Kenya

Nairobi (Chapter)

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Coverage includes: Nairobi & around, Ngong Hills, Kiambethu Tea Farm.

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Why Go?
Nairobi’s reputation for crime is well-known, but the horror stories obscure a vibrant and cosmopolitan city full of attractions. Primary among these is the world’s only national park on the cusp of a capital city – a park packed with the free-roaming megafauna more associated with remote African plains. There’s also an elephant orphanage and a brilliant park that has played a crucial role in saving the Rothschild’s giraffe from extinction – a visit to both promise experiences that will rank alongside your favourite wildlife memories of your time in Kenya. Not far away, the former home of Karen Blixen (of *Out of Africa* fame), an outstanding museum and fantastic restaurants and hotels all add to the city’s appeal. And those horror stories? Yes, many of them are true. But the majority of visitors to Kenya’s capital never experience a problem. If you keep your wits about you, you’re far more likely to leave with a lasting impression of Kenya’s dynamism than tales of personal disaster.

When to Go

Nairobi

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History
Nairobi is a completely modern creation, and almost everything here has been built in the last 100 years. In fact, until the 1890s the whole area was just an isolated swamp. But, as the tracks of the East African Railway were laid down between Mombasa and Kampala, a depot was established on the edge of a small stream known to the Maasai as uaso nairobi (cold water). The Maasai were quickly and forcibly removed from the land, as the British East Africa protectorate had ambitious plans to open up the interior to white colonial settlement.

In addition to its central position between the coast and British holdings in Uganda, Nairobi benefited from its extremely hospitable environment. Its proximity to a network of rivers meant that water was abundant, and its high elevation and cool temperatures were conducive to comfortable residential living without fear of malaria. Although Nairobi did struggle in its early years, with frequent fires and an outbreak of the plague, by 1907 the booming commercial centre had replaced Mombasa as the capital of British East Africa.

Even after the first permanent buildings were constructed, Nairobi remained a frontier town, with rhinos and lions freely roaming the outskirts. As a result, the colonial government built some grand hotels to accommodate the first tourists to Kenya — big-game hunters, lured by the attraction of shooting the country’s almost naively tame wildlife. In 1946, Nairobi National Park was established as the first national park in East Africa. It remains the only wildlife reserve in the world bordering a capital city.

After achieving independence in 1963, Nairobi grew too rapidly, by most accounts, putting a great deal of pressure on the city’s infrastructure. Power cuts and water shortages became a common occurrence, and enormous shanty towns of tin-roofed settlements sprung up on the outskirts of the capital. In the name of modernisation, almost all of the colonial-era buildings were replaced by concrete office buildings, which today characterise much of the modern city.

However, Nairobi has been successful in establishing itself as East Africa’s largest city and main transport hub. The capital is also situated firmly at the centre of national life and politics, though this position did the city no favours in 1998 when the US embassy on Moi Ave was bombed by militants with links to al-Qaeda. More than 200 Kenyans were killed in the attack, and although four suspects were convicted and sentenced to life without parole, many locals were angered by what they considered lenient sentences (they had wanted the death penalty) and meagre compensation.

In December 2007, the shanty towns of Nairobi were set ablaze as riots broke out following a disputed presidential election.

**NAIROBI IN...**

**Two Days**

Start by getting up close and personal with wildlife at the **Giraffe Centre** and the **David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust**. A visit to the **Karen Blixen Museum** is recommended for *Out of Africa* fans, then go shopping at the **Kazuri Beads & Pottery Centre** and **Utamaduni**. In the evening, dine at **Carnivore** and dance at the **Simba Saloon**.

On day two, head downtown to visit the **National Museum**, view the city from the **Kenyatta Conference Centre**, and step back in colonial time at the **Railway Museum**. Have a drink at the legendary **Thorn Tree** or **Lord Delamere Terrace & Bar**. In the evening, eat posh at **Tamarind Restaurant** and have a whole lot of fun at **Simmers**.

**Four Days**

Spend the best part of your third day in **Nairobi National Park**, but leave enough time for a tour of **Kibera** shanty town. For dinner, eat at either **Rusty Nail** or the **Karen Blixen Coffee Garden**.

For your final 24 hours, branch out into the **Ngong Hills** and the grave of Denys Finch Hatton, do a bit of shopping in the **curio markets**, eat at **Haandi**, Kenya’s best Indian restaurant, then drink the night away at **Gypsy’s Bar**.
Hundreds of homes were burnt to the ground by protestors, and many suffered violent attacks. Deep scars remain, especially among those who were internally displaced.

In recent years, the growth of the city has led to tremendous pressure being put on the government to develop protected lands such as Nairobi National Park. But the government has so far resisted, as these lands continue to support traditional migration routes for herd animals.
National Museum (Map p56; www.museums.or.ke; Museum Hill Rd; adult/child KSh800/400, combined ticket with Snake Park KSh1200/600; ☏ 8.30am-5.30pm) Kenya's wonderful National Museum, housed in an imposing building amid lush, leafy grounds just outside the centre, has a good range of cultural and natural history exhibits. Aside from the exhibits, check out the life-sized fibreglass model of pachyderm celebrity Ahmed, the massive elephant who became a symbol of Kenya at the height of the 1980s poaching crisis, and who was placed under 24-hour guard by Jomo Kenyatta; he's in the inner courtyard next to the shop.

The museum's permanent collection is entered via the Hall of Kenya, with some ethnological exhibits, but this is a mere prelude. In a room off this hall is the Birds of East Africa exhibit, a huge gallery of at least 900 stuffed specimens. In an adjacent room is the Great Hall of Mammals, with dozens of stuffed mammals, as well as a skeleton reproduction of Ahmed the elephant. Accessible off the mammals room is the Cradle of Humankind exhibition, the highlight of which is the Hominid Skull Room – an extraordinary collection of skulls that describes itself (with some justification, it must be said) as 'the single most important collection of early human fossils in the world'; the information panels in this room are worth poring over.

Upstairs, the Historia Ya Kenya display is an engaging journey through Kenyan and East African history. It's well-presented, well-documented and offers a refreshingly Kenyan counterpoint to colonial historiographies. Also on the 1st floor, the Cycles of Life room is rich in ethnological artefacts from Kenya's various tribes and ethnic groups. There are also plans to reinstall the Joy Adamsons Exhibition on the 1st floor, including the 'Peoples of Kenya' series of tribal portraits by the author of Born Free.

Snake Park (Map p56; www.museums.or.ke; Museum Hill Rd; adult/child KSh800/400, combined ticket with National Museum KSh1200/600; ☏ 8.30am-5.30pm) In the grounds of the National Museum, the zoo-like Snake Park has some impressive snake species, including the puff adder, black mamba, African rock python and the Gaboon viper (which rarely bares its 4cm-long fangs, the longest in the world). There are also local fish species, lizards, turtles and some sad-looking crocodiles.

Kenyatta Conference Centre (Map p60) Towering over City Square on City Hall Way, Nairobi's signature building was designed as a fusion of modern and traditional African styles, though the distinctive saucer tower looks a little dated next to some of the city's flashier glass edifices. Staff will accompany you up to the viewing platform (adult/child KSh500/250; ☏ 9.30am-6pm) and helipad on the roof for wonderful views over Nairobi. The sightline goes all the way to the suburbs and on clear days you can see aircraft coming in to land over Nairobi National Park. You're allowed to take photographs from the viewing level but not elsewhere in the building. Access may be restricted during events and conferences.

Railway Museum (Map p56; Station Rd; adult/child KSh400/100; ☏ 8am-5pm) The main collection at this interesting little museum is housed in an old railway building and consists of relics from the East African Railway. There are train and ship models, photographs, tableware, and oddities from the history of the railway, such as the engine seat that allowed visiting dignitaries like Theodore Roosevelt to take potshots at unsuspecting wildlife from the front of the train.

In the grounds are dozens of fading locomotives in various states of disrepair, dating from the steam days to independence (which puts the museum's more recent trains on a par with those still being used on the Nairobi–Mombasa line). You can walk around the carriages at your leisure.
To Dutch Embassy (1km); Ugandan High Commission (2km); German Embassy (2.5km)

To Casablanca (1km); Palacina (1.2km)

To East African Wild Life Society (800m); Maasai Market (800m); X-treme Outdoors (800m); Yaya Centre (800m); Basecamp Explorer (1km); Upper Hill Campsite & Backpackers (1.8km)

To Wilson Airport (2km); Kibera (4km); Karen & Langata (13km)
At the back of the compound is the steam train used in the movie *Out of Africa*. It's a fascinating introduction to this important piece of colonial history.

The museum is reached by a long lane beside the train station.

**National Archives**

(Map p60; Moi Ave; admission free; ☑️ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Right in the bustling heart of Nairobi is the distinctive National Archives, the ‘Memory of the Nation’, a vast collection of documents and reference materials housed in the former Bank of India building. It's mainly used by students and researchers, but the ground-floor atrium and gallery display an eclectic selection of contemporary art, historical photos of Nairobi, cultural artefacts, furniture and tribal objects, giving casual visitors a somewhat scattergun glimpse of East African heritage.

**Uhuru Park**

(Map p60; admission free; ☑️ dawn-dusk) An expanse of manicured green on the fringe of the CBD, this attractive city park is a popular respite from the mean city streets. It owes its existence to Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner; in the late 1980s, she fought to save the park from the bulldozers of the former Moi government. Moi had famously suggested that Maathai should be more of a proper woman in the ‘African tradition’. Upon her death in late 2011, her funeral was held in the park and attended by thousands of mourners. During the day, the park attracts picnicking families, businessmen stepping out of the office and just about anyone in need of a little green. It’s not safe after dark.

**Parliament House**

(Map p60; ☎️ 2221291; Parliament Rd) If you fancy a look at how democracy works (or doesn’t) in Kenya, it’s possible to obtain a free permit for a seat in the public gallery at parliament house; ring ahead to secure your permit and remember that applause is strictly forbidden. If parliament is out of session, you can tour the buildings by arrangement with the sergeant-at-arms.

**Jamia Mosque**

(Map p60; Banda St) Amid the clutter of downtown, Nairobi’s main mosque is a lovely building in typical Arab-Muslim style, with all the domes, marble and Quranic
inscriptions you’d expect from an important Islamic site, plus the traditional row of shops down one side to provide rental income for its upkeep. Non-Muslims are very rarely allowed to enter, but the appealing exterior is visible from the street.

American Embassy Memorial Garden
(Map p60; Moi Ave; admission KSh20; 8am-6pm)
This well-tended walled garden occupies the former site of the American embassy, which was destroyed by terrorist bombings in 1998. It’s a lovely spot, despite being right between busy Moi and Haile Selassie Aves. The entrance fee pays for maintenance, and keeps numbers down.

KAREN & LANGATA
These posh suburbs south of Nairobi bear little resemblance to the urban sprawl of the capital. Inhabited mainly by the descendants of white settlers and foreign expats, these leafy environs conceal extensive ranks of houses and villas, all discreetly set in their own colonial-era grounds. The genteel atmosphere and wealth of attractions make Karen and Langata appealing destinations for an easy escape from city life.

Nairobi National Park
(Map p64; www.kws.org/parks/parks_reserves/NANP.html; adult/child/student US$40/20/15; 6am-sunset) Welcome to Kenya’s most accessible yet incongruous safari experience. Set on the city’s southern outskirts, Nairobi National Park (at 117 sq km, it’s one of Africa’s smallest) has abundant wildlife which can, in places, be viewed against a backdrop of city skyscrapers and airliners coming in to land at the nearby airport. Remarkably, the animals seem utterly unperturbed by it all.

