.

**T**here is a point on the road past Isiolo where your playlists suddenly feel unnecessary. The landscape opens up wide, the air thins, and everything - your thoughts, the traffic, the noise - falls away. Northern Kenya does that to you. It is the part of the country that does not rush to impress. It waits. Quietly. Patiently. And when it does reveal itself, it does so on its own terms.

## Lake Turkana

I have been to Lake Turkana a few times now, and each trip still feels like I am approaching the edge of the map. The lake appears slowly, almost reluctantly, as if someone lifted a curtain to reveal this long, shimmering strip of green-blue water tucked into a desert of black volcanic rock.

Turkana light is something else - harsh at noon, soft and peachy at dusk. People talk about the archaeological significance, the fossils, and the “cradle of mankind.” But standing there, with the wind blowing against your clothes and that vast water stretching up to Kenya’s border with Ethiopia, nothing feels academic. It just feels ancient in a way that is hard to articulate without sounding dramatic.



ISTOCK

Lake Turkana



The Chalbi Desert

## The Chalbi Desert

The Chalbi Desert is not a place you “see.” It is a place you feel in your bones. The heat hits you differently. The silence is heavier. The landscape looks flat until suddenly it doesn’t - a ripple of dunes, a salt crust that reflects the sky, a camel caravan that seems to appear out of nowhere.

The most memorable moment I had there was sitting under a small patch of shade with a family who insisted I join them for a chat. No rush. No schedule. No “experience.” Just a calm afternoon in the middle of what felt like the world’s quietest room. It reminded me that travel isn’t always about the views - sometimes it’s about being still long enough for a place to let you in.



Baby elephant at the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary Kenya

## Reteti

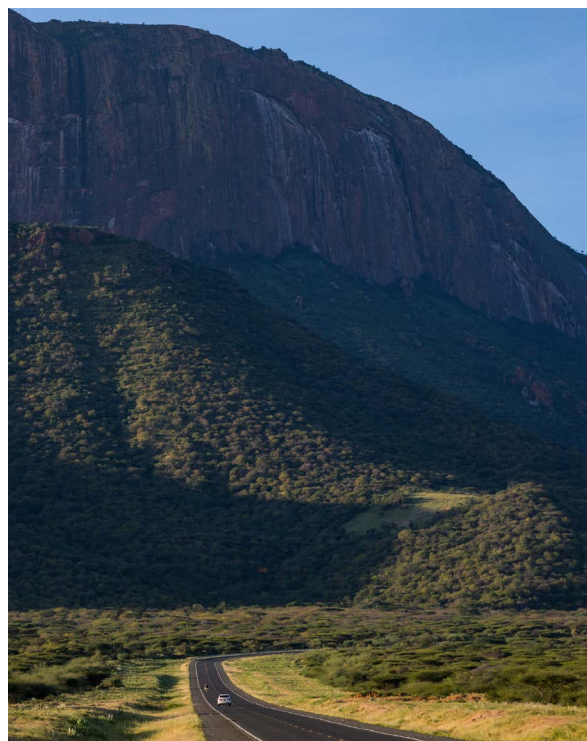
Reteti is not dramatic. It is tender. The first time I visited, I expected a lot of noise from elephants trumpeting and people bustling. But what struck me most was how gentle everything felt. Keepers move with practised ease, whereas small elephants lean into them the way children do with people they trust.

You don’t leave Reteti thinking about conservation “as a concept.” You leave thinking about the names of the keepers, the stories of the calves, the way a bottle of milk tilted at just the right angle can mean survival. It is one of the rare places where you actually see what community-led conservation looks like in real life.

## Marsabit

Marsabit doesn’t announce itself. You climb and climb, and suddenly the temperature drops and the earth turns green again. It feels almost strange after all that desert.

The town is its own little universe - different cultures brushing past one another with the ease of people who have shared space for generations. Borana herders, Rendille women in bright wraps, Samburu boys leading goats through the market. It is not curated for visitors, and that is precisely the charm. You walk, you talk to people, you drink tea, and slowly the place begins to make sense.



ISTOCK

Mount Ololokwe, also known as Ol Doinyo Sabache, Marsabit

## Why do I keep going back?

Northern Kenya is not for everyone. It is remote, the days are long, and the landscapes can feel severe if you are used to softer scenery. But it is one of the few places in the world that forces you to slow down - really slow down - until you start noticing small things again: the colour of the dust at sunrise, the way the wind shifts before a storm, the openness of people who live far from everything yet somehow more connected to it all.

Every time I leave, I tell myself I will return when life gets too noisy. And every time I do, the north has a way of reminding me why Kenya still feels endlessly surprising - even to those of us who call it home.

# Kenya at a Glance



## Where to walk

**Masai Mara Conservancies** For that classic Mara beauty without the crowds—big skies, Maasai guides with stories for days, and wildlife encounters that feel intimate rather than staged.

**Laikipia Plateau** A rugged, expansive playground of rocky outcrops, rare species, and innovative conservation work. This is where walking feels like true exploration.

**Amboseli Conservancies** Think elephants, acacia woodlands, and the ever-present silhouette of Kilimanjaro.

**Hell's Gate National Park** A place where you can hike, wander through volcanic gorges, and get eye-level with zebra and eland—no vehicle needed.

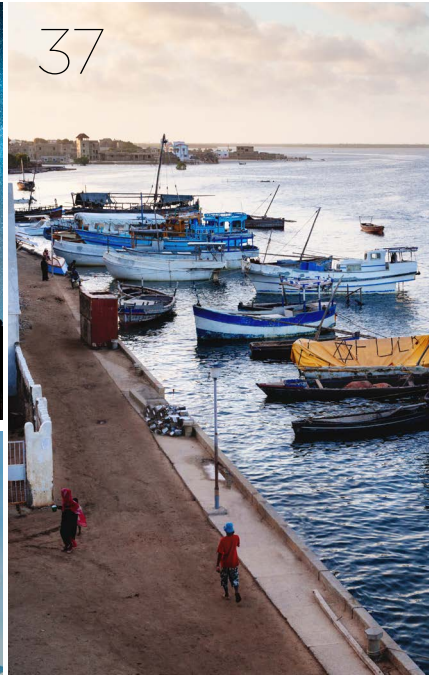
**Samburu Conservancies** For lovers of the unusual and the beautiful. The Samburu Special Five alone are worth the journey, but it's the light—that warm, coppery northern light—that stays with you



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# Experience the Magic, Embrace the Future



**“Travellers today want more than a safari: they are looking for experiences that spark curiosity.”**

**June Chepkemei,**  
CEO,  
Kenya Tourism Board

Looking back on 2025, I feel profound pride in what our tourism industry has accomplished, coupled with an even stronger sense of excitement for what is yet to come. This year has been about imagining new possibilities, turning challenges into opportunities, and showing the world the magic that makes Kenya unlike any other destination.

Building on the record 2.4 million arrivals and Ksh 452 billion earned in 2024, we remain firmly on course to reach 3 million visitors by year-end, targeting potential tourism revenue of Ksh 560 billion. The momentum is driven by strong performance in both our traditional and emerging markets, as well as

remarkable growth in our vibrant domestic tourism.

The Africa Tourism Awards 2025 in London were a defining moment for the country. Kenya won multiple honours, with the Kenya Tourism Board crowned the Best Tourism Board in Africa and the Maasai Mara recognised as the Best Safari Destination.

Other commendations included Best Tourism Video (“This is the Real Deal”), Best Country Destination, Best City Destination for Nairobi, and Best International Airport for Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. These accolades were a signal that our story of authentic experiences, breathtaking landscapes, and the cutting-edge infrastructure that opens our wonders to the world resonates globally.

The year has been transformative across different fronts, in particular, air connectivity. The entry and return of several long-haul carriers, including Salam Air, Gulf Air, TAAG Angola Airlines, Flynas, Flydubai, and Turkish Airlines, represent an explicit endorsement of confidence in our destination and open exciting new gateways for inbound tourism.

Matching this momentum, the hospitality sector has delivered impressive expansions and upgrades, while strategic investments in supporting infrastructure continue to raise our overall product offering.

Crucially, our partnerships with key stakeholders have strengthened significantly. KTB has been engaging county governments, private sector players, and community-based organisations to

ensure tourism benefits reach the grassroots level while preserving the authenticity of our experiences.

Diversification has been at the heart of the Kenya Tourism Board’s 2025 strategy. Travellers today want more than a safari; they are looking for experiences that spark curiosity. They want to run a marathon in the Kenyan savannah, attend a music festival in Nairobi, or restore body and mind through wellness journeys cradled in Kenya’s extraordinary natural surroundings.

Sports tourism, cultural festivals, adventure trails, Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE), wellness retreats, and now astro-tourism have all become part of Kenya’s offerings. These experiences enable us to engage visitors year-round, offering something unique at every turn.

As the global shift toward sustainable travel accelerates, we have made responsible tourism the bedrock of Kenya’s growth. Central to this commitment is the “One Tourist, One Tree” initiative - directly tying visitors to reforestation - reinforced by eco-certified accommodation and community-led conservation protecting our heritage for tomorrow.

As we move into 2026, our focus will be on deepening what works and exploring what’s possible. We are expanding the Magical Kenya Signature Experiences (MKSE), enhancing our infrastructure, connectivity, and accessibility, forging strategic partnerships, and integrating sustainability at the core of tourism growth.

2025 was a year of bold steps, creativity, and collaboration. Kenya has shown that it is ready to lead, not just compete. This magazine is an invitation to turn the page and step into that magic - to meet the people, live the stories, and collect the experiences that make every visit to Kenya truly unforgettable.

Faith Kipyegon in Diani



# Top 10 Reasons to Visit Kenya in 2026



By Benson Oguda

Kenya has long captured our imaginations with sweeping savannahs, majestic wildlife, and unforgettable sunsets. But in 2026, the country feels like it's stepping into a new era—one defined not just by its natural beauty, but by thoughtful transformation. From conservation-led lodges to community-owned conservancies and a rapidly modernising capital, Kenya is emerging as a destination with depth, purpose, and heart.

Photo by Kyle Vollmers.



Electric vehicles are charged on solar power at Emboo Safari camp.

## 1. Travel that gives back

Across Kenya—in the Mara, Laikipia, Samburu, and beyond—a growing number of camps are leading with regenerative tourism. These aren't your usual eco-lodges. Think solar-powered camps, electric safari vehicles, and deep partnerships with local communities. Visitors don't just come to see wildlife—they help protect it. Whether by planting trees, supporting conservation projects, or learning from local rangers, your safari becomes part of a bigger, more meaningful story.

## 2. The Nairobi vibe

In 2026, Nairobi feels more like a destination than a gateway. The city's creative pulse has sharpened: boutique hotels, new galleries, farm-to-table restaurants, and street-style cafés are reshaping its cultural landscape. Walkable districts like Ngara are emerging as hubs for art, music, and food—a refreshing contrast to the traditional safari, but just as compelling.

## 3. The great migration, but with breathing space



The great wildebeest migration remains one of Kenya's greatest draws. Yet, if the Mara Reserve feels too crowded, consider the private conservancies and luxury camps that surround it. These areas offer the same jaw-dropping wildlife action—river crossings, predator tracking, quiet plains—but with fewer vehicles and a more thoughtful, low-impact approach.

## 4. Coast: Sun, sand, and culture

In places like Diani, Lamu, and Watamu, boutique beach lodges are blending traditional Swahili charm with contemporary comfort. Think dhow cruises at sunset, cooking classes in seaside villages, and laid-back cafés serving coastal cuisine. These are not just beach holidays—they are slow, soulful moments by the Indian Ocean.



Faith Kibegon in Diani

## 5. Conservation in motion

In Laikipia, Lewa, and Ol Pejeta, conservation isn't just a side project—it's the core business. These conservancies provide sanctuary for endangered species (like black rhinos), while investing in education, ranger programs, and local economies. Travellers can meet those making a difference—from wildlife scouts to community leaders—and understand how tourism is helping rather than harming.



A Black Rhino at Ol Pejeta Conservancy



## 6. Iconic landscapes, close up

Amboseli's elephants trailing below Mount Kilimanjaro—it's a scene photographers dream of. But 2026 brings a new twist: eco-focused camps, longer walking trails, and immersive nature experiences that let you explore responsibly and intimately.



## 7. Off the beaten path

Head north, and Kenya opens into raw, dramatic terrain. Kayak on Lake Turkana, walk with local guides through the Chalbi Desert, or explore community-led conservation landscapes in remote regions. It's a trip for travellers who want their Kenya wild and unscripted.

## 8. Food that feels local

Kenyan food is evolving fast. Chefs are elevating local ingredients—whether it's seafood from the coast, vegetables from the highlands, or spices from the Swahili coast—into something fresh, creative, and delicious. Whether it's a gourmet dinner in Nairobi or a simple beachside curry, the food feels rooted in place and culture.



SHUTTERSTOCK

## 9. Real cultural encounters



Kenya's diverse communities are redefining how travellers connect. You can learn beadwork from Maa-sai artisans, support women-led partnerships in Samburu, or join storytelling sessions in rural conservancies. These aren't performances. These are real conversations with real people, and they are powerful.

## 10. The Kenyan spirit, alive and welcoming

The best reason to travel to Kenya in 2026 is its spirit. The warmth of its people, the generosity of its landscapes, and the quiet optimism of its future—it all adds up. Whether you're on a family safari, a romantic getaway, or a solo adventure, Kenya still has that rare quality: it makes you feel like you belong.





# Wellness & Regeneration

# Why Kenya is the Next Best Wellness Destination

By Sameha Mursal

**O**n most mornings along the coastal resorts, long before the beach chairs fill and the sun claims its full heat, small groups gather on wooden decks overlooking the Indian Ocean. Instructors raise their hands toward the rising light, and for a moment, the only sound is that of the tides. It's not the Kenya most travellers imagine—no safari vehicles, no dust trails, no lions lounging theatrically under acacia trees.

This Kenya is softer, slower, and increasingly sought-after: a country discovering its place in the global wellness travel boom.

Wellness tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of global travel, and Kenya—long known for big skies and big game—is quietly transforming itself into an East African haven for spa lovers, yoga devotees, digital detoxers, and anyone craving a break from the frenetic pace of modern life. And the shift is visible from the coast to the inland.

## The coast is learning to breathe again

If the national parks give Kenya its drama, the coastline may give it its soul. And nowhere is the country's wellness awakening more evident than in Watamu, Malindi, Diani, and Lamu, where boutique hotels and retreats have embraced a more

mindful aesthetic: fewer cocktails by the pool, more cool aloe compresses after an ocean-view massage.

The coastline's new crop of eco-chic lodges offers sunrise yoga platforms, some suspended above mangrove forests, open-air treatment rooms that smell faintly of frangipani, and healing therapies that borrow from both Swahili herbal traditions and modern spa science. In Diani, resorts have expanded their spa menus beyond the standard Swedish massage to include sea-salt scrubs, coconut body polishes, and coastal detox rituals inspired by local plant lore.

And then there is Lamu—timeless, car-free and so unhurried it should come with a warning label for stressed travellers. The island has become Kenya's unofficial yoga capital. All through the year, hundreds gather for Lamu Yoga Festival, spreading their mats across rooftops, dhow decks, and sandy courtyards scented with jasmine. It's calm by design—an invitation to adopt the island's slow life, if only for a few days.

## Wellness moves inland

While the coast may have led the charge, Kenya's wellness renaissance has also arrived inland—and with it, a charming mash-up of safari and serenity.

At the foot of Mount Kenya, a new wave of lodges is blending wilder-



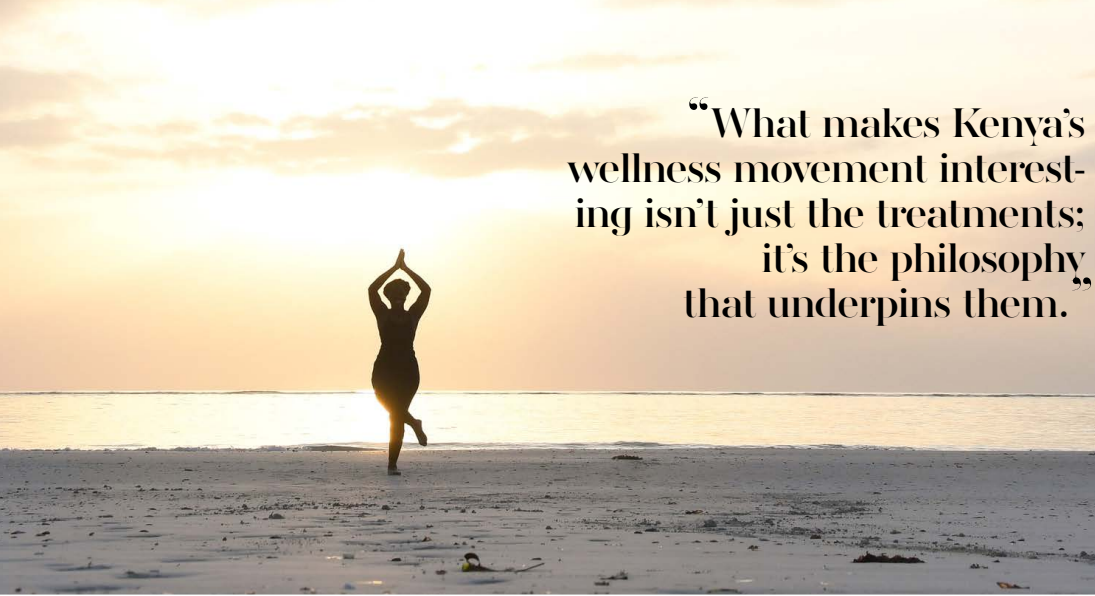
“Wellness tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of global travel.”

ness escapes with wellness philosophies. Picture deep-tissue massages after long bush walks, forest bathing among ancient cedars, and evenings spent in wood-fired saunas with views of elephants grazing in the distance.

