

Safaris

'Safari' has to be one of the most evocative words ever to infiltrate the English language. It may just mean 'journey' in Swahili, but to the eager visitors flocking to the Kenyan national parks it means so much more, inspiring visions of wildebeests fording raging rivers, lions stalking their heedless prey through the savanna grass, elephants trundling their way to water, iridescent flamingos lining a salty shore at sunset or the guilty thrill of watching vultures tear flesh and hyenas crunch through bone. For many people, taking that trip into the wild is the sole reason for coming to Africa, and once you've experienced untamed nature first-hand it's hard not to let the bush bug bite. Kenya is not always the cheapest destination for wildlife safaris, but with its huge diversity of habitats, cultures and attractions it's undeniably one of the most appealing. The well-developed travel industry allows access to even the remotest areas with a minimum of effort, though with hundreds of companies vying for the tourist buck, it's worth remembering that not all the predators in this particular game walk on four legs. With a bit of common sense, however, the biggest problem you'll face is choosing a trip, and the hardest thing you'll have to do is return to so-called civilisation afterwards.

PLANNING A SAFARI

It's possible to arrange an entire safari from scratch if you hire your own vehicle, but there are lots of things to sort out (see p72) and it's easier and cheaper to go with an organised group. There are an incredible number of companies out there offering a bewildering array of itineraries, so it's a good idea to shop around and find a company that best fits your requirements. Depending on your tastes, you can travel by minibus, 4WD, truck, camel, bicycle or airplane, or even on foot in some places. More than a few travellers book the first safari that fits their budget and end up feeling that they should have chosen something else; a bit of legwork visiting the various companies may save you a lot of time trying to get a refund if the safari isn't what you thought you had booked.

WARNING

Every year we get dozens of letters from readers complaining about bad experiences on safari and the companies mentioned by far the most are some of Nairobi's budget companies. Incidents reported to us range from mere bad practice, such as dodging park fees and ignoring client requests, to pure rip-offs and outright criminal behaviour, including sexual harassment, threats, abuse and assault. Female travellers in particular bear the brunt of many of the worst cases, even when travelling in pairs or small groups.

With this in mind, we can only reinforce yet again just how important it is to take care when booking a budget safari: do as much research as possible, insist on setting out every detail of your trip in advance, don't let yourself be pressured into anything, don't pay any substantial monies up front and, if in doubt, think seriously about stretching your budget to use a reputable midrange firm. The budget companies listed here are 'reliable' in that they have been operating under the same name for years and will at least attempt to take you out on safari rather than disappearing overnight, but satisfaction is by no means guaranteed whoever you go with. Of course, we do receive plenty of positive feedback as well, so there's no need to let potential problems put you off a safari entirely – just keep your wits about you and make it clear from the start that you won't take any crap from anyone!

Choosing a Safari

There are essentially two types of organised safaris – those where you camp, and those where you stay in lodges or luxury tented camps at night. Some budget companies also have their own lodges on the outskirts of parks, which tend to be cheaper, although you'll often lose quite a bit of time shuttling between the lodge and the parks.

Whatever accommodation you choose, safaris typically start and end in either Nairobi or Mombasa, although there are a few exceptions to this. Most companies use either large Toyota Land Cruiser 4WDs or Nissan Urvans (effectively matatus, or minibuses), which have a hatch in the roof for wildlife viewing. This safe vantage point from which to take photos is something you'll miss out on if you hire your own car. Some bigger companies also use open-sided trucks (see p70), which achieve the same effect. A few companies offer walking or cycling safaris (see p70).

As well as transfers to and from Nairobi or Mombasa and between the parks, safari companies offer two wildlife drives per day. Bear in mind that if you arrange a half-day visit to any park as part of your safari, the chances are you won't be visiting at prime viewing time as you'll spend these periods driving to and from your destination.

WHICH PARKS?

Once you've decided on the type of accommodation and where you want to leave from you'll need to pick your parks. Some travellers choose to maximise their chances of seeing the Big Five (elephant, rhino, leopard, lion and buffalo) by visiting one of the more open but crowded parks such as Amboseli or Masai Mara, and often end up with a lot of 'lions-in-front-of-a-jeep' photos. Others prefer to view wildlife in the less disturbed wilderness of the African bush. While they see less wildlife at many of the other parks due to denser vegetation, nothing can beat the sensation of having a pool of basking hippos all to yourself.

People who are interested in specific pursuits such as bird-watching, fishing or tribal culture will find that some parks (and companies) are better suited to their needs than others (see p67).

We've tried to give an impression of what you can expect to find at the various parks (see p53, and individual park entries), but the wildlife is mobile and does not always want to be seen, so there's no guarantee you'll see every species described in the wildlife books.

You should also give some thought to how far away the various parks are from each other, as it's quite easy to spend half your safari driving between the parks if you're not careful.

When to Go

Wildlife can be seen at all times of year, but the migration patterns of the big herbivores (which in turn attract the big predators) are likely to be a major factor in deciding when to go. From July to October, huge herds of wildebeest and zebras cross from the Serengeti in Tanzania to the Masai Mara, and Amboseli also receives huge herds at this time. This is probably prime viewing time as the land is parched, the vegetation has died back and the animals are obliged to come to drink at the ever-shrinking waterholes. However, most safari companies increase their rates at this time.

The long rains (from March to June) and short rains (from October to November) transform the national parks into a lush carpet of greenery. It's very scenic, but it does provide much more cover for the wildlife to hide behind and the rain can turn the tracks into impassable mush. Safaris may be impossible in the lowland parks during either rainy season.

Regular wildlife drives can cause other shifts in animal behaviour patterns – in Tsavo West leopards apparently now lurk in roadside ditches during the day, waiting for dik-dik (small antelopes) scared by cars.

Booking

Many travellers prefer to get all the planning done before they arrive in the country and book from abroad, either through travel agents or directly with companies. Most safari operators have websites and many will take Internet bookings, but making arrangements with anyone other than a well-established top-end operator this way can be a risky business, and if you're going for a budget option you should certainly wait and do your research on the ground when you arrive.

In the high season, many companies depart daily or every second day for the most popular national parks. To less frequented parks such as Samburu, Buffalo Springs, Shaba and Meru, they generally leave only once or twice per week. In addition, most companies will leave for any of the most popular national parks at any time so long as you have a minimum number of people wanting to go, usually four. If you are on your own, you may have to hang around for a while to be bundled together with a larger group. It obviously makes sense to either book ahead or get a group together yourself rather than just turn up alone and expect to leave the next morning. Advance booking is a good idea for Lake Turkana safaris (p69) and the more exotic options described in this chapter.

The best way to ensure you get what you pay for is to decide exactly what you want, then visit the various companies in person and talk through the kind of package you're looking for. A good starting point is to visit one of the travel agents in Nairobi or Mombasa and pick up as many leaflets as you can get your hands on. You can then make an informed choice about which companies to visit. You can also book through the travel agents, although you'll usually pay a little more than if you negotiate directly with the companies, or check out the offers on www.kenyalastminute.com.

One persistent feature of Kenya's safari scene is the role of the street tout. These people will approach you almost as soon as you step off the plane in Nairobi and try to get you signed up for a safari there and then. They're not all bad guys and the safari you end up with may be fine, but you'll pay a mark-up to cover their commission, while the constant hard sell can be exasperating. At most of the budget companies, it's not even worth trying to enter without a tout as they wait by the door and escort every customer inside. On the plus side, many will take you round several companies, so if you want to do a quick circuit of the budget operators

ANIMAL SPOTTING

When you visit Kenya's national parks and reserves you'll be spending a lot of time craning your neck and keeping watchful eyes out for animals and birds. There are a few telltale signs to note, as well as a few things you can do to maximise your chances. Most are just common sense, but it's amazing how many people go belting around noisily expecting everything to come to them.

The best time to see wildlife is between 6.30am and 9.30am, and again from 3.30pm to 6.30pm. Make sure your safari company takes you out during these times. Wildlife drives in the middle of the day are largely pointless, although there are signs that in the popular parks (such as Amboseli and Masai Mara) animals are actually changing their normal hunting habits to avoid the tourists. When the tourists head back to the lodges for lunch, the carnivores go out hunting – in peace.

Drive around slowly and, wherever possible, quietly, and keep your eyes trained on the ground ahead and to the side, and on the branches above. In wooded country, agitated and noisy monkeys or baboons are often a sign that there's a big cat (probably a leopard) around.

Vultures circling are not necessarily an indication of a kill below, but if they are gathering in trees and seem to be watching something, you can reasonably assume they are waiting their turn for a go at a carcass.

they can actually be quite helpful, as long as you're firm about not making a final decision that day.

