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Kenya Fact Sheet

Look up Kenya in the atlas and you will find a country about 800 kilometres (500 miles) across from east to west, and about the same distance from north to south, through longer towards the coast, with the Equator running through the middle. Although it is wholly in the tropics, only the coastal strip has the sort of climate and vegetation which "tropical" suggests to the northern mind's eye. Conditions in the rest vary, depending on altitude and rainfall.

It is the area of medium altitude that offers the best game and bird safaris. This is where you realize that the wide-open spaces are not just a figure of speech. However, little and often as possible, is the rule for game viewing. If you stay too long at one time familiarity breeds a kind of indifference, perhaps increased by the indigestion that hours in a car without exercise may give rise to. But a return visit to a Park or Reserve is always a delight, however often you go.

The highlands offer the Mountain Parks, a chance to walk or climb on the mountains themselves, and the sports of a temperate climate.

THE HIGHLANDS

The highlands are the most productive part of the country. They are not very big, occupying less than a quarter of the land surface. The Eastern Highlands, which include Mount Kenya and the Nyandarua Range, formerly the Aberdares, have two annual rainy seasons, the long rains from March to May and the short rains from the end of October to early December, and hence two seasons per year for quick-growing crops. The Western Highlands, including the Mau, the Cherangani Hills, Mount Elgon and Tinderet, also have rain from March to May, and still more rain on into July and August, thanks to moisture brought by the wind from Uganda and Lake Victoria, but they are fairly dry from October onwards. The stretch of the Rift Valley, which separates the eastern from the western highlands, is itself quite high, rising to around 1800 metres (6000 feet) at Nakuru.

Kenya's Rift Valley is a small part of that great double scar on the earth's surface, which runs from the Jordan Valley in the north to Mozambique in the south. How high are the highlands? All of them are more than 1500 metres (say 5000 feet) above sea level, rising to the 4321 metres (14178 feet) of Mount Elgon and the 5199 metres (17058 feet) of Mount Kenya.

THE LAKE REGION

Besides the coastal strip and the highlands there are two areas of medium altitude. One is the Lake Region of western Kenya, to the north and south of the Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria, with its hub at Kisumu. This is a warm, fairly fertile, well-watered part of the country which carries a sizeable population and is even overcrowded in some places, for example in Maragoli areas of Western Province.

THE DRY COUNTRY

The other medium altitude area is the dry country, a vast triangle occupying more than half of Kenya's land surface. Its base runs all along the northern borders which the country shares with the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, and its apex in the south is on the Tanzanian border quite near the sea - say 30 to 45 kilometres (20 to 30 miles) inland from Vanga. Over all this country the rainfall is insufficient for people to lead a settled life and practice agriculture except in isolated places - an oasis like Taveta.

Round the edges of the highlands there is enough rain to produce good seasonal grass, and these areas, the "grassland savannah" of the textbooks, are shared by nomadic pastoralists and game. Thus to the south of Nairobi you find the Maasai as well as the Amboseli and Nairobi National Parks; on the northern



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edge of the highlands the grazing grounds of the Samburu a but on the Samburu/ Buffalo Springs/ Isiolo National Reserves.

KENYA'S MAGNIFICENT COAST

South of the Equator, bordering the Indian Ocean, in Kenya's Eastern boundary lies the lush COAST OF KENYA. Famous for Marine Parks and Reserves, the white sandy beaches, historical monuments, contemporary culture and the warm climate give the Kenya's Coast a unique tourist product. Almost 47% of Kenya's tourism occurs here. Nationally about 52% of the total hotel beds are at the coast, and 95% of the visitors to Kenya use the coast as a base for inland safaris.

The coastal strip has good beaches on the warm Indian Ocean, palm trees and casuarinas to lie under, and some good hotels. It is an ideal place to be warm and idle. For variety, sailing and deep-sea fishing are available, snorkelling (known here as goggling) in pools along the reef, visits to the marine National Parks, some historical monuments of interest, and the occasional journey inland to the Shimba Hills or elsewhere.

The marine and coastal environments include Indian Ocean territorial waters and the immediate hinterland areas that border the ocean. Another feature of the coastline is the fringing coral reef, which runs between 0.5 km and 2 km offshore with occasional gaps at the mouths of rivers and the isolated areas facing the creeks. The shoreline is dominated in most areas by beaches, cliffs or mangrove forests. The coral-reef system and mangrove swamps serve the most important ecological role and the former is a major tourist attraction next to the sea and sand.

Marine parks are fully protected. In marine reserves specified traditional methods of fishing are allowed under controlled conditions, but commercial methods of fishing are prohibited. The reserves are buffer zones between parks and the unprotected surrounding waters.

Mombasa, Kenya's port offers a large choice of hotels of International standard

The deep water and safe harbours around Mombasa Island have attracted shipping for centuries.

