

Kenya



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Itineraries



1
WEEK

Safari Njema

Ideal for those with limited time, this classic safari route brings you face to face with the continent's most charismatic creatures. To do it in a week, you'll need to fly between the three destinations. *Safari njema* – have a good trip!

Begin in **Nairobi**. Kenya's (in)famous capital is not without charm – track down endangered giraffes, orphaned elephants and the Big Five set against a backdrop of not-so-distant skyscrapers. Plan on one full day, then fly from the capital's Wilson Airport to the **Masai Mara National Reserve**. Between July and October, the Mara hosts the annual wildebeest migration, one of the greatest wildlife concentrations on earth, but the Mara is worth visiting any time. Three days is a minimum, but spend four if you can.

Staying in Maasailand, fly, possibly via Nairobi, to **Amboseli National Park**, where you can get closer to elephants than almost anywhere else in Africa. From here, the views of Mt Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, are without rival in Africa. After two nights, you'll fly back to Nairobi, wondering why you're not staying longer.



3
WEEKS

Big Five & Big Mountains

Seeing the Big Five (elephant, lion, leopard, rhino and buffalo) has become a mantra for African wildlife watchers – the term was coined by white hunters for those species deemed most dangerous to hunt. With three weeks to cover all this territory, you could easily get around in your own rented vehicle.

Ol Pejeta Conservancy, up on the Laikipia Plateau, is the closest place to Nairobi where you can see the Big Five. One of few Laikipia conservancies you can visit without checking in to a luxury lodge, Ol Pejeta has plenty of organised activities to get you lion-tracking, cycling within sight of rhinos or simply walking out into the wild. Stay for at least three days to make the most of it.

Before leaving Kenya's Central Highlands, allocate a week for one of East Africa's most rewarding adventures – the trek to the summit of **Mt Kenya**, Africa's second-highest peak, will leave you gasping for both air and superlatives.

Travelling via Nairobi, consider a two-night detour to **Ol Donyo**, a supremely luxurious lodge in the Amboseli ecosystem and on the foothills of the Chyulu Hills. Although rhinos are elusive, it's a rare chance to see the Big Five without the crowds.

From Ol Donyo, it's a straightforward drive to wildlife-rich **Tsavo West National Park**, which offers a real taste of the African wilderness and has the advantage of being home to all the Big Five – see them all in one day and you've hit the safari jackpot. Close to the southern fringes of Tsavo West, the **Lumo Community Wildlife Sanctuary** is also good for the Big Five.

From here you can head down the highway to the ancient Swahili port of **Mombasa**, where you can either fly straight home, or start a whole new journey exploring the Kenyan coast.



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Top: Swahili man playing a siwa, Lamu (p254)

Bottom: Passengers going to Funzi Island (p227)



3
WEEKS

Sun, Surf & Swahili

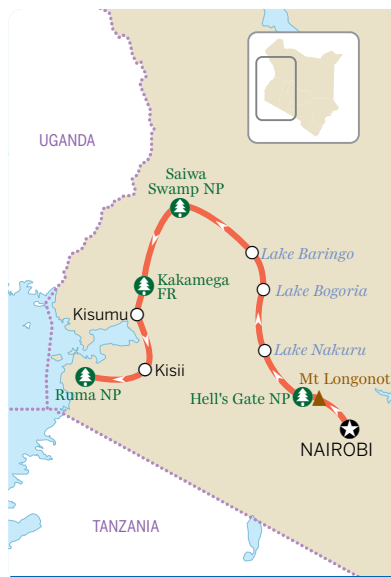
Whether you're interested in exploring the remaining vestiges of Swahili culture or simply kicking back on the beach for days on end, don't miss the chance to explore Kenya's sun-drenched coast. Three weeks is a minimum to make this journey, which can be made on public transport, but you could take far longer if you find a beach you never want to leave. Check the security situation before setting out.

First explore the coastal gateway of **Mombasa**, one of the truly great port cities on earth and the essence of East Africa. It gets steaming hot here, so after a few days your first stop heading south should be **Tiwi Beach**, a tranquil white-sand paradise popular with independent travellers. Just down the road, you can head on to the package-holiday destination of **Diani Beach** for a taste of the full-on resort experience with plenty of water sports thrown in.

Near the Tanzanian border, **Funzi** and **Wasini** islands provide a dose of unspoilt coastal life; on the latter Mkwiro is somewhere close to paradise. These islands also afford easy access to the excellent **Kisite Marine National Park**. Whether you spot crocodiles along the banks of mangrove-lined rivers or dolphins crashing through the surf, a visit to the marine park is a wonderful complement to Kenya's terrestrial wildlife destinations. Offshore, humpback whales are a possibility from August to October. A trip in a traditional dhow is also a must. Allow at least a week in this area.