The annual wildebeest and zebra migration that takes place in July and August can be seen here (albeit in significantly lower concentrations than in the Masai Mara), and there are generally large aggregations of antelope and buffaloes here year-round.

Nairobi National Park has acquired the nickname ‘Kifaru Ark’, a testament to its success as a rhinoceros (kifaru in Kiswahili) sanctuary. The park is home to the densest concentration of black rhinoceros (over 50) in the world.

Lions and hyenas are also commonly sighted within the park; park rangers at the entrance usually have updates on lion movements. You’ll need a bit of patience and a lot of luck to spot the park’s resident cheetahs and leopards. Other regularly spotted species include gazelle, warthog, zebra, giraffe, ostrich and buffalo.

The park’s wetland areas also sustain approximately 400 bird species, which is more than in the whole of the UK.
A little further into the park, the Ivory Burning Monument marks the spot where, in 1989, Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi burnt 12 tons of ivory at a site near the main gate. This dramatic event improved Kenya’s conservation image at a time when East African wildlife was being decimated by relentless poaching.

The park’s main entrance is on Langata Rd. Other entrances are on Magadi Rd and the Athi River Gate; the latter is handy if you’re continuing on to Mombasa, Amboseli or the Tanzanian border. The roads in the park are passable with 2WDs, but travelling in a 4WD is never a bad idea, especially if the rains have been heavy.

Unless you already have your own vehicle, the cheapest way to see the park is on the park shuttle (adult/child US$20/5), a big KWS bus that leaves the main gate at 2pm on Sunday for a 2½-hour tour. You need to book in person at the main gate by 1.30pm.

Nairobi Safari Walk (Map p64; www.kws.org/parks/education/nairobi_safariwalk; adult/child US$20/5; 6am-sunset)

Just outside the main entrance into Nairobi National Park, this safari walk is a sort of zoo-meets-nature boardwalk with lots of birds as well as other wildlife, including a pygmy hippo and a white rhino. Children in particular love the chance to get up close and personal with the animals.

Animal Orphanage (Map p64; adult/child US$15/5; 8.30am-5.30pm)

Just inside the main gate to Nairobi National Park, this animal orphanage houses formerly wild animals that have been recovered by park rangers. Although it’s something of a glorified zoo and the conditions in which the animals are kept are less than inspiring, the orphanage does protect animals that would have died without human intervention. It also serves as a valuable education centre for Nairobi-ites and school children who might not otherwise have the chance to interact with wildlife.

Giraffe Centre (Map p64; www.giraffecenter.org; Koitobos Rd; adult/child KSh700/250; 9am-5.30pm)

This is one of Kenya’s good-news conservation stories. In 1979 Jock Leslie-Melville (the Kenyan grandson of a Scottish earl) and his wife Betty began raising a baby giraffe in their Langata home. At the time, when their African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW) was just getting off the ground, there were no more than 120 Rothschild’s giraffes (which differ from other giraffe subspecies in that there is no patterning

**NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK: A NECESSARY PARK**

There’s one very good reason why Nairobi has its own national park: cities and wildlife don’t mix. As Nairobi boomed in the early 20th century, conflicts between humans and animals were rampant. Early residents of the capital were forced to carry guns at night to protect themselves from lions, while herd animals routinely raided country farms. As a result, the colonial government of British East Africa set about confining the game animals to the Athi plains to the west and south of Nairobi. In 1946, Nairobi National Park became the first national park in British East Africa, although the event was not without controversy, as the Maasai pastoralists were forcibly removed from the parklands.

The conflict between human and wildlife continues in the park today. The park is fenced in parts to keep the wildlife out of the city, although it’s not a closed system and is instead kept open to allow animals to migrate along a narrow wildlife corridor to southern Kenya or the Masai Mara. With human settlements almost completely encircling the park, however, such corridors are almost completely closed and the migrations will soon be a thing of the past. What that means for animals that survive by following the rains or for the ecosystems within the park is a topic of great concern for conservationists.

**Friends of Nairobi National Park** (FoNNaP; Map p64; 500622; http://fonnap.wordpress.com; Kenya Wildlife Service Headquarters, Langata Rd) The society aims to protect migration corridors connecting the park with other Kenyan regions as well as raising awareness about the park.
SIGHTS

NAIROBI

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The centre combines serious conservation with enjoyable activities. You can ob-
serve, hand-feed or even kiss a Rothschild’s giraffe from a raised wooden structure,
which is quite an experience, especially for children (and the young-at-heart). You may
also spot warthogs snuffling about in the mud, and there’s an interesting self-guided
forest walk through the adjacent Gogo River bird sanctuary.

If the giraffes have piqued your interest, consider staying at the phenomenal (and ex-
clusive) Giraffe Manor (p73) on the grounds.

To get here from central Nairobi by public transport, take matatu 24 via Kenyatta Ave
to the Hardy shops, and walk from there. Alternatively, take matatu 26 to Magadi Rd,
and walk through from Mukoma Rd. A taxi should cost around KSh1000 from the city
centre.

TOP CHOICE

David Sheldrick
Wildlife Trust

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(Map p64; ☎ 2301396; www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org; admission KSh500; ☀11am-noon) Occupy-
ing a plot within Nairobi National Park, this non-profit trust was established in 1977,
shortly after the death of David Sheldrick, who served as the anti-poaching warden of Tsavo National Park. Together with his wife Daphne, David pioneered techniques for raising orphaned black rhinos and elephants and reintroducing them back into the wild, and the trust retains close links with Tsavo for these and other projects. After entering at 11am, visitors are escorted to a small viewing area centred on a muddy watering hole. A few moments later, much like a sports team marching out onto the field, the animal handlers come in alongside a dozen or so baby elephants. For the first part of the viewing, the handlers bottle-feed the baby elephants – a strangely heartwarming sight.

Once the little guys have drunk their fill, they proceed to romp around like big babies, though it’s serious business keeping them in line as they each weigh a few hundred kilos. The elephants seem to take joy in misbehaving in front of their masters, so don’t be surprised if a few break rank and start rubbing up against your leg! While the elephants gambol around, the keepers explain the background of each of the animals.

The baby elephants also use this designated timeslot for their daily mud bath, which makes for some great photos; keep your guard up as they’ve been known to spray a tourist or two with a trunkful of mud.

Once the show ends, you’re permitted to field, the animal handlers come in alongside a dozen or so baby elephants. For the first part of the viewing, the handlers bottle-feed the baby elephants – a strangely heartwarming sight.

Once the little guys have drunk their fill, they proceed to romp around like big
in cages, remember that they are being rehabilitated, and will eventually be released into the wild.

To get here by bus or matatu, take 125 or 126 from Moi Ave and ask to be dropped off at the KWS central workshop on Magadi Rd (KSh50, 50 minutes). It’s about 1km from the workshop gate to the Sheldrick centre – it’s signposted and KWS staff can give you directions. Be advised that at this point you’ll be walking in the national park, which does contain lions, so stick to the paths. A taxi should cost between KSh1000 and KSh1500 from the city centre.

Karen Blixen Museum

(Map p64; ☎️8002139; www.museums.or.ke; Karen Rd; adult/child KSh800/400; 🕒9.30am-6pm) This museum is the farmhouse where Karen Blixen, author of Out of Africa, lived between 1914 and 1931. She left after a series of personal tragedies, but the lovely colonial house has been preserved as a museum. It, along with the adjacent agricultural college, was presented by the Danish government to the Kenyan government at independence. The museum is set in expansive gardens, and is an interesting place to wander.
around, especially if you’re a fan of the Hollywood classic. That said, the movie was actually shot at a nearby location, so don’t be surprised if things don’t look entirely right! Guides (non-mandatory, but useful) are included in the admission fee, but they do expect a tip.

Just down the road you’ll find the Karen Blixen Coffee Garden (p77) and the Karen Blixen Cottages (p72), just in case you want to make the most of your Out of Africa experience.

The museum is about 2km from Langata Rd. The easiest way to get here by public transport is by matatu 24 via Kenyatta Ave, which passes right by the entrance. A taxi should cost between KSh1000 and KSh1500 from the city centre.

**Kazuri Beads & Pottery Centre**

(Map p64; ☎ 3883500; www.kazuri.com; Mbagathi Ridge; shop 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun, factory 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) An interesting diversion in Karen, this craft centre was started up by an English expat in 1975 as a place where single mothers could learn a marketable skill and achieve self-sufficiency. Beginning with just two employees,
the workforce has burgeoned to over 100, including several disabled women who work from home. A knowledgeable foreman provides a tour (free of charge) of the various factory buildings, where you can observe the process from the moulding of raw clay to the glazing of the finished products. A tasteful gift shop is right on the premises, with prices considerably cheaper than at other retail locations.

**Bomas of Kenya**

(Cultural Centre

(Map p64; ☏ 891801; www.bomasofkenya.co.ke; Langata Rd; adult/child KSh600/300; performances 2.30-4pm Mon-Fri, 3.30-5.15pm Sat & Sun)

The talented resident artists at this cultural centre perform traditional dances and songs taken from the country’s various tribal groups, including Arabic-influenced Swahili *taarab* music, Kalenjin warrior dances, Embu drumming and Kikuyu circumcision ceremonies. It’s touristic, of course, but still a spectacular afternoon out.

The centre is at Langata, near Nairobi National Park’s main gate. Bus or matatu 125 or 126 runs here from Nairobi train station (KSh40, 30 minutes). Get off at Magadi Rd, from where it’s about a 1km walk, clearly signposted on the right-hand side of the road. A taxi should set you back between KSh1000 and KSh1200.

**Activities**

Most international tourist hotels have swimming pools that can be used by non-guests for a daily fee of between KSh200 and KSh500.

**Nature Kenya**

(Birdwatching

(☎ 3749957; www.naturekenya.org; per person KSh200) Organises a variety of outings, including half-day bird walks that depart from the National Museum. Contact them for more information.
Mountain Club of Kenya (MCK; www.mck.or.ke; Wilson Airport) The club meets at 8pm every Tuesday at the clubhouse at Wilson Airport. Members organise frequent climbing and trekking weekends around the country and have a huge pool of technical knowledge about climbing in Kenya.

Tours
Some travel agencies (p83) and safari companies (p35) offer full- or half-day tours that take in some of the city's major attractions. Prices vary from one company to the next, and also depend on how much ground you cover, how many people take the tour and how long the tour lasts.

An increasingly popular tour is a walk through the Kibera shanty town. See p69 for details.

People to People Tourism (☎0722750073; www.peopletopeopletourism.com) This company does city tours and can take you further afield, with an emphasis on cultural encounters. Ask whether it's still running its introduction to the world of jua kali, Kenya's open-air manufacturing industry; it sometimes combine tours of the usual tourist sights with visits to jua kali workshops producing crafts and other goods.

Festivals & Events
Kenya Fashion Week (Sarit Centre, Westlands) An expo-style event held in June, bringing together designers and manufacturers from all over the country.

Kenya Music Festival (Kenyatta Conference Centre) Kenya's longest-running music festival was established almost 80 years ago by the colonial regime. African music now predominates, but Western and expat musicians still take part. It's held over 10 days in August.

Tusker Safari Sevens (http://safarisevens.com; Nyayo National Stadium) A high-profile, international seven-a-side rugby tournament. It's always hotly contested and the Kenyan team has a strong record in the tournament, reaching the semi-finals in 2011. It's held in October and November.

