

## INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO KENYA

### Official name

The Republic of Kenya is named after Mount Kenya or 'Kirinyaga', the 'Mountain of Whiteness'.

### Capital city Nairobi

(Nairobi meaning 'the place of cool waters' in Maa). The highest city in East Africa (1700 m), modern and fast growing, Nairobi has over 4 million inhabitants (estimated).



### Main cities

Mombasa is the coastal capital and the largest port on the East African coast. Other major cities include: Kisumu, Eldoret and Nakuru.

### Area

Kenya covers an area of 583,000 sq km, 13,400km of which is inland water, including part of Lake Victoria. The coastline is 536 km long.

### Borders

Kenya is bordered by Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania.

### Climate

The coast is hot with an average daytime temperature of 27-31 degrees centigrade whilst the average daytime temperature in Nairobi is 21- 26 degrees centigrade. Nairobi can become cold enough for coats and fleece; July and August mark YOUR GUIDE TO YOUR STAY IN KENYA the Kenyan winter. Temperatures elsewhere depend on altitude. Typically, January-February is dry, March-May is wet, June-September is dry, October-December is wet.

### Economy

Agriculture employs 80% of the population, contributes 20% to GDP and accounts for 50% of export earnings. Tourism is the largest source of income. The industrial base contributes around 18% of GDP.

## Population

33.9 million (2005 est.), 42.5% of whom are under 14 years old, with a growth rate of 2.56%, one of the highest in the world. It is estimated that 50% of the population live below the poverty line. **Ethnic makeup**  
There are over 40 tribal groups distinguished by two major language groups: Bantu and Nilotic. The largest tribes of the Bantu are the Kikuyu, Meru, Gusii, Embu, Akamba, Luyha and Mijikenda. The largest tribes of the Nilotic are the Maasai, Turkana, Samburu, Pokot, Luo and Kalenjin. A third group made up of Cushitic speaking peoples includes the El-Molo, Somali, Rendille and Galla. The coastal region is the home of the Swahili people.

## Religion

Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and traditional beliefs.

## Language

English (official), Kiswahili (national), multiple ethnic languages (Bantu, Cushitic and Nilotic language groups).  
Literacy: 85% of population over age 15 can read and write.

## Government

Kenya is an independent republic with a democratically elected parliament. The President is the chief of state and head of government.

## Currency exchange

Most hotels offer forex facilities, though sometimes at disadvantageous rates. Forex facilities remain open at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport daily from 7am to midnight.

## Currency

Kenya shilling (Ksh); slang 'bob'; coins: 50cts, KSh1, KSh5, KSh10 and KSh20; notes KSh50, KSh100, KSh200, KSh500 and KSh1,000.

## Exchange rates

As a general guide to exchange rates, the following rates applied as of March 2009 1 US\$ 90 Kenya shillings 1 Euro 109 Kenya shillings 1 Pound Sterling 116 Kenya shillings

## Banking

Foreign currency can be changed at banks, foreign currency bureaux or hotels. Banks in major centres are open from 09.00 to 15.00 Mon-Fri. 09.00 to 11.00 on the first and last Saturday of each month. Banks in coastal towns open and close half an hour earlier.

## ATMs

ATMs are available country wide with 24-hour access. Most accept international VISA cards. **Credit cards**  
All major international cards are accepted. Credit card fraud occurs in Kenya, as in most other parts of the world, and the usual precautions should be taken.

## Travellers' cheques

Travellers' Cheques are accepted at most banks, bureaux and hotels.

## Tipping

Tipping is appreciated. Most hotels and restaurants include a 10% service charge.

## Shopping and business hours

08.30 to 12.30 and 14.00 to 17.30 Mon-Sat. Many businesses work Saturday mornings. **Shopping centres**  
Nairobi has a number of large shopping malls, which are recommended for visitors since they offer optimum security. Those listed below offer: supermarkets, retail outlets, banks, forex bureaux, restaurants and bars. Mobil Plaza, Muthaiga T el: (020) 3766418 Sarit Centre, Westlands T el: (020) 3740329 (Cinema, Health Club) The Junction, Lavington T el: (020) 3872881 (Cinema) The YaYa Centre, Tel: (020) 2713360 Hurlingham The Warwick T el: (020) 7120876 Centre (immediately adjacent to UNON) Village Market T el: (020) 7122488 (5 minutes from UNON, Cinema)

## Time

GMT +3 all year-round. Kenya maintains an almost constant 12 hours of daylight. Sunrise is typically 06.30 and sunset at 18.45.