A few highland retreats now offer nutrition-led wellness programmes, farm-to-table menus, guided meditation, cold-water immersion, and sleep-performance therapies to rival some European wellness hotels.

The Rift Valley is getting in on the trend, too. Around Naivasha and Nakuru, small boutique stays have launched weekend yoga retreats, mindfulness workshops, plant-based detox menus, and lakefront spa therapies that pair serenity with

“What makes Kenya’s wellness movement interesting isn’t just the treatments; it’s the philosophy that underpins them.”



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

spectacular birdlife. For Nairobians, these quick escapes have become the new away-day: light packing, heavy exhaling.

### Kenyan wellness ethos

What makes Kenya’s wellness movement interesting isn’t just the treatments; it’s the philosophy that underpins them.

Local therapists are weaving African botanicals — moringa, baobab, shea, coastal coconut oils — into treatments. Traditional healers influence herb-based therapies, and Swahili wellness rituals are being revived for a new generation of travellers. Even the retreats themselves reflect a distinctly Kenyan ethic: simple luxury, open horizons,

and a sense that nature is the real therapy.

Many wellness resorts operate as eco-lodges, blending sustainability with serenity: solar-powered spas, plastic-free stays, rainwater-fed plunge pools, and architecture that folds into the landscape rather than claiming it.

### Digital detox

If there is a universal truth about modern travel, it’s that people are tired—tired of screens, tired of noise, tired of doing too much. Kenyan wellness retreats have leaned into that fatigue with the kind of gentle assertiveness only a retreat can muster.

Some coastal yoga camps now

advertise “no Wi-Fi during sessions”—a simple line that feels surprisingly radical. Others encourage barefoot walking meditations along the tide line. A few offers structured digital detox programmes, prying travellers from their devices and steering them back into their bodies. And in a country where starlight is still visible, sleep retreats have become a quiet but steady draw.

The surge in wellness tourism has also brought a new type of visitor. They are not here for the Big Five checklist or whirlwind itineraries. They’re looking for the soft stuff: rest, awareness, nourishment, and personal rebooting.

Kenya—youthful, creative, and endlessly scenic—is discovering it can offer all of that without reinventing itself. The landscapes already soothe. The culture already prioritises warmth and hospitality. The spas and retreats shape the calm into something travellers can check into.

### Where to go

**Malindi & Watamu:** Yoga retreats, Ayurvedic therapies, and ocean-based healing rituals in one of Kenya’s most tranquil coastal settings.

**Diani:** Upscale beachfront resorts with expansive spas, beauty therapies, and bespoke wellness programmes.

**Lamu:** The country’s bohemian wellness hub—rooftop yoga, slow days, and a festival that turns the entire island into a giant outdoor studio.

**Mount Kenya & Laikipia:** Safari-meets-serenity lodges offering saunas, forest bathing, meditation trails, and nutritional programmes.

**Rift Valley (Naivasha & Nakuru):** Intimate retreats ideal for weekend resets, featuring mindfulness workshops and lakeside spa days.

## Wellness & Regeneration

By Cynthia Kanyali

Kenya has long held a magnetic pull on travelers — a country where lush green savannahs roll into distant horizons, mountains cut sharp silhouettes against the sky, and wildlife still roams with a sense of ancient rhythm. It's no surprise that millions of visitors, both local and international, arrive each year to experience its landscapes and cultures. Tourism isn't just an economic pillar here; it's woven into the country's identity.

But as the world shifts toward sustainability, resilience, and regeneration, the Kenyan safari is undergoing its own quiet transformation. A new movement— regenerative tourism— is reshaping how we travel through the wild. Instead of simply protecting what exists, it aims to restore it. This is travel that gives back more than it takes.

Across Kenya, you can already see it: solar-lit bush camps, community-run conservancies, rewilding projects, and safari itineraries that let travelers directly support conservation or off set their carbon footprint. Visitors aren't just observing nature anymore— they're becoming part of its healing.

And in a time when climate change is accelerating biodiversity loss, this shift isn't just innovative — it's urgent.

### A shift beyond sustainability

Kenya's tourism operators have been forced to rethink their approach as erratic rainfall, dwindling water sources, and shifting wildlife migration patterns become part of daily reality. Sustainability— doing "less harm"— is no longer enough.

Regenerative tourism goes a step further. Its goal is to leave places healthier than we found them, and to ensure local communities benefit just as much as the landscapes do.

# Healing the Kenyan Wild

This philosophy aligns naturally with Kenya's pastoralist traditions. For centuries, the Maasai, Samburu, and Borana have stewarded their lands with a deep understanding of wildlife patterns, grazing cycles, and seasonal change. Today, their knowledge forms the foundation of Kenya's regenerative tourism movement.

### Harnessing the african sun

Being almost on the equator, Kenya has no shortage of sunshine, and eco-lodges are turning it into a powerful tool for conservation.

In the Maasai Mara, Amboseli, Laikipia, Tsavo, and Samburu, solar farms now sit quietly beside tented suites and rustic-chic lodges. Solar power lights rooms, chills drinks, pumps water, charges cameras, and even runs eco-friendly cooling systems. Crucially, it replaces diesel generators, which once filled the bush with noise and fumes.

The shift does more than lower emissions. Quieter camps mean wildlife can move naturally across the land. Clean air keeps both animals and guests healthier. And fewer fuel

**“As the world shifts toward sustainability, resilience, and regeneration, the Kenyan safari is undergoing its own quiet transformation.”**

deliveries reduce the footprint of tourism in remote wilderness areas. Some lodges now operate entirely off the grid, pairing solar systems with rainwater harvesting, gravity-fed showers, and low-impact architecture that blends seamlessly into the landscape.

### Where luxury meets low impact

Kenya's pioneering eco-camps have redefined what luxury can look like in the wild. Think canvas suites with plush bedding, outdoor lounges framed by acacia trees, biodegradable toiletries in the bathrooms, and not a single plastic bottle in sight.

Many camps compost organic waste for community farms, recycle grey water to nurture native plants,





PHOTO BACKDROP\_PRODUCTION

and source produce from nearby smallholders to cut transport emissions. Others support research projects, train local guides, or invite guests to participate in conservation activities— from tracking lions to planting trees.

This blend of comfort and conscience is shaping a new kind of safari: deeply indulgent yet intentionally light on the land.

### Rewilding through tourism

Some lodges have gone further, using tourism dollars to fund habitat restoration—planting indigenous trees, clearing invasive species, restoring riverbanks, or managing grazing to revive degraded grasslands.

The result? Mini-conservancies that slowly knit ecosystems back together. And yes, all without compromising the safari experience. On the contrary, these efforts often make the wildlife viewing richer.

At night, guests unwind on open-air decks under star-filled skies or dip into solar-powered plunge pools. Bush spas use organic, lo-

Emboo's Solar System provides power 24/7 to the lodge and all the electric vehicles.

cally sourced products. Luxury here feels softer, more grounded—less about excess and more about harmony.

### Every journey counts

With travellers increasingly conscious of their environmental impact, carbon-off set programs are becoming standard in Kenya's safari world. A long-haul flight may leave a hefty carbon footprint, but off setting channels funds into projects that actively heal the planet.

In Kenya, these efforts include re-foresting water catchment areas, restoring mangroves along the coast, regenerating overgrazed rangelands, supporting clean cookstove initiatives, and protecting wildlife habitats that naturally store vast amounts of carbon.

Choosing an offset package means your journey directly supports the landscapes you came to see.

### The heart of regeneration

Regenerative tourism in Kenya is closely linked to community-owned

“As travellers seek meaningful, responsible adventures, regenerative tourism offers a hopeful and inspiring path forward.”

and co-managed conservancies.

These areas—designated by local pastoralists—serve as important wildlife corridors, buffer zones, and grazing lands. Visitors to camps in these conservancies help fund a number of programs, including wildlife protection and anti-poaching efforts, educational and scholarship initiatives, livelihoods of those involved in bead-making, farming, and guiding. Funding also goes towards setting up health clinics and water projects, as well as sustainable grazing plans that restore degraded land

This model has resulted in one of Africa's most successful conservation stories, with wildlife populations rising in regions where communities and tourism collaborate.

Here, endangered species like rhinos, cheetahs, and African wild dogs thrive, thanks to tourism dollars supporting the communities that protect them.

### The future is regenerative

Kenya is more than just a famous safari destination; it is becoming a model for climate resilience, cultural preservation, and ecological restoration.

As travellers seek meaningful, responsible adventures, regenerative tourism offers a hopeful and inspiring path forward.

The changes are evident everywhere: lodges powered by solar energy, forests thriving through community care, wildlife flourishing in restored grasslands, and visitors leaving behind not footprints, but thriving ecosystems.

This isn't tourism that merely maintains; it's tourism that transforms. And Kenya is leading the way.

Emboo's  
swimming  
pool



PHOTO SVENJA KRUGER, STORIESMATTER

# Kenya's Bet on a Tourism That Gives Back

PHOTO TOBIN\_SPARLING



Each River Suite has a lounge area, perfect for watching nature all around you.

## Blending luxury and restoration

Take Emboo River Camp in the Maasai Mara. It's small—just eight rooms—but it's one of the most ambitious lodges in the region. The camp runs a fully electric safari fleet, the first of its kind in the Mara, powered entirely by solar. Drives are silent, clean, and oddly calming. You don't realise how much rumbling diesel shapes a safari until it's gone.

The sustainability blueprint runs through everything: no single-use plastics, all wastewater recycled, power generated on-site, and green building techniques used throughout. Their kitchen is vegan-first and leans heavily on fresh produce from their own organic garden. Many of the guides are Maasai women, something still far too rare in the industry. The result is an experience that feels both grounded and genuinely forward-looking.

Angama—whether the famous Mara property high on the escarpment or their newer Amboseli lodge—takes a similar approach. Solar power, careful landscaping, solid partnerships with neighbouring communities, and ongoing conservation research sit quietly behind the guest experience. It's luxury, yes, but with an eye on the future.

They're not alone. Elewana Collection, Porini Camps, Kicheche Mara, and Basecamp Explorer are all putting real weight behind conservation work and community benefits. What used to sound like marketing language now shows up in very practical ways on

## By Harriet James

For decades, Kenya's safari story has been told through big wildlife moments and the lodges that frame them—sunset drives in the Mara, the familiar silhouette of Kilimanjaro above Amboseli, the luxury tents tucked into quiet valleys. But underneath all that, the industry is quietly shifting. A different kind of travel is taking shape, one that isn't just about avoiding harm but actually helping landscapes and communities recover. It's called regenerative tourism, and more camps are embracing it.

Eco-tourism asked visitors to "leave no trace." Regenerative travel asks them to leave a place a little better than they found it. And in pockets across Laikipia, Samburu, Tsavo, and the Mara, this idea is moving from theory into daily operations.



Emboo's main area overlooking the river and tucked into the forest.

PHOTO TOBIN\_SPARLING

the ground.

### Giving back in real terms

At Elewana, sustainability is part of how the lodges run: water management, local sourcing, staff development, health programmes, and school support. Porini Camps, spread across the Mara, Samburu, and Lewa, have long channelled tourist dollars into ranger salaries, anti-poaching operations, and community development.

Kicheche keeps vehicle density low to protect the land, runs on renewable energy, and invests steadily in local education and conservation. Basecamp Explorer leans heavily into cultural preservation, especially Maasai heritage. Guests often find themselves joining school visits, community projects, or reforestation work—not in a staged way, but in a way that feels part of the ecosystem.

These efforts are making a difference. Wildlife corridors stay open because communities are paid fairly.



Emboo's solar powered rides.

PHOTO TOBIN\_SPARLING

Forest patches regenerate. Families earn steady incomes. And the tourism experience becomes deeper for travellers who want to understand the place beyond the game drive.

### Community conservancy

If regenerative travel in Kenya has a centre of gravity, it's the community conservancy. Many camps sit on land owned by local people, especially in the Mara. Lease fees go directly to families, creating incentives to protect habitat and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Training is a big part of it, too. Women and young people pick up skills in guiding, solar installation, farming, hospitality, and wildlife monitoring.

Scholarships, craft cooperatives, and health initiatives spread the benefits even further. A guest's stay doesn't just fund a room—it supports a small ecosystem of opportunity.

### A climate-smart path

With droughts, shrinking water sources, and unpredictable seasons becoming more common, this shift is also about survival. Rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, hybrid power systems, and electric vehicles are no longer nice-to-haves—they're responses to a very real climate challenge.

The transition isn't easy. It takes money, training, and long-term commitment. But Kenya is well placed to lead, thanks to strong conservancy networks and a safari industry that understands the value of healthy landscapes.

And slowly, a new kind of Kenyan safari is emerging—one where luxury and responsibility sit comfortably together, and where travellers become part of the work to keep these landscapes alive for the next generation.

# Forest Bathing in Kenya's Most Enchanting Woodlands

By Harriet James

Walking through Kakamega Forest in the mid-morning feels like stepping into a living, breathing cathedral. Light falls in soft, golden ribbons through a canopy of ancient Elgon teak, strangler figs, and towering mahoganies that rise like pillars above you. The earth underfoot is cool and damp, padded with leaves and roots that twist like old stories. Every step releases the scent of something older than time — moist soil, decaying wood, and the sweet freshness of an ecosystem that has existed for millions of years.

I had come to Kakamega for a Kenya Tourism Board media familiarisation trip, and my guide, Mr. Douglas Imbiakha, made sure we didn't simply hike the forest — we studied it, listened to it, let it show us how life meshes together beneath its monumental green roof.

You hear the forest long before you fully see it. In the quiet, the mind clears, the lungs lighten, and Nairobi's noise seems to dissolve like mist. Somewhere deep inside the thickets, the rhythmic drumming of the Great Blue Turaco carries through the trees. Black-and-white colobus monkeys leap overhead, their calls echoing like pockets of laughter. Butterflies in emerald, cobalt, and bright orange spiral lazily through slanted beams of light. It's a whole symphony of movement and sound — subtle, layered, and deeply grounding.

## The art of forest bathing

Forest bathing — or shinrin-yoku — began in Japan as a mindful, sensory immersion in nature rather than a workout. It's an invitation to slow down, to let the forest impress itself on you through scent, texture, coolness, birdsong, the pattern of moss on a fallen trunk. Modern research backs the old wisdom: time spent in forests lowers stress, reduces blood pressure

Hiking in Kakamega forest



and cortisol, and may even strengthen the immune system.

Call it therapy or simply minutes well spent — the effect is undeniable. That morning in Kakamega, my chest felt clearer, my mind quieter, and my senses sharpened.

Kenya, so often framed through the lens of savannahs and sweeping plains, has an unexpectedly rich forest belt. Each woodland has its own personality — lush, coastal, montane, mystical — and each offers a different kind of forest-bathing experience.

### **Kakamega Forest:** *Kenya's last rainforest*

Kakamega is the final remnant of the equatorial Guineo-Congolian rainforest that once stretched across Central Africa, and being here feels almost sacred. Shaded trails wind beneath a cathedral-like canopy; every turn reveals new ferns, insects, birds, and butterflies. This forest rewards slowness — a quiet sit on a mossy trunk, a pause to listen, a few minutes spent watching monkeys glide through the canopy. For guided forest therapy or deep sensory immersion, Kakamega is unmatched.

### **Karura Forest:** *A green sanctuary in the city*

For Nairobians, Karura offers the easiest escape into green. Its well-marked loops, waterfalls, bamboo groves, and shaded paths make it perfect for a weekday forest bath before work or a short guided session on a calm weekend. Because the trails are safe and maintained, your mind stays free to notice light shifting through fig trees or the morning birdsong that blankets the forest.

### **Arabuko-Sokoke:** *Coastal magic*

Along the Kenyan coast, Arabuko-Sokoke feels like a different species of forest altogether — sunlit in places, dense and secretive in others. It's famed for its endemic birds and the elusive golden-rumped sengi, a tiny



Forest bathing in aberdares

PHOTOS HARRIET AKINYI

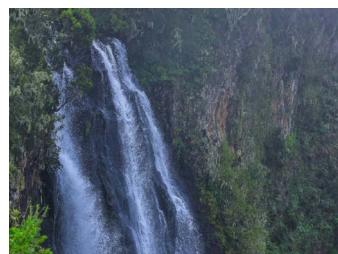
elephant shrew found nowhere else on earth. Forest bathing here comes with bird flashes from nowhere, the crisp scent of coastal trees, and the loud, almost orchestral insect life. In its quieter pockets, the immersion feels both restorative and gently adventurous.

### **Aberdare Forests:** *Mist, moss, and monastic calm*

High in central Kenya, the Aberdare forests are cool and moody, cloaked in moss and bamboo. Mist hangs low, narrowing the world to water sounds, bird calls, and your own breath. A slow walk to a waterfall becomes a soft meditation; sitting on a cold rock feels almost monastic. Large mammals also wander these forests, so a guide or ranger is essential — especially if you want to go deep into the mist.

