



Kenya Travel Information

Airport Formalities

Upon arrival at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, you will be met by a representative of Custom Safaris as you come off the plane. With your guide's assistance, you will proceed through immigration, then baggage claim, then customs. After exiting customs, a Custom Safaris representative will escort you to your hotel.

Climate

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: April – May and October – November. Temperature seldom varies from the mid- to upper 70's with evening lows near 60 degrees. Days vary little in length: sunrise about 6:20 A.M. and sunset about 6:30 P.M. June to September is cool and dry, with high daytime temperatures averaging 75 degrees. At this time, depending on conditions in the south, the Mara provides one of nature's most dramatic spectacles, the annual migration of over a million wildebeest and zebras, teeming from the south to cross the Mara River into the Masai Mara National Reserve.

Clothing for Safari

Safaris are basically informal: wear cool, loose, comfortable clothing. Avoid bright colors on safari to help you blend into the background. Knit shirts, T-shirts, or cotton tops, jeans, khakis, and shorts are satisfactory. Comfortable walking or athletic shoes are a must. And, don't forget your swimsuit. Most lodges and tented camps have pools. Be prepared for cool weather as well as warm. Bring a couple of pairs of long pants and a sweater or jacket. Dawn and sunset game drives in open vehicles can be quite chilly with the temperatures climbing as the day goes by. Layering allows for flexibility. Remember, pack light. Inexpensive laundry service is available at most lodges and tented camps.

Communication

Language: Kenya's national language is Swahili, but English is widely spoken. Learning a few words can go a long way to enhancing cultural exchanges:

Jambo – hello

Ahsante – thank you

Kwa heri – goodbye

Ndiyo – yes

Tafadhali – please

Hapana – no

Telephone: International direct dialing is available at most hotels, but hotels levy a substantial surcharge on all calls. Most game lodges will have a central phone at reception but not individual phones in the rooms. The country code for Kenya is 254. Mobile phone coverage extends to the principal urban centers and parts of popular game reserves such as the Mara. Check with your cell phone provider regarding international calling plans from Kenya.

Currency/Banking

Carry cash in small denominations. Exchange money at authorized banks and the hotels. Always save your exchange receipts in case they are checked by customs when you depart. Nairobi's airport has 24-hour exchange facilities. Hotels in Nairobi and most lodges can exchange money. Major credit cards (VISA and MasterCard) are widely accepted in large shops, restaurants, and at most of the lodges in Kenya.

Standard currency is the Kenya Shilling (Ksh), divided into 100 cents. Shillings are issued in notes of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, and 1000, and coins of 1, 5, and 10 Shillings. Dollars are widely accepted, but you will receive change in Shillings. No Kenyan Shillings may be taken in or out of Kenya. It is a difficult and lengthy process to change Kenyan Shillings back into U.S. dollars at the end of the tours. Therefore, plan your purchases accordingly.

Electricity

The electrical voltage is 220-240 volts, 50 cycle AC so you will need an adapter. If you have a transformer and plug set, bring it along. Plugs are two thick round pins or three rectangular prongs. Converters and adapters may not work efficiently, so battery operated appliances are highly recommended. Power failures occur on occasion so it's wise to bring a small flashlight.

Food and Drink

Food: When it comes to cuisine, travelers are delighted and surprised by the variety and quality of food that is served in Kenya. Food at the hotels, lodges, and tented camps is fresh, well-prepared, and abundant. The British influence is evident in the type and style of meals. Indian cooking has also greatly shaped East African cuisine. For example, *chapati*, a flat type of bread, is very common on Kenya's dinner tables. *Samosas*, tasty meat-filled fried dumplings, are sold everywhere. *Githeri* is a satisfying maize and bean stew that is often prepared with a variety of vegetables and sometimes meat. Goat meat is popular, but for *nyama choma* (meat roasted over a wood or charcoal fire) beef is preferred. Breakfast usually consists of juices, a variety of fruits, cereals, eggs, toast, and meat. Lunch is normally a buffet-style with salads, soup, bread and rolls, cold meats, cheeses, hot dishes, and desserts. Tea is served in the afternoon, while dinner usually consists of multi courses.

