

Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodation	345
Activities	348
Business Hours	350
Children	351
Climate Charts	352
Courses	353
Customs	353
Dangers & Annoyances	353
Disabled Travellers	355
Discount Cards	355
Embassies & Consulates	355
Festivals & Events	357
Food	357
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	357
Holidays	358
Insurance	358
Internet Access	359
Legal Matters	359
Maps	359
Money	360
Photography & Video	361
Post	362
Senior Travellers	363
Shopping	363
Solo Travellers	364
Telephone	365
Time	365
Toilets	365
Tourist Information	366
Visas	366
Women Travellers	367
Work	367

ACCOMMODATION

Kenya has a good range of accommodation options, from basic cubicle hotels overlooking city bus stands to luxury tented camps hidden away in the national parks. There are also all kinds of campsites, budget tented camps, simple bandas (often wooden huts) and cottages scattered around the parks and rural areas.

During the low season many companies offer excellent deals on accommodation on the coast and in the main wildlife parks, often working with airlines to create pack-

PRACTICALITIES

- Major newspapers and magazines in Kenya include the *Daily Nation*, the *East African Standard*, the *East African*, the *Weekly Review* and the *New African*.
- KBC and NTV, formerly KTN, are the main national TV stations; the CNN, Sky and BBC networks are also widely available on satellite or cable (DSTV).
- KBC Radio broadcasts across the country on various FM frequencies. Most major towns also have their own local music and talkback stations, and the BBC World Service is easily accessible.
- Kenyan television equipment uses the standard European NSTC video system.
- Kenya uses the 240V system, with square three-pin sockets as used in the UK. Bring a universal adaptor if you need to charge your phone or run other appliances.
- Kenya uses the metric system – distances are in kilometres and most weights are in kilograms.

ages aimed at the local and expat market. The website of **Let's Go Travel** (www.lets-go-travel.net) displays almost all the major hotels and lodges in Kenya, giving price ranges and descriptions, while www.kenyalastminute.com is a good port of call for discounted bookings at some of the more expensive camps, lodges and hotels, particularly on the coast.

Where appropriate accommodation options are split into budget, midrange and top-end categories for ease of reference. In general, a budget double room is anything under KSh1000. You can pay as little as KSh150 for four walls and a bed, with foam mattress and shared squat toilet; for KSh400 and up you'd usually get a private bathroom, and at the upper end of the scale shower heaters and breakfast may be on offer. Surprisingly, bedding, towels and soap are almost always provided however much you pay, though cleanliness varies widely and toilet seats can be rare luxuries.

In most of the country, midrange accommodation falls between KSh1000 and KSh3500 for a double room – the major exception to this is Nairobi, where you can pay anything up to KSh6000 for the same standards. In this bracket you'd usually expect breakfast, private bathroom, telephone and good-size double beds with proper mattresses; the more you pay the more facilities you get, from restaurants and bars to TVs, hot showers and the odd swimming pool.

Everything over KSh3500 (or US\$80 in Nairobi) counts as top end, and what you get for your money varies enormously. Once you hit US\$100 you should count on breakfast, TV, phone, air-con (on the coast), room service and toiletries as standard, and in the upper realms of the price range the extras can include anything from complimentary minibars to casinos, Jacuzzis and free activities. The most expensive places are the exclusive getaways tucked away in national parks and other remote corners of the country, which can exceed US\$600 for a double but don't necessarily include all the trappings you'd expect elsewhere.

Although most midrange and top-end places quote prices in US dollars, payment can be in local currency. Note that most places have separate rates for residents, and these are often much less than the nonresident rates. All prices quoted in this book are nonresident rates.

Many midrange and (especially) top-end options also change their prices according to season, which can be confusing as very few places use exactly the same dates. In principal there are high, low and shoulder seasons, but some hotels can divide their year into five or more distinct pricing periods. For lodges in the national parks, the norm is to charge high-season prices from July to March, with low-season prices only applicable from April to June. On the coast, where things are much more seasonal, peak times tend to be July to August and December to March, and a range of lower rates can apply for the rest of the year.

Note that however high season is defined, premium rates or supplements always apply over Christmas, New Year and Easter, and can be as much as double the high-season tariffs. Conversely, hotels that are near empty in low season may be open to some negotiation on rates.

In this book, 'high season' refers to rates quoted for the longest peak period (not premium rates), and 'low season' refers to the lowest prices available out of season – any other variations should fall between these two guidelines.

African Safari Club

Although it's package tourism at its most developed, the UK-based **African Safari Club** (UK ☎ 020-84660014; www.africansafariclub.com) has some splendid properties on the coast and in several of the national parks. The company even has its own airline ferrying in guests from Europe. There are African Safari Club resorts at Watamu, Kilifi, Shanzu Beach and Kikambala on the coast, and in Tsavo East and Masai Mara National Parks. Rates are typical for up-market resorts, but are quoted as part of holiday packages so few offers are for less than a week or so.

Bandas

These are basic huts and cottages, usually with some kind of kitchen and bathroom, that offer excellent value for budget travelers. There are KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service) bandas at Shimba Hills, Tsavo West, Meru and Mt Elgon, and near the marine reserves at Malindi and Shimoni. Some are wooden huts, some are thatched stone huts and some are small brick bungalows with solar-powered lights; facilities range from basic dorms and squat toilets to kitchens and hot water provided by wood-burning stoves. The cost varies from US\$10 to US\$20 per person. **Let's Go Travel** (☎ 020-340331; www.lets-go-travel.net) in Nairobi is the agent for an increasing number of bandas. You'll need to bring all your own food, drinking water, bedding and firewood.

Beach Resorts

Much of the coast, from Diani Beach to Malindi, is taken up by huge luxury beach resorts. Most offer a fairly similar experience, with swimming pools, water sports, bars, restaurants, mobs of souvenir vendors on the beach and 'tribal' dance shows in the evening. They aren't all bad, though, especially if you want good children's facilities, and a handful of them have been very sensitively designed. Nightly rates vary from US\$40 per person at the small family resorts to US\$500 at top-end places. Note

that the majority of these places will close in the early summer, generally from May to mid-June or July.

Camping

There are many opportunities for camping in Kenya and it is worth considering bringing a tent with you, although gear can also be hired in Nairobi and around Mt Kenya. There are KWS campsites in just about every national park or reserve, though these are usually very basic. There'll be a toilet block with a couple of pit toilets, and usually a water tap, but very little else.

As well as these permanent campsites, KWS also runs so-called 'special' campsites in most national parks; these sites move every year and have even fewer facilities than the standard camps, but cost more because of their wilder locations and set-up costs. A reservation fee of KSh5000 per week is payable on top of the relevant camping fee.

Private sites are rare but they offer more facilities and may hire out tents if you don't have your own. It's sometimes possible to camp in the grounds of some hotels in rural towns, and Nairobi has some good private campsites. Camping in the bush is possible but unless you're doing it with an organised trip or a guide, security is a major concern; don't even think about it on the coast.

All campsite prices in this book are per person unless otherwise specified.

Hostels

The only youth hostel affiliated with Hostel International (HI) is in Nairobi. It has good basic facilities and is a pleasant enough place to stay, but there are plenty of other cheaper choices that are just as good. Other places that call themselves 'youth hostels' are not members of HI and standards are extremely variable.

Hotels & Guesthouses

Real bottom-end hotels (often known as 'board and lodgings' to distinguish them from 'hotels', which are often only restaurants) are widely used as brothels and tend to be very run-down. Security at these places is virtually nonexistent; the better ones are set around courtyards and are clean if not exactly comfortable.

Proper hotels and guesthouses come in as many different shapes and sizes as the people

who stay in them. As well as the top-end Western companies, there are a number of small Kenyan chains offering reliable standards across a handful of properties in particular towns or regions, and also plenty of private family-run establishments.

Self-catering options are common on the coast, where they're often the only mid-priced alternative to the top-end resorts, but not so much in other parts of the country. A few fancier places offer fully fitted modern kitchens, but more often than not the so-called kitchenettes will be a side room with a small fridge and a rusty portable gas hob.

Terms you will come across frequently in Kenya include 'self-contained', which just means a room with its own private bathroom, and 'all-inclusive', which differs in exact meaning from place to place, but it's generally all meals, certain drinks and possibly some activities should be included in the room rate.

Rental Houses

Renting a private house is a popular option on the coast, particularly for groups on longer stays, and many expats let out their holiday homes when they're not using them. Properties range from restored Swahili houses on the northern islands to luxurious colonial mansions inland, and while they're seldom cheap the experience will often be something pretty special.

Safari Lodges

Hidden away inside or on the edges of national parks are some fantastic safari lodges. These are usually visited as part of organised safaris, and you'll pay much more if you just turn up and ask for a room. Some of the older places trade heavily on their more glorious past, but the best places feature five-star rooms, soaring *makuti*-roofed bars (with a thatched roof of palm leaves) and restaurants overlooking waterholes full of wildlife. Staying in at least one good safari lodge is recommended, if only to see how the other half lives! Rates tend to come down a lot in the low season.

Tented Camps

As well as lodges, many parks contain some fantastic luxury tented camps. These places tend to occupy wonderfully remote settings, usually by rivers or other natural locations,

and feature large, comfortable, semipermanent safari tents with beds, furniture, bathrooms (usually with hot running water) and often some kind of external roof that to keep the rain out. There are a few moderately priced options in Tsavo East National Park but most of the camps are very posh and the tents are pretty much hotel rooms under canvas. The really exclusive properties occupy locations so isolated that guests fly in and out on charter planes.

ACTIVITIES

If bombing around in a safari bus isn't active enough for you, Kenya has an amazing range of distractions and diversions to keep you on your toes from dusk till dawn. Trekking and snorkelling are among the most popular pursuits inland and on the coast respectively, as they require no expensive equipment and can be arranged very easily locally; more adventurous activities include a whole world of water sports and aerial adventures from balloons to gliders. For more ideas on organised trips and activities, see p59.

Balloonning

Balloon trips in the wildlife parks are an absolutely superb way of seeing the savanna plains and, of course, the animals. The almost ghostly experience of floating silently above the plains with a 360° view of everything beneath you is incomparable, and it's definitely worth saving up your shillings to take one of these trips.

The flights typically set off at dawn and go for about 1½ hours, after which you put down for a champagne breakfast. You will then be taken on a wildlife drive in a support vehicle and returned to your lodge. Flights are currently available in the Masai Mara for around US\$390. Check out the following companies:

Adventures Aloft (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-214168; Kimathi House, Kimathi St, Nairobi) This company operates out of Mara Fig Tree Lodge and you can book there, in Nairobi, or at any other lodge in the Masai Mara.

Balloon Safaris Ltd (☎ 020-605003; www.balloon-safaris.com; Wilson Airport, Nairobi) This company operates out of Keekorok Lodge.

Governors' Balloon Safaris (☎ 020-2734000; www.governorscamp.com) This company operates out of Little Governors' Camp in Nairobi.

Transworld Balloon Safaris (☎ 020-2713333) Based at the Sarova Mara Lodge in the Masai Mara.

Cycling

An increasing number of companies offer cycling and mountain-biking trips in Kenya. Popular locations include the edge of the Masai Mara, Hell's Gate National Park, Central Highlands and Kerio Valley. The best specialist operator is **Bike Treks** (☎ 020-446371; www.biketreks.co.ke).

Many local companies and places to stay around the country can arrange cheap bicycle hire, allowing you to cycle through places such as Arabuko Sokoke Forest Reserve and Hell's Gate National Park. Hire is usually between KSh300 and KSh500 per day. See p376 for more information on cycling in Kenya. For details of companies which offer cycling safaris, see p70.

Diving & Snorkelling

There is a string of marine national parks spread out along the coast between Shimoni and Malindi (see p151 for further details), with plenty of opportunities for snorkelling and scuba diving. The better marine parks are those further away from Mombasa, at Wasini Island (p179), on the south coast, and at Malindi (p205) and Watamu (p198), to the north. The Lamu archipelago (p212) also has some fine reefs, off the islands of Manda Toto and Kiwayu.

Just about any boat trip will include some time snorkelling or 'goggling' on one of the many local reefs, and masks are readily available wherever you go for around KSh200. However, snorkellers are discouraged from wearing flippers (fins) because of the damage they can do to the coral.

There are distinct seasons for diving in Kenya. October to March is the best time, but during June, July and August it's often impossible to dive due to the poor visibility caused by heavy silt flow from some of the rivers on the coast. This doesn't necessarily mean that no companies will take your money for trips during this period! In 1997, there was a huge coral die-off as part of a warming of the ocean attributable to El Niño and global warming. However, the coral is slowly recovering and there are thousands of colourful fish species and even marine mammals.

If you aren't certified to dive, almost every hotel and resort on the coast can arrange an open-water diving course. By international standards, they aren't cheap – a five-day

PADI certification course will cost between US\$330 and US\$450. Trips for certified divers including two dives go for around US\$90. The cheapest way to dive is on dhow tours to Wasini, where you only pay US\$50 for two dives, although you have to pay for the tour as well.

Nairobi Sailing & Sub Aqua Club (Map p126; ☎ 020-501250; Nairobi Dam, Langata Rd, Nairobi) offers British Sub Aqua Club diver training and runs diving trips to the coast between September and April.

If you're going to scuba dive on the coast, note that the only decompression chamber in the region is in Mombasa and is run by the Kenyan navy.

Fishing

The **Kenya Fisheries Department** (Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-3742320; Museum Hill Rd, Nairobi), opposite National Museums of Kenya, operates a number of fishing camps in various parts of the country. However, they're difficult to reach without your own vehicle and directions from the Fisheries Department, from whom you'll also need to get a fishing licence.

The deep-sea fishing on the coast is some of the best in the world and various private companies and resorts in Shimoni, Diani Beach, Mtwapa, Watamu and Malindi can arrange fishing trips. Boats cost from US\$250 to US\$500 and can usually fit four or five anglers. You'll pay the same price if it's just you in the boat. The season runs from August to April.

For freshwater fishing, there are huge Nile perch as big as a person in Lakes Victoria and Turkana, and some of the trout fishing around the Aberdares and Mt Kenya is quite exceptional. See p68 for more details on fishing safaris in Kenya.

Fishing licences for Mt Kenya, Mt Elgon and Aberdare National Parks can be obtained from the respective park gates at a cost of KSh100 per day. In addition to this fee, park visitors are required to pay the standard daily park-entry charges and KWS guide fees at KSh500 per day.

Gliding & Flying

The **Gliding Club of Kenya** (☎ 0733-760331; gliding@africaonline.co.ke; PO Box 926, Nyeri), near Nyeri in the Central Highlands, offers silent glides over the Aberdares (p254).

RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Please consider the following tips when diving:

- Never use anchors on the reef, and take care not to ground boats on coral.
- Avoid touching or standing on living marine organisms or dragging equipment across the reef. Polyps can be damaged by even the gentlest contact. If you must hold on to the reef, only touch exposed rock or dead coral.
- Practise and maintain proper buoyancy control. Major damage can be done by divers descending too fast and colliding with the reef.
- Take great care in underwater caves. Spend as little time within them as possible as your air bubbles may be caught within the roof and thereby leave organisms high and dry. Take turns to inspect the interior of small caves before leaving.
- Resist the temptation to collect coral or shells, or to loot marine archaeological sites.
- Ensure that you take home all your rubbish and any other litter you may find. Plastics in particular are a serious threat to marine life.
- Do not feed fish.
- Minimise your disturbance of marine animals. Never ride on the backs of turtles.

Flying lessons are easily arranged in Nairobi and are much cheaper than in Europe, the USA and Australasia. Contact the **Aero Club of East Africa** (☎ 020-608990) and **Ninety-Nines Flying Club** (☎ 020-500277), both at Wilson Airport.

Sailing

Kilifi, Mtwapa and Mombasa all have sailing clubs, and smaller freshwater clubs can also be found at Lake Naivasha and Lake Victoria, which both have excellent windsurfing and sailing. If you're experienced, you may pick up some crewing at the various yacht clubs, although you'll need to become a temporary member. While it isn't hands-on,

a traditional dhow trip out of Lamu is an unforgettable experience.

Trekking & Climbing

For proper mountain trekking Mt Kenya (p261) is the obvious choice, but other promising and relatively unexplored walking territory includes Mt Elgon (p312) on the Ugandan border, the Cherangani Hills and Kerio Valley (p309) east of Kitale, the Matthews Range and the Ndoti Mountains (p327) north of Isiolo, the Loroghi Hills (p335) north of Maralal, the Mau Forest region (p242) near Nakuru, the upper reaches of the Aberdares (p256) and even the Ngong Hills (p130), close to Nairobi.

For more trekking information refer to the relevant chapters in this book, get hold of a copy of Lonely Planet's *Trekking in East Africa*, or contact the **Mountain Club of Kenya** (MCK; ☎ 020-602330; www.mck.or.ke) in Nairobi (for more details, see p97). Its website has good advice on Mt Kenya as well as on technical climbing and trekking throughout Kenya.

In addition to rafting trips (right), **Savage Wilderness Safaris** (☎ 020-521590; www.whitewaterkenya.com; Sarit Centre, PO Box 1000, Westlands, Nairobi) offers mountaineering trips to Mt Kenya and rock climbing at sites around the country, as well as some more unusual options like caving.

Water Sports

Conditions on Kenya's coast are ideal for windsurfing – the country's offshore reefs protect the waters, and the winds are usually reasonably strong and constant. Most resort hotels south and north of Mombasa have sailboards for hire; rates vary from KSh400 to KSh800 per hour, and instruction is also usually available. The sheltered channel between Lamu and Manda Islands (p223) is one of the best places to windsurf on the coast.

As well as the ubiquitous windsurfing, diving and snorkelling which is always on offer, some of the larger resorts have water-sports centres giving visitors the opportunity to try out absolutely everything from jet skis and banana boats to bodyboarding and traditional surfing. Kitesurfing is the latest craze to catch on, with tuition available. Diani Beach (p174), south of Mombasa, is the best place to go if you want to try any (or all) of these activities.

White-Water Rafting

The Athi/Galana River has substantial rapids, chutes and waterfalls and there are also possibilities on the Tana River and Ewaso Ngiro River near Isiolo. The most exciting times for a white-water rafting trip are from late October to mid-January and from early April to late July, when water levels are highest.

The people to talk to are **Savage Wilderness Safaris** (☎ 020-521590; www.whitewaterkenya.com; Sarit Centre, PO Box 1000, Westlands, Nairobi), run by the charismatic Mark Savage. Depending on water levels, rafting trips of up to 450km and three weeks' duration can be arranged, although most trips last one to four days and cover up to 80km.

One of the most popular short trips (US\$95 per person, one day) is on the Tana River, northeast of Nairobi, which covers grade two to five rapids. Overnight trips with more time spent on the river cost US\$140. Also possible are three-day adventures on the Athi River, southeast of Nairobi (US\$380 per person plus US\$95 per extra day), and the Ewaso Ngiro River, northwest of Isiolo (US\$450 per person with additional days at US\$105 per day).

The above prices include transport from Nairobi, tented accommodation, good-quality food, soft drinks and beer. You are also provided with all necessary rafting equipment including life jackets and helmets. At least four people are required for the Tana trips and at least six for the other rivers.

