



KENYA COUNTRY GUIDE



ELEVATE DESTINATIONS
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This Kenya Country Guide includes cultural guidelines, communication tips, health and safety recommendations, and so much more! Please note that all information specific to your trip, such as inclusions and exclusions, staff contact numbers, flight recommendations, etc. is listed in your Online Trip Portal. For any questions unanswered by either the Country Guide or the online portal, please don't hesitate to reach out to an Elevate Destinations staff member. We hope that this document proves to be helpful and that you are getting excited about your journey to Kenya!

COMMUNICATIONS

For 24 hour assistance in country, please check your personalized itinerary for contact details.

[US Embassy Nairobi](#)

United Nations Avenue

00621 Nairobi, Kenya

Kenya_ACS@state.gov

Tel: +254 20 363-6000

International Calls

If you are in-country and trying to reach a number in the U.S., dial 000 + 1 + [telephone number]. Please be advised that some hotels impose a surcharge that can be more than double the cost of international calls. Be sure to check the hotel policy before placing international calls.

You may be able to use your US cell phone while in Kenya, depending on the type of phone and your mobile carrier service. However, be sure to investigate your carrier's roaming fees, especially for data, as this can add up quickly. If you bring an unlocked phone, you can also buy a local SIM card upon arrival.

Most hotels have some Wifi access, although it is not always reliable or reaching speeds in the US. When Internet access is available, applications such as Skype or WhatsApp provide an affordable – and in many cases free – solution to making international calls.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

***There is a plastic bag ban in Kenya. Do not bring your things in disposable plastic bags or you will be made to remove them and may have to pay a fine.**

The following points are intended to enhance your upcoming trip. Please reach out to your contact at Elevate Destinations if you have more questions. For a general introduction to the history, culture, and travel for the countries you will be visiting, we recommend Lonely Planet Travel Guides, which are updated annually.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to or living in a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in case of an emergency.

In case of emergency, it is advisable to record all of your important information on one sheet of paper, photocopy it, and distribute a few copies in your luggage, your money belt, and amongst relatives or friends at home. Also, email a scanned copy to yourself to have available online anywhere.

Here are some ideas on what to include:

- A photocopy of your passport
- Travel insurance policy details and 24-hour emergency number
- Details of relatives/friends and your primary care physician to be contacted in an emergency
- Bank and credit card contact information, serial numbers for electronics, etc.

If you can scan these documents and email them to your web-based email account, this is a useful backup as well.

Visas

KENYA: All travelers to Kenya will need an evisa to enter the country, which you can obtain in advance via the online system here: <http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>. In most cases, a single entry, 30 day visa* is the right choice. We recommend applying for your visa between 60 to 30 days prior to your departure. Your visa becomes valid for 90 days *from when it is issued*, so you won't want to apply too early, but you will also want to allow at least 30 days for processing.

Applicants receive an email confirmation with a tracking number. In most cases, you will then receive an email with an entry QR code within 3 business days. It is mandatory to print this file and to take a hard copy with you to Kenya. Please note that you are likely to be refused entry into Kenya if you do not carry a hard copy of the PDF file.

*Note: Single-entry visas for Kenya allow re-entry into Kenya for up to three months after visiting other East Africa countries without having to purchase a multiple-entry visa. If you plan a post tour extension to Tanzania or Uganda, simply inform the immigration official who stamps your passport on arrival of the length of your initial stay and your plans to return to Kenya later in your tour.

Please note that as of January 1, 2021, obtaining a visa upon arrival is no longer an option.

For most recent passport and visa details, search your destination country on the State Department website here, or contact the Embassy of Kenya directly by phone at 202.387.6101.

Passport

Your passport must be valid for 6 months beyond your length of stay. Two blank pages are required for entry, and the last two amendment pages are unacceptable for immigration stamps.

Health Concerns

Please consult with a travel clinic or your personal physician regarding recommended immunizations for travel to Kenya. You will need to do this well in advance of your trip as some vaccinations require time to take effect, and you may need to allow time between a series of shots.

The CDC recommends that all travelers are up-to-date on routine vaccinations 4-6 weeks before travel. The following may be required for travel to Kenya, depending on your travel plans:

- Yellow fever*

*Please note that if you are traveling from a country with a risk of Yellow Fever, you *must* travel with your yellow fever certificate as you may be asked to present it upon entry or exit at the Kenyan border. The certificate only becomes valid 10 days after vaccination. You can find more details on Yellow Fever endemic countries [here](#).

The CDC recommends the following vaccines for travelers to Kenya: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid. Prescription medication for the prevention of Malaria may also be advised.

Please consult your health care professional for guidance. *For more country-specific info on vaccine requirements and recommendations, you can find up-to-the-minute information from the [CDC](#).*

COVID-19:

All adults traveling with Elevate Destinations should plan to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 at least 2 weeks before departure. Please plan to carry your CDC Vaccination Card with you on your travels like you would a visa or passport. Our ground teams will follow the latest health and safety guidelines with regards to hygiene and PPE.