With the shimmering sands and the waters of the Indian Ocean stretches before it, amidst verdant, bougainvillea, flamboyants and hibiscus bring a riot of colour to the gardens, shaded by gently swaying palm trees.

Many Swahili settlements flourished along the East African coast as early as the 13th Century, but many of these have fallen into ruins, with the exception of the old towns of Mombasa, Lamu, Zanzibar and others.

Due to its strategic position, Mombasa Old Town, in particular, had attracted many visitors including the Persians, the Arabs, the Portuguese and the British. Thus, a rich heritage of diverse cultures exist in the area, tradition, a strong sense of neighborhood and Islamic religion still playing an important role in the residents lives. Old Town is gifted with a unique architectural character that combines influences from Africa, Asia and Europe. Many of the buildings retain their 19th Century facades with beautiful carved doors, arched windows and elegantly - styled timber balconies.

The Kenya coast is dotted with the ruins of over one hundred ancient Swahili settlements dating to as far back as the 8th Century AD; many of these ruins are in the forms of houses, mosques and tombs. They present the glorious Swahili culture, which at its height in the 15 - 16th Century, saw merchants from all over the world carry out their trade with the local townspeople. The ruins now form a very important part of Kenya- and the world's - cultural heritage that needs to be preserved for the future generations. The



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National Museums of Kenya had been charged with conserving these ruins and monuments, which portray the panorama of Kenya's heritage and can be visualized in the description given below.

Area: 530,000 sq. km

Capital: Nairobi

Currency: Kenya Shilling (Ksh)

Population: 35 million

Climate: Hot

Time: +3 GMT

YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE FOR KENYA

Welcome to Kenya - a country with a wealth of centuries - old traditions and cultures, exotic wildlife and unspoilt plains dynamically juxtaposed against the hustle of big-city life. Travelling Kenya is a unique experience, a discovery of the soul and a wondrous voyage. Here are few pointers to ensure you get the most of the world in one country".

BANKING AND CURRENCY

Local currency is the Kenya Shilling (KSHS), with 100 cents (c) equaling Kshs1. Notes come in Kshs 50, Kshs 100, Kshs 200, Kshs 500 and Kshs 1000 denominations, whilst coins are minted in 10c, 50c, Kshs 1, Kshs 5, Kshs 10, Kshs 20. All major commercial banks and Foreign Exchange Bureaus provide foreign exchange services. American Express, Dinners Club, Master and Visa Card are welcome and can be used.

The easiest currencies to exchange are US Dollars, Pounds sterling and Deutschmarks. Travellers' Cheques are widely accepted, and many hotels, travel agencies, safari companies and restaurants accept Credit Cards. Most Banks in Kenya are equipped to advance cash on credit cards. There are no restrictions on the amount of foreign currency that can be brought into Kenya.

Before departure, travellers are advised to convert any excess Kenya Shillings into foreign Currency at a bank or bureau de change. Anyone wishing to take more than 500,000 Kenya Shillings out of the country will require written authorization from the Central Bank.

BANKING AND SHOPPING HOURS

Most commercial banks are open from 0900 - 1530 Mondays to Fridays and some branches open on Saturdays from 0900 - 1100 hrs. The Bank branches at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (Nairobi) and Moi International Airport (Mombasa) both run 24 hour Forex services.

Businesses and Shops are open from 0830 - 1700 Mondays to Fridays closing for an hour over lunch (1300 - 1400) and from 0900 - 12.30 on Saturdays. However, major shopping centres are abuzz till later on Saturdays and also open on Sunday mornings. Most businesses in Kenya are open from Monday to Friday, though some also trade on Saturday and Sundays.

TIME & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Kenya has a single time zone - which is GMT + 3.

Kenyan Public holidays include:



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1st January - New Years Day

February/ March - Idd IL Fitr *

March/ April - Good Friday **

March/ April - Easter Monday **

1st May - Labour Day

1st June - Madaraka Day

10th October - Moi Day

20th October - Kenyatta Day

12th December - Jamhuri Day

25th December - Christmas Day

26th December - Boxing Day

* The Muslim Festival of Idd IL Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadhan. The date varies each

Year depending on the sighting of a new moon in Mecca.

** Dates for the Christian festival of Easter vary from Year to year.

IMMIGRATION

You must have a valid passport. In addition travellers from most countries need a Kenya entry visa. This should be applied for at least 30 days prior to travel, either from local Kenya Embassy or consulate if there is one or from a British Embassy or consulate if there is not.

At the time of writing entry visas are not required for travellers from these countries: the Commonwealth (except for Australia, Nigeria and British passport holders born in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh), Denmark, Ethiopia, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Uruguay and West Germany.

On arrival you will have a visitor's pass stamped in your passport for the expected duration of your holiday visit. If you are staying longer than 90 days you will need an alien's registration certificate. If you leave the country and return to it during your visit you will need a re-entry pass from the Immigration Department.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

For arrivals by air from Europe, North America or Australia, Kenya no longer has any required Inoculations. Entering overland, though, you may well be required to show Yellow fever and Cholera International Vaccination Certificates and a cholera jab is, in any case, a good precaution - there are occasional outbreaks in Kenya.



