

Big Five Presents  
*Kenya*

*Exotic yet faintly familiar, Kenya calls to that wild streak deep in the human heart that longs to be out in nature, to be part of something grander than ourselves.*

For generations of travelers, Kenya has answered that call with one of the greatest natural shows on earth – the annual migration of hundreds of thousands of wildebeest and zebra crossing the Masai Mara’s rolling grasslands and wooded savannas. The sweeping countryside of the Great Rift Valley takes in striking Mt. Kenya, the second highest peak in Africa. Vast Lake Victoria is the second largest freshwater lake in the world, and the source of the White Nile, one of the two tributaries of Egypt’s mythic Nile River. Kenya is also the ancestral home to more than 40 distinct tribal groups. Luxury, tented camps and private estates nestled deep in the wilderness, welcome the traveler. This is quintessential safari country ripe with adventures. With its wealth of wildlife cultures and dramatic scenery, Kenya remains one of the most popular and best organized safari destinations. Yet, that very success must make us hesitate. So many travelers come in search of Kenya’s wild nature that human overcrowding in the national parks and reserves, along with poaching and habitat loss are making it increasingly difficult to experience this incredible wilderness. That is why Big Five made a commitment to move away from large-scale inns and lodges in favor of small private conservancies that offer a practical sustainable approach. We recognize that a multi-pronged approach is needed that includes tour operators, conservancies and other conservation entities working together to save Kenya’s, and indeed Africa’s wild places as well as the wildlife and the local communities that depend on them to survive for future generations.



## Suggested Itinerary

### Day 1: Nairobi, Kenya

Nairobi remains the safari capital of East Africa and portal for most Kenya adventures.

### Day 2: Nairobi / Chyulu Hills

Chyulu Hills sits between the Amboseli and Tsavo West National Parks in southeast Kenya.

### Day 3: Chyulu Hills

This location is unrivalled for its location and the untouched authenticity of the Mbirikani Group Ranch.

### Day 4: Chyulu Hills / Laikipia Plateau

Kenya's less-visited Laikipia Plateau in the northern territory is primeval landscape near the great Rift Valley.

### Day 5: Laikipia Plateau

Walking with Samburu Maasai guides and horseback riding with plains animals make this a compelling destination.

### Day 6: Laikipia Plateau / Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies

The Mara is Kenya's most irreplaceable wildlife sanctuary, and hosts the last great animal migration on the planet.

### Days 7/8: Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies

Masai Mara's exceptional big game viewing includes lion prides up to 20 strong.

### Day 9: Masai Mara Game Reserve / Nairobi / Depart

## Custom Options

### Amboseli Wildlife Conservancies (3 days)

Private wildlife conservancies sharing this ecosystem aim to protect the land and encourage wildlife conservation.

### Great Rift Valley & Lake Victoria (4 days)

The valley offers some of the finest bird watching in the world. The lake's shoreline is spread among three countries – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

### Loita Hills (3 days)

This may be one of Kenya's last remaining wilderness areas and a stronghold of traditional Maasai culture.

### Private Conservancies (4 days)

The finest safari experiences today are to be found in Kenya's private nature conservancies. They also pose positive solutions for long-term survival of the landscapes, the wildlife and the cultures of East Africa.

### Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Mt. Kenya & Northern Kenya Conservancies (4-6 days)

Acclaimed safari camps and lodges are part of successful conservation efforts that provide classic safari adventures.

### Northern Rangelands Trust (4 days)

Northern Rangelands Trust is a group of community conservancies in northern Kenya established to benefit the land, wildlife and local communities.

## About Kenya

**Amboseli Wildlife Conservancies:** Amboseli's fragile ecosystem supports a wide range of mammals, including wildebeest, buffalo, impala, Thompson's gazelle, lion, cheetah, elephants and rare black rhino as well as more than 420 species of birds. It is also home of traditional Maasai people. Private wildlife conservancies protect the land and encourage wildlife conservation as an alternative to subsistence farming. Migrating species from Amboseli that were previously killed or driven away from farmlands are now encouraged to make the conservancy their home. Recent years have witnessed a significant increase in wildlife numbers with elephants returning to make the land their own after a 20 year absence. African Wildlife Foundation helps identify critical wildlife corridors such as Kitenden Corridor, which links the Kilimanjaro Forest Reserve in Tanzania to Amboseli National Park.

