



WHY GO?

A steady drip after tantalising drip of TV wildlife documentaries have held nature enthusiasts enthralled in recent times, and one of the most accessible of African countries exploding with animal exploits is Kenya.

With a tried-and-tested tourist infrastructure, and a wildlife service that is highly protective of its national parks, Kenya makes an excellent choice for a big game safari. Tours in wildlife areas can be arranged independently, but it's easier to arrange a Kenyan safari through a UK tour operator.

WHEN TO GO?

The dry season (main tourist season): January and February, is the best period for watching the wildlife – the animals are more exposed when the grass is low, and water scarcity encourages a variety of animals to gather in and around water holes. However, the best safari season can depend on the area, from around June to mid-October, for example, is the wildebeest migration period in the Masai Mara. Some national parks, such as Aberdare, are closed during the main rainy season (March to the end of May). Check with your tour operator.

RECOMMENDED MEDICATION

As well as a mosquito repellent, vaccines for the following are recommended: Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Yellow fever, a certificate of vaccination for yellow fever is required if arriving from an infected

Kenya safaris

You've seen the documentaries, now you can do it for real. Our recommendations on how to plan your wildlife trip

area. See your GP for recommended anti-malaria medication and further information on vaccines, such as how long in advance of your trip you will need to take them and other vaccines that are sometimes recommended according to your holiday activity.

WHAT TO TAKE

Strong sun block, light clothing (including light waterproof trousers and jacket) with a warm top – some parks, such as Mount Kenya and Aberdare, are high above sea level and nights can be cold. Also pack a pair of binoculars suitable for birdwatching (see the RSPB site www.rspb.org.uk/advice/watchingbirds), and a camera with a zoom lens.

WHAT TO AVOID

Illegal souvenirs such as ivory, rhino horn, big cat pelts, reptile leather shoes, bags etc, and turtle combs, jewellery, sunglasses, coral and shell products. For more information, visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/customs and click on 'Banned or restricted goods'.

GETTING THERE

The following airlines have direct scheduled flights from London Heathrow to Kenya's capital, Nairobi:

British Airways www.britishairways.com
Kenya Airways www.kenya-airways.com
Virgin Atlantic Airways
www.virgin-atlantic.com

VISA

A three-month tourist visa can be bought at the port of entry or through the Kenya High Commission. www.kenyahighcommission.net/visas.html. At the time of writing, the cost was £20 (payment by cash).

TOUR OPERATORS

■ Abercrombie and Kent (tailor-made tours)

☎ 0845 618 2202

🌐 www.abercrombiekent.co.uk

■ Cox and Kings

(group, tailor-made and private tours)

☎ 020 7873 5000

🌐 www.coxandkings.co.uk

■ Airtours

(part of Thomas Cook, and has group tours)

☎ 0844 800 7978

🌐 <http://tinyurl.com/yzf94nm>

■ Carrier (tailor-made and private tours)

☎ 0161 491 7610

🌐 www.carrier.co.uk

■ Cosmos Holidays (group tours)

☎ 0871 42 38 422

🌐 www.cosmos-holidays.co.uk

■ Exodus (group tours)

☎ 0845 330 6009

🌐 www.exodus.co.uk

■ Explore (group tours)

☎ 0845 013 1537

🌐 www.explore.co.uk

■ First Choice (group tours)

☎ 0871 200 7799

🌐 www.firstchoice.co.uk

■ Gold Medal Holidays (group tours)

☎ 0844 493 1260

🌐 www.goldmedal.co.uk

■ Hayes and Jarvis Holidays (group and tailor-made tours)

☎ 0871 664 0242

🌐 www.hayesandjarvis.co.uk



■ **ITC Classics (group and tailor-made tours)**

☎ 01244 355 550

🌐 www.itcclassics.co.uk

■ **Just You (singles holiday specialist and group tours)**

☎ 0800 567 7393

🌐 www.justyou.co.uk

■ **Kuoni (group tours)**

☎ 01306 747002

🌐 www.kuoni.co.uk

■ **Somak Holidays**

(group and tailor-made tours)