### **Shimba Hills and Mount Kenya:** *Forests with their own aura*

In the south, Shimba Hills blends forest pockets with cliff side vistas and glimpses of savannah, creating a varied rhythm that alternates between immersion and breathtaking openness. Further north, the lower montane forests of Mount Kenya offer crisp, pine-scented air and trails lined with endemic flora — ideal for those who want their forest



karuru waterfalls in aberdares



### **How to forest bathe in Kenya**

Forest bathing is simple, but benefits from intention:

- **Go slow** — take a few steps, stop, breathe.
- **Use all your senses** — five things you can see, four you can touch (with care), three you can hear, two you can smell, one you can taste.
- **Breathe deliberately** — let the belly rise and fall.
- **Sit quietly** for five to twenty minutes and let the forest settle your nervous system.
- **Be respectful**—stay on trails, honour local rules, hire community guides when possible.

Above all, enter with humility. Forest bathing isn't about conquering a trail or ticking off a landmark. It's about letting the forest hold you—gently, quietly—for just a little while.



# Under the stars: Kenya's night experiences



Under the stars:  
Kenya's night  
experiences

# Kenya After Dark: Nature's Night Shift

By Cynthia Kanyali

We all know the birds' morning song. But when the sun slips behind the horizon, leaving streaks of orange and violet in its wake, that familiar chorus softens—and another one rises. The cool hush of night becomes a stage for creatures that prefer the shadows. The nocturnals.

As moonlight sweeps across the savannah, Kenya reveals a different rhythm—quieter, wilder, more intimate. Beneath a sky heavy with stars, some of the most unforgettable safari moments unfold for those willing to venture into the dark.

By day, Kenya is a world of heat and clarity: lions dozing in the grass, elephants seeking shade, herds grazing lazily in the sun. But at night, the wilderness transforms. Civets, aardvarks, genets, white-tailed mongooses, and bat-eared foxes leave their hiding places. Lions coordinate hunts, hyenas laugh their way

across the plains, leopards slip between shadows, and bright-eyed bush babies bounce through the branches. To experience Kenya after dark is to feel the savannah's real heartbeat.

What begins as a simple drive under the stars becomes a front-row seat to nature's hidden theatre—raw, unfiltered, and alive.

## A sensory immersion

At night, without the glare of the sun, your senses sharpen. The savannah speaks more clearly. The crackle of grass as a predator stalks unseen. The eerie laugh of hyenas drifts across the plains. The hypnotic buzz of nocturnal insects, punctuated by the soft hoots of night owls.

With sight limited, sound becomes your compass—and Kenya becomes a place you don't just see, but feel. The low tremor of a lion's roar. The rhythmic chirping of crickets. The sudden crash of a hippo pushing through the reeds. Each sound tells a story, and expert guides use these cues to navigate the darkness, ensuring wildlife remains undisturbed.

Night sky from Emboo River's lounge.

A chorus of alarm calls might betray a hunting leopard. A sharp rustle could signal a passing predator. A sudden hush might mean something extraordinary lies ahead.

With the cool night breeze on your skin and the scent of crushed dry grass in the air, this sensory immersion lingers long after the drive ends.

## Under the moonlight

Stepping out on a night drive feels like entering a parallel world. The same plains that shimmer gold during the day now glow silver, subdued but more mysterious.

Night drives help travellers understand the full rhythm of African wildlife—the way the ecosystem transforms when the sun disappears. Predators awaken. Herbivores stay tense and alert. Insects crescendo into a living soundtrack. Nocturnal creatures emerge, shaping the balance of the landscape.

Beyond the experience, night drives play a vital role in conservation. Conservancies use night time patrols to monitor wildlife, deter poachers, and gather data on species that remain little studied. Park fees and conservancy contributions directly support these efforts.

Unlike national parks, which mostly limit activities to daylight hours, Kenya's private conservancies offer legally permitted, expertly guided night drives—some of the best in Africa.

## These include:

- *Maasai Mara conservancies such as Naboisho, Mara North, and Olare Motorogi*
- *Oi Pejeta Conservancy*
- *Lewa Wildlife Conservancy*
- *Several Samburu conservancy regions.*

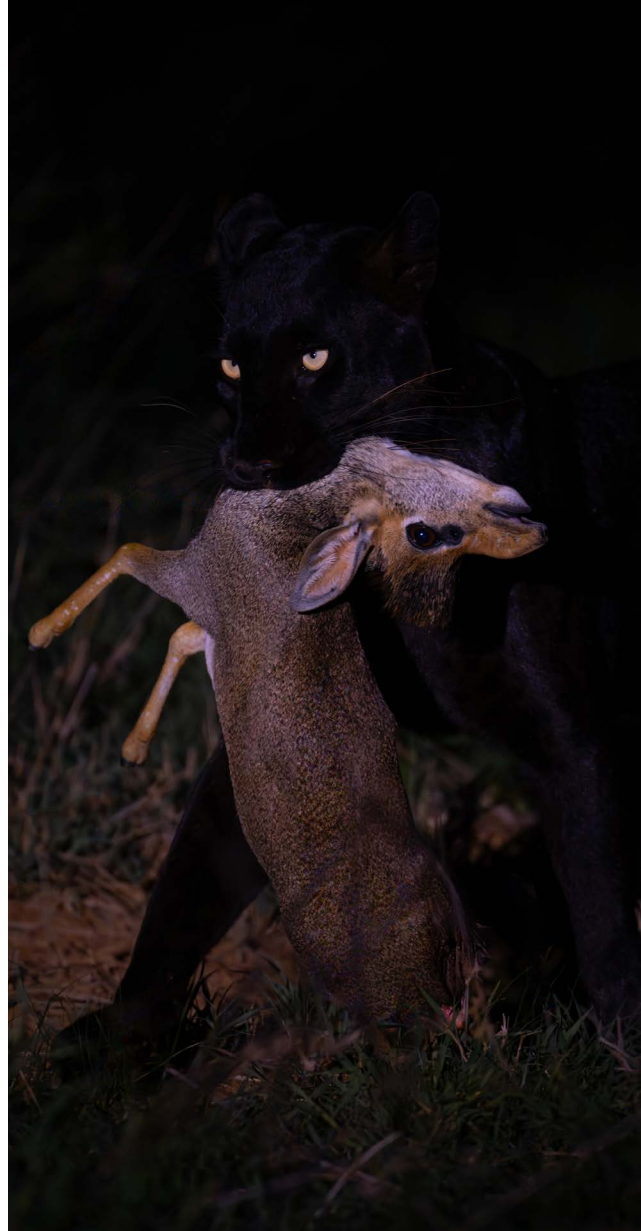
Four adult lionesses with five cubs drinking from a pond at night in Lenton, Kenya



PHOTOS-ISTOCK



wonderful closeup of spotted hyena cub in the savanna during the night



Close-up of female black leopard carrying dik-dik

# Nature's night shift

Kenya's nocturnal animals are among the continent's most elusive—but with a skilled guide, quiet patience, and a bit of luck, the night reveals its secrets.

## Leopards

Nearly invisible in daylight, leopards come alive at night. You may spot one draped over a branch, eyes glowing softly, or see its shadow glide across the road during a silent hunt. Their elegance under the

moonlight is unforgettable.

## Hyenas

Beyond their eerie reputation, hyenas are complex creatures. Their nighttime calls—the famous “laugh”—help them communicate, coordinate, and command the darkness.

## Aardvarks, Aardwolves & Other Rarities

These shy, secretive animals

are the holy grail of night safaris. Aardvarks, aardwolves, honey badgers, and bat-eared foxes are rarely seen in sunlight. Spotting one feels like stumbling upon the savannah's best-kept secret.

## Bush babies & genets

Look up and you'll see glowing pairs of eyes darting through branches—bush babies in acrobatic play. Genets appear and vanish in seconds, tails flicking in the

dark. Porcupines shuffle past, quills rustling, while civets and mongooses forage under the cover of night.

## Predators in their element

Many travellers never see lions in action because they sleep through most of the day. But at night, they are electrifying—social, vocal, and fiercely alive. Watching a pride patrol under the moonlight offers a rare glimpse into their true nature.



# Where to experience Kenya's best night safaris



## Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Between the Aberdares and Mount Kenya, Ol Pejeta is renowned for exceptional nocturnal sightings—from big cats to the rare aardvark. As home to the last two northern white rhinos, its night patrols plays a crucial role in conservation.

## Maasai Mara Conservancies

Naboisho, Mara North, and Olare Motorogi offer exclusive night drives with minimal vehicle traffic. Guides track animals with extraordinary precision, and the experience feels private, almost cinematic.

## Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

With its calm atmosphere and varied landscapes, Lewa is perfect for spotting elusive species and enjoying peaceful, uninterrupted drives.

## Samburu Conservancies

Northern Kenya's dramatic terrain becomes even more striking at night. Guests can glimpse desert-adapted animals and the "Samburu Special Five," alongside rare nocturnal wanderers.



Female black leopard crosses rock at night



## Tips for an unforgettable night safari

- **Dress warmly:** Nights can get chilly—layers are your friend.
- **Bring low-light binoculars:** They enhance sightings without straining your eyes.
- **Stay quiet:** Sound travels far; silence increases your chances.
- **Trust your guide:** Their instincts are unmatched in the dark.
- **Avoid bright lights or flashes:** They disturb animals and break the magic.
- **Be patient:** The rarest moments happen when you least expect them.

### The magic of the unknown

The true thrill of a night safari lies in the mystery. Every shadow could be something extraordinary. Every sound hints at a story unfolding

nearby. Unlike daytime drives, which follow familiar rhythms, night safaris embrace unpredictability—the pure, untamed version of the wilderness.

You might return to camp buzzing after spotting an aardvark, or teary-eyed after watching a lioness shepherd her cubs across the road. Or perhaps the moment that stays with you will be the silence—the kind that makes you aware of the ancient world still pulsing around you.

A Kenyan night safari isn't just an add-on; it's a revelation. It takes you deeper into the lore of the savannah and reveals a side of Africa few ever see.

Because when the stars burn brightest and the wilderness wakes, you realise Kenya's magic doesn't fade with the sunset.

It simply changes shape—and becomes even more extraordinary.

Under the stars:  
Kenya's night  
experiences

# Finding Silence Under a Billion Stars

By Harriet James

**A**s astronomers adjusted their telescopes, Daniel Chu Owen of The Travelling Telescope, a social enterprise he co-founded with his wife, Susan Murabana, to promote astronomy across Africa, pointed to the Milky Way stretching like a silver river across the heavens.

"Keep your eyes as dark-adapted as possible," he advised the crowd, red flashlight on his forehead. "The longer you look, the more the sky reveals."

A mother whispered to her child beside me, "If you see a shooting star, make a wish." The child nodded, eyes wide, waiting for magic.

It was the first stargazing experience at Shaba National Reserve, a fitting location for such a celestial adventure. Tucked away in northern Kenya, Shaba's vast, untamed landscape and minimal light pollution make it one of the best places in the country for observing the night sky. Here, the stars appear closer and brighter, unspoiled by city glare, and



the Milky Way stretches across the horizon like a glowing river of light.

I was here to observe the Perseid Meteor Shower, one of the brightest celestial displays of the year. A year ago, when I was there, its peak was expected on the night of August 11 through the early hours of August 12. Caused by debris from the comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle, the Perseids have been lighting up Earth's skies for centuries — a gift of dust and starlight that burns as it meets our atmosphere.

"We're spinning through the debris trail left by a comet," Chu explained. "Sometimes you'll see dozens of meteors per hour. And if we're lucky, we might even get an outburst — a meteor storm with thousands."

## Rhythm divine

The crowd cheered each streak that darted across the heavens. Counting shooting stars became a kind of game. Between the whoops and whispered wishes, Chu strummed his guitar, performing an original song inspired by an asteroid "that could wipe out humanity." His wife laughed softly, helping him recall the lyrics. Couples danced quietly beneath Jupiter's glow.

Kenya's night skies are now drawing a different kind of traveler: those seeking wonder, silence, and perspective. For the conscious tourist, stargazing offers both ecological and emotional sustainability. It requires no electricity, no roads, no

**"Guests can move seamlessly from daytime safaris among elephants and lions to nighttime safaris among galaxies and meteor showers."**

disturbance to wildlife — only darkness, patience, and awe. Unlike Namibia's vast deserts or South Africa's established observatories, Kenya's position at the equator, which gives us both northern and southern hemisphere viewing, its rare fusion of wilderness and indigenous storytelling makes it the perfect place for this unique adventure. Its skies, too, are some of the clearest and darkest on the continent, from the arid north in Samburu and Marsabit to the remote expanses of the Rift Valley and Maasai Mara, allowing for uninterrupted views of both northern and southern constellations.

But what truly sets Kenya apart is how astronomy meets adventure: guests can move seamlessly from daytime safaris among elephants and lions to nighttime safaris among galaxies and meteor showers. Beyond stargazing, Shaba offers a complete immersion into wild beauty. I explored the rugged terrain in an early morning game drive and spotted the majestic elephants, the



← endangered Grevy's zebras, reticulated giraffes, and the rare beisa oryx. In the evenings, we enjoyed a sumptuous bush dinner while camping under the stars.

Another destination that is perfect for a stargazing experience is Samburu National Park at Sopa Lodge. While I was there for the experience, I recall watching the Samburu sky transformed into a boundless canvas of stars, unmarred by city lights or skyscrapers. We all stood in silence, eyes lifted skyward, as astronomers from Leo Sky Africa traced constellations with laser pointers and trained telescopes on Saturn's rings and the craters of a nearly full moon. This was no ordinary safari night. It marked the launch of Kenya's bold new frontier: Astro-Tourism.

A collaboration between Sopa Lodges East Africa and Leo Sky Africa, the event introduced a new dimension to Kenya's travel experience, one that brings together scientific discovery, environmental consciousness, and indigenous storytelling.

"Samburu has always been known for its 'Special Five' wildlife," said Kennedy Ayoti, Chief Operating Officer at Sopa Lodges. "With Astro-Tourism, we now add a 'special sixth' element: the stars."

## The magical equator

Samburu's geographical advantage is clear. Lying close to the equator, the region offers views of both northern and southern skies. Its remoteness ensures minimal light pollution, creating some of the darkest and clearest skies in Africa, ideal for viewing celestial events like planetary alignments, eclipses, and meteor showers.

For many African communities, astronomy is not a new science but an old one reborn. Long before telescopes, people read the skies for guidance — predicting seasons, navigating terrain, and timing ceremonies.

"Astronomy is deeply African," says Kimani Wa Nyoike, founder of Leo Sky Africa. "Our ancestors used the stars



Stars over Mount Kilimanjaro.

for planting, travel, and storytelling. Astro-Tourism revives that heritage, it's science, but it's also culture."

Apart from Samburu, there are other destinations where Kenyans can enjoy the stars in clear skies. For instance, in Laikipia Plateau, home to vast private conservancies like Ol Pejeta and Segera Retreat. Laikipia's altitude and arid air make for exceptionally clear night skies. Stargazing safaris are often paired with night game drives, offering a rare combination of cosmic and wildlife wonder. I remember a one-star gazing experience I had at Loisaba Star Beds by Elewana, where I enjoyed sleeping under the stars with the sounds of roaring lions in the backdrop.

The Masai Mara is another destination where guests can enjoy this. While most visitors come to see the Great Migration, the Mara's open plains provide an equally spectacular celestial show. Lodges such as Angama Mara and Mara Serena Safari

Lodge offer astronomy nights, complete with telescopes and storytelling inspired by Maasai cosmology.

At the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, Amboseli too offers a dramatic stargazing backdrop. The mountain's silhouette frames the horizon, and on clear nights, the Milky Way is visible in full glory. Camps like Tawi Lodge and Tortilis Camp organize evening sky sessions led by local naturalists.

Often called "the cradle of mankind," Lake Turkana is also a cradle for stargazers. Its isolation guarantees dark skies, and the annual solar eclipses visible from the region have drawn global attention.

Destinations like Naivasha, Elementaita, and Baringo offer spectacular vantage points for viewing constellations mirrored on tranquil lake waters. Loldia House and Lake Elementaita Serena Camp are among lodges incorporating astronomy talks and telescopic viewing into their guest experiences.



# Wild Kenya



# Saving the Night Walker of Loisaba



Loisaba

## By our Correspondent

A deep, rolling vibration drifted across the valley as I climbed into the open Land Cruiser at Loisaba Conservancy just after dawn. My guide, Dalmas Lemaiyan of Loisaba Tent-ed Camp, paused mid-sentence, his head tilted toward the escarpment.

“Lion,” he said softly. “Probably on the ridge. The leopards will keep a distance today.”

Leopards. That was why I had come—not just to this vast, rugged sweep of northern Kenya, but to the only place on the continent where one of the most mysterious cats on Earth has slipped out of legend and into view: the black leopard. For decades, it lived mostly in folklore, whispered about around village fires. Then, in 2019, Loisaba and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance released the first scientifically verified images of a melanistic leopard in Africa in nearly a century. The world was stunned. For the conservationists here, the discovery brought not triumph, but responsibility.

## The cat that lived in folklore

As Lemaiyan steered us along a ridge, the early light washed over Loisaba’s 56,000 acres—acacia woodland, golden plains, volcanic kopjes—all stretching toward the Laikipia Plateau. This is a predator’s domain, a landscape leopards have

patrolled longer than any conservation timeline. Yet the black leopard, born of a rare recessive gene that cloaks the coat in midnight, has thrust Loisaba into the global spotlight—and into a race to ensure the animal survives.

Black leopards aren’t a separate species. They are ordinary African leopards carrying a gene that triggers melanism. In bright daylight, you can still see the ghost of their rosettes beneath the dark sheen. While Asia has scattered pockets of melanistic leopards, Africa has long been the place where such sightings drifted into myth. Until Loisaba’s camera traps changed the story.

