

Discovering the Magical Kenya Signature Experience Collection

Kenya's tourism players are repositioning and expanding their offering to deliver unique, authentic Kenyan travel experiences.

Dubbed the "Magical Kenya Signature Experiences" (MKSE), facilities and organisations are creating more immersive travel experiences than ever before as the country seeks to grow and diversify products and experience.

Through this collection, Kenya is able to showcase to the world that it has a lot more to offer beyond the iconic wildlife safari and the pristine sandy beaches for both repeat and first time visitors. With more than 30 tourism facilities now certified for signature experience offering, Kenya has recorded one of key milestones of its tourism transformation. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the tourism industry is ready for kick-off once travel resumes fully.

Kenya is a multi-experiential destination offering unique, diverse, memorable and authentic traveller experiences. Words alone are insufficient to capture the magic and the true beauty of the country's natural and human interactions. Following are just a few of Kenya's great undiscovered pearls.

MIDA CREEK

In the heart of Watamu, stretching inland from the expansive Indian Ocean is the Mida Creek: a mangrove-lined oasis with statuesque palms, sea turtles and several species of fish and birds... The serenity of these waters beckons to lovers of nature to float peacefully through the forest and get carried seaward by the outgoing tide. This tidal phenomenon happens right after a full or a new moon, when the outgoing tide is strongest. Nearby one can stay at the Watamu Tree House. Whether you are an adventure junkie or looking for a relaxing and quiet getaway, once you arrive you will never want to leave this place. Amazing rooms immersed in nature, delicious food that is healthy and catered to the individual, and friendly staff who welcome the visitor like family. Watamu Tree House yields unparalleled views of the surrounding nature and the azure blue Indian Ocean from the highest point in town.

If a visitor is looking for a different mode of seafaring, why not try kayaking upon the clear and serene waters of Mida Creek? Beginners and experts alike can paddle peacefully in a guided kayak while exploring the rich ecosystem of the channel where the mangroves, the palms and migratory birds from as far away as Europe coexist in a tropical nirvana.

CYCLING IN KENYA

Kenya's pristine, white, sandy beaches are famous the world over, and Diani, situated on Kenya's southern coast, is no exception. In this little slice of paradise, one may spice up one's beach holiday by taking an entirely different kind of safari... on a bicycle. There's a lot to see and explore on two wheels: from Mwamanga village or a visit to the sacred forest, to local markets and schools. A village bike tour is a wonderful opportunity is a chance to learn a lot about the local culture, develop a skill and keep fit, all while on holiday.

SOMETHING FOR ALL BUDGETS

The Kenyans pride themselves on having a travel experience for everyone. Adventurers on a budget from around the world gather at Distant Relatives Eco-Lodge all year round to enjoy beautiful sunsets, picturesque ocean views and popular live-music events. Situated upon the waters of the serene Kilifi Creek, it is a mecca for the environmentally and socially conscious. The intrepid traveller can indulge in thrilling activities such as snorkelling, moonlit dhow sailing, walks through the neighbouring villages and wild cliff adventures.

A TENTED CAMP IN NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK

Away from the coast, right next to the bustling capital city of Nairobi lies a memorable, tented eco-safari experience within the Nairobi National Park. Nine guest tents make up the uniquely special Nairobi Tented Camp, the only one within the park itself. It offers a uniquely contrasting setting of the wild and the great outdoors against the stunning backdrop of city skyscrapers. The park's wildlife, including lions, giraffes, buffalo, zebra and others, can be sighted at daybreak or in the evening, as the sun starts to retire in the west.

THE MAASAI MARA

Tourists and animal lovers have long traversed the Maasai Mara by road, by air, and on foot in search of the perfect, nature-filled experience in the wild. A novel way to way to crisscross this great reserve is on a bicycle, guided by resident Maasai and accompanied by a vehicle. This adventure, organised by tour operator Savage Wilderness brings cyclists up-close with the migrating wildebeest and other wildlife. Once the sun begins to retire, guests can return to camp with hot showers and sumptuous food as just reward for their physical efforts throughout the day.

NORTHERN KENYA

In Northern Kenya, visitors can experience the unique opportunity of an unforgettable night under the stars, in true appreciation of the stunning wilderness and wildlife offered by the Sasaab camp in Samburu. One can leave the lodge behind and go off the grid with only the bare essentials to enjoy campfires, unobstructed views of a star-studded, inky black sky and a deep reconnection to the wild.