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You can expect dry and warm weather all over Kenya in January, February and March, and these are still the most popular months for visitors, if only because they can avoid the worst of the northern hemisphere's winter.

At the end of March the rains normally break. East of the Rift these are long rains, and they usually last for two and a half up to three months, giving place to colder weather that lasts until the end of August. September and October are beautiful months, the equivalent of the northern spring, and they are followed by an interlude of short rains between the latter part of October and mid-December. Things then warm up to the dry season.

West of the Rift the rains continue from April right through to about October, and for parts of western Kenya the wettest month is August. But in a normal year, while eastern Kenya is having its short rains, the dry season in the west has already begun.

DRIVING

In Kenya, driving is on the left, and pedestrians should therefore look right, then left and then right again before crossing. Any valid driver's license is accepted in Kenya, provided it bears the photograph and signature of the holder and is printed in English.

The speed limit on city roads is 80 km/h, whilst on national highways it is 120 km/h. Wearing a seat belt is not necessary but is recommended. Driving under the influence of alcohol is considered a serious offence, and traffic laws are strictly enforced.

DUTY FREE

You can buy duty-free goods at the Nairobi airport.

ELECTRICITY

The Kenya supply is nominally 220/ 240 volts. Plugs are 3 point square. If you are planning to bring a video camera charger or any other electrical advice, please bring voltage and plug adaptors where appropriate.

EMERGENCIES

The national emergency number for the Police, Ambulance and Fire Station is 999.

HEALTH

On entry you no longer need a certificate of vaccination against smallpox. But it is wise to carry a yellow fever certificate and essential if you have passed enroute through an area where yellow fever is endemic. Similarly, you need a cholera inoculation certificate if coming from a cholera area.

You should take an anti-malaria prophylactic if visiting the coast, the Lake region or the game parks; remember to start it a week or two before you come and continue it for a week or two after you leave.

Unless, you know the particular stretch of water to be safe, avoid bathing in up-country lakes, streams and rivers because of the danger of bilharzia. Water from the tap is, in general, safe to drink in Nairobi and Mombasa elsewhere be careful.



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LANGUAGE

Whilst English and Kiswahili is the language of administration and is widely spoken, Kenya has 42 other official languages. Some being, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhyia, Kamba, Giriama, Digo, Masai, Taita, Gisu, Bukusu and Somali.

SAFETY

Crime is noted for being a problem in Kenya and tourists are advised to undertake normal precautionary measures. Be observant throughout the day and night and do not draw attention to yourself by flashing an expensive camera, jewellery or large amounts of cash. Rather deposit your valuables in your hotels' safety deposit box.

Don't walk the streets alone after dark, and keep your car doors locked and windows closed at all times. It is preferable to keep personal items and luggage hidden in the trunk rather than visible on the seat of the car. Remember to park in well-lit areas and do not pick up strangers.

COMMUNICATIONS

POST

Getting letters and parcels out of the country is not difficult, and the rates are reasonable. Receiving parcels in the country on the other hand is misery and to be avoided if possible; it involves heavy work with the bureaucracy, including customs inspection and the payment of duty and sales tax.

There are different rates for letters by weight, airletters and postcards by size. Parcel services are available from large post offices. There are post restante services in Nairobi and Mombasa.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Kenya has a good network of telephone, cellular and satellite connections. Intermediate distance calls are the hardest to get. Local calls within a single exchange area normally work all right. International calls are good. When calling Kenya, the International code is 254+ local area code. Most hotels/ lodges offer International telephone and fax services. In larger if you have a mobile phone with a roaming connection, then you can make use of Kenya's excellent cellular networks, which covers most larger towns and tourist areas.

INTERNET

Kenya has good Internet Service Providers. Many hotels and lodges offer E-mail and Internet services. In most towns, there are plenty of private business centres and cyber cafes offering e-mail and internet access.

MEDIA

Kenya has several English language newspapers. The most popular are the Daily Nation (www.nationonline.com) and the East African Standard (www.eastafricanstandard.com)

The East African is a weekly newspaper sold throughout Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. There are two separate Swahili newspapers, Taifa Leo and Kenya Leo. There is also locally produced television and radio media. International newspapers and magazines are widely available in Kenya. Digital Satellite Television has become widespread throughout Kenya. Many hotels provide this South African based service, offering a range of channels.



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TIPPING

Tipping is not mandatory in Kenya. Guides, drivers, waiters and hotel staff can be tipped at your discretion.

VALUE ADDED TAX

A 18 per cent Value Added tax is added to the price of most items and services. However, if you retain your receipt of purchase, you can claim VAT back on goods priced higher than KES 5000 at the airport of departure, various harbours and custom offices. You will also need to produce a VAT refund control sheet, your passport and the items purchased.