“The moment we saw the pictures, we knew we had something extraordinary,” says Dr Nicholas Pilfold of San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. “But extraordinary comes with responsibility. A rare sighting doesn’t automatically mean a healthy population.”

Only around 11% of the world’s leopards are melanistic. In Africa, the number is far lower. Pilfold’s team confirmed the first black leopards in Laikipia in nearly 100 years—but the discovery also reminded them how little is known.

And Loisaba faces the same pressures tightening around wildlife

**“The moment we saw the pictures, we knew we had something extraordinary.”**

across Kenya: expanding pastoralism, climate shocks, habitat loss, and conflict between carnivores and livestock. Protecting a single black leopard is not the goal. Protecting the entire leopard population—the genetic pool that makes such a mutation possible—is.

## Eyes in the bush

We stopped at a rocky outcrop where one of Loisaba’s camera traps was strapped discreetly to a tree. Lemaiyan tapped the metal casing.

“This is our eyes,” he said. “The bush doesn’t lie. If the leopards pass, we will know.”

Camera traps are the backbone of Loisaba’s leopard monitoring programme. Dozens sit hidden along ravines, thickets, and game trails, capturing the comings and goings of one of Africa’s most elusive predators. Researchers match individuals by their rosettes, track territories, identify breeding females, and map conflict hotspots.

Crucially, the images have confirmed that the black leopard is not an isolated individual, but part of a viable breeding population. One frame even shows the melanistic leopard beside a spotted female believed to be its mother.

Technology has shifted conservation from guesswork to data. But it can’t do the work alone.



## People make or break the future

Loisaba sits within a mosaic of Samburu, Maasai, Turkana, and other pastoralist communities—people whose lives, livestock, and traditions are intertwined with the land. Historically, leopards were speared or poisoned in retaliation for livestock losses. Today, coexistence is the centrepiece of conservation here.

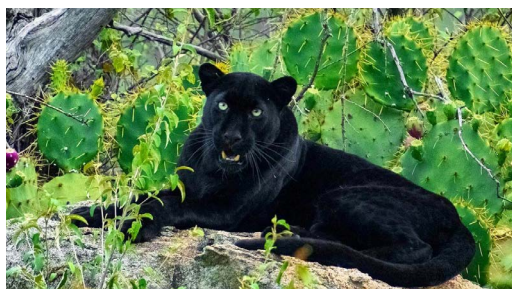
“Conservation must make sense to the people who live with wildlife,” says conservation biologist and PhD researcher Laiyon Lenguya. “If a community sees wildlife as more valuable alive than dead, then the leopard is safe.”

One of the most effective tools has been the predator-proof boma—fortified livestock enclosures that drastically reduce nighttime attacks.

“If a leopard can’t reach your livestock, there’s no reason to retaliate,” Lemaiyan says as we inspect a newly built boma in a neighbouring village. “Peace begins with good fences.”

Loisaba also funds schools, employs hundreds of local residents, supports community rangers, and manages grazing plans that keep both livestock and wildlife moving.

But climate change is tightening the margins. Northern Kenya’s



The elusive black leopard at Loisaba Conservancy. PHOTO | LOISABA

worsening droughts have reduced prey, thinned vegetation, and pushed lions and hyenas into new territories—territories that leopards once held quietly.

“Climate shocks affect big cats in silent ways,” says Pilfold. “If lions push into new spaces because of drought, leopards are squeezed out.”

To buffer the pressure, Loisaba is restoring degraded areas, clearing invasive species, and working with scientists to understand how climate extremes reshape predator behaviour.

“If the land thrives, predators thrive,” Lenguya adds. “It’s simple, but not easy.”

## Guarding a mythic future

One of the most transformative tools in leopard conservation is GPS-collaring. Unlike lions, leopards leave almost no sign—no tracks, no obvious kills, no predictable patterns.

“GPS collars help us see what has always been invisible,” says Lenguya.

Collaring a leopard is a logistical ballet involving expert trackers, KWS veterinarians, community approval, safe darting zones, and terrain that swings between steep escarpments and dense bush. Through a partnership between Loisaba Conservancy, Mpala Research Centre, Mugie Conservancy, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, and KWS, 25 collars have been secured, with four already active.

The collars send hourly satellite signals, mapping a world we rarely see—corridors through farmland, overlapping territories, movement at the edges of settlements.

“At first, it looks like tangled lines,” says Lenguya. “But it’s a story of survival, intelligence, and adaptation.”

Communities are central to this work. They report sightings, share traditional knowledge, and participate in conflict-reduction strategies. Initiatives like the Chui Mamas Centre, early-warning systems, and modern boma training all help reduce pressure on predators.

Future plans include expanding collar deployments, mapping leopard hotspots in detail, and sending alerts when collared cats approach livestock zones.

But as the global fascination with the black leopard grows, conservationists remain cautious.

“We are not saving a myth,” Pilfold says. “We are saving an ecosystem that allows a myth-like animal to exist.”

## The beauty in not seeing

Most visitors come hoping to see the black leopard. Almost all leave without seeing it. That elusiveness is part of its mystique—and part of what makes its conservation urgent.

As we drove back to camp, the sky turning violet over the escarpment, I realised something: seeing the leopard, black or spotted, is not the point. The real victory is ensuring that future generations still can.



Large White Pelican flock at Crescent Island, a private game sanctuary in the Lake Naivasha in Kenya, Africa.

# Kenya's Feathered Soul

ISTOCK



Yellow-billed oxpecker on face of Cape buffalo, Talek, Kenya

## By our Correspondent

At dawn, as the city stirs awake, the first notes of the Olive Thrush echo through the misty air at Nairobi National Park, making it one of the most soulful voices to listen to. Cloaked in earthy olive-brown plumage with a warm orange breast and bright yellow beak, this bird blends gracefully into the acacia thickets and forest edges it calls home. Its soft yet vibrant tones carry a sense of calm, often heard just before dawn or after light rain.

"The song is both territorial and expressive, used to mark its space and communicate with a mate," explained Richard Kipng'eno from Nature Kenya.

Nairobi National Park offers the perfect sanctuary for the Olive Thrush because it combines everything this species thrives on, which is tranquility, trees, and food.

Nairobi is often called the world's birding capital for a good reason. With

over 600 bird species recorded, the city offers unmatched diversity, from forest dwellers in Karura Forest and Ngong Hills to wetland species in Nairobi National Park and Paradise Lost. The park itself is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Key Biodiversity Area, hosting ten species listed on the IUCN Red List and four migratory visitors.

The park's location is ecologically unique. It lies at the meeting point of two great ecosystems: the forested and cultivated hills that rise toward the Aberdares and the open savannahs that stretch southward toward Amboseli and Kilimanjaro. This convergence creates a mosaic of habitats, from riverine forests to grasslands and dams, each home to distinct bird communities.

At the Nairobi National Park, the morning birding drive through the park felt like an orchestra in motion. In the forested section, one is serenaded by the fluty calls of the Rüppell's Robin-Chat, while the African Paradise Flycatcher, with its elegant, trailing tail feathers, darts between branches. The White-backed



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Vulture, now critically endangered, might be spotted perched on an acacia, scanning the horizon.

At Nagolomon Dam, African Spoonbills, Darters, and Spur-winged Plovers wade gracefully, while the Grey Crowned Crane, Nairobi's emblem, struts regally along the water's edge. Overhead, Yellow-billed Kites glide lazily, their cries echoing across the plains.

Even for beginners, Nairobi offers an accessible introduction to birdwatching. Mobile apps like Merlin Bird ID now help identify species, making it easy for anyone to participate.

"As cities grow, birds adapt, some thrive near humans, while others retreat. Protecting green spaces in cities like Nairobi is key to preserving this balance," Richard adds.



PHOTO | HARRIET JAMES



PHOTO | HARRIET JAMES

Black cormorants in lake baringo

In a world growing increasingly fast and noisy, birdwatching offers a rare kind of stillness, a reminder that beauty, wonder, and wildness still thrive, often just beyond the city's edge.

## Birdwatcher's paradise

Beyond the city, Kenya opens up into a birdwatcher's paradise. The country's geography, which is right at the equator and spans forests, deserts, savannahs, lakes, and coastlines, makes it home to over 1,100 bird species, including more than 60 endemics. Between October and April, migratory birds from Europe and Asia arrive in vast numbers, transforming Kenya into a living aviary.

A short drive from Nairobi lies Naivasha, a gem in the Great Rift Valley and one of Kenya's most rewarding birding destinations. With its mix of freshwater lakes, acacia woodlands, and volcanic landscapes, Naivasha attracts hundreds of resident and migratory species.

At Hell's Gate National Park, towering cliffs and deep gorges form a dramatic backdrop for raptors. The park is home to the Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture), Verreaux's Eagle, and Augur Buzzard, with Fischer's Tower serving as an ideal perch for these aerial hunters. Smaller birds like Cisticolas, Swifts, and Larks add movement

and song to the vast open plains.

A visit to Lake Naivasha reveals a completely different world, one of still waters, papyrus edges, and calls of waterbirds. Over 400 species thrive here, including African Fish Eagles, Great White Pelicans, Grey-backed Herons, Hammerkops, and Kingfishers. Early morning boat rides provide the best views, with fish eagles diving dramatically for their prey.

Nearby, Crescent Island Game Sanctuary offers a tranquil escape where visitors can walk among giraffes and zebras while spotting African Jacanas, Malachite Kingfishers, and Tropical Boubous along the shore. Just west of the lake, the Crater Lake Game Sanctuary, an emerald volcanic lake, provides a haven for species like the Tawny Eagle, Little Grebe, Black Crane, and Olive Pigeon, with the surrounding acacia forest alive with Sunbirds, Weavers, and Turacos.

For hikers, Mount Longonot National Park blends adventure and avian beauty, its lower slopes attracting Hartlaub's Turaco, Rueppell's Robin-Chat, and Scarlet-chested Sunbird. At the same time, raptors soar high above the crater rim.

Further north in the Rift Valley, Lake Baringo teems with Verreaux's Eagle Owls, Goliath Herons, and Cormorants, while Lake Bogoria dazzles with flamingos and migratory Steppe Eagles. Western Kenya's Kakamega Forest, the country's only tropical rainforest, enchants birders with the Great Blue Turaco, Turner's Eremomela, and Blue-headed Bee-eater.

Its thick canopy hums with life — a reminder of Africa's ancient forests. Nearby, Saiwa Swamp National Park hosts the elusive Sitatunga Antelope and over 370 bird species, including the striking Ross's Turaco.

At higher altitudes, Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Ranges reveal alpine specialists like the Scarlet-tufted Sunbird and Mountain



# Moving Slowly Through the Wild

Yellow Warbler, thriving in the crisp air. Meanwhile, at Kenya's coast, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest is a global biodiversity hotspot where the Sokoke Scops Owl, Amani Sunbird, and Clarke's Weaver delight keen birders. Mida Creek near Watamu supports migratory shorebirds, while the Tana Delta and Sabaki Estuary provide refuge for thousands of waterbirds.

## Wild wild north

In Kenya's north, Samburu National Reserve offers desert-adapted species like the Vulturine Guineafowl, Golden-breasted Starling, and Somali Ostrich, while conservation areas like Ol Pejeta Conservancy, known for rhinos, over 300 bird species, including Secretary Birds and Augur Buzzards, can be spotted.

My tour in Turkana revealed that apart from its rich cultural heritage and dramatic landscape, the destination is also an underrated birding paradise that surprises even the most seasoned birdwatchers. Its striking mix of savannah, semi-desert, and Rift Valley lake habitats creates a haven for both resident

and migratory bird species.

At the heart of this region lies Lake Turkana, the world's largest desert lake and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to over 350 bird species. Its shimmering alkaline waters draw flocks of flamingos, pelicans, cormorants, and Egyptian geese. At the same time, the shores and islands — including Central Island and South Island National Parks — host African skimmers, spur-winged plovers, and a variety of migratory waders from Europe and Asia.

Central Island, famously dubbed the "Crocodile Island," is not only known for its volcanic craters but also as a thriving nesting ground for Goliath herons, grey-headed gulls, and little grebes, where cliff side habitats offer spectacular views of soaring raptors.

Each of these destinations tells its own story of survival, migration, and adaptation. Visiting these places made me realize that birdwatching in Kenya is more than a pastime; it's a journey through the country's ecological soul, one that reveals the intimate connection between land, water, and sky.

Lake Turkana

ISTOCK



By Annar Husain

I've always believed Kenya reveals itself in layers. The first layer is what you see from a safari vehicle—the sweeping plains, the drama of a hunt, the big skies that make you feel wonderfully small.

But it wasn't until I stepped out of the car and onto the warm earth that I realised how much I'd been missing. On foot, Kenya feels different. More ancient. More personal. A walking safari is not just a different way to travel; it's a different way to pay attention.

## Learning to walk again

The first time I set out on a walking safari, I remember feeling oddly self-conscious. You don't realise how loud your footsteps are until you're trying not to disturb a grazing impala thirty metres away.

Yet as we moved deeper into the bush, my senses slowly recalibrated. The crunch of dry grass under my boots, the soft clack of seed pods underfoot, the sudden hush when the wind changed direction, they became part of the story.

Walking strips away the sense of separation you get inside a 4x4. You're



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no longer an observer behind a lens; you're a participant, part of the landscape. Every pause feels intentional.

Every shadow catches your eye. And in those moments of stillness, you feel—truly feel—the presence of the wild around you. It's humbling in a way that's hard to articulate without sounding sentimental, but maybe that's the point. Walking softens you.

**The genius of naturalists**

What really changed the experience for me were the guides—those calm, steady naturalists who move with the kind of grace you only earn from years spent outdoors. They read the land the way others read newspapers: quickly, naturally, almost without thinking.

Their knowledge of plants, insects, bird calls, wind patterns—all those details we usually overlook—gives each walk the richness of a masterclass. And yet, nothing ever felt like a lecture. Just quiet wisdom, shared easily, out in the open.

**The beauty of small things**

Vehicle safaris serve you spectacle. Walking safaris offer revelation. You start noticing things you would

never pick up from a car window: the clean split of a fresh hyena track, the way a dung beetle rolls its perfectly formed ball with astonishing commitment, the soft alarm calls of birds signalling something unseen. There is a thrill in the small discoveries—the ones that nudge you to look closer, lean in, pay attention.

Each walk feels like a slow-unfurling treasure hunt, where the prizes aren't dramatic sightings but tiny clues that connect you more deeply to the ecosystem.

**When to go**

The ideal timing for a walking safari depends on what you want to see. Most visitors prefer the dry season, usually between June and October, when animals congregate around water sources, and the bush is easier to navigate. Visibility is higher, making tracking and spotting wildlife easier.

The shoulder months—late January to March and November to mid-December — can also offer excellent conditions, with thinner crowds, moderate vegetation, and occasional showers that do not significantly disrupt walking adventures.

**Where to walk**

**Masai Mara Conservancies** For that classic Mara beauty without the crowds—big skies, Maasai guides with stories for days, and wildlife encounters that feel intimate rather than staged.

**Laikipia Plateau** A rugged, expansive playground of rocky outcrops, rare species, and innovative conservation work. This is where walking feels like true exploration.

**Amboveli Conservancies** Think elephants, acacia woodlands, and the ever-present silhouette of Kilimanjaro. Magical doesn't even begin to describe it.

**Hell's Gate National Park** A place where you can hike, wander through volcanic gorges, and get eye-level with zebra and eland—no vehicle needed.

**Samburu Conservancies** For lovers of the unusual and the beautiful. The Samburu Special Five alone are worth the journey, but it's the light—that warm, coppery northern light—that stays with you

# New Life Beneath Watamu Waves



Watamu

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## By our Correspondent

**A**long Kenya's northern coast, Watamu Marine National Park feels like a place the ocean is still proud of. The water glows turquoise, the sand is soft and white, and the air carries that calm you only find by the sea. It isn't just the scenery—it's what's happening beneath the surface.

This is where turtles return to nest, coral reefs slowly rebuild, and local conservation teams work day and night to protect the coastline. Watamu isn't just a holiday spot;

it's where nature, community, and science come together to save Kenya's ocean life.

### Giving turtles a second chance

Watamu is one of Kenya's most important nesting beaches for sea turtles. Every year, green, hawksbill, and olive ridley turtles travel considerable distances to lay their eggs here—often returning to the exact beach where they were born. But life has become harder for these gentle giants. Plastic waste, fishing nets, habitat loss, and even occasional poaching threaten their survival.

Local Ocean Conservation's

(LOC) Watamu Turtle Watch is the team leading the rescue effort. Working with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), they protect nests, care for injured turtles, and educate the community. At night, Beach Monitors patrol the sand to make sure the turtles can nest safely. When a nest is at risk—maybe due to erosion, floods, or human activity—the team carefully relocates the eggs to safer spots.

One of LOC's most successful efforts is the Turtle Bycatch & Release Programme. Fishermen call whenever a turtle gets accidentally caught in their nets. LOC responds quickly: the turtle is collected,



Newborn hatching green sea turtle crawls across a beach Shela, Lamu Island, Kenya.



Watamu

ISTOCK

checked, measured, tagged, and—if it's healthy—released back into the national park. Many fishers now take pride in helping protect the species they once viewed as a nuisance. A quick phone call often means a life saved.