Bear in mind that once you enter a safari company office, the staff may be reluctant to let you walk out without a firm booking, so you'll often be told that the great price they're offering is only valid on the spot. This is more of a problem in the budget places, so be firm and say no if the proposed safari isn't exactly what you're looking for or if you just want to shop around more. Once you've left you're quite free to come back, in which case it should be easy enough to negotiate back down to the original price.

Costs

With all this competition, prices are remarkably uniform across different companies, but the determining factors are always going to be the type of accommodation, the places you want to visit, the season and the duration of the safari. In general, the longer you go for, the less you pay per day. Whichever type of safari you choose, be aware that you generally get what you pay for. A high degree of personal involvement in camp chores and a willingness to eschew creature comforts usually guarantees a lower price. If you want the opposite, it will cost you more.

There's a good argument for spending a bit more on your safari and using a reliable vehicle. Too many budget companies are notorious for breakdowns and we get a flood of letters every year from travellers who spent at least one day of their safari waiting for a tow truck or mechanic.

For camping safaris with no frills you are looking at US\$70 per day, which should include transport, food (three meals per day), park entry and camping fees, tents and cooking equipment. You'll usually be expected to share a tent even if you're travelling alone, although you can pay a single supplement of around 25% of the daily safari rate and have the tent to yourself. Sleeping-bag hire is typically US\$10 per trip on top of the safari price.

The prices for staying in lodges or tented camps are considerably higher on the whole. In high season you're looking at a minimum of US\$160 per person per night in the lodges and up to US\$350 in the luxury tented camps (these prices will drop in the low season). Again, if you want a room to yourself there's usually a supplement of around 25%, although it can be as high as 50%.

At the end of one of these safaris your driver/guide and cook(s) will expect a reasonable tip. This is only fair since wages are low and they will have put in a lot of effort to make your trip memorable. Remember that other travellers are going to follow you and the last thing anyone wants to find is a disgruntled driver/guide who couldn't care less whether you see wildlife or not. At the time of research, a good tip was around KSh200 per guide/cook per day from each traveller – in other words, what you would spend on a couple of drinks.

Many safaris feature side trips to *manyattas* (tribal villages), which provide an opportunity for displaced villagers to make a bit of income from tourism, either posing for photographs or selling souvenirs. Guides and drivers usually levy a fee of around US\$10 per head for this, but often this money goes into the driver's pocket. If you visit a *manyatta*, insist that the driver gives the tribespeople their due.

What to Bring

Any organised safari will provide camping gear or accommodation and all meals. You may have to provide your own drinking water, and alcohol is almost always extra, so bringing your own booze can help keep down

costs. Sleeping bags can usually be hired from your safari company or local outfitters. If you're planning to attempt the Mt Kenya trek it's probably worth bringing a decent three-season bag from home.

You'll need enough clothing and footwear for hot days and cold nights, but the amount of baggage you'll be allowed to bring will be limited. Excess gear can usually be stored at the safari company's offices. Don't forget to bring a pocketknife and a torch (flashlight) – the company will provide kerosene lanterns for the camp but it's unlikely they'll be left on all night.

'Luxury' items such as toilet paper and mosquito nets are generally not provided, so you'll need to bring your own. Mosquito nets can often be hired and insect repellent, skin cream and mosquito coils are always a good idea. There are few shops in the bush, so sanitary towels, medicines and other important items should all be brought with you.

Service & Feedback

The service provided by even the best safari companies can vary, depending on the driver, the itinerary, the behaviour of the wildlife, flat tyres and breakdowns and, of course, the attitude of the passengers themselves. It's possible for a good company to provide a bad safari and for bad companies to shine occasionally. It's also a volatile market and a company that has a good reputation one year can go to the dogs the next. We've tried to recommend some of the better companies later in this chapter, but this shouldn't take the place of hands-on research once you arrive in the country.

It's worth getting in touch with the **Kenyan Association of Tour Operators** (KATO; ☎ 020-713348; www.katokenya.org; PO Box 48461, Nairobi) before making a booking. It may not be the most powerful regulatory body in the world, but most reputable safari companies subscribe and going with a KATO member will give you *some* recourse in case of conflict. Accreditation by the **Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association** (KPSGA; ☎ 020-609355; www.safariguides.org; PO Box 24397, Nairobi) is also a good indicator of quality. On the ethical side, the **Ecotourism Society of Kenya** (ESOK; ☎ 020-2724755; www.esok.org; PO Box 10146, Nairobi) also maintains a list of member companies who subscribe to its code of conduct for responsible, sustainable safaris.

One thing to look out for whichever company you book with is client swapping. Quite a few companies shift clients on to other companies if they don't have enough people to justify running the trip themselves. This ensures that trips actually depart on time and saves travellers days of waiting for a safari to fill up, but it does undermine consumer trust. Reputable companies will usually inform you before they transfer you to another company. In any case, it may not be the end of the world if you end up taking your safari with a different company from the one you booked with; just make sure the safari you booked and paid for is what you get.

The brochures for some safari companies may give the impression that they offer every conceivable safari under the sun, but in fact, many companies also advertise trips run by other companies. While it's not the most transparent way to do business, again, it needn't be the end of the world. A reliable company will normally choose reliable partners, and you're only really likely to come unstuck at the budget end of the market. Sadly, the only way some of the shoddier operators can get business is through touts, and these companies employ all sorts of tricks to cut costs, including not maintaining their vehicles, entering national parks through side entrances to avoid fees, and employing glorified matatu drivers with little knowledge of the wildlife as guides.

Be particularly careful of safari companies in Nairobi. Some of these guys don't actually run *any* of their own safaris, and are basically just travel

When choosing a company, look out for those that give something back to the community or conservation projects. For example, the international Peregrine trekking company recently donated US\$11,000 to establish a tree plantation on the edge of the Masai Mara, helping regenerate native woodland and provide an income for local people.

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agents. If you book with one of these operators and anything goes wrong, or the itinerary is changed without your agreement, you have very little come-back and it'll be virtually impossible to get a refund. Unfortunately, it's often hard to tell which are genuine safari companies and which are agents. If you want to know who you're dealing with throughout, go with one of the more expensive agents and confirm exactly who will be operating which parts of the trip, particularly if you are detouring to Tanzania or Uganda.

We welcome all feedback on your safari experiences and will try to incorporate it into future editions of this book.

TYPES OF SAFARI

Camping Safaris

Camping safaris cater for budget travellers, the young (or young at heart) and those who are prepared to put up with a little discomfort to get the authentic bush experience. At the bottom of the price range, you'll have to forgo luxuries such as flush toilets, running water and cold drinks, and you'll have to chip in to help with chores such as putting up the tents and helping prepare dinner. Showers are provided at some but not all campsites, although there's usually a tap where you can scrub down with cold water. The price of your safari will include three meals a day cooked by the camp cook(s), although food will be of the plain-but-plenty variety.

There are more comfortable camping options, where there are extra staff to do all the work, but they cost more. A number of companies have also set up permanent campsites in the Masai Mara and Samburu National Reserves where you can just drop into bed at the end of a dusty day's drive. At the top end of this market are some very plush luxury campsites offering hot showers and big permanent tents fitted with mosquito nets, beds and sheets, about as far from real camping as five-star hotels are from youth hostels. See p66 for companies using these kind of sites.

Whatever you pay, you'll end up hot, tired and dusty at the end of the day, but you'll sleep well, and if you're lucky your travelling companions should be like-minded independent souls with a sense of adventure. Few things can match the thrill of waking up in the middle of the African bush with nothing between you and the animals except a sheet of canvas and the dying embers of last night's fire. It's not unusual for elephants or hippos to trundle through the camp at night, or even the occasional lion, and, so far, no-one has been eaten or trampled on – that we know of.

Reliable companies offering camping safaris at the time of writing included the following:

Basecamp Explorer (☎ 020-577490; www.basecampexplorer.com; Ole Odume Rd, Hurlingham, Nairobi) An excellent Scandinavian-owned ecotourism operator offering a nine-day camping itinerary to Samburu, Lake Nakuru and the Masai Mara, with walking at Mt Kenya, Lake Bogoria and Lake Baringo. The firm also has its own luxury site in the Masai Mara (p289) and runs plenty of high-end conservation-based safaris, including trips to Lamu, Tanzania, Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro.

Best Camping Tours (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-229667; www.bestcampingkenya.com; I&M Towers, Kenyatta Ave, Nairobi) This company offers budget camping safaris on all the main routes, including Amboseli or Masai Mara (three to four days) and Amboseli and Tsavo West (four days). Longer seven- and eight-day safaris visit various combinations of Amboseli, Tsavo West, the Rift Valley lakes, Masai Mara, Mt Kenya, Samburu and Lake Nakuru. It also runs trips into Tanzania. The average cost is around US\$80 per day.