Sleeping
Nairobi has something for everyone when it comes to accommodation, from rough-and-ready cheapies on the wrong side of the tracks to palatial colonial-era hotels rich in history to fabulously priced options out in the verdant suburbs.

You can expect to pay a bit more in Nairobi than you would for the same facilities elsewhere in Kenya. However, in a city where personal safety is something of an issue, it's worth shelling out more for secure surroundings, especially if you're travelling with expensive gear. The majority of mid-range and top-end places also tend to throw in a hearty buffet breakfast, which can certainly keep you going throughout the day.

In this section, accommodation is broken down by neighbourhood and then by author preference. Keep in mind that inflation and political instability in Kenya can have drastic consequences, and prices are likely to change: use the prices here as general comparisons as opposed to fixed and non-negotiable rates. Also, rates vary considerably at the top-end properties, so it's best to contact them in advance as you can usually secure small discounts.

CITY CENTRE
Kahama Hotel (Map p56; ☎3742210; www.kahamahotels.co.ke; Muranga Rd; s/d from KSh3100/3700) Almost equidistant between the city centre and the National Museum, this place is a terrific choice. Its catchcry is 'Economy with Style' and it pretty much lives up to it, with pleasant rooms, comfy beds and free wireless
access (no Yahoo! for some reason). The only downside? The new highway passes by the front door – ask for a room at the back.

**Top Choice**

**Norfolk Hotel**

(Map p56; 2265000; www.fairmont.com/norfolkhotel; Harry Thuku Rd; s/d from US$275/300; P P P) Built in 1904, Nairobi’s oldest hotel was the place to stay during colonial days. The hotel remains the traditional starting point for elite safaris, and the Lord Delamere Terrace is still Nairobi’s most famous meeting place. Thanks to the leafy grounds, it has an almost rustic feel, providing an appealing contrast to the modern bent of more central options, and it is by far the best spot in town for those looking for a bit of historical authenticity. To learn more about the colourful antics of Lord Delamere, one of the Norfolk’s legendary patrons, see p295.

**Nairobi Serena Hotel**

(Map p56; 2842000; www.serenahotels.com; Central Park, Procession Way; s/d from US$290/320; P P P) Consolidating its reputation as one of the best top-flight chains in East Africa, this entry in the Serena canon has a fine sense of individuality, with its international-class facilities displaying a touch of safari style. Of particular note is the onsite Maisha health spa, which offers a wide range of holistic cures aimed at soothing your travel-worn bones and balancing your wanderlust-ridden mind. Opt for one of the amazing garden suites, where you can take advantage of your own private patio, complete with mini-pergola for dining outside. As the hotel is right opposite Uhuru Park, avoid walking anywhere from here at night.

**New Stanley Hotel**

(Map p60; 2757000; www.sarovahotels.com/stanley; cnr Kimathi St & Kenyatta Ave; s/d from US$421/468; P P P) A Nairobi classic. The original Stanley Hotel was established in 1902, though the latest version is a very smart and modern construction run by the sophisticated Sarova Hotels. Rooms are large and luxurious, and colonial decor prevails inside, with lashings of green leather, opulent chandeliers and old-fashioned fans, though the real highlight (at least from our perspective!) is the Thorn Tree Café (see p74), which inspired Lonely Planet’s online community. Online rates are often considerably lower than the rack rates listed here.

**Meridian Court Hotel**

(Map p60; 2220006; www.meridianhotelkenya.com; Muranga’a Rd; s/d from KSh7850/8950; P) The elaborate lobby here is rather more prepossessing than the grey concrete blocks above it, but it’s hardly worth complaining when you’re essentially getting a suite for the price of a standard room. There’s no great luxury involved and some of the furnishings have seen better days, but the pool, bar and restaurants make it terrific value in this price range. The superior rooms are rarely worth the extra.

**New Kenya Lodge**

(Map p60; 2222202; www.nksafari.com; River Rd; dm/s/d with shared bathroom KSh600/700/1200) This classic, long-standing shoestringer’s haunt has seen better decades (some of the beds sag prodigiously), though it’s got an aged charm if you’re not too fussy about things like, well, cleanliness. Staff here are friendly, and there’s hot water in the evening (or so they claim).

**Terminal Hotel**

(Map p60; 2228817; Moktar Daddah St; s/d/tr KSh1700/2000/2300) Although it’s lacking in quality compared to other midrange offerings, the Terminal Hotel is preferable to the rock-bottom budget crash pads in the

### NAIROBI ART GALLERIES

The **Go-Down Arts Centre** (off Map p56; 0726992200; www.thegodownartscentre.com; Dunga Rd; admission free; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) contains 10 separate art studios, and is rapidly becoming a hub for Nairobi’s burgeoning arts scene. It brings together visual and performing arts with regular exhibitions, shows, workshops and open cultural nights. It’s in a converted warehouse in the Industrial Area just south of the CBD.

One of Nairobi’s longest-established galleries is the central **Gallery Watatu** (Map p60; 2024857; Lonrho House, Standard St). It has regular exhibitions of paintings, photography and some sculpture, and many of the items are for sale; be prepared to part with upwards of KSh20,000. It also has a good permanent display.
KIBERA

Kibera (which is derived from a Nubian word kibra, meaning forest) is a sprawling urban jungle of shanty-town housing. Home to an estimated one million residents, Kibera is the world’s second-largest shanty town (after Soweto in Johannesburg, South Africa). Although it covers 2.5 sq km in area, it’s home to somewhere between a quarter and a third of Nairobi’s population, and has a density of an estimated 300,000 people per sq km. The neighbourhood was thrust into the Western imagination when it featured prominently in the Fernando Meirelles film The Constant Gardener, which is based on the book of the same name by John le Carré. With the area heavily polluted by open sewers, and lacking even the most basic infrastructure, residents of Kibera suffer from poor nutrition, violent crime and disease.

Although it’s virtually impossible to collect accurate statistics on shanty towns, with the demographics changing almost daily, the rough estimates for Kibera are shocking enough. According to local aid workers, Kibera is home to one pit toilet for every 100 people; its inhabitants suffer from an HIV/AIDS infection rate of more than 20%; and four out of every five people living here are unemployed. These stark realities are compounded by the fact that the social services needed to address the situation are largely absent from governmental policies.

History

The British established Kibera in 1918 for Nubian soldiers as a reward for service in WWI. However, following Kenyan independence in 1963, housing in Kibera was rendered illegal by the government. But this new legislation inadvertently allowed the Nubians to rent out their property to a greater number of tenants than legally permitted and, for poorer tenants, Kibera was perceived as affordable despite the legalities (or lack thereof). Since the mid-1970s, though, control of Kibera has been firmly in Kikuyu hands, who now comprise the bulk of the population.

Orientation

Kibera (Map p64) is located southwest of the CBD.

The railway line heading to Kisumu intersects Kibera, though the shanty town doesn’t actually have a station. However, this railway line does serve as the main thoroughfare through Kibera, and you’ll find several shops selling basic provisions along the tracks.

Visiting the Shanty Town

A visit to Kibera is one way to look behind the headlines and touch on, albeit briefly, the daily struggles and triumphs of life in the town; there’s nothing quite like the enjoyment of playing a bit of footy with street children aspiring to be the next Pelé. Although you could visit on your own, security is an issue, and such visits aren’t always appreciated by residents. The best way to visit is on a tour, allowing you to explore a little of Kibera in the company of a trustworthy local resident. But be aware that a number of establishments in Nairobi are starting to offer ‘cultural tours’ to Kibera, many of which visitors may feel are not much more than organised voyeurism promoting little human interaction. If you are considering a visit, ask questions about the nature of your trip, and consider the potential positive and negative impact that it may have on the community. One company we recommend is Kibera Tours (0723669218; www.kiberatours.com; per person KSh2500).

Getting There & Away

You can get to Kibera by taking bus 32 or matatu 32c from the Kencom building along Moi Ave. Be advised that this route is notorious for petty theft, so be extremely vigilant and pay attention to your surroundings.
WHERE TO STAY IN NAIROBI?

Your experience of bedding down in the capital will be largely dependent on where you choose to lie, since Nairobi’s neighbourhoods vary considerably in character.

The heart and soul of Nairobi is the city centre, so if you want to go to bed and wake up in the centre of it all, look no further. The main budget area is between Tom Mboya St and River Rd, where you’ll find dozens of small hotels and guesthouses, though most of the rock-bottom cheapies are usually brothels or dosshouses for drunks. Staying in this area is something of a budget-travellers’ tradition, but remember that these are some of Nairobi’s meanest streets. The area west of Moi Ave is generally fine, and has a range of options.

Of the outlying areas, the eastern districts of Nairobi Hill and Milimani have the most promising selection, catering for all budgets. This is where you’ll find a clutch of reliable business hotels and upmarket lodges, and the city’s top three backpacker spots, all pleasantly removed from the congestion of the city centre. If you want to be a bit further out, there’s expat-friendly Westlands and Parklands.

For a decidedly different take on Nairobi, consider heading right out into the ‘burbs, namely Karen and Langata. For the most part, accommodation out here is at the top end, though the bucolic charm exuded by many of these properties is worth every shilling. If that’s out of your price range, however, there are a couple of campsites that are worth checking out.

If Karen and Langata aren’t far enough away from the city centre for you, then consider bedding down among the famed Ngong Hills, home to a popular ranch and a world away from the urban bump and grind. Near the Athi River, also on the south side of the city, is another recommended spot, Acacia Camp (see boxed text p88), especially good if you want to get up close and personal to some fine, feathered friends.

city centre. The emphasis here is on doing the basics well, with no overblown attempts at tourist frills, and the clean and adequate rooms speak for themselves.

Hotel Ambassadeur Nairobi

(Map p60; 22246615; Tom Mboya St; s/d from US$80/100; P) Believe it or not, this big hotel opposite the National Archives once belonged to the posh Sarova chain, and while structurally not much has changed, we do suspect room standards were rather more exacting in those days. Rooms are large and relatively plain with worn carpet a recurring theme. That said, it’s central, and offers decent value in this price range.

Hilton Nairobi Hotel

(Map p60; 22250000; www.hilton.com; Mama Ngina St; s/d from US$200/250; P P P) A distinct Nairobi landmark, the Hilton dominates the centre of town with its somewhat dated round tower, occupying virtually an entire block with rooms, restaurants, shops and a whole slew of business facilities. Although its overwhelming modernity isn’t as atmospheric as some of Nairobi’s more seasoned top-end hotels, the Hilton remains one of the best deals in town for upmarket travellers.

Kenya Comfort Hotel

(Map p60; 2317605; www.kenycomfort.com; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts; s/d from US$45/60; P) This cheerily painted place is kept in reasonable nick, offering a selection of tiled rooms and a lift for easy access. Meals are also available in the popular 24-hour Sokoni bar-restaurant, and the rooftop guest lounge is a nice place to survey the city.

Hotel Africana

(Map p60; 0726243840; Dubois Rd; s/d KSh1050/1400) The Africana has clean, bright rooms, and is better maintained than many places in its class. It has a TV room and a roof garden offering a bird’s-eye view of the busy streets. The surrounding area is pretty seedy, but it’s a 15-minute walk to the centre.