Some turtles, however, need more help. At the LOC Rehabilitation Centre, you'll find turtles recovering from wounds caused by nets, boat propellers, or infections. Others suffer from a disease called Fibropapillomatosis, which causes tumour-like growths on their bodies. Healing can take weeks or months. The work is slow, gentle, and patient—but watching a fully recovered turtle swim back into the sea makes every hour worth it.

Visitors can tour the centre to see the work up close. There's no touching—only trained staff handle the turtles—but guests get a real sense of what conservation looks like on the ground. Most people leave inspired, carrying stories they'll tell again and again.

### Bringing coral reefs back to life

Below Watamu's calm surface lies another world in recovery: the coral reefs. These reefs are home to colourful fish, rays, octopuses, and countless tiny creatures. But like reefs everywhere, they've been struck by warming seas, pollution, and destructive fishing practices. Some areas have bleached; others have broken apart completely.

A Rocha Kenya is at the centre of the reef restoration work in Watamu, working closely with KWS and Coral Reef Care. Their divers grow coral fragments in underwater nurseries, then attach them carefully to damaged reefs. They clear out harmful algae, monitor coral health, and study how the reef responds to changes in the environment. It's slow, detailed work—nature sets the pace—but signs of recovery are appearing. Small fish return first, then larger ones follow, and soon the reef begins to look like a home again.

The team also works with local fishing communities. Sustainable fishing helps protect the reefs, which in turn protect the fish populations. Onshore, regular beach cleanups help stop plastic from reaching the water. Visitors are welcome to join these efforts or learn more about reef health. Coral planting, however, is left to trained divers to avoid damaging fragile areas.

### Watamu's promise

Watamu is the kind of place that stays with you long after you leave. It's beautiful—of course—but it's the work happening behind the scenes that truly stands out. When you watch a rehabilitated turtle glide back into the sea or catch a glimpse of coral glowing again in shallow water, you feel part of something hopeful.

For travellers, this is an invitation to explore Kenya's coast responsibly: snorkel with care, visit the Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, join a beach cleanup, or choose operators that support conservation.

Because here, every restored reef, every protected nest, and every rescued turtle is proof that the ocean can heal—when people choose to help. Watamu's wonder is still alive, and it's waiting to be experienced, one thoughtful visit at a time.



Culture,  
People & Place

# Kenya, Where the World Comes Together

By Hesbon Githinji

I first noticed it on a Tuesday morning in Westlands, Nairobi. Not the skyline or the honking of matatus. It was the mix of languages. Swahili and Sheng bounced off the walls of cafés, while French and Spanish drifted from some co-working spaces, and Arabic came from a nearby apartment balcony. A barista called out an order; a Ugandan designer typed at a table; a Kenyan entrepreneur switched between English and Sheng mid-sentence while scribbling notes. It was chaotic, noisy, and somehow felt like a synchronised song.

Nairobi is just one part of Kenya's cultural story. From the slow streets of Lamu to the waters of Kisumu, from leafy suburbs to coastal beaches, Kenya has long been a place where people arrive, stay, and mix. Today, more than ever, those arrivals include visitors from across the globe—artists, entrepreneurs, remote workers—looking for a place to live and work.

## Layers of culture

Kenya's cultural mix isn't new. Long before Nairobi had offices and rooftop cafés, the coast was a hub for trade in East Africa. Lamu, Mombasa, and

Ruins of ancient Gedi (Gede), Swahili town in Kenya near Malindi



# Culture, People & Places

Malindi show the traces of centuries of Omani, Persian, Indian, and Portuguese influence. Walking the streets of Lamu's old town, you notice coral-stone houses with carved wooden doors, narrow streets built to catch the breeze. In a small café, a Somali chef might be rolling samosas beside Indian sweets, while children play under trees. These patterns of life have lasted generations.

Inland, Kenya's 40-plus ethnic groups shape daily life. In Kisumu, Luo fishers haggle at the lakefront while Kikuyu farmers bring their produce into town. Nairobi is a smaller-scale version: Maasai bead sellers sit next to Somali fabric shops, Kamba farmers run market stalls alongside Indian cafés. Switching between communities or speaking several languages is normal—no one notices it, because it's everyday life.

### Foreigners who settle

The new arrivals are different from the diplomats and NGO workers of the past. Now, remote workers, tech specialists, and creative professionals are moving in, some for months, some for good.

Ana, a Brazilian designer, moved to Kilimani last year. She works for a European fintech company but spends her mornings sketching in co-working spaces and afternoons cycling through Karura Forest. "I thought Nairobi would feel temporary," she says over coffee. "But the city gives you space to be busy or quiet. And the people notice what you do, not where you're from."

Sam, a French conservationist, divides his time between Naivasha and Nairobi. He tracks hippos during the day and writes reports at night. "I could be anywhere," he says, "but here, work, life, and nature fit together in a way I didn't expect."

Liu Wei, a South Korean cybersecurity engineer in Westlands, moved to work remotely and explore Kenya's tech scene. "There's a lot of talent here," she says. "And most people speak two or three languages. It makes collaborating easier than

I thought."

### Neighbourhoods meet

Diversity is built into Kenya's streets and markets. In Westlands, some cafés host yoga classes in the morning, business meetings at lunch, and co-working sessions all day. At Two Rivers Mall, Nigerian tech founders meet Kenyan investors over coffee while artists sell Maasai-inspired jewellery. Everything happens.

Kilimani has its own energy. On a Thursday evening, you might see a German engineer playing chess with a Kenyan student, a Lebanese chef teaching a cooking class, or an American writer typing on a

balcony.

Along the coast, Diani attracts Europeans, Americans, and Africans looking for beaches and a slower pace. In Watamu, a French yoga instructor teaches locals and visitors alike, while an Italian chef collaborates with Kenyan fishermen to explore new methods of cooking seafood. Life is lived side by side, and unsurprisingly, it often overlaps.

Foreigners are drawn to Kenya for practical reasons—reliable internet, English widely spoken, connections to Europe and Asia. But they also appreciate how work and life overlap naturally.

Karura Forest, a short drive from the city, shows this clearly. Cyclists, dog walkers, and visitors share the trails. Everyone benefits from the same space, even if they are not interacting. At Village Market, a Nigerian entrepreneur closes a deal, a Kenyan artist sells jewellery, and a South African freelancer runs a short workshop—all in the same room, all part of daily life.

Even matatu rides are lessons in coexistence. Languages mix, greetings are exchanged, conversations start and fade.

### Identities coexist

Kenya isn't a place where identities disappear. Maasai herders, Kenyan-Chinese restaurateurs, Belgian NGO workers, Somali shop owners—all live alongside each other without losing who they are. Foreign arrivals add to the mix but don't erase local ways. They adjust and learn.

For newcomers, part of the appeal is that you can belong without having to change who you are. Kenya rewards presence and contribution.

Many who planned a short visit end up staying longer. The reasons include the beautiful weather, the cost of living, and basic infrastructure. But the subtler ones matter more, like communities that are curious but not intrusive, access to nature near the city, and the sense that it's possible to build a life here. Kenya lets its people live alongside foreigners.



# Moving Through Maasai, Samburu, and Swahili Worlds

By Titus Mutangili

By mid-morning, the Loita Hills are already warming, the cowbells thinning into the wind as families drift through the routines that have shaped Maasai life for generations. From a distance, the landscape looks almost staged—red shuka cloth against pale grassland, a manyatta dotted with livestock, the horizon pulled taut by the Great Rift. But up close, the reality is gentler, humbler, and far more layered than the stock images that define East Africa abroad.

Kenya's cultural map is often flattened into clichés: warriors leaping skyward, coastal traders sailing dhows, camel herders moving through dust. Yet a journey that runs from the Maasai heartland through Samburu country and down to the Swahili coast reveals something quieter—a set of living traditions that persist not because they are performed, but because they are carried.

This is a trip less about spectacle, more about the unforced rituals of everyday life.

## Rites of passage in the Loita Hills

At dawn in the Loita Valley, elders gather under the shade of a tree as a small group of boys prepare for emuratare, the circumcision rite that marks the passage from childhood to warriorhood. Though the ceremony's most dramatic moment is well



Lamu old town waterfront, Kenya. UNESCO World Heritage site.

known—often too well known in tourist literature—the surrounding hours are more instructive.

Mothers, who traditionally keep a deliberate distance, move about with a quiet efficiency that is both protective and symbolic. Older men discuss lineage and age-set cycles with the precision of archivists. A young initiate, face marked with ochre, adjusts his shuka with a steadiness that belies his age.

For the Maasai, the rite is not simply an individual milestone; it renews an entire social architecture built on age groups, mentorship, and generational continuity. As one elder puts it, “This is how we remember who we are, and who we belong to.”

There is no sense of performance here. No crowds, no rehearsed explanations. Just the slow, unadorned passing of responsibility from one set of hands to the next.



### In Samburu country, different yet similar

Several hours north, the landscape shifts. The grassland thins out. The light sharpens. Samburu country opens up in wide, ochre-coloured stretches that feel almost other-worldly.

Where Maasai culture moves with a certain ceremonial gravity, Samburu life carries a lighter cadence. In the village of Lerata, young warriors—morans—gather in the late afternoon for a singing circle. The movement is gentle and unhurried at first, before rising into a rhythmic sequence of chants that seem to vibrate through the ground itself.

The beadwork, often described loosely in travel writing, reveals its complexity only when seen up close: layers of colour arranged in patterns that signify family ties, age sets, and personal milestones. A young warrior explains that bead colours are not decorative choices but social language. “Red is not just red,” he says with a small smile. “It means something about courage. It means something about us.”

Elders watch from the shade, offering commentary with the kind of amused restraint that suggests this has been happening in much the same way for as long as they can remember.

Life here is shaped by mobility, live-



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stock, and the slow, deliberate reading of weather patterns that determine when and where families move. Change arrives, but cautiously. As one elder remarks, “We do not resist the world, but we do not abandon ours.”

### The Ocean remembers

Descending toward the coast feels like entering another country entirely. The air grows heavier, fragrant with salt and woodsmoke. Lamu, with its coral-stone architecture and narrow alleyways, offers a different inheritance: one shaped not by pastoral cycles but by centuries of maritime trade.

The Swahili coast is not a monolithic culture. It is a palimpsest—African, Arab, Persian, and Indian influences layered by commerce, religion, and the monsoon winds that carried trad-

ers across the Indian Ocean long before globalisation became a modern shorthand.

In Lamu Old Town, dhow builders still work with a level of craftsmanship that appears almost anachronistic in an age of fibreglass and GPS. Haji, a builder with four decades of experience, traces the curve of a hull with the practised certainty of someone who has learned to read the sea like a manuscript. “The ocean teaches you timing,” he says. “And patience.”

Dinner with a local family provides a different vocabulary of heritage: coconut-rich stews, delicately spiced pilau, and cassava softened in tamarind—dishes that speak of centuries of exchange, adaptation, and quiet resilience. Later, the soft, melodic rise of taarab music drifts from a nearby courtyard, threading through the alleys with the ease of something that has always belonged here.

In contrast to the often-dramatic imagery of inland rites and pastoral life, Swahili heritage reveals itself through refinement—in architecture, in language, in the poetic cadence of daily prayer.

### Three worlds in a diverse country

What ties these three cultural strands together is not uniformity but the deliberate persistence of identity. Each community negotiates change on its own terms. The Maasai adapt rites but keep the structure. The Samburu shift grazing routes but maintain age-set systems. The Swahili modernise trade but protect their architectural and literary traditions.

Kenya’s cultural breadth—often reduced to soundbites in global tourism campaigns—is, in practice, a series of lived continuities. They do not announce themselves as heritage. They simply endure, adjusted but intact.

Travelling from the highlands to the coast reveals less about what makes Kenya “exotic” and more about what makes it human: the instinct to honour memory, the urge to ritualise transition, and the quiet, unshowy ways communities preserve belonging.

# Kitengela Glass: The Art Village Just Outside the City



The Kitengela Hot Glass Studio

By Dennis Musau

Suppose you are longing for a travel experience that blends creativity, nature, and a touch of magic, not far away from the city. The Kitengela Hot Glass Studio is a destination for travelers seeking a visual and hands-on experience.

Tucked just an hour from the city, on the edge of Nairobi National Park near Ongata Rongai, Kajiado County, the studio is one of Kenya's most unique destinations, an artist's haven where waste glass takes on a new life.

Part of the charm begins even before you arrive. After leaving the main tarmac, the road turns rugged and dusty, a slow meander past acacia trees and grazing cattle as Nairobi's skyscrapers retreat on the horizon.

In the quiet Kitengela plains, the towering brown dome, where the studio is located, appears behind a wrought-iron gate. It is not merely a workshop but a living art village. The space brims with playful architecture, recycled materials, and multi-coloured



The Kitengela Hot Glass Studio

handmade pieces.

Glass hangs everywhere, dangling from trees, embedded in walls, woven into mosaics, and built into whimsical structures. There are glass seats and tables, sculptural installations, pathways, and sunlit corners that shimmer under the sun.

The studio itself is adorned with bot-

tle mosaics, recycled metal sculptures that rise from the earth, and desks and benches fashioned from repurposed materials. It's a world that blurs the line between art and nature.

Kitengela Hot Glass was founded by Anselm Croze, who returned from a glassblowing apprenticeship in Holland in 1990 with a dream of bringing the craft to Kenya. Three decades later, his vision has evolved into a fully fledged art village.

The studio collects scrap glass, mainly discarded windows and bottles, from industrial suppliers, hotels, bars, and restaurants.

## Transforming waste

Witnessing how this waste is transformed into luminous bowls, chandeliers, beads, goblets, and artsy furniture pieces is one of the most fascinating aspects of the visit.

It begins with the sorting area, where you watch artisans separate small pieces of discarded glass by colour and type. From there, the shards are washed and then heated for 30 minutes before being shovelled into



The Kitengela Hot Glass Studio

a 1,100-degree-celsius furnace.

Watching glassblowers at work is a mesmerising experience: artisans dip long metal blowpipes into the furnace, gather a ball of molten glass, and begin shaping it by blowing air through the tube while continuously rotating it.

The glow shifts to golden amber as the piece cools into shape. The glassblowers use blocks of wood, shears, paddles, and wet newspapers to sculpt vases, tumblers, jugs, chandeliers, wind chimes, wall installations, and even jewelry.

The rhythm of it all is quite stunning to experience. As Croze himself has described it, the joy of the craft is in “the hypnotic magic and instant gratification of the process.”

Alongside the glassblowers is the metalworks team, which builds frames for the furniture pieces, like chairs and tables, onto which the colourful glass components are later mounted.

What elevates the experience even further is the warmth of the artisans. They are happy to chat, answer questions, demonstrate techniques, and even let you try your hand at simple

shaping under guidance. You don’t just see the art; you meet the people behind it, learn their stories, and appreciate the dedication that goes into every piece.

And it does not end at the furnace and the studio tour; the place makes for a full-day experience with multiple activities and picture-perfect spots.

One of the most photographed features of the compound is the pedestrian suspension bridge that stretches over a small gorge. Walking across it is an adventure in itself: wobbly, exciting, and offering the best panoramic shots of the art village.

There is also a swimming pool, an unusually shaped one, adorned with mosaics and overlooking the plains. On warm afternoons, it’s the perfect place to cool off, sunbathe, or enjoy a lazy lunch with friends. Many families and couples plan their visit specifically around a sunny poolside day.

The on-site café serves coffee, meals, fresh salads, and juices. The relaxed, arty ambience makes it ideal

for sipping something cold, browsing your new glass souvenirs, and soaking in the sounds of wild birds, monkeys, and ducks that roam around the compound.

No visit is complete without a walk through the leading shop. It’s a kaleidoscope of colour, featuring rows of glasses, candleholders, plates, lampshades, jewellery, mirrors, and decorative pieces that you can purchase for your home or as a gift for a loved one. From pocket-friendly trinkets to elaborate centrepieces, it is easy to find something unique that fits your budget.

For photographers and social media lovers, Kitengela Hot Glass is a goldmine. Every surface, wall, structure, and sculpture is a stunning backdrop for your shots and videos.

### Getting there:

The studio is accessible by bike or car. The journey begins on Magadi Road, where you turn onto Masai Lodge Road, past Africa Nazarene University and Khalifa Bin Jasmin High School.

From there, look out for colourful metal and glass sculptures installed along the roadside, and signage that will lead you to the gate.

### Charges:

Blowing giant bubbles costs KSh 500 (\$3.9), while for KSh 2,500, visitors can spend 15 minutes at a glassblowing bench shaping a paperweight. A 30-minute session, which includes blowing one full glass or two smaller objects, costs KSh 5,000 (\$38.5). An hour-long glassblowing session, which yields 2-4 pieces, is priced at KSh10,000 (\$77) and is shareable with up to two people.

Bead-making costs KSh4,500 (\$34.7) for a 30-minute solo session, and mosaic classes are KSh2,800 (\$28.5) for an hour with all materials provided. For the suspended bridge, a round trip costs KSh 300 (\$2.3), and a swim in the Dragon Pool costs KSh 250 (\$1.9) to KSh 500, depending on the option chosen.



# Adventure & outdoors





“Beyond the vast, often-photographed savannah, a secret Kenya explodes into a world of rugged peaks and adrenaline-fueled trails”

**By our Correspondent**

Forget the tired safari postcard. This is where you draw your line in the sand. This is the ultimate test against yourself and nature's most epic obstacles. Are you ready to trade routine for the raw, exhilarating air at the summit of Mount Kenya, or feel the sheer drop as you paraglide over the legendary Kerio Valley? Can you handle the wild, volcanic heart of Mount Longonot on two wheels, or conquer the demanding rock faces of Hell's Gate? Stop dreaming about adventure. Kenya is calling your bluff.