☎ 020 8423 3000

🌐 www.somak.com

■ **The Ultimate Travel Company**

(group, tailor-made and private tours)

☎ 020 7386 4646

🌐 www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk

■ **Thomas Cook Signature (group travel)**

☎ 0844 412 5959

🌐 www.tcsignature.com/kenya

■ **Thomson (group and tailor-made tours)**

☎ 0871 231 4691

🌐 www.thomson.co.uk

■ **Virgin Holidays (group and tailor-made tours)**

☎ 0844 557 5825

🌐 www.virginholidays.co.uk

■ **Wilderness Journeys**

(group, tailor-made and private tours)

☎ 0131 625 6635

🌐 www.wildernessjourneys.com

■ **World Expeditions (trekking specialists, with group, tailor-made and private tours)**

☎ 020 8545 9030

🌐 www.worldexpeditions.co.uk

GETTING AROUND

Transport to and inside the national parks and reserves is usually by 4x4 (these can range from minibuses to Land Rovers). Try to use companies that provide open-topped vehicles as you'll be able to stand up to take photos as well as see more with your binoculars above the vehicle's roof.

Internal flights, using light aircraft to reach far-flung parks, are often suggested as an option to cut down time on long journeys otherwise spent on dusty, potholed roads. Some specialist tours leave the 4x4s behind in favour of a safari by foot or horseback.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation on a Kenyan safari ranges from luxury lodges to large comfortable tents.

Our safari trip accommodation

We stayed with Porini Camps 🌐 www.porinisafaricamps.com, (booked through Wilderness Journeys, see tour operators), as well as the Porini Rhino Camp in the Ol Pejeta Conservancy at Laikipia, and the Porini Lion Camp in the Olare Orok Conservancy at the Masai Mara. The camps are all tented and include a spacious restaurant (mess) tent, and generously-sized individual accommodation tents. These ensuite tents are simply and attractively furnished with single or large double beds and large bathrooms.

Each morning you will be woken up with a pot of fresh Kenyan coffee or tea and large jugs of hot water for washing – a blessing for those early, sunrise game drives. 'Safari showers' are of the gravity variety and should be ordered 20 minutes before you want your shower. Large buckets of hot water are manually brought to your tent to fill an exterior container.

FURTHER INFORMATION



RECOMMENDED GUIDEBOOK

Lonely Planet Kenya, £16.99 (ISBN 978-1-74104-773-8)

CURRENCY

£1 = 123 KES (Kenya shillings)

RESPONSIBLE SAFARI TOUR OPERATORS

Most tour operators will point out their responsible tourism credentials on their website, with a breakdown of environmental projects they support, and how their selected park lodges or camps support the local community, and minimise environmental damage.

These responsible measures can vary greatly between operators. To help separate the wheat from the chaff when searching through tour operator websites or brochures, arm yourself with a good practice check-list based on the following questions:

GUIDES

■ **How are the guides trained?** The national standard to look for is the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association, guides carry an ID card. The guides should understand wildlife

behaviour knowing, for example, how close to approach an animal without upsetting it.

■ **Are guides and drivers monitored to ensure that they stay on designated park roads and tracks?** A slight deviation from the well-driven trail is sometimes given the (unofficial) nod. The practice becomes unacceptable when an armada of vehicles race across the savannah in pursuit of an animal.

LODGES AND CAMPS

■ **Are local people employed?** Do they hold management positions, or at least positions of responsibility?

■ **How are lodges and camps powered?** Do they use (polluting) fossil fuel powered generators, solar energy, or a mixture of both?

■ **Is water used sparingly?** Are large hotel swimming pools really necessary in drought-prone reserves? After all you are going on safari to see the wildlife.



For the full magazine report on Kenya, see p44 of the January 2010 issue of Which? Holiday