Central YMCA

(Map p56; 2724116; State House Rd; dm/s/d from KSh1000/1400/2100; P) While it might not inspire the Village People to dedicate a song to it, this central spot has a decent range of passable rooms. Note that you don’t need to be a man or a Christian to stay at the YMCA, though you’ll certainly be in the majority here if you’re either. Breakfast is available for KSh400, and other meals for KSh600.
Terrace Hotel
(Map p56; 221636; Ronald Ngala St; s/d with shared bathroom KSh700/1000) One of the better deals you'll get at the budget end, the hotel wears its worn atmosphere like a badge of honour. It compares favourably to some of the cell-like establishments around, but it's still spartan by any standard.

Down Town Hotel
(Map p56; 2240501; downtowntel2000@yahoo.com; Moktar Daddah St; s/d KSh1900/2200) A few doors up from the Terminal Hotel, Down Town doesn't have quite the personality of its neighbour, but provides similar standards for a similar price. If the Terminal's full, chances are this is where they'll send you for alternative accommodation, and you're unlikely to hold it against them. That is, unless they're still demolishing the building next door and noise levels haven't abated.

MILIMANI & UPPER HILL

Top Choice
Upper Hill Country Lodge
(Hotel $)$
(Map p56; 2891600; www.countrylodge.co.ke; Second Ngong Ave, Milimani; s/d from KSh11,400/15,600) This fantastic property was constructed by the owners of the adjacent Fairview Hotel, though rather than striving for over-the-top opulence, the focus here is on affordable luxury for business travellers. Despite a recent price hike, it remains one of the best-value midrange options in Nairobi – its minimalist yet stylish living quarters can compete with the best of them. Travellers can also unwind in the small gym, relax in the rock garden or take advantage of the bars and restaurants at the Fairview next door.

Top Choice
Palacina
(Boutique Hotel $$$$)
(off Map p56; 2715517; www.palacina.com; Kitale Lane, Milimani; 1-/2-person ste US$270/409, penthouse US$690) The fabulous collection of stylish suites – at what is possibly the first genuine boutique hotel in Kenya – is perfect for well-heeled sophisticates who still like the personal touch. Intimate rooms are awash with calming tones, boldly accented by rich teak woods, lavish furniture and private jacuzzis.

Wildebeest Camp
(Backpackers $)
(Map p56; 27620740; www.wildebeestcamp.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; camping KSh1000, dm/s/d KSh1250/2500/3500, s/d garden tent from KSh3500/4500) This fabulous place, next to the Royal Nairobi Golf Course west of Upper Hill, is another of Nairobi's outstanding budget options. The atmosphere is relaxed yet switched on, and the accommodation is spotless and great value however much you're paying. A great Nairobi base.

Heron Hotel
(Hotel $$$)
(Map p56; 2720740; www.heronhotel.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; s/d from KSh9995/11,995) It's hard to see why anyone would pay top-end prices when places like the Heron are around. Rooms are modern, extremely comfortable and well-appointed, while the staff are attentive and professional. The location is quiet and there's not even the merest trace of Buffalo Bill's, a notorious brothel that once occupied the site. Highly recommended.

Upper Hill Campsite & Backpackers
(Backpackers $)
(off Map p56; 2500218; www.upperhillcampsite.com; Othaya Rd, Kileleshwa; camping KSh450, dm/d KSh700/KSh3000, d without bathroom KSh2000) An attractive, secure compound and an oasis from the mean city streets, Upper Hill offers a range of accommodation, attracting a loyal following of overland trucks groups and an international mix of backpackers and budget travellers. It's centred on an elegant, restored colonial house on a sprawling estate in the embassy district of Kileleshwa. Competing for the title of Nairobi's top backpacker spot, Upper Hill organises just about every kind of safari and outdoor excursion you can imagine, and it will even take the time to tune up your ride if you're on a self-drive expedition. To get here, take matatu or bus 46 along Othaya Rd until you pass the Egyptian embassy on the left-hand side; the entrance to the property is just past here on the right-hand side.

Millimani Backpackers & Safari Centre
(Backpackers $)
(Map p56; 2724827; www.millimanibackpackers.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; camping KSh600, dm KSh750, s/d cabins KSh2200/2500, with shared bathroom KSh1500/2000) This terrific place is one of the friendliest accommodation options in town, and whether you camp out back, cosy up in the dorms or splurge on your own cabin, you'll end up huddled around the fire at night, swapping travel stories and dining on home-cooked meals (KSh450) with fellow travellers. The friendly
staff can also help you book a safari, organise onward travel or simply get your bearings. Take matatu 46 (KSh30) from the city centre.

**Nairobi International Youth Hostel**

(Map p56; 2738046; www.yhak.org; Ralph Bunche Rd, Milimani; dm KSh700-900, d KSh3000; P @) This well-looked-after budget option isn’t as atmospheric as the Upper Hill Campsite and Milimani Backpackers, but Kenya’s HI instalment is still a comfortable and relaxed spot to meet other travellers. It offers the usual range of hosteller-catered amenities including an activity centre, booking desk, cybercafe, bar-restaurant and a communal lounge. It’s preferable that you have an HI card, but you’ll still be let in if you don’t. Any matatu or bus going down either Valley or Ngong Rds will get you here; always take a taxi when returning at night.

**Fairview Hotel**

(Map p56; 2711321; www.fairviewkenya.com; Bishops Rd, Milimani; s/d/ste from KSh14,800/17,300/24,000; P W) An excellent top-end choice that puts many of the more prestigious and pricier places in town to shame. The Fairview is nicely removed from the central hubbub and defined by its winding paths and green-filled grounds. It all creates a refined atmosphere, especially around the charming courtyard restaurant.

**PARKLANDS**

**Southern Sun Mayfair**

(Map p77; 3740920; http://southernsun.co.ke; Parklands Rd, Parklands; s/d from US$299/324; P W) If you’re looking for discreet luxury from the city centre, the Mayfair is a 1930s Edwardian place with classy rooms arrayed around a mature internal garden. The furnishings have colonial charm that’s rarely overdone.

**KAREN & LANGATA**

Staying in Karen and Langata puts you pretty far from the city centre, though that’s precisely the point. These leafy suburbs are a welcome respite from the grit of the CBD, and you’ll be within striking distance of some of Nairobi’s top tourist attractions.

**TOP CHOICE / Karen Blixen Cottages**

(BOUTIQUE HOTEL $$$)

(Map p64; 882130; www.karenblixencoFIG.png; www.karenblixencoffeegarden.com; 336 Karen Rd, Karen; s/d US$300/465; P W) Located near the Karen Blixen Museum, this gorgeous clutch of spacious cottages is centred on a formal garden, and adjacent to a small coffee plantation and a country restaurant. It’s sophisticated, supremely comfortable and if you’re keen on having an *Out of Africa* experience, then look no further.

**Nairobi Tented Camp**

(TENTED CAMP $$$)

(Map p64; 2603337; www.nairobitentedcamp.com; Nairobi National Park; s/d full board US$405/770; P W) The only accommodation inside Nairobi National Park, this luxury tented camp offers the full-on safari experience, even though you’ve scarcely left the city. The tents are like those you’ll find in Kenya’s better-known parks, and with just eight of them there’s a real (and somewhat incongruous) sense of solitude. Prices

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**KAREN BLIKEN**

The suburb of Karen takes its name from Karen Blixen, aka Isak Dinesen, a Danish coffee planter and aristocrat who went on to become one of Europe’s most famous writers on Africa. Although she lived a life of genteel luxury on the edge of the Ngong Hills, her personal life was full of heartbreak. After her first marriage broke down, she began a love affair with the British playboy Denys Finch Hatton, who subsequently died in a plane crash during one of his frequent flying visits to Tsavo National Park.

After the farm came close to bankruptcy, Blixen returned to Denmark, where she began her famous memoir *Out of Africa*. The book is one of the definitive tales of European endeavour in Africa, but Blixen was passed over for the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature in favour of Ernest Hemingway. She died from malnutrition at her family estate in Denmark in 1962.

*Out of Africa* was made into a movie in 1985, starring Meryl Streep, Robert Redford and one of the retired trains from Nairobi’s Railway Museum. The final production was terrific from a Hollywood perspective, but leaves out enough of the colonial history to irk historians and Kenyan nationalists alike.
include airport transfers, a game drive and park entrance fees.

**Margarita House**  
**GUESTHOUSE $**  
(Map p64; ☏ 2018421; www.themargaritahouse.com; Lower Plains Rd, Karen; s/d from US$85/125; P)  
Tucked away on a quiet street on Karen’s north side, this tranquil guesthouse is one of the few midrange options in the area, and thankfully it’s a good one. Rooms are large and comfortable, contemporary artworks adorn the walls, and Elizabeth and Joel are welcoming hosts. The roads can be a little confusing around here – print out the detailed directions from its website.

**Giraffe Manor**  
**HISTORIC HOTEL $$$**  
(Map p64; ☏ 8891078; www.giraffemanor.com; Mukoma Rd, Karen; s/d full board US$660/960; F)  
Built in 1932 in typical English style, this elegant manor is situated on 56 hectares, much of which is given over to the adjacent Giraffe Centre. As a result, you may have a Rothschild’s giraffe peering through your bedroom window first thing in the morning, which is just about one of the most surreal experiences you could imagine. And yet, the real appeal of the Giraffe Manor is that you’re treated as a personal guest of the owners – which means you can use their chauffeur, sample their wines and dine in lavish excess. Literary buffs should ask for the Karen Blixen room, decked out with furniture the famous author gave the owners when she left Africa for the last time.

**Karen Camp**  
**CAMPGROUND $$**  
(Map p64; ☏ 8833475; www.karencamp.com; Marula Lane, Karen; camping US$6, s/d walk-in tent US$20/30, r from US$40; F)  
You wouldn’t expect to find a backpacker-friendly option out here in affluent Karen, which is why we like this friendly little spot so much. The quiet location and smart facilities are reason enough to make the trek out to the shady campsites, spick-and-span dorms and permanent safari-style tents.

**Eating**

Nairobi is well stocked with places to eat, particularly in the city centre, where you can choose anything from the cheap workers’ canteens around River Rd to Chinese feasts and full-on splurges off Kenyatta Ave. For dinner it’s worth heading out to the suburbs, where there are dozens of choices of cuisine from all over the world. Karen and Langata have the best range, though there are some good choices in Westlands and Parklands, and in Milimani and Upper Hill.

As in the rest of the country, lunch is the main meal of the day, and city workers flock to the numerous canteens dishing up simple, classic Kenyan and Swahili dishes along with Western staples like chicken and chips. Nairobi has plenty of upmarket restaurants serving internationally inspired cuisine. The capital is also famous for its Indian cuisine, which makes an appearance in some form or another on just about every menu.

Note that in this section, eating options are broken down by neighbourhood and then by author preference. Also be advised that restaurants come and go quickly in the fickle capital, though the places we cover in this section have thus far stood the test of time.

**CITY CENTRE**

Nairobi’s lifeblood flows through the CBD, which is why you’ll find the lion’s share of restaurants here. Cheap canteens and fast-food eateries fuel a good number of Nairobi’s office workers, though there are several upmarket places that can set the scene for that crucial business lunch. If you’re planning on having dinner anywhere in the city centre, be sure to take a taxi back to your accommodation as the streets empty out once the sun goes down.

**Savanna: The Coffee Lounge**  
**CAFE $**  
(snacks from KSh180, mains KSh440-590; ☏ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) National Museum (Map p56; Museum Hill Rd); Central Nairobi (Map

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

Found a fantastic restaurant that you’re longing to share with the world? Disagree with our recommendations? Or just want to talk about your most recent trip?