Beyond the vast, often-photographed savannah, a secret Kenya explodes into a world of rugged peaks and adrenaline-fueled trails. The Great Rift Valley and Central Highlands aren't just scenery; they are an obstacle course waiting to be conquered.

This isn't a trip; it's an unbeatable 4-week voyage into the heart of authentic, high-stakes adventure. If you miss this expedition, you miss the real Kenya.

# The Ultimate Test of Will



## Mountain Biking

Claim Your Bush Trails the moment to stake your claim is NOW. Kenya offers raw, off-road mountain biking territory that remains gloriously untouched. As the popularity of this sport explodes, the bikes are ready, but the bush trails are still waiting for true pioneers.

### *Biking in Diani:*

The Coast's Secret. Ditch the car and pedal through the South Coast's quiet village roads and hidden trails. This isn't just transport, it's your private, fresh-air immersion into local life. Do you want the tourist snapshot, or the intimate, two-wheeled perspective?

### *Malindi and Watamu:*

Two-Wheeled freedom. These beachside roads offer glorious freedom. Cycle where locals do, get your exercise, and encounter the genuine spirit of coastal Kenyan life. Don't just stay at the resort, explore what lies beyond the gates.

### *Naivasha's Thrill:*

Ride through Hell's Gate. This is the one you'll tell stories about. Mountain Bikes are widely available, and they are your ticket to an unparalleled experience riding straight through Hell's Gate National Park, cycling past herds of zebra, giraffe, and buffalo. This level of intimate access is not possible anywhere else in the world.



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Mountain Ranges in Kenya. Well known as Aberdare ranges

## Trekking & Climbing:

The high stakes welcome to a landscape of extremes. From the scorching desert plains to the rarefied atmosphere of snow-capped summits, Kenya is a vertical challenge reserved for those who demand more than a walk. For climbers, this is your ultimate proving ground.

### *Technical Climbing Mount Kenya:*

Africa's Ultimate Test. The summit, crested by the twin icy peaks of Batian and Nelion, isn't a hike; it's a serious 5.10 technical assault across ice, rock, and scree. If you're an experienced climber, your international résumé is incomplete without this line item.

The window is tight (peaking from July to early October); expert guiding and preparation are non-negotiable. Don't wait for next year; the challenge

is here. Rock Climbing, Fischer's Tower. Ready to scale sheer cliffs?

### *Hell's Gate National Park:*

Hell's Gate National Park hosts some of the country's best routes, including the dramatic volcanic pillar, Fischer's Tower. Qualified guides and equipment are waiting at the Park HQ. All you need to bring is the nerve.

### *The Untamed Treks: Mount Elgon:*

Ascend isolated high passes and moorlands to a vast caldera. Explore deep forests, geothermal springs, and hidden caves. This is rugged, raw exploration. It's cold, it often rains, and it's waiting for you to leave your footprint.

### *Loroghi Hills:*

The Cultural Immersion You Didn't Expect. Wild, isolated, and boasting views that will redefine your Rift Valley stan-

dard. But the true reward? Traveling with a Samburu guide allows you to connect with the people who call these stunning hills home. Don't just walk the land, let a local guide you into the culture.

### *Wild Treks in Aberdare Forest:*

Plunge into a genuine wilderness. Navigate dense forest, witness the majestic Karuru Falls, and brave the freezing plunge pool of Chania Falls (if you dare!). From the high moorlands, the views across to Mt. Kenya are humbling. The only thing standing between you and the 4,000-metre summit of Satima is your own endurance.

### *Kakamega Forest:*

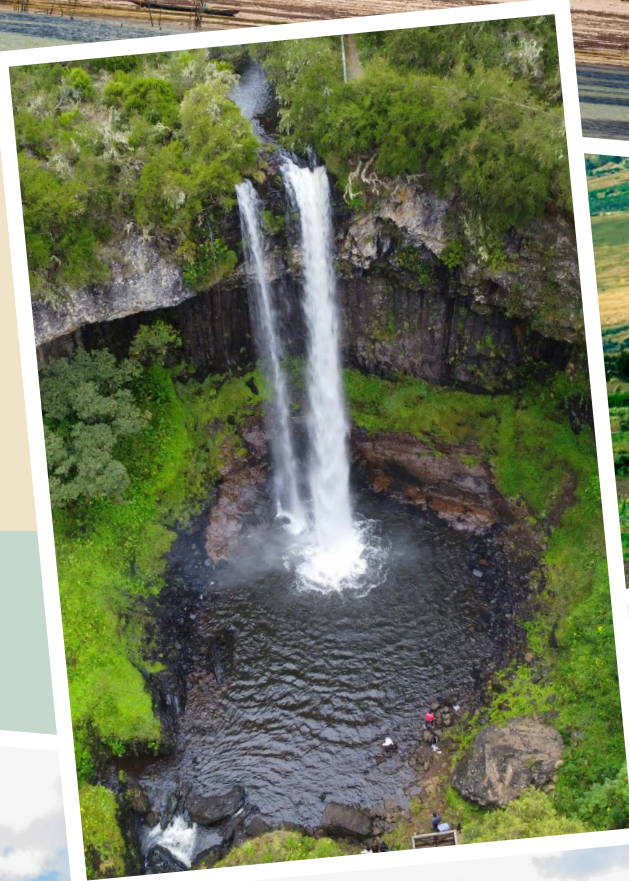
A lush, unique forest with easy trekking conditions, but an intensely fascinating biodiversity. Hire a local guide and gain a real, insider's insight into a world of unique plants and specialist birding. Don't miss the chance to walk through this living emerald jewel.

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Mount Longonot  
ISTOCK



Chania  
Waterfall in  
Kenia Aberdare  
Nationalpark



Hell's Gate National Park

## Must-Do Hikes

### *Menengai Crater:*

Commit 6 hours to summit the rim of this enormous volcanic crater, 12km across and 500m deep, for spectacular views high over Nakuru town.

### *Hiking Mount Longonot:*

Conquer the 2100m high Longonot in an hour and a half and be rewarded with sensational views of Naivasha. But the real prize is the walk around the crater rim and the steep path down to the volcanic floor, for the truly adventurous, local guides can assist with abseiling into the mountain's heart. Go deep, or don't go at all.

## Sky Diving

The Ultimate Adrenaline Drop You've seen Kenya on land. Now, see it from 14,000 feet, plunging earthwards at a heart-stopping 120 miles per hour over the elec-

tric blue of the Indian Ocean. If your heart isn't racing, you aren't living.

### *Diani Beach Tandem Jumps:*

The Minute That Changes Everything. The equatorial atmosphere allows for a full minute of accelerated freefall before you touch down on pure white sand, right outside your hotel. For novices, the tandem jump is your initiation.

### **Warning:**

This is the closest you'll ever feel to flying free as a bird, and it is intensely addictive. Many who jump once can't wait to go again. So while everyone else is settling for the predictable safari, are you bold enough to take to the skies, conquer the peaks, and ride the hidden trails? Your adventure window is open. Don't look back later wishing you had taken the leap.

# Chasing Waterfalls in Ragia Forest

By Dennis Musau

Yearning for a day that feels worlds away from Nairobi's fast rhythm, the kind where you trade exhaust fumes for crisp mountain air and the hum of the city for the rush of waterfalls? Ragia Forest is the kind of escape that quietly takes your breath away.

Located some ninety kilometres north of the city in Lari, Kiambu County, this pocket of wilderness sits on the southern edge of the vast Aberdare ecosystem—a cool, green world of bamboo thickets, forested ridges, and hidden valleys.

It borders Kieni Forest to the east, the Kinangop Plateau to the west, and, beyond its northern and southern edges, Kinangop and Kamae forests. At 4,250 hectares, it is a substantial slice of mountain woodland, managed by the Kenya Forest Service, and carries with it a deep history: this was once a stronghold of Mau Mau freedom fighters during Kenya's struggle for independence in the 1950s.

The walk through Ragia begins at Sasumua Dam, where you enter through the modest China's Camp Gate and step straight into a world of towering green. The trek forms a

loop, nine kilometres out, nine kilometres back, and typically takes around seven hours to complete.

The terrain shifts from steady inclines to steep drops, climbing to an altitude of 2,742 metres. It is not an easy walk, but it is the sort of challenge that rewards you with nature's beauty.

Almost immediately, the trail sinks into dense bamboo. Sunlight filters through the packed stalks while the ground feels padded underfoot with years of fallen leaves.

This 'bamboo garden', as the guides here call it, is one of Ragia's most enchanting sections, calm and fragrant. Then the path angles downwards, following old elephant trails into the valley, growing more rugged and more intimate as ferns brush your boots and birds whistle above.

Eventually, a sharp, slippery drop leads you into a hidden, small cave where 'Waterfall No. 18', as the locals call it, reveals itself: tall, powerful, and framed by moss-draped rocks and vines. After a quiet pause here, the trail climbs back up before descending once again toward 'Waterfall No. 17', another beautiful cascade whose mist fills the air around it.

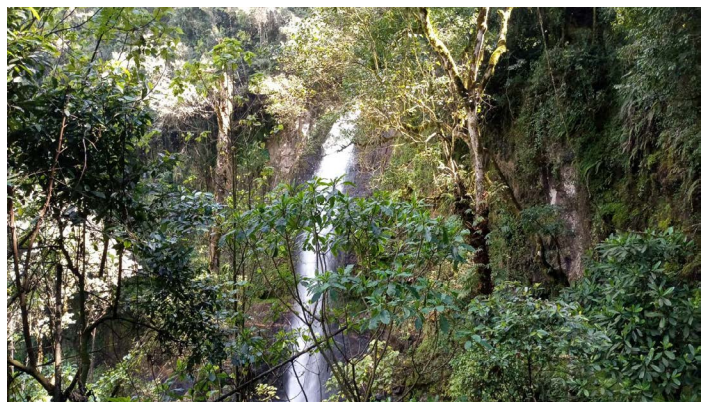
Many hikers pause here for a dip, the icy water providing the thrilling shock perfect for 'duff mpararo' (swimming in natural water bodies like rivers and ponds).

## Mau Mau cave

Just beyond the waterfalls lies one of Ragia's most memorable features: a Mau Mau cave once used as a hide-out by Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, General China, and other resistance fighters.

Inside its dark, extraordinary chambers, with only the echo of dripping water and the muffled forest sounds outside, you are reminded that this tranquil landscape once sheltered men fighting for the country's freedom.

The return path threads, once more, through dense bamboo and along a forest road where birds chatter overhead and the air carries the scent of wet earth. Ragia is a place of many



Ragia Forest. PHOTO | HIKING ADVENTURES



Sasumua Dam. PHOTO | HIKING ADVENTURES

small wonders: ferns that unfurl like coiled sculptures, insects darting between shafts of light, an old bridge perfect for dramatic photos, and glimpses of Elephant Hill in the distance.

The forest feels alive and immersive in a way that few trails near Nairobi manage. But it demands respect—Ragia can be slippery, especially after rain, and the steep descents require caution. Falls are common, and the trail is not suitable for children. Good hiking boots with a firm grip are essential, and a trekking pole can be the difference between a graceful step and a muddy slide.

For all its challenges, Ragia offers

a kind of peace that lingers long after the trail ends. It is the combination of sound and silence, the roar of waterfalls, the quiet awe inside a Mau Mau cave, the rhythmic rustle of bamboo in the wind.

It is the deep-green beauty of a forest that has remained largely untouched, the thrill of navigating slippery descents, the shock of cold river water on your skin, and the satisfaction of completing a demanding 18-kilometre trek.

In a world where so much nature feels manicured, Ragia still feels wild. It is raw, refreshing, and deeply grounding. For anyone seeking a challenge, a story, and a day wrapped in pure mountain forest, Ragia offers

an adventure worth taking.

### **Getting to Ragia Forest:**

Reaching the trailhead takes approximately two hours from Nairobi, following Waiyaki Way, then turning onto the Thika–Gatura road and passing through Gitaru, Kimende, Soko Mjinja, Kwa Haraka, and Kinamba before arriving at Sasumua Dam.

### **Charges:**

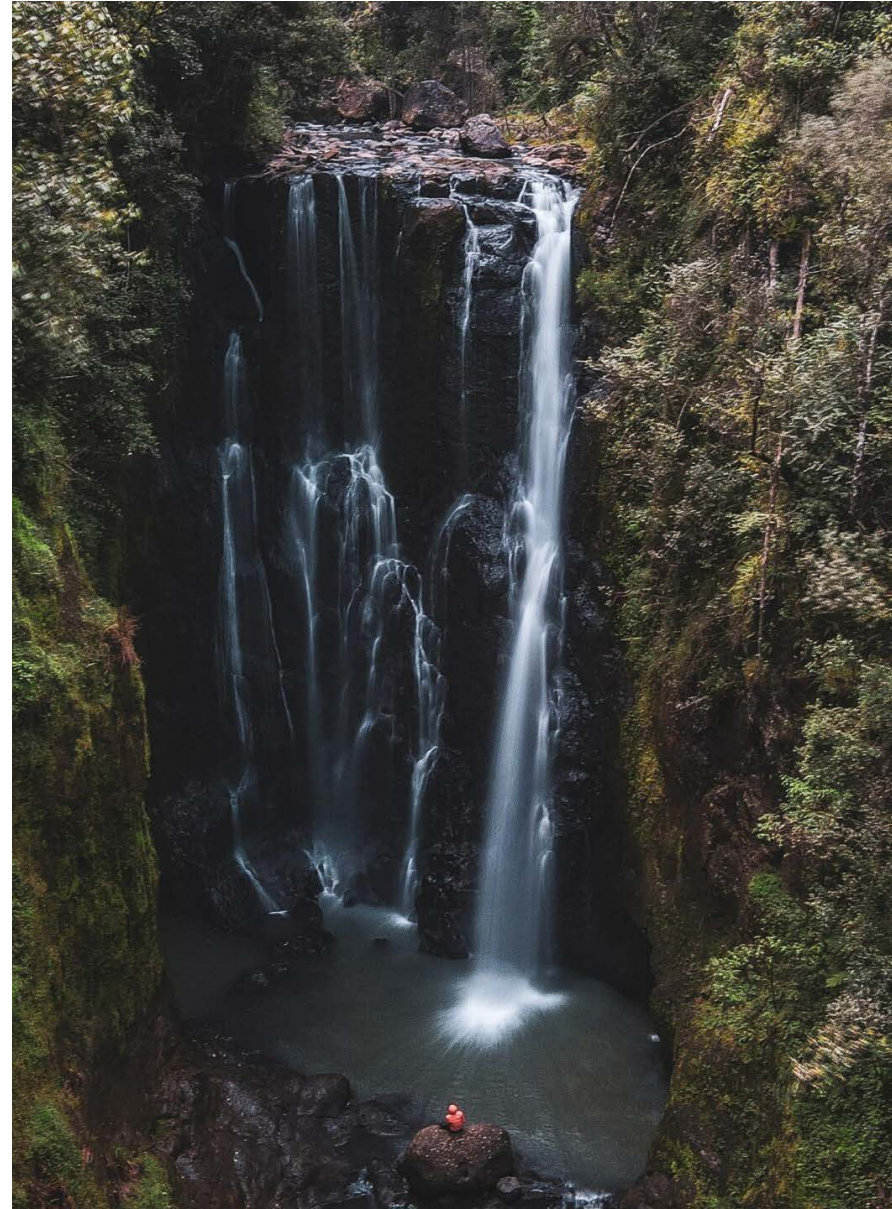
Entry into the forest costs Ksh 333 per person, and the parking area near China's Camp Gate serves as the staging point before the hike begins.

Rangers are available to guide you through the trail and offer security, and their fee is negotiable.

Ragia Forest/ Sasumua Falls PHOTO |HIKING ADVENTURES



Sasumua Falls PHOTO |HIKING ADVENTURES



Adventure  
& outdoors

# Climbing Kenya's Crown via Chogoria

By Annar Husain

Mount Kenya doesn't just rise—it erupts into the sky. A jagged crown of volcanic rock in the heart of central Kenya, the mountain is Africa's second-highest peak at 5,199 meters; its three summits—Batian, Nelion, and Point Lenana—are often dusted with snow, even under the equatorial sun. Down its flanks, alpine forests give way to moorlands, hanging glaciers, and valleys that feel untouched by time. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site for good reason: part myth, part geology, and entirely unforgettable.

Among its many trails, one stands out not just for its beauty but for sheer drama—the Chogoria Route.

## Trekking the Chogoria Route

If Mount Kenya had a signature runway moment, Chogoria would steal the spotlight. It's widely considered the most scenic approach to the mountain, a trail that reveals the landscape in slow, breathtaking chapters rather than all at once. The path eases you from dense forest into heather and moorland, then suddenly—almost theatrically—opens into sweeping valleys, cliff faces, and high-altitude lakes that shimmer like glass.

## Two lakes define the Chogoria story.

Lake Ellis, quiet and meditative, is the kind of place where you find yourself taking too many photos and then simply putting the camera down to absorb the silence. Higher up lies Lake Michaelson, tucked into a steep glacial amphitheatre, its turquoise glow startling even on cloudy days. Many trekkers call it the mountain's most beautiful spot, a reward you don't forget.

## When to Go

For clear skies and dry trails, aim for January to March or June to October. These months offer the best visibility of the peaks, glaciers, and lakes, making the ascent safer and more comfortable.

