

# Destination Information Guide

# Kenya



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# Welcome to the World of Big Five!

*The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.*

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



## Nairobi, Kenya

Elevation: 5327 feet

Latitude: 01 19S

Longitude: 036 55E

### Average Temperature

Years on Record: 21

| YEAR | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |    |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| °F   | 67   | 68   | 69   | 70   | 69  | 67   | 64   | 63   | 63   | 66   | 68   | 67   | 67 |

### Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 21

| YEAR | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |    |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| °F   | 75   | 77   | 80   | 80   | 76  | 74   | 73   | 71   | 72   | 76   | 78   | 75   | 75 |

### Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 21

| YEAR | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |    |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| °F   | 58   | 58   | 58   | 60   | 61  | 59   | 56   | 54   | 54   | 55   | 58   | 60   | 59 |

### Average Precipitation

Years on Record: 40

| YEAR | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |   |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| in.  | 29.8 | 1.8  | 1.7  | 2.9  | 6.3 | 4.7  | 1.2  | 0.5  | 0.5  | 1    | 1.7  | 4.7  | 3 |

## WEATHER

The East African climate is surely one of the finest in the world. The area lies along the equator, so temperature varies little during the year, varying by region rather than by season. The climate is temperate and sunny year round with two rainy seasons. The "long rains" occur between April and June; the "short rains" in October and November. But even during these times, it is seldom overcast all day, and many experienced African travelers prefer these off season times of the year as there are fewer tourists and the country is green and flowering. The days vary little in length with sunrise about 6:20 A.M. and sunset about 6:30 P.M.

The temperature seldom varies from the mid- to upper 70's with evening lows near 60 degrees. It is somewhat warmer along the coast and drier bush country. It will be cooler in the upland areas like the Aberdare, Mount Kenya Safari Club, and Ngorongoro Crater, where it can actually be chilly at night.

December through March are the warmest summer months. July and August are considered their winter and are the coolest months. September and October are springtime and weather again gets a little warmer. In late July through September, you will see the annual migration of wildebeest into the Masai Mara. Although the sun is intense, early mornings and evenings can get quite cool, especially in the mountain areas.

## TIME ZONES

Kenya is GMT + 3 hours in the winter, and GMT + 2 in the summer.

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** three blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** Kenya visas can be obtained on arrival at the airport. But many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. If you are traveling to more than one country or to a country that requires visas in advance, Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: [www.trivisa.com](http://www.trivisa.com). Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

**Important:** Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** *Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.*

**\*\*\*Kenya is strictly enforcing the policy of having at least two (we recommend three to be safe) blank pages available in each passport on arrival, failure to meet this requirement could mean that entry will be refused.**

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Travel in East Africa normally begins and ends at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi or Kenya Moi International Airport in Mombasa. Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Handy baggage carts are available free of charge. You can also exchange money at this time at the bank windows located in the airport. Big Five personnel or their representatives will be waiting for you with a Big Five sign with your name on it. They will help you with baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities.

## KENYA CUSTOMS

**Duty-Free Items:** Passengers 18 years and older arriving in Kenya may bring in 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 225g of tobacco, 1 bottle of liquor, a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use, 1 still camera and reasonable amount of film for personal use. Note that customs will not balk at two still cameras but they may be wary of casual travelers carrying excessive amounts of photographic equipment.

**Prohibited Items:** Fruit, seeds and plants, imitation firearms, and all narcotics are prohibited. International penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. The export of gold, diamonds and wildlife skins or game trophies not obtained from authorized Kenyan government department is also prohibited.

## U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

**Yellow Fever:** Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

## **NOTE: YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION FOR INCOMING TRAVELERS**

We are informed that port health officials at the airport have stepped up efforts to check for compliance by arriving passengers for the Yellow Fever vaccination certificates. These certificates are required not only for passengers coming from

countries with risk of yellow fever transmission but also those who may have transited through such countries. The Yellow Fever certificate requirement is not new, but it is being more strictly enforced. Any incoming passengers who do not have the certificate when required will be vaccinated at the airport if they wish to enter the country.

The cost of the vaccination is Kshs. 1,000. The list of countries that are currently on the list as “risk of Yellow Fever transmission” include: Angola, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Colombia Congo, Congo, Code d’ Voire, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, French Guyana, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Senegal, Somali, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Rwanda.

**Malaria:** There is a malaria risk for anyone traveling to Africa south of the Sahara Desert. Malaria exists throughout the year in all areas including urban areas. Resistance to Chloroquine is confirmed. Although you will have little exposure to malaria, it is better to be cautious. **We strongly recommend that you consult your physician regarding these matters.** It is highly recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants in the evening hours. Take along a insect repellent and apply to exposed skin.