Whatever your reason, head to lonelyplanet.com, where you can post a review, ask or answer a question on the Thorntree forum, comment on a blog, or share your photos and tips on Groups. Or you can simply spend time chatting with like-minded travellers. So go on, have your say.
EATING
NAIROBI

Thorn Tree Café
(Map p60; Loita Street; Central Nairobi (Map p60; Kenyaatta Ave)) This classy little chain has outposts across Nairobi, including two in the town centre, but we particularly like the tranquility of the branch inside the grounds of the National Museum. Decor is safari chic without being overdone, service is friendly and unobtrusive, and dishes include pies, wraps, samosas, sandwiches, burgers, pasta, soup and salads.

Lord Delamere Terrace & Bar
(Map p56; 2265000; www.fairmont.com/norfolkhotel; Norfolk Hotel, Harry Thuku Rd; mains KSh1450-2575; lunch & dinner) This popular rendezvous spot at the Norfolk Hotel has existed as the unofficial starting and ending point for East African safaris since 1904. While it has been patronised by almost all of the first European pioneer settlers, it is named after the colourful character that is Lord Delamere (see p295). While the atmosphere may be a bit too colonial for some people's tastes, there's no denying the palatable sense of history that ebbs from the walls. The restaurant inside the Norfolk Hotel, Tapu (mains KSh1450-2750; lunch & dinner), shares a similar menu, with wonderful steak and seafood and dishes that range from Lamu crab cakes and Indian Ocean lobster to crocodile kebabs and ostrich fillets.

Tamarind Restaurant
(Map p60; 2251811; www.tamarind.co.ke; off Harambee Ave; mains KSh1000-2500; lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) This classy little chain has outposts across Nairobi, including two in the town centre. While it has been patronised by almost all of the first European pioneer settlers, it is named after the colourful character that is Lord Delamere (see p295). While the atmosphere may be a bit too colonial for some people's tastes, there's no denying the palatable sense of history that ebbs from the walls. The restaurant inside the Norfolk Hotel, Tapu (mains KSh1450-2750; lunch & dinner), shares a similar menu, with wonderful steak and seafood and dishes that range from Lamu crab cakes and Indian Ocean lobster to crocodile kebabs and ostrich fillets.

Nyama Choma Stalls
(Map p56; Haile Selassie Ave; lunch around KSh400) A definite step down the scale, but worth it for the atmosphere, are the backstreet stalls near the Railway Museum, behind the Shell petrol station. Foreigners are a rare sight, but you'll be warmly welcomed and encouraged to sample Kenyan dishes such as matoke (cooked mashed plantains).

Malindi Dishes
(Map p60; Gaberone Rd; mains KSh80-250; lunch & dinner) This small Swahili canteen serves great food from the coast, including pilau (curried rice with meat), birianis (spicy rice casseroles) and coconut fish, lamb, chicken and seafood. This small Swahili canteen serves great food from the coast, including pilau (curried rice with meat), birianis (spicy rice casseroles) and coconut fish, lamb, chicken and seafood.
with side dishes such as ugali (maize- or cassava-based staple), naan and rice. You’ll get a grand halal feed here, but true to its Muslim roots, it’s closed for prayer at lunchtime on Friday.

**Trattoria**

**ITALIAN $$**

(Map p60; ☑340855; cnr Wabera & Kaunda Sts; mains KSh850-1300; ☑7am-midnight) This popular and classy downtown Italian restaurant, swathed in trellises and plants, offers excellent pizzas, homemade pasta, risottos, varied mains and a whole page of desserts. The atmosphere and food are excellent. It’s packed every night, especially the upstairs balcony section.

**Kahawa**

**INTERNATIONAL $**

(Map p60; EcoBank Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh320-620; ☑lunch & dinner daily) Kahawa has an unusual coastal theme – the counter even resembles a traditional dhow (Arabic sailing vessel), complete with mast. The menu, however, is anything but old-fashioned, proffering an ever-changing cavalcade of unexpected specials to complement the grills and steaks. Servings are generous.

**Seasons Restaurant**

**KENYAN $**

(main KSh390-500, buffets KSh500; ☑24hrs)

**Nairobi Cinema**

(Map p60; Uchumi House, Aga Khan Walk); Kimathi St (Map p60; Mutual Bldg) The cafeteria vats here always brim with cheap Kenyan and Western favourites, which is probably why this local chain has a strong following. The buffet is small but (unusually for those who’ve been staying in safari lodges) entirely African in orientation. It claims to open 24 hours, but we didn’t pass by at 4am to check. The Nairobi Cinema outlet has a popular bar and beer garden, where you can bring your own alcoholic beverage and pay a small corkage fee.

**Fiesta Restaurant & Bar**

**INTERNATIONAL $$**

(Map p60; Koinange St; mains KSh620-980; ☑7am-midnight) Despite the Latin resonances of the name and the bright adobe-style decor, the Fiesta doesn’t have anything remotely Tex-Mex on offer. It concentrates instead on mixed grills and other international dishes, with an upmarket version of Kenya’s nyama choma (barbecued meat) obsession thrown in. Come here on a slow afternoon and it all falls a bit flat, but the atmosphere livens up most evenings.

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**FOR THE LOVE OF MEAT**

Love it or hate it, **Carnivore** (Map p64; www.carnivore.co.ke; off Langata Rd; meat buffet lunch/dinner KSh2530/2835, veg buffet KSh2150/2410, child 5-12 half price; ☑lunch & dinner; ☑) is hands down the most famous nyama choma (barbecued meat) in Kenya, an icon among tourists, expats and wealthier locals for the past 25 years.

Owned by the Tamarind chain, Carnivore was voted by UK magazine *Restaurant* to be among the 50 best restaurants in the world in 2002 and 2003. This honour was largely in recognition of the fact that you could dine here on exotic game meats. In recent years, however, strict new laws mean that zebra, hartebeest, kudu and the like are now off the menu, and you have to be content with camel, ostrich and crocodile in addition to the more standard offerings. You also get soup, salads and sauces to go with the meats.

At the entrance is a huge barbecue pit laden with real swords of beef, pork, lamb, chicken and farmed game meats. As long as the paper flag on your table is flying, waiters will keep bringing the meat, which is carved right at the table: if you’re in need of a breather, you can tip the flag over temporarily. Note that dessert and coffee (but not other drinks) are included in the set price.

This meat-fest does have its critics – prices are high and the waiters, hats and all, can seem like the ringmasters of a circus with their enthusiastic bonhomie. But if you take it for what it is, you’ll leave satisfied.

At lunchtime, you can get to Carnivore by matatu 126 from the city centre – the turn-off is signposted just past Wilson Airport, from where it’s a 1km walk. At night, it’s best to hire a taxi, which should run to about KSh800 each way depending on your bargaining skills.

At night you may wish to stay on for an all-night dance-athon at the adjacent Simba Saloon (p79).
Panda Chinese Restaurant  
**CHINESE $**  
(Map p60; EcoBank Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh420-1300; 🌐lunch & dinner)  
This spacious, classy restaurant hidden away on Kaunda St is where you should head if you have a sudden, incurable craving for beef and broccoli. The staff are attentive (sometimes overly so, especially when it's quiet), but the food is some of the best Chinese chow you’ll find in these parts.

Porterhouse Restaurant  
**STEAKHOUSE $**  
(Map p60; ☎️221829; Mama Ngina St; mains KSh480-690; 🌐9.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat)  
Steak-lovers should make this 1st-floor restaurant their first port of call: apart from a few token dishes such as chicken Kiev, the menu here is entirely dedicated to the art of carving chunks of cow. Locals worry that it’s not what it used to be, but it still has few steak rivals in the downtown area.

Etouch Food Court  
**FAST FOOD $**  
(Map p60; Union Towers, cnr Moi Ave & Mama Ngina St; meals KSh350-550; 🌐lunch & dinner)  
We all need a bit of greasy comfort food from time to time, and Nairobi-ites are certainly no exception. If you find yourself craving a quick fix, head to the Etouch Food Court, a central collection of cheap 'n' easy fast-food joints such as Nando’s, Chicken Inn, Creamy Inn, Pizza Inn...you get the idea.

Blue Nile Ethiopian Restaurant  
**ETHIOPIAN $**  
(Map p56; ☎️2271851; bluenile@yahoo.com; Argwings Kodhek Rd, Hurlingham; mains KSh400-700; 🌐lunch & dinner)  
One of those rare places with a character all its own, Blue Nile's quirky lounge, painted with stories from Ethiopian mythology, couldn't be mistaken for anywhere else. For the full, communal, African eating experience, you could order the five-to seven-person doro wat (spicy traditional chicken stew, KSh4500), but the yebeg key wot (spiced goat meat sauce marinated in butter and spicy berebere) is much more manageable.

Efendi Restaurant  
**INDIAN $**  
(Map p77; ☎️4448294; The Mall Shopping Centre, Ring Rd, Westlands; mains KSh750-1500; 🌐lunch & dinner; 🍽️)  
This international-award-winner is widely regarded as the best Indian restaurant in Kenya. While you might not expect to find a restaurant of this calibre in a shopping mall, your doubts will disappear the moment the waiter brings the tome of a menu to your table. Indeed, it reads something like a recipe book crossed with a guide to Indian cuisine, and includes wonderful Mughlai (North Indian) spreads, tandoori dishes and plenty of vegetarian curries. Be sure to come here with an empty stomach as it isn’t exactly the lightest fare, especially when served with Haandi’s signature stacks of naan and piles of basmati rice. It has sister restaurants in Kampala and London, and even sells its own souvenir T-shirts.

Siam Thai  
**THAI $**  
(Map p77; ☎️3751728; Unga House, Muthithi Rd, Westlands; mains KSh760-2500; 🌐lunch & dinner)  
While Asian food in Kenya tends to gravitate towards greasy Chinese, this attractive restaurant has an extensive menu of authentic Thai food. Curries here are rich, thick and spicy, which is exactly the way they’re supposed to be. Unga House can be reached from either Woodvale Grove or Muthithi Rd.

Sarit Centre Food Court  
**FAST FOOD $**  
(Map p77; Sarit Centre, Parklands Rd, Westlands; prices vary; 🌐lunch & dinner)  
This large food court on the 2nd floor of this popular shopping mall has a good variety of small restaurants and fast-food places catering to discerning palates. Standard Kenyan and Indian offerings are available here, as are other international eats including Italian and Chinese cuisines.

Talisman  
**INTERNATIONAL $**  
(Map p64; ☎️3883213; 320 Ngong Rd, Karen; mains KSh950-1800; 🌐breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sun)  
This classy cafe-bar-restaurant is incredibly fashionable with the Karen in-crowd, and rivals any of Kenya’s top eateries for imaginative international food. The comfortable...
lounge-like rooms mix modern African and European styles, the courtyard provides some welcome air, and specials such as chili coconut mangrove-crab curry perk up the palate no end.

Rusty Nail

(Map p64; ☎️ 3882461; Dagoretti Rd, Karen; mains KSh950-1300; 🍽️ lunch & dinner) The relaxed atmosphere of this pavilion restaurant sits nicely with the wide range of food on offer. Lunch and dinner menus change weekly, although steaks and fish dishes are mainstays. It also serves lighter meals such as burgers and salads, and traditional Sunday roasts cater for nostalgic English foodies.

Karen Blixen

Coffee Garden

International $$$

(Map p64; ☎️ 0719346349; www.tamarind.co.ke; Karen Rd, Karen; mains KSh790-1690; 🍽️ 7am-10pm) This upmarket option, run by the ubiquitous Tamarind group, offers diners and snackers five different areas in which to enjoy a varied menu, including the plush L’Amour dining room, the historic 1901 Swedo House and the main section, which is a smart restaurant set in a veritable English country garden. The food is excellent, especially the mixed grill ‘chapa kazi choma sampler’, an upmarket version of Kenya’s favourite dish. Its Sunday lunch buffet (KSh1490) is popular, and excellent
value. It’s just down the road from the Karen Blixen Museum.

