



Kenya

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HISTORY



The Republic of Kenya, located in East Africa, borders the Indian Ocean and has nearly 50-million people. Its largest and capital city is Nairobi. Before you go on safari, here's everything you need to know about the country to prepare for a fantastic visit.

In the Beginning

Farmers and herders mostly populated the east African country of Kenya before Arab settlers arrived in the area. Most of these farmers and herders were migrants from west and northeast Africa.

Arab Traders

Arab traders who settled on the coast of East Africa played a significant role in shaping the Kenya of today. They traded slaves, spices, and ivory and developed small communities around this economy, which grew into large cities. These cities thrived on the trade and culture of both the settlers and original inhabitants. Swahili, the predominant language of Kenya, stems from Bantu culture, but Arabs also influenced the language.



MONEY

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The country uses the Kenyan Shilling as currency. One Shilling is equal to 0.0097 United States dollars. United States dollars are accepted, but you should be prepared to pay cash for certain small-ticket items and services such as meals and souvenirs. When eating in restaurants, it's customary to tip wait staff at least 10%.

Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in Kenya and can be used to pay for big-ticket items such as hotel stays and safaris.

ATM

There are ATMs in Kenya's large cities, but you will need to have cash on you in rural areas.

HELPFUL INFO

Climate

The coast is tropical, while temperatures are temperate in the west and southwest, and the north and eastern regions are hot and dry. There is more rain in the coastal and southwestern areas. You might consider visiting July through September, which is Kenya's dry season. These are also the best times to see wildlife, including the Great Wildebeest Migration.

Electricity

The standard voltage in Kenya is 240-volts. Tourists can use their electrical appliances in the country if the standard voltage in their home countries is between 220 and 240 volts; electronics from Europe and North America typically won't work in Kenya without an adapter. The country uses the Type G three-pin rectangular blade plug.



Technology & Communication

Kenya offers free public WiFi. You can only use your cell phone if it is compatible with the GSM (Global System for Mobile communications) 900 system. All cell phones sold in Europe will work in Kenya, but not all phones in North America. It's best to check with your provider before you travel.

Infrastructure & Transport

Transportation by public and privately owned buses is popular -- and cheap -- in Kenya. There is also taxi service in all the main cities, or rental cars. There is also a rail system that runs from Mombasa to the capital, Nairobi.

In Case Of An Emergency

Call 999 on landline phones for emergency services in Kenya or 112 on cell phones. You can also call your embassy or consulate for emergencies.

Language

Swahili and English are spoken in Kenya. English is common in metropolitan areas, but don't expect to hear it spoken in rural regions of Kenya.



LGBT Travel

Same-sex marriage is banned in Kenya and the country does not recognize relationships between same-sex individuals.

Homosexuality is considered taboo in the country; same-sex couples should avoid public displays of affection.

Religion

Most Kenyans practice Christianity. Islam is the second most common religion. Some Kenyans also practice Buddhism and Hinduism.



Getting There

Large airlines fly into Kenya's capital of Nairobi, as well as the city of Mombasa. The cities operate the two busiest hubs in Kenya.

Several low-cost airlines fly into Moi International Airport in Mombasa.

Driving

Foreigners have to be issued a Kenyan driver's license to drive in the country. If you have an international driver's license or reside in a Commonwealth country, you will not have to take driving tests.

THE EXPERIENCE

Culture

The citizenship of Kenya is a diverse one comprised primarily of 13 ethnic groups and 27 smaller ones, each with a unique language, dress, and food. Where they are similar is that family and community are central to them all.

It is most common to greet Kenyans with handshakes and "Jambo," or "How are you?"

Bucket List

Hot Air Balloon Ride at Masai Mara

Lake Naivasha

Nairobi National Park

Hike or Take a Safari to Mt. Kenya

Visit David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

Snorkel or jet ski at Diani Beach

Visit Fort Jesus Museum

Visit Lamu Old Town, the Islamic Swahili Settlement

Family Travel Highlights

Masai Mara Game Park

Giraffe Centre

Nairobi Railway Museum

Elephant Orphanage

Tourist Authority

Kenya Tourism Board

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Foods To Try

Ugali (cornmeal porridge) is the favorite dish in Kenya.

Githieri (maize and bean mix cooked in broth) is also popular, as is Matumbo (tripe).

Try some street foods like mandazi (sweet bread) and samosas
(fried pastries with sweet fillings).

Fine dining can be found in Nairobi's
international hotels.

Drinks To Try

Kenya Cane

Kenya Gold

Kenyan Tea

Dawa

Afia Juice



Photography Hot Spots

Toi Market

Nairobi Railway Museum

Kisumu Impala Sanctuary

Lamu Island

Mt. Kenya

Souvenirs To Buy

Maasai Beads

Macadamia Nuts

Kisii Soapstone Carvings

Kitengela Glass

Masks