Bushbuck Adventures (☎ 020-7121505; bushbuckadventures.com; Peponi Rd, Westlands, Nairobi) Bushbuck is a small company specialising in personalised safaris. It has a private, semi-permanent camp in the northwest corner of the Masai Mara. As a result, it's relatively expensive, but some company profits are put into conservation projects. Prices range from US\$150 per person per day for five people to US\$340 for one person. The company is also strong on walking safaris.

A potential problem comes from companies that don't have their own equipment at all and only run out to hire a vehicle after they've secured a booking.

Eastern & Southern Safaris (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-242828; www.essafari.co.ke; Finance House, Loita St, Nairobi) A classy and reliable outfit aiming at the midrange and upper end of the market, with standards to match. The basic three-day Masai Mara package comes in at US\$367 per person; five days in the Mara and Lake Nakuru costs US\$631. Safaris in Tanzania and Uganda are also available. Rates are based on two people sharing, but are reduced for groups of three or more. Departures are guaranteed with just two people for some itineraries.

Flight Centres (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-210024; www.flightcentres-kenya.com; Lakhamsi House, Biashara St, Nairobi) This company acts as an informal broker for camping safaris in Kenya. It can shop around for you and is a good barometer of quality. It also runs a few of its own overland safaris (see p70) under the umbrella of its parent company, Africa Travel Co.

Gametrackers (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-338927; www.gametrackersafaris.com; Nginyo Towers, cnr Koinange & Moktar Daddah Sts, Nairobi) Long established and usually reliable, this company offers a full range of camping and lodge safaris around Kenya, including routes in the remote Lake Turkana (see p69). There are also short excursions to Nairobi National Park, walking treks in Aberdare National Park, Mt Kenya treks and numerous long-haul trips to Tanzania, Uganda and further afield. For shorter safaris, rates are usually around US\$75 per day. The longer trips depart on set dates, outlined on its website.

Ketty Tours Mombasa (☎ 041-2315178; ketty@africaonline.co.ke; Ketty Plaza, Moi Ave); Diani Beach (☎ 040-203582; Diani shopping centre) This company specialises in short tours of the coastal region (Wasini, Shimba Hills, Gede etc) and into Tsavo East or West. However, it also offers camping safaris to all the usual parks from two to 10 days. Prices typically start at US\$100 per person per day for a camping safari and US\$120 to US\$150 for a luxury trip.

Let's Go Travel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-340331; www.lets-go-travel.net; Caxton House, Standard St, Nairobi) This excellent travel agent runs its own safaris and excursions and also sells on an amazing range of trips from other companies, covering Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and even the Seychelles, as well as plenty of specialist and remote options in Kenya itself. Prices are on the high side for camping but the scope justifies the expense, and it's also a good port of call for unusual lodge safaris and car hire.

Primetime Safaris (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-215773; www.primetime.co.ke; Contrast House, Moi Ave, Nairobi) A big budget player that's widely touted. We've received several good and a few bad reports, so make sure you know exactly what you're getting. The standard five-day Masai Mara trip will cost around US\$65 a day.

Safari Seekers (www.safari-seekerskenya.net) Nairobi (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-652317; Jubilee Insurance Exchange Bldg, Kaunda St); Mombasa (Map p158; ☎ 041-220122; Diamond Trust Arcade, Moi Ave) This budget company has been operating for some years. It has its own permanent campsites in Amboseli, Samburu and Masai Mara, and runs camping and lodge safaris in both Kenya and Tanzania, plus trips into Uganda. Camping safaris cost US\$70 to US\$105 per person per day (plus US\$10 per person per trip for sleeping-bag hire). Departures are at least once a week, or any time with at least four people. Safari Seekers also offers air safaris to Amboseli and Masai Mara with accommodation at luxury lodges or tented camps.

Saferide Safaris (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-253129; www.saferidesafaris.com; Ave House, Kenyatta Ave, Nairobi) A relatively new budget operator consistently recommended by readers for its camping excursions.

Sana Highlands Trekking Expeditions (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-227820; www.sanatrekkingkenya.com; Contrast House, Moi Ave, Nairobi) Another of the big budget players and a regular stop on the tout circuit. Its brochure is one of the many identikit ones going around and bears a rather cheeky resemblance to the last edition of Lonely Planet's *Kenya!* However, it has had a good reputation in the past for walking safaris as well as the usual camping and lodge itineraries.

Savuka Tours & Safaris (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-225108; www.savuka-travels.com; Pan African House, Kenyatta Ave, Nairobi) A big-budget operator with extremely persistent touts. The rates are cheap, but its camp in the Masai Mara is 40 minutes from the nearest gate. On the other hand, we've had many positive reports from customers; just make sure you know how much time you'll actually spend inside the parks. Mara, Amboseli, Lake Nakuru and Samburu itineraries are available.

Special Camping Safaris Ltd (☎ 020-350720; www.camping-safaris.com; Whistling Thorns, Isinya/Kiserian Pipeline Rd, Kiserian) This small family-run company offers good trips to Masai Mara

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MINIMAL-IMPACT SAFARIS

However much you pride yourself on your environmental awareness, there's one wild card on every safari: the driver. The person who controls the car controls the impact your trip makes on the country you're passing through, and with massive professional and financial pressure on them, most drivers will habitually break park rules to get you closer to the action. In the interests of the animals, please observe the following:

- Never get out of your vehicle, except at designated points where this is permitted. Certain species may look harmless enough, but this is not a zoo – the animals are wild and you should treat them as such.
- Never get too close to the animals and back off if they are getting edgy or nervous. Stress can alter the animals' natural behaviour patterns and could make the difference between this year's lion cubs surviving or getting killed by other predators.
- Animals always have the right of way. Slow down if you see animals on the road ahead, and leave them plenty of space.
- Don't follow predators as they move off – you try stalking something when you've got half a dozen minibuses in tow!
- Keep to the tracks. One of the biggest dangers in the parks is land degradation from vehicles crisscrossing the countryside. The tyre tracks act as drainage channels for the rain and erode the soil, which affects the grasses that attract the herbivores, which attract the predators. Insist that your driver sticks to the main trails, however good the photo opportunity may seem.
- Don't light fires except at campsites, and dispose of cigarettes carefully. An old film case is the best place for cigarette butts, which can then be disposed of outside the park.
- Don't litter the parks and campsites. Unfortunately, the worst offenders are safari drivers and cooks who toss everything and anything out the window. It won't do any harm to point out to them the consequences of what they're doing, or you could just clean it up yourself.

(US\$495, four days), or Masai Mara and the Rift Valley lakes (US\$625, six days), and a full 10-day safari that takes in Masai Mara, Lakes Naivasha, Nakuru, Bogoria and Baringo, Maralal, Samburu and the Mt Kenya foothills (US\$1050). All these rates are based on a group of four people.

Lodge & Tented-Camp Safaris

If you can't do without luxuries, there's another side to the safari business, a world of luxurious lodges with swimming pools and bars overlooking secluded waterholes, and wonderfully remote tented camps that re-create the way wealthy hunters used to travel around Kenya a century ago. Some of the lodges are beautifully conceived and the locations are to die for, perched high above huge sweeps of savanna or water holes teeming with African wildlife. Most are set deep within the national parks, so the safari drives offer maximum wildlife-viewing time. A lot of the environmental bad habits of the 1980s, leopard baiting for example, are falling out of favour.

In the lodges you can expect rooms with bathrooms or cottages with air conditioning, international cuisine, a terrace bar beneath a huge *makuti* (palm-thatched) canopy with wonderful views, a swimming pool, wildlife videos and other entertainments, and plenty of staff on hand to cater for all your requirements. Almost all lodges have a waterhole, and some have a hidden viewing tunnel that leads right to the waterside. Some also put out salt to tempt animals to visit, a dubious habit which shouldn't really be encouraged.

The luxury tented camps tend to offer semipermanent tents with fitted bathrooms (hot showers come as standard), beds with mosquito nets, proper furniture, fans and gourmet meals served alfresco in the bush.

The really exclusive ones are even more luxurious than the lodges, and tend to be *very* expensive: many of the guests fly in on charter planes, which should give you some impression of the kind of budget we're talking about.

Some of the companies listed for camping safaris also provide lodge-based safaris, but the following are big, reliable operators that have been around for years. Most are members of KATO. In and around Mombasa, most bookings are done through hotels.

