

# BIG FIVE

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

*Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



# KENYA

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to frequently asked questions. It is not intended as a definitive guide.



NAIROBI												
Elevation: 5327 feet												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	68	69	70	69	67	64	63	63	66	68	67	67
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	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. "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. Many experienced African travelers prefer off season times as there are fewer tourists and the country is green and flowering. Days vary little in length: sunrise about 6:20 A.M. and sunset about 6:30 P.M.

Temperature seldom varies from 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 Aberdares, 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 mountain areas.

## TIME ZONES & FLIGHT TIMES

Kenya is GMT + 3 hrs in the winter, and GMT + 2 in the summer. Flight times: Flying time to Nairobi is generally 16 hours (8 hours to Europe from the East Coast and 8 hours from Europe to Nairobi), plus any layover time between flights.

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

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

**Visas:** Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service ([www.ZVS.com](http://www.ZVS.com)) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet.

You can also download the necessary forms from the website, where you will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

**Important: Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:**

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa 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.

## 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 assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities. Upon leaving, this will be in reverse.

## CUSTOMS INTO KENYA

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:** Importation of fruit, seeds and plants, firearms, and all narcotics is 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.

## LUGGAGE

***For general international luggage information, please see information sheet provided in your pre-trip information. Remember that due to constantly changing rules, you should reconfirm with your international airlines prior to travel for restrictions.***

## LUGGAGE ON SAFARI

Soft, lightweight luggage is suggested. Since there is limited space on safari vehicles, 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 all your time repacking your suitcase!

If you are 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.

FOR FLIGHTS TO AND FROM THE GAME PARKS AND RESERVES, BAGGAGE LIMITATION IS 32 LBS. PER PASSENGER. Additional luggage or packages can be held in locked storage at your hotel in Nairobi and retrieved at the end. All luggage should be locked and have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Banks operate Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. until around 4:00-4:30 p.m., and about 9:00 a.m. until about 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturdays. Business hours are generally from 8:00-8:30 a.m. to about 5:00 p.m. Only a few offices are open on Saturday mornings, shops follow almost the same hours.

## CURRENCY / BANKING

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. Always save your exchange receipts in case they are checked by customs when you depart.

Nairobi's international airport has 24-hour exchange facilities. 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.

Standard currency is the Kenya Shilling, divided into 100 cents. Shillings are issued in notes of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000, and coins of 1, 5, and 10 Shillings. *No Kenyan shillings may be taken in or out of Kenya*, so if you are going from Kenya to another country, change no more currency than you can spend before leaving for the next country. It is a difficult and lengthy process to change Kenyan Shillings back into U.S. dollars at the end of your tour. *Therefore, plan your purchases accordingly.*

## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

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

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

**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. Follow the specific directions of your prescription, but 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. Mosquitoes typically feed between dusk and dawn, so it is advisable to wear long clothing in the evening hours. Take good insect repellent and apply to all 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.

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 or cream. *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>.*

## 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. *Remember that this is not Disneyland, these animals are wild.* 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 are almost always the result of someone doing something they have been advised not to do.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Bureau of Consular Affairs' website: <http://travel.state.gov>.

## COMMUNICATION

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

Telephone: Country code: +254. International direct dialing is available at most hotels but remember that hotels levy a substantial surcharge on all calls. Public phones work with coins or with telephone cards that can be purchased in post offices or from international call services in major towns. Most game lodges will have a central phone at reception but not individual phones in the rooms. Many hotels have facsimile machines available for guests.

Jambo	Hello
Kwa heri	Goodbye
Tafadhali	Please
Ahsante	Thank you
Ndiyo	Yes
Hapana	No

Major centers such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Thika and Eldoret have Internet cafés. Internet facilities are constantly being upgraded. Several local companies offer computer Internet access, with hourly rates.

## ELECTRICITY

The electrical voltage is 220-240 volts, 50 cycle AC so you will need a step-down adapter. Most hotels have 110-volt sockets for shavers, as well as their normal three flat-pronged outlets. 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 and generators are many times turned off during the night, so it's wise to take a small flashlight along.