**Cholera:** Inoculation recommended. Cholera is reported in areas of the country.

**Medical Treatment:** While traveling with Big Five, you are automatically enrolled in the Flying Doctors Society. This service is designed to bring first rate medical care to outlying remote areas. Should the need arise; you will receive prompt medical attention and transportation to the nearest medical facility.

**Please note:** If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

**Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.** Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

## CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

## CLOTHING ON SAFARI

Located at the equator, the temperature does not vary more than 10 to 20 degrees year around. Most of Kenya and Tanzania sits between 3,000 and 7,000 feet (Nairobi is at 5,500 feet). Mornings and evenings are cool and days are warm. Both the Mt. Kenya Safari Club and the Tree Hotels are at or above 7,000 feet. The coast is typically tropical, warm and humid. Dress for comfort and ease. Safaris are basically informal -- cool, loose clothing for both men and women.

Avoid camouflage-type clothing. Bright-colored clothes are not recommended on safari because we want to blend in with the background. Knit shirts, T-shirts, or cotton tops, jeans, khakis, and shorts are satisfactory. Bring along a couple pairs of long pants and a sweater or a jacket. Comfortable walking or athletic shoes are a must. And, don't forget your swimsuit. Most lodges and tented camps have beautiful pools.

Although it is appropriate to change clothes for dinner at most of the safari lodges, it is no longer mandatory at Mt. Kenya Safari Club for men to wear a coat and tie. But it is still requested you dress nicely for dinner. When visiting The Ark, you will be limited to a small overnight bag (i.e., your carry-on bag) due to space restrictions. Your larger suitcases will be safely stored in a security room at the Aberdare Country Club where you will stop for lunch. Be prepared for cool weather as well as warm. Remember that game drives are often at dawn and sunset in open vehicles. Layering is the best option. Keep in mind that you can have laundry done at almost every lodge/tented camp. Service is reliable and reasonably priced, so don't over pack. You might want to bring small, wrapped hard candy as a snack since there are no snacks between meals. There are no corner grocery stores to pick up forgotten items so be prepared with whatever you need to make your trip comfortable.

## LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

## LUGGAGE ON SAFARI

Leave your expensive, designer luggage at home. Soft, lightweight luggage is suggested. Since there is limited space on the safari vehicle, **one medium sized bag per person is allowed on safari vehicles, and one small shoulder or carry-on bag stays with you at your seat.** The small bag can hold cameras, binoculars, jackets, valuables, etc. The larger bag will be packed in the rear of the vehicle. Plastic bags are always good to keep toiletry or small items in. Since you will be "living out of your suitcase" and changing lodges frequently, try to keep things as simple and organized as possible. You don't want to spend time repacking your suitcase!

**FOR FLIGHTS TO & FROM GAME PARKS & RESERVES, BAGGAGE IS LIMITED TO 32 LBS. PER PASSENGER.** Additional luggage can be stored at your hotel in Nairobi and may be retrieved at the end of your tour. All luggage should be locked and have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

## MONEY

Carry cash and traveler's checks in **small denominations** and travelers' checks should be from well-known sources. All East African countries have very strict exchange control regulations. Exchange money at authorized banks and exchange facilities only and always save your exchange receipts for custom's inspection. Twenty-four hour exchange facilities are located in Nairobi's international airport. Hotels in Nairobi and most lodges can exchange money. Major credit cards are widely accepted in large shops, restaurants and at most of the lodges in Kenya. Please be aware that Diners Card is not accepted by many properties in Africa. Visa and MasterCard are accepted by most top hotels and lodges in Kenya. In addition to credit cards, clients should bring US dollars and traveler's checks.

Please note that Kenyan shilling (up to Kshs.100,000.00) can be taken out of the country. It is fairly easy to exchange Kenya Shillings back into US dollar at the end of the tour as long as you have the proper exchange receipts verifying how much money you exchanged initially. *So make sure that you keep every receipt each time you exchange US dollars into Kenya shillings.* **Note: Most small, tented camps cannot change large bills, even in Kenya shillings such as 1,000 notes. Make sure you bring enough small bills for any tipping and other items you may need.**

## LANGUAGE

Kenya's national language is Swahili, but English is widely spoken. Learning a few expressions and polite forms of address helps make friends and foster good fellowship. If you show a little interest, you will no doubt have several people, tutoring you on the local phrases in Swahili. Here are a few to get you started: Jambo – Hello, Kwaheri – Goodbye, Tafadhali – Please, Ahsante – Thank you, Ndiyo – Yes, Hapana – No.