The company also offers a wide range of other land- and water-based activities, including kayaking and sailing.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most government offices are open Monday to Friday from 8am or 8.30am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5pm. Post offices, shops and services open roughly from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 9am to noon on Saturday; in Nairobi and other large cities the big supermarkets are open from 8.30am to 8.30pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 8pm Sunday. Internet cafés generally keep longer evening hours and may open on Sunday.

Banking hours are from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 11am Saturday; some smaller branches may only open on the first and last Saturday of the month.

In tourist resorts and larger cities banks may stay open until 4.30pm or 5pm Monday to Saturday. Forex bureaux are typically open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturday. Barclays Bank at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is open 24 hours and is the only bank in the country to open on Sunday.

Restaurant opening hours vary according to the type of establishment – as a rule cafés and cheap Kenyan canteens will open at around 6am or 7am and close in the early evening, while more expensive ethnic restaurants will be open from 11am to 10pm daily, sometimes with a break between lunch and dinner. International restaurants and those serving breakfast and/or alcohol are usually open from 8am until 11pm. Bars that don't serve food are open from around 6pm until late, while nightclubs open their doors around 9pm and can keep going until 6am or later at weekends!

In this book we have only given specific opening hours where they differ significantly from these broad guidelines.

CHILDREN

Many parents regard Africa as just too dangerous for travel with children, but it is possible, and even easy, if you're prepared to spend a little more and take comfort over adventure for the core of the trip.

Local attitudes towards children vary in Kenya just as they do in the West: screaming babies on matatus elicit all the usual sighs and tuttings, but usually kids will be welcomed anywhere that's not an exclusively male preserve, especially by women with families of their own.

For invaluable general advice on taking the family abroad, see Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan.

Practicalities

Budget hotels are probably best avoided for hygiene reasons. Most midrange accommodation should be acceptable, though it's usually only top-end places that cater specifically for families. Camping can be exciting but you'll need to be extra careful that your kids aren't able to wander off unsupervised into the Kenyan countryside.

Most hotels will not charge for children under two years of age. Children between two and 12 years who share their parents'

room are usually charged at 50% of the adult rate. You'll also get a cotbed thrown in for this price. Large family rooms are often available, especially at the upper end of the price scale, and some places also have adjoining rooms with connecting doors if your kids are old enough for a bit of independence.

Be warned that some exclusive lodges, including Treetops, the Ark and Shimba Rainforest Lodge, impose a minimum age limit for children; typically they must be aged at least eight to be admitted. If camping, be alert for potential hazards such as mosquitoes, dangerous wildlife and campfires. It's particularly important to consider the risks posed to children by tropical diseases – talk to your doctor to get the best advice. Mosquito repellents with high levels of DEET may be unsuitable for young children.

Street food is also likely to be risky, as is unwashed fruit. Letting your children run around barefoot is usually fine on the beach (beware of sea urchins!), but may be risky in the bush because of thorns, bees, scorpions and snakes. Hookworm and bilharzia are also risks.

Travelling between towns in Kenya is not always easy with children. Car sickness is one problem, and young children tend to be seen as wriggling luggage, so you'll often have them on your lap. Functional seatbelts are rare even in taxis and accidents are common – a child seat brought from home is a good idea if you're hiring a car or going on safari. The journey to and from the coast by train is highly enjoyable for people of all ages.

Canned baby foods, powdered milk, disposable nappies and the like are available in most large supermarkets, but are expensive. Bring as much as possible from home, together with child-friendly insect repellent (this can't be bought in Kenya).

Sights & Activities

The coast is the obvious place to go for anyone travelling with children, as virtually all the resort hotels have pools, private beaches, playgrounds, games, entertainment and even kids' clubs to take the little darlings off your hands if you need a break. We've used the child-friendly icon (☺) throughout this book to indicate hotels with dedicated children's facilities.

Short boat trips can be great for slightly older children. If you stay in Diani Beach

(p172) or Malindi (p205) there are also several national parks or reserves within easy reach, so you can go on safari without having to drive for too long to get there. Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (p170) should capture most children's imagination and is accessible but wild enough to be exciting.

Many parents swear by Lamu (p212) as a good family destination – it's small and safe but has plenty to see and provides a taste of an exotic culture as soon as you step off the ferry. The large population of donkeys also provides a hefty dose of cuteness for young animal-lovers.

If you want to go on a full-scale safari, bear in mind that a four-hour wildlife drive with strangers can be an eternity for an uncomfortable child. It's best to choose one of the smaller, more open parks such as Nairobi National Park (p125), Amboseli (p137) or Lake Nakuru (p243), where there's plenty to see and the distances involved are relatively short. The kind of accommodation you choose will depend on the age, tolerance and curiosity of your offspring.

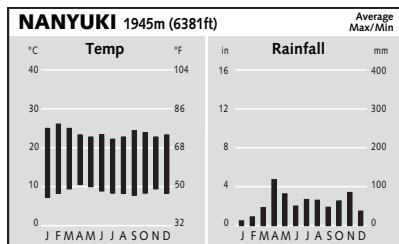
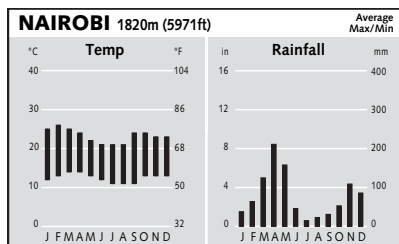
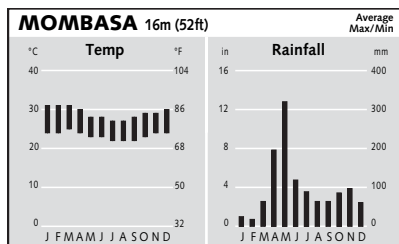
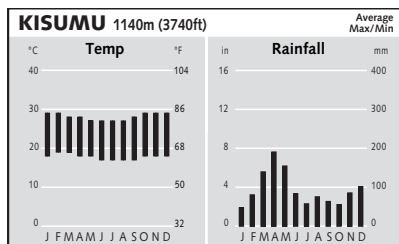
In Nairobi, the Langata Giraffe Centre (p128), David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (p127), National Museum (p104) and Railway Museum (p105) are all good for children. Bomas of Kenya (p124) has a good children's playground.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Kenya's diverse geography means that temperature, rainfall and humidity vary widely, but there are effectively four distinct zones.

The hot, rainy plateau of western Kenya has rainfall throughout the year, the heaviest usually during April when as much as 200mm may be recorded, and the lowest in January with an average of 40mm. Temperatures range from a minimum of 14°C to 18°C to a maximum of 30°C to 36°C throughout the year.

The temperate Rift Valley and Central Highlands have perhaps the most agreeable climate in the country. Average temperatures vary from a minimum of 10°C to 14°C to a maximum of 22°C to 28°C. Rainfall varies from a minimum of 20mm in July to 200mm in April, falling in essentially two seasons – March to the beginning of June (the 'long rains') and October to the end of November (the 'short rains'). Mt Kenya and the Aberdare mountains are the country's



main water catchments, with falls of up to 3000mm per year recorded in these places.

In the semiarid bushlands of northern and eastern Kenya temperatures vary from highs of up to 40°C during the day to less than 20°C at night. Rainfall in this area is sparse and, when it does occur, is often in the form of violent storms. July is usually the driest month, and November the wettest. The average annual rainfall varies between 250mm and 500mm.

The consistently humid coast region has rainfall averages from 20mm in February to around 300mm in May. Rainfall is dependent on the monsoon, which blows from the northeast from October to April and from the southwest for the rest of the year. The average annual rainfall is between 1000mm and 1250mm (less in drought years). Average temperatures vary little during the year, ranging from 22°C to 30°C.

These charts illustrate the typical annual conditions in key cities around the country; see p14 for a general overview of peak visitor periods.

For the latest local weather forecasts online, visit the **Kenya Meteorological Office** (www.meteo.go.ke).

COURSES

If you intend to spend considerable time in Kenya, learning Swahili is an excellent idea. The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) runs the best language school. Taking a language course (or any course) also entitles you to a 'Pupils' Pass', an immigration permit allowing continuous stays of up to 12 months. You may have to battle with bureaucracy and the process may take months, but it can be worth it, especially as you will then have resident status in Kenya during your stay.

The fee for a Pupil's Pass varies. A charge will be levied by your school for sorting out the paperwork so expect to pay around KSh3000 for a one-year pass. A deposit of KSh5000 or a letter of guarantee by an approved body registered in Kenya (your language school) is required along with two photographs and a copy of your passport (if applying from overseas). Check out the following language schools:

ACK Language & Orientation School (☎ 020-2723200; www.ackkenya.org; Bishops Rd, Upper Hill, PO Box 47429, Nairobi) Full-time courses (US\$450) last 14 weeks and take up five hours a day. More flexible is private tuition, which costs US\$4 per hour. Study materials will cost around US\$40.

Language Center Ltd (☎ 020-570610; Ndemi Close, off Ngong Rd, PO Box 40661, Nairobi) This is a good cheaper option; classes cost KSh250 per hour in a group or KSh450 for one-on-one tuition, and you can study two, three or seven days a week.

CUSTOMS

There are strict laws about taking wildlife products out of Kenya. The export of

products made from elephant, rhino and sea turtle are prohibited. The collection of coral is also not allowed. Ostrich eggs will also be confiscated unless you can prove you bought them from a certified ostrich farm. Always check to see what permits are required, especially for the export of any plants, insects and shells.

Usual regulations apply to items you can bring into the country – 50 cigars, 200 cigarettes, 250g of pipe tobacco, 1L of alcohol, 250ml of perfume and other personal items such as cameras, laptop computers and binoculars. Obscene publications are banned, which may extend to some lads' magazines.

You are allowed to take up to KSh100,000 out of the country.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

While Kenya is a safe destination in African terms, there are still plenty of pitfalls for the unwary or inexperienced traveller, from everyday irritations to more serious threats. A little street sense goes a long way here, and getting the latest local information is essential wherever you intend to travel.

Banditry

Wars in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia have all had their effect on the stability and safety of northern and northeastern Kenya. AK-47s have been flowing into the country for many years and the newspapers are filled with stories of hold-ups, shoot-outs, cattle rustling and general lawlessness. Bandits and poachers infiltrating from Somalia have made the northeast of the country particularly dangerous, and with the American 'War on Terror' shutting down the funding for many warring factions within Somalia, these problems are only going to get worse.

In the northwest, the main problem is armed tribal wars and cattle rustling across the Sudanese border. There are Kenyan *shifita* (bandits) too, of course, but cross-border problems seem to account for most of the trouble in the north of the country.

Despite all the headlines, tourists are rarely targeted, as much of the violence and robberies take place far from the main tourist routes. Security has also improved considerably in previously high-risk areas such as the Isiolo–Marsabit, Marsabit–Moyale and Malindi–Lamu routes. However, you should check the situation locally before

taking these roads, or travelling between Garsen and Garissa or Thika.

The areas along the Sudanese and Ethiopian borders are very risky, although most visitors are very unlikely to have any reason to go there in the first place.

Crime

Even the staunchest Kenyan patriot will readily admit that the country's biggest problem is crime. It ranges from petty snatch theft and mugging to violent armed robbery, carjacking and of course white-collar crime and corruption. The wealthy are content to surround themselves with more and more armed guards and razor wire and little is done to address the causes of the problem. As a visitor you needn't feel paranoid, but you should always keep your wits about you, particularly at night.

Perhaps the best advice for when you're walking around cities and towns is not to carry anything valuable with you – that includes jewellery, watches, cameras, bum bags, day-packs and money. Most hotels provide a safe or secure place for valuables, although you should be cautious of the security at some budget places. Cheap digital watches and plastic sunglasses can be bought in Kenya for under KSh100 and you won't miss them if they get taken.

While pickpocketing and bag-snatching are the most common crimes, armed muggings do occur in Nairobi and on the coast (see the relevant chapters for more details). However, they usually occur at night or in remote areas, so always take taxis after dark or along lonely dirt roads. Conversely, snatch-and-run crimes happen more in crowds. If you suddenly feel there are too many people around you, or think you are being followed, dive straight into a shop and ask for help.

Luggage is an obvious signal to criminals that you've just arrived. When arriving anywhere by bus, it's sensible to take a 'ship-to-shore' approach, getting a taxi directly from the bus station to your hotel. You'll have plenty of time to explore once you've safely stowed your belongings. Also, don't read this guidebook or look at maps on the street – it attracts unwanted attention.

In the event of a crime, you should report it to the police, but this can be a real procedure. You'll need to get a police report if you

intend to make an insurance claim. In the event of a snatch theft, think twice before yelling 'Thief!'. It's not unknown for people to administer summary justice on the spot, often with fatal results for the criminal.

Although crime is a fact of life in Kenya, it needn't spoil your trip. Above all, don't make the mistake of distrusting every Kenyan just because of a few bad apples – the honest souls you meet will far outweigh any crooks who cross your path.

Money

With street crime a way of life in Nairobi, you should be doubly careful with your money. The safest policy is to leave all your valuables in the hotel safe and just carry enough cash for that day. If you do need to carry larger sums around, a money belt worn under your clothes is the safest option to guard against snatch thefts. However, be aware that muggers will usually be expecting this.

More ingenious tricks include tucking money into a length of elasticised bandage on your arm or leg, or creating a hidden pocket inside your trousers. If you don't actually need your credit card, travellers cheques or cash with you, they'll almost always be safer locked away in your hotel safe. Don't overlook the obvious and leave money lying around your hotel room in plain view, though – however well you get on with the staff, they're unlikely to resist a free month's wages if they've got a family to feed.

Scams

At some point in Kenya you'll almost certainly come across people who play on the emotions and gullibility of foreigners. Nairobi is a particular hotspot, with 'friendly' approaches a daily, if not hourly, occurrence (see p104 for examples of favourite tricks). People with tales about being refugees or having sick relatives can sound very convincing, but they all end up asking for cash. It's OK to talk to these people if they're not actively hassling you, but you should always ignore any requests for money.

Be sceptical of strangers who claim to recognise you in the street, especially if they're vague about exactly where they know you from – it's unlikely that any ordinary person is going to be *this* excited by seeing you twice. Anyone who makes a big show of inviting you into the hospitality of their

STREET KIDS

Nairobi in particular has huge problems with street children, many of whom are AIDS orphans, who trail foreigners around asking for food or change. It's up to you whether you give, but if you do, the word will go around and you won't get a moment's peace. It's also debatable how much your donations will help as the older boys operate like a mini-mafia, extorting money from the younger kids.

If you want to help out, money might be better donated to the charity **Homeless Children International** (☎ 020-573013; www.hcikenya.org), which works to improve conditions for these children.

home also probably has ulterior motives. The usual trick is to bestow some kind of gift upon the delighted traveller, who is then emotionally blackmailed into reciprocating to the order of several hundred shillings.

Tourists with cars also face potential rip-offs. Don't trust people who gesticulate wildly to indicate that your front wheels are wobbling; if you stop, you'll probably be relieved of your valuables. Another trick is to splash oil on your wheels, then tell you the wheel bearings, differential or something else has failed, and direct you to a nearby garage where their friends will 'fix' the problem – for a substantial fee, of course.

Terrorism

Kenya has twice been subject to terrorist attacks: in August 1998 the US embassy in Nairobi was bombed (see p32), and in November 2002 the Paradise Hotel, north of Mombasa, was car-bombed at the same time as a rocket attack on an Israeli jet. While these events caused a brief panic in the tourist industry, it now seems they were isolated incidents and that Western travellers to Kenya can expect to have a trouble-free time in the country. Visitors to the predominantly Muslim coast region should be aware that anti-American sentiment can run high here, but actual violence against foreigners is highly unlikely.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Travelling in Kenya is not easy for physically disabled people, but it's not impossible.

Very few tourist companies and facilities are geared up for disabled travellers, and those that are tend to be restricted to the expensive hotels and lodges. However, if you're polite you're likely to get assistance from people wherever you need it. Visually or hearing-impaired travellers, however, will find it very hard to get by without an able-bodied companion.

In Nairobi, only the ex-London taxi cabs are spacious enough to accommodate a wheelchair, but many safari companies have experience taking disabled people out on safari. The travel agency **Travel Scene Services** (☎ 020-215404; travelscene@insightkenya.com) has lots of experience with disabled travellers.

Many of the top-end beach resorts on the coast have facilities for the disabled, whether it's a few token ramps or fully equipped rooms with handrails and bathtubs. Many of the hotels owned by **Lonrho Hotels** (Nairobi ☎ 020-216940; www.lonrho.com) can make provisions for disabled people – Mount Kenya Safari Club has its own wheelchair for guests' use. In Amboseli National Park, **Oltukai Lodge** (Nairobi ☎ 020-4445514; oltukai@mitsuminet.com) has two disabled-friendly cottages.

For further information about disabled travel contact the following:

Access-Able Travel Source (☎ 303-2322979; www.access-able.com; PO Box 1796, Wheatridge CO, USA)

Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (☎ 020-224443; apdk@connect.co.ke; APDK House, Lagos Rd, PO Box 46747, Nairobi) This group in Kenya may also be able to help disabled visitors.

Holiday Care (☎ 0845-1249971, minicom 0845-1249976, outside the UK 208-760072; www.holidaycare.org.uk; Sunley House, 4 Bedford Park, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2AP, UK) Advice for disabled and less-mobile senior travellers.

DISCOUNT CARDS

There's no uniformly accepted discount card scheme in Kenya, but a residence permit entitles you to claim the very favourable resident rates all over the country. Students are eligible for concessionary rates at museums and some other attractions on producing suitable ID – the international ISIC card should be widely recognised. Despite Kenyans' general respect for age and wisdom, there are no concessions or discounts for seniors.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Kenya has diplomatic representation in many countries. Where there is no Kenyan

embassy or high commission, visas can be obtained from the British embassy or high commission.

It's important to understand what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket home is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If all your money and documents are stolen, the embassy might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

Kenyan Embassies & Consulates

Australia (☎ 02-62474788; kenrep@dynamite.com.au; QBE Bldg, 33-35 Ainslie Ave, Canberra, ACT 2601)

Austria (☎ 01-7123919; kenyarep-vienna@aon.at; Neulinggasse 29/8, 1030 Vienna)

Canada (☎ 613-5631773; www.kenyahighcommission.ca; 415 Laurier Ave, East Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6R4)

Ethiopia (☎ 01-610033; kenya.embassy@telecom.net.et; Fikre Miriam Rd, PO Box 3301, Addis Ababa)

France (☎ 01-56622525; kenparis@wanadoo.fr; 3 Rue Freycinet, 75116 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-25922660; embassy-kenya.bn@wwmail.de; Markgrafenstr 63, 10969 Berlin)

India (☎ 011-26146537; www.kenyamission-delhi.com; 34 Paschimi Marg, Vasant Vihar, 10057 New Delhi)

Israel (☎ 03-57546333; kenya04@ibm.net; 15 Rehov Abba Hillel Silver, Ramat Gan 52522, PO Box 52136, Tel Aviv)

Italy (☎ 396-8082714; www.embassyofkenya.it; Via Archimede 165, 00197, Rome)

Japan (☎ 03-37234006; www.embassy-avenue.jp/kenya; 3-24-3 Yakumo, Meguro-Ku, Tokyo 152)

Netherlands (☎ 070-3504215; kenre@dataweb.nl; Nieuwe Parklaan 21, 2597, The Hague)

South Africa (☎ 012-3622249; kenp@pta.lia.net; 302 Brooks St, Menlo Park, 0081, Pretoria)

Sudan (☎ 011-460386; Street 3 Amarar, PO Box 8242, Khartoum)

Tanzania (☎ 022-2112955; khc@raha.com; NIC Investment House, Samora Ave, PO Box 5231, Dar es Salaam)

Uganda (☎ 041-258235; Plot No 41, Nakasero Rd, PO Box 5220, Kampala)

UK (☎ 020-76362371; www.kenyahighcommission.com; 45 Portland Pl, London W1N 4AS)

USA (☎ 202-3876101; www.kenyaembassy.com; 2249 R St NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Kenya

Many countries around the world maintain diplomatic missions in Kenya; a selection of these is listed following. Missions are located in Nairobi (area code ☎ 020) unless otherwise stated.