## FOOD & DRINK

**WATER:** Although hotels and restaurants in Nairobi will advise you 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. ***Please note that good drinking water in developing countries is a precious commodity and you will usually have to pay for bottled water.*** Traveler's diarrhea is common when traveling in a country outside your own. Taking precautions with the water you use is an important factor to help avoid problems. Also, remember that the same warning applies to using ice cubs, brushing your teeth and washing your contacts.

You may wish to talk to your doctor about a general antibiotic or anti-diarrhea medication.

**FOOD:** 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, 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. Several Indian foods are today

typical Kenyan dishes. For example, *chapati*, a flat type of bread, is a very common on Kenya's dinner tables. *Samosas*, tasty meat-filled fried dumplings, are sold everywhere, from street-side vendors to fast food restaurants. *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. Seafood is from mountain streams, lakes, and coastal regions. Beef, chicken, and pork are fresh and plentiful.

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 and cheeses, hot dishes and desserts. Tea is served in the afternoon, while dinner usually consists of multi courses. Coffee and tea are served with meals; and beer, wine, soft drinks are available. The Kenya beer (Tusker) is made locally and an international favorite. Locally grown Kenyan coffee and tea are especially flavorful and strong.

Bottled mineral water is always available for purchase. Limited varieties of soft drinks are available, but diet drinks and decaffeinated beverages are not available. Hard liquor is in short supply or you may not find your favorite brands.

## CLOTHING FOR SAFARI

Safaris are basically informal; cool, loose, comfortable clothing for both men and women. You don't need safari-type clothing, although avoid bright colors on safari to help you blend into the background. Avoid camouflage-type clothing. 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.

It is no longer mandatory at Mt. Kenya Safari Club for men to wear a coat and tie. But they do request that you dress neatly for dinner. Women should also take along appropriate casual clothing.

Be prepared for cool weather as well as warm. Bring a couple pairs of long pants and a sweater or a jacket. Dawn and sunset game drives in open vehicles can be quite chilly with the temperatures climbing as the day goes by. Layering allows the most flexibility. Laundry service at most lodges and tented camps is inexpensive. *Please refer to luggage restrictions and our clothing list for other suggestions.*

## TIPPING

Tipping is not compulsory, nor are amounts fixed. Tips to drivers / guides are not included and left up to the discretion of the client. Tipping is normally done at the end of the tour. The following, however, is a general guideline to assist you.

- Hotel staff: All hotel taxes and service charges have been included in the cost of your tour, so unless someone provides you with extra service like room service, you need not tip. Always check your bill first to see if a service charge has been automatically added.
- 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 \$3.00 to \$5.00 per person per day based on six passengers in a vehicle. If there are fewer passengers, you might consider offering a little more in recognition of any individual attention you receive.

## SHOPPING

East Africa is a shopper's paradise. You will find many opportunities to buy souvenirs. Remember that you are

expected to negotiate a price in bazaars and markets. Check with the larger shops like African Heritage in Nairobi or some of the gift shops in the lodges/hotels 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, T-shirts, and a variety of handmade and craft items. Of course, you'll find lots 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. 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, ETC. SUCH ITEMS ARE SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BARGAINING

- Bargain, bargain, bargain! This should be fun! Sometimes it is helpful to establish prices before going out to bargain.
- When bargaining, 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.
- Again, remember, it's a game. Make it fun and both sides will have a good time and be satisfied with the transaction.

## 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 toward 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.

Numerous 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 was 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.

***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.

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.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial traveling companion makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari. Observing simple rules of common courtesy will better assure the success of your travel.

## SETTING THE PACE

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 itineraries are scheduled so that driving times are kept to a minimum, and 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 by the swimming pool. There will be lots of fresh air, good food, and pleasant companionship.

## A WORD ABOUT VEHICLES

Big Five has specially-equipped safari vehicles. In Kenya, you'll travel aboard 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 on every seat.

