



Understand East Africa

EAST AFRICA TODAY 570

Fifty years after the region gained independence, many challenges remain, but there are bright spots, too.

HISTORY 572

From humankind's earliest days through migrations, colonialism and independence, East Africa's modern face reflects many influences.

LIFE IN EAST AFRICA 578

Daily life moves to its own pace, with hospitality, community solidarity and spirituality major themes.

TRIBAL CULTURES 583

Over 300 different groups are at home in East Africa, with fascinating and colourful traditions.

ENVIRONMENT 591

Diverse landscapes and fragile ecosystems host a wealth of plants, birds and wildlife.

WILDLIFE & HABITAT 597

Read the definitive full-colour guide to Tanzania's wildlife by renowned expert David Lukas.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES 621

East Africa's parks range from open savannah lands to dense mountain forests, all packed with wildlife.

PRIMATES 627

Close-up encounters with chimpanzees and mountain gorillas are a regional highlight.

THE ARTS 631

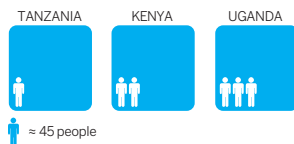
Discover East Africa's lively arts scene, from Swahili-style architecture to Congolese dance bands.

A TASTE OF EAST AFRICA 634

Learn about everything from ugali to etiquette in this guide to dining East African style.



population per sq km



East Africa Today

Legendary Allure

East Africa's allure is legendary, with its charming old Swahili towns, wildlife-packed safari parks, the world's last remaining mountain gorillas, magical archipelagos and a vibrant kaleidoscope of cultures. Its cities pulse with energy as glitzy high-rises appear practically over night, the young and not-so-young wait in line at crowded internet cafes, and overflowing matatus (minibuses) careen wildly through the streets. Crowds pack churches on Sunday mornings and mosques at midday on Fridays; sidewalk vendors hawk everything from fresh pineapples to mobile phones; and massive billboards tout the virtues of condoms and abstinence. Tree-planting campaigns and anti-plastic bag legislation have put the region firmly in the running with the rest of the world to go green. And each day East Africans shake their collective head about the deplorable antics of some of their politicians.

Ethnic & Political Tensions

Yet, in 2007, Kenya – the regional powerhouse – erupted in postelection ethnic violence, shaking East Africa's upwards-oriented image and sending visitor numbers plummeting. Northern Uganda, although increasingly stable, continues to be plagued by outbreaks of conflict. Opposition party rioting in 2011 injured dozens in Kampala. Parts of Burundi are still shadowed by scattered rebel elements and banditry, and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; formerly Zaire) remains shaky.

Economic & Social Challenges

East Africa's economy is a mixed picture. Inflation is at low to moderate levels, economies are growing, and tourism is a major money earner; however, all of the five countries covered in this book are ranked in the

- » Area:
1,816,753 sq km
- » Highest point:
Mt Kilimanjaro
(5896m)
- » Lowest point:
Lake Tanganyika's floor
(358m below
sea level)
- » Famous for:
wildebeest
migration,
mountain
gorillas, safaris,
dhows, tradi-
tional cultures

Dos & Don'ts

- » **Do** support local enterprise: buy directly from the makers.
- » **Do** choose safari/trekking operators that treat local communities as equal partners.
- » **Do** ask permission before photographing people.
- » **Do** take advantage of cultural tourism programs.
- » **Don't** engage in indiscriminate gift giving. Donate to sustainable, recognised projects.
- » **Don't** buy items made from ivory, skin, shells, etc.

Top Films

- » **War/Dance** (2007) A glimpse into northeastern Uganda
- » **Kibera Kid** (2006) Life in Nairobi's largest slum
- » **Hotel Rwanda** (2004) Story from the Rwandan genocide
- » **Africa: The Serengeti** (1994) The annual wildebeest migration