Heading north back on the coastal trail, make a quick stop in the charming town of **Kilifi** before pressing on to **Arabuko Sokoke Forest Reserve**, one of the largest remaining tracts of indigenous coastal forest in East Africa, with prolific birdlife, forest elephants and the golden-rumped elephant shrew.

Further north are the **Gede** ruins, an ancient Swahili city dating back to the 13th century. Another historic destination along the Swahili coast is **Malindi**, a 14th-century trading post that's now one of the country's leading beach destinations for Italian holiday-makers. It has bucketloads of charm once you get beyond the beach. This itinerary ends at the wonderful **Lamu Archipelago**, a veritable tropical paradise and Swahili heritage gem.



2 WEEKS Rift Valley & Wetlands

Kenya's Rift Valley ranks among Africa's defining geological marvels. To complete this itinerary in two weeks, you'll need your own set of wheels.

Begin near **Nairobi** at the Olepolos Country Club, contemplating the Rift's glory while nursing a Tusker. Drive north to, and then climb **Mt Longonot**, one of the Rift's prettiest vantage points, and walk amid the dramatic rock forms of **Hell's Gate National Park**. Allow a couple of days around here. Then it's an easy hop to lakes **Nakuru**, **Bogoria** and **Baringo**.

Take the loop through the Cherangani Hills to the lovely **Saiwa Swamp National Park**, a real wetland treat.

Heading south, explore the lush **Kakamega Forest Reserve**, then pass through **Kisumu** on your way to busy **Kisii**, which is a handy hub for Lake Victoria's small islands, and tiny **Ruma National Park**, a rarely visited gem.



3 WEEKS Desert Frontiers

This adventurous trail winds through the barren but beguiling landscape around Lake Turkana. You could take forever if you try to explore the area by public transport – rent a 4WD with a driver to get around.

The eastern gateway to this region is **Isiolo**. As you make your way north, the **Mathews Range** is great for walkers. Back on the road, **Marsabit** is a dusty tribal centre, home to a fine national park, and is a quintessentially northern Kenyan outpost.

Take the western loop to Turkana via **North Horr**, heading for the tiny lakeside settlement of **Loyangalani**, a base for trips into even more remote parts. From here the trail leads south again, passing all kinds of scenic zones and the stopover towns of **South Horr** and **Baragoi**. It's worth stopping for a couple of days in **Maralal**, to replenish supplies and sample the joys of camel trekking.

If the remote north has you under its spell, head up to the other side of Turkana, passing through the lush western area around **Marich Pass** to reach sweltering **Lodwar** and the lovely lakeshore at **Eliye Springs**.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



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Coordinating Author, Nairobi, Central Highlands & Laikipia, Southeastern Kenya

Anthony Ham (www.anthonham.com) brings to Kenya fifteen years of travelling through, writing about and photographing in Africa. His passion for the continent began in North and West Africa, and more recently he has travelled extensively through East and Southern Africa, writing about conservation issues, nomadic and indigenous peoples and countries in conflict for newspapers and magazines around the world. When he's not in Africa, Anthony moves between Melbourne and Madrid with his wife and two daughters.

Read more about Anthony at:
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Stuart Butler

Masai Mara & Western Kenya, Northern Kenya

Stuart Butler grew up listening to stories of his father's childhood in Kenya and his grandparents' tales of working on the earliest English editions of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. When Stuart finally stepped foot in Africa it was Kenya he chose. It didn't disappoint. His travels have taken him across Africa and beyond, from the colours of Asia to the Arctic tundra. He now lives with his wife and two small children on the beaches of southwest France. His website is www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com. Stuart also wrote the Travel with Children chapter.

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Kate Thomas

Southern Rift Valley, Mombasa & the South Coast, Lamu & the North Coast

Kate is a British/American author who has been based in Africa ever since finding herself on a press trip to Liberia in 2007. Two months after returning from that trip, she packed her bags for Liberia, where she spent a couple of years writing about everything from food and fashion to hospitals and mental health. Since then she's watched mountain gorillas in the Democratic Republic of Congo, travelled overland from South Africa to Kenya, danced about architecture in Guinea-Bissau and read her way through Nigeria's literary greats. Kate also writes for magazines and journals, taking every opportunity to champion the good stuff coming out of Africa.

David Lukas

David wrote the Wildlife & Habitat chapter. He is a freelance naturalist who lives next to Yosemite National Park in California. He writes extensively about the world's wildlife, and has contributed to wildlife chapters for eight Lonely Planet guides on Africa, ranging from *Ethiopia to Africa*.

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