## A Five-Day Journey:

### The Chogoria–Sirimon Traverse

Many climbers choose to ascend via Chogoria and descend on the gentler Sirimon side—a five-day traverse that strikes the perfect balance between acclimatisation, scenery, and pace. You ascend gradually through forest, bamboo, and moorland before the landscape shifts into the stark alpine world near the summit. The Sirimon descent is softer, greener, and easier on tired knees.

#### **Day 1: Nairobi - Mt. Kenya Bandas (2,900 m)**

**Distance: 10 km | Ascent: 650 m | Travel: ~3 hrs**

The journey begins with a morning drive out of Nairobi, trading city bustle for the patchwork slopes of central Kenya. Lunch in Chogoria Town is your last taste of the lowlands before a 4x4 presses upward toward the bamboo zone.

From the forest edge, the trail begins in a cool hush—only birdsong and the rustle of bamboo breaking the quiet. By late afternoon, you reach Mt. Kenya Bandas, simple, warm, and surrounded by thick forest. It's the perfect soft landing before the climb truly begins.

#### **Overnight: Mt. Kenya Bandas**

**Day 2: Mt. Kenya Bandas - Lake Ellis Campsite (3,450 m)**

**Distance: 9 km | Ascent: 550 m | Trek: ~4 hrs**

The forest thins as the mountain opens into wide, rolling moorlands. The trail surprises you with pockets of giant groundsels, moss-covered rocks, and bright alpine flowers. A riverside lunch feels like something from an old expedition diary.

By mid-afternoon, you arrive at Lake Ellis, a tranquil bowl of water cupped by open highlands. It's a peaceful

campsite with vast night skies and crisp air that signals the altitude shift.

#### **Overnight: Lake Ellis Campsite**

**Day 3: Lake Ellis - Mintos Camp (4,200 m)**

**Distance: 12 km | Ascent: 750 m | Trek: ~4 hrs**

A steady morning climb lifts you onto a ridge with sweeping views across Gorges Valley. It's the mountain at its most dramatic—steep cliffs, wide plains, and endless moorlands stretching behind you. You join the main Chogoria trail around 4,100 m and push on to Mintos Camp, perched perfectly for sunset.

A short wander leads you to the Temple, a sheer 150-meter cliff whose views are so dizzyingly beautiful that people often pause in reverent silence. It's Mount Kenya at its most humbling.

#### **Overnight: Mintos Hut Area**

**Day 4: Mintos - Point Lenana (4,985 m) - Old Moses Camp (3,300 m)**

**Distance: 19 km | Ascent: 785 m | Descent: 1,685 m | Trek: 8-9 hrs**

Your summit day starts in the dark, headlamps cutting through the cold. The climb is steady but demanding; by the time dawn breaks, you're standing on Point Lenana, watching the sun rise over the jagged shadows of Batian and Nelion. It's one of Africa's great mountain moments.

A long, scenic descent follows through Shipton Camp and down the wide sweep of Mackinder's Valley. The moorlands feel softer here, the terrain easier on tired limbs. By late afternoon, you reach Old Moses Camp for a well-deserved rest.

#### **Overnight: Old Moses Camp**

**Day 5: Old Moses - Sirimon Gate - Nairobi**

A gentle morning walk winds through forest and moorland toward Sirimon Gate, where the mountain slowly recedes behind you. By late afternoon, you're back in Nairobi—dusty, exhilarated, and already nostalgic.

## Experience the Magic

Trekking Mount Kenya via the Chogoria Route is an immersion into one of East Africa's most enchanting landscapes. Misty bamboo tunnels, cliff-ringed lakes, dawn seen from nearly 5,000 meters—every section of the route has its own personality, its own memory that stays with you.

Point Lenana rewards you with a sunrise that feels almost otherworldly. Sirimon sends you home gently, through forests alive with the chirps of birds. And somewhere between those two points, Mount Kenya shifts from a mountain you climbed to a place you carry with you.

Explore Kenya's  
hidden gems

# Journeys Off the Map

By James Nyandew & Annar Husain



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## 1. Lake Turkana

Lake Turkana rises in Kenya's far north, a green jewel in the desert, framed by black volcanic rocks. Winds sweep dust across the landscape, carrying the smell of dry earth and cooking fires from scattered villages. Fishermen push small wooden canoes into the water, their voices carrying across the lake. Crocodiles rest on the rocks, and flamingos march along the shore before taking flight in a flurry of pink.

Reaching Turkana is not simple. Roads disappear into sand and scrub, and 4x4 vehicles bounce over rough tracks. The effort is part of the reward. At Koobi Fora, fossils older than most cities litter the ground, and visitors can trace the shapes of early humans while elders of the Turkana people watch quietly. Life here flows in rhythms unchanged for centuries: nomadic herders painted in ochre, children chasing goats, and women weaving beads that click softly with every step.

### *Tips for travellers*

·Lake Turkana: Fly to Lodwar; hire a 4x4 and local guide. Best November–March. Eco-lodges or lakeside camps.

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Magical Kenya

# Explore Kenya's hidden gems

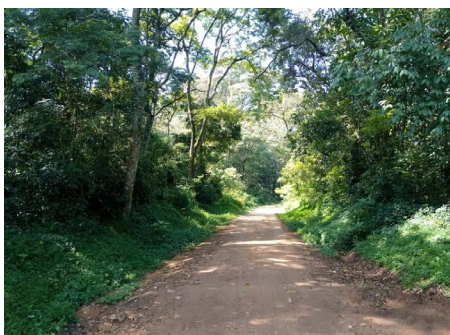
## 2. Loita Hills

Heading south to the Loita Hills is like stepping into another world. Mist curls through valleys, while Maasai cattle graze and their bells tinkle softly. Ridge walks reveal hills and streams stretching into the Rift Valley. Local guides, often born and raised in the area, share small stories along the way.

A necklace of tiny red beads might carry a tale passed down for generations. A dik-dik pauses in the grass, ears flicking, before disappearing into the mist. In the Loita Hills, it's the small details—the smells, the sounds, the human stories—that make the place memorable.

### *Tips for travellers*

·Loita Hills: Roads are rough; 4x4 recommended. Stay in community guesthouses. Sunrise hikes offer the best views.



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## 3. Kakamega Forest

Kakamega Forest offers a different kind of quiet. Kenya's only tropical rainforest smells of wet soil and moss, with sunlight filtering through dense trees. Monkeys swing overhead, butterflies drift in sunlit patches, and hidden streams and waterfalls appear along winding paths.

Forest guides show visitors medicinal plants and explain how locals have used them for generations. Staying at an eco-lodge within the forest brings mornings of birdsong and nights filled with the glow of fireflies. Kakamega slows you down, making every slight sound, scent, and movement feel alive.

### *Tips for travellers*

·Kakamega Forest: About 60 km from Kisumu; best March–May or October–December. Eco-lodges allow immersive stays. Local guides enhance wildlife and plant

## 4. Ruma National Park

Ruma National Park, on the edge of Lake Victoria, is one of Kenya's quieter wildlife destinations. Grass glistens with morning dew, and the savannah stretches across gentle hills dotted with acacia trees. Black rhinos leave footprints in the mud, while impala, buffalo, and lions move across the landscape.

Drives through the park feel private. A rhino may graze just meters away, impala scatter at the sound of a vehicle, and the sun casts the grass in gold and violet tones. Without the crowds of more popular parks, wildlife encounters here feel intimate, almost like being allowed to watch a private moment in nature.

### *Tips for travellers*

·Ruma National Park: 30 km from Migori; 4x4 recommended—campsites or small lodges nearby. Early morning or late afternoon drives are best.



## 5. Marafa Hell's Kitchen

Marafa Hell's Kitchen, near Malindi, is a landscape that seems to move. Sandstone cliffs twist and fold, glowing red and gold as the sun lowers. Walking through narrow ravines, visitors feel both small and part of something ancient. Local guides tell stories of fishermen who once hid here during storms and show fading carvings etched into the cliffs.

Sunrise and sunset offer different moods: soft, pastel light in the morning, dramatic flares in the evening. Shadows shift constantly as the wind moves through the canyons, giving the impression that the landscape itself is alive.

### *Tips for travellers*

·Marafa Hell's Kitchen: 30 km from Malindi; sturdy shoes recommended. Sunrise and sunset offer the best light for walking and photography.

## Roads not take

What links these places is not their geography, but the way life continues in them. From Turkana's desert herders to Loita's Maasai villagers, Kakamega's forest trackers, Ruma's rhinos, and the legends whispered in Marafa, these corners of Kenya demand attention. Travellers must slow down, notice the details, and pause in spaces essentially

unchanged over centuries.

Travel here is about presence: watching flamingos lift from the water, feeling mist curl around ankles in the hills, smelling rain-soaked soil in the forest, tracing fossils or carvings that have survived generations. These hidden corners are not just destinations; they are experiences, waiting for those willing to leave the main roads behind.



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# Kenya Opens Its Tea and Coffee Heartland

By Gilbert Koech

The lush green rolling hills of tea plantations welcome visitors to the county of Nandi.

The county, better known as the source of champions, has a lot to offer in terms of breathtaking tourist sites.

Nandi County is endowed with attractions ranging from wildlife, rivers, waterfalls, and geysers, among others yet to be exploited, breathtaking landscapes, hills ideal for hiking, campsites, and trekking.

Other huge tea farms are also found dotting various parts of the country, such as Kericho, but agro-tourism is yet to be fully explored.

Agro-tourism is tourism that combines agricultural practices with recreational activities, allowing visitors to experience rural life through immersive, educational, and hands-on farm activities. During such activities, tourists engage in farming practices and learn about where food comes from, thereby supporting rural economies.

**Interest in agro-tourism**

The East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA) Managing Director George Omuga said his organization is working with partners to promote agro-tourism.



# Agro & culinary journeys

Kuku Paka, Kenyan char-grilled Chicken stewed in creamy spicy Coconut Sauce served in earthenware saucepan on a wooden table



Limuru Kiambu County Kenya. Large scale tea plantation.

Omuga said the promotion started in the Mombasa auction, which is one of the largest. Talks are underway with tourism stakeholders so that agro-tourism can kick off during the tea auction before moving to tea farms across the country.

“We want to integrate the Ministry of Tourism so that when we receive international guests, we need to showcase what we have,” he said.

To improve tea making as part of the tourism package, Omuga said his organization has been taking visitors through the art and science of tea making. This, he says, will ensure tourists get the best tea when they spend time in some of the hotels.

Omuga said the move will not only place Kenya’s tea as one of the best but will also elevate the country as a tourist destination of choice.

EATTA is a voluntary organization bringing together Tea Producers, Buyers (Exporters), Brokers, Tea Packers and Warehouses, all working to promote the best interests of the tea trade in Africa. Currently, membership comprises over three hundred companies extending across the East and Central African region.

EATTA is mandated to promote and facilitate the interests of all stakeholders in the tea trade by creating an enabling business environment geared towards maintaining global standards and delivering tea products to customers in the most profitable way.

### New frontiers

The Kenya Vision 2030 identifies tourism as a key sector under the eco-

nomie pillar, envisaging Kenya as one of the top ten long-haul and leading tourist destinations offering a high-end, diverse, and distinctive visitor experience.

The Vision says the government will conduct research to develop an inventory of agro-tourism sites, eventually generating an agro-tourism guide for tourists. Potential sites include tea and coffee estates, and food festivals.

In 2021, the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) rolled out promotional programs to position the country for agro-tourism, with tea, flowers, and coffee leading the pack of farm tours to be showcased. Kenya is positioning farm tours as experiences for both local and international travellers as part of its strategy to diversify tourism products.

KTB intensified the campaign during the launch of farm tours at Gatura Greens Tea Farm in Murang’a County. KTB Company Secretary Allan Njoroge called on farm owners and producers to work towards packaging tours that would benefit both them and the traveller.

He said Kenya is one of the largest producers and exporters of tea and cut flowers in the world, attracting global interest, and is known for its high-quality coffee loved globally.

“People want to understand what makes Kenya’s products special, and farm tours give an opportunity to provide this information. We also want to show domestic tourists that there are many travel opportunities around them to explore,” Njoroge said.

He added that Kenyan products continue to play a great role in keeping

destination memories alive globally, especially with the minimal travel and lockdowns experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### A new strategy

Kenya’s key tourism products have mainly centred on safari and beach destinations.

The draft Kenya National Tourism Strategy (2025–2030) reiterates that for Kenya to be globally competitive, it must focus on product innovation, diversification, market expansion, and improving destination appeal.

The draft prioritizes product development and diversification, seeking to expand Kenya’s tourism offering beyond traditional beach and safari to include cultural, wellness, sports, adventure, agri-tourism, and MICE tourism.

It also seeks to promote and market tourism in a way that strengthens Kenya’s visibility globally, implements targeted market approaches, and secures sustainable promotion funding.

The strategy notes that despite its rich diversity—wildlife, heritage, cultural, adventure, and conference attractions—the country remains heavily reliant on a few traditional markets and products. Fragmented branding, underutilized digital platforms, inconsistent visitor experiences, and weak destination coordination have limited Kenya’s ability to benefit from emerging tourism trends such as experiential travel, eco-tourism, and growing domestic and regional tourism.

Furthermore, the absence of a cohesive multi-tiered marketing structure—national, circuit, and city-level—has limited Kenya’s ability to compete with more coordinated global destinations.

The strategy seeks to reposition Kenya as a year-round, multi-product destination by addressing these issues through coordinated, innovative, and sustainable promotion and marketing.



# Streets, Kitchens, and Coastlines



Nyama choma, Swahili for roast meat, is slow cooked in outdoor kitchen and eaten with the hands. This order was 1 kilo of the most popular, mbuzi choma or roasted goat.



Nyama choma means grilled meat - traditional east african food

## By our Correspondent

Kenya doesn't just live in guidebooks. It also lives in its kitchens, in the markets where tomatoes sweat in the sun, in smoke curling above street corners, in the scent of cloves, cumin, and the ocean.

To eat your way through Kenya is to slow down, to get messy, to pay attention. Every bite is a story. Every meal, a memory waiting to happen.

### Nyama choma: Fire, meat, ritual

Step into a nyama choma joint anywhere—Nairobi's chaotic outskirts, a quiet village homestead—and suddenly

the world narrows to sizzling meat over charcoal or wood, smoke curling into your hair, your nose, your clothes. Nyama choma isn't just grilled meat; it's a heartbeat.

Goat, beef, chicken, charred to perfection, dripping fat into the fire with a hiss that makes your stomach growl like a beast.

Ugali, soft and steaming, waits patiently beside tangy kachumbari, a humble salad of tomatoes and onions that somehow tastes like sunshine. Here, knives are optional, and forks are ignored. You eat with your hands, with your friends, with laughter ringing louder than the fire.

**“You eat with your fingers because spoons would betray the experience.”**



Chapatis



SHUTTERSTOCK

Every bite carries smoke, patience, and the quiet pride of the grill master, a guy who wrangles flavour from fire as if he were painting on a canvas. Time slows. Conversation lingers. And when you finally swallow, you know—this isn't just eating. It's sharing. It's living.

### **Coastal spices: Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa**

Now take that same curiosity to the coast, where the ocean hits the streets with the scent of salt and spice. Cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, cumin—they fight for attention with the smell of the sea, each one promising a story on your tongue before you even take a bite.

Coastal Kenya is a culinary crossroads, a marriage of Arab, Indian, and African traditions that somehow taste effortless, alive.

Biryani glistens, each grain a fragrant jewel. Pilau steam curls into the air, teasing your appetite with cinnamon and cardamom. Then there's samaki wa kupaka—fish bathed in coconut sauce, silky, sticky, messy, delicious.

You eat with your fingers because spoons would betray the experience. Every bite is a negotiation between spice, sea, and your own greed.

### **Streets alive: Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa**

Kenya's cities move at their own chaotic pace, and its street food keeps up. Mandazi—pillowy, fried, sugar-warmed doughnuts—smell like nostalgia. Crispy samosas snap with spiced beef or lentils hiding inside. Viazi karai, bhajias, roasted maize—every corner offers a new texture, a new jolt of flavour.

These snacks appear and vanish in moments, snatched by hungry hands, leaving behind fingers coated in chilli, salt, and memory. Walking the streets is not just eating—it's eavesdropping on the city itself. Its heartbeat, its humour, its grit. And by the end, you're not just full—you're alive, connected, and maybe a little messy.

### **Nairobi's new flavour**

And then there's Nairobi—little chaos with a lot of ambition. Rooftop restaurants glimmer, intimate bistros hum, fusion cafés take old flavours and push them into the future. Chefs are digging into local markets, honouring the past while throwing in a little audacity.

Nyama choma here can be smoky, tender, and kissed with paprika and exotic spices you didn't know could

exist together. Tilapia gets cloaked in herbaceous chutney that tastes like the coast in a single bite.

Vegetables, legumes, indigenous grains—no longer humble sides, now stars on the plate. Every dish is a conversation about history, innovation, and the city's pulse served on porcelain.

Add to that cafés experimenting with locally grown coffee, micro-breweries bottling flavours of passionfruit, hibiscus, sugarcane, or honey, and you begin to see a city rediscovering itself through taste. Nairobi is an experiment, a challenge to the palate, an invitation to pay attention.

### **You keep coming back**

Kenya's food waits to be noticed, appreciated, and savoured. Eat here a thousand times, and there's always one bite, one flavour, one moment that hits you fresh. Around the fire, under the sun, on a street corner—you leave with more than a full stomach. You go with a story.

And every return reminds you that food here isn't just food. It's culture, history, intimacy, and magic. Smoke in your hair, spice on your fingers, laughter in your ears, Kenya serves memories.