## ELECTRICITY

Electrical voltage is 220-240 volts, 50 cycle AC. You will need a step-down adapter. Most hotels have 110-volt sockets for shavers, as well as their normal three flat-pronged outlets. Plugs are two thick round pins or three rectangular prongs. Converters and adapters may not work efficiently, so battery-operated appliances are best. Power failures occur and generators are frequently turned off during the night, so it's wise to have a small flashlight.

## FOOD & DRINK

To be safe, drink bottled water. Also use bottled water for brushing your teeth and for cleaning contacts. Although hotels and restaurants in Nairobi will advise you that their tap water is safe to drink, and the safari lodges will provide a thermos of "safe" water in every room/tent, *the safest precaution is to purchase readily available bottled water.* Traveler's diarrhea is common, and this is a simple step to help avoid it. You may wish to talk to your doctor about a general antibiotic or anti-diarrhea medication.

Please note that water is a precious commodity in most areas of the world, and you will most likely be charged extra for bottled water. In most cases, bottled water on Big Five's safaris is included.

When it comes to cuisine, travelers are surprised and delighted by the variety and quality that is served in Kenya. Food at the hotels, lodges, and tented camps is fresh, varied, well-prepared, and abundant. The British and Indian influences have greatly shaped East African cuisine. Banana, papaya, passion fruit and pineapple, among others, normally appear at breakfast and lunch buffets. Seafood is from mountain streams, lakes, and coastal regions. Beef, chicken, and pork are fresh and plentiful. **Note:** If you have food allergies or special/restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

## TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:

<http://www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide>

## SHOPPING

East Africa is a shopper's paradise. Remember that you are expected to negotiate a price in bazaars and markets. Larger shops in Nairobi or gift shops in lodges/hotels may have fixed prices but often have better quality merchandise. Among the interesting souvenirs you will find are: Masai tribal ornaments, spears, hand-woven sisal baskets and bags, local books and maps, gemstones and jewelry, an array of batiks and paintings, beadwork, meerschaum pipes, camel-hair rugs, soap stone carvings, pottery, multicolored fabrics, safari outfits, T-shirts, and a variety of handmade and craft items, including wood carvings and masks in a variety of woods and quality. *It's advisable to carry your purchases home with you. Air freight is not reliable.* **PLEASE NOTE THAT IN KENYA, IT IS ILLEGAL TO SELL ANY PRODUCT MADE FROM A WILD ANIMAL INCLUDING IVORY, HIDES AND SKINS, RHINOCEROS HORN, ELEPHANT HAIR BRACELETS, CROCODILE HANDBAGS. SUCH ITEMS ARE SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION.**

## WHILE ON SAFARI...

*See pre-departure materials for general safety issues.* While on a safari, lodges and camps are located in or near wildlife parks and reserves, and be aware that you may find wildlife wandering onto the grounds after dark. *Remember that this is not Disneyland, these animals are wild.* Follow the guidelines set by each property with regard to safety guidelines. Incidents involving animals in East Africa are rare and are almost always the result of someone doing something they have been advised against. National park regulations govern the behavior of visitors. This is for your safety as well as the safety of the animals. Be considerate of the habitat as well. Many of the heavily visited parks prohibit driving off-road, but this is seldom a problem in getting up close to the animals, as there is an intricate pattern of roads throughout the parks. ***Please note that Big Five drivers are strictly prohibited from harassing or chasing the animals.*** While on a safari in the parks and reserves, try to make an effort to speak softly while near animals. Keep your head and arms in the vehicle area, don't make sudden moves or wave to try to attract attention. The less you impact environment of the animals you want to see, the longer they will stay in your presence, and the better you'll be able to observe their natural behavior.

Most lodges, hotels and camps have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them. Like any big city, Nairobi has its share of crime. During the day, it is reasonably safe to walk, but there

are large crowds of people on the streets. Be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page: <http://travel.state.gov>.

### **A WORD ABOUT SAFARI VEHICLES**

Roads in much of Africa are unpaved and bumpy, making for rough rides at times, even in Big Five's specially-equipped safari vehicles. In Kenya, you'll travel in our company-owned fleet of meticulously maintained minibuses. Each minibus carries a maximum of six passengers, guaranteeing a window seat and easy access to the roof hatches. Big Five carries on board each minibus an ice cooler stocked with mineral water, binoculars, and a small reference library on the wildlife, flora and cultures. For the comfort and safety of all passengers, smoking is not permitted aboard safari vehicles. Our fleet in Kenya is custom built with pop-up roofs for game viewing and photography, modern VHF radios for communication between Big Five vehicles on a safari, and seat belts.

### **DRIVER/GUIDES**

Big Five understands the tremendously positive affect a guide can have on the success and smooth operation of your tour. There is no area where we're more particular than in selecting the guides that accompany

### **SUGGESTED READING LIST**

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc.. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

### **THE MAASAI OF EAST AFRICA**

by **Jamie Hetfield, Marianne Johnston**

Describes customs, food, clothes and homes of the Maasai people in the grasslands of eastern Africa.