Abercrombie & Kent (Map pp102–3; ☎ 020-6950000; www.abercrombiekent.com; Abercrombie & Kent House, Mombasa Rd, Nairobi)

Micato Safaris (☎ 020-220743; www.micato.com; View Park Towers, Monrovia St, Nairobi)

Pollman's Tours & Safaris (☎ 020-337234; www.pollmans.com; Pollman's House, Mombasa Rd, Nairobi)

Private Safaris (www.privatesafaris.co.ke) Nairobi (☎ 020-554150; Twinstar Tower, Mombasa Rd); Mombasa (☎ 041-476000; Safari House, Kaunda St)

Somak Travel (www.somak-nairobi.com) Nairobi (☎ 020-535508; Somak House, Mombasa Rd); Mombasa (☎ 041-487349; Somak House, Nyerere Ave)

Southern Cross Safaris (www.southerncrosssafaris.com) Nairobi (☎ 020-884712; Symbion House, Karen Rd); Mombasa (Map p155; ☎ 041-475074; Kanstan Centre, Nyali Bridge, Malindi Rd); Malindi (Map p206; ☎ 042-30547; Malindi Complex, Lamu Rd)

United Touring Company (UTC; www.unitedtouring.com) Nairobi (☎ 020-331960; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St); Mombasa (☎ 041-316333; Moi Ave)

Prices are similar across these companies (US\$160 to US\$350 per day). Abercrombie & Kent uses Land Cruiser 4WDs, while the others tend to use minibuses.

SPECIALIST SAFARIS Bird-Watching Safaris

Most of the safari companies listed in this chapter offer some kind of bird-watching safaris, but quality varies. For the very best Kenya has to offer, contact **Origins Safaris** (☎ 020-312137; www.originsafaris.info; Fedha Towers, Standard St, Nairobi), originally set up as East African Ornithological Safaris by one of the best ornithologists in Kenya. The company offers 14-day specialist bird-watching extravaganzas that take in Mt Kenya, the Rift Valley lakes, Kakamega Forest Reserve, the Masai Mara National Reserve and Lake Victoria.

Top-class lodges are used throughout this trip and the cost, based on two people sharing, works out at US\$4986/5803 per person in the low/high season, coming down to US\$3061/3663 per person for groups of six. There are monthly departures throughout the year.

Camel Safaris

This is a superb way of getting right off the beaten track and into areas where vehicle safaris don't or can't go. Most camel safaris go to the Samburu and Turkana tribal areas between Isiolo and Lake Turkana and you'll have a chance to experience nomadic life and mingle with tribal people. Wildlife is also plentiful, although it's the journey itself that is the main attraction.

You have the choice of riding the camels or walking alongside them and most tribes are led by experienced Samburu *moran* (warriors) and accompanied by English-speaking tribal guides who are well versed in bush lore, botany, ornithology and local customs. Most travelling is done as early as possible in the cool of the day and a campsite established around noon. Afternoons are time for relaxing, guided walks and showers before drinks and dinner around a camp fire.

Many safari lodges accumulate their own populations of semi-tame monkeys and other small mammals. The well-fed rock hyraxes at the Voi Safari Lodge in Tsavo East are so relaxed that you may have to shoo them out of your room!

All companies provide a full range of camping equipment (generally including two-person tents) and ablution facilities, but they vary in what they require you to bring. Some even provide alcoholic drinks, although normally you pay extra for this. The typical distance covered each day is 15km to 18km so you don't have to be superfit.

The following companies offer camel safaris of varying lengths:

Bobong Camp (☎ 062-32718; olmaisor@africaonline.co.ke; PO Box 5, Rumuruti) This remote camp offers some of Kenya's cheapest self-catered camel safaris – KSh1000 per day for basic hire of one camel and a handler, no other equipment included. You can create your own package and pretty much roam where you want to. Organised Turkana and Samburu cultural visits can also be arranged (KSh5000 per group).

Desert Rose (☎ 0722-638774; www.desertrosekenya.com; PO Box 44801-00100, Nairobi) These walking camel-train safaris leave from the remote Desert Rose lodge just north of Barogoi in northern Kenya. Simple safaris, with no ice or meat, can be arranged for US\$120 per day (minimum six nights), while more luxurious trips, with chilled wine and three-course meals, cost US\$220 per day (minimum two people, two nights). All trips are led by experienced guides and you have the Matthews Range, Ndoto Mountains and Ol Doiyo Nyiro (near South Horr) as your playground.

Yare Safaris (Map pp102–3; ☎ 020-214099; yare@africaonline.co.ke; Windsor House, University Way, Nairobi) This well-established independent operator offers seven-day trips to Yare Camel Club & Camp (☎ 065-62295) in Maralal for around US\$500, picking up the camels at the Ewaso Ngiro River. Short custom packages are also available from the camp itself – US\$20 for a day including lunch or US\$35 per day for overnight safaris. All-inclusive packages are US\$90 per day.

Cultural Safaris

With ecofriendly lodges now springing up all over Kenya, local tribespeople are becoming increasingly involved with tourism, and there are a growing number of companies offering cultural safaris that allow you to interact with the tribes in a far more personal way than the rushed souvenir stops that the mainstream tours make at Maasai villages. The best of these combine volunteer work with more conventional tour activities and provide accommodation in tents, ecolodges and village houses.

Many of the Lake Turkana safaris covered earlier include a trek to Rendille and Samburu villages and interact with the tribespeople.

Reliable and interesting companies include the following:

Eastern & Southern Safaris (☎ 020-242828; www.essafari.co.ke) Excellent luxury 'Green Safaris' run in conjunction with Kenya's Green Belt Movement, involving visitors in cultural and conservation activities around Nairobi, Amboseli, Lake Nakuru and the Masai Mara. The 13-day package costs US\$2028, with optional add-ons to visit the beaches around Mombasa or head into Tanzania.

Eco-Resorts (☎ 042-32191; www.eco-resorts.com; PO Box 120, Watamu) This US-based company offers a variety of activity-based volunteer and cultural packages and customised safaris around Kenya. A proportion of profits go to community and conservation projects.

IntoAfrica (☎ 0114-2555610; www.intoafrica.co.uk; 40 Huntingdon Cres, Sheffield, S11 8AX, UK) Runs seven- and 14-day 'fair-traded' trips providing insights into African life and directly supporting local communities. Its Wild Kenya and Kenya Insights safaris explore cultures and offer wildlife viewing. Accommodation is in hotels, bush camps and permanent tented camps. Trips leave on scheduled dates and start at around US\$140 per person per day; if you have a group, you can pay more and begin the trip when you want.

Origins Safaris (☎ 020-312137; www.originsafaris.info) Origins also offers a superb range of exclusive cultural safaris around the country, including such rare sights as Samburu circumcision ceremonies and tribal initiation rites in southern Ethiopia.

Fishing Safaris

Kenya offers some wonderful fishing and a local permit should cost you just KSh100, but most organised trips are very much geared towards wealthier visitors.

Perhaps the grandest option is a flying trip to **Rutundu Log Cabins** (☎ 020-340331; www.letsgosafari.com; cabins US\$300) in Mt Kenya National Park, booked through Let's Go Travel. Both Lake Rutundu and Lake Alice, a two-hour drive to the south, are well stocked with rainbow trout, while nearby Kazita Munyi River is stocked with brown trout. Rods, flies, boats and guides are all available. Accommodation is in comfortable and well-equipped self-catering cabins, and return charter flights here from Nanyuki are around US\$250. Full board is also available for a considerable extra sum.

Origins Safaris (☎ 020-312137; www.originsafaris.info) also offers flying trips to Lake Rutundu. Trips last four days and cost a whopping US\$4222 for a single person, coming down to US\$1662 per person for a group of four. Nile perch fishing on Lake Turkana is also a possibility.

For shorter fishing excursions, several top-end lodges in the Masai Mara offer short flying trips to Lake Victoria for Nile perch fishing at around US\$425 per person for a half-day. Many can be booked through Let's Go Travel. **Lonrho Hotels Kenya** (☎ 020-216940; www.lonrho.com), recently acquired by Fairmont, also arranges half-day river and lake trout-fishing trips from the Mount Kenya Safari Club (p273) in Nanyuki (US\$30 per person).

Deep-sea fishing off the Kenyan coast can be arranged with just about any travel agent or top-end resort in the region; Malindi (p208) is a good place to start.

Flying Safaris

These safaris essentially cater for the well-off who want to fly between remote airstrips in the various national parks and stay in luxury tented camps. If money is no object, you can get around by a mixture of charter and scheduled flights and stay in some of the finest camps in Kenya; arrangements can be made with any of the lodge and tented-camp safari operators. Flying safaris to Lake Turkana and Sibiloi National Park are common, and most safari companies will be able to sort out a countrywide itinerary. Safari Seekers (p65) can arrange reasonably priced flying safaris. Quite a few special-interest safari operators use light aircraft to save time.

Lake Turkana Safaris

There can be few travellers who come to Kenya who do not relish the expedition through the semi-arid wilds of Samburu National Reserve and up to the legendary Lake Turkana (Jade Sea). To get an idea of the country you will pass through, see p332 and p338.

These safaris all use open-sided 4WD trucks that take up to 18 people and two to three staff (cook, driver and courier). You will need to set aside a minimum of seven days to complete the journey.

