



INSIDER'S GUIDE TO KENYA

By thinking a little about your holiday destination before you travel, and taking some simple steps when you are there, you can gain so much more from your holiday. You will also be making a positive contribution to the people and the places you visit.

KENYA

The **Republic of Kenya** is a country in Eastern Africa. It is bordered by Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the northeast, Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, and Sudan to the northwest, with the Indian Ocean running along the southeast border.

Kenya is a diverse country, with many different cultures including the Swahili on the coast, pastoralist communities in the north, and several different communities in the central and western regions. Today, the Maasai culture is well known, due to its heavy exposure from tourism although it is only a minor tribe. The Maasai are known for adorning their upper bodies and the jewellery they wear.

Kenya has considerable land area of wildlife habitat, including the Maasai Mara. The "Big Five" animals of Africa can be found in Kenya: the lion, leopard, buffalo, rhinoceros and elephant, and this is what attracts the growing number of tourists to this vast country.

– DO VENTURE OUT OF YOUR HOTEL TO FIND THE REAL KENYA

If you are staying in coastal areas of Kenya do venture outside of the hotel. If unsure check with your tour operator representative or reception. Buying locally made products, shopping in locally owned outlets and treating yourself to local food and drink are great ways to get into the holiday spirit and also benefit the people who live in the area you are visiting. Ask your hotel if the souvenirs and curios sold in their shop are sourced locally (some hotels and lodges sell mass-produced goods from outside Kenya).

– WHEN VISITING A MAASAI OR OTHER CULTURAL VILLAGE, ASK IF THE MONEY YOU PAY STAYS IN THE VILLAGE

There is a history of exploitation in some of these villages by drivers and guides who pocket the fees. Wherever possible, book an excursion through your tour operator or hotel / lodge rather than handing over money in the village. This will ensure that the money reaches the village.

– USE OFFICIALLY LICENSED TAXIS AND OPERATORS WHEN BOOKING BOAT TRIPS AND EXCURSIONS

Others may be cheaper (as they are not paying taxes and license fees), but they may not adhere to the same safety standards as official operators and may not offer you the best experience.

– PLEASE REMEMBER THAT KENYANS ARE EXTREMELY FRIENDLY PEOPLE

Many may invite you back to their home to meet their family. This is a genuine offer of hospitality and those taking up this offer will have a memorable experience. In the coastal areas (as in many countries!), do not walk in unfamiliar places after dark, as this could put your safety at risk.

– RESPECT THE LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Ensure that your dress and behaviour is appropriate for the places you visit. For example, the Maasai find it very offensive when visitors pass wind or urinate in their presence (as you can imagine!). Please don't dress in beachwear (especially bikini tops) when away from your hotel or beach. The Mombassa coastal areas are predominantly Muslim and hence locals take great offence to clothing they see as immodest. This is also true when visiting cultural villages around the National Parks and game reserves. If you are unsure, please ask your travel representative or accommodation.

– PLEASE BE AWARE THAT PORNOGRAPHY IS TABOO IN KENYA

The carrying and displaying of pornographic magazines in the presence of local people is totally unacceptable, as is leaving these in full view at your serviced accommodation.

– GET INTO THE SWING OF HAGGLING, AS THIS IS PART OF THE LOCAL CULTURE

In general, traders will start at twice the price that they expect to obtain for an item. Don't be embarrassed or avoid buying items for fear of haggling - it can be fun! Also be fair – consider what you would be prepared to pay for an item in the UK and haggle accordingly. The Maasai bead-work curios, in particular, take the women days to make, threading each bead by hand, so please re-imburse them accordingly.

– PLEASE DON'T STAY AWAY FROM THE BEACHES BY THE PERCEIVED 'HASSLE' FACTOR OF YOUNG (AND OLD!) KENYANS TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING ON THE BEACH

The average wage in Kenya is extremely low, unemployment is high and access to visitors is difficult, particularly with the 'all-inclusive' hotels on the coast. Just let sellers know, politely but firmly, if you are not interested and they will move on. Most operators on the main beaches are now licensed, so this issue is no longer a major one.



– ASK PERMISSION BEFORE TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

Due to poverty, many people will ask for a 'token' in exchange for a photograph. If you promise to send local people copies of photographs, please do. Breaking promises can lead to a general disrespect and distrust of tourists.

