

Tourism and the environment

Kenya

Few countries in the world can offer the traveller the variety of landscapes that Kenya can. It has mountains, grassy plains, sandy beaches, coral reefs and an abundance of wildlife. Kenya appreciates these natural resources and has set up over 50 National Parks and game reserves to protect and manage its environment. Tourism has become

Kenya's major source of overseas income. Safaris, meaning 'journeys', are organised so that tourists can be driven around, usually in seven- or nine-seater minibuses with adjustable roofs to allow easier viewing. Unlike on early safaris, today's tourists are only allowed to shoot with cameras. An advertisement for one safari is given in Figure 10.28.



SAFARIWISE

Safari lodges in Kenya provide all modern comforts. While simple in design, your room will have bath or shower (except Shimba Hills and Treetops where shared facilities are provided) and most lodges have a pool. Cuisine, though not *cordon bleu*, is of good standard and sometimes includes game meat.

We use the best available vehicles – 7- or 9-seater safari cruisers with roof hatches and sliding windows for easy game viewing and photography. Journeys, particularly between game reserves, can be long, dusty and tiring but the excitement of seeing wildlife in its natural habitat usually makes it all worthwhile. The occasional change in routeing and/or hotels/lodges may be necessary due to weather conditions or shortage of accommodation.

Tented accommodation is sometimes included at Samburu or Keekorok – but do not be alarmed! The tents have stand-up room, are heavy-duty and erected on a concrete base under an awning, while to the rear (direct access from tent) are simple but private shower and toilet facilities.

Day 1 Nairobi/Samburu (310 km)

After breakfast drive north, cross the Equator and pass Mt Kenya, to Samburu Lodge. After lunch there will be a game drive when you should see elephant, buffalo, lion, reticulated giraffe, zebra, crocodile and many bird species.

Day 2 Samburu

Early morning game drive. Relax at midday around the swimming pool or watch the Samburu perform traditional dances. Late afternoon game drive.

Day 3 Samburu/Treetops (200 km)

Drive south for lunch at the Outspan Hotel. A short journey takes you into the Aberdare Mountains where you will spend the night at Treetops, the world-famous tree hotel. As evening approaches, buffalo, elephant and rhino join other animals at the waterhole.

Day 4 Treetops/Nakuru/Naivasha (240 km)

Transfer to Outspan for breakfast. Drive to the Thomson's Falls, and down into the Rift Valley to Nakuru for lunch. A short drive will let you see vast flocks of flamingos and the endangered Rothschild giraffe. Continue to Lake Naivasha Hotel for the night.

Day 5 Naivasha/Maasai Mara (240 km)

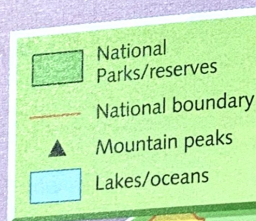
Leisurely morning by the lakeside. After lunch, drive to Keekorok Lodge in the Maasai Mara.

Day 6 Maasai Mara

The huge Mara plain provides some of the best game-viewing in East Africa. During early morning and late afternoon game drives you are likely to see huge herds of wildebeest and zebra, as well as lion, elephant, cheetah, leopard, Maasai giraffe, and hippo. An option is the early morning balloon safari.

Day 7 Maasai Mara/Nairobi (260 km)

Early morning departure arriving at Nairobi for lunch. Afternoon flight to Mombasa to continue your holiday at a beach hotel.



Kenya appreciates the value of its landscape and wildlife. They are seen as a major source of income in a country desperately short of money. Money from tourism can be used to pay for improving services, building more houses and roads, and creating new jobs. But tourism also has its problems. Large numbers of people going on safaris can damage the very environment which attracted them there in the first place. Pressure is put upon wildlife and local people, as well as on Kenya's many fragile environments.

The environment Safari minibuses are meant to keep to well-defined tracks in National Parks and game reserves. However, drivers often form new routes, either to enable their passengers to get as close as possible to wildlife, or to avoid wet season marshy areas. Minibuses can get stuck in the mud, ruining vegetation (Figure 10.29), or widening existing tracks (Figure 10.30). In Amboseli, as in other parks, the wind, minibuses and herds of animals all cause mini dust storms which increase the rate of soil erosion (Figure 10.31).

Wildlife Minibuses are not meant to go within 25 metres of animals, but their drivers often ignore this as they are unlikely to get good tips from their passengers if the best close-up views of wildlife are not obtained. Animals may be prevented from mating, making a kill, or forced to move to less favourable areas. Balloon safaris (Figure 10.32) cause controversy as conservationists claim that the intermittent release of hot air and the shadow of passing balloons disturb wildlife.

People Today, apart from employees at safari lodges, nobody is allowed to live in National Parks. Even game reserves only permit a limited number of herders and their cattle. The setting up of National Parks meant that nomadic tribes, such as the Maasai, had to be moved away from their traditional grazing grounds. Many now have to live a more permanent life, earning money by selling small artefacts to, or performing traditional dances for, the tourists (Figure 10.33). Recently the government has begun to work with the Maasai, allocating them a share of the wealth obtained from tourism to help improve their education, housing and water supply (page 151).



Figure 10.29
Erosion by minibuses



Figure 10.32
Balloon safari

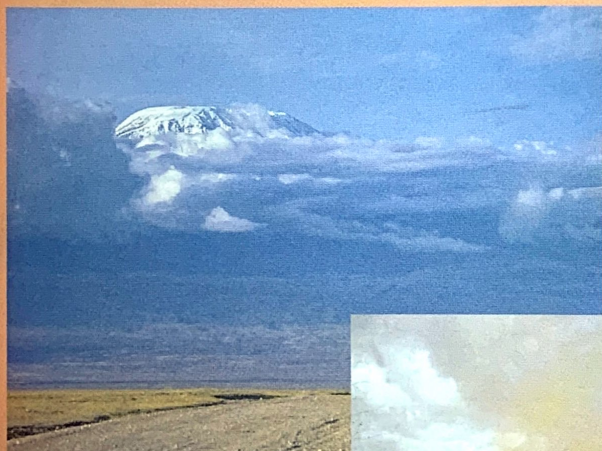


Figure 10.30
Dust track in Amboseli



Figure 10.31
A dust storm causing soil erosion

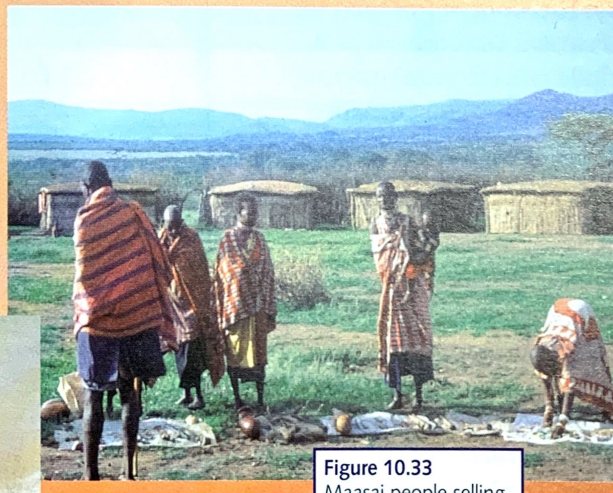


Figure 10.33
Maasai people selling artefacts to tourists