# Urban Kenya



Nairobi expressway



## Wildlife at the edge of the city:

### Nairobi National Park

Just a short drive from the heart of Nairobi, Nairobi National Park — established in 1946 — offers a rare encounter: skyscrapers on the horizon, lions in the foreground. It's one of the few places on earth where big cats roam against an urban backdrop. With luck, you might spot sleek cheetahs scanning the grass or a leopard slipping into shade.

The park is also one of Kenya's most successful rhino sanctuaries, home to thriving populations of both black and white rhinos. Buffalo, giraffes, zebras, wildebeest, gazelles, and antelopes wander the open plains, and with more than 100 mammal species recorded, no two visits ever feel the same. Birders, meanwhile, find paradise here — more than 500 bird species fill the skies, especially vibrant between March and May when European migrants arrive.

Early morning game drives are a classic way to explore, but you can also wander along designated trails or settle at scenic picnic spots like Kingfisher, Mokoyiet, the Ivory Burning Site, or Impala Observation Point. Campsites let you fall asleep to a distant lion's roar, and nearby attractions — from the Nairobi Safari Walk to the Nairobi Animal Orphanage — deepen the conservation story. Nairobi National Park makes wilderness feel close, accessible, and impossible to forget.

## Urban Kenya

# The Wild Heart of Nairobi

### By our Correspondent

**M**orning breaks gently over Nairobi, catching on the glass edges of new towers and the familiar chaos of matatus easing into motion. The city hums awake—a mix of espresso machines, birdsong, and the low murmur of a place always on the move. Yet just beyond the traffic lights and leafy suburbs, the wild stirs too. It's this contrast—sharp, surprising, and uniquely Nairobi—that gives the city its quiet magic.

Here, a skyline of steel rises beside plains where buffalo graze. Giraffes appear at the edge of suburban fences. Elephant calves splash only minutes from shopping malls and coffee bars. Nairobi doesn't separate its wild heart from its urban one; it folds them together, letting both shape people's daily lives.

Rediscovering the city means noticing these juxtapositions—the small moments where nature slips into the everyday and reminds you that Nairobi is never just a city. It's a living, layered place where adventure begins long before you "leave town."



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## A step back in time: The Karen Blixen Museum

On the leafy outskirts of Nairobi, the Karen Blixen Museum — founded in 1986 — offers a captivating glimpse into the life of one of Kenya’s most iconic literary figures. Housed in the preserved farmhouse of Danish author Karen Blixen, best known for *Out of Africa*, the museum transports you to the early 20th century with its authentic colonial-era interiors, original furniture, kitchenware, and décor from her time.

As you walk through sunlit rooms — from her study to the drawing room — and stroll the gardens and a nature trail lined with labeled indigenous trees, you can almost feel the rhythm of her early 20th-century life on her coffee farm. Knowledgeable guides share anecdotes about Blixen’s time in Kenya, her relationships with local communities, and the literary legacy she left behind, leading you toward the museum shop, where a curated selection of books, handicrafts, postcards, and souvenirs tied to *Out of Africa* awaits.

Nearby, a café offers a peaceful spot for a cup of Kenyan coffee and light refreshments, letting you soak in sweeping views of the Ngong Hills as the story of one of Kenya’s most celebrated authors lingers in your mind.



ISTOCK

## Up close with giants: The Giraffe Centre

In Lang’ata, the Giraffe Centre brings you eye-to-eye with the elegant Rothschild’s giraffe. From an elevated platform, you can hold out a pellet and watch those impossibly long lashes blink as a giraffe leans in, its tongue curling around your offering. The brave might attempt the cheeky “giraffe kiss,” a rite of passage for many visitors.

Beyond the feeding decks, the surrounding nature sanctuary invites a gentle wander through native trees, flowering bushes, and quiet waterholes. Birds flit overhead, and if you move slowly, you may spot other small wildlife. An onsite lecture offers insight into the conservation work behind the experience. Afterwards, the Tea House and the Daisy Zooner Shop—filled with local crafts and giraffe-inspired keepsakes—extend the calm, leafy charm of this urban oasis.

## A haven for elephants: David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

On the edge of the city lies one of Kenya’s most heartwarming sanctuaries: the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. Founded in 1977, it has become a global symbol of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, known especially for raising orphaned elephants and rhinos.

The Nairobi Nursery’s public visiting hour—daily from 11 a.m. to noon—is pure magic. With advance booking, you get to watch tiny elephants sprint out of the forest toward their bottles, splash in mud baths, trumpet with delight, and nuzzle keepers who have become their surrogate families. Their curiosity is disarming; they study you as eagerly as you study them.

For a deeper connection, stays at the Trust’s eco-lodges offer exclusive access to Reintegration Units in Voi, Ithumba, or Umani Springs, where older orphans take their final steps back into the wild. It’s a rare privilege: seeing conservation not as an idea, but as a life being rebuilt.

## Experience the magic

As sunset washes the city in amber and rose, Nairobi reveals its truest self—a place where lions prowl within sight of office towers, where colonial-era farmhouses sit quietly among modern suburbs, and where conservation has grown into a defining part of the city’s identity.

Every corner holds a surprise: a giraffe stepping into view, an elephant calf splashing joyfully, a guide sharing a story passed down through generations. Nairobi’s beauty lies not just in its contrasts but in the way it blends them—effortlessly, confidently, and with a rhythm all its own.

Here, the city and the wild meet on equal terms. Here, every visit feels like a rediscovery. Here, Nairobi whispers the same invitation over and over: Come explore. Come marvel. Come feel the magic of a city unlike any other.

# Why Nairobi Is Africa's Bleisure Hub

By Eva Chao

**K**enya's 2024 tourism data suggests something more structural than a simple uptick in visitor numbers. With 2.39 million international arrivals, what draws attention is the growing weight of business and meetings-related travel.

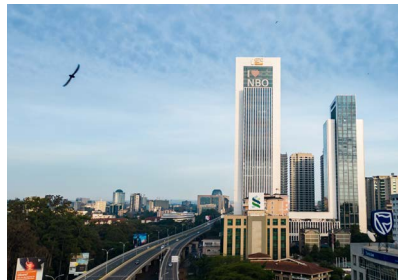
The MICE segment—meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions—expanded 12.5% last year, now representing 27% of all arrivals. That's a strong signal that business trips are accounting for a rising share of inbound travel, and many of those trips come with an implicit leisure agenda.

## Built for business and leisure

The capital is doing much of the heavy lifting behind the shift. Over recent years, Nairobi has acquired the essential infrastructure for conferences and corporate events, including decent connectivity, a stock of hotels up to international standards, and a stable supply of venues sized for mid-level to large gatherings.

New hotels and conference facilities developments mirror the needs of regional banks, development agencies, telcos, NGOs, and corporates headquartered in the city.

Over the last decade, more than 25 international and regional hotel brands have opened or expanded in Nairobi, adding thousands of rooms and dozens of flexible meeting ven-



ues. This gives event planners options that don't require building temporary infrastructure or working around space limitations.

Meanwhile, coastal cities like Mombasa, Diani, and Watamu are upgrading their resort infrastructure to better absorb post-conference travellers. Many are introducing co-working spaces, meeting rooms, and flexible work pods—subtle but telling signs of where demand is heading.

In a region where logistics often prove a constraint, this self-contained setup gives Kenya a competitive edge.

But more significant is what happens once the last session ends. From Nairobi, a short trip can bring you to very different settings like the lakeside of Naivasha is about 90 minutes' drive; a flight of under an hour land you near the wildlife of the Mara; and coastal escapes like Diani or Watamu are reachable in two hours or less—making a quick transition from boardroom to beach (or bush) entirely feasible.

## Business meets escape

Hoteliers and tour operators are picking up on a clear pattern with corpo-

rate itineraries increasingly crafted as hybrid packages. A typical schedule might place a structured conference in Nairobi first, then transition to a quieter, more relaxed leg in the Rift Valley or along the coast.

This design attends to both professional obligations and personal downtime, a growing preference among regional banks, development organisations, and multinational firms operating in East Africa.

For coastal destinations, the impact has been meaningful. Resorts along the Indian Ocean—long seasonal and dependent on holidaymakers—are seeing an inflow of post-conference guests. Their stays are often longer than a standard business trip, with delegates trading slides and plenaries for coastal breezes and downtime, occasionally working remotely given strong internet connectivity.

Several practical enablers underpin this trend. Reliable 5G/fibre connectivity across many parts of Kenya allows remote work from leisure destinations. Domestic air routes are frequent enough to support short-haul weekend getaways.

And the broader tourism infrastructure—from hotels to safari lodges to coastal resorts—already built for holiday travellers, adapts readily to the needs of mixed-purpose visitors.

## No need to shout

What sets Kenya apart is that the repositioning is happening organically rather than through a top-down PR campaign. Its business ecosystem is large and fluid enough to generate meeting traffic on its own. Meanwhile, its leisure assets—from Rift Valley landscapes to Indian Ocean beaches—remain globally appealing without requiring reinvention.

This pivot won't replace Kenya's leisure identity. But it's becoming a crucial second engine—one that's beginning to shape where hotels invest, where airlines add capacity, and how planners design regional events.

And with the expansion of the United Nations (UN) offices in Nairobi following relocation of some function New York and Geneva, Kenya's strategy is emerging from its lived reality, a country where work and leisure already blur with surprising ease.



# Transformational Travel

# Why Kenya Is the Ultimate Family Story

By Cynthia Kanyali

**M**ulti-generational travel is having a moment—and Kenya has embraced it with the kind of ease that feels almost instinctive. Here, grandparents, parents, and children don't just take a holiday together; they create a shared story. Think of it as a family reunion, but with elephants grazing in the background, Samburu beadwork lessons replacing small talk, and evenings spent around a fire instead of a crowded dining table.

Kenya has long understood that the best trips are the ones that span ages. From baby-friendly safari lodges to conservation-led kids' clubs, the country has shaped

a travel experience where everyone—no matter the age—finds their place in the wild.

## The rise of multi-generational safaris

More families are choosing to travel in packs, and for good reason: it's more affordable, more meaningful, and endlessly more fun. And few places welcome groups better than Kenya, a country built on community, hospitality, and landscapes big enough for every kind of traveller.

Days stretch out with activities families can enjoy together—tracking pawprints across the savannah, beading with Samburu women, planting trees with Maasai elders. These aren't just excursions; they're the moments that turn a family trip into a family legacy.

## Fun for every generation

Whatever your definition of adventure, Kenya offers it. Maybe it's floating above the plains in a hot-air balloon at sunrise, or watching dolphins shimmer off the coast. Maybe it's a gentle guided bush walk, or an afternoon spent dozing by the pool as children chase butterflies with their new ranger badges.

## Camps across Kenya have become masters at designing age-appropriate activities:

- **For little explorers:** bush treasure hunts, dung tracking, beadwork lessons, and junior ranger programs complete with badges, nature logbooks, and certificates they'll proudly carry home.

- **For teenagers:** photography classes, mountain biking, wildlife tracking with rangers, and night drives in private conservancies. These hands-on experiences often plant the earliest seeds of a conservation ethic.

- **For parents:** morning game drives followed by spa treatments, long lazy brunches in the bush, peaceful nature walks, and sundowners with views that demand a moment of silence.

- **For grandparents:** short game drives, mobility-friendly camps, paved walkways, and tents designed for comfort. They get to enjoy slow, meaningful safari moments—birdwatching from the verandah, storytelling around the fire, and watching their family fall in love with the wild.

What's remarkable is how Kenyan lodges manage to keep the atmosphere serene and deeply authentic even while catering thoughtfully to family needs.





## Why Kenya is perfect for multi-generational travel

It's not one thing—it's everything working together.

• **Easy logistics:** Modern airports, direct international arrivals, and quick internal flights make transitions smooth even for young children and seniors.

• **Year-round travel:** With varied climates, families can visit throughout the year without facing extreme weather.

• **Safety and expertise:** Guides are highly trained, conservancies are well-regulated, and responsible safari practices give parents and grandparents peace of mind.

• **A culture that honours all ages:** Kenyan hospitality is famously warm, and children and elders hold a special place in local communities.

• **A chance to disconnect—and reconnect:** In a world of constant screens, Kenya gently reminds children (and adults) that there's a bigger, more beautiful world out there.

Most journeys begin in Nairobi, where a night at a family-friendly lodge helps everyone adjust before heading into the wild. Cultural immersion adds texture to the trip—visits to Maasai villages, traditional craft sessions, and meals infused with local flavours create memories layered with meaning.



SHUTTERSTOCK

### A family story that lasts a lifetime

This is the kind of trip where the smallest moments become the biggest memories. A grandmother watches her granddaughter sketch lion cubs. A father pointing out constellations his teenage son has never seen. A toddler wobbling like a baby giraffe, trying to mimic its walk. A family falling silent as elephants cross the road, the earth trembling beneath their feet.

Kenya isn't just where families vacation. It's where generations meet

in the middle—between the wild and the familiar, the ancient and the new, the quiet moments and the breathtaking ones.

In a world where families are often scattered by geography and routine, Kenya offers something rare: a place to reconnect, to breathe together, and to remember what shared time can feel like. Out here, with the grasses swaying and horizons stretching endlessly ahead, families don't just travel together.

They grow together.



# Sports Tourism

Sports  
Tourism

# Stride for Stride: Training Sports Champions

By Gilbert Koech

**T**he Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) is turning to an unexpected arena to attract more visitors: sports.

With world-class athletes and expansive training grounds, Kenya is positioning itself as a hub for international sports enthusiasts, particularly runners seeking high-altitude training. The strategy aims to capitalise on the country's reputation as a breeding ground for some of the world's most celebrated athletes.

## High altitude, high potential

Kenya's Rift Valley and other elevated regions are home to a network of high-altitude training camps, long favoured by elite Kenyan athletes including Eliud Kipchoge, Paul Tergat, Pamela Jelimo, and Samuel Wanjiru. The thinner air at these elevations forces the lungs to work harder, boosting endurance—a key advantage that has helped Kenyan runners dominate





City races—to attract foreign participants, further cementing Kenya’s global sporting credentials.

### **Adventure tourism meets athletics**

Kenya’s sporting strategy extends beyond running. Earlier this year, KTB launched the Heritage Trails Expedition and Barngetuny Run, a series of mountain and trail running events designed to highlight the country’s adventure tourism potential.

The five-day series, which kicked off in Laikipia County, combined hiking, biking, cultural immersions, and farm tours across Laikipia, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Baringo, and Nandi counties. It culminates with the Barngetuny Run on January 18 in Nandi. Organised in collaboration with Athletics Kenya, the initiative is part of a broader effort to diversify Kenya’s tourism offerings while tapping into the fast-growing \$804 billion global adventure tourism market.

### **Tourism on the rise**

The timing could not be better. According to the Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report 2024, international arrivals globally rose 11% to 1.4 billion. Africa welcomed 74 million visitors, a 7% increase compared to 2019 and a 12% rise from 2023, accounting for 5.3% of global arrivals.

Kenya itself saw inbound tourism grow sharply. The country welcomed 2,394,376 international visitors in 2024, up 14.6% from 2,089,259 in 2023. Earnings from tourism rose 19.8%, reaching Sh 452.20 billion, up from Sh 377.49 billion the previous year.

For KTB, sport offers a way to harness these trends, combining Kenya’s natural landscapes, elite athletic pedigree, and adventure tourism opportunities into a single, compelling proposition for international travellers.



international competitions.

KTB sees a broader opportunity: attracting not just professional athletes, but amateur sports enthusiasts and tourists eager to experience Kenya’s running culture firsthand.

### **‘Home of champions’**

In 2024, KTB announced partnerships with athletics training camp operators across the country to promote their facilities to global audiences. June Chepkemei, KTB’s CEO, emphasised that Kenya’s growing reputation in athletics continues to draw international athletes eager to train alongside the country’s champions.

“We have witnessed several international visitors enrolling in training, either for health or competition purposes,” said Chepkemei. “This presents an opportunity to position Kenya as a premier destination for athletics training.”

Chepkemei has urged camp owners in the Rift Valley, Central Kenya, and Ukambani to upgrade facilities to meet international standards, enhancing the experience for visiting athletes.

The board is also exploring partnerships with organisers of major local marathons—including the Standard Chartered and Eldoret



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**Arusha PM Service**

Flight No	Routing	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
F2 143	Wilson→ Arusha	1310 hrs	1410 hrs	<b>Daily</b>
F2 144	Arusha→Wilson	1440 hrs	1540 hrs	

**Entebbe AM Service**

Flight No	Routing	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
F2 083	Wilson → Kisumu	0800 hrs	0845 hrs	<b>Daily</b>
F2 083	Kisumu → Entebbe	0945 hrs	1030 hrs	
F2 084	Entebbe →Kisumu	1115 hrs	1200 hrs	
F2 084	Kisumu →Wilson	1245 hrs	1330 hrs	
F2 083	Wilson → Kisumu	0800 hrs	0845 hrs	

**Entebbe PM Service**

Flight No	Routing	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
F2 087	Wilson → Kisumu	1530 hrs	1615 hrs	<b>Mon / Wed / Fri / Sun</b> Effective 02nd February 2026
F2 087	Kisumu →Entebbe	1715hrs	1800 hrs	
F2 088	Entebbe → Kisumu	1845hrs	1930 hrs	
F2 088	Kisumu →Wilson	2015hrs	2100 hrs	
F2 087	Wilson → Kisumu	1530 hrs	1615 hrs	

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