Drink: Coffee and tea are served with meals, and beer, wine, and soft drinks are available. The Kenya beer, Tusker, is made locally and is an international favorite. Locally grown Kenyan coffee and tea are especially flavorful and strong. Bottled mineral water is always available for purchase. A limited variety of soft drinks is available. **Water:** Although hotels and restaurants will advise you that their tap water is safe to drink, the safest precaution is to drink the available bottled water provided by the hotels and lodges and your guide while on safari. Taking precautions with the water you use is an important factor to help avoid health problems. The same warning applies to using ice cubes and brushing your teeth.

Health Requirements

Yellow fever inoculation is required if you are coming from any area other than the U.S., Europe, or Canada, or you plan on visiting more than one African country. It is required for everyone traveling to Rwanda. **Malaria** exists throughout the year in all areas including urban areas. Although you will have little exposure to malaria, it is better to be cautious. It is highly recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. Follow the specific directions of your prescription. Anti-malarial medication should be taken prior to departure, during your trip, and continued after your return home. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito by using good insect repellent. **Tetanus** and **polio** vaccines should be up to date. Also advised is **Hepatitis A** and **Hepatitis B** vaccination series.

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. Talk to your doctor about prescribing a general antibiotic or anti-diarrhea medication. While traveling with Custom Safaris, you have access to a medical service providing 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.

Lodges and Tented Camps

Accommodations are excellent, and each lodge is unique with its own personality. Even in the tented camps, you'll enjoy evening entertainment, elegant meals, fresh linens, and hot showers. All accommodations have private bathrooms, elegant dining areas, gift shops, and large, clean swimming pools. Some lodges have water holes and salt licks that draw animals close to the lodges. Each property is personally inspected on a regular basis by our management team who use the strictest criteria for judging comfort, location, amenities, and overall atmosphere.

Luggage

Soft, lightweight luggage is suggested. Since there is limited space on safari vehicles, you will be given a Custom Safaris exclusive duffel bag. You may also carry one medium-sized bag on the safari vehicle and one small-sized shoulder bag or backpack. 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. Laundry service is available at most of the lodges. For the domestic flights within Kenya, luggage is limited to 32 pounds per person. All luggage should be locked and have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Passports and Visas

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure with at least two blank pages in the passport.

Visas: All visitors require a Visa to enter Kenya. Visas may be obtained through the Kenya Embassy. Application forms can be downloaded on the Kenya Embassy website. Recommended: Zierer Visa Service (www.ZVS.com) to process required visas. The cost for this service is about \$100 which includes reliable, fast processing and passport insurance. You will need to send the completed application form (downloaded from the website), your passport, 2 identical passport quality photographs, and photocopies of all documents submitted to ZVS, including the information page of your passport.

Safari Driver/Guides and Vehicles

Custom Safaris understands the tremendously positive affect a guide can have on the success and smooth operation of your tour. All of our guides are professional, experienced, English speaking, highly educated, and experts in locating wildlife. They are eager to share their love of the land and their insights into the Kenyan culture and wildlife. Each vehicle carries six passengers, guaranteeing a window seat for each passenger.

Safety

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss. While on a safari, lodges and camps are located in or near wildlife parks and reserves. Be aware that you may find wildlife wandering onto the grounds after dark. It is always best to follow the guidelines for each individual property with regard to safety guidelines. Incidents involving animals in East Africa are rare and usually involve individuals who do something they have been advised not to do.

Historically, Kenya is one of Africa's most stable democracies and after considerable unrest at the end of 2007, normalcy has returned to Kenya after an agreed power sharing between the two warring political parties. The most recent presidential elections were peaceful. Kenyans, always a warm and friendly people, are eager to welcome visitors back to their beautiful country.

Shopping

East Africa is a shopper's paradise. You will find many opportunities to buy souvenirs. You are expected to negotiate a price in bazaars and markets. Check with the larger shops in Nairobi or some of the gift shops in the lodges to establish a price range. Many times they have better quality merchandise, but their prices are fixed.

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, and a variety of handmade and craft items. You'll also find a lot of wood carvings and masks in a variety of woods and quality of craftsmanship. Kenya is also known for its locally grown coffee and tea.