Covid-19 entry requirements are continuously evolving, and may change between the time of publishing and your departure date. In order to provide you the most accurate guidance, please check the travel portal for details on meeting country specific COVID-19 entry requirements before your trip.

Travel Insurance

We strongly encourage all travelers to purchase adequate travel insurance to cover any unexpected cancellation, as well as unforeseen medical and evacuation needs. **Elevate Destinations is not a licensed insurance agency or advisor.**

You are welcome to purchase travel insurance through our partners at [Wanderwell Insurance](#). You can also contact Wanderwell at hello@gowanderwell.com to schedule a phone call. Wanderwell is a Certified B Corp, a 1% for the Planet business member and a Transformational Travel Council ALLY.

Please note that Cancel For Any Reason Insurance may be the only option that covers COVID-19 related cancellations. Policies vary, but in most cases, this type of coverage must be purchased within 1-3 weeks of your program deposit.

Money

Kenya: The local currency is the Kenyan Shilling (KES). The exchange rate fluctuates, but is currently 111 KES per US\$1. You can check the exchange rates [here](#).

The small amount of local currency you may need during your stay in Kenya can be obtained at authorized facilities such as at hotels, banks and foreign exchange bureaus. In general, we suggest that you limit the amount of money you convert into local currency and exchange only what you think you will spend before leaving a foreign country. Be aware that normally, only paper currency will be accepted for exchange (not coins).

Cash

Kenya is primarily a cash economy, so we recommend bringing the funds you will need for personal spending in US dollars. Lodges and hotels will have a secure safe where you can request to store currency during your travels. Be sure to bring newer bills (printed in the last five years). Ripped or damaged bills will be very difficult to convert or spend.

ATM

ATMs are found throughout the country, but are not always reliable and less common in smaller towns. ***Be sure to notify your bank that you will be traveling internationally before departure so they do not see your transactions as fraudulent, as they may put a hold on your account.**

Credit Cards

Although credit cards are increasingly accepted at restaurants and hotels in larger cities, this may not be the case in remote areas. Visa is the credit card of preference, and travelers may have trouble using Mastercard or AMEX for credit or debit purchases. Make sure to have your credit card PIN number with you. If you do not have one, call your credit card company to obtain one. Credit card transactions may incur a service charge, so check your agreement in advance.

International Fees

Be sure to verify your bank's policies regarding international transaction charges when withdrawing from an ATM. When using your debit/credit card in stores, you may be charged a foreign transaction fee, which is usually assessed as a percent of what you are spending. For cash withdrawals, there is often a flat fee, though some may charge an additional percentage on top of that. The fees may also be different for cash advances at a bank than at the ATM.

Gratuities

Gratuities for your group travel program are included and will be pre-paid on your behalf in advance of your arrival. If you receive assistance from a porter on arrival at the hotel, please consider a tip of \$2 per bag.

IN-COUNTRY INFO

Arrival

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met by our local representative. Please contact the emergency numbers listed in the portal if you cannot locate our staff member at the airport.

Time

Kenya: GMT +3 Hours (At 12:00pm in New York, it is 8:00 pm in Kenya).

Electricity

Kenya uses a standard of 240 V, 50 Hz, and plug TYPE G. While some lodges do have US outlets available, we do recommend buying a universal adaptor to account for varying outlet types and voltages.



SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Weather Conditions

While Kenya does not have distinct seasonal changes due to its proximity to the Equator, there are some subtle climatic variations at different times of the year:

- **December through March:** These are usually the warmest months of the year. However; morning and evening temperatures are refreshingly cool with low humidity.
- **April:** This season is normally characterized by heavy, intermittent rains. But it remains warm and often sunny.
- **June, July, and August:** Kenya's weather is coolest during these months and the country is refreshingly green.
- **May & September, October, and November:** This is a delightful time to visit East Africa as scattered rains fall to freshen the country and lay the dust, although they sometimes can be heavy.

What to pack

We recommend layering as the best way to stay warm or keep cool. Our happiest travelers are always prepared for rain or shine! Please bring clothing to layer and accommodate a range of conditions from hot and humid to cool and windy weather. To help you prepare for your trip, we have put together a recommended packing list for your trip. A few things to keep in mind:

- Please be sure to pack any medications you take, a change of clothes, and any valuables **in your carry-on bag** in case your checked bag is lost/delayed. Prescription medication should be brought in the original packaging with labels.

- If travelling on a flying safari, please note that weight restrictions apply on charter flights and soft-sided bags are requested. Luggage weight limits on board your charters are 15kg/33lbs per passenger. Luggage storage facilities are available in Nairobi.
- Every piece of checked baggage should contain identification. While every precaution will be taken with your baggage, we strongly recommend the purchase of adequate baggage insurance by each traveler.