Bushbuck Adventures (☎ 020-7121505; www.bushbuckadventures.com) This company offers 10-day Lake Turkana safaris on request. Itineraries are tailor-made and tend to keep away from the usual routes. Trips often include guided walks, allowing meetings with Rendille and Samburu tribespeople. The Ndoto Mountains, Matthews Range, Shaba National Reserve and Chalbi Desert can all be included.

Gametrackers (☎ 020-338927; www.gametrackerssafaris.com) Gametrackers offers 10- and eight-day options to Lake Turkana and is the only company to include Marsabit National Park. Its 10-day safari takes in Mt Kenya, Samburu National Reserve, Marsabit, Chalbi Desert, Lake Turkana, Maralal and Lake Baringo, and costs US\$550 (plus a local payment of US\$110 per person in Turkana). The eight-day option visits Lake Baringo, Maralal, Lake Turkana and the Samburu National Reserve, and costs US\$440 (plus a local payment of US\$75). Both safaris use a powerboat for a short excursion on the lake and traditional Turkana huts make up Gametrackers' camp beside the lake 10km south of Loyangalani. Gametrackers also offers a 10-day combined Lake Turkana and camel safari.

Cultural interaction can have a surprisingly profound effect on some people – in 2005 one Londoner was so taken with traditional Maasai dress that he started wearing it on the streets back home, causing enough of a stir to make the local press.

'If money is no object, you can get around by a mixture of charter and scheduled flights and stay in some of the finest camps in Kenya'

Motorcycle Safaris

Operating out of Diani Beach, **Fredlink Tours** (☎ 040-3202647; www.motorbike-safari.com; Diani Plaza, Diani Beach) runs motorcycle safaris to the Taita Hills and the Kilimanjaro foothills, supported by a Land Rover. Large 350cc trail bikes are used and the full six-day trips include a wildlife drive in Tsavo West National Park and two nights' lodge accommodation. The cost is KSh57,800 per rider, including meals, camping, guides, fuel and a support vehicle.

Fredlink also rents out motorcycles and scooters (see p178) and can arrange custom-guided motorcycle tours for around KSh6700 per day. Check its website for more information.

Truck Safaris

Overlanding is a common element of many people's travels through Africa. Although most are bound for elsewhere in Africa – Harare or Cape Town are particularly popular – a few Kenya-only trips are available in converted flat-bed trucks that can carry up to 24 passengers.

Following is a list of popular outfits with tours within Kenya. For more on companies that include Kenya as part of an overland trip, see p375.

Acacia Expeditions (UK ☎ 020-7706 4700; www.acacia-africa.com; 23a Craven Tce, London W2 3QH, UK) As well as overland trips, Acacia runs shorter trips within Kenya, including a four-day Masai Mara package (€295 plus a local payment of US\$90), four- and six-day packages to Masai Mara and Lake Nakuru (€275 plus US\$170 and €395 plus US\$149, respectively), a five-day Mt Kenya trek (€495 plus US\$60) and a seven-day Kenyan Wildlife Safari (€445 plus US\$179). The company also runs specialist tours for disabled clients.

Flight Centres (☎ 020-210024; www.flightcentres-kenya.com) As well as international overland routes of up to 56 days, this company (under its parent company, Africa Travel Co) has a three-day Masai Mara truck trip for UK£195, plus a US\$120 kitty.

Guerba Expeditions (UK ☎ 01373-826611; www.guerba.co.uk; Wessex House, 40 Station Rd, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 3JN); Kenya (☎ 020-553056; guerba@africaonline.co.ke; PO Box 43935, Nairobi) This excellent outfit has deep Kenyan roots. Truck safaris include an eight-day tour covering the Masai Mara and lakes Nakuru and Naivasha for UK£325 (plus US\$115 kitty) and a 15-day trip that goes to wildlife parks and the lakes for UK£675 (plus US\$180 kitty). Its 14-day Kenya Family Safari & Coast package (from UK£875 plus US\$170), covering Masai Mara, Lakes Nakuru and Naivasha, Tsavo West and Diani Beach, takes children over eight years old.

Walking & Cycling Safaris

For the keen walker or cyclist and those who don't want to spend all their time in a safari minibus, there are a number of options. For information on treks in Mt Kenya National Park, see p264.

Bike Treks (☎ 020-446371; www.biketreks.co.ke; Kabete Gardens, Westlands, Nairobi) This company offers walking and cycling as well as combined walking/cycling safaris. Its shortest safari is a three-day Masai Mara combined trip, and there are also six-day walking trips to the Loita Plains and Maasai land west and south of Narok, which include a full-day wildlife viewing drive in the Masai Mara. For cyclists there's a six-day safari through the heart of Maasai land, including a full-day wildlife drive in the Masai Mara. A minimum of three people guarantees departure on any of these safaris. Rates are about US\$120 per person per day, including food, accommodation, bicycles and/or guides, but not sleeping-bag hire (around US\$15 extra per trip).

IntoAfrica (UK ☎ 0114-2555610; www.intoafrica.co.uk) This environmentally and culturally sensitive company gets more praise from readers than almost any other company we've recommended, emphasising on fair trade. Trips include a variety of routes up Mt Kenya and cultural treks with Maasai people in the Chyulu Hills and Tsavo West National Parks. Prices start at around US\$975 for a seven-day trek, leaving on a scheduled departure date. See p68 for more culturally focused safaris.

Ontdek Kenya (☎ 061-2030326; www.ontdekkenya.com; PO Box 2352, Nyeri) This small operator has been recommended by several readers and offers walking trips catered to women, vegetarians and bird-watchers. Destinations include the Rift Valley lakes and Mt Kenya.

Samburu Trails Trekking Safaris (UK ☎ 0131-6256635; www.samburutrails.com; 72 Newhaven Rd, Edinburgh EH6 5QG, UK) A small specialist outfit offering a range of foot excursions in some less-visited parts of the Rift Valley, including easy five-day walks (from US\$830 per person) and expedition-standard eight-day mountain treks (from US\$992).

Savage Wilderness Safaris (☎ 020-521590; www.whitewaterkenya.com; Sarit Centre, Westlands, Nairobi) Kenya's only white-water rafting company also offers organised and custom walking safaris in the Loita and Chyulu Hills and elsewhere, plus climbing and mountaineering on Mt Kenya.

Sirikwa Safaris (☎ 0733-793524; Kitale) This outfit is run by Jane and Julia Barnley from their farmhouse/guesthouse and campsite about 20km outside Kitale on the Lodwar road. They have considerable knowledge of routes and campsites in the Cherangani Hills and can provide trekking guides (KSh825 per day), porters (KSh412 per day) and expert bird-watching guides (KSh825 per half-day). They can also arrange trips to Kakamega Forest Reserve, Saiwa Swamp National Park, Mt Elgon, Kongelai Escarpment, Tata Falls, Turkwel Gorge and the Cherangani Hills.

ITINERARIES

Whether you take a camping or lodge safari, there's a plethora of options ranging from two to 15 days and, in some cases, up to six weeks, visiting parks in neighbouring countries as well. If possible, it's best to go on a safari for at least five days (preferably longer), otherwise a good deal of your time will be taken up driving to and from the national parks and Nairobi. You'll also see a great deal more on a longer safari and have a much better chance of catching sight of all the major animals. In addition, you may also get a chance to spend some time with local tribespeople on a longer safari. The short trips also make stops in tribal villages, but these are normally just a quick souvenir and photo opportunity, and can be a bit demoralising.

Most itineraries offered by safari companies fall into one of three loosely defined 'circuits', which can all be combined for longer trips. Mt Kenya treks (see p264) are a fourth option, sold separately or as an add-on to any of these basic outlines, and the majority of firms now also offer trips into Tanzania and Uganda. Few organised tours take in the western circuit pushed by the Kenya Tourist Board, which would include places such as Kakamega Forest Reserve (p304) and Mt Elgon (p312).

The Mara Circuit

The standard itineraries pushed on visitors by most companies are three-day and seven-day safaris from Nairobi to the Masai Mara (p286). The shorter version will generally involve two nights in the park and two half-days travelling, while the longer trips will also include stops at Lake Nakuru (p243) and Samburu National Reserve (p324). You also have the option of visiting Lakes Baringo (p247) and Bogoria (p246) while in this region.

The Southern Circuit

Offered as the main alternative to the Mara, southern itineraries make a beeline for Amboseli National Park (p137) and its famous Kilimanjaro backdrop. Anything longer than a three-day trip here should allow you to visit Tsavo West (p143), with a couple more days required to add on Tsavo East (p145) as well. Most companies will give you the option of being dropped in Mombasa at the end of this route rather than heading back to Nairobi, which saves you a bit of travelling and allows you time to explore the marine parks and other attractions of the coast.