## 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 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.

Above and beyond their role as a knowledgeable host, our guides are consummate professionals, experienced in dealing with hotel and government officials, experienced 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 accommodations 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 close to lodges. Each property is personally inspected on a regular basis by our management team, who uses the strictest criteria for judging comfort, location, amenities, and overall atmosphere.

## INTRODUCTION TO KENYA

Official Name: Republic of Kenya Capital: Nairobi

Government: One party modified democracy.

Date of Independence: Dec 12, 1963

Population: 23 million

Religions: More than half the people are Christians, 30% are Moslems, and 10% Animists. There are Hindu and Jewish minorities.

Kenya is a multifaceted country of some 225,000 square miles. In geographical terms, it ranges from rugged, arid deserts in the north to rich fertile valleys in the center, which in turn give way to the rolling grasslands of the Masai Mara to the south. Fishing villages on the shores of Africa's largest lake, Lake

Victoria, in the west give way to white sandy beaches of the Indian Ocean in the east.

Steeped in history, Kenya is one of Africa's most developed countries, but nevertheless still manages to combine the old with the new in perfect harmony. Modern Nairobi with its skyscrapers and up-to-date shopping centers dominates the skyline, contrasting greatly with the typical African mud hut villages on its outskirts. Western style clothing to be seen on the streets of Nairobi looks out of place a few miles away compared to the traditional dress of the colorful Masai who seems oblivious to the progress of civilization and continue their nomadic life as they have done for generations.

## NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

Kenya contains 50 national parks and reserves, although only about two dozen are properly established in terms of accessibility and facilities for tourists.

Only national parks offer complete legal protection from uses other than wildlife conservation and tourism. National reserves and sanctuaries allow limited use by the local people. Most of Big Five's itineraries include a varied selection of the famous parks and reserves of Kenya. These diverse and carefully planned itineraries allow travelers to experience the best Kenya has to offer. Following is a brief description of some of the major parks and reserves that you will visit on your Big Five itinerary.

**Aberdare National Park** Aberdare Mountain range extends north to south from about Nairobi to Thomson's Falls. To the west, they border the Great Rift Valley, and to the east they bump up against a high fertile plateau that separates them from Mount Kenya. Within these mountains lies the Aberdare National Park, where wildlife is abundant, especially elephant, rhino, buffalo, leopard, giant forest hog, and waterbuck. On the eastern slopes toward Nyeri are famous Treetops and The Ark lodges.

**Amboseli National Park** Amboseli has earned a reputation for great scenic beauty, with the majestic snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro in the background. This is Masai country, a proud nomadic people, who have lived in harmony with nature for centuries. Masai villages surround Amboseli. An estimated 420 species of birds have been recorded in the park.

**Lake Naivasha** Few lakes have a more commanding setting than Lake Naivasha, highest and purest of the Rift Valley lakes. The area around Lake Naivasha was a popular settlement area for early colonial families. It's also a bird sanctuary with more than 400 species recorded here. Lake Naivasha is also home to a fledgling wine industry that began in 1980. Lake waters also irrigate thousands of hectares of fertile volcanic loam that produce vegetables and colorful flowers. During high season, more than a million stems a night are airlifted to Europe.

**Lake Nakuru National Park** Established in 1960 as a bird sanctuary, Lake Nakuru was the first national park in Africa to be set aside primarily for the conservation of bird life. Surrounded by acacia woodland and rich savannah, this park is still considered one of the finest ornithological sites in the world. It is famous worldwide for its great flock of pink flamingoes, estimated to number more than a million at certain times of the year. Roger Tory Peterson, one of the world's leading ornithologists., calls this "greatest bird spectacle on earth" by The region also includes two other sanctuaries – one for rhino; one for Rothschild giraffe.