Essentials

- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Money pouch/wallet
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Day pack
- ☐ 1-2 reusable water bottles
- ☐ Photocopy of passport & insurance policy (You can email yourself a scanned copy)
- ☐ Earplugs for light sleepers
- ☐ Phone/camera and chargers
- ☐ Plug adaptor/universal converter

Clothes

- ☐ Breathable, cool, quick dry light-colored clothing: khaki, grey, brown and green.
- ☐ Waterproof jacket or poncho
- ☐ A “versatile, casual, yet nice” outfit
- ☐ Cool, long trousers & long-sleeved tops for evenings
- ☐ Good walking shoes/ boots
- ☐ Sunhat or cap – helps protect the eyes, and leaves you more approachable with locals
- ☐ Sunglasses (polarized are suitable for water activities)
- ☐ A light jacket, fleece hoodie or sweater/sweatshirt
- ☐ Socks
- ☐ T-shirts
- ☐ Sandals & flip-flops (for showers, walking around the hotel room, or indoors)
- ☐ Sleepwear

Women are encouraged to wear clothes that cover their knees and shoulders as a sign of respect for local cultures.

Medical Kit & Toiletries

- ☐ Medications you are taking
- ☐ Comfortable, well-fit face masks or face coverings
- ☐ Insect repellent (most effective brands are unscented and contain either picaridin or Deet)
- ☐ Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)
- ☐ Hand sanitizer
- ☐ Anti-malarial tablets, if advised by a medical professional
- ☐ Re-hydration salts and anti-diarrhea preparations
- ☐ Pepto-Bismol for stomach upsets
- ☐ Pain medication or anti-inflammatories (Advil, Ibuprofen, etc.)
- ☐ Antiseptic cream, Band-Aids, sterile wipes
- ☐ Razor

- ☐ Any personal care items like lotions, creams, special hair products
- ☐ Lip balm with SPF, and nose medications for long flights (saline nose spray)
- ☐ If you have a favorite doctor, bring along their phone number in case you get sick and want a trusted expert to talk to.

Other

- ☐ Extra duffel bag to bring home additional purchases
- ☐ Small, packable shopping bag
- ☐ Waterproof bag – NOT Ziploc style, you will need something reusable like a [stasher](#) or a [sea-to-summit pouch](#) for keeping valuables dry
- ☐ Book for reading on the plane or at lodges
- ☐ Wildlife guides – bird books and wildlife identification books
- ☐ Binoculars, Camera
- ☐ Notebook and pens
- ☐ Specialty snacks, if desired
- ☐ Necessary chargers for electronics

Pre-Departure Checklist

- ☐ Verify passport is: Valid for 6 months beyond the duration of your trip and contains at least two blank pages
- ☐ Consult with a physician for vaccination and prescription recommendations
- ☐ Examine travel insurance options
- ☐ Let your bank know of your travel plans (if you plan to use debit/credit cards)
- ☐ If traveling with a child under 18, please ensure you bring a copy of their birth certificate

LOCAL CUSTOMS & CULTURE

Etiquette and cultural differences

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of traveling, and these differences must be respected. The countries you will be visiting have cultural norms and taboos that we encourage visitors to understand and abide by.

Kenya is a multilingual country. The official languages are Bantu Swahili and English.

Formal greetings are fundamental to life in rural Africa, and it is important that, as a visitor, you follow suit. A few words of salutation followed by an enquiry after the other's health is the usual way to start a conversation. It is considered an affront to plough straight into question-asking, even if you are simply looking for directions from a passer-by. Most Kenyans speak some English, but using the Swahili greeting '*jambo!*' with a smile will more often than not inspire a warm welcome.

Please only give donations through an established organization that you know and trust, who have established relationships within communities in which they work. This will ensure that gifts are evenly distributed based on need, avoiding the chance that one individual or family receives gifts disproportionately.

Photography

When photographing people, always ask permission first. Always be considerate of anyone's desire not to be photographed. The only exception to this is when you are photographing a public scene with a lot of people in it, aiming at no one in particular. Because so many local people are asked for permission to be photographed, many will expect a tip or fee for this. For a deeper dive into best photography practices, we invite you to read our [blog about decolonizing photography](#).

There are some places where photography is prohibited, and these areas are usually clearly marked. If you are uncertain about whether or not photography is permitted, your guide will be there to advise you. *Under no circumstances should you take photographs of airports, government buildings and installations, or military or police personnel.*

We recommend that you bring all the photographic equipment you will need from home, including extra SD cards and additional camera batteries. In Kenya, film and batteries are not usually for sale outside of major cities and, if available, are very expensive and may be of questionable age and quality. It is also suggested that you check the working order of your camera and have your equipment insured before you depart.