**Self-Catering**

There are very few places to stay with self-catering facilities, but you can buy supplies for snack lunches, safaris etc, as well as cooking ingredients, from the many supermarkets downtown and in the suburbs.

**Nakumatt**  
SUPERMARKET $  
Downtown (Map p60; Kenyatta Ave); Lifestyle (Map p60; Moktar Daddah St); Village Market (Village Market, Limuru Rd, Gigiri) The principal supermarket chain in Nairobi and Kenya as a whole, Nakumatt has a huge selection of Kenyan and Western foods and other products. The new Lifestyle store spreads over several floors, with departments stocking all kinds of useful household and outdoor goods.

**Uchumi**  
SUPERMARKET $  
(Map p77; Sarit Centre, Parklands Rd, Westlands)  
Once the main supermarket chain in town, Uchumi has faded fast in Nakumatt’s wake and several central branches have closed. It has a good range of items.

### Drinking

Western café culture has hit Nairobi, and been seized upon enthusiastically by local expats and residents pining for a decent cup of Kenyan coffee. This is the best place in the country for *real* coffee. All of the cafes reviewed here offer at least some form of food, whether it’s a few cakes or a full menu, but none serve alcohol.

As for bars, there are plenty of cheap but very rough-and-ready bars around Latema Rd and River Rd, although these places aren’t recommended for female travellers, and even male drinkers should watch themselves. There are some safer and friendlier watering holes around Tom Mboya St and Moi Ave, and many of the restaurants and hotels reviewed in our Sleeping and Eating sections are fine places for a drink. You can also head to Westlands and Karen, where the drinking scene brings in a lot more expats. Even in the ‘burbs, however, foreign women without a man in tow will draw attention.

**CITY CENTRE**

**Simmers**  
BAR  
(Map p60; cnr Kenyatta Ave & Muindi Mbingu St; ☄8am-1am) If you’re tired of having your butt pinched to the strains of limp R&B in darkened discos, Simmers is the place to come to rediscover a bit of true African rhythm. The atmosphere at this open-air bar-restaurant is amazing, with enthusiastic crowds turning out to wind and grind the night away to parades of bands playing anything from Congolese rumba to Kenyan *benga* (contemporary dance). The women here are more likely to be locals out for a giggle rather than working girls out for business, so men shouldn’t have to worry too much about being hassled. With free-flowing Tusker, a separate shots bar and plenty of *nyama choma* to keep the lion from the door, it’s no wonder the place always feels like a party.

**Nairobi Java House**  
CAFE  
(Map p60; www.nairobijava.com; Mama Ngina St; coffee KSh120-280; ☄6.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 7am-10pm Sat, 9am-7.30pm Sun) This fantastic coffee-house is rapidly turning itself into a major brand, and you may see its logo on T-shirts as far afield as London and beyond. Aficionados say the coffee’s some of the best in Kenya, and there are plenty of cakes and other sweet and savoury treats (even New York cheesecake).

**Roast House**  
BAR  
(Map p60; Kilome Rd; ☄noon-late) This split-level bar-restaurant is one of the better specimens in the River Rd area, with regular DJ nights. Caution is advised if you’re coming here at night – bring a local friend if you want to take part in the action.

**Zanze Bar**  
BAR  
(Map p60; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave; ☄6pm-late) A lively and friendly top-floor bar with pool tables, a dance floor, cheap beer and reasonable food. During the week things are relatively quiet, but from Friday to Sunday it rocks until the early hours, with a much more relaxed vibe than the big clubs.
WESTLANDS & PARKLANDS

**Gypsy’s Bar** BAR
(Map p77; Woodvale Grove; ☏ 11am-4am) This is probably the most popular bar in Westlands, pulling in a large, mixed crowd of Kenyans, expats and prostitutes. Snacks are available, and there’s decent Western and African music, with parties taking over the pavement in summer.

**Klub House** BAR
(Map p77; Parklands Rd; ☏ 24hr) At the western end of Westlands, the Klub House is another old favourite. The spacious bar has more pool tables than other bars, and is a good place to party until late. Music is predominantly Latin, Caribbean and home-grown Swahili, and every night has a different theme, from chillout (Monday) and live jazz (8pm to 11pm Tuesday) to disco (Friday) and live bands (Saturday)

**Soho’s** BAR
(Map p77; Parklands Rd; ☏ 6pm-late) A lively and popular place that pulls in a smart Kenyan and expat crowd. As well as the crisp cold beers, there’s a good selection of wines and cocktails.

MILIMANI

**Casablanca** BAR
(off Map p56; ☏ 2723173; Lenana Rd, Hurlingham; ☏ hours vary) This Moroccan-style lounge bar continues to be a hit with Nairobi’s fastidious expat community, and you don’t have to spend much time here to become a convert. Shisha pipes, wines and cocktails conspire to ease you into what’s bound to end up a late night.

**Entertainment**

There’s a good selection of dance clubs in Nairobi’s centre and there are no dress codes, although there’s an unspoken assumption that males will at least wear a shirt and long trousers. Beer in all these places is reasonably priced at about KSh150, but imported drinks cost a lot more. Due to the high number of female prostitutes, men will generally get the bulk of the hassle, though even women in male company are by no means exempt from approaches by either sex.

For information on entertainment in Nairobi and for big music venues in the rest of the country, get hold of the *Saturday Nation*, which lists everything from cinema releases to live-music venues. There are also plenty of suggestions in the magazine *Going Out*. Nightclubs usually open from 9pm until 6am, although they may close earlier if things are quiet.

**Nightclubs**

**Florida 2000** NIGHTCLUB
(Map p60; http://floridaclubskenyacom; Moi Ave; men/women KSh250/150) This big dancing den, known by everyone as F2, is near City Hall Way. It works to the same formula of booze, beats and tightly packed bodies. As is typical in Nairobi, every night is a little different: Thursday is techno trance, Friday is rumba and so on.

**New Florida** NIGHTCLUB
(Map p60; floridaclubskenyacom; Koinange St; men/women KSh250/150) The ‘Madhouse’ is a big, rowdy club housed in a bizarre, blacked-out saucer building above a petrol station. The music ranges from jazz to the customary weekend mish-mash of Western pop. Whatever night you choose, it’s usually mayhem, crammed with bruisers, cruisers, hookers, hustlers and curious tourists, but it’s great fun if you’re in the right mood (or just very drunk).

**Simba Saloon** NIGHTCLUB
(Map p64; off Langata Rd; admission KSh200-300) Next door to Carnivore out on the road to Karen, this large bar and nightclub, which is partly open-air, pulls in a huge crowd, particularly on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. There are video screens, several bars, a bonfire and adventure playground in the garden, and unashamedly Western music on the dance floor, although you might get the occasional African superstar playing live. It’s usually crammed with wealthy Kenyans, expat teenagers, travellers and NGO workers, plus a fair sprinkling of prostitutes. You can get a range of well-priced food at all hours, and there’s a Dormans coffee stall to keep those eyelids open until closing.

**Theatre**

**Kenya National Theatre** THEATRE
(Map p56; ☏ 2225174; Harry Thuku Rd; tickets from KSh250) This is the major theatre venue in Nairobi. As well as contemporary and classic plays, there are special events such as beauty pageants, which are less highbrow but still culturally interesting. Check out the *Daily Nation* to see what’s on. It’s opposite the Norfolk Hotel.
Shopping

Nairobi is a good place to pick up souvenirs before heading home. There are loads of souvenir shops downtown and in the area northwest of Kenyatta Ave, so you’re spoilt for selection. Be warned though that prices are usually higher than elsewhere in the country.

Although most places sell exactly the same things, there are a few speciality shops with better-than-average crafts. The ‘Little India’ area around Biashara St is good for fabric, textiles and those all-important souvenir Tusker T-shirts. If you’re interested in buying local music, just wander around the River Rd and Latema Rd area and listen out for the blaring CD kiosks.

**Top Choice**

**Utamaduni**
(Map p64; www.utamaduni.com; Bogani East Rd, Karen; 9am-6pm) Utamaduni is a large crafts emporium, with more than a dozen separate rooms selling all kinds of excellent African artworks and souvenirs. Prices start relatively high, but there’s *none* of the hard sell you’d get in town. A portion of all proceeds goes to the Kenya Wildlife Foundation. There’s an on-site restaurant and playground. It’s close to the Giraffe Centre.

**African Heritage Design Company**
(Map p56; Museum Hill Rd; 9am-6pm daily) With various outlets around town, including this one opposite the entrance to the National Museum, African Heritage Design Company has a classy range of statues, ceramics and textiles. Not all of the items are from Kenya, but the quality is good.

**Banana Box**
(Map p77; www.bananaboxcrafts.com; Sarit Centre, Westlands; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Amid the rather less-altruistic commercialism of the Sarit Centre, Banana Box works in conjunction with community projects and refugee groups and offers modern uses for traditional objects. It’s one of the better handicrafts stores around town, with an upmarket feel but reasonable prices.

**Spinners Web**
(off Map p77; www.spinnerswebkenya.com; Getathuru Gardens, off Peponi Rd, Spring Valley; 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) This place works with workshops and self-help groups around the country. It’s a bit like a handicrafts version of Ikea, with goods displayed the way they might look in a Western living room. There are some appealing items, including carpets, wall-hangings, ceramics, wooden bowls, baskets and clothing.

**Undugu Craft Shop**
(Map p77; www.undugukenya.org; Woodvale Grove, Westlands; 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) This nonprofit organisation supports community projects in Nairobi and has top-quality crafts including wood and soapstone carvings, basketwork and fair-trade food products.

**Maasai Market**
(Central Nairobi (Map p60; off Slip Rd; Tue); Gigiri (Village Market, Limuru Rd; Fri); City Centre (Map p60; opposite Reinsurance Plaza, Taita Rd; Sat); Yaya Centre (off Map p56; Argwings Kodhek; Sun) These busy curio markets are held every Tuesday on the waste ground near Slip Rd in town, Friday in the rooftop car park at the Village Market shopping complex, Saturday in the city centre and Sunday next to the Yaya Centre. The markets, where Maasai handicrafts dominate although you’ll find handicrafts from other ethnic groups as well, are open from early morning to late afternoon. Check with your accommodation as locations and schedules do change.

**City Market**
(Map p60; Muindi Mbingu St; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) The city’s souvenir business is concentrated in this covered market, which has dozens of stalls selling wood carvings, drums, spears, shields, soapstone, Maasai jewellery and clothing. It’s a hectic place and you’ll have to bargain hard (and we mean hard), but there’s plenty of good stuff on offer. It’s an interesting place to wander around in its own right, though you generally need to be shopping to make the constant hassle worth the bother.

**Westland Curio Market**
(Map p77; Parklands Rd, Westlands) This complex of stalls, located at a road junction, has the usual tourist kitsch as well some genuine tribal objects, such as Turkana wrist-knives and wooden headrests. Like at the City Market, you’re going to need to bargain hard here, though the sales pressure is a bit softer. It’s near the Sarit Centre in Westlands.
As long as you stay alert, walk around this area by day is rarely a problem. There should be no reason to feel unthreatening and comparatively trouble-free. If you are walking along the streets of Nairobi, don’t give your assailant any reason to do something rash. In the event that you are mugged, never, ever resist – simply give up your valuables and, more often than not, your assailant will see the scene and quickly lead to violent crime. If you want to visit tourist zones, do so with a reliable local friend or as part of an organised tour. After sunset, mugging is a risk anywhere on the streets, and you should always take a taxi, even if you’re only going a few blocks. This will also keep you safe from the attentions of Nairobi’s street prostitutes, who flood into town in force for a bit of moonlighting.

