

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · BEACHES · HIKING · CULTURE · ADVENTURE



Kenya

Kenya is where the modern safari took shape: wildebeest plunge across the Mara River, elephants roam beneath Kilimanjaro's snows at Amboseli, and Nairobi has lions within sight of its skyline. Add Swahili Lamu and the white sand of Diani for contrast. July to October covers the migration's peak.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Kenya.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 16 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Nairobi	 CURRENCY Kenyan shilling (KES) £1 ≈ KES 174	 LANGUAGE Swahili, English	 BEST TIME Jan–Feb, Jul–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£450 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type G 240V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 30m direct ~£550–£950 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+3 standard time

Kenya combines classic savannah safari with Rift Valley lakes, Africa's second-highest mountain and a Swahili coast shaped by a thousand years of Indian Ocean trade. A typical first trip starts in Nairobi, flies or drives to the Maasai Mara for three or four nights, then adds Amboseli for elephants and Kilimanjaro views, or Lake Naivasha and Lake Nakuru in the Rift Valley. Many finish with a week on the coast at Diani, Watamu or Lamu. With longer, the arid north around Samburu and the private conservancies of Laikipia bring different species, such as Grevy's zebra and reticulated giraffe, and far fewer vehicles.

Safari days start before dawn and end at dusk, with long midday breaks, and the costs come largely from park fees, lodges and vehicles, so Kenya is pricier than its street-food prices suggest. In August and September the Mara can feel busy around the river crossings; the conservancies bordering the reserve limit vehicle numbers and allow walking safaris and night drives. Nairobi sits at around 1,800 m, so it is cooler than many expect. Everyday payments run through M-Pesa mobile money, and English is widely spoken. It suits first-time safari-goers, photographers and families, and combines easily with a beach break.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Maasai Mara National Reserve

Kenya's most famous reserve has big cats on open grassland year-round, and from about July to October hosts the wildebeest migration from Tanzania's Serengeti, with dramatic Mara River crossings. The bordering conservancies offer quieter game drives.
- 2

WILDLIFE

Amboseli National Park

Big-tusked elephant herds graze the swamps of this compact park, with Kilimanjaro rising across the Tanzanian border on clear mornings. It's a four- to five-hour drive or a short flight from Nairobi.

3

HISTORY

Lamu Old Town

The oldest and best-preserved Swahili town in East Africa and a UNESCO site, with almost no cars, carved wooden doors, donkeys in narrow lanes and dhows on the waterfront. Nearby Shela village has a long sandy beach.

4

BEACH

Diani Beach

A long stretch of white sand south of Mombasa, protected by an offshore reef, with kitesurfing, snorkelling trips to Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Park and colobus monkeys in the coastal forest behind.

5

ADVENTURE

Mount Kenya

Africa's second-highest mountain is a UNESCO-listed national park straddling the equator. Trekkers take four or five days to reach Point Lenana at 4,985 m via the Sirimon or Chogoria routes; the higher Batian peak needs technical climbing.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Nairobi

≈ 5 million people

Spend a night or two for Nairobi National Park, the Giraffe Centre and the Sheldrick Trust's orphaned elephants, plus a growing restaurant scene in Westlands and Karen.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Mombasa

≈ 1.3 million people

Kenya's main port mixes Swahili, Arab and Indian influences; explore the narrow lanes of the Old Town and Portuguese-built Fort Jesus before heading to the beaches north or south.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Nakuru

≈ 600,000 people

A Rift Valley farming city best known as the gateway to Lake Nakuru National Park, with its rhinos and flamingos, and to Menengai Crater just north of town.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Kenya

Best time: **Jan–Feb, Jul–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

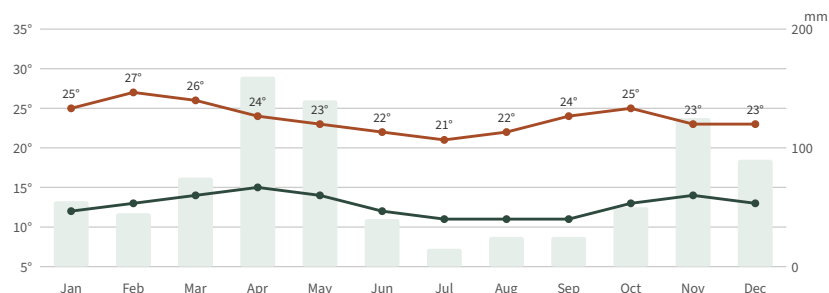
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Nairobi