Australia High Commission (Map pp98-9; ☎ 445034; www.embassy.gov.au/ke.html; ICIFE House, Riverside Dr)

Austria (Map pp102-3; ☎ 319076; nairobi-ob@bma.gv.at; City House, Wabera St)

Canada High Commission (☎ 3663000; www.nairobi.gc.ca; Limuru Rd)

Ethiopia (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2732050; State House Ave)

France (Map pp98-9; ☎ 316363; www.ambafrance-ke.org; Barclays Plaza, Loita St)

Germany (☎ 4262100; www.nairobi.diplo.de; 113 Riverside Dr)

India High Commission (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222566; www.nairobi.indianhighcommission.com; Jeevan Bharati Bldg, Harambee Ave)

Ireland Honorary Consulate (Map pp98-9; ☎ 556647; irconsul@swiftkenya.com; Masai Rd)

Israel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2722182; Bishops Rd)

Italy Embassy (Map pp102-3; ☎ 319198; cooperazione@utlnairobi.org; International Life House, Mama Ngina St); Consulate (Map p158; ☎ 041-314705; Jubilee Bldg, Moi Ave, Mombasa)

Japan (Map pp102-3; ☎ 315850; embjap@wananchi.com; ICEA Bldg, Kenyatta Ave)

Netherlands (☎ 4447412; Riverside Lane)

South Africa High Commission (☎ 2827100; Roshanmaer Pl, Lenana Rd)

Spain (Map pp102-3; ☎ 246009; embespe@mail.mae.es; International House, Mama Ngina St)

Sudan (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2720883; sudanemb@wananchi.com; AON-Minet Bldg, Mamlaka Rd) At the time of research, this embassy did not issue visas.

Switzerland (Map pp102-3; ☎ 228735; International House, Mama Ngina St)

Tanzania High Commission (Map pp102-3; ☎ 311948; Reinsurance Plaza, Aga Khan Walk)

Uganda High Commission (☎ 4445420; www.uganda-highcommission.co.ke; Riverside Paddocks); Consular section (Map pp102-3; ☎ 311814; Uganda House, Kenyatta Ave)

UK High Commission (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2844000; www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/kenya; Upper Hill Rd)

USA (☎ 3636000; http://nairobi.usembassy.gov; United Nations Ave)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Major events happening around Kenya include the following:

Maulid Festival Falling in March or April for the next few years, this annual celebration of the prophet Mohammed's birthday is a huge event in Lamu town, drawing hundreds of visitors (see p218).

Rhino Charge (www.rhinoark.org) Charity cross-country rally in aid of Rhino Ark (see p258), pitting mad motorists against crazy obstacles. Held in June.

Tusker Safari Sevens (www.safarisevens.com) International rugby tournament held every June near Nairobi (see p107).

Kenya Music Festival (☎ 020-2712964) The country's longest-running music festival (see p107), held over 10 days in August.

Mombasa Carnival (zainab@africaonline.co.ke) November street festival, with music, dance and other events (see p162).

East Africa Safari Rally (www.eastfricansafarirally.com) Classic car rally now in its 50th year, covering Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda using only pre-1971 vehicles. Held in December.

FOOD

You can eat well in Kenya, though outside the major towns variety isn't always a priority – see p92 for a full rundown of the restaurant scene. In general you should be able to snack for KSh10 to KSh100 on the street and fill up for under KSh200 in any cheap Kenyan cafeteria; an Indian or standard Western meal will cost around KSh500, a Chinese meal anything up to KSh1000, and a top-flight meal in a classy restaurant with wine and all the trimmings can easily exceed KSh2000 per person.

In this book we have organised restaurants by type of food where appropriate, for ease of reference.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Even today there is still a widespread perception across Africa that homosexuality is somehow an un-African phenomenon, introduced to the continent by degenerate European colonials. It goes on covertly of course, particularly on the coast, but under Kenyan law, homosexuality is still punishable by up to 14 years in prison. There are very few prosecutions under this law, but it's certainly better to be discreet; some local conmen do a good line in blackmail, picking up foreigners then threatening to expose them to the police!

Awareness is increasing in Kenya, but with the churches exerting a hardline 'moral' stance on their followers, homosexuality continues to be frowned upon: as recently as June 2005, 98% of respondents to a national survey said that same-sex marriage was against their personal and religious principles. Only a third declared themselves totally against homosexuality in itself, but 96% said it was against their beliefs, showing just how far the Kenyan gay community still has to go to achieve equality. However, polls of this kind and calls for public debate give some hope that the issue will at least cease to become such a taboo subject over the next few years.

According to the UN, sex between gay men accounts for only 5% to 10% of HIV/AIDS cases in Kenya. Despite the best efforts of international aid organisations, condoms are still as unpopular with Kenya's gay community as they are in heterosexual circles, and due to the secret nature of most gay relationships some men will also have unprotected sex with women who are unaware of their same-sex partners, increasing the risk factor exponentially.

Although there are probably more gays and lesbians in Nairobi, the coast is more tolerant of gay relationships, at least privately. There is now a Swahili word for gay, coined here: *msenge*. Lamu has long been considered a paradise getaway for gay couples, but it's no longer as tolerant as it once was. Memories still linger from 1999, when a couple was taken into protective custody in Lamu to shield them from an angry mob of locals opposed to their plans for a gay wedding.

The closest Kenya has to a 'scene' is the tolerant Gypsy's bar (see p117) in Westlands, Nairobi, though as of September 2005 the organisation **Gay Kenya** (www.gaykenya.com) has introduced an official bi-monthly gay night, also in Westlands – call ☎ 020-4452691 for details.

The **Purple Roofs travel directory** (www.purple.roofs.com/africa/kenyata.html) lists a number of gay or gay-friendly tour companies in Kenya and around the world that may be able to help you plan your trip. For luxury all-inclusive packages, the travel agencies **Atlantis Events** (www.atlantisevents.com) and **David Tours** (www.davidtours.com) can arrange anything from balloon safaris to luxurious coastal hideaways, all

with a gay focus. For information, **Behind the Mask** (www.mask.org.za) is an excellent website covering gay issues and news from across Africa.

HOLIDAYS

Kenya's tribal groups have their own local festivals, but they're private affairs and you probably won't get to see them. Animal sacrifices and ritual circumcision are common events so this may not be a bad thing!

All government offices and banks close on public holidays, and most shops and businesses will either close or run according to their usual Sunday opening hours. Popular events such as Madaraka Day can cause a run on accommodation at the lower end of the budget scale, and transport may run less frequently or be more crowded than usual.

Muslim festivals are significant on the coast. Many eateries there close until after sundown during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which runs from 24 September 2006, 13 September 2007 and 2 September 2008. The Maulid Festival (see p357), marking the birth of the Prophet Mohammed, is also widely celebrated, especially on Lamu. This will take place on 12 April 2006, 20 March 2007 and 20 March 2008.

Public Holidays

- 1 January** New Year's Day
- March/April** Good Friday and Easter Monday
- 1 May** Labour Day
- 1 June** Madaraka Day
- 10 October** Moi Day
- 20 October** Kenyatta Day
- 12 December** Independence Day
- 25 December** Christmas Day
- 26 December** Boxing Day

School Holidays

Kenyan schools run on a three-term system much like the British education establishments on which they were originally modelled, though summer vacations tend to be shorter. Holidays usually fall in April (one month), August (one month) and December (five weeks). As few Kenyan families can afford to stay in tourist hotels these holidays mostly have little impact on visitors, but more people will travel during these periods and popular public areas like the coastal beaches will be that bit more crowded.

INSURANCE

Two words: get some! A travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a very sensible precaution. The policies handled by STA Travel and other student travel organisations are usually good value. Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options, but the higher ones are chiefly for countries such as the USA that have extremely high medical costs. Medical cover is the most vital element of any policy, but make sure you check the small print:

- Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can even include motorcycling, scuba diving, even trekking. If such activities are on your agenda you'll need a proper comprehensive policy, which may be more expensive. Using a locally acquired motorcycle licence may not be valid under your policy.
- You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals direct rather than you having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation.
- Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Be aware that reverse-charge calls are only possible to certain countries from Kenya (see p365).
- Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home. If you have to stretch out on public transport you will need two seats and somebody has to pay for them!
- If you are travelling in remote areas, check with your insurance company that you can contact the Flying Doctors Service (see below) or AAR Health Services (see opposite) direct in the event of a serious emergency without having to confirm it with your company at home first.

If you are travelling through Africa for some time or heading to the more remote corners of Kenya, it may be worth signing up with either the Flying Doctors Service or AAR Health Services. These two organisations can come and get you should you become ill in a *lugga* (dry river bed) west of North Horr or in another remote area.

The **Flying Doctors Service** (☎ 020-602495, emergency 020-315454; www.amref.org) is part of

the African Medical and Research Foundation (Amref) and operates a 24-hour air-ambulance service out of Nairobi's Wilson Airport. It will get you from wherever you are to the nearest decent hospital (often Nairobi). Tourist cover costs US\$25 for two months within 500km of Nairobi and US\$50 within 1000km.

The private **AAR Health Services** (Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-2715319, emergency 020-271737; www.aarhealth.com; Fourth Ngong Rd, Nairobi) is a comprehensive medical network that covers Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and offers a road and local service as well as emergency air evacuation to any suitable medical facility in East Africa. Tourist cover starts at US\$100.

INTERNET ACCESS

Email is firmly established in Kenya, although connection speeds fluctuate wildly, even in Nairobi. Most towns have at least one Internet café where you can surf freely and access Hotmail, Yahoo! and any other webmail accounts; instant messenger programmes such as Yahoo! and MSN are also very popular locally and are installed on many public machines. In Nairobi or Mombasa, you can pay as little as KSh1 per minute for access, but in rural areas and top-end hotels, the rate can be as high as KSh20 per minute.

With the increasing popularity of Internet cafés, the national Posta network has stepped in and virtually revolutionised the industry by offering Internet access at almost every main post office in the country. The real beauty of this is that every branch charges the same fixed rate of KSh1.16 per minute (KSh1 plus VAT). It's run on a pre-pay system – you pay KSh100 for a card with a PIN code, which you can then use to log in at any branch as often as you like until the money runs out. While the service can't often compete with the flashier private offices in big cities like Nairobi and Mombasa, it's well worth investigating if you're further afield.

If you're travelling with a notebook or hand-held computer, plenty of top-end hotels have ethernet connections or dataports in the rooms, and some have even embraced wi-fi. However, you should be aware that your modem may not work once you leave your home country – for more information, see www.teleadapt.com. In any case, unless

LEGAL AGE

- Age of majority: 18 years
- Voting age: 18 years
- Age of consent (heterosexual): 16 years
- Age of criminal responsibility: 8 years
- Drinking age: 18 years

you've got important work to do carrying a laptop around can be more trouble than it's worth in Kenya, and with street crime what it is we'd generally recommend leaving expensive bits of kit like this at home.

LEGAL MATTERS

All drugs except *miraa* (a leafy shoot with amphetamine-like effects) are illegal in Kenya. Marijuana (commonly known as *bhanga*) is widely available but highly illegal, and possession carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison. Dealers are common on the beaches north and south of Mombasa and frequently set up travellers for sting operations for real or phoney cops to extort money.

African prisons are unbelievably harsh places; don't take the risk. Note that *miraa* is illegal in Tanzania, so if you do develop a taste for the stuff in Kenya you should leave it behind when heading south.

Rape laws in Kenya currently only protect women, though if the new Sexual Offences Bill being proposed at the time of writing is passed sexual assaults on both men and women will be criminal offences.

Another bill in the pipeline at the time of writing is the Tobacco Control Bill, which if passed will ban smoking in public places throughout the country – Uganda and Tanzania have both introduced similar laws. The only exception is the burning of dry tobacco leaves to scare off elephants!

MAPS

Bookshops, especially the larger ones in Nairobi, are the best places to look for maps in Kenya. The *Tourist Map of Kenya* gives good detail, as does the *Kenya Route Map*; both cost around KSh250. Marco Polo's 1:1,000,000 *Shell Euro Karte Kenya* and Geocenter's *Kenya* (1:1,000,000) are useful overview maps that are widely available in Europe. The scale and clarity are very good,

but the location of some minor features are inaccurate. For those planning a longer trip in Southern and East Africa, Michelin's 1:4,000,000 map 955 (Africa Central and South) is very useful.

Macmillan publishes a series of maps of the wildlife parks and these are not bad value at around KSh250 each (three are available in Europe – *Amboseli, Masai Mara* and *Tsavo East & West*). Tourist Maps also publishes a national park series for roughly the same price. They might look a bit flimsy on detail, but they include the numbered junctions in the national parks.

The most detailed and thorough maps are published by the Survey of Kenya, but the majority are out of date and many are also out of print. The better bookshops in Nairobi usually have copies of the most important maps, including *Amboseli National Park* (SK 87), *Masai Mara Game Reserve* (SK 86), *Meru National Park* (SK 65), *Tsavo East National Park* (SK 82) and *Tsavo West National Park* (SK 78). It may be worth a visit to the **Kenya Institute of Surveying & Mapping** (☎ 020-8561486; <http://kism.icconnect.co.ke>; Thika Rd, Nairobi), but this can take all day and there's no guarantee it will have any more stock than the bookshops.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the Kenyan shilling (KSh), which is made up of 100 cents. Notes in circulation are KSh1000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 20, and there are also new coins of KSh40, 20, 10, five and one in circulation. Old coins are much bigger and heavier, and come in denominations of KSh5 (seven-sided) and KSh1. The old 50¢, 10¢ and 5¢ coins are now pretty rare, as most prices are whole-shilling amounts. Note that most public telephones accept only new coins. Locally, the shilling is commonly known as a 'bob', after the old English term for a one-shilling coin.

The shilling has been relatively stable over the last few years, maintaining fairly constant rates against a falling US dollar and a strong British pound. Both these currencies are easy to change throughout the country, as is the euro, which is rapidly replacing the dollar as the standard currency quoted for hotel prices on the coast. Cash is easy and quick to exchange at banks and forex bureaux but carries a higher risk of theft, while travellers cheques are replaceable but not as

widely accepted and often carry high commission charges. Carrying a combination of these and a Visa ATM card will ensure you're never stuck for cash.

See p354 for information on security, p15 for information on costs, and the Quick Reference section (inside front cover) for exchange rates.

ATMs

Virtually all banks in Kenya now have ATMs at most branches, but their usefulness to travellers varies widely. Barclays Bank has easily the most reliable machines for international withdrawals, with a large network of ATMs covering most major Kenyan towns. They support MasterCard, Visa, Plus and Cirrus international networks.

Standard Chartered and Kenya Commercial Bank ATMs also accept Visa but not the other major providers, and are more likely to decline transactions. Whichever bank you use, the international data link still goes down occasionally, so don't rely on being able to withdraw money whenever you need it.

Black Market

With deregulation, the black market has almost vanished and the handful of money-changers who still wander the streets offering 'good rates' are usually involved in scams of one kind or another. The exception is at land border crossings, where moneychangers are often the only option. Most offer reasonable rates, although you should be careful not to get short-changed or scammed during any transaction.

Cash

While most major currencies are accepted in Nairobi and Mombasa, once away from these two centres you'll run into problems with currencies other than US dollars, pounds sterling and euros. Away from the coast, you may even struggle to change euros. Play it safe and carry US dollars – it makes life much simpler.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are becoming increasingly popular, with old fraud-friendly, fully manual swipe machines slowly being replaced by electronic systems that dial up for every transaction. While there's less chance of someone making extra copies of chits this

way, the connections fail with tedious regularity. Visa and MasterCard are now widely accepted, but it would be prudent to stick to up-market hotels, restaurants and shopping centres to use them.

Be aware that credit-card companies will not post cards to Kenya, so you'll have to arrange a courier.

Moneychangers

The best places to change money are foreign exchange or 'forex' bureaux, which can be found everywhere and usually don't charge commission. The rates for the main bureaux in Nairobi are published in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. Watch out for differing small bill (US\$10) and large bill (US\$100) rates; the larger bills usually get the better rates.

Banks also change money, but they charge large commissions and there's a fee per travellers cheque, so you're better off carrying larger denominations. The rates for travellers cheques may be better than at the bureaux, and you'll have the added bonus of being able to put your money away in the secure setting of the bank foyer. American Express (AmEx) has offices in Mombasa and Nairobi, where you can buy and sell AmEx travellers cheques.

INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS

Postbank, a branch of the Kenyan Post Office, is the regional agent for Western Union, the global money-transfer company. Using its service is an easy way (if the phones are working) of receiving money in Kenya. Handily, the sender pays all the charges and there's a Postbank in most towns, often in the post office or close by. Senders should contact **Western Union** (USA ☎ 1800-3256000; Australia ☎ 1800-501500; New Zealand ☎ 0800-270000; UK ☎ 0800-833833; www.westernunion.com) to find out the location of their nearest agency.

Tipping

Tipping is not common practice among Kenyans, but there's no harm in rounding up the bill by a few shillings if you're pleased with the service in a cheap restaurant. In tourist-oriented businesses a service charge of 10% is often added to the bill along with the 16% VAT and 2% catering levy. Most tourist guides and all safari drivers and cooks will expect some kind of gratuity at the end of your tour or trip – see p62. As fares are

negotiated in advance, taxi drivers do not need to be tipped unless they provide you with exceptional service.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are most widely accepted if they're in US dollars, British pounds or euros. High commission charges are common, and bureaux that charge no commission will often give a rate substantially below the cash rate for cheques.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Photographing people remains a sensitive issue in Kenya. Some tribal groups request money for you to take their photo.

You should never get your camera out at border crossings or near government or army buildings; even bridges can sometimes be classed as sensitive areas.

Film & Equipment

You'll find Kodak and Fuji 100, 200 and 400 ASA (ISO) print and slide film widely available in Nairobi, but even 100 ISO slide film is hard to find in Mombasa. If you plan to use 64 or 800 ASA film, bring it from home. As an indication of price, 36-exposure slide film in Nairobi costs about KSh400; 36-exposure colour print film is cheaper at KSh250 to KSh350 but again, only 100, 200 and (less frequently) 400 ASA are available. Watch out for out-of-date batches.

Both VHS and Hi-8 video film is available in Nairobi and Mombasa, but it's relatively expensive. You may also be able to find memory cards and other accessories for digital and DV cameras, but again prices are high and quality is not guaranteed.

If you don't have the inclination or resources to buy expensive equipment but do know a bit about photography, it is possible to hire SLR cameras and lenses in Nairobi (see p100).