## Electricity

220-240 volts AC, with standard 13-amp three square-pin plugs.

## Water

Kenyan tap water is not safe to drink. Bottled water is readily available.

## Post offices

Opening hours are 08.00 to 17.00 weekdays and 09.00 to 12.00 on Saturdays. Stamps can be purchased at post offices, stationery and souvenir shops and hotels.

## Media

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC ) has radio transmission in English, Swahili, Hindi and African languages. The BBC World Service (which also transmits on 93.7 FM), Voice of America and Deutsche Welle all transmit on short-wave frequencies. Radio France International transmits on 89.9 FM and China International Radio on 91.9 FM. There are several commercial radio stations such as Capital FM and Kiss FM. There are also YOUR GUIDE TO YOUR STAY IN KENYA locally produced television channels in English and Swahili, and digital satellite TV from South Africa. The two daily English-language newspapers are the Daily Nation and the Standard. The two Swahili newspapers are Taifa Leo and Kenya Leo.

## Travel and Tourism

For details on travel and tourism options in Kenya, contact the Kenya Tourist Board. Tel: +254 (0)20 2711262. Email: [info@kenyatourism.org](mailto:info@kenyatourism.org), [http:// www.magicalkenya.com](http://www.magicalkenya.com).

### The Safety and Communication Centre

For up-to-the minute safety and security advice contact: Where: Kenya Tourism Federation, KWS Complex, Langata Road Telephone: T el+ 254 (0)20 604767/604729. Mobile: 0733 617499 or 0722 745645

### Tourist 24-hour helpline

Tel: +254 (0)20 604767/605485

## National Parks and Reserves

Kenya's total wildlife conservation area is 44,359 sq km or 7.6 % of the total area. The main parks are: Aberdare National Park, Amboseli National Park, Hell's Gate National Park, Lake Nakuru National Park, Meru National Park, Mt Elgon National Park, Mount Kenya National Park, Nairobi National Park, Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Park. One of the most popular tourist destinations, the Maasai Mara, is designated a National Reserve. There are two major marine parks: Mombasa Marine National Park and Malindi/Watamu National Park. Details on all Kenyan National Parks and Reserves can be obtained from: Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Tel: + 254 (0) 20 600800. Email: [tourism@kws.org](mailto:tourism@kws.org) or <http://www.kws.org>.

## World Heritage sites

Fort Jesus, the Gedi Ruins, Koobi Fora, Mount Kenya, Hells Gate National Park and the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

## Historical sites

Kenya has over 400 historical sites ranging from prehistoric fossils and petrified forests, to 14th century slave trading settlements, Islamic ruins and 16th century Portuguese Forts.

## Landscape

The landscape of Kenya is distinctly divided into two halves - the eastern half which slopes gently to the coral-backed seashore, and the western portion, which rises abruptly through a series of hills and plateaus to the Eastern Rift Valley. West of the Rift is a westward-sloping plateau, and the lowest part is covered by Lake Victoria. The highest point in the country is the snow-capped peak of Mount Kenya (5,199 m), the second highest mountain in Africa. The coastline extends some 536 km from the Tanzanian border in the southeast, to the Somali border in the northeast. The main rivers are the Athi/Galana and the Tana. The major lakes are: Lake Victoria, Turkana, Baringo, Naivasha, Magadi, Jipe, Bogoria, Nakuru and Elementeita. 10 YOUR GUIDE TO YOUR STAY IN KENYA

## Flora

Kenya's flora is diverse. Coastal forests contain palm, mangrove, teak, copal and sandalwood trees. Forests of baobab, euphorbia and acacia trees cover the lowlands to an elevation of approximately 915 m. Extensive areas of savannah are interspersed with groves of acacia and papyrus, which characterize the terrain from 915 to 2,745 meters above sea level. Bamboo and camphor are common in the dense rainforest of the eastern and south eastern mountain slopes. The alpine zone (above 3,550 meters) contains many Senecio and Lobelia plants.

## Fauna

Despite the tremendous losses inflicted by hunting and poaching during the twentieth century, Kenya teems with wildlife. There are 80 major animal species ranging from the 'Big Five' (elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, lion and leopard) to tiny antelopes such as the dik-dik, which is slightly larger than a rabbit. At least 32 endemic species are endangered.

## Avifauna

Kenya boasts around 1,137 species of birds. Spotting over 100 bird species in a day is not uncommon. 11