Tips for successful bargaining:

- Bargain, bargain, bargain! This should be fun. It is a means of communicating and striking up a conversation with the local people. They enjoy talking to you and learning about where you are from while you are in the bargaining process.
- Your first offer should be much lower than the asking price. Establish a price in your own mind how much the item is worth to you and what your top dollar price will be.
- Their first offer will normally be high. Your first counteroffer should be low. The game is your move up in what you offer, while the seller moves down.
- Do not be afraid to walk away. The seller may drop the price.
- You will also get a better price per item if you buy several items from the same vendor.

Time Zones

Kenya is GMT + 3 hours in the winter, and GMT + 2 hours in the summer. (10 hours ahead of California time.)

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory, nor are amounts fixed. The following is a general guideline:

Lodge / hotel staff: Depending on service, your tent steward should be tipped \$5 - \$10 per day. All other staff can be tipped by depositing any amount in the tip box near the front desk of the lodge. This will be evenly distributed to the staff at the end of the day.

Baggage handling: Handling of one piece of baggage is included. This includes porter's tips at airports, hotels, lodges, and camps. If you wish to give an extra gratuity to hotel or lodge porters, we suggest \$1.00 for all baggage brought to your room.

Driver / guides: One driver/guide accompanies each safari vehicle. Customary gratuity is \$10.00 to \$20.00 per person per day, and this is paid at the end of the tour.

Traveler's Etiquette

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between your customs and those of Africa. Different traditions and philosophies, some of which are very old, govern attitudes towards time, business, and politics in Africa. But this is at the heart of why we travel – to experience the world through other cultures and viewpoints. Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial, flexible traveling companion and observing simple rules of common courtesy makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari.

While on a safari, 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 try to attract attention. The less you impact the 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. A safari is a very spiritually and emotionally stimulating experience. Even though many of the roads are rough and dusty, you will end each day tired but content. Game viewing is done from the comfort of your safari vehicle or from vantage points at your lodge. Very little walking is required. Traveling between game parks involves a certain amount of driving, but stops are scheduled along the way. On a safari, your time is your own. If you do not wish to go on all the game drives, you may relax at the lodge or visit the local schools and villages.

Introduction to Kenya

Official Name: Republic of Kenya

Size: 224,960 square miles (slightly smaller than Texas)

Capital: Nairobi (population 2.9 million)

Government: Republic

Date of Independence from Great Britain: December 12, 1963

Population: 37.9 million

Religions: 80% Christian, 10 % Muslim, 9% traditional African religions, 1% Hindu/Sikh/Jewish

Language: English (official), Swahili (national)

Life expectancy: 55.3 years

GDP: \$30 billion

Gross national income per capita: \$680

Natural resources: wildlife, soda ash, land

Main exports: tea, coffee, horticultural products, petroleum products, cement, soda ash

Main imports: machinery, vehicles, crude petroleum, iron and steel, resins and plastic material

Kenya is a multifaceted country. In geographical terms, it ranges from rugged, arid deserts in the north, to rich fertile valleys in the center, to rolling grasslands of the Masai Mara in the south. Fishing villages on the shores of Africa's largest lake, Lake Victoria, in the west extend to white sandy beaches of the Indian Ocean in the east.

East Africa, including Kenya, may be the place where humans first evolved. Recent finds near Kenya's Lake Turkana indicate that hominids lived in the area 2.6 million years ago. Steeped in history, it is one of Africa's most developed countries, but still manages to combine the old with the new. Modern Nairobi with its skyscrapers and up-to-date shopping centers dominate the skyline, contrasting greatly with the typical African mud hut villages just a few miles away. Western style clothing to be seen on the streets of Nairobi looks out of place compared to the traditional dress of the colorful Masai and Samburu who seem oblivious to the progress of civilization and continue their nomadic life as they have done for generations.

The United States and Kenya have enjoyed cordial relations since Kenya's independence. The close cooperation between the two countries is working to promote peace and stability in the area. More than 9,000 U.S. citizens are residents of Kenya and about 100,000 Americans visit Kenya each year.