Film Processing

Shops and booths offering film processing are popping up in small towns and villages all over Kenya. In addition, there are plenty of one-hour film-processing labs in Nairobi, and at least one in all other major towns. They can handle any film speeds, but results can vary. Depending on the print size, processing and printing costs about KSh480 to KSh650 for a 36-exposure film.

E6 slide processing can only be done in Nairobi and costs around KSh450 for a 36-exposure film.

Taking Pictures

As the natural light in Kenya can be extremely strong, morning and evening are the best times to take photos. A plain UV filter can also be a good idea to take the harshness out of daylight pictures.

For serious wildlife photography an SLR camera that can take long focal length lenses is necessary. Zoom lenses are best for wildlife photography as it's easier to frame your shot for the best composition. This is especially important because the animals are almost constantly on the move. The 70mm to 210mm zoom lenses are popular, and 200mm is really the absolute minimum power you'll need to get good close-up shots. The only problem with zoom lenses is that they absorb about 1.5 f-stops of light, which is where 200 and 400 ASA film starts to become useful.

Telephoto (fixed focal length) lenses give better results than zoom lenses, but you're limited by having to carry a separate lens for every focal length. A 400mm or 500mm lens brings the action right up close, but again you need fast film to make the most of it. Another option is to carry a 2x teleconverter, a small adaptor that doubles the focal length of your lens.

When using long lenses you'll find that a tripod can be extremely useful, and with any lens greater than about 300mm it's a necessity. Within the confined space of the hatch of a safari minibus, you may be better off with a folding miniature tripod, which you can then rest on the roof. Remember to ask your driver to switch off the engine to avoid vibrations affecting your photo. If you've got a large lens but no tripod, lying your camera on a small beanbag or cushion can help reduce camera shake.

A decent bag is essential to protect your gear from the elements and the rough roads – safari dust gets everywhere, particularly in parks like Samburu and Tsavo. It's also vital to make sure that your travel insurance policy covers your camera gear should it get stolen.

For more pointers on taking pictures in Africa and elsewhere, look out for Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography* book.

POST

The Kenyan postal system is run by the government Postal Corporation of Kenya, now rebranded as the dynamic-sounding **Posta** (www.posta.co.ke). Letters sent from Kenya rarely go astray but can take up to two weeks to reach Australia or the USA. Incoming letters to Kenya take anywhere from four days to a week to reach the poste-restante service in Nairobi.

Postal Rates

The airmail rates (in KSh) for items posted from Kenya are:

Item	East Africa	Europe	USA & Australia
letter	55	75	95
small postcard	30	40	55
large postcard	55	75	95
aerogram	35	45	45

Note that there are different prices for large and small postcards – if in doubt, go with the large postcard price.

Parcels

If sent by surface mail, parcels take three to six months to reach Europe, while airmail parcels take around a week. As a rough guide, a 1kg parcel sent by air/surface mail would cost KSh1160/940 to East Africa, KSh1270/1030 to Europe and KSh1330/1070 to the rest of the world.

Most things arrive eventually, although there is still a problem with theft within the system. Curios, clothes and textiles will be OK, but if your parcel contains anything of obvious value, send it by courier. Posta has its own courier service, EMS, which is considerably cheaper than the big international courier companies. The best place to send parcels from is the main post office in Nairobi (see p100).

Receiving Mail

Letters can be sent care of poste restante in any town. Make sure your correspondents write your name in block capitals and also underline the surname.

Some travellers use the **American Express Clients Mail Service** (Nairobi Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-222906; Express Kenya Ltd, PO Box 40433, Hilton Hotel, Mama Ngina St; Mombasa ☎ 041-315405; Nairobi Express

Kenya Ltd, PO Box 90631, Nkrumah Rd) and this can be a useful, and more reliable, alternative. You'll need to have an AmEx card or be using its travellers cheques to avail yourself of this service.

SENIOR TRAVELLERS

Although there are no tour companies set up specifically for senior travellers, the more expensive tours cater well to seniors' requests and requirements. Before you book, ask the operator what they can do to help make your trip possible and comfortable. The luxury-tour and safari business is well used to older travellers, and wildlife drives and other safari activities are great for older people. One company with a good reputation for catering to seniors is **Eastern & Southern Safaris** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-242828; www.essafari.co.ke; Finance House, Loita St, PO Box 43332, Nairobi).

You may be able to find other senior-friendly companies on the website of **Wired Seniors** (www.wiredseniors.com), which has travel links from around the world. It's also worth contacting **Holiday Care** (☎ 0845-1249971; www.holidaycare.org.uk), a UK organisation providing advice for travellers of all ages with mobility or health problems.

SHOPPING

Kenya is an excellent place for souvenirs, although much of the cheap stuff is mass-produced for the tourist trade. Look carefully at what's available before parting with your money. It is illegal to export some wildlife products (see p353).

Nairobi and Mombasa are the main souvenir centres, but many of the items come from other regions, so it's often possible to pick them up where they are made. Many top-end hotels have their own stalls or stores and there are dozens of souvenir shops at the airport, but prices are extremely high compared with the rest of the country, and it's better (and more fun) to spend some time shopping around.

It's certainly possible to buy something that will look good in your living room without spending a fortune, but, these days, something of genuine quality and artistry is going to cost real money. This particularly applies to *makonde* carvings, jewellery and paintings. In some cases, you can be talking about thousands of US dollars for a single piece.

Posting things of small value home is usually straightforward and secure (for details, see opposite).

Bargaining

Haggling is a way of life in Kenya, and prices for everything from taxi fares to hotel rooms may be negotiable. While quibbling over the price of a few bananas is probably going too far, souvenir shopping is one area where you should hold out for the best price. Do plenty of prior research, so you have a clear idea of what an item should cost and how much you're willing to pay before you set foot in the shop you want to buy from. Looking in the more expensive fixed-price outlets is a good way of checking what the real quality items should look like.

When it comes to agreeing on a price, never agree to the first amount offered, but try not to pitch your own first offer too low – this will just make you look clueless about the item's real value and force you to come up in larger increments than they come down. Once you've reached your desired price, however, stick to your guns and don't go over it unless they really don't seem to be budging. Remember, they will never sell for a loss, and you can always walk away rather than overpay. Above all, keep it light: Kenyans bargaining among themselves may look like they're arguing, but as a visitor it's much better to stay friendly, avoid antagonism and feel good about the process whatever the outcome.

Local people are occasionally willing to swap their handicrafts for Western clothing, shoes and the like, but it's important to remember that most Kenyans need your money more than an old T-shirt – paying a fair price can make a real difference to the lives of villagers whose only income comes from selling goods to tourists. Keep this in mind when arguing over a few cents.

Baskets

Kiondos (sisal baskets) are an extremely popular Kenyan souvenir. They come in a variety of sizes, colours and configurations with many different straps and clasps. Expect to pay around US\$2 for a basic basket, and up to US\$10 for a large one with leather trim. Some of the finer baskets have baobab bark woven into them and this bumps up the price considerably. Reed baskets, widely used as shopping bags, cost less than KSh50.

Fabrics & Batik

Kangas and *kikois* are the local sarongs and serve many purposes. *Kangas* are colourful prints on thin cotton that are sold in pairs, one to wrap around your waist and one to carry a baby on your back. Each bears a Swahili proverb. Biashara St in Mombasa is the *kanga* centre in Kenya, and you'll pay upwards of KSh350 for a pair, depending on quality. *Kikois*, traditionally worn by men, are made with a thicker, striped cotton and are simpler and more colourful. They are originally from Lamu and this is still the best place to buy them; prices start at around KSh350 each, more for the thicker Somali fabrics.

Batik cloth is another good buy and there's a tremendous range, but the better prints are not cheap. The tradition was imported from elsewhere. You can expect to pay KSh500 and upwards for batiks on cotton, and thousands of shillings for batiks on silk.

Jewellery

Most jewellery on sale in Kenya is of tribal origin, although very little is the genuine article. The colourful Maasai beaded jewellery is the most striking and the most popular, and is very distinctive. Necklaces, bangles and wristlets are widely available and bead-work is used on all sorts of knick-knacks, from hair-slides to wallets. Prices are high, but there's lots of work involved in making them. None of the 'elephant hair' bracelets sold by hawkers in Nairobi are the real thing – most are simply plastic wire or reed grass covered in boot polish.

Soapstone

Easily carved soapstone is used to make popular chess sets, ashtrays and even abstract organic-looking sculptures. Kisumu on Lake Victoria is the best place to buy, although soapstone souvenirs are sold and produced across the country, most notably in Kisii. The only problem is that soapstone is quite fragile and heavy to carry around.

Tribal Souvenirs

Traditional tribal objects are very popular. Spears are particularly sought-after and come apart into several sections, making them easy to transport. Like the painted leather shields, most are mass-produced for the tourist market. Turkana wrist knives

and Maasai knives forged from car shock absorbers are also high-kudos souvenirs.

Decorated Maasai calabashes, traditionally used to store *mursik*, a type of drink (see p93), are eye-catching but tend to pong a bit. All sorts of masks are available, although few are used in rituals today. The three-legged African stool is another very popular souvenir, and *shukas* (Maasai blankets) and shoes made from old car tyres are cheap, unusual souvenirs.

Woodcarvings

These are easily the most popular Kenyan souvenir; a painted wooden giraffe is an instant marker of a trip to East Africa. Much of the stuff on offer is of dubious taste, but there is some very fine work available. The most famous woodcarvings found here are the *makonde*-style effigies (made by the Akamba people from around the Tanzanian border), which are traditionally carved from ebony, a very black, heavy wood. They often feature wildlife, towers of thin figures and slender Maasai figurines. However, be aware that ebony is a threatened wood (see p57).

If possible, buy from one of the many nonprofit handicraft cooperatives around the country rather than souvenir shops; these people need all the help they can get. Heavy bargaining is necessary if you buy from market stalls or tourist shops. You can pay anything from KSh200 up to hundreds of US dollars for a large and intricate piece.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

The issues facing solo travellers in Kenya are essentially the same as anywhere else in the world. The biggest drawbacks are not having anyone to watch your back or your bags on the road, and the price of safaris and organised activities, which generally means you have to join a group to make any kind of trip affordable. Advantages include freedom of movement (just try flagging down a matatu when there's eight of you) and a whole different level of contact with local people.

On the whole men will find travelling alone easier than women, as the level of day-to-day harassment is generally less for males, especially on the coast. However, lone female travellers are sometimes 'adopted' by local women in a way that seldom happens to men.

TELEPHONE

The Kenyan fixed-line phone system, run by **Telkom Kenya** (www.telkom.co.ke), is more or less functional, but has been overtaken by the massive popularity of prepaid mobile phones – there are now 2.1 million mobile subscribers in the country, compared with just 127,000 in 2000!

International call rates from Kenya have come down recently, but are still relatively expensive, charged at a flat rate of US90¢ per minute in peak times and US64¢ per minute off-peak to any destination. Operator-assisted calls are charged at the standard peak rate but are subject to a three-minute minimum. You can always dial direct using a phone card. All phones should be able to receive incoming calls (the number is usually scrawled in the booth somewhere).

Calls made through a hotel operator from your room will cost an extra 25% to 50% so check before making a call.

Reverse-charge (collect) calls are possible, but only to countries that have set up free direct-dial numbers allowing you to reach the international operator in the country you are calling. Currently these countries include: the **UK** (☎ 0800-220441), the **USA** (☎ 0800-111,0800-1112), **Canada** (☎ 0800-220114,0800-220115), **New Zealand** (☎ 0800-220641) and **Switzerland** (☎ 0800-220411).

The minimum charge for a local call from a payphone is KSh5 for 97 seconds, while long-distance rates vary depending on the distance. When making a local call from a public phone, make sure you put a coin into the slot first. Calls to Tanzania and Uganda are priced as long-distance calls, not international.

For the international dialling code, see the inside front cover of this book.

Mobile Phones

An estimated 80% of all calls here are now made on mobile phones, and coverage is good in all but the furthest rural areas. Kenya uses the GSM 900 system, which is compatible with Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 system. If you have a GSM phone, check with your service provider about using it in Kenya, and beware of high roaming charges. Remember that you will generally be charged for receiving calls abroad as well as for making them.

Alternatively, if your phone isn't locked into a network, you can pick up a prepaid starter pack from one of the Kenyan mobile-phone companies – the main players are **Safaricom** (www.safaricom.co.ke) and **CelTel** (www.kel.tel.com). A SIM card costs about KSh100, and you can then buy top-up 'scratchcards' from shops and booths across the country. Cards come in denominations of KSh100 to KSh2000; an international SMS costs around KSh10, and voice charges vary according to tariff, time and destination of call.

You can easily buy a handset anywhere in Kenya, generally unlocked and with SIM card. Prices start around KSh2500 for a very basic model.

Phone cards

With the new Telkom Kenya phone cards, any phone can now be used for prepaid calls – you just have to dial the **access number** (☎ 0844) and enter in the number and pass-code on the card. There are booths selling the cards all over the country. Cards come in the following denominations of KSh200, KSh500, KSh1000 and KSh2000, and call charges are slightly more expensive than for standard lines (peak/off peak US\$1/70¢).

TIME

Time in Kenya is GMT/UTC plus three hours year-round. You should also be aware of the concept of 'Swahili time', which perversely is six hours out of kilter with the rest of the world. Noon and midnight are 6 o'clock (*saa sitta*) Swahili time, and 7am and 7pm are 1 o'clock (*saa moja*). Just add or subtract six hours from whatever time you are told; Swahili doesn't distinguish between am and pm. You don't come across this often unless you speak Swahili, but you still need to be prepared for it.

TOILETS

These vary from pits (quite literally) to full-flush, luxury conveniences that can spring up in the most unlikely places. Nearly all hotels sport flushable sit-down toilets, but seats are a rare commodity – either they're a prized souvenir for trophy hunters or there's a vast stockpile of lost lids somewhere... Public toilets in towns are almost equally rare, but there are a few less-than-emetic pay conveniences in Nairobi if you've only got a penny to spend.

In the more up-market bush camps you'll be confronted with a long drop covered with some sort of seating arrangement. The best of these is in Tusk Camp high in the Aberdare National Park – you'll have a view across the forest to Mt Kenya. Things are less pleasant when camping in the wildlife parks. Squatting on crumbling concrete is common. When trekking it's good practice to take soiled toilet paper out of the park with you (consider carrying sealable bags for this purpose).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Local Tourist Offices

Considering the extent to which the country relies on tourism, it's incredible to think that, at the time of writing, there was still no tourist office in Nairobi. There are a handful of information offices elsewhere in the country, ranging from helpful private concerns to underfunded government offices; most can at least provide basic maps of the town and brochures on local businesses and attractions.

Diani Beach (Map p171; ☎ 040-3202234; Barclays Centre)

Lamu (Map p214; ☎ 042-633449; off Kenyatta Rd)

Malindi (Map p206; ☎ 042-20689; Malindi Centre, Lamu Rd)

Mombasa (Map p155; ☎ 041-225428; mcta@ikenya.com; Moi Ave)

Tourist Offices Abroad

The Ministry of Tourism maintains a number of overseas offices. Most only provide information by telephone, post or email.

Canada (☎ 905-8913909; www.kcoacanada.org; 1599 Hurontario St, Suite 100, Mississauga, Ontario, L5G 4S1)

Germany (☎ 089-23662194; think@magnum.de; c/o The Magnum Group, Herzogspitalstrade 5, D-80331 Munich)

Italy (☎ 02-48102361; kenya@adams.it; c/o Adam & Partner Italia, Via Salaino 12, 20144 Milano)

Netherlands (☎ 020-4212668; kenia@travelmc.com; Leliegracht 20, 1015 DG Amsterdam)

Spain (☎ 93-2920655; kenya@ketal.com; c/o Tuset 10, 304a, 08006 Barcelona)

UK (☎ 020-78367738; kenya@iuk.co.uk; 69 Monmouth St, London WC2H 9JW)

USA (☎ 1-866-44-53692; infousa@magicalkenya.com; Carlson Destination Marketing Services, PO Box 59159 Minneapolis, MN 55459-8257)

VISAS

Visas are now required by almost all visitors to Kenya, including Europeans, Australians,

New Zealanders, Americans and Canadians, although citizens from a few smaller Commonwealth countries are exempt. Visas are valid for three months from the date of entry and can be obtained on arrival at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi. The visa fee is UK£35 or US\$50 for a single-entry visa, and UK£70 or US\$100 for multiple entries. If you have any other currencies, you'll have to change them into shillings and then back into dollars. Tourist visas can be extended for a further three-month period – see below – but seven-day transit visas (US\$20) cannot.

It's also possible to get visas from Kenyan diplomatic missions overseas, but you should apply well in advance, especially if you're doing it by mail. Visas are usually valid for entry within three months of the date of issue. Applications for Kenyan visas are simple and straightforward in Tanzania and Uganda, and payment is accepted in local currency. Visas can also be issued on arrival at the land borders with Uganda and Tanzania.

Under the East African partnership system, visiting Tanzania or Uganda and returning to Kenya does not invalidate a single-entry Kenyan visa, so there's no need to get a multiple-entry visa unless you plan to go further afield. The same applies to single-entry Tanzanian and Ugandan visas, though you do still need a separate visa for each country you plan to visit. Always check the latest entry requirements with embassies before travel.

It's always best to smarten up a bit if you're arriving by air; requests for evidence of 'sufficient funds' are usually linked to snap judgments about your appearance. If it's fairly obvious that you aren't intending to stay and work, you'll generally be given the benefit of the doubt.

For information on visas for longer-term stays, see p353 and opposite in this chapter.

Visa Extensions

Visas can be renewed at immigration offices during normal office hours, and extensions are usually issued on a same-day basis. Staff at the immigration offices are generally friendly and helpful, but the process takes a while. You'll need two passport photos and KSh2200 for a three-month extension. You also need to fill out a form registering as an alien if you're going to be staying more than

90 days. Immigration offices are only open Monday to Friday; note that the smaller offices may sometimes refer travellers back to Nairobi or Mombasa for visa extensions.

Local immigration offices include the following:

Kisumu (Map p292; Reinsurance Plaza, cnr Jomo Kenyatta Hwy & Oginga Odinga Rd)

Lamu (Map p214; ☎ 042-633032; off Kenyatta Rd)

Malindi (Map p206; ☎ 042-30876; Mama Ngina Rd)

Mombasa (Map p155; ☎ 041-311745; Uhuru ni Kari Bldg, Mama Ngina Dr)

Nairobi (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-222022; Nyayo House, cnr Kenyatta Ave & Uhuru Hwy)

Visas for Onward Travel

Since Nairobi is a common gateway city to East Africa and the city centre is easy to get around, many travellers spend some time here picking up visas for other countries that they intend to visit. If you are going to do this you need to plan ahead of time and call the embassy to confirm the hours that visa applications are received (these change frequently in Nairobi). Most embassies will want you to pay visa fees in US dollars (see p356 for contact details).

Just because a country has an embassy or consulate here, it doesn't necessarily mean you can get that country's visa. The borders with Somalia and Sudan are both closed, so you'll have to go to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia if you want a Sudanese visa, and Somali visas are unlikely to be available for the foreseeable future.

For Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, three-month visas are readily available in Nairobi and cost US\$50 for most nationalities. Two passport photos are required for applications and visas can usually be issued the same day.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Within Kenyan society, women are poorly represented in positions of power, and the few high-profile women in politics run the same risks of violence as their male counterparts. However, in their day-to-day lives, Kenyans are generally respectful towards women, although white women in bars will attract a lot of interest from would-be suitors. Most are just having a go and will give up if you tell them you aren't interested. The only place you are likely to have problems is at the beach resorts on the coast, where women

may be approached by male prostitutes as well as local romeos. It's always best to cover your legs and shoulders when away from the beach so as not to offend local sensibilities.

With the upsurge in crime in Nairobi and along the coast, women should avoid walking around at night. The ugly fact is that while men are likely just to be robbed without violence, rape is a real risk for women. Lone night walks along the beach or through quiet city streets are a recipe for disaster, and criminals usually work in gangs, so take a cab, even if you're in a group.

Regrettably, black women in the company of white men are often assumed to be prostitutes, and can face all kinds of discrimination from hotels and security guards as well as approaches from Kenyan hustlers offering to help rip off the white 'customer'. Again, the worst of this can be avoided by taking taxis between hotels and restaurants etc.

WORK

It's difficult, although by no means impossible, for foreigners to find jobs. The most likely areas in which employment might be found are in the safari business, teaching, advertising and journalism. Except for teaching, it's unlikely you'll see jobs advertised, and the only way you'll find out about them is to spend a lot of time with resident expats. As in most countries, the rule is that if an African can be found to do the job, there's no need to hire a foreigner.

The most fruitful area in which to look for work, assuming that you have the relevant skills, is the 'disaster industry'. Nairobi is awash with UN and other aid agencies servicing the famines in Somalia and southern Sudan and the refugee camps along the Kenyan border with those countries. Keep in mind that the work is tough and often dangerous, and pay is usually very low.

Work permits and resident visas are not easy to arrange. A prospective employer may be able to sort the necessary paperwork for you, but otherwise you'll find yourself spending a lot of time and money at the **Immigration office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-222022; Nyayo House, cnr Kenyatta Ave & Uhuru Hwy, Nairobi) in Nairobi.

Voluntary Conservation & Development Work

Taita Discovery Centre (☎ 020-331191; www.savannahcamps.com) in Nairobi is a conservation-based

offshoot of Savannah Camps & Lodges. This purpose-built conservation research centre covers 68,000 hectares of the Taita and Rukinga ranches near Tsavo West National Park and forms a vital migration corridor for elephants and other animals between Tsavo and Mt Kilimanjaro.

Courses on a huge range of conservation topics are run here along with hands-on projects in conservation and the local community. However, doing good work doesn't come cheap. The cost is US\$207 per week for a minimum of four weeks, and you'll have to make your own arrangements for getting to the sanctuary, or take a package from Nairobi or Mombasa that includes flying doctor membership (US\$148 return).

Another good organisation is **Kenya Youth Voluntary Development Projects** (☎ 020-225379; kvdakenya@yahoo.com; Gilfillan House, Kenyatta Ave, PO Box 48902, Nairobi). A variety of three- to four-week projects are available, including road building, health education and clinic construction. There's a US\$200 registration fee and camping accommodation is provided.

Inter-Community Development Involvement (ICODEI; ☎ 0337-30017; www.volunteerkenya.org; Reverend Reuben Lubanga, PO Box 459, Bungoma), run in conjunction with the University of Indiana in the USA, offers a number of longer community projects focusing on health issues such as AIDS awareness, agriculture and conservation. The cost is US\$1300 for the first month and US\$120 per extra week. This includes a three-day Masai Mara safari.

The Colobus Trust (p173), at Diani Beach, and the Elsamere Conservation Centre (p234), on Lake Naivasha, also take paying volunteers.

Foreign organisations can also assist with volunteer work. Reliable bodies include the following:

Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (www.unesco.org/ccivs)

Global Volunteers (www.globalvolunteers.org)

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO; ☎ 020-8780 2266; www.vso.org.uk; 317 Putney Bridge Rd, London SW15 2PN) Placements for professionals.

Volunteer Work Information Service (www.workingabroad.com)

Transport

CONTENTS

Getting There & Away	369
Entering the Country	369
Air	369
Land	373
Sea & Lake	375
Tours	375
Getting Around	376
Air	376
Bicycle	376
Boat	377
Bus	377
Car & Motorcycle	378
Hitching	382
Local Transport	382
Safaris	384
Train	384

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Unless you are travelling overland from Southern Africa or Egypt, flying is by far the most convenient way to get to Kenya. Nairobi is a major African hub and flights between Kenya and the rest of Africa are common and relatively cheap. It's important to note that flight availability and prices are highly seasonal. Conveniently for Europeans, the cheapest fares usually coincide with the European summer holidays, from June to September. An economy return ticket from London can be about UK£400, but during December and January prices soar and availability plummets.

It's also worth checking out cheap charter flights to Mombasa from Europe, although these will probably be part of a package deal to a hotel resort on the coast. Prices are often absurdly cheap and there's no obligation to stay at the resort you're booked into.

A few adventurous and resourceful souls with their own vehicles still travel overland to Kenya from Europe, but most routes pass through several war zones and should only be considered after some serious planning and preparation.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering Kenya is generally pleasingly straightforward, particularly at the international airports, which are no different from most Western terminals. Visas are typically available on arrival for most nationalities (passport photos required), but you should contact your nearest Kenyan diplomatic office to get the most up-to-date information. Exchange offices or moneychangers are always present and visa fees can be paid in local currency or US dollars.

Passport

There are no restrictions on which nationalities can enter Kenya. Citizens of Tanzania, Uganda, Scandinavia, the Republic of Ireland, Rwanda, Sudan and certain Commonwealth countries did not require visas at time of writing – see p366 and check the latest situation before travelling.

AIR Airports & Airlines

Most international flights to and from Nairobi are handled by **Jomo Kenyatta International Airport** (NBO; ☎ 020-825400; www.kenyaairports.co.ke), 15km southeast of the city. By African standards it's a pretty well-organised place, with two international terminals, a smaller domestic terminal and an incredible number of shops offering duty free and expensive souvenirs, snacks and Internet access. You can walk easily between the terminals.

Some flights between Nairobi and Kilimanjaro International Airport or Mwanza in Tanzania, as well as many domestic flights,

use **Wilson Airport** (WIL; ☎ 020-603260), which is about 6km south of the city centre on Langata Rd. The other arrival point in the country is **Moi International Airport** (MBA; ☎ 041-433211) in Mombasa, 9km west of the centre, but apart from flights to Zanzibar this is mainly used by charter airlines and domestic flights.

Kenya Airways is the main national carrier and has a generally good safety record, with just one fatal incident since 1977.

The following are airlines flying to and from Kenya, with offices in Nairobi except where otherwise indicated:

African Express Airways (3P; ☎ 020-824333; hub Wilson Airport, Nairobi)

Air India (AI; Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-340925; www.airindia.com; hub Mumbai)

Air Madagascar (MD; ☎ 020-225286; www.airmada.gascar.mg; hub Antananarivo)

Air Malawi (QM; ☎ 020-240965; www.airmalawi.net; hub Lilongwe)

Air Mauritius (MK; ☎ 020-229166; www.airmauritiu.com; hub Mauritius)

Air Zimbabwe (UM; ☎ 020-339522; www.airzim.co.zw; hub Harare)

Airkenya (QP; ☎ 020-605745; www.airkenya.com; hub Wilson Airport, Nairobi) Kilimanjaro only.

British Airways (BA; Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-244430; www.british-airways.com; hub Heathrow Airport, London)

Daallo Airlines (D3; ☎ 020-317318; www.daallo.com; hub Hargeisa)

Egypt Air (MS; Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-226821; www.egyptair.com.eg; hub Cairo)

Emirates (EK; Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-211187; www.emirates.com; hub Dubai)

Ethiopian Airlines (ET; Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-330837; www.ethiopianairlines.com; hub Addis Ababa)

Gulf Air (GF; ☎ 020-241123; www.gulfairco.com; hub Abu Dhabi)

Jetlink Express (JO; ☎ 020-244285; www.jetlink.co.ke; hub Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi)

Kenya Airways (KQ; Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-3274100; www.kenya-airways.com; hub Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi)

KLM (KL; Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-32074100; www.klm.com; hub Amsterdam)

Oman Air (WY; Map p158; ☎ 041-221444; www.oman-air.com; hub Muscat)

Precision Air (PW; ☎ 020-602561; www.precisionairt.com; hub Dar es Salaam)

Qatar Airways (QR; www.qatarairways.com; hub Doha)

Rwandair (WB; ☎ 0733-740703; www.rwandair.com; hub Kigali)

Safarilink Aviation (☎ 020-600777; www.safarilink.co.ke; hub Wilson Airport, Nairobi) Kilimanjaro only.

SN Brussels Airlines (SN; ☎ 020-4443070; www.flysn.com; hub Brussels)

South African Airways (SA; ☎ 020-229663; www.saakkenya.com; hub Johannesburg)

Swiss International Airlines (SR; ☎ 020-3744045; www.swiss.com; hub Zurich)

Tickets

If you enter Nairobi with no onward or return ticket you may run foul of immigration and be forced to buy one on the spot – an expensive exercise. Note that you can't get a standby flight to Kenya unless you're an airline employee.

The airport departure tax for international flights is included in the cost of your plane ticket.

INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

Discount round-the-world (RTW) tickets are a tempting option if you want to include Kenya on a longer journey, but the most common African stop is Johannesburg – if you're coming from Europe any ticket that includes Nairobi is usually much more expensive. If you're coming from Australia or New Zealand the difference may not be so great, but it's still often cheaper to buy an RTW or Australia–Europe ticket, stop over in Johannesburg and then buy a ticket on to Nairobi from there. Either way you may have to go through several travel agents before you find someone who can put a good deal together.

The following are online agents for RTW tickets:

- www.airtreks.com
- www.bootsnall.com
- www.roundtheworldflights.com
- www.travelbag.com
- www.thetravelleruk.com

Africa

Nairobi is a major African hub and there are good connections to most regions of Africa – Kenya Airways and the relevant national airlines serve everywhere from Abidjan to Yaoundé at least a few times a week, with the most frequent routes serving East and West Africa.

TANZANIA & UGANDA

Kenya Airways and Precision Air offer frequent flights from Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar to Nairobi and Mombasa, and have been

so successful that Air Tanzania suspended its competing flights on the Dar–Nairobi route in 2005. If you book in advance it can be cheaper to fly to Mombasa with Precision Air then connect with a domestic KA flight to Nairobi, rather than taking a direct flight to the capital.

Several airlines fly to Nairobi daily from the Kilimanjaro International Airport near Moshi, including Airkenya, Ethiopian Airlines and Precision Air, which also has flights from Mwanza on Lake Victoria.

Kenya Airways is also the principal carrier flying between Nairobi and Entebbe (34km south of Kampala).

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Kenya Airways has regular flights from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The only direct flights between Kenya and South Africa come from Johannesburg; Kenya Airways and South African Airways (SAA) both have daily flights on this route.

Rennies Travel (www.renniestravel.com) and **STA Travel** (www.statravel.co.za) have offices throughout Southern Africa. Check their websites for branch locations.

Flight Centres (☎ 021-3851530; www.africatavelco.com) in Cape Town and **Worldwide Adventure Travel** (☎ 013-40172; vfa@africatavelco.com) in Victoria Falls are partners of Flight Centres in Nairobi, and have years of experience in the budget travel business.

Asia

Kenya Airways serves Hong Kong, Bangkok and Shanghai a few times a week.

STA Travel (Bangkok ☎ 0 2236 0262; www.statravel.co.th; Hong Kong ☎ 2736 1618; www.statravel.com.hk; Japan ☎ 03-5391 2922; www.statravel.co.jp; Singapore ☎ 6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg) proliferates in Asia. In Hong Kong you can also try **Four Seas Tours** (☎ 2200 7760; www.fourseastravel.com/english).

Australia & New Zealand

Getting to Kenya from Australia or New Zealand is harder than you might expect, as none of the trans-Asian airlines fly to Nairobi (and that includes Qantas and Air New Zealand). The most direct route from Australia to Kenya is via Mauritius with Air Mauritius, but the cheapest tickets are usually via the Persian Gulf with Gulf Airlines or Emirates, or with SAA via Johannesburg.

Return fares typically cost A\$2250 to A\$2600 from Sydney or Melbourne, around A\$2300 from Perth and NZ\$2750 to NZ\$3000 from Auckland.

STA Travel (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au) and **Flight Centre** (☎ 133133; www.flightcentre.com.au) both have offices throughout Australia. For online bookings, try www.travel.com.au. Cheap air fares are also advertised in the travel sections of weekend newspapers, such as the *Age* in Melbourne and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

In New Zealand, the *New Zealand Herald* has a good travel section with plenty of advertised fares. Both **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0508 782872; www.statravel.co.nz) have branches throughout the country. For online bookings www.travel.co.nz is recommended.

Continental Europe

Kenya Airways' link with KLM means that you can fly to Nairobi via Amsterdam from regional airports across Europe. From Amsterdam, as from most European cities, return fares range from €600 to €800, depending on the season.

SN Brussels Airlines also has regular connections to Nairobi with cheap return fares available. Because of the Swiss Airlines connection, Switzerland is another good place to buy discount air tickets to Nairobi. The new Jetlink Express company runs regular direct flights to Italy.

STA Travel (Austria www.oekista.at; Denmark www.statravel.dk; Finland www.statravel.fi; Germany www.statravel.de; Norway www.statravel.no; Sweden www.statravel.se), the international student and young person's travel giant, has branches in many European nations. There are also many **STA-affiliated travel agencies** (www.statravelgroup.com) across Europe. Visit the website to find an STA partner close to you.

Other recommended travel agencies across Europe include the following:

Belgium

Acotra Student Travel Agency (☎ 02 51 286 07)
WATS Reizen (☎ 03 22 616 26)

France

AnyWay (☎ 0892 893892; www.anyway.fr)
Lastminute (☎ 0892 705000; www.lastminute.fr)
Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 0825 000747; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

OTU Voyages (www.otu.fr) Specializes in student and youth travellers.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com)

Germany

Expedia (www.expedia.de)

Just Travel (☎ 089-747 33 30; www.justtravel.de)

Lastminute (☎ 01805 284 366; www.lastminute.de)

Italy

CTS Viaggi (☎ 064 62 04 31; www.cts.it)

Netherlands

Airfair (☎ 020-620 51 21; www.airfair.nl)

NBBS Reizen (☎ 020-624 09 89)

Spain

Barcelo Viajes (☎ 902 11 62 26; www.barceloviajes.com)

Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 902 17 09 79; www.nouvelles-frontieres.es)

Switzerland

SSR Voyages (☎ 01 297 11 11; www.ssr.ch)

Indian Subcontinent

Flights between East Africa and Mumbai (Bombay) are common, due to the large Indian population in East Africa; Kenya Airways and Air India are the major carriers. Typical fares to Nairobi are about US\$350.

Although most of India's discount travel agents are in Delhi, there are also some reliable agents in Mumbai. **STIC Travels** (www.stictravel.com; Delhi ☎ 11-2335 7468; Mumbai ☎ 22-2218 1431) has offices in dozens of Indian cities. Another agency is **Transway International** (www.transwayinternational.com).

Middle East

Coming from the Middle East, Kenya Airways and Egypt Airways serve the Cairo–Nairobi route several times a week. Kenya Airways also flies regularly to Istanbul and Dubai. Emirates and Gulf Air both have numerous flights to Nairobi from airports throughout the Middle East. Oman Air has twice-weekly flights from Dubai and Muscat to Mombasa, and African Air Express flies an unusual route between Nairobi and Dubai via Eldoret and Mogadishu.

The following are recommended agencies:

Al-Rais Travels (www.alrais.com) In Dubai.

Egypt Panorama Tours (☎ 02-359 0200; www.eptours.com) In Cairo.

Israel Student Travel Association (ISTA; ☎ 02-625 7257) In Jerusalem.

Orion-Tour (www.oriontour.com) In Istanbul.

North America

All flights from North America to Nairobi go via Europe. Through tickets are easy to get from travel agents, but it's often cheaper to buy a discounted ticket to London, Amsterdam or Brussels and then connect to Kenya from there.

From the USA, North West Airlines is affiliated with KLM and Kenya Airways and offers speedy connections through London or Amsterdam to East Africa. Return tickets to Nairobi from New York can cost as little as US\$1300 in the low season; from Los Angeles, a return ticket costs about US\$1500. Fares from Canada are about 10% more; KLM and British Airways offer flights from Toronto to Nairobi.

Discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators. San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and some other big cities. **Travel Cuts** (☎ 800-667-2887; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency.

The following agencies are recommended for online bookings:

- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.expedia.ca (Canada)
- www.expedia.com
- www.itn.net
- www.lowestfare.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.sta.com
- www.travelocity.ca (Canada)
- www.travelocity.com

UK & Ireland

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out* and the *Evening Standard*, and in the free *TNT* magazine (www.tntmagazine.com).

Charter flights can work out as a cheaper alternative to scheduled flights and the package may also include accommodation, which you aren't obliged to use if you want to travel around the country. **Somak** (☎ 020-8903 8526; www.somak.co.uk) is probably your best bet for good deals.

Recommended travel agencies include the following:

Bridge the World (☎ 0870 444 7474; www.b-t-w.co.uk)

Flight Centre (☎ 0870 890 8099; flightcentre.co.uk)

Flightbookers (☎ 0870 814 4001; www.ebookers.com)

North-South Travel (☎ 01245-608291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) Donates part of its profit to projects in the developing world.

Quest Travel (☎ 0870 442 3542; www.questtravel.com)

STA Travel (☎ 0870 160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk)

Trailfinders (www.trailfinders.co.uk)

Travel Bag (☎ 0870 890 1456; www.travelbag.co.uk)

LAND BUS

Entering Kenya by bus is possible on several major routes, and it's generally a breeze; while you need to get off the bus to sort out any necessary visa formalities, you'll rarely be held up for too long at the border. That said, arranging your visa in advance can save you quite a bit of time and a few angry glares from your fellow passengers.

Car & Motorcycle

Crossing land borders with your own vehicle is generally straightforward as long as you have the necessary paperwork – see p378 for more details on requirements and general road rules. Petrol, spare parts and repair shops are readily available at all border towns, though if you're coming from Ethiopia you should plan your supplies carefully, as stops are few and far between on the rough northern roads.

If you're planning to ship your vehicle to Kenya, be aware that port charges in the country are very high. For example, a Land Rover shipped from the Middle East to Mombasa is likely to cost US\$1000 just to get off the ship and out of the port. This is almost as much as the cost of the shipping itself! Putting a vehicle onto a ship in the Mombasa port costs about US\$600 on top of this. There are numerous shipping agents in Nairobi and Mombasa willing to arrange everything for you, but check all the costs in advance.

Ethiopia

With ongoing problems in Sudan and Somalia, Ethiopia offers the only viable overland route into Kenya from the north. The security situation around the main entry point at Moyale is changeable; the border

is usually open, but security problems often force its closure. Cattle- and goat-rustling are rife, triggering frequent cross-border tribal wars, so check the security situation carefully before attempting this crossing.

