

‘ Karibuni ’

Information about Kenya

Karibuni means "we warmly welcome you." In Swahili language.

A country in East Africa, the Republic of Kenya borders the Indian Ocean to the southeast, Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Somalia to the northeast. Lake Victoria is shared between Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. The capital is Nairobi. The total area is 58,000 sq. km and the population is 39 million. There are over 40 different ethnic groups in Kenya. Mount Kenya is the second highest in Africa and the country takes its name from the mountain.

The country's name comes from the Kamba, Embu, and Kikuyu names for Mount Kenya. Translated, this means, "place with ostriches" in all three languages.

A German explorer, Ludwig Krapf, recorded the name as Kenia and Kegnia in the 19th century. Former pronunciation during colonial times has been largely abandoned in favor of the African version.

Geography

Kenya is the 47th-largest country in the world, with an area of 580,367 sq. km. The coast on the Indian Ocean rises to the central highlands. The Great Rift Valley bisects the highlands. A fertile plateau is in the east. The highlands are one of Africa's most productive agricultural areas. Mount Kenya is the second highest African mountain at 17,057 ft.

There is tropical climate on the coast but this becomes arid in Kenya's interior. Between March and May, there is a lot of rain. In October and November rainfall is moderate, but high temperature remains.

There is much sunshine in Kenya all year. It is cool at night and in the morning. From April to June, the long rainy season takes place. The short is from October to December. The coolest period is from July to August and the hottest from February to March.

Kenya's wild life habitat is considerable and includes the Masai Mara, an area of animal migration. Africa's "Big Five" animals are found in the country, which are the leopard, rhinoceros, lion, elephant, and buffalo. The national parks and reserves are also home to numerous other animals as well as reptiles and birds. The annual migration between June and September is a popular event for filmmakers.

History

Fossils of giant crocodiles have been found in Kenya that date to over 200 million years ago in the Mesozoic Era. Other findings show primates were present in Kenya more than 20 million years ago. Hominids such as Homo habilis and Homo erectus, descendants of modern Homo sapiens, lived in Kenya during the Pleistocene epoch. Some of the most famous archeological findings were located in Kenya.

Pre-Colonial History: Cushitic-speaking people moved into the area from northern Africa around 2,000 BCE. Arab traders became frequent visitors by the 1st century AD. Due to Kenya's location near the Arabian Peninsula, Persian and Arab settlement began near the coast in the 8th century. Bantu and Nilotic-speaking people moved into the area in the first millennium AD. Today, descendants of these people are three-fourths of Kenya's population.

Kenya switched to a maritime-based economy with specialties in shipbuilding in the 6th or 9th century AD. Mombasa was a major port city in the region. In the 15th century, Duarte Barbosa,

a Portuguese voyager, described Mombasa as a port with great traffic with different sizes of ships moving to a number of far away locations.

Prior to colonization, the Kenyan coast traded with the Arab world and India mostly for slaves and ivory. In addition to coming from mostly Arab nations, they also came from Zanzibar. Estimates show 90 percent of the people on the coast were slaves.

Swahili became a language of trade between different groups.

Kenya's Luo descended from herding and agricultural tribes from western Kenya. They are associated with the Nilotic language group. The Nilotes originated in northeastern Africa and may have moved south because of wars in Egypt and Kush. The Nilotes in Kenya were primarily the Kalenjin, Turkana, Luo, and Maasi.

Among Kenyan coastal cities is Malindi. It has been an important Swahili settlement since the 14th century. It has typically been friendly to foreign powers, including the Chinese Ming Dynasty and the Portuguese.

Colonial History: Kenya's colonial period dates to the German protectorate in 1885 and the British East Africa Company's arrival in 1888. In 1890, Germany gave its coastal holdings to Britain. The Kenya-Uganda railway was built to pass through the area. Some tribes, mainly the Nandi led by Orkoiyot Koitalel Arap Samoei, resisted the construction of the railway from 1895 to 1905. It was eventually finished. Indians arrived in Kenya in large numbers as skilled workers for the construction.

During construction in Tsavo, two lions, known as the Tsavo man eaters, attacked the railway workers. The descendants of the workers formed the core of Kenyan Ismaili Muslim and Sikh communities.