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar	Safari Rally Kenya A round of the World Rally Championship based at Naivasha, with special stages across the Rift Valley and spectator points near Hell's Gate; it has been held in March in recent years.
Nov	Lamu Cultural Festival Three days of dhow races, donkey races, Swahili poetry, henna painting and music fill Lamu's waterfront, usually in late November.

How much does Kenya cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ KES 7,808 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £150 per person / day ≈ KES 26,027 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £450 per person / day ≈ KES 78,081 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Nyama choma Kenya's social food: goat or beef roasted slowly over charcoal, chopped at the table and eaten with kachumbari salad and ugali, ideally with a cold Tusker.	Ugali and sukuma wiki Stiff maize-flour porridge, eaten by hand, with collard greens fried with onion and tomato; the everyday plate in homes and cheap cafés.	Swahili pilau Coastal rice cooked with cumin, cardamom, cinnamon and cloves, usually with beef or chicken; try it alongside fish in coconut sauce in Mombasa or Lamu.
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Getting around

Most safaris use a driver-guide in a pop-top 4x4 or minivan. Safarilink and AirKenya fly light aircraft from Nairobi's Wilson Airport to Mara airstrips, while Kenya Airways and Jambojet serve Mombasa, Malindi, Lamu and Kisumu. The Madaraka Express train links Nairobi and Mombasa in about five to six hours. Uber and Bolt work in Nairobi and Mombasa; matatu minibuses are cheap but chaotic.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  G 240V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 999 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +254	TIME ZONE UTC+3 (standard time)
TAP WATER Not safe — drink bottled or treated water	DRIVING On the left
TIPPING Tip safari guides around US\$10–20 per guest per day and camp staff via a shared box; in restaurants, 10% is usual if service isn't included.	

ETIQUETTE

Greet with a handshake and 'Jambo' or 'Habari'. Ask before photographing people, especially Maasai and Samburu, who may expect payment, and dress modestly in Lamu and other coastal towns.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (NBO), Nairobi; Moi International Airport (MBA), Mombasa

Visas & entry for Kenya

Shown for a British passport.

Apply online before you go (travel authorisation)

You must apply online for electronic travel authorisation in advance of travel. The local authorities recommend applying at least 2 weeks before your departure.

Travellers who currently hold a visa can continue to travel using their visa until it expires.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A Tetanus Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya Dengue Hepatitis B Measles Meningococcal disease Polio Rabies Tuberculosis Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Kenya: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Kenya

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sat 12 Dec 2026	Jamhuri Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day

Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Tue 1 Jun 2027	Madaraka Day
Sun 10 Oct 2027	Mazingira Day
Mon 11 Oct 2027	Mazingira Day (observed)
Wed 20 Oct 2027	Mashujaa Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Swahili

ENGLISH	SWAHILI	SAY IT
Hello	Jambo	<i>JAHM-boh</i>
Thank you	Asante	<i>ah-SAHN-teh</i>
Please	Tafadhali	<i>tah-fah-THAH-lee</i>
Excuse me	Samahani	<i>sah-mah-HAH-nee</i>
How much is this?	Hii ni bei gani?	<i>hee nee BAY GAH-nee</i>

Know before you go

Single-use plastic carrier bags are banned in Kenya, with heavy fines, so leave them at home and remove duty-free purchases from their bags before landing.

Get a Safaricom SIM on arrival: M-Pesa mobile money is used for everything from taxis to market stalls, and visitors can register with a passport.

Migration timing varies with the rains, so choose a well-placed conservancy camp rather than chasing crossings, and for August and September book lodges and light-aircraft seats months ahead.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.