The Northern Circuit

The focal point of any northern safari is Lake Turkana (p336), which requires at least seven days to visit effectively due to the long distances involved. Depending on how long you take and which side of the lake

'If possible, it's best to go on a safari for at least five days (preferably longer), otherwise a good deal of your time will be taken up driving to and from the national parks and Nairobi'

'Overlanding is a common element of many people's travels through Africa'

SAFARI FATIGUE

Taking a longer safari is great, but be warned – endless long days peering out of a sunroof, on bumpy roads, in the heat, eating the same food, stuck with the same people, can take its toll quicker than you might think. And while on the first day any animal you see will be exciting, sooner or later most travellers will experience safari fatigue, that jaded feeling of ‘not another zebra, I wanna see a f***ing leopard’... A few cultural activities, an afternoon’s relaxation or even just a quick swim can do wonders for keeping things fresh.

you visit, possible stops include Lake Bogoria, Lake Baringo, Marsabit National Park (p329), Samburu National Reserve and Maralal (p332); a 14-day safari could even cover all of these.

DO-IT-YOURSELF SAFARIS

This is a viable proposition in Kenya if you have some camping equipment and can get a group together to share the costs of renting a vehicle (see p379). It’s not a good idea to go on a do-it-yourself safari by yourself; aside from the everyday risks, if you have to change a tyre in lion country you’ll want someone to watch your back!

Doing it yourself has several advantages over organised safaris, primarily total flexibility, independence and being able to choose your travelling companions. However, as far as costs go, it’s generally true to say that organising your own safari will cost at least as much, and usually more, than going on a cheap organised safari to the same areas.

Apart from the cost, vehicle breakdowns, accidents, security and a lack of local knowledge are also major issues. Maps are hard to find, particularly for remote areas, and if you do break down in the wild you’re well and truly on your own. Not to mention the fact that whoever is driving is going to be too busy concentrating on the road to notice much of the wildlife.

With an appropriate vehicle, all accommodation options are open to you, even out-of-the-way places, and camping and using bandas are two good ways to keep down your costs. **Let’s Go Travel** (☎ 020-340331; www.lets-go-travel.net) is the best outfit to contact for this type of accommodation.

If you want to hire camping equipment, the only place to go is **Atul’s** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 020-225935; Biashara St, PO Box 43202, Nairobi). Identification, such as a passport, is required and advance booking is recommended and saves time. Expect to pay KSh250 per day for a sleeping bag with liner, KSh500 for a two-person dome tent and KSh120 per day for gas stove (gas canisters are extra). On most items there is a deposit of KSh2000 to KSh3000. For longer trips, it may work out cheaper to buy some things at the big Nakumatt supermarkets in Nairobi, which sell cheap plastic plates, stoves, chairs etc.

It’s also possible to hire a vehicle and camping equipment as one package – **Tough Tracks** (☎ 050-2030329; www.toughtracks.com; PO Box 563, Naivasha) offers the rather unusual option of renting a fully fitted 4WD with roof-mounted tent and everything else you might need for a long self-service safari for up to four people, including mobile phone, fridge, gas cooker and cooking utensils. Prices range from UK£85 per day (less than 10 days) to UK£70 per day (25 days or more), with a minimum of five days rental; insurance excess waiver is an additional UK£10 per day (see p379 for more on car-rental insurance). The firm’s based in Naivasha but will deliver your vehicle to and pick it up from an agreed point such as an airport.

Wildlife Guide

For many travellers, Africa means animals – and for the wildlife watcher Kenya is one of the prime locations for seeing nature in the raw. Nowhere else on Earth is so great an array of large animals supported by such a range of environmental and climatic variations. All manner of wildlife experience is here: the epic seasonal migrations of huge zebra herds, the excitement of the solitary cheetah bringing down its prey, the skittish avian inhabitants of Arabuko-Sokoke, the protective mother warthog watching over her young.

The East African mosaic of riverine forest, savanna and lake shore was favoured by the earliest humans. For millennia thereafter it was humankind who was the intruder in this domain. Today, only pockets of this once-mighty untouched realm remain, but it is here that the wildlife-watcher is drawn. Whether you hanker after the massed flamingos at Lake Bogoria, the grazing herds of antelope and wildebeest on the savanna, the shrieking monkeys in the forest canopy in Kakamega, or the ponderous elephants and delicately stepping giraffes of Samburu National Reserve, there's no real trick to spotting wildlife in Kenya. If you're in the right place at the right time, wildlife is in abundance, so you need to get out there and put in the time, be it on a safari vehicle, atop a camel or on foot.

Bear in mind, too, that by watching wildlife in Kenya you are helping to conserve it. A substantial amount of foreign currency is earned from wildlife tourism in Kenya and other East African countries. The money you spend in visiting national parks and reserves contributes to the long term viability of these sanctuaries where the fabled great cats and innumerable herd animals can continue to carry out their timeless life-and-death drama.



Zebra in motion, Masai
Mara National Reserve.
PHOTO BY PHILIP & KAREN SMITH

Greater bushbabies are named for their plaintive wailing calls (the calls of lesser bushbabies are rarely noticed).

PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON



PRIMATES

BUSHBABY

Greater bushbaby (*Otolemur crassicaudatus*, pictured); **East African lesser bushbaby** (*Galago senegalensis*)

These nocturnal primates have small heads, large rounded ears, bushy tails and enormous eyes. Greater bush-

babies are dark brown; tiny lesser bushbabies are light grey with yellow on their legs. They are often in family groups of up to six or seven, but forage alone for sap, fruit, insects and, in the case of greater bushbabies, lizards, nestlings and eggs. Lesser bushbabies make spectacular treetop leaps.

Size: Greater bushbaby length 80cm, including 45cm tail; weight up to 1.5kg. Lesser bushbaby length 40cm; weight 150g to 200g. **Distribution:** Lightly wooded savanna to thickly forested areas; greater and lesser bushbabies occur mostly in southern and central Kenya. **Status:** Common but strictly nocturnal.

The male vervet monkey has a distinctive bright-blue scrotum, an important signal of status in the troop.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL



VERVET MONKEY

Cercopithecus aethiops

Conspicuous inhabitants of the woodland-savanna, vervet monkeys are easily recognised by their grizzled grey hair and black face fringed with white. Troops may number up to 30. Vervet monkeys have a sophisticated vocal repertoire, with, for example, different calls for different predators. They

are diurnal and forage for fruits, seeds, leaves, flowers, invertebrates and the occasional lizard or nestling. They rapidly learn where easy pickings can be found around lodges and campsites, but become pests when they are accustomed to being fed.

Size: Length up to 130cm, including 65cm tail; weight 3kg to 9kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** All savanna and woodland habitats. **Status:** Very common and easy to see.

The blue monkey's social group may be as large as 30 but generally numbers between four and 12.

PHOTO BY ANDERS BLOMQUIST



BLUE (SAMANGO) MONKEY

Cercopithecus mitis

Similar to vervet monkeys, but slightly larger and much darker, blue monkeys have a grey to black face, black shoulders, limbs and tail, and a reddish-brown or olive-brown back. They are more arboreal than vervet monkeys and generally prefer dense forest and woodland rather than savanna. They

feed largely on fruit, bark, gum and leaves. Social groups usually consist of related females and their young, and a single adult male. Their broad diet allows them to occupy relatively small home ranges.

Size: Length 140cm, including 80cm tail; weight normally up to 15kg, but as much as 23kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout most evergreen forests and forest patches. **Status:** Locally common; active by day; often difficult to see in foliage.

EASTERN BLACK-AND-WHITE COLOBUS

Colobus guereza

This colobus is glossy black with a white face, bushy white tail and a white fur 'cape'. Newborns are initially white, gaining their adult coat at around six months. The black-and-white colobus spends most of its time in the forest canopy, where it feeds mostly on leaves. The ready availability of its food enables it to survive on quite small home ranges, usually maintained by troops of up to 12 animals, consisting of a dominant male, females and young.

Size: Length 140cm, including 80cm tail; weight 3.5kg to 10kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Forests in western Kenya; the similar Angolan black-and-white colobus (*C. angolensis*) can be found in southeast Kenya. **Status:** Locally common; active during the day but often difficult to see among foliage.



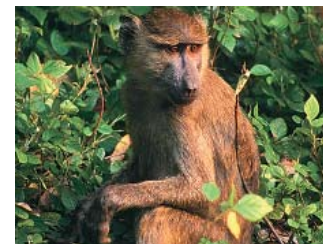
The black-and-white colobus' low-energy diet means it is relatively inactive but it makes spectacular leaps when moving through the treetops.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDELGEN

BABOON

Papio cynocephalus

Baboons are unmistakable. The yellow baboon (*P. c. cynocephalus*) and the olive baboon (*P. c. anubis*; pictured) are named for their differing hair colour. Baboons live in troops of between eight and 200; contrary to popular belief there is no single dominant male. Social interactions are complex, with males accessing only certain females, males forming alliances to dominate other males, and males caring for unrelated juveniles. Baboons forage in woodland-savanna for grasses, tubers, fruits, invertebrates and occasionally small vertebrates. **Size:** Shoulder height 75cm; length 160cm, including 70cm tail; weight up to 45kg; male larger than female, and twice as heavy. **Distribution:** The yellow baboon is common in central and eastern Kenya; the olive baboon is more common in western Kenya. **Status:** Abundant.