When World War I began in 1914, British East Africa's governors and those in German East Africa agreed to a truce to keep the colonies out of the fighting. One German commander, Lt. Col. Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, was cut off from Germany and decided to tie British forces down in the area. His campaign was effective but eleven days after the Armistice in 1918 he surrendered in Zambia.

The British and other European farmers settled the interior highlands in the early 20th century. 30,000 lived there by the 1930s. One million members of the Kikuyu tribe already lived there as itinerant farmers. The settlers protected their positions by banning coffee production by the locals and granted less and less land in exchange for their labor. Many fled to the cities when they could not make a living from the land.

Due to the Mau Mau rebellion against the British, Kenya was placed under a state of emergency from 1952 to 1959. The British then began counter-insurgency operations.

Warūhiū Itote's capture on January 15, 1954 allowed the British to learn more about the rebel command structure. After weeks of planning Operation Anvil began on April 24, 1954, effectively placing the capital under military siege. Mau Mau supporters were moved to detention camps. Composed of loyalist Africans, the Home Guard was the main part of the government's strategy. By the conflict's end, the Home Guard had killed 4,686 of the Mau Mau's forces, accounting for 42 percent of its fighters. On October 21, 1956, Dedan Kimathi was captured, effectively ending the rebellion. Changes took place in the government to reward loyalists and punish the Mau Mau supporters

Post-Colonial History: In 1957, the first direct elections for Africans to the Legislative council occurred. The Kenya African National Union (KANU) formed a government before independence was granted on December 12, 1963. This was the same day a constitution was formed. That year the Kenyan army fought ethnic Somalis in the Shifta War. Kenya defeated the Shiftas in 1967.

Ethiopia and Kenya signed a defensive pact in 1969.

Jomo Kenyatta became the first president of the newly proclaimed Republic of Kenya on December 12, 1964. In 1978, Daniel arap Moi became president after Kenyatta died. Moi remained president in unopposed elections in 1979, 1983, and 1988. In 1983, a threatened military coup caused elections a year early.

A low-ranked serviceman in the Air Force, Hezekiah Ochuka, planned the coup along with other enlisted Air Force personnel. The regular army quickly suppressed the rebellion. The Air Force was disbanded after the attempt and a number of its members were court-martialed or dismissed outright.

Elections in 1988 began a system of queuing, where voters were supposed to line up behind favored candidates as opposed to a secret ballot. This was seen as undemocratic and led for calls to reform the constitution. This led to changes and the institution of a multi-party system. The first multi-party elections occurred in 1992 and 1997. Moi still won reelection. In 2002, the constitution barred him from running again and an opposition candidate from the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), Mwai Kibaki, became president. The elections were judged free and fair, marking a turning point in Kenya's history

Politics

In Kenya, the president is the head of state and the head of government. The country is a presidential representative democratic republic with a multi-party system. The government exercises executive power and the government and National Assembly exercise legislative power. There is an independent judiciary.

Despite its political system and problems in neighboring countries, Kenya has been stable. Some law that limited freedom of assembly and speech were revised in 1997. This produced credible national elections in 1997.

Kenya also held open, free, and fair elections in 2002. The peaceful transfer of power from the KANI to the Narc was a turning point in the country's history.

The new ruling coalition under president Kibaki focused on economic growth, lessening corruption, and rewriting the constitution. Some of these promises have been kept.

2007 Elections
In the last general elections, President Kibaki ran for reelection under the Party of National Unity against the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). International observers found these elections flawed. Kibaki won but the vote tabulation process caused his opponent, Raila Odinga, to declare himself the "people president" and call for a recount.

Almost 1,000 were killed in the violence following the election and 600,000 were displaced. Eminent Africans, including Kofi Annan, negotiated a peaceful solution. The two sides signed an agreement on February 28, 2008 to form a coalition government in which Odinga would become the prime minister. The president agreed to appoint cabinet members from both the PNU and ODM.

The new prime minister was given authority to supervise certain government functions. The lawmakers in Kenya approved the agreement on March 18, 2008.