**Masai Mara Game Reserve** Masai Mara is world renowned as a reserve of breathless vistas, offering panoramas of vast rolling plains, hills, and woodland groves. Fed by the Mara River, this is lion, elephant and buffalo country. More than a million wildebeest and thousands of zebra participate in the

annual migrations. The actual migration is impossible to forecast accurately, nevertheless, visitors to Masai Mara in August and September are certain to see something of the great herds. This is home to Kenya's largest population of predators, including black-mane lions. Herds of elephant, buffalo, wildebeest, Burchell's zebra, gazelle, and topi can be seen along with leopard and cheetah. The Mara River bisects the reserve, and its tributaries are home to large concentrations of hippos. Some 485 species of birds, 53 of them raptors, have been identified within the reserve.

**Mt. Kenya National Park** The slopes of snow-clad Mount Kenya are covered with rich deciduous and bamboo forests. Open, high-altitude moorland sits just below glaciers and snow fields. The forests contain an abundance of game animals, and more than 150 species. Wildlife includes buffalo, elephant, and rhino. This is one of the world's highest national parks, with 286 square miles of forest, moorland, rock, and ice. The higher mountains above 10,170 feet down to approximately 8,530 feet were declared a national park in 1949. Areas between 5,250 and 1,020 feet constitute the Mt. Kenya Forest Reserve.

**Samburu / Buffalo Springs / Shaba National Park** Samburu/ Buffalo Springs Reserves are really two in one, separated only by a 16-kilometer frontage of the Ewaso Nyiro River. Rugged and remote, these wildlife areas are within the fascinating semi-desert Northern Frontier District of Kenya.

Shaba is one of Kenya's most beautiful and isolated reserves and is set in the Northern Frontier District. It takes its name from a cone of volcanic rock and evidence of its past intensity is demonstrated by the formidable lava flow at the southern end of the reserve. The reserve, whose northern border follows the Ewaso Nyiro River is a mixture of open plains, thick bush and river forests. This wilderness contains many species of common animals, but the main attraction are several rarer species such as reticulated giraffe, Grevy's zebra, greenuk, beisa oryx and the Somali ostrich.

**Sweetwaters Game Reserve** Local people named the area for the fresh, sweet water tapped from the ground. The terrain is typical savannah grassland interrupted by whistling thorn shrubs and acacia trees. Sweetwaters is a privately owned game reserve, making it possible to take night game drives, camel rides and walking safaris escorted by a resident naturalist. Jane Goodall established a Chimpanzee Sanctuary on the reserve that also serves as a rhino sanctuary. Here, a colony of orphaned and abandoned chimps that are being rehabilitated and taught to fend for themselves in an area that resembles their natural living conditions.

**Mt. Kenya National Park** The dominant feature of this park is the snow-clad peaks of Mount Kenya. Its slopes are covered with rich deciduous and bamboo forests. Open, high-altitude moorland sits just below glaciers and snow fields. The forests contain an abundance of game animals, and more than 150 species of birds have been recorded in this park. Resident wildlife includes buffalo, elephant, and rhino. The park is also home to a wealth of flora and fauna. This is one of the world's highest national parks, with 286 square miles of forest, moorland, rock, and ice. The higher mountains above 10,170 feet down to approximately 8,530 feet were declared a national park in 1949.

## **NAIROBI**

Nairobi, at first glance, seems to be a very big, noisy, crowded city. But it is a city steeped in history. In 1896, the British started work on the famous railway, later dubbed *The Lunatic Line*, which was to run from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, a distance of 581 miles. The first 300 miles were fairly straightforward, except for the occasional incidents with the man-eating lions of Tsavo.

When they reached the Great Rift Valley, considerable problems presented themselves in laying track. The main depot was in distant Mombasa, so the British decided they needed headquarters closer to the site of construction difficulties. A station was built on a spot close to a small river where the Masai then grazed their cattle. The Masai called this place *enairobi*, which meant "place of cool waters," and this is where Nairobi got its name.

Less than 100 years old, Nairobi has grown from a jumble of tents to a city of more than two million, and has become one of the major cities of modern Africa. Located 87 miles south of the Equator, it sits at an altitude of 5,500 feet above sea level. Although usually only one or two nights are spent in Nairobi, the city is rich in history, and there are a variety of sightseeing options in and around Nairobi.