### **I DREAMED OF AFRICA**

by **Kuki Gallmann**

At the age of 25, Kuki Gallmann moved to Kenya with her future husband, where they established a vast ranch. But Africa's beauty doesn't come without a price. When tragedy struck, Kuki found herself pregnant and alone with her young son and 90,000 acres of Africa to oversee.

our clients. All of our guides and tour escorts have more than 10 years experience in the safari business. All our guides are English-speaking, highly educated, and experts in locating wildlife. They are eager to share their love of the land and their insights into the African culture, wildlife, flora, as well as the many discoveries that will make your safari a memorable one. Beyond their roles as knowledgeable hosts, our guides are consummate professionals, experienced in dealing with hotel and government officials, and in smoothing the way through check-ins, entry formalities, and other procedures critical to your trip. Their caring professionalism is consistently commended by our travelers, and is a tradition on which we stake our reputation.

### **LODGES & TENTED CAMPS**

Accommodations are excellent, and each lodge is unique with its own personality. Hotels, lodges, and camps are known for their ambiance, location, and service. Even in the tented camps, you'll enjoy fresh linens, elegant meals, and hot showers. Most tents in the permanent tented camps have cement floors and comfortable furniture; all have private bathrooms, including the tented camps, and most have large, clean swimming pools. Many lodges have water holes and salt licks that draw animals right to the outskirts of the lodge.

### **OUT OF AFRICA & SHADOWS ON THE GRASS**

by **Isak Dinesen**

With classic simplicity, Isak Dinesen tells of years she spent from 1914 to 1931 running coffee plantation in Kenya.

### **AFRICAN SILENCES**

by **Peter Matthiessen**

A powerful and sobering account of the cataclysmic depredation of the African landscape and its wildlife. In this critically acclaimed work, Peter Matthiessen explores new terrain on a continent he has written about in *A Tree Where Man Was Born* and *Sand Rivers*.

## **THE FATE OF THE ELEPHANT**

by **Douglas H. Chadwick**

With a single hand, he can pull two palm trees to the ground. If he had two hands, he could tear the sky... So unfolds a Yoruba poem celebrating the largest, most powerful, and one of the smartest creatures to walk the planet: the elephant. In this richly detailed exploration of the natural history and troubled fate of both African and Asian elephants, noted wildlife biologist and author Douglas Chadwick travels the world to acquaint us with these awesome giants. Through visits to India, Siberia, Botswana, Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, and even an American zoo, Chadwick illustrates the pivotal role elephants play in shaping and balancing ecosystems, and the livelihoods of a wide array of people. He shows us how similar elephants are to humans and leads us to rethink our definition of and approach to conservation.

## **ALMOST HUMAN: A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF BABOONS**

by **Shirley C. Strum**

When Strum set out in 1972 to do graduate work with Kenyan baboons, conventional wisdom said that primate society, epitomized by monkeys such as baboons, was based on aggression and ruled by males and their dominance hierarchy. But her absorbing chronicle of fifteen years spent observing a troop of baboons has revealed remarkable new aspects of animal behavior.

## **BORN FREE: A LIONESS OF TWO WORLDS**

by **Joy Adamson, Jane Goodall (Introduction)**

There have been many accounts of the return to the wild of tame animals, but since its original publication in 1960, *Born Free* has stood alone in its power to move us. Joy Adamson's story of a lion cub in transition between the captivity in which she is raised and the fearsome wild to which she is returned captures the abilities of both humans and animals to cross the seemingly unbridgeable gap between different worlds.

## **CHEETAHS OF THE SERENGETI PLAINS**

by **T. M. Caro, George B. Schaller (Editor)**

This is the most comprehensive account of carnivore social behavior to date. Synthesizing more than a decade of research in the wild, this book offers a detailed account of the behavior and ecology of cheetahs. Caro explores group and solitary living among cheetahs and discovers that the causes of social behavior vary dramatically, even within a single species. Caro offers new perspectives on saving this charismatic big cat.

## **ELEPHANT MEMORIES: THIRTEEN YEARS IN THE LIFE OF AN ELEPHANT FAMILY**

by **Cynthia Moss**

Cynthia Moss has studied the elephants in Kenya's Amboseli National Park for over twenty-seven years. Her long-term research has revealed much of what we now know about these complex and intelligent animals. Here she chronicles the lives of the members of the *T* families led by matriarchs Teresia, Slit Ear, Torn Ear, Tania, and Tusless. With a new afterword catching up on the families, and current conservation issues, Moss's story continues to fascinate animal lovers.