President Uhuru KENYATTA and Deputy President William RUTO were elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a five-year term (eligible for a second term); in addition to receiving a simple majority of votes, the presidential candidate must also win 25% or more of the votes cast in each of more than half of the 47 counties to avoid a runoff. Note – the president is both chief of state and head of government.

Kibaki named a coalition cabinet pursuant to the Grand Coalition agreement. There was a proposal to eliminate the prime minister's position and reduce the president's power. A referendum was held and the issue passed. The new constitutional provisions also provided for more local government power and a bill of rights. These changes brought about Kenya's Second Republic.

Provinces, Districts, and Divisions

There are eight provinces in Kenya that are each headed by a Provincial Commissioner. These are then subdivided into districts, then into divisions. The eight provinces are Central, Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western.

There are also local governments including city, municipal, and town councils. In rural areas, these are known as county councils. Local officials are elected when general elections occur.

Nairobi is the most populous city with 2,940,911 people followed by Mombasa with 707,400 and Nakuru with 337,200.

Tourism

The services sector contributes 63 percent of the country's GDP and is dominated by tourism. Tourism has grown steadily since independence. Most tourists come from the U.K. and Germany to the game reserves and beaches. Tsavo National Park in the southeast is a well-known reserve. Tourism is the largest earner of foreign exchanges.

Facts

Meaning of Country's name	Kenya was named after Mount Kenya from the Kikuyu name Kere-Nyaga ("Mountain of Whiteness")
Capital	Nairobi
Largest Cities	Nairobi and Mombasa
Population	45,010,056
Country Code	254
Internet Country Code	.ke
Area	224,080 mi ² (580,367 km ²)
Area-Comparative	Slightly more than twice the size of Nevada
Bordering Countries	Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan
Date of Founding (Current State)	December 12, 1963
Type of Government	Semi-Presidential Republic
Languages Spoken	Swahili, English, Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, somali, Masai, Turkana, Nandi, Galla, Suk
Religions Practiced	Catholic, Protestant, Hindu
GDP per Capita	\$1,800 (2013 est.)
Latest GDP Growth Rate	5.1% (2013 est.)
Top Exports	Tea, Coffee, Wheat, Petroleum products
National Holidays	New Year's Day – Jan. 1, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Labour Day – May 1, Madaraka Day, Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan), Moi Day, Kenyatta Day, feast of the Sacrifice, Independence Day – Dec. 25, Boxing Day
Money Currency	Kenyan shilling
National Sports	National Basketball Team, National Cricket Team, National Women's

- Teams** Cricket Team, Fed Cup Team, National Football Team, National Field Hockey team, National Rugby Union Team, National Women's National Rugby Union Team, and Athletes have participated in the Olympics
- Random Fact** Nairobi, the capital of Kenya is the safari capital of the world

Kenya Parks & Reserves information

AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK

Arid looking as Amboseli is it has, historically, supported both game and the Maasai that kept their herds of cattle here. It is thanks to the waters that run off Africa's greatest mountain that the apparently dry Amboseli, Kenya's first game sanctuary, is able to support its wildlife. Mount Kilimanjaro broods high over Amboseli, generally cloaked by clouds but appearing in all its snow-shrouded magnificence from time to time. Kilimanjaro was once part of Kenya, but on the marriage of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany Queen Victoria gifted it to her beloved grand son, whose colony Tanzania then was, as the perfect wedding present. The mountain now provides water for the park, wonderful views and, of course, the most glorious background for animal photography. There has been serious erosion in the park. Elephant feeding habits combined with light soil have made serious inroads in the Amboseli vegetation. Nonetheless, there are still high numbers of the elephant for which the park is famous, and it is here that much research has been done on the largest land mammal. Indeed, a cursory examination will show that humankind is not the only animal to destroy its own environment. The grasslands in the park can be undeniably lovely when made verdant by the rains and the three major swamps could star in a dinosaur movie. The swamps on the east of the park attract wildebeest, zebra and antelope with the predators that live off them, chiefly lion which tend to be easy to view here. In the south, Enkongo Narok swamp attracts hippos to the larger pools and plenty of buffalo, buck and teeming birdlife including the jacanas that pick their way elegantly and carefully. Giraffe are here and in areas still sufficiently treed there are leopard. Cheetah, caracal and civet may be seen. In the west of the park lies Lake Amboseli, a seasonal soda lake, sometimes with flamingos. Amboseli is a fabulous place to visit. The overwhelmingly lovely views and good wildlife sightings are too good to miss.