From immigration on the Ethiopian side of town it's a 2km walk to the Ethiopian and Kenyan customs posts. Be aware that a yellow fever vaccination is required to cross either border at Moyale. Unless you fancy being vaccinated at the border, get your jabs in advance and remember to keep the yellow fever certificate with your passport. A cholera vaccination may also be required. If you're travelling in the other direction, through Ethiopia to Sudan, you'll have to go to Addis Ababa to get your Sudanese visa.

If you don't have your own transport from Moyale, lifts can be arranged with the trucks from the border to Isiolo for around KSh1000 (or KSh500 to Marsabit).

Those coming to Kenya with their own vehicle could also enter at Fort Banya, on the northeastern tip of Lake Turkana. However, it's a risky route and fuel stops are rare. There is no border post, so you must already possess a Kenyan visa and get it stamped on arrival in Nairobi – immigration officials are quite used to this, although not having an Ethiopian exit stamp can be a problem if you want to re-enter Ethiopia.

Somalia

There's no way you can pass overland between Kenya and war-ravaged Somalia at present unless you're part of a refugee aid convoy, as the Kenyan government has closed the border to try and stop the flow of poachers, bandits and weapons into Kenya.

Sudan

Recent progress in the Sudanese peace process has raised many people's hopes for the future, but Kenya's neighbour to the north is still far from untroubled. If things continue to improve, the Kenya–Sudan border may reopen, but at time of writing it was still only possible to travel between the two countries either by air or via Metema on the Ethiopian border (see left for more details on the route from Ethiopia).

Tanzania

The main land borders between Kenya and Tanzania are at Namanga, Taveta, Isebania

and Lunga Lunga (for Tanzania), and can be reached by public transport. There is also a crossing from the Serengeti to the Masai Mara, which can only be undertaken with your own vehicle, and one at Loitokitok, which is closed to tourists, although you may be able to temporarily cross on a tour (see p140 for more information). Train services between the two countries have been suspended.

Following are the main bus companies serving Tanzania:

Akamba (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke)

Davanu Shuttle Nairobi (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-316929) Arusha (☎ 057-8142) Arusha/Moshi shuttle buses.

Easy Coach (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-210711; easycoach@wananchi.com)

Riverside Shuttle Nairobi (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-229618) Arusha (☎ 057-2639) Arusha/Moshi shuttle buses.

Scandinavia Express (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-247131)

MOMBASA TO TANGA/DAR ES SALAAM

Numerous buses run along the coast road from Mombasa to Tanga and Dar es Salaam, and they cross the border at Lunga Lunga/Horohoro. Most people travel on through buses from Mombasa, but it's easy enough to do the journey in stages by local bus or matatu (minibus) if you'd rather make a few stops along the way.

In Mombasa, buses to Dar es Salaam leave from around Jomo Kenyatta Ave, near the junction with Mwembe Tayari Rd. The average cost is around KSh1000 to Dar (eight hours) and KSh500 to Tanga (two hours), depending on the company you travel with and the standard of the buses.

In Dar es Salaam, buses leave from the Mhazizi Mmoja bus stand on Bibi Titi Mohamed Rd, near Uhuru and Lindi Sts, along the southeast side of Mnazi Mmoja Park.

If you want to do the journey in stages, there are frequent matatus to Lunga Lunga from the Mombasa ferry jetty at Likoni. A matatu can then take you the 6.5km between the two border posts. On the Tanzanian side, there are regular matatus from Horohoro to Tanga (see p181 for more details).

MOMBASA TO ARUSHA/MOSHI

A number of rickety local buses leave Mombasa every evening for Moshi and Arusha in Tanzania. There are occasional morning services, but most buses leave around 7pm

from Mombasa or Arusha. Fares are around KSh500 to Moshi (six hours) and KSh800 to Arusha (7½ hours). In Mombasa, buses leave from in front of the Mwembe Tayari Health Centre on Jomo Kenyatta Ave.

Buses cross the border at Taveta, which can also be reached by matatu from Voi (see p150 for more details).

NAIROBI TO ARUSHA/MOSHI

You have the choice of an ordinary bus or a much more comfortable minibuss shuttle service between Nairobi and Arusha. Each takes about four hours and neither requires a change of service at the border at Namanga.

Riverside Shuttle and Davanu Shuttle both offer convenient shuttle services from central Nairobi, costing roughly US\$30 to Arusha and US\$35 to Moshi. The big advantage of both these services is being able to board the bus in the comparative sanity of downtown Nairobi. There are often touts at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi advertising a direct shuttle bus service from the airport to Arusha for about US\$30, but they just bring you into Nairobi where you join one of the regular shuttles.

Full-sized buses are much cheaper, but most leave from the hectic River Rd area in Nairobi; thefts are common there so watch your baggage. Easy Coach is a good option, as services leave from its office compound near Nairobi railway station. Buses from Nairobi to Dar es Salaam (see below) also travel via Arusha, and small local buses leave from Accra Rd every morning. The average cost of these services is between KSh700 and KSh1000 to Arusha, and between KSh1000 and KSh1200 to Moshi, more for the real luxury liners.

It's also easy, though less convenient, to do this journey in stages, since the Kenyan and Tanzanian border posts at Namanga are right next to each other and regularly served by public transport. There are a couple of nice places to stay in Namanga if you want to break the journey, for example to visit Amboseli National Park, before heading to Nairobi or Arusha.

NAIROBI TO DAR ES SALAAM

Several Kenyan companies have buses from Nairobi to Dar es Salaam. Scandinavia Express and Akamba both have reliable daily services from their offices in the River Rd

area, with prices ranging from KSh1600 to real luxury coaches at KSh3000. Journey time is around 16 to 18 hours with stops.

SERENGETI TO MASAI MARA

Theoretically it's possible to cross between Serengeti National Park and Masai Mara National Reserve with your own vehicle, but you'll need all the appropriate vehicle documentation (including insurance and entry permit).

NAIROBI/KISUMU TO MWANZA

The road is sealed all the way from Kisumu to just short of Mwanza in Tanzania, offering a convenient route to the Tanzanian shore of Lake Victoria. From Nairobi, probably the most comfortable way to go is with Scandinavia Express or Akamba; prices range from around KSh1000 to KSh2000, and the journey should take roughly 12 hours.

From Kisumu, regular matatus serve the Tanzanian border at Isebania/Sirari (KSh350, four hours); local services head to Mwanza from the Tanzanian side. Buses going direct to Mwanza (KSh500, four hours) leave frequently from Kisii.

Uganda

The main border post for overland travellers is Malaba, with Busia an alternative if you are travelling via Kisumu. Numerous bus companies run between Nairobi and Kampala, or you can do the journey in stages via either of the border towns.

Several of the main bus companies serve Uganda:

Akamba (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke)

Falcon (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-229692)

Scandinavia Express (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-247131)

NAIROBI TO KAMPALA

Various companies cover the Nairobi to Kampala route. From Nairobi – and at the top end of the market – Scandinavia Express and Akamba have buses at least once daily, ranging from ordinary buses at around KSh1000 to full-blown luxury services with drinks and movies, hovering around the KSh2000 mark. All buses take about 10 to 12 hours and prices include a meal at the halfway point. Akamba also has a service to Mbale in Uganda (KSh800, 10 hours).

Various other companies have cheaper basic services which depart from the Accra Rd area in Nairobi. Prices start at around KSh800 and journey times are more or less the same as the bigger companies, with a few extra allowances for delays and general tardiness.

If you want to do the journey in stages, Akamba has morning and evening buses from Nairobi to Malaba and a daily direct bus from there to Kampala. There are also regular matatus to Malaba (KSh650) from Cross Rd.

The Ugandan and Kenyan border posts at Malaba are about 1km apart, so you can walk or take a *boda-boda* (bicycle taxi). Once you get across the border, there are frequent matatus until the late afternoon to Kampala, Jinja and Tororo.

Buses and matatus also run from Nairobi or Kisumu to Busia, from where there are regular connections to Kampala and Jinja.

SEA & LAKE

At the time of writing there were no ferries operating on Lake Victoria, although there's been talk for years of services restarting.

Tanzania

It's theoretically possible to travel by dhow between Mombasa and the Tanzanian islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, but first of all you'll have to find a captain who's making the journey and then you'll have to bargain hard to pay a reasonable amount for the trip. Perhaps the best place to ask about sailings is at Shimoni (p181). There is a tiny immigration post here, but there's no guarantee they'll stamp your passport so you might have to go back to Mombasa for an exit stamp.

Dhows do sail between small Kenyan and Tanzanian ports along Lake Victoria, but many are involved in smuggling (fruit mostly) and are best avoided.

TOURS

It's possible to get to Kenya as part of an overland truck tour originating in Europe or other parts of Africa (many also start in Nairobi bound for other places in Africa). See p70 for details of safaris that are specific to Kenya.

Most companies are based in the UK or South Africa, but Flight Centres is a good

local operator with offices in Nairobi, Cape Town and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Trips can last from just a few days to epic grand tours of up to 13 weeks.

Acacia Expeditions (UK ☎ 020-77064700; www.acacia-africa.com)

African Routes (South Africa ☎ 031-5693911; www.africanroutes.co.za)

Dragoman (UK ☎ 01728-861133; www.dragoman.co.uk)

Explore Worldwide (UK ☎ 01252-760000; www.exploreworldwide.com)

Flight Centres Nairobi (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-210024; www.flightcentres-kenya.com); Cape Town (☎ 021-3851530; cpt@africatavelco.com); Victoria Falls (☎ 013-40172; vfa@africatavelco.com)

Gametrackers Ltd (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-338927; www.gametrackersafaris.com)

Guerba Expeditions (UK ☎ 01373-826611; www.guerba.co.uk)

GETTING AROUND

AIR Airlines in Kenya

Including the national carrier, Kenya Airways, four domestic operators of varying sizes now run scheduled flights within Kenya. All appear to have a virtually clean slate safety-wise (Kenya Airways have suffered just one fatal incident since 1977). Destinations served are predominantly around the coast and the popular southern national parks, where the highest density of tourist activity takes place.

With all these airlines, be sure to book well in advance (this is essential during the tourist high season). You should also remember to reconfirm your return flights 72 hours before departure, especially those that connect with an international flight. Otherwise, you may find that your seat has been reallocated.

The following airlines fly domestically:
Airkenya (☎ 020-605745; www.airkenya.com) Amboseli, Kiwayu, Lamu, Lewa Downs, Masai Mara, Malindi, Meru, Nanyuki, Samburu.

Kenya Airways (Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-3274100; www.kenya-airways.com) Kisumu, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa.

Mombasa Air Safari (☎ 041-433061; www.mombasaairsafari.com) Amboseli, Ukunda, Lamu, Masai Mara, Malindi, Mombasa, Tsavo.

Safarilink (☎ 020-600777; www.safarilink.co.ke) Amboseli, Chyulu Hills, Kiwayu, Lamu, Lewa Downs, Masai Mara, Naivasha, Nanyuki, Samburu, Tsavo West.

CHARTER AIRLINES

Chartering a small plane saves you time and is the only realistic way to get to some parts of Kenya, but it's an expensive business. It may be worth considering if you can get a group together. For a three-day trip from Nairobi to Sibiloi National Park on the west of Lake Turkana, you can expect to pay around US\$350 to US\$400 each, if five people are sharing.

There are dozens of charter companies operating out of Nairobi's Wilson Airport – **Excel Aviation** (☎ 020-601764), **Z-Boskovic Air Charters** (☎ 020-501210) and **Blue Bird Aviation** (☎ 020-602338) are worth a look.

A couple of small charter-type airlines run occasional scheduled flights from Diani Beach, Lamu, Mombasa and Eldoret – see the relevant Getting There & Away sections for details.

BICYCLE

Loads of Kenyans get around by bicycle, and while it can be tough for those who are not used to the roads or the climate, plenty of hardy visiting cyclists do tour the country every year. But whatever you do, if you intend to cycle here, do as the locals do and get off the road whenever you hear a car coming. No matter how experienced you are, it would be tantamount to suicide to attempt the road from Nairobi to Mombasa on a bicycle.

Cycling is easier in rural areas, and you'll usually receive a warm welcome in any villages you pass through. Many local people operate *boda-bodas*, so repair shops are becoming increasingly common along the roadside. Be wary of cycling on dirt roads as punctures from thorn trees are a major problem.

The hills of Kenya are not particularly steep but can be long and hard. You can expect to cover around 80km per day in the hills of the western highlands, somewhat more where the country is flatter. Hell's Gate National Park, near Naivasha, is particularly popular for mountain biking.

It's possible to hire road and mountain bikes in an increasing number of places, usually for less than KSh500 per day. Few places require a deposit, unless their machines are particularly new or sophisticated. Several tour operators now offer cycling safaris (see p70 for details).

BOAT Lake Victoria

There has been speculation for years that ferry transport will start again on Lake Victoria, but for the foreseeable future the only regular services operating are motorised canoes to Mfangano Island from Mbita Point, near Homa Bay. An occasional ferry service runs between Kisumu and Homa Bay.

Dhow

Sailing on a traditional Swahili dhow along the East African coast is one of Kenya's most memorable experiences and, unlike on Lake Victoria, certain traditional routes are very much still in use.

Dhows are commonly used to get around the islands in the Lamu archipelago (p212) and the mangrove islands south of Mombasa (p179). For the most part, these operate more like dhow safaris than public transport. Although some trips are luxurious, the trips out of Lamu are more basic. When night comes you simply bed down wherever there is space. Seafood is freshly caught and cooked on board on charcoal burners, or else barbecued on the beach on the surrounding islands.

Most of the smaller boats rely on the wind to get around, so it's quite common to end up becalmed until the wind picks up again. The more commercial boats, however, have been fitted with outboard motors so that progress can be made even when there's no wind. Larger dhows are all motorised and some of them don't even have sails.

BUS

Kenya has an extensive network of long- and short-haul bus routes, with particularly good coverage of the areas around Nairobi, the coast and the western regions. Services thin out the further away from the capital you get, particularly in the north, and there are still plenty of places where you'll be reliant on matatus.

Buses are operated by a variety of private and state-owned companies that offer varying levels of comfort, convenience and road-worthiness. They're considerably cheaper than taking the train or flying, and as a rule services are frequent, fast and often quite comfortable. However, many travellers are put off taking buses altogether by the diabolical state of Kenyan roads.

In general, if you travel during daylight hours, buses are a fairly safe way to get around and you'll certainly be safer in a bus than in a matatu, simply due to its size. The best coaches are saved for long-haul and international routes and offer DVD movies, drinks, toilets and reclining airline-style seats. On the shorter local routes, however, you may find yourself on something resembling a battered school bus.

Whatever kind of conveyance you find yourself in, don't sit at the back (you'll be thrown around like a rag doll on Kenyan roads), or right at the front (you'll be the first to die in a head-on collision, plus you'll be able to see the oncoming traffic, which is usually a terrifying experience). You should also be aware that a Kenyan bus trip is not always the most restful experience – unlike matatus, hawkers can actually board most services to thrust their wares in your face, and it's not unknown for roving preachers, herbalists and just about anyone else to spend entire journeys shouting the odds for the benefit of their fellow passengers. On certain coastal buses you'll even hear the regular Muslim call to prayer.

Kenya Bus Services (KBS), the government bus line, runs the local buses in Nairobi and also offers long-haul services to most major towns around the country. Its buses tend to be slower than those of the private companies, but are probably safer for this reason. Of the private companies, Akamba has the most comprehensive network, and has a good, but not perfect, safety record. Easy Coach is another private firm quickly establishing a solid reputation for efficiency and comfort.

There are a few security considerations to think about when taking a bus in Kenya. Some routes, most notably the roads from Malindi to Lamu and Isiolo to Marsabit, have been prone to attacks by *shifas* (bandits) in the past – check things out locally before you travel. Another possible risk is drugged food and drink: if you want to reach your destination with all your belongings, politely refuse any offers of drinks or snacks from strangers.

The following are the main bus companies operating in Kenya:

Akamba (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke) Eldoret, Kakamega, Kericho, Kisii, Kisumu, Kitale, Machakos, Mombasa, Nairobi, Namanga.

Even if you have collision and theft insurance, you'll still be liable for an excess of KSh2000 to KSh150,000 (depending on the company) if something happens to the vehicle; always check this before signing. You can usually reduce the excess to zero by paying another KSh900 per day for an Excess Loss Waiver. Note that tyres, damaged windscreens and loss of the tool kit are always the hirer's responsibility.

As a final sting in the tail, you'll be charged 16% value added tax (VAT) on top of the total cost of hiring the vehicle. Any repairs that you end up paying for will also have VAT on top. And a final warning: always return the vehicle with a full tank of petrol; if you don't, the company will charge you twice the going rate to fill up.

Deposits

There's a wide variation in the deposit required on hired vehicles. It can be as much as the total estimated hire charges plus whatever the excess is on the collision damage waiver. You can cover this with cash, signed travellers cheques (returnable) or credit card.

Drop-Off Rates

If you want to hire a vehicle in one place and drop it off in another there will be additional charges. These vary depending on the vehicle, the company and the pick-up and drop-off locations. In most cases, count on paying KSh10,000 between Nairobi and Mombasa and about KSh5000 between Mombasa and Malindi.

Driver Rates

While hiring a 'chauffeur' may sound like a luxury, it's actually a very good idea in Kenya for both financial and safety reasons. Most companies will provide a driver for around KSh1000 per day – the big advantage of this is that the car is then covered by the company's own insurance, so you don't have to pay any of the various waivers and will not be liable for any excess in the case of an accident (though tyres, windows etc remain your responsibility).

In addition, having someone in the car who speaks Swahili, knows the roads and is used to Kenyan driving conditions can be absolutely priceless, especially in remote areas. Most drivers will also look after the

car at night so you don't have to worry about it, and they'll often go massively out of their way to help you fulfil your travel plans. On the other hand, it will leave one less seat free in the car, reducing the number of people you can have sharing the cost in the first place.

DRIVING TO TANZANIA & UGANDA

Only the bigger (and more expensive) companies cater for this, and there are large additional charges. With Budget, Hertz or Avis, expect to pay around US\$150 for them to sort out all the documentation, insurance, permits etc.

RENTAL AGENCIES

At the top end of the market are some international companies. All have airport and town offices in Nairobi and Mombasa. Of these, Budget is the best value, though it's well worth paying for the Excess Loss Waiver.

Central Rent-a-Car is probably the best of the local firms, with a well-maintained fleet of fairly new vehicles and a good back-up service. Its excess liability is also the lowest (KSh2000), but vehicles are self-drive only, with no drivers available. Apart from Central, all of these companies have steep excesses. Glory levies a staggering KSh150,000 excess – enough to bankrupt even the most well-heeled traveller!

Most safari companies will also rent out their vehicles, though you'll have few of the guarantees that you would with the companies listed here. **Let's Go Travel** (☎ 020-340331; www.letsgosafari.com) organises reliable car hire at favourable rates through partner firms. At the very bottom of the scale, local pick-ups hang around the City Market in Nairobi with 'Ask for Transport' signs, a cheap option if you just want to get from A to B but not to be recommended for more intensive trips.

On the coast, it is possible to hire motorcycles, scooters and quads at Diani Beach and Bamburi Beach, although most people just use them to zip up and down the beach road. **Fredlink Co Ltd** (☎ 040-3202647; www.motorbike-safari.com; Diani Plaza, Diani Beach) rents out 350cc trail bikes and Yamaha scooters, and also arranges motorcycle safaris. See p178 for information about Fredlink Tours and p70 for information about motorcycle safaris.