Safety

We take every precaution to ensure your safety. But, as in many metropolitan areas, it's important to practice common sense and awareness to take necessary precautions to safeguard against pickpocketing. Please do not wear expensive or sentimentally valuable jewelry while on this trip. This is especially important during any site visits or community visits – please dress simply and avoid showing cash on these occasions, and avoid other conspicuous indicators of wealth. While traveling with Elevate in Kenya, you will be accompanied at all times, and you will have private security with you during your visit to Kiambiu Informal Settlement. If you have a safety concern, ask your guide or inform security right away.

Water

Do not drink tap water, unless expressly advised that it is filtered and safe to use. We recommend bringing a refillable water bottle to use. We will provide clean water to refill your water bottles throughout the trip. Some people also choose to brush their teeth with clean drinking water but this is up to personal preference based on how hardy you feel your stomach is. Do not use ice unless you know it was made from potable water.

Similarly, we recommend travelers to eat foods that have been cooked well. Fresh vegetables and fruits bear the risk of having been washed in contaminated water. Fruits you can peel are generally safe (i.e. bananas). If you have a question about what is safe, ask your guide, and plan on eating primarily at your hotel and lodges, which will be providing nearly all of your meals. **We do not recommend eating street food in Kenya.**

Responsible Travel Tips

Here are a few tips that are an easy, yet impactful way to "elevate" the way we travel:

- **Keep an open mind:** Try to observe local customs and respect traditional cultures and people.
- **Language:** Learning a few basic greetings and "thank you" in the local language can get you far and is often a gesture that locals take kindly to.
- **Local economy:** Support locally owned businesses, restaurants, and other services. Shop from local artisans, craftsmen, and artists to promote traditional crafts and encourage contemporary arts.
- **Pay a fair price:** Gentle bargaining is acceptable in markets, and a fun way to engage with locals. In stores with clearly marked prices, such as boutiques and specialty stores, haggling is not encouraged or well received. If you are in doubt, check with your guide. Be prepared to take your time in reaching a price.
- **Respect:** It is important to acknowledge the privacy and dignity of others and ask before photographing or filming people. Ask permission before entering sacred places, homes, or private land and take heed of local customs (i.e., remove shoes, hats, cover hair with a shawl, etc.). Feel free to ask your guide if unsure; they are there to support your introduction to the culture!
- **Community and environment:** Contribute to organizations that support traditional cultures and protect the natural environment. Keep to designated trails and do not disturb plants and animals or their natural habitats.
- **Animal products:** Avoid purchasing crafts, clothing, furniture, or other products that are derived from members of protected or endangered animal or plant species. For example, souvenirs made from tropical hardwoods or preserved butterflies. When in doubt, avoid it.
- **Properly dispose of trash:** Avoid using plastic bags and try to minimize the use of other disposables. When traveling in areas away from cities, make sure to take out what you take in. Bring a reusable water bottle and be prepared to treat your own drinking water when possible – check out what our friends at [Travelers Against Plastic](#) are doing!
- **Don't feel pressured to give away money or material items:** You will likely encounter instances of poverty and people asking for donations. We try to discourage giving away money or objects as it can accentuate an unequal relationship between visitors and locals. Additionally, children that receive money, gifts, and sweets from you are encouraged to stick around for more rather than to be in school! As difficult as it can be to turn down direct requests, sometimes giving your friendship and respect to locals can be the best gift of all. If you feel moved to make a donation, we can advise you on the best way to do this through a trusted organization.

Elevate Destinations takes pride in its leadership in the field of responsible travel. We take care in selecting our local partners that share our environmental and social values and are avid supporters of locals working in the tourism industry as they are both the most impacted and impactful players at the local level. All of your ground costs on this trip are carbon offset using Native Eco's [Carbon Calculator](#), and we encourage you to offset your international flights as well.

Please feel free to read more about Elevate's [values & vision](#), our [sustainability commitment](#), our programs that give back, and more on our website at www.elevatedestinations.com. Our team members are always

excited to share more on this topic, so keep an eye out for updates and stories on our Facebook page! We acknowledge that to maintain truly sustainable travel products takes ongoing commitment. We continue to monitor our programs on the ground to improve them, and welcome your thoughts, feedback, and encouragement!

Human Trafficking in Travel

Elevate Destinations has signed the Code of Conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism and expects all of its partners to refuse involvement, both direct and indirect, in the commercial exploitation of children. A "child" is defined as a person younger than 18 years of age, according to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. We encourage our travelers and suppliers to report the sexual exploitation of children. Information, even the smallest amount, can represent the missing piece of an ongoing investigation by law enforcement. If you are uncomfortable with leaving your name and contact information, you can report anonymously to law enforcement or NGOs. [Report a concern](#). Alternatively, you can also email protect@ecpat.net to report the sexual exploitation of children.