ABERDARE NATIONAL PARK

Probably the highest national park in the world, Aberdare is all above 7,000 feet. The habitat of the Aberdare Mountains, like that of Mount Kenya that is on the other side of the Laikipia Plains, ranges from forest and thick bamboo to open moor land. Breathtaking waterfalls, brightly coloured birds, soaring raptors, a fascinating and diverse plant world and gorgeous scenery make this national park both lovely and intriguing. This is the area for those who are keen to fish. A certain Captain Grogan and the fishing, in rivers such as the Naro Moru, the Thego, introduced the trout here in 1906 and the Chania is renowned. The Aberdares are also remembered as the guerrilla base of Kenyan heroes during their war for independence from the British. Established as a national park in 1950, Aberdare lies around two high peaks, Kinangop and Lesatima, with almost 50 kilometres of high moors stretching mistily between them. The scenery here is stunning and the waterfalls particularly dramatic - the Gura Falls plunge and foam down the side of a 1500-foot rock face. Some of the indigenous wildlife in the Aberdares is equally as stunning. Melanistic black leopard, serval and genet can be found here, but are both shy and rare. Large numbers of buffalo, a few rhino, elephant, Colubus monkeys, bush pig and wart hog may be found in the forests. It is said that the elephant still remember the bombing

raids by the British during the war for independence, and are thus extremely suspicious of mankind. The birding is excellent. Brightly coloured parrots, francolin, the strutting secretary bird and green ibis are among the species here. Sunbirds enjoy the open moors and raptors such as the rufous sparrowhawk, goshawk, buzzards and the crowned eagle scour the moors for prey. The Aberdares even has a Hollywood connection. This is where the film "Gorillas in the Mist", starring Sigourney Weaver, was made. The renowned naturalist studied the mountain gorillas of Rwanda and was murdered there. Perhaps even more famously, although rather longer ago, it was to Treetops, that the news of her father's death, and her accession to the throne, was brought to the then Princess Elizabeth.

SAMBURU NATIONAL RESERVE AND BUFFALO SPRINGS NATIONAL RESERVE KENYA

Samburu is different from many of the other frequently visited areas. These forty square miles of reserve is not the oft-seen Kenyan landscape of savannah and flat-topped acacias, but harsh, dramatic terrain. The people from this area, the Samburu, are similarly dramatic to the outsider. Dressed in bright red, with their braided hair and skin daubed with red ochre, the "Moran", the youthful warriors of the Samburu almost always spear-in-hand, are a wonderful sight. The permanent water supply of the Uaso Nyiro River is what attracts the game to Samburu. Much of the reserve is arid, hilly landscape but riverine forest fringes the riverbanks and there are doum palms, the fruit of which is a great favourite with elephants. Crocodiles lie quietly in the mud and it is here that you will find abundant Birdlife, including palm-eagles, storks, hornbills, bee-eaters and plenty of weaverbirds. Some species in the area are specially adapted to the arid environment, and are particularly northern – the magnificent Oryx, for example and the gerenuk, a rather odd looking long-necked gazelle which can stretch up to reach the lower branches of the thorn trees. You will also find Grevy's Zebra, larger than the more commonly seen Burchell's zebra, and reticulated giraffe, with their irregular netted pattern of white. Desert lion are found here, leopards can be seen, and the ostrich (Ethiopian) have blue legs! Elephant wander, browsing in family groups. Buffalo Springs has the Uaso Nyiro River as its northern boundary, and thus may almost be seen as an extension of Samburu Reserve, which is bounded in the south by the river. The game here is the same as Samburu, but here there is more marshland and the large pools from the springs themselves. You may cross from one reserve to the other via a bridge over the river. Samburu and Buffalo Springs are becoming more sought after as a wildlife destination. They are only a couple of hundred miles from Nairobi and thus an easy hop on the light aircraft that fly from Wilson Airport, which itself is just outside Nairobi. In addition, the harsh beauty of the landscape is compelling.