**Karen Blixen House and Museum:** The farm, actually located in a suburb of Nairobi called Karen, consists of several out buildings and the small house. It was here that Karen Blixen settled in 1913 from Denmark to establish a coffee farm on 360 acres. Her experiences and love affair with Denys Finch Hattan inspired the book *Out of Africa*.

**AFEW Giraffe Center:** Reserve of 15 acres set in a small pocket of indigenous forest only 11 miles from the city center is the Langata Giraffe Center. Rothschild giraffes roam the grounds, eating food pellets from visitors. African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW) is headquartered here. AFEW is dedicated to educating local schoolchildren on the need for wildlife preservation. More than 160 species of birds have been identified on the grounds, as well as warthogs. The center has a tea house and a gift shop stocked with giraffe mementos. Sitting across the great lawns is Giraffe Manor. This is the former home of Jock and Betty Leslie-Melville who founded AFEW and began the project to save the endangered Rothschild giraffe in 1977. Their initial objective was to save the endangered Rothschild giraffe, and they adopted and raised several baby giraffes. One of them, Daisy, helped them create an awareness of the plight of this giraffe subspecies. They relocated a few of the remaining Rothschild giraffes to safety. Today, those transplanted giraffes are doing well and have produced offspring.

**Nairobi National Park:** With its main gate only 5 miles from Nairobi, Nairobi National Park is the smallest and oldest of Kenya's Game Parks. Established in 1945, it covers an area of only 44 square miles. Three sides of the park are fenced with an open southern end providing animal access. Except for a small forest area, the park vegetation comprises mostly open grassy plains. Despite its urban location and small area, this park contains a good selection of the game found throughout Kenya with the exception of an elephant. Situated at the main gate on Langata Road, the Nairobi Animal Orphanage is a hospice for young, sick, and stray animals.

**Kazuri, Ltd. Ceramic Beads & Jewelry:** Kazuri, which means "small and beautiful" in Swahili, began 17 years ago as a small ceramic workshop experimenting in making hand-made beads. It began in Lady Susan Wood's garden. She became fascinated with local color beads when she and her husband, late Michael Wood, founder of the Flying Doctor's Society, farmed the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro. She began the project with two African women. Today, more than a hundred women create 12,000 beads a day. The women come from the villages around Nairobi. This has turned out to be an ideal industry for these women to help support their families. Tour the factory and the gift shop. Website: <http://www.kenya-direct.com/kazuri/kazprods.html>

**Railroad Museum:** This museum houses trains and memorabilia that helped build Kenya. Nairobi took shape around the railway system. Artifacts from famous Lunatic Express line include wooden rhino catcher on which Teddy Roosevelt sat astride during his 1908 safari and a wooden bench.

**Natural History Museum:** The Natural Museum of Kenya in Nairobi houses displays of East Africa's wild animals.

There is a display of Arab-inspired coastal culture and upstairs a display remembering Kenya's turbulent struggle for independence. An educational display represents many of Kenya's ethnic groups. Some 574 original watercolors by Joy Adamson – between 1947 and 1954 -- are on permanent exhibit. This work captures customs and costumes of the indigenous peoples of Kenya. Upstairs is also what is reputedly the world's largest collection of African butterflies and other insects, as well as a bird gallery, which exceeds 900 species. A large selection of archaeological finds and fossils excavated by Dr. Mary Leakey are also on display.

Utamaduni: "Utamaduni" in Swahili means culture, tradition, refinement or civilization. Situated in the suburb of Langata, this craft center is home to 18 different shops offering a myriad of high quality Kenyan art, crafts, and clothing. *Part of the proceeds of each sale is donated to the Kenya Wildlife Service on an ongoing basis to help fund projects.*

### **Limuru Highlands**

Kiambethu Tea Estate is the home of Mrs. Mitchell in the Limuru Highlands about 22 miles northeast of Nairobi. Mrs. Mitchell is now in her 80's. Her parents were pioneer settlers and in 1910, were the first to grow tea commercially in Kenya. She takes clients on a short walk around the indigenous forest to see Colobus monkeys and relate the history of her family, her English garden and explain how tea is grown. Clients sample a "fresh" pot of tea at her estate and enjoy a sumptuous buffet lunch before heading for the Ngong Hills and Kenya's picturesque countryside. After a brief introduction into Masai culture, there is an opportunity to visit the manyatta and interact with the people, learning about their customs and forms of art. Morani performs warlike dances.