**Chyulu Hills:** Chyulu Hills is a collection of ancient volcanic cones and craters.

Breathtaking views embrace Mt. Kilimanjaro. Private conservancies insure excellent game viewing of buffalo, bushbuck, eland, elephant, leopard, warthog, wildebeest and zebra and, of course, the big cats. Game drives, walking safaris, horseback riding, hiking in the mountains and visits to traditional Maasai villages make for a classic safari experience.

**Great Rift Valley & Lake Victoria:** The valley is bordered by escarpments both east and west. The floor is broken by volcanoes and encompasses a series of lakes. This large trough in Kenya is part of the Gregory Rift, the eastern branch of the East African Rift, which starts in Tanzania to the south and continues northward into Ethiopia. Lake Naivasha, at over 1,829 meters / 6,000 feet, is the highest lake in the Rift Valley and one of its most beautiful. Fringed by papyrus, this is prime bird watching territory with more than 400 species, including 13 globally threatened species. Lake Nakuru National Park is best known for thousands of flamingos nesting along the shores of Lake Nakuru. Lake Nakuru is one of the Rift Valley soda lakes, 1,754 meters / 5,755 feet above sea level. Lake Victoria has a shoreline of some 4,828 kilometers / 3,000 miles and contains more than 3,000 islands, many inhabited.

**Laikipia Plateau:** This remote part of Kenya was made famous by Kuki Gallman's book, *I Dreamed of Africa*. Laikipia's safari lodges are intimate, catering to a small number of guests. It is possible to do game walks in the company of Samburu Maasai guides, whose knowledge of local wildlife, culture and history is unmatched. Horseback riding on the plains of Africa with herds of zebra, giraffes or elephants is unlike any other riding experience in the world. This is one of the last refuges for black rhino and has the largest elephant population outside of Kenya's parks.

**Loita Hills:** Loita Hills are one of Kenya's last remaining 'true wilderness' areas.

This is a place to truly enjoy the landscapes and walk with local Maasai people to gain a genuine look into their world. The area offers day and night game drives, bush walks and specialised bird watching. Travelers have the opportunity to sleep under the stars on the Masai Mara and hike deep into Masai country to areas seldom visited. This is where the most traditional Masai culture exists. Remote forest glades, the edge of the Great Rift Valley escarpment, stunning views of Lake Natron and sunrises over distant Kilimanjaro are all on the menu here.



**Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Mt. Kenya & Northern Kenya Conservancies:** Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's mission is not only to protect wildlife, but to act as a catalyst for conservation across northern Kenya. By supporting development in the communities outside conservancy's boundaries, Lewa has become the leading role model for sustainable wildlife conservation throughout East Africa. From 1970 to the early 1980s, the numbers and range of black rhino in Africa declined drastically. In Kenya alone, the population dropped from 20,000 to less than 300 due to illegal killing for rhino horn. Some 620 black rhino remain in Kenya, with about 75 on the conservancy. Since 2000, Lewa's black rhino population growth rate has averaged ten percent. Northern Kenya Conservancies are home to elephant, leopard, bushbuck, giant forest hog, buffalo as well as ancient cycads, spectacular butterflies and wild orchids. The semi-arid Laikipia is one of the last relatively undiscovered frontiers of wildest Africa. Pastoralist nomads and wildlife still live in harmony and the ecosystems are still intact. Laikipia stretches from the equator near Mt Kenya, to the edge of the Great Rift Valley. It is a malaria-free area with an average altitude of 1,829 meters / 6,000 feet. Kikuyu, Turkana, Pokot, Samburu, Maasai, Ndorobo, Jamu and Kalenjin tribes inhabit the area. Lions, leopards and cheetahs stalk the savannah. It's a haven for elephants and hippos. The conservancy is renowned for wild dogs, an increasingly rare sight outside the region. Imposing Mt. Kenya is the highest in Kenya and second tallest in Africa. Its highest peak sits at 5,200 meters / 17,060 feet and it is encircled by national park. The slopes are dressed in forest, bamboo, scrub, and alpine moorland, with rock, ice and snow at the highest elevations. The park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and biosphere reserve. One of Kenya's successful private conservancies, Ol Pejeta Conservancy, works to conserve the highly endangered black rhino, and is the largest black rhino sanctuary in East Africa. It is also home to southern white rhinos and the critically endangered northern white rhinos. As an integral part of the Laikipia / Samburu ecosystem, Ol Pejeta is also home to the big five and boasts a high wildlife density.

**Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies:** The Masai Mara Game Reserve is a prized wildlife sanctuary, renowned for the ancient pageantry of the annual zebra and wildebeest migration. Several conservancies have been created around the Masai Mara to help protect these wildlife lands as well as developing projects that benefit the Maasai people who live in the area, making them active stakeholders in the conservancy. This is pristine wilderness with open savannah plains, riverine forest, springs, streams and rivers and rolling hills. Intersected by dark green veins of rich acacia woodland, this area is where some of *Out of Africa* was filmed. Herds of buffalo, hartebeest, impala and gazelle graze the savannas. Giraffe and elephant gather along the Mara River and pods of hippos gather in the water below. Here, too, is the country's largest predator population, with lion prides up to 20 strong. Activities available include a day trip to Lake Victoria and a brilliant hot air balloon ride (weather permitting) over the Mara. In addition to providing revenue from land leased from the local Maasai, conservancies also offer education, medical and employment opportunities previously unavailable to these mostly subsistence-level communities.

**Nairobi:** Founded in 1899, Nairobi is one of the most prominent cities in Africa. Much in the city harks back to its storied past such as the home-turned-museum of Isak Dinesen (Baroness von Blixen), whose writings left us a picture of Kenya at the turn of the 20th century – a colonial world of romance, daring, struggle and triumph. The Giraffe Centre helps protect the endangered Rothschild giraffe found only in East Africa. David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is an important center for the care and protection of rescued and orphaned elephants and rhinos.

**Northern Rangelands Trust:** Northern Rangelands Trust is a home-grown institution aimed at addressing local problems and creating long-lasting local solutions. It connects different interest groups with a goal of collectively developing strong community-led institutions as a foundation for investment in community development and wildlife conservation. Collectively, these conservancies are home to approximately 60,000 pastoralists of different ethnic origin, including Samburu, Rendille, Laikipiak Maasai and Meru. The long-term conservation of wildlife in Kenya's northern rangelands is inextricably linked to the fate of these local communities. The Northern Rangelands Trust encompasses over three million acres. In the Matthews Mountain Range, a 323,748-hectare / 800,000-acre private conservancy was established to promote wildlife conservation and socioeconomic development through sustainable utilization of natural resources.

**Private Conservancies:** Private conservancies play a vital role in maintaining habitat for wildlife. Millions of acres are under private ownership. The owners have created important conservation areas. Conservancies have developed facilities and conservation projects along with local communities, who share the revenues generated, which help health, education and enterprise initiatives to alleviate poverty. Each reserve offers its own activities, many of which cannot be done in national parks such as bush walks, night game drives, and horse or camel trekking. Some also have mountain biking and river rafting. The conservancies also encourage guests to meet villagers to learn something of their ancient traditions. Many are adjacent to national parks and reserves such as the Masai Mara Reserve, Samburu, Tsavo, and Amboseli National Parks to maintain vital wildlife habitats, permitting animals to move freely from one area to another. Travelers also benefit as the conservancy camps and lodges allow only limited numbers of visitors at any one time, insuring an experience no longer found in many national parks.

#### Best Time To Go

*Kenya is a year-round destination, with each season offering its own distinctive rewards, but the best weather is usually July to February.*

*Note: By late July, the herds have begun the dangerous trek from Tanzania northwards into Kenya; August and October is prime migration time in Kenya; September to October flowers bloom and migration ends, but animals are plentiful, and visitors are fewer.*

*Kenya's peak bird-watching season is October to April, while the whale shark (earth's largest fish) season is February and March.*

**\$600 - \$1300 per person per day**  
Land only, double occupancy



*Consider enhancing your adventure by including the following destinations: Israel (p133-136), Jordan (p137-140), Morocco (p21-24), UAE & Oman (p145-148)*