DINING WITH GIRAFFES

There is only one place in the world where one can wake up to the utterly unique, once-in-a-lifetime experience of dining with gentle, statuesque African giraffes... At the Giraffe Manor in the Karen suburb on the outskirts of Nairobi, one can enjoy the delightful company of the resident Rothschild's giraffes at the breakfast table. This is, without a doubt, a brilliantly unscripted yet incredibly intimate wildlife experience within easy reach of city residents and visitors.

A SAFARI LIKE NO OTHER

A safari like no other, tucked in the valley between the lofty slopes of Mount Kenya and the peaks of the Aberdare mountains is the Solio Conservancy and Lodge. Kenya's oldest private rhino sanctuary is home to considerable herds of the black and white

rhino. Also present on the property is an abundance of other wildlife. It is only here that can one enjoy uninhibited, close-up views of wildlife and the landscape from atop specially designed vehicles that allow for rooftop seating and spectacular 360° views.

Northern Kenyan is a melting pot of rich cultures and truly breath-taking landscapes. It is perfect for those who want an alternative adventure, such as traveling on a camel... A camel safari is the ideal means of traveling through northern Kenyan lands. With Karisia Walking Safaris, visitors can escape the constraints of vehicles, crowds and the city life to lose themselves in the wild, where trains of camels are the only traffic for miles.

BIG 5 CONSERVATION - CLOSE-UP

At the break of dawn, guests of the Borana Conservancy in Lewa can join the noble efforts of wildlife conservation by accompanying a team of trained rangers to track and check on the black and white rhino populations on the vast, 32,000-acre property, which is also home to the rest of the Big 5. This immersive experience provides a special opportunity to learn first-hand about conservation and the work that goes into keeping Kenya's rhinos safe.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JOY ADAMSON

A few hours east of Laikipia, visitors can indulge in the fascinating history of Meru, courtesy of the Elewana Collection, made famous by Born Free, the bestselling novel and award-winning movie recounting the lives of George and Joy Adamson and Elsa the lioness in Meru National Park. Visits can be made to some of the iconic sites: George's pool, where George Adamson often took Elsa the lioness for her afternoon walk, the original camp site where the lions were raised and released back into the wild, and the grave of Elsa, the feline that started it all. One can enjoy the beauty of the park and its wildlife, marvel at the spectacular views, the smells, the colours, and delve into the past.

UNSPOILED LANDSCAPES OF THE SAMBURU

In Samburu, the unspoiled landscapes are a thing of true beauty to behold. One can discover the secrets of Kenya's great, unspoiled northern frontier by tracking the black rhino in the wild on foot through the Sera Community Conservancy, guided by an expert guide and ranger. It is a chance for true adventure, but it also offers opportunities for guests to actively contribute to the protection of this iconic species.

Intimate, one-of-a-kind family vacations can also be had at El Karama Lodge, the ultimate safari for adults and children alike. Located on 14,000 acres in the heart of Laikipia, it features diverse landscapes, thriving biodiversity and a wide variety of wildlife. Guests have their pick of eight private cottages and can expect an intimate getaway with a host of activities such as game drives, walking tours, fly camping and horse riding. Kids will love the Bush School, the first wildlife kids club of its kind. It is dedicated to learning and fun and family adventures in wild spaces.

LEARN ABOUT THE MAASAI MORAN

Deep within the world-famous Maasai Mara Game Reserve is the warrior academy, where travellers can spend a day with fearless Maasai moran and learn about their lives, their traditions, their dances, their folklore and partake of their food. Nearby, the Saruni Mara Lodge is specially designed for families and small groups. It is a chance to understand the rich culture of these indigenous people first-hand and see Kenya for the culturally rich and diverse nation that it is.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

To the north-west of Migori town in the Lake Victoria basin lies a massive, ancient, dry stone-walled complex that dates back to the 16th century. This UNESCO world heritage site is in the custody of the National Museums of Kenya and is of immense historical value. Thimlich Ohinga is an exceptional testimony of settlement patterns and way of life of the early inhabitants of Nyanza. It is a must see for the historically and anthropologically inclined.

THE PRIDE OF THE LION KING

Within the rugged wilderness of the Borana Conservancy in Northern Kenya, visitors are rewarded with sweeping, panoramic views from Pride Rock, the famous landmark that inspired the visuals of the world-famous Disney Film, The Lion King. From this natural vantage point, a one-and-a-half-hour hike or fifteen-minute drive from Borana Lodge, one can enjoy a oneness with nature, stunning picturesque landscapes and the wild-life that have roamed the surrounding grasslands for centuries...

Learn more: www.magicalkenya.com/mkse



Photo: Maasai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya, © Sutirta Budiman - Unsplash



Nairobi tented camp - © Jeffrey Wu



Maasai Moran- © Sneha Cecil - Unsplash