The following are local and international hire companies:

Avenue Car Hire (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-313207; www.avenuecarhire.com)

Avis (Map pp98-9; ☎ 020-316061; www.avis.co.ke)

Budget (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-223581; www.budget-kenya.com)

Central Rent-a-Car (☎ 020-222888; www.carhirekenya.com)

Glory Car Hire (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-225024; www.glorycarhire.com)

Hertz (☎ 020-248777; www.hertz.co.ke)

Insurance

Driving in Kenya without insurance would be a mind-numbingly idiotic thing to do. It's best to arrange cover before you leave. Liability insurance is not always available in advance for Kenya; you may be required to purchase some at certain borders if you enter overland, otherwise you will effectively be travelling uninsured.

Car rental agencies in Kenya always offer some kind of insurance – see p379 for full details.

Parking

In small towns and villages parking is usually free, but there's a pay-parking system in Nairobi, Mombasa and other main towns. Attendants issue one-day parking permits for around KSh70, valid anywhere in town. If you don't get a permit you're liable to be wheel-clamped, and getting your vehicle back will cost you at least KSh2000. It's always worth staying in a hotel with secure parking if possible.

Purchase

It's certainly possible to buy a car when you're in Kenya – just look at public noticeboards in expat-rich areas such as the Nairobi suburbs and the coast resorts. However, the practicalities of registering, taxing and keeping your vehicle generally road-legal are quite another matter, and would require a fair bit of ground research if you seriously intended to keep the car running for a decent length of time.

Road Conditions

Road conditions vary widely in Kenya, from flat smooth highways to dirt tracks and steep rocky pathways. Many roads are severely eroded at the edges, reducing the

carriageway to a single lane, which is usually occupied by whichever vehicle is bigger in any given situation. The roads in the north and east of the country are particularly poor. The main Mombasa–Nairobi–Malaba road (A104) is badly worn due to the constant flow of traffic.

Roads in national parks are all made of *murram* (dirt) and have eroded into bone-shaking corrugations through overuse by safari vehicles. Keep your speed down and be careful when driving after rain. Although some dirt roads can be negotiated in a 2WD vehicle, you're much safer in a 4WD.

Road Hazards

The biggest hazard on Kenyan roads is simply the other vehicles on them, and driving defensively is essential. Ironically, the most dangerous roads in Kenya are probably the well-maintained ones, which allow drivers to go fast enough to do really serious damage in a crash. On the worse roads, potholes are a dual problem: driving into them can damage your vehicle or cause you to lose control, and sudden avoidance manoeuvres from other vehicles are a constant threat.

On all roads, be very careful of pedestrians and cyclists – you don't want to contribute any more to the death toll on Kenya's roads. Animals are another major hazard in rural areas, be it monkeys, herds of goats and cattle or lone chickens with a death wish.

Acacia thorns are a common problem if you're driving in remote areas, as they'll pierce even the toughest tires. The slightest breakdown can leave you stranded for hours in the bush, so always carry drinking water, emergency food and, if possible, spare fuel.

Certain routes have a reputation for banditry, particularly the Garsen–Garissa–Thika road, which is still essentially off limits to travellers, and the dirt track from Amboseli National Park to Tsavo West National Park, where you're usually required to join a convoy. The roads from Isiolo to Marsabit and Moyale and from Malindi to Lamu have improved considerably security-wise in the last few years, but you're still advised to seek local advice before using any of these routes.

Road Rules

You'll need your wits about you if you're going to tackle driving in Kenya. Driving

practices here are some of the worst in the world and all are carried out at breakneck speed. Indicators, lights, horns and hand signals can mean anything from 'I'm about to overtake' to 'Hello *mzungu* (white person)!' or 'Let's play chicken with that elephant', and should never be taken at face value.

Kenyans habitually drive on the wrong side of the road whenever they see a pothole, an animal or simply a break in the traffic – flashing your lights at the vehicle hurtling towards you should be enough to persuade the driver to get back into their own lane. Never drive at night unless you absolutely have to, as few cars have adequate headlights and the roads are full of pedestrians and cyclists. Drunk driving is also very common, among expats as much as locals.

Note that foreign-registered vehicles with a seating capacity of more than six people are not allowed into Kenyan national parks and reserves; Jeeps should be fine, but VW Kombis and other camper vans may have problems.

HITCHING

Hitchhiking is never entirely safe in any country, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk; it's safer to travel in pairs and let someone know where you are planning to go. Also, beware of drunken drivers.

Although it's risky, many locals have no choice but to hitch, so people will know what you're doing if you try to flag down cars. The traditional thumb signal will probably be understood, but locals use a palm-downwards wave to get cars to stop. Many Kenyan drivers expect a contribution towards petrol or some kind of gift from foreign passengers, so make it clear from the outset if you are expecting a free ride.

If you're hoping to hitch into the national parks, dream on! Your chances of coming across tourists with a spare seat who don't mind taking a freeloading stranger along on their expensive safari are slimmer than a starving stick insect, and quite frankly it seems pretty rude to ask. You'll get further asking around for travel companions in Nairobi or any of the gateway towns.

On the other side of the wheel, foreign drivers will be approached all the time by Kenyan hitchers demanding free rides, and

giving a lift to a carload of Maasai is certainly a memorable cultural experience.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Boat

The only local boat service in regular use is the Likoni ferry between the mainland and Mombasa island, which runs throughout the day and night and is free for foot passengers (vehicles pay a small toll).

Boda-boda

Boda-bodas (bicycle taxis) are common in areas where standard taxis are harder to find, and also operate in smaller towns and cities such as Kisumu. There is a particular proliferation on the coast, where the bicycle boys also double as touts, guides and drug dealers in tourist areas. A short ride should never cost more than KSh20.

Bus

Nairobi is the only city with an effective municipal bus service, run by KBS. Routes cover the suburbs and outlying areas during daylight hours and generally cost no more than KSh40. Metro Shuttle and private City Hopper services also run to areas such as Kenyatta Airport and Karen. Due to traffic density, safety is rarely a serious concern.

Matatu

Local matatus are the main means of getting around for local people, and any reasonably sized city or town will have plenty of services covering every major road and suburb. Fares start at KSh10 and may reach KSh40 for longer routes in Nairobi. As with buses, roads are usually busy enough for a slight shunt to be the most likely accident, though of course congestion never stops drivers jockeying for position like it's the Kenya Derby.

Minibus transport is not unique to Kenya, but the matatu has raised it into a cultural phenomenon, and most Kenyans use them regularly for both local and intercity journeys. The vehicles themselves can be anything from dilapidated Peugeot 504 pick-ups with a cab on the back to big 20-seater minibuses. The most common are white Nissan minibuses (many local people prefer the name 'Nissans' to matatus).

In the bad old days matatus were notorious for dangerous driving, overcrowding and general shady business, but anyone

revisiting Kenya will be stunned at the difference. In 2003 then Transport Minister John Michuki banned all matatus from the roads until they complied with a new set of laws, ensuring amazingly speedy results. Matatus must now be fitted with seatbelts and 80km/h speed governors, conductors and drivers must wear clearly identifiable red shirts, route numbers must be clearly displayed and a 14-person capacity applies to vehicles which used to cram in as many as 30 people. Frequent police checks have also been brought in to enforce the rules.

The changes are immediately noticeable and represent an improvement of sorts, but it hasn't taken operators long to find loopholes: most drivers have worked out how to gain extra speed on downhill stretches, conductors memorise the locations of police checkpoints and will scramble extra bodies in and out between them, and passengers seem quite happy only to buckle up when approaching a roadblock. Many drivers still also chew *miraa* leaves to stay awake beyond what is a reasonable or safe time.

Apart from in the remote northern areas, where you'll rely on occasional buses or paid lifts on trucks, you can almost always find a matatu going to the next town or further afield, so long as it's not too late in the day. Simply ask around among the drivers at the local matatu stand or 'stage'. Matatus leave when full and the fares are fixed. It's

unlikely you will be charged more money than other passengers.

Wherever you go, remember that most matatu crashes are head-on collisions – under no circumstances should you sit in the 'death seat' next to the matatu driver. Play it safe and sit in the middle seats away from the window.

Shared Taxi (Peugeot)

Shared Peugeot taxis are a good alternative to matatus, though they're not subject to the same speed and safety regulations. The vehicles are usually Peugeot 505 station wagons (hence the local name) that take seven to nine passengers and leave when full.

Peugeots take less time to reach their destinations than matatus as they fill quicker and go from point to point without stopping, and so are slightly more expensive. Many companies have offices around the Accra, Cross and River Rds area in Nairobi, and serve destinations mostly in the north and west of the country.

Taxi

Even the smallest Kenyan towns generally have at least one banged-up old taxi for easy access to outlying areas or even remoter villages, and you'll find cabs on virtually every corner in the larger cities, especially in Nairobi and Mombasa, where taking a taxi at night is virtually mandatory. Fares

HAKUNA MATATU?

The new traffic laws were not just designed to impact on safety in matatus – they've also had a profound effect on their aesthetic qualities, the very thing that makes them such unique characters in the first place.

Matatus, particularly the big 20-seater ones on local Nairobi routes, frequently used to be moving works of street art, daubed with colourful graffiti reflecting whatever was currently hip in Kenya and blasting out appropriate tuneage on mega-decibel stereos. As part of the new regulations, however, strict noise limits are enforced, and every public conveyance must have a yellow stripe down the side displaying the route, vehicle number and capacity, requiring many matatus to be repainted.

Nairobi matatus have taken the change to heart, and most Nissans are now plain white with a few token stickers or paintings in the rear window. Even the names reflect the toned-down image of the 'new' transport industry: while there are still plenty of Beyoncé and Homeboyz, you're now just as likely to travel in a bus called Safety Bars, God Never Fails or Rise'n'Shine.

In Mombasa, however, hardcore is alive and well, and while the decorations are kept relatively small, the matatu names are, if anything, more provocative. Look out for Saddam, Blood Fist, Jihad and You Are Lonely When You Are Dead... Our favourite, though, has to be the delightful if slightly baffling 'U Kick My Cat – I Kill Ur Dog'. What better sentiment to keep the spirit of the matatu alive and well?

are invariably negotiable and start around KSh200 for short journeys. Most people pick up cabs from taxi ranks on the street, but some companies will take phone bookings and most hotels can order you a ride.

Tuk-Tuk

They are an incongruous sight outside South-East Asia, but several Kenyan towns and cities have these distinctive motorised mini-taxis. The highest concentration is in Malindi, but they're also in Nairobi, Mombasa, Machakos and Diani Beach; Watamu has a handful of less sophisticated motorised rickshaws. Fares are negotiable, but should be at least KSh100 less than the equivalent taxi rate for a short journey (you wouldn't want to take them on a long one!).

SAFARIS

While public transport provides ample options for moving between towns and cities, an organised safari is the best way of getting into and around Kenya's national parks and remote areas like Lake Turkana, and they can sidestep many of the day-to-day hassles of travelling independently. See p59 for a full rundown of the many options.

TRAIN

The Uganda Railway was once the main trade artery in East Africa, but these days the network has dwindled to two main routes, Nairobi–Kisumu and Nairobi–Mombasa. Both are night services of around 13 hours, much slower and less frequent than going by air or road but considerably more safe and comfortable. The Nairobi–Mombasa trip is considered one of the great rail journeys in Africa, providing an opportunity to meet other travellers, and splashing out the extra for full dining-car privileges is worth it just for the experience. As an added bonus cold beer is available on the journey – not something you'll get on a coach.

There are also a handful of weekday evening commuter services from Nairobi, but these are of little help to travellers as road transport is far more efficient.

Classes

There are three classes on Kenyan trains, but only 1st and 2nd class can be recommended. Note that passengers are divided up by gender.

First class consists of two-berth compartments with a washbasin, wardrobe, drinking water and a drinks service. Second class consists of plainer, four-berth compartments with a washbasin and drinking water. No compartment can be locked from the outside, so remember not to leave any valuables lying around if you leave it for any reason. You might want to padlock your rucksack to something during dinner and breakfast. Always lock your compartment from the inside before you go to sleep. Third class is seats only and security can be a real problem.

Passengers in 1st and 2nd class on the Mombasa line are treated to the full colonial experience, including a silver-service dinner in an old-fashioned dining car. Meals typically consist of stews, curries or roast chicken served with rice and vegetables, all dished up by uniformed waiters. There's always a vegetarian option. Tea and coffee is included; sodas (soft drinks), bottled water and alcoholic drinks are not, so ask the price before accepting that KSh1500 bottle of wine. Cold beer is available at all times in the dining car and can be delivered to your compartment.

Costs

The only downside to the train is the price of tickets, over KSh3000 for 1st class on the Nairobi–Mombasa route, including meals (dinner and breakfast) and bedding. You can reduce this considerably by just paying for the seat and bringing your own food and sleeping bag, though you're missing out on the fun half of the experience that way. The Kisumu route is much less fancy, and 1st-class tickets cost around KSh1500. Reduced rates apply for children aged three to 11.

Reservations

You must book in advance for 1st and 2nd class, otherwise there'll probably be no berths available. Two to three days is usually sufficient, but remember that these services run just three times weekly in either direction. Visa credit cards are accepted for railway bookings. If you book by phone, arrive early to pay for your ticket and make sure you're actually on the passenger list. Compartment and berth numbers are posted up about 30 minutes prior to departure.

There are **booking offices** (Nairobi ☎ 020-221211; Mombasa ☎ 041-312220) in major cities and Kisumu railway stations.

Health

Dr Caroline Evans

CONTENTS

Before You Go	385
Insurance	385
Recommended Vaccinations	386
Medical Checklist	386
Internet Resources	386
Further Reading	386
In Transit	387
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	387
Jet Lag & Motion Sickness	387
In Africa	387
Availability & Cost of Health Care	387
Infectious Diseases	388
Traveller's Diarrhoea	392
Environmental Hazards	393
Traditional Medicine	393

If you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take some basic preventive measures, you'd be pretty unlucky to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in this chapter. Africa certainly has an impressive selection of tropical and other diseases, but you're much more likely to get a bout of diarrhoea (in fact, you should bank on it), a cold or an infected mosquito bite than an exotic disease. When it comes to injuries (as opposed to illness), the most likely reason for needing medical help in Africa is as a result of road accidents – vehicles are rarely well maintained, the roads are potholed and poorly lit, and drink driving is common.

BEFORE YOU GO

A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save you a lot of trouble later. Before a long trip, get a check-up from your dentist, and from your doctor if you have any chronic illness, eg high blood pressure or asthma, or use regular medication. You should also organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you); get a first aid and medical kit together (see p386); and arrange necessary vaccinations (p386).

It's tempting to leave all the preparations to the last minute – don't! Many vaccines don't take effect until two weeks after you've been immunised, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (known in some countries as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This is mandatory for the African countries that require proof of yellow fever vaccination upon entry, but it's a good idea to carry it anyway wherever you travel.

Travellers can register with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers** ([iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)). Its website can help travellers find a doctor who has completed recognised training. Those heading off to very remote areas might like to do a first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance) or attend a remote medicine first-aid course, such as that offered by the **Royal Geographical Society** (www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk).

If you are bringing medications with you, carry them in their original containers, clearly labelled. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

How do you go about getting the best possible medical help? It's difficult to say – it really depends on the severity of your illness or injury and the availability of local help. If malaria (p389) or another potentially serious disease is suspected, seek medical help as soon as possible or begin self-medicating if you are off the beaten track.

INSURANCE

Find out in advance whether your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures (in many African countries doctors expect payment in cash). It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover the emergency transport required to get you to a hospital in a major city, to better medical facilities elsewhere in Africa,

or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant if necessary. Not all insurance covers this, so check the contract carefully. If you need medical help, your insurance company might be able to help locate the nearest hospital or clinic, or you can ask at your hotel. In an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate.

Membership of the **African Medical and Research Foundation** (Amref; www.amref.org) provides an air evacuation service in medical emergencies in some African countries, as well as air ambulance transfers between medical facilities. Money paid by members for this service goes into providing grass-roots medical assistance for local people.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The **World Health Organization** (www.who.int/en/) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. A great time to ensure that all routine vaccination cover is complete is when you are planning your travel. The consequences of these diseases can be severe, and outbreaks of them do occur.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/), the following vaccinations are recommended for all parts of Africa: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningococcal meningitis, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. Vaccination against yellow fever is not necessarily recommended for all parts of Africa, although the certificate is an entry requirement for many countries (see p392). For Kenya, it is advisable to be vaccinated.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

It is a very good idea to carry a medical and first-aid kit with you, to help yourself in the case of minor illness or injury. Following is a list of items you should consider bringing with you:

- Acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- Acetazolamide (Diamox) for altitude sickness (prescription only)
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions (prescription only)
- Antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)

- Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antimalaria pills
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- Insect repellent containing DEET, for the skin
- Iodine tablets (for water purification)
- Oral rehydration salts
- Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents, and bed nets
- Pocket knife
- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- Steroid cream or hydrocortisone cream (for allergic rashes)
- Sun block
- Syringes, sterile needles and fluids if travelling to remote areas
- Thermometer

If you are travelling through an area where malaria is a problem – particularly an area where falciparum malaria predominates – consider taking a self-diagnostic kit that can identify malaria in the blood from a finger prick.

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the Internet. For further information, the Lonely Planet website at www.lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start. The World Health Organization publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost at www.who.int/ith/. Other websites of general interest are: **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost; the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/); and **Fit for Travel** (www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk), which has up-to-date information about outbreaks and is very user-friendly.

It's also a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available:

- Australia** www.smarttraveller.gov.au
- Canada** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/index.html
- UK** www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/index.htm
- USA** www.cdc.gov/travel/

FURTHER READING

Two publications produced by Lonely Planet are useful: *Healthy Travel Africa*, by

Isabelle Young, and *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan. Other useful books:

- *A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine*, by Eric A Weiss
- *Healthy Travel*, by Jane Wilson-Howarth
- *How to Stay Healthy Abroad*, by Richard Dawood
- *Travel in Health*, by Graham Fry

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots can form in the legs during flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. This formation of clots is known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT), and the longer the flight, the greater the risk. Although most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some might break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it could cause chest pain and breathing difficulty. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To help prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should regularly walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

If you're crossing more than five time zones you could well suffer jet lag, which results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To minimise the effect of jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (of the nonalcoholic variety) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. The main side effect of these drugs is drowsiness. If you're concerned about taking medication, a herbal alternative is ginger (in the form of ginger tea, biscuits or crystallized ginger), which works like a charm for some people.

IN AFRICA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Health care in Africa is varied: it can be excellent in the major cities, which generally have well-trained doctors and nurses, but it is often patchy off the beaten track. Medicine and even sterile dressings and intravenous fluids might need to be purchased from a local pharmacy. The standard of dental care is equally variable, and there is an increased risk of hepatitis B and HIV transmission from poorly sterilised equipment.

By and large, public hospitals in Africa offer the cheapest service, but will have the least up-to-date equipment and medications; mission hospitals (where donations are the usual form of payment) often have more reasonable facilities; and private hospitals and clinics are more expensive but tend to have more advanced drugs and equipment and better trained medical staff.