Dangers & Annoyances
First-time visitors to Nairobi are understandably daunted by the city’s unenviable reputation. ‘Nairobery’, as it has been nicknamed by jaded residents and expats, is often regarded as the most dangerous city in Africa, beating stiff competition from Johannesburg and Lagos. Read the local newspapers and you’ll quickly discover that carjacking, robbery and violence are daily occurrences, and the social ills behind them are unlikely to disappear in the near future. However, shell-shocked first-timers should take comfort in the fact that the majority of problems happen in the shanty towns, far from the main tourist zones.

The most likely annoyance for travellers is petty theft, which is most likely to occur at budget hotels and campsites. As a general rule, you should take advantage of your hotel’s safe and never leave your valuables out in the open. While you’re walking around town, don’t bring anything with you that you wouldn’t want to lose. As an extra safety precaution, it’s best to only carry money in your wallet, and hide your credit cards and bank cards elsewhere.

The downtown area bound by Kenyatta Ave, Moi Ave, Haile Selassie Ave and Uhuru Hwy is pleasant place during daylight hours, but it tends to accumulate all kinds of dodgy characters at night. Nairobi’s infamous reputation is largely the result of its horrific shanty towns, which lie on the outskirts of the city. These expansive areas, largely devoid of electricity, plumbing and fresh water, are tense places where opportunism can quickly lead to violent crime. If you want to visit these places to get a better sense of how Nairobi’s less-fortunate inhabitants live, do so with a reliable local friend or as part of an organised tour.

In the event that you are mugged, never, ever resist – simply give up your valuables and, more often than not, your assailant will flee the scene rapidly. Remember that a petty thief and a violent aggressor are very different kinds of people, so don’t give your assailant any reason to do something rash.

Finally, the majority of foreign visitors and resident expats in Nairobi never experience any kind of problem, so try not to be paralysed with fear. Again, it’s important to understand the potential dangers and annoyances that are present, though you shouldn’t let fear exile you to your hotel room. Exude confidence, practise street smarts, and chances are you’ll actually end up really enjoying your time in Nairobi.

**SCAMS** Nairobi’s handful of active confidence tricksters seem to have relied on the same old stories for years, and it’s generally easy to spot the spels once you’ve heard them a couple of times.

It is almost a certainty that at some point during your time in Nairobi you will be approached on the street by safari touts. Most of these persistent guys are hoping to drag you into an operator’s office, where they can expect to receive a small commission. A small minority are hoping to

**Village Market**
(www.villagemarket-kenya.com; Limuru Rd, Gigiri)
This beautifully conceived shopping centre has a selection of entertainment activities to help you while away an afternoon, including a cinema, bowling alley, pool hall, water slides, minigolf and a children’s playground complete with toy-car rides and a minitrain circuit. You can get here with matatu 106 (KSh40) from near the train station.
### SCammers

One classic Nairobi con trick that you’ll likely be subjected to is the refugee story, commonly combined with the equally well-worn university scam. In this gambit, it turns out that your interlocutor has coincidentally just won a scholarship to a university in your country (the amount of research they do is quite astounding), and would just love to sit down and have a chat with you about life there.

Then at some point you’ll get the confidential lowering of the voice as the story kicks in with ‘You know, I am not from here...’ leading into an epic tale of woe that involves them having walked barefoot all the way from Juba or Darfur to flee the war. While once restricted to stories with a Sudanese focus, they could include stories from Zimbabwe, Somalia or just about any troubled African nation.

Of course, once you’ve shown due sympathy they’ll come to the crux of the matter: they have to get to Mombasa or Dar es Salaam or elsewhere to confirm their scholarship and fly out for their studies, and all they need is a few thousand shilling – not that they could ask you, their new friend, for that much money, though anything you could spare to help them out would be greatly appreciated (you get the idea).

There are variations on the theme. One traveller wrote telling us how, after refusing to give anything, he was approached by two ‘policemen’ who promptly arrested the scammer and warned the traveller that he was in trouble for conspiring with an illegal immigrant. If this happens to you, ask for to see police ID and try to enlist the help of people around you.

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distract you with their glossy brochures while they deftly lift your wallet.

This is not to say that safari touts are bad people – a good number of them really do want to help you make a booking. With that said, it’s better to err on the side of caution and work directly with a reliable operator. For more information, see the Safaris chapter (p28).

Apart from the regular safari rip-offs, you should be careful of something known as the ‘Nairobi bump’. The usual tactic is for a scammer to bump into you in the street, and then try to strike up a small conversation. If this happens, keep walking, as it’s probably the most effective way of preventing your wallet or backpack from being stolen.

You should also be wary of anyone who says they work at your hostel/hotel/campsite, even if they actually know the names of the staff there. We have received countless letters from travellers who have been duped into handing over money on the street for seemingly valid reasons, such as buying groceries for the evening’s dinner. If someone claiming to be from your accommodation asks for money, be sceptical and just walk away.

Given the continuing severity of the conflicts in countries close to Kenya, another local speciality is the refugee scam.

In short, always exercise caution while talking to anyone on the streets of Nairobi. While there are genuinely good people out there, the reality is that foreign tourists are an easy target for scamming.

#### Emergency

**Aga Khan Hospital** (off Map p56; ☏3662020; Third Parklands Ave) A reliable hospital with 24-hour emergency services.

**Emergency services** (☎999) The national emergency number to call for fire, police and ambulance assistance. A word of warning, though – don’t rely on prompt arrival.

**Police** (Map p56, Map p60; ☏2240000) Phone for less-urgent police business.

**St John’s Ambulance** (☎2210000)

**Tourist helpline** (☎604767; ☏24hr)

#### Internet Access

There are hundreds of internet cafes in downtown Nairobi, most of them tucked away in anonymous office buildings in the town centre. Connection speed is decent assuming you’re not streaming YouTube, though machine quality varies wildly. Rates range from KSh1 to KSh4 per minute. It can be difficult to find any cyber cafe open in the downtown area on Sunday.

**AGX** (Map p60; Barclays Plaza, Loita St; per min KSh1; ☏8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Best connections in town, with a choice of browsers.

**EasySurf** (Map p77; Sarit Centre, Westlands; per hr KSh180; ☏8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7.30pm Sat, 10.30am-3.30pm Sun)

**Perm Enterprises** (Map p60; cnr Mundi Mbingu & Kaunda Sts; per hr KSh60; ☏8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat)
Medical Services
Nairobi has plenty of health-care facilities that are used to dealing with travellers and expats, which is a good thing as you’re going to want to avoid the Kenyatta National Hospital – although it’s free, stretched resources mean you may come out with something worse than you had when you went in.

AAR Health Services (Map p56; 02715319; Williamson House, Fourth Ngong Ave) Probably the best of a number of private ambulance and emergency air-evacuation companies. It also runs a private clinic in Westlands.

Acacia Medical Centre (Map p60; 02212200; ICEA Bldg, Kenyatta Ave; 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat, 8am-5pm Sun)

KAM Pharmacy (Map p60; 02251700; IPS Bldg, Kimathi St; 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat) A one-stop shop for medical treatment, with a pharmacy, doctor’s surgery and laboratory.

Nairobi Hospital (Map p56; 02846000; www.nairobihospital.org; off Argwings Kodhek Rd; 24hr)

Money
Jomo Kenyatta International Airport has several exchange counters in the baggage reclaim area and a Barclays Bank (24hr) with an ATM outside in the arrivals hall.

There are Barclays branches with guarded ATMs on Mama Ngina St, Muindi Mbingu St and on the corner of Kenyatta and Moi Aves. There are also branches in the Sarit Centre and on Woodvale Grove in Westlands, and the Yaya Centre in Hurlingham.

The other big bank is Standard Chartered Bank, which has numerous downtown branches.

Foreign-exchange bureaux offer slightly better rates for cash than the banks. There are dozens of options in the town centre, so it’s worth sifting around to see who is currently offering the best deal.

Goldfield Forex (Map p60; EcoBank Towers, Kaunda St; 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Link Forex (Map p60; 0226212; ground fl, Uganda House, Standard St; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Postbank (Map p60; 13 Kenyatta Ave) For Western Union money transfers.

Travellers Forex Bureau (Map p77; The Mall Shopping Centre, Westlands; 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Post
The vast main post office (Map p60; 02243434; Kenyatta Ave; 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is a well-organised edifice close to Uhuru Park. Around the back of the main building is the EMS office (8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat), for courier deliveries, and there’s a Telkom Kenya office upstairs.

If you just want stamps, head to the post offices on Haile Selassie Ave or Tom Mboya St, or in the Sarit Centre and on Mpaka Rd in Westlands.

DHL (www.dhl.co.ke); Downtown (Map p60; 06925135; International House, Mama Ngina St); Westlands (Map p77; 0711017131; Sarit Centre) is a reliable private courier.

Telephone
Telkom Kenya (Map p60; 02232000; Haile Selassie Ave; 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has dozens of payphones and you can buy phonecards. Many stands downtown sell Telkom Kenya phonecards and top-up cards for prepaid mobiles. Alternatively, there are numerous private agencies in the centre of town offering international telephone services.

Toilets
It may come as a shock to regular travellers to Africa, but Nairobi now has a handful of staffed public toilets around the downtown area offering flush toilets with a basic level of cleanliness. Signs will indicate if you need to pay (about KSh5). Some central shopping centres, such as Kenya Cinema Plaza, have free public conveniences.

Tourist Information
Despite the many safari companies with signs saying ’Tourist Information’, there is still no official tourist office in Nairobi. For events and other listings you’ll have to check the local newspapers or glean what you can from a handful of magazines, which take a bit of effort to hunt down.

The vast noticeboards found at the Sarit Centre and Yaya Centre are good places to look for local information. All sorts of things are advertised here, including language courses, vehicles for sale and houses for rent.

Travel Agencies
For companies that concentrate exclusively on selling safaris, see p28.

Bunson Travel (Map p60; 02248371; www.bunsontravel.com; Pan Africa Insurance Bldg, Standard St) A good upmarket operator selling air tickets and upmarket safaris.
Getting There & Away

Air

Nairobi is the main arrival and departure point for international flights, although some touch down in Mombasa as well. For information about international services to and from Nairobi, and domestic and international airlines that serve the city, see p373.

Nairobi has two airports:

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (NBO; Map p64; 6611000; www.kenyaairports.co.ke) Most international flights to and from Nairobi arrive at this airport, 15km southeast of the city.

Wilson Airport (WIL; Map p64; 3603260; www.kenyaairports.co.ke) Six kilometres south of the city centre on Langata Rd; mostly domestic flights.

Bus

In Nairobi, most long-distance bus company offices are in the River Rd area, clustered around Accra Rd and the surrounding streets, although some also have offices on Monrovia St for their international services. Prices vary from company to company, and there are many companies servicing these routes. You should always make your reservation up to 24 hours in advance and check (then double check) the departure point from where the bus leaves.

The Machakos Country Bus Station (Map p60; Landhies Rd) is a hectic, disorganised place with buses heading all over the country; it serves companies without their own departure point. However, if you can avoid coming here, do so as theft is rampant.