Ever opportunistic, baboons often visit camp-sites and may become (dangerous) pests.

PHOTO BY JASON EDWARDS

CARNIVORES

PANGOLIN

Manis temminckii

Ground pangolins are covered with large rounded scales over the back and tail, and have a sparse covering of hair on the face and underbelly. Pangolins (which are also known as scaly anteaters) walk on the outer edges of their paws with their claws pointed inwards, leaving a distinctive track.

Size: Length 70cm to 100cm; weight 5kg to 15kg. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya, apart from the northeast, in many habitats except dense forest. **Status:** Relatively uncommon; nocturnal and difficult to see.



Pangolins subsist entirely on ants and termites that they excavate from termite mounds, rotting wood and dung heaps.

PHOTO BY ANDREW VAN SAMBERGK

Jackals scavenge from the kills of larger predators but are also efficient hunters.

PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN



JACKAL

Golden jackal (*Canis aureus*); black-backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*, pictured); side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*)

Golden jackals are often the most numerous carnivores in open savanna and are very active by day. Black-backed jackals have a mantle of silver-grey hair and black-tipped tails; they are the most common

night scavengers. Side-striped jackals are grey with a light stripe along each side and a white-tipped tail. All have a similar social and feeding behaviour. Pairs are long-lasting and defend small territories.

Size: Shoulder height 38cm to 50cm; length 95cm to 120cm, including 25cm to 40cm tail (shortest in the golden jackal); weight up to 15kg. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya, preferring open plains and woodlands; side-striped jackal most abundant in well-watered wooded areas. **Status:** Abundant in parks and settled areas.

The huge ears of bat-eared foxes detect the faint sounds of invertebrates below ground, before they unearth them in a burst of frantic digging.

PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN



BAT-EARED FOX

Otocyon megalotis

These little foxes eat mainly insects, especially termites, but also wild fruit and small vertebrates. They are monogamous and are often seen in groups comprising a mated pair and offspring. Natural enemies include large birds of prey, spotted hyenas, caracals and larger cats. They will bravely attempt to rescue a family

member caught by a predator by using distraction techniques and harassment, which extends to nipping larger enemies on the ankles.

Size: Shoulder height 35cm; length 75cm to 90cm, including 30cm tail; weight 3kg to 5kg. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya; absent from mountainous habitat and dense forest. **Status:** Common, especially in national parks; mainly nocturnal but often seen in the late afternoon and early morning.

Wild dogs are endurance hunters; the pack chases prey until exhaustion, then cooperates to pull it down.

PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON



WILD DOG

Lycaon pictus

Wild dogs' blotched black, yellow and white coat, and their large, round ears, are unmistakable. They live in packs of up to 40, though usually 12 to 20. They are widely reviled for eating their prey alive, but this is probably as fast as 'cleaner' methods used by other carnivores. Mid-sized antelopes

are their preferred prey, but wild dogs can take animals as large as buffaloes. They require enormous areas of habitat and they are among the most endangered carnivores in Africa.

Size: Shoulder height 65cm to 80cm; length 100cm to 150cm, including 35cm tail; weight 20kg to 35kg. **Distribution:** Much reduced, now restricted to the largest protected areas, including Tsavo National Park. **Status:** Highly threatened: numbers reduced by persecution, disease and habitat loss.

CAPE CLAWLESS OTTER

Aonyx capensis

Similar to European otters, but much larger, Cape clawless otters are a glossy chocolate brown with a white or cream-coloured lower face, throat and neck. Only the hind feet are webbed, and, unlike the front feet of most otters, the front feet of Cape clawless otters end in dexterous, human-like fingers with rudimentary nails. Otters are active during early morning and evening, though they become nocturnal in areas where they are hunted by humans. Their main foods include fish, freshwater crabs and frogs.

Size: Length 105cm to 160cm, including 50cm tail; weight up to 30kg. **Distribution:** Large freshwater bodies and along coastlines across Kenya. **Status:** Locally common; active both day and night but usually seen in the early morning and late afternoon.

'THIS IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE IN PICK & MIX'

HONEY BADGER (RATEL)

Mellivora capensis

Pugnacious and astonishingly powerful for their size, honey badgers have a fascinating relationship with honey guide birds. Honey guides lead them to bees' nests, which honey badgers rip open for honey, and in doing so provide honey guides access to their favoured food – beeswax. Honey badgers are omnivorous, feeding on small animals, carrion, berries, roots, eggs, honey and social insects (ants, termites and bees) and their larvae. Honey badgers are best viewed in parks, where they sometimes scavenge from bins.

Size: Shoulder height 30cm; length 95cm, including 20cm tail; weight up to 15kg. **Distribution:** Widespread, apart from the northeast, in most habitats. **Status:** Generally occurs in low densities, but populations are sustainable; apparently active by day in parks but nocturnal in areas of human habitation.

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GENET

Small-spotted genet (*Genetta genetta*); large-spotted genet (*Genetta tigrina*, pictured)

Relatives of mongooses, genets resemble slender domestic cats, with foxlike faces. The two species can be differentiated by the tail tips – white in the small-spotted, black in the large-spotted. The former also has a crest along the spine, which it raises when threatened. All-black individuals of both species may occur, particularly in mountainous regions. They hunt on land and in trees, feeding on rodents, birds, reptiles, eggs, insects and fruits. Genets deposit their droppings in latrines, usually in open sites.

Size: Shoulder height 18cm; length 85cm to 110cm, including 45cm tail; weight up to 3kg. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya. **Status:** Very common but strictly nocturnal; often the most common small carnivore seen at night.



Genets are solitary, sleeping by day in burrows, rock crevices or tree hollows.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

Collectively, mongooses intimidate much larger enemies.

PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN



MONGOOSE

Many of the small animals that dash in front of cars in Africa are mongooses. A few species, such as the dwarf mongoose (*Helogale parvula*) and the banded mongoose (*Mungos mungo*) are intensely social, keeping contact with twittering calls while foraging. Others, such as the slender mongoose (*Galerella sanguinea*; pictured) – with a black-tipped tail

that it holds aloft when running – and the white-tailed mongoose (*Ichneumia albicauda*), are usually solitary. Family groups are better at spotting danger and raising kittens. Invertebrates are their most important prey.

Size: Ranges from the dwarf mongoose at 40cm in length and up to 400g in weight, to the white-tailed mongoose at 120cm and up to 5.5kg. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya. They prefer open areas to closed woodlands and wooded savanna. **Status:** Common; sociable species are diurnal, while solitary species are generally nocturnal.

Aardwolves may suffer huge population crashes following spraying for locusts (the spraying also kills termites).

PHOTO BY ABI



AARDWOLF

Proteles cristatus

The smallest of the hyena family, aardwolves subsist almost entirely on harvester termites (which are generally ignored by other termite eaters because they are so noxious), licking more than 200,000 from the ground each night. Unlike other hyaenids, they don't form clans; instead, they forage alone and mates

form only loose associations with each other. The male assists the female in raising the cubs, mostly by babysitting at the den while the mother forages. Aardwolves are persecuted in the mistaken belief that they kill stock.

Size: Shoulder height 40cm to 50cm; length 80cm to 100cm, including tail of up to 25cm; weight 8kg to 12kg. **Distribution:** Widespread in savanna and woodland habitats from the south of Kenya into the country's arid north. **Status:** Uncommon; nocturnal but occasionally seen at dawn and dusk.

Spotted hyena clans, which can contain dozens of individuals, are led by females.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL



SPOTTED HYENA

Crocuta crocuta

Widely reviled as scavengers, spotted hyenas are highly efficient predators with a fascinating social system. Females are larger than, and dominant to, males and have male physical characteristics, including an erectile clitoris that renders the sexes virtually indistinguishable. Spotted hyenas are massively built

and appear distinctly canine, but they are more closely related to cats than dogs. They can run at a speed of 60km/h and a pack can easily dispatch adult wildebeests and zebras. Their 'ooo-ooop' call is one of the most distinctive East African night sounds.

Size: Shoulder height 85cm; length up to 180cm, including up to 30cm tail; weight up to 80kg. **Distribution:** Increasingly restricted to conservation areas. **Status:** Common where there is suitable food, often the most common large predator in protected areas; mainly nocturnal but also seen during the day.

SERVAL

Felis serval

The first impression one gains of servals – tall, slender, long-legged cats – is that they look like small cheetahs. The tawny to russet-yellow coat has large black spots, forming long bars and blotches on the neck and shoulders. All-black individuals do occasionally occur. Other distinguishing features include large upright ears, a long neck and a relatively short tail. Servals are associated with vegetation near water and are most common in flood-plain savanna, wetlands and woodlands near streams. Birds, small reptiles and occasionally the young of small antelopes are also taken.

Size: Shoulder height 60cm; length up to 130cm, including tail up to 30cm; weight up to 16kg. **Distribution:** Well-watered habitats throughout Kenya. **Status:** Relatively common but mainly nocturnal, sometimes seen in the early morning and late afternoon.



Servals are rodent specialists, feeding on mice, rats and springhares.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

CARACAL

Felis caracal

Sometimes called African lynxes due to their long, tufted ears, caracals are robust, powerful cats that prey on small antelopes, birds and rodents but also take prey much larger than themselves. Caracals are largely solitary, and although male-female pairs may associate more than most other cats, females raise their one to three kittens alone. The sandy body colour is excellent camouflage, but the ears and face are strikingly patterned in black and white and are highly mobile and expressive – features are used for visual signalling.

Size: Shoulder height 40cm to 50cm; length 95cm to 120cm, including tail up to 30cm; weight 7kg to 18kg; male slightly larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya. **Status:** Fairly common but largely nocturnal and difficult to see.



Caracals' long back legs power prodigious leaps – they even take birds in flight.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

LEOPARD

Panthera pardus

Supreme ambush hunters, leopards stalk close to their prey before attacking in an explosive rush. They eat everything from insects to zebras, but antelopes are their primary prey. Leopards are highly agile and climb well, spending more time in trees than other big cats – they hoist their kills into trees to avoid losing them to lions and hyenas. They are solitary animals, except when a male and female remain in close association for the female's week-long oestrus.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm to 75cm; length 160cm to 210cm, including 70cm to 110cm tail; weight up to 90kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Widely spread throughout Kenya; of all the big cats, the most tolerant of human activity. **Status:** Common but, being mainly nocturnal, they are very difficult to see.



Leopards are heard more often than seen; their rasping territorial call sounds very much like a saw cutting through wood.

PHOTO BY ABI

Young male lions are ousted from the pride at the age of two or three, becoming nomadic until around five years old, when they are able to take over their own pride.

PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER



LION

Panthera leo

Lions spend the night hunting, patrolling territories (of 50 to 400 sq km) and playing. They live in prides of up to about 30, comprising four to 12 related females, which remain in the pride for life, and a coalition of unrelated males, which defend females from foreign males. Lions hunt – certainly as a group, perhaps

cooperatively – virtually anything, but wildebeests, zebras and buffaloes are their main targets.

Size: Shoulder height 120cm; length 250cm to 300cm, including tail up to 100cm; weight up to 260kg (male), 180kg (female). **Distribution:** Largely confined to protected areas and present in all savanna and woodland parks in Kenya. **Status:** Common where they occur; mainly nocturnal but easy to see during the day.

Three out of every four hunts fail for cheetahs.

PHOTO BY ANDREW VAN SMEERDIJK



CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus

The world's fastest land mammal, cheetahs can reach speeds of over 105km/h but become exhausted after a few hundred metres and therefore usually stalk prey to within 60m before unleashing their tremendous acceleration. Cheetahs prey on antelopes weighing up to 60kg as well as hares and young

wildebeests and zebras. Litters may be as large as nine, but in open savanna habitats most cubs are killed by other predators, particularly lions. Young cheetahs disperse from the mother when aged around 18 months. The males form coalitions; females remain solitary for life.

Size: Shoulder height 85cm; length up to 220cm, including tail up to 70cm; weight up to 65kg. **Distribution:** Largely restricted to protected areas and surrounding regions; shuns densely forested areas. **Status:** Uncommon, with individuals moving over large areas; frequently seen in national parks.

Bull elephants live alone or in bachelor groups, joining herds when females are in season.

PHOTO BY ALEX DISSANAYAKE



UNGULATES

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Loxodonta africana

Elephants usually live in groups of 10 to 20 females and their young, congregating in larger herds at common water and food resources. A cow may mate with many bulls. Vocalisations include a deep rum-

ble felt as a low vibration, and a high-pitched trumpeting given in threat or when frightened. Consuming 250kg of vegetation daily, elephants can decimate woodlands, but this may be part of the savanna's natural cycle. They live for up to 100 years.

Size: Shoulder height up to 4m (male), 3.5m (female); weight 5 to 6.5 tonnes (male), 3 to 3.5 tonnes (female). **Distribution:** Widely distributed in Kenya apart from the north. **Status:** Very common in most of the larger national parks.

HYRAX

Rock Hyrax (Procavia capensis, pictured); Yellow-Spotted Rock Hyrax (Heterohyrax brucei)

Hyraxes (or dassies) occur nearly everywhere there are mountains or rocky outcrops. They are sociable, living in colonies of up to 60. Yellow-spotted hyraxes are distinguished by the presence of a prominent white spot above the eye.

Hyraxes spend much of the day basking on rocks or chasing other hyraxes. If accustomed to humans they are often approachable, but will dash off if alarmed, uttering shrill screams. Rocks streaked white by hyraxes' urine are often an indicator of a colony's presence.

Size: Rock hyrax length up to 60cm; weight up to 5.5kg. Yellow-spotted hyrax length up to 50cm; weight up to 2.5kg. **Distribution:** Both species are very widely distributed throughout Kenya. **Status:** Common; regularly inhabit areas around lodges, where they become tame.



Despite resembling large guinea pigs, hyraxes are actually related to elephants.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANBERGEN

BURCHELL'S ZEBRA

Equus burchelli

Thousands of Burchell's zebras (one of three zebra species in Africa) join blue wildebeests on their famous mass migration. Larger herds are usually temporary aggregations of smaller groups. Stallions may hold a harem for 15 years, but they often lose single mares to younger males, which gradually build up their own harems. When pursued by predators, zebras close ranks as they run off, making it hard for any individual to be singled out for attack. And yes, it's true – a zebra's stripes are as individual as a human's fingerprints.

Size: Shoulder height 1.4m to 1.6m; length 2.2m to 2.6m; weight up to 390kg; females are slightly smaller than males. **Distribution:** In and around parks throughout Kenya. **Status:** Very common and easily seen.



The zebra's sociality centres on harems of five to six mares defended by a single stallion.

PHOTO BY MANFRED GOTTSCHALK

BLACK (HOOK-LIPPED) RHINOCEROS

Diceros bicornis

In many countries rhinos have been exterminated and the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) is now very rare in East Africa (it remains numerous in southern Africa). The smaller of the two species, black rhinos are more unpredictable and prone to charging when alarmed or uncertain about a possible threat. They use their pointed, prehensile upper lip to feed selectively on branches and foliage. Black rhinos are solitary and aggressively territorial, usually only socialising during the mating season; however, they may form temporary associations.

Size: Shoulder height 1.6m; length 3m to 4m; weight 800kg to 1400kg; front horn up to 130cm long. **Distribution:** Restricted to relict populations in a few reserves; black best seen in Nairobi National Park; white best seen in Lake Nakuru National Park. **Status:** Highly endangered but seen in protected areas.



Poaching for horns has made the rhinoceros Africa's most endangered large mammal.

PHOTO BY JASON EDWARDS

Female warthogs have a pair of distinctive facial warts under the eyes; males have a second set of warts further down the snout.

PHOTO BY ABI



WARTHOG

Phacochoerus aethiopicus

Warthogs grow two sets of tusks: their upper tusks grow as long as 60cm, and their lower tusks are usually less than 15cm long. Sociality varies, but groups usually consist of one to three sows and their young. Males form bachelor groups or are solitary, only associating with females during oestrus.

Warthogs feed mainly on grass, but also on fruit and bark. In hard times, they grub for roots and bulbs. They den in abandoned burrows or excavate their own burrows.

Size: Shoulder height 70cm; weight up to more than 100kg, but averages 50kg to 60kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya except in dense rainforest and mountains above 3000m. **Status:** Common, diurnal and easy to see.

Adult bull hippos aggressively defend territories against each other and most males bear the scars of conflicts.

PHOTO BY CHRISTER FREDRIKSSON



HIPPOPOTAMUS

Hippopotamus amphibius

Hippos are found close to fresh water, spending most of the day submerged and emerging at night to graze on land. They can consume about 40kg of vegetation each evening. They live in large herds, tolerating close contact in the water but foraging alone when on land. The scars found on bulls resulting

from conflicts are often a convenient indicator of the sex of hippos. Cows with calves are aggressive towards other individuals. Hippos are extremely dangerous when on land and kill