Most drugs can be purchased over the counter in Africa, without a prescription. Many drugs for sale in Africa might be ineffective; they might be counterfeit or might not have been stored under the right conditions. The most common examples of counterfeit drugs are malaria tablets and expensive antibiotics, such as ciprofloxacin. Most drugs are available in capital cities, but remote villages will be lucky to have a couple of paracetamol tablets. It is strongly recommended that you bring all medication from home. Also, the availability and efficacy of condoms cannot be relied upon – bring all the contraception you'll need. Condoms bought in Africa might not be of the same quality as in Europe, North America or Australia, and they might have been incorrectly stored.

There is a high risk of contracting HIV from infected blood if you receive a blood transfusion in Africa. The **BloodCare Foundation** (www.bloodcare.org.uk) is a useful source of safe, screened blood, which can be transported to any part of the world within 24 hours.

The cost of health care might seem very cheap compared to that in first-world countries, but good care and drugs might be not be available. Evacuation to good medical care (within Africa or to your own country)

can be very expensive indeed. Unfortunately, adequate – let alone good – health care is available only to very few Africans.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

It's a formidable list but, as we say, a few precautions go a long way...

Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis)

This disease is spread by flukes (minute worms) that are carried by a species of freshwater snail. The flukes are carried inside the snail, which then sheds them into slow-moving or still water. The parasites penetrate human skin as people paddle or swim and then migrate to the bladder or bowel. They are passed out via stool or urine and could contaminate fresh water, where the cycle starts again. Paddling or swimming in suspect freshwater lakes or slow-running rivers should be avoided. There may be no symptoms. However, there may be a transient fever and rash, and advanced cases may have blood in the stool or in the urine. A blood test can detect antibodies if you might have been exposed, and treatment is then possible in specialist travel or infectious disease clinics. If not treated the infection can cause kidney failure or permanent bowel damage. It is not possible for you to infect others directly.

Cholera

Cholera is usually only a problem during natural or artificial disasters, eg war, floods or earthquakes, although small outbreaks can also occur at other times. Travellers are rarely affected. The disease is caused by a bacteria and spread via contaminated drinking water. The main symptom is profuse watery diarrhoea, which causes debilitation if fluids are not replaced quickly. An oral cholera vaccine is available in the USA, but it is not particularly effective. Most cases of cholera can be avoided by drinking only clean water and by avoiding potentially contaminated food. Treatment is by fluid replacement (orally or via a drip), but sometimes antibiotics are needed. Self-treatment is not advised.

Diphtheria

Found in all of Africa, diphtheria is spread through close respiratory contact. It usually causes a high temperature and a severe sore throat. A membrane can form across the throat, requiring a tracheostomy to prevent

suffocation. Vaccination is recommended for those likely to be in close contact with the locals in infected areas. This is more important for long stays than for short-term trips. The vaccine is given as an injection alone or with tetanus, and lasts 10 years.

Filariasis

Tiny worms migrating in the lymphatic system cause filariasis. The bite from an infected mosquito spreads the infection. Symptoms include localised itching and swelling of the legs and/or genitalia. Treatment is available.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice and, although it is rarely fatal, it can cause prolonged lethargy. If you're recovering from hepatitis A, you shouldn't drink alcohol for up to six months afterwards, but once you've recovered, there won't be any long-term problems. The first symptoms include dark urine and a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes. Sometimes a fever and abdominal pain might be present. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, Vaqta, Havrix) is given as an injection: a single dose will give protection for up to a year, and a booster after a year gives 10-year protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single-dose vaccine, with hepatrix or viatim.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread through infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It can also be spread from an infected mother to the baby during childbirth. Hepatitis B affects the liver, which causes jaundice and occasionally liver failure. Most people recover completely, but some people might be chronic carriers of the virus, which could lead eventually to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Those visiting high-risk areas for long periods or those with increased social or occupational risk should be immunised. Many countries now routinely give hepatitis B as part of routine childhood vaccination. It is given singly or can be given at the same time as hepatitis A (hepatyrix).

A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks or six months.

HIV

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), is an enormous problem throughout Africa, but is most acutely felt in sub-Saharan Africa. The virus is spread through infected blood and blood products, by sexual intercourse with an infected partner and from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth or breastfeeding. It can be spread through 'blood to blood' contacts, such as with contaminated instruments during medical, dental, acupuncture and other body-piercing procedures, and through sharing intravenous needles. At present there is no cure; medication that might keep the disease under control is available, but these drugs are too expensive for the overwhelming majority of Africans, and are not readily available for travellers either. If you think you might have been exposed to HIV, a blood test is necessary; a three-month gap after exposure and before testing is required to allow antibodies to appear in the blood.

Malaria

One million children die annually from malaria in Africa. The disease is caused by a parasite in the bloodstream spread by the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito. There are several types of malaria, falciparum malaria being the most dangerous type and the predominant form in Africa. Infection rates vary with season and climate, so check out the situation before departure.

The incidence of malarial transmission at altitudes higher than 2000m is rare.

Unlike most other diseases regularly encountered by travellers, there is no vaccination against malaria (yet). However, several different drugs are used to prevent malaria, and new ones are in the pipeline. Up-to-date advice from a travel health clinic is essential as different medications are more suitable for some travellers than others. Also, the pattern of drug-resistant malaria is changing rapidly, so what was advised years ago might no longer be the case.

Malaria can affect people in several ways. The early stages include headaches, fevers, generalised aches and pains, and malaise, often mistaken for flu. Other symptoms can include abdominal pain, diarrhoea and a cough. Anyone who develops a fever while in a malarial area should assume malarial infection until a blood test proves negative, even if you've been taking antimalarial medication. If not treated, the next stage can develop within 24 hours, particularly if falciparum malaria is the parasite: jaundice, reduced consciousness and coma (known as cerebral malaria) followed by death. Treatment in hospital is essential, and if patients enter this late stage of the disease the death rate may still be as high as 10%, even in the best intensive-care facilities.

TRAVEL PREPARATION

Many travellers are under the impression that malaria is a mild illness, that treatment

AIDS IN KENYA

Like most of its neighbours, Kenya is in the grip of a devastating AIDS epidemic. There are 2.5 million Kenyans with full-blown AIDS and nearly 700 people die from the disease every day. AIDS is predominately a heterosexual disease in Kenya and now strikes all classes of people. At least 890,000 children have been orphaned and many others are infected while in the womb.

Teachers have been badly affected – at least 18 die daily – because they are predominantly in the 20 to 29 age group that's most affected by HIV/AIDS, and Kenya is facing an education crisis as a result, leaving even fewer people to spread the AIDS-awareness message. Around 85% of prostitutes are affected, and young girls in general are especially vulnerable, due to the widespread belief that AIDS can be cured by sleeping with girls who are virgins.

Drug treatments that are available in the West to increase the lifespan of AIDS sufferers and reduce the risk of infection passing to the foetus in HIV-infected women remain well beyond the financial reach of most Kenyans, few of whom have access to even basic health care. The problem is unlikely to improve as long as Western drug companies refuse to allow developing countries to produce much cheaper generic versions of their products. Currently the cost of treating a single AIDS victim for a year is US\$34,000, while the annual wage of most people in Kenya is under US\$500.

is always easy and successful, and that taking antimalarial drugs causes more illness through side effects than actually getting malaria. In Africa, this is unfortunately not true. Side effects of the medication depend on the drug being taken. Doxycycline can cause heartburn and indigestion; mefloquine (Larium) can cause anxiety attacks, insomnia and nightmares, and (rarely) severe psychiatric disorders; chloroquine can cause nausea and hair loss; and proguanil can cause mouth ulcers. These side effects are not universal, and can be minimized by taking medication correctly, such as with food.

If you decide that you really do not wish to take antimalarial drugs, you must understand the risks, and be obsessive about avoiding mosquito bites. Use nets and insect repellent, and report any fever or flu-like symptoms to a doctor as soon as possible. Some people advocate homeopathic preparations against malaria, such as Demal200, but as yet there is no conclusive evidence that this is effective, and many homeopaths do not recommend their use. Some people should not take a particular antimalarial drug, eg people with epilepsy should avoid mefloquine, and doxycycline should not be taken by pregnant women or children younger than 12.

The risks from malaria to both mother and foetus during pregnancy are considerable. Malaria in pregnancy frequently results in miscarriage or premature labour. Unless good medical care can be guaranteed, travel throughout Africa when pregnant – particularly to malarial areas – should be discouraged unless essential. See Stand-By Treatment (below) if you are more than 24 hours away from medical help.

Adults who have survived childhood malaria develop a resistance and usually only develop mild cases of malaria if it recurs; most Western travellers have no resistance at all. Resistance wanes after 18 months of nonexposure, so even if you have had malaria in the past, you might no longer be resistant.

STAND-BY TREATMENT

If you are planning a journey through an area where malaria exists, particularly where falciparum malaria predominates, consider taking a stand-by treatment. Emergency stand-by treatments should be seen as emergency treatment aimed at saving the

patient's life and not as routine way of self-medicating. It should be used only if you will be far from medical facilities and have been advised about the symptoms of malaria and how to use the medication. Medical advice should be sought as soon as possible to confirm whether the treatment has been successful. The type of stand-by treatment used will depend on local conditions, such as drug resistance, and on what antimalarial drugs were being used before stand-by treatment. This is worthwhile because you want to avoid contracting a particularly serious form such as cerebral malaria, which affects the brain and central nervous system and can be fatal within 24 hours. As mentioned on p386, self-diagnostic kits, which can identify malaria in the blood from a finger prick, are also available in the West.

Meningococcal Meningitis

Meningococcal infection is spread through close respiratory contact and is more likely to be contracted in crowded situations, such as dormitories, buses and clubs. Infection is uncommon in travellers. Vaccination is recommended for long stays and is especially important towards the end of the dry season, which varies across the continent. Symptoms include a fever, severe headache, neck stiffness and a red rash. Immediate medical treatment is necessary.

The ACWY vaccine is recommended for all travellers in sub-Saharan Africa. This vaccine is different from the meningococcal meningitis C vaccine given to children and adolescents in some countries; it is safe to be given both types of vaccine.

Poliomyelitis

Polio is generally spread through contaminated food and water. It is one of the vaccines given in childhood in the West and should be boosted every 10 years, either orally (a drop on the tongue) or as an injection. Polio can be carried asymptotically (ie showing no symptoms) and could cause a transient fever. In rare cases it causes weakness or paralysis of one or more muscles, which might be permanent.

Rabies

Rabies is spread by the bites or licks of an infected animal on broken skin. It is always fatal once the clinical symptoms start

(which might be up to several months after an infected bite), so post-bite vaccination should be taken as soon as possible. Post-bite vaccination (whether or not you've been vaccinated before the bite) prevents the virus from spreading to the central nervous system. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of post-bite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. To prevent the disease, three injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated and receive a bite, you will need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vaccinated, you will need fewer post-bite injections, and have more time to seek medical help.

Rift Valley Fever

This fever is spread occasionally via mosquito bites. The symptoms are of a fever and flu-like illness, and is rarely fatal.

River Blindness (Onchocerciasis)

This is caused by the larvae of a tiny worm, which is spread by the bite of a small fly. The earliest sign of infection is intensely itchy, red, sore eyes. Travellers are rarely severely affected. Treatment should be sought in a specialised clinic.

Sleeping Sickness (Trypanosomiasis)

Sleeping sickness is spread via the bite of the tsetse fly and causes a headache, fever and eventually coma. There is an effective treatment.

Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products. BCG vaccination is recommended for anyone who is likely to be mixing closely with the local population, although the vaccination gives only moderate protection against TB. It is more important to be vaccinated for long-term stays than for short stays. The BCG vaccine is not available in all countries, but is given routinely to many children in developing countries. The vaccination is usually given in a specialised chest clinic and causes a small permanent scar at the site of injection. It is a live vaccine and should not be given to pregnant women or immunocompromised individuals.

TB can be asymptomatic, only being picked up by a routine chest X-ray. Alternatively, it can cause a cough, weight loss or fever, sometimes months or even years after exposure.

Typhoid

This illness is spread through handling food or drinking water that has been contaminated by infected human faeces. The first symptom of infection is usually a fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Sometimes septicaemia (blood poisoning) can also occur. A typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available. Antibiotics are usually given as treatment, and death is rare unless septicaemia occurs.

THE ANTIMALARIAL A TO D

- A – Awareness of the risk. No medication is totally effective, but protection of up to 95% is achievable with most drugs, as long as other measures have been taken.
- B – Bites. Avoid at all costs. Sleep in a screened room, use a mosquito spray or coils, sleep under a permethrin-impregnated net at night. Cover up at night with long trousers and long sleeves, preferably with permethrin-treated clothing. Apply appropriate repellent to all areas of exposed skin in the evenings.
- C – Chemical prevention (ie antimalarial drugs) is usually needed in malaria-infected areas. Expert advice is needed as the resistance patterns of the parasite can change, and new drugs are in development. Not all antimalarial drugs are suitable for everyone. Most antimalarial drugs need to be started at least a week in advance and continued for four weeks after the last possible exposure to malaria.
- D – Diagnosis. If you have a fever or flu-like illness within a year of travel to a malaria-infected area, malaria is a possibility, and immediate medical attention is necessary.

Yellow Fever

You should carry a certificate as evidence of vaccination against yellow fever if you've recently been in an infected country, to avoid immigration problems. For a full list of countries where yellow fever is endemic visit the websites of the **World Health Organization** (www.who.int/wer/) or the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm). A traveller without a legally required up-to-date certificate could possibly be vaccinated and detained in isolation at the port of arrival for up to 10 days, or even repatriated.

Yellow fever is spread by infected mosquitoes. Symptoms range from a flu-like illness to severe hepatitis (liver inflammation), jaundice and death. Vaccination must be given at a designated clinic and is valid for 10 years. It's a live vaccine and must not be given to immunocompromised or pregnant women.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Although it's not inevitable that you will get diarrhoea while travelling in Africa, it's certainly likely. Diarrhoea is the most common travel-related illness – figures suggest that at least half of all travellers to Africa will get diarrhoea. Sometimes dietary changes, such as increased spices or oils, are the cause. To help prevent diarrhoea, avoid tap water unless you're sure it's safe to drink (see opposite). You should also only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if cooked or peeled, and be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Although freshly cooked food can often be safe, plates or serving utensils

might be dirty, so be highly selective when eating food from street vendors (ensure that cooked food is piping hot right through). If you develop diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing water (lots), and some salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinoline drug, such as ciprofloxacin or norfloxacin) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (eg loperamide) if you are not within easy reach of a toilet. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or abdominal pain, seek medical attention.

Amoebic Dysentery

Contracted by eating contaminated food and water, amoebic dysentery causes blood and mucus in the faeces. It can be relatively mild and tends to come on gradually, but seek medical advice if you think you have the illness as it won't clear up without treatment (which is with specific antibiotics).

Giardiasis

This, like amoebic dysentery, is caused by contaminated food or water. The illness usually appears a week or more after exposure to the parasite. Giardiasis might cause only a short-lived bout of typical travellers' diarrhoea, but may cause persistent diarrhoea. Ideally, seek medical advice if you suspect you have giardiasis, but if you are in a remote area you could start a course of antibiotics.

MANDATORY YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION

- North Africa – Not mandatory for any areas of North Africa, but Algeria, Libya and Tunisia require evidence of yellow fever vaccination if entering from an infected country. It is recommended for travellers to Sudan, and might be given to unvaccinated travellers leaving that country.
- Central Africa – Mandatory in Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, Congo (Zaire), Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and recommended in Chad.
- West Africa – Mandatory in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sao Tome & Principe and Togo, and recommended for The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.
- East Africa – Mandatory in Rwanda; it is recommended for Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.
- Southern Africa – Not mandatory for entry into any countries of Southern Africa, although it is necessary if entering from an infected country.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Heat Exhaustion

This condition occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt, and is particularly common in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. Self-treatment: fluid replacement with water and/or fruit juice, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt-loss component consists of consuming salty fluids such as soup, and adding a little more salt to foods than usual.

Heatstroke

Heat exhaustion is a precursor to the much more serious condition of heatstroke. In this case there is damage to the sweating mechanism, with an excessive rise in body temperature; irrational and hyperactive behaviour; and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement is usually also required by intravenous drip.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes might not always carry malaria or dengue fever, but they (and other insects) can cause irritation and infected bites. To avoid these, take the same precautions as you would for avoiding malaria (see p391). Use DEET-based insect repellents. Excellent clothing treatments are also available; mosquitos that land on treated clothing will die.

Bee and wasp stings cause real problems only to those who have a severe allergy to the stings (anaphylaxis.) If you are one of these people, carry an 'epipen' – an adrenaline (epinephrine) injection, which you can give yourself. This could save your life.

Sandflies are found near many African beaches. They usually only cause a nasty itchy bite but can carry a rare skin disorder, cutaneous leishmaniasis. Prevention of bites with DEET-based repellents is sensible.

Scorpions are frequently found in arid or dry climates. They can cause a painful bite that is sometimes life-threatening. If you are bitten by a scorpion, take a painkiller. Medi-

cal treatment should be sought if collapse occurs.

Bed bugs are often found in hostels and cheap hotels. Bites lead to very itchy, lumpy skin. Spraying the mattress with crawling-insect killer then changing the bedding will get rid of them.

Scabies is also frequently found in cheap accommodation. These tiny mites live in the skin, particularly between the fingers. They cause an intensely itchy rash. The itch is easily treated with malathion and permethrin lotion from a pharmacy; other members of the household also need treatment to avoid spreading scabies, even if they do not show any symptoms.

Snake Bites

Basically, avoid getting bitten! Do not walk barefoot, and don't stick your hand into holes or cracks. However, 50% of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (such as a stick) and apply a bandage over the site, with firm pressure – similar to bandaging a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get medical help as soon as possible so antivenom can be given if needed.

Water

Never drink tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (such as with iodine tablets), except in South Africa. Never drink from streams, rivers and lakes. It's also best to avoid drinking from pumps and wells – some do bring pure water to the surface, but the presence of animals can still contaminate supplies.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

At least 80% of the African population relies on traditional medicine, often either because conventional Western-style medicine is too expensive, because of prevailing cultural attitudes and beliefs, or simply because in some cases it works. It might also be because there's no other choice: a World Health Organization survey found that although there was only one medical doctor for every 50,000 people in Mozambique, there was a traditional healer for every 200 people.

Although some traditional African remedies seem to work on illnesses such as

malaria, sickle cell anaemia, high blood pressure and some AIDS symptoms, most African healers tend to learn their art by apprenticeship, so education (and consequently the application of knowledge) is inconsistent and unregulated. Conventionally trained physicians in South Africa, for example, angrily describe how their AIDS patients die of kidney failure because a *sangoma* (traditional healer) has given them an enema containing an essence made from powerful roots. Likewise, when traditional healers administer 'injections' with porcupine quills, knives or dirty razor blades, diseases are often spread or created rather than cured.

Rather than attempting to stamp out traditional practices, or simply pretend they aren't happening, a positive first step taken by some African countries is the regulation of traditional medicine by creating healers' associations and offering courses on such topics as sanitary practices. It remains unlikely in the short term that even a basic level of conventional Western-style medicine will be made available to all the people of Africa (even though the cost of doing so is less than the annual military budget of some Western countries). Traditional medicine, on the other hand, will almost certainly continue to be practised widely throughout the continent.