The table below provides a guide to what’s possible with the better companies and with orientative prices. For international bus services from Nairobi, see p374.

Of the various bus companies, these are the ones we recommend:

Akamba (Map p60; 2365790; Lagos Rd) The biggest private bus company has an extensive network. It’s generally safer and more reliable than most other companies. It also has a booking office (Map p60; Monrovia St) across from Jevanjee Gardens in the north of the city centre, from where its international buses go to Uganda and Tanzania.

Easy Coach (Map p60; 2210711; Haile Selassie Ave) Another reliable company serving western Kenyan destinations as well as running international buses to Uganda and Tanzania.

Modern Coast (Oxygen; Map p60; cnr Cross Lane & Accra Rd) Safer, more reliable and slightly more expensive buses to Mombasa, Malindi and Kisumu. They don’t take phone bookings.

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### BUSES FROM NAIROBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO</th>
<th>FARE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eldoret</td>
<td>KSh1050-1100</td>
<td>6-8 hr</td>
<td>Akamba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakamega</td>
<td>KSh1150-1300</td>
<td>7-9 hr</td>
<td>Easy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisumu</td>
<td>KSh900-1250</td>
<td>5½-7 hr</td>
<td>Akamba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaba</td>
<td>KSh1250</td>
<td>6-7 hr</td>
<td>Modern Coast (Oxygen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malindi</td>
<td>KSh1500</td>
<td>10-13 hr</td>
<td>Modern Coast (Oxygen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mombasa</td>
<td>KSh100-1200</td>
<td>8-10 hr</td>
<td>Akamba</td>
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<td>Easy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern Coast (Oxygen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Riverside Shuttle
(Map p60; ☎ 0722220176; Monrovia St) Mostly international services to Arusha and Moshi (Tanzania).

### Matatu
Most matatus leave from the chaotic Latema, Accra, River and Cross Rds and fares are similar to the buses. Most companies are pretty much the same, although there are some that aim for higher standards than others. **Mololine Prestige Shuttle** (Map p60), which operates along the Nairobi–Naivasha–Nakuru–Eldoret route, is one such company, with others set to follow their example on other routes. Departure points are shown on the Central Nairobi map.

### Peugeot (Shared Taxi)
As with matatus, most of the companies offering Peugeot shared taxis have their offices around the Accra, River and Cross Rds area. Departures vary on demand, but you can usually find cars heading to Eldoret, Isiolo, Kabarnet, Kericho, Kisumu, Kitale, Meru, Malaba and Nakuru. Fares are about 20% higher than the same journeys by matatu. Most services depart in the morning.

### Train
The train from Nairobi to Mombasa receives divided reviews – some acclaim it as a sociable and comfortable means of avoiding the highway while spotting some wildlife from the windows; for others it’s shabby and unnecessarily time-consuming, not helped by inconsistent scheduling and lax timetable enforcement. For more information on train travel in Kenya, see p382.

Nairobi train station has a small **booking office** (Map p60; Station Rd; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm). You need to come in person to book tickets a few days in advance of your intended departure. On the day of departure, arrive early.

### Getting Around

#### To/From Jomo Kenyatta International Airport
Kenya’s main **international airport** (Map p64; ☎ 6611000) is 15km out of town, off the road to Mombasa. We recommend that you take a taxi (KSh1200 to KSh1500, but you’ll need to bargain hard) to get to/from the airport, especially after dark. If you book at one of the ‘information’ desks at the airport, you’ll still end up in a public taxi, but it isn’t any more expensive.

A far cheaper way to get into town is by city bus 34 (KSh30), but a lot of travellers get robbed on the bus or when they get off. Always hold onto valuables and have small change ready for the fare. Buses run from 5.45am to 9.30pm weekdays, 6.20am to 9.30pm Saturdays and 7.15am to 9.30pm Sundays, though the last few evening services may not operate. Heading to the airport, the main departure point is along Moi Ave, right outside the Hotel Ambassadeur Nairobi. Thereafter, buses travel west along Kenyatta Ave.

#### To/From Wilson Airport
To get to **Wilson Airport** (Map p64; ☎ 3603260), the cheapest option is to take bus or matatu 15, 31, 34, 125 or 126 from Moi Ave (KSh25, 15 to 45 minutes depending on traffic). A taxi from the centre of town will cost you KSh750 to KSh1000, depending on the driver. In the other direction, you’ll have to fight the driver down from KSh1250. The entrance to the airport is easy to miss – it’s just before the large BP petrol station.
Bus
The ordinary city buses are run by KBS (229707) but you shouldn’t need to use them much. Forget about them if you’re carrying luggage – you’ll never get on, and if you do, you’ll never get off! Most buses pass through downtown, but the main KBS terminus is on Uyoma St, east of the centre. There are other private companies plying routes within the city, such as City Hoppa and MM.

Car
See p377 for comprehensive information on car hire, road rules and conditions. If you are driving, beware of wheel-clampers: parking in the centre is by permit only (KSH140), available from the parking attendants who roam the streets in bright yellow jackets. If you park overnight in the street in front of your hotel, the guard will often keep an eye on your vehicle for a small consideration.

Matatu
Nairobi’s horde of matatus follows the same routes as buses and displays the same route numbers. For Westlands, you can pick up 23 on Moi Ave or Latema Rd. Matatu 46 to the Yaya Centre stops in front of the main post office, and 125 and 126 to Langata leave from in front of the train station. As usual, you should keep an eye on your valuables while on all matatus. There are plans to phase out matatus and replace them with larger (and fewer) minibuses to reduce traffic congestion. No new matatu licences were being issued at the time of research, but don’t expect to notice any difference in the short-term.

Taxi
As people are compelled to use them due to Nairobi’s endemic street crime, taxis here are overpriced and under-maintained, but you’ve little choice, particularly at night. Taxis don’t cruise for passengers, but you can find them parked on every other street corner in the city centre – at night they’re outside restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

Fares around town are negotiable but end up pretty standard. Any journey within the downtown area costs KSh400, from downtown to Milimani Rd costs KSh500, and for longer journeys such as Westlands or the Yaya Centre, fares range from KSh600 to KSh700. From the city centre to Karen and Langata is around KSh1000 one way.

You can also find a few Indonesian-style tuk-tuks operating from Kenyatta Ave, though they’re slowly being phased out.

AROUND NAIROBI

Ngong Hills
The green and fertile Ngong Hills were where many white settlers set up farms in the early colonial days. It’s still something of an expat enclave, and here and there in the hills are perfect reproductions of English farmhouses with country gardens full of flowering trees – only the acacias remind you that you aren’t rambling around the home counties of England.

The hills provide some excellent walking, but robbery has been a risk in the

TRAIN ROUTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
<th>1ST-CLASS FARE</th>
<th>2ND-CLASS FARE</th>
<th>DEPARTURE TIME</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>Kisumu</td>
<td>KSh2550</td>
<td>KSh1400</td>
<td>6.30pm Mon, Wed &amp; Fri</td>
<td>14½ hr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>Mombasa</td>
<td>KSh3660</td>
<td>KSh2640</td>
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<td>15 hr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>Naivasha</td>
<td>KSh1805</td>
<td>KSh1255</td>
<td>6.30pm Mon, Wed &amp; Fri</td>
<td>3 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>Nakaru</td>
<td>KSh1560</td>
<td>KSh1560</td>
<td>6.30pm Mon, Wed &amp; Fri</td>
<td>6½ hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
past; ask locals for the latest information. If you're worried, take an organised tour or an escort from the Ngong police station or KWS office.

**Grave of Denys Finch Hatton**

(Historic Site) Close to Pt Lamwia, the summit of the range, is the grave of Denys Finch Hatton, the famous playboy and lover of Karen Blixen. The site is now almost completely overgrown and is difficult to find 4km up the hill from Kiserian; ask someone to show you the way from Kiserian, and expect to pay a KSh200 tip. A large obelisk marks his grave, inscribed with a line from ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, one of his favourite poems. The inscription reads ‘He prayeth well, who loveth well/Both man and bird and beast.’ There are legends about a lion and lioness standing guard at Finch Hatton’s graveside, but these days they’d have trouble getting past the padlocked gate. Call ahead to make sure the custodian of the key is nearby.

**Ngong Hills Racecourse**

(Stadium) Several Sundays a month, hundreds of Nairobi residents flee the noise and bustle of the city for the much more genteel surroundings of the Ngong Hills Racecourse, just east of Karen. In the past, races had to be cancelled because of rogue rhinos on the track, but the biggest danger these days is stray balls from the golf course in the middle! The public enclosure is free to enter; entry to the grandstand is KSh150, or you can pay KSh300 for a platinum pass, which gives you access to the cushioned members’ seating and the restaurant overlooking the course. A race card costs KSh50 and you can bet as little as KSh25 with some bookies (minimum KSh100 with the course Tote). There are usually three races every month during the season, which runs from October to July. You can get here on the Metro Shuttle bus (KSh50, 30 minutes) and matatus 24 or 111 (KSh25), all from Haile Selassie Ave.

**Whistling Thorns**

(Camping) This scenic ranch, located in the Maasai foothills of the Ngong, is a wonderfully rural spot to either launch or wind down your Kenyan holiday. It offers horse-riding safaris through the area, as well as walking trails and birdwatching on the open plains. You can also feast on the delicious home cooking (breakfast KSh450). To get here by public transport, take bus or matatu 111 or 126 from Moi Ave to Kiserian (KSh60, one hour) and change to an Isinya/Kajiado matatu. Ask to be dropped at Whistling Thorns, which is 200m from the roadside. Count on a two-hour trip from central Nairobi, less if you’re coming in your own vehicle.

**Maasai Ostrich Resort**

(LODGE) Combining an ostrich farm and a hotel is a fairly unusual idea, but, then again, why not? Certainly the simple but comfortable farmhouse accommodation and gardens provide a nice setting, and there’s a range of activities (including ostrich riding!) to keep you busy in an otherwise unpromising area. To get out here, take the road towards Namanga (A104) and turn left at the sign. Southbound public transport can get you to the turn-off, but it’s another 7km to the farm itself.

**Kiambethu Tea Farm**

(Kenyan coffee may be world-famous, but the country is also the world’s largest exporter of black tea. A visit to the **Kiambethu Tea Farm** (www.kiambethufarm.co.ke;
ACACIA CAMP

Just 36km from central Nairobi, off the busy Nairobi–Mombasa Rd, Acacia Camp (Map p54; 02529500; www.swaraplains.com; US$102/192; P), located within the Swara Plains conservancy, is a wonderful escape from city life. The camp itself is extremely comfortable without being over the top, with well-appointed bungalows, good food and lovely gardens in the shade of acacias. The ranch itself is spread out over 81 sq km and is home to giraffes, zebras, wildebeest, warthogs, a host of gazelles and antelopes and more than 270 bird species (but not cheetahs as advertised on its website); the only predator is a resident hyena. For additional charges, there are game drives and a visit to some captive (and still rather wild) lions on the ranch’s outer reaches.

guided tour & lunch KSh1700) is a wonderful chance to get an insight into Kenya’s tea plantations, as well as being an immensely enjoyable excursion from the city. The guided tour takes you through the history of Kenyan tea-growing, visits the lovely colonial-era farmhouse and can also encompass a nearby stand of primary forest.

Advance bookings are essential and some Nairobi tour companies can make the necessary arrangements, including transport. If you’re coming in your own vehicle, print out the detailed directions from its website. The farm is around 25km northwest of central Nairobi.