– PLEASE DON'T SHOW AFFECTION IN PUBLIC

Be aware that kissing in public is culturally inappropriate and makes local people feel very uncomfortable. Homosexuality is also considered a crime in Kenya so do please use discretion.

– PLEASE DON'T GIVE GIFTS, MONEY OR SWEETS DIRECTLY TO CHILDREN

This encourages begging and it is much better to make a contribution to a local school or towards a local project – ask your tour representative or at your accommodation to find out how best to do this. As a predominantly Muslim country, begging is taboo and local people find it very embarrassing and demeaning to see children beg from tourists.

– PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE

Animals and plants could be rare, fragile, sacred, or even harmful to your health. Please be sure that you don't buy any products made from endangered plants or wild animals, including hardwoods, corals, shells, starfish, ivory, fur, feathers, skins, horn, teeth, porcupine quills, eggs, reptiles and turtles. Curios made from hardwood are causing deforestation in Kenya (you can tell hardwood from softwood, as it is very heavy). For more information on endangered species and the WWF-UK Souvenir Alert Campaign for tourists and to find out how to report a concern, visit www.wwf-uk.org.

– PLEASE DON'T TOUCH, REMOVE OR WALK ON CORAL WHILST ON BOAT TRIPS, SNORKELLING OR DIVING

The coral reefs are extremely fragile and take decades to grow.

– When on safari, make sure your driver keeps to marked routes

DO NOT ENCOURAGE YOUR DRIVER TO GO 'OFF-ROAD', AS THIS CAN HARM VEGETATION, KILL BABY ANIMALS HIDDEN IN THE GRASS AND ALSO CAUSE INCREASED STRESS TO WILD ANIMALS. DO NOT PRESSURIZE YOUR DRIVER TO FIND BIG CATS, AS THIS CAN CAUSE IRRESPONSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING (IE. WHERE MANY VEHICLES ARE RELENTLESSLY PURSUING FAMILIES OF CATS, WHILE THEY TRY TO RAISE THEIR YOUNG AND HUNT FOR FOOD). IF THERE ARE ALREADY LOTS OF VEHICLES AROUND THE CATS, PLEASE ASK YOUR DRIVER TO MOVE ON AND RETURN LATER.

Please don't have your photograph taken with any 'wild' animals

– PLEASE DON'T FEED OR TOUCH WILD ANIMALS, PARTICULARLY MONKEYS AROUND YOUR HOTEL

This can lead to increased aggression as they compete for food, which is detrimental to both animals and people. Some monkeys will be carrying rabies and other diseases that are transmissible to humans, so please keep your distance.

– CHILD SEX TOURISM IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

and is a growing area of concern in coastal areas due to poverty. If you would like to report an incidence, contact Crimestoppers – if overseas +44 800 555 111 or 0800 555 111 in the UK or contact ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) www.ecpat.org, +44 207 501 8927 or talk to your local representative or accommodation for advice. Sex tourism in general is very prevalent in the coastal areas (with both male and female 'clients') and should be avoided – it is estimated that 7% of Kenyans are HIV positive.

– PLEASE DISPOSE OF ANY CIGARETTE BUTTS AND LITTER CAREFULLY

if there are no litter bins, take any rubbish back to your hotel. Fires are a serious hazard in Kenya and can kill the wildlife you have come to enjoy.

– LITTER

As in any other destination, Kenya needs to address ever-increasing needs to reduce, collect and recycle litter. Therefore the less litter you create the better it will be for everyone. Please remove all unwanted packaging material before you leave your home country and avoid disposable goods.

– PLEASE USE WATER SPARINGLY

Please don't support dancing bear performances

– USE WATER SPARINGLY

There are often water shortages, as Kenya is a drought prone country. Each year, people and their cattle die as a result. It really is a matter of life and death. Take quick showers instead of baths and tell staff that you are happy to re-use towels and bed linen rather than having them replaced daily.

– USE ENERGY WISELY

Turn down / off heating or air conditioning when not required. Switch off lights when leaving a room and turn the TV off rather than leaving it on standby



FOR MORE INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

www.ecotourismkenya.org

www.magickkenya.com