### **Mombasa**

The gateway to the Kenya Coast, Mombasa is the country's second largest city. With a recorded history of more than 2,000 years, it is a mystical mixture of ancient and modern with a population blending the great cultures of Africa, Arabia and Europe. Not everyone realizes that this picturesque port is an

island with two deep water harbors. Graceful dhows, unchanged through the centuries, mingle with ocean liners in the harbor. The old town is a maze of streets and lanes with shuttered homes and open-fronted shops where the smell of exotic spices is always present. Along the silver white shoreline, hotels, restaurants, casinos, shows and nightlife caters for every taste and budget. Built in 1593, the ancient Portuguese fort, named Fort Jesus, stands as a sentinel against long forgotten invasions from the sea and is now a fine museum of antiquities. A coral reef about a mile out protects the Kenya coastal waters. There are few or no sharks, only scores of species of spectacular coral fish easily observed in the clear warm ocean. The waters of the Indian Ocean off the Kenya coast offer unlimited opportunities for the serious sport fisherman or enthusiastic first timer.

### **Lamu**

Lamu is the last remaining bastion of the Shirazi, the oldest of the cultures on this coast. Visitors are transported back through time to a way of life much as it was 600 years ago. Little has changed and by visiting Lamu, it is easy to see how life must have once been in all the great trading posts of the East African coastline. The unchanged architecture of the houses is a series of open plan galleries almost always without doors and interior courtyards ensuring shade from the tropical sun and calm from the bustling streets outside, kept secret by enormous intricately carved doors. The simplicity and grace of existence are therapeutic here. It is a tranquil life. Apart from one vehicle on the island, no cars are allowed, and there is a large donkey population. The Lamu area contains some of the world's last truly deserted tropical beaches and islands, traditional crafts, exotic shopping for bargain hunters, and a glimpse of a contented way of life that has remained unchanged for centuries.

## **A word about our global commitment**

Big Five is dedicated to projects around the globe that address the critical relationship between healthy local people and their environments. We actively seek partners who reinforce our philosophy of renewable resources and responsible tourism. These eco-alliances stand witness to Big Five's on-going commitment to support the well being of local peoples and environments in our host destinations. We are proud to support the following organizations and projects.

### **In Africa**

#### **St. Nicholas Community Development Center and Children's Home, Nairobi, Kenya**

St. Nicholas Community Development Center was founded in 1986, under the auspices of the Anglican Church of Kenya. The center, located on 12 acres, has become home to more than 168 orphaned and abandoned children; some fresh from living on the streets, others victims of abuse, still others whose families have been devastated by AIDS. Children range in age from two to 20. Big Five and its staff in Nairobi have worked closely with the center over the years. Most recently, the company donated money to help build two new dormitories, which opened last year and now house 80 children.

In addition to food, shelter and medical care, the center also provides educational opportunities for both residents and children of community. The center runs a primary and secondary school, and is working to expand a vocational training center. St. Nicholas Center is also involved in a variety of outreach programs to help reintegrate children back into their communities. The center offers hope and help to some of Kenya's most forgotten children.

#### **Mountain bongo repatriation project, Florida & Kenya**

The Rare Species Conservatory Foundation, Florida, launched a project to restore a critically endangered flagship species – mountain bongos -- to self-sustaining levels in the wild of Kenya from captive U.S. zoo stock. The mountain bongo repatriation project represents a rare milestone in wildlife conservation. The repatriated bongos are founders for a long-term breeding effort at the Mt. Kenya Game Ranch, whose descendants will be gradually acclimated to the wild over future generations. Ultimately, the program seeks to restore a sustainable wild population within the Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site via close coordination with the Kenya Wildlife Service.