MOUNT KENYA NATIONAL PARK

Centred on Africa's second highest mountain, Mount Kenya National Park covers the most astonishing variation in terrain. The twin high peaks of extinct volcano Mount Kenya, Batian at 5199m and Nelion at 5188m, are the only places on the equator to boast permanent snow. Four days, for the fit amateur, will see you to the top of the lower peak, Lanana, and on the way up allow you to see the GM-looking giant plantlife of the mountainsides, including a huge lobelia of up to ten feet high quite unlike our own garden varieties, and giant rosette plants! The two higher peaks, joined by a ridge called the Gate of Mists, are strictly for the accomplished climber and Kenya is rated, even by Himalayan climbers, as one of the most difficult ice mountains in the world. To the Kikuyu, Kenya's largest ethnic group, Mount Kenya is the home of the God Ngai who sits atop the highest peak and is thus their sacred mountain. Forested with juniper and podo from about two thousand metres, the vegetation changes to bamboo and then a thick canopy of lesser trees. Spanish moss frosts the trees, watered by the mists of the mountain slopes. Leopard, elephant, colobus monkeys, the shy bongo and buffalo inhabit the forest. Stunning sunbirds in jewel bright colours may be seen on the slopes. The Mount Kenya mole rat and the Mount Kenya mole shrew, specific to the area, are rare. The elusive golden cat

can also be found at higher altitudes and it is said that on the moors there is a better chance of seeing the melanistic black leopard. Tracks up the mountain are passable in good weather by four wheel drive vehicles. The Naro Moru track leads through the main gate to the park and takes you to about ten thousand feet. The Chogoria track, on the Meru side, takes you to about fourteen thousand feet. High altitude moorland walks are of stunning beauty. Tarns twinkle in the sunlight and the views are utterly breathtaking.

LAKE NAKURU NATIONAL PARK

Originally declared a national park because of a superbly diverse bird population, which includes many migrants, the park is also a favourite place for travellers to seek the rare black rhino. However, it is for the flamingos that the lake is best known, and it was for their protection that the park was originally created. The level of the bluegreen alkaline waters here varies and this, with other accompanying environmental changes, causes considerable variation in the flamingo population, but when they are present, en masse, the whole lake turns a gorgeous rosy pink. Although protection of the flamingo population on the lake was the original rationale for the inception of the national park, further land was included in the early seventies and it is now about 190 sq m. This expansion, which took in a large grassland area, has allowed the park to protect further species. Buffalo, zebra, antelope and both lion and leopard are to be found. The rather less ubiquitous reedbuck and waterbuck are also here as is the glamorously leggy Rothschild giraffe. Temptingly, the black rhino-breeding programme, started in the late eighties, has proved successful and this is an excellent place to view them. Lake Nakuru is a small national park. There is no need to stay in the area in order to see all that is to be seen. A good day trip may be enough and these can easily be organised from the Lake Naivasha area.

Masai Mara National G.R

Probably the most famous of the reserves, the Masai Mara, in Kenya's southwestern corner, boasts an astonishing amount of game. Unfenced, the Mara is bounded in the east by the Ngama Hills and in the west by the Oloololo or Siria Escarpment. Gazelle, wildebeest and zebra graze in large numbers and where prey is found so are predators. Not only is this a great place in which to find game, but also the wide greeny-gold savannahs spotted with thorn trees make it ideal for photography. The Mara, as it is known in Kenya, is ravishingly beautiful and also offers long, undisturbed views and utterly dramatic panoramas. The weather really means something here. The sun may beat down unforgivingly, huge clouds in fabulous shapes may sweep across the widest of skies, and the wind ripples the grasses as though they are stroked by a giant hand. The landscape is stunning. The famously black-maned Mara lions are possibly the stars of the Mara show, but cheetah, elephant, kongoni, topi, Thompson's gazelle, waterbuck, hyena, and primates are all here too. As with the rest of Kenya, the birding is good. There is no settlement within the reserve however; the Mara is in theory owned by the Maasai, pastoralists and, in earlier times, renowned lion-killers. Lodges and hotels offer the opportunity to buy their beadwork, checked cloths and copies of their spears. It is said that if lions scent approaching Maasai on the breeze they move swiftly in the opposite direction. Famously, the Mara is the northerly end of the Great Migration, that great primeval surge of wildebeest, zebra and antelope that sweeps in from Tanzania's Serengeti to Kenya's Masai Mara as the Tanzanian grass starts to fail. They are tracked by the large predators that pick off the weak, the stragglers and the young. The great herds, nearing their destination by July, mass along the Mara River, pushing, shoving and fantastically noisy, just waiting for the first animal to cross so that they can all follow, lemming-like, on the final leg of the journey. However, crocodiles lie in wait, sluggishly cruising the waters, fully prepared for their best meal of the year. Many fail in the life-and-death struggle - drowned, eaten by the crocodiles or, made careless or weak by their stressful swim, brought down by lions. The Masai Mara is terrible yet wonderful, and not to be missed.

Advice

1. Kenya has eight provinces: Central, Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western. The largest province is Rift Valley, and the most populous is Nairobi. The second-tallest peak in Africa, Mount Kenya, is located in Eastern Province.
2. The Kenyan currency is the shilling. Informally, it is referred to as the bob.
3. The Daily Nation and The Standard are two of the better-known publications in Kenya and are the largest newspapers in East Africa. Other notable newspapers include the Kenya Times and the East African Standard.
4. The official languages of Kenya are Swahili and English. There are seven different dialects of Swahili, as well as about 62 other languages spoken within the country by various African tribes and communities of Asian and Middle Eastern descent. The African languages can be traced back to three language families—the Cushitic languages (which originated in the northeast), the Bantu languages (from the center and southeastern portions of the country), and the Nilotic languages (from the west). Jambo is a familiar Swahili greeting heard in Kenya.
5. In Kenya, a smoking ban prohibits lighting up in any public area, including streets, parks, bars, markets, theaters, and restaurants. Take note: it also forbids smoking in private homes and cars. Managers of hotels and bars, however, are allowed to set up designated smoking zones; be on the lookout for those.

Getting In and Around

Visas: Ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the end of your visit to Kenya. You should have available at least two blank pages in your passport for your visa and entry/exit stamps. Visas can be obtained in advance from a Kenyan embassy or consulate and can also be purchased at the airport in Kenya.

A yellow fever immunization card may be requested when you enter Kenya, so visit your local physician or health clinic before your departure and be sure that you have the required vaccinations.

Transportation: Most international flights will arrive in and depart from Nairobi. The city has two main airports, Jomo Kenyatta International and Wilson Airport. If you are flying in or out of Kenya, you will most likely use Jomo Kenyatta. Wilson Airport is primarily for domestic travel; a limited number of flights around the African continent fly from Wilson, though.

Public transportation is available in larger cities. The government-owned Kenya Bus Service manages many bus routes, but the most popular public transportation method is privately owned minibuses called matatus. While matatus definitely offer the cheapest way to get around, they are also the most congested, as drivers will squeeze in as many passengers as they can. Be prepared for a squished ride. In most of the cities, especially in areas that are popular with tourists, taxis are available for hire. They can provide a more convenient and safer alternative to public transportation, but taxis are also going to be more expensive. Be sure to negotiate a price before you get into the car, to prevent being overcharged. If you are looking to take a private vehicle service between cities, you'd do well to confer with your hotel staff for advice on reputable companies

Kenya Railways and the Kenya Bus Service, as well as numerous privately owned bus lines, all operate out of Nairobi and travel throughout the country.

Mobile Phones: If your mobile phone uses the GSM 900 system (standard with European mobiles, but most American and Canadian phones run on the 850/1900 system), you will be able to use it in Kenya. Be prepared to spend large amounts of money on phone calls, however. Your best and cheapest alternative is to buy a SIM card from one of the two main companies that sell them in Kenya, Safaricom and Zain. SIM cards and reload credits are sold all over the country. A word to the wise: text messages are significantly cheaper than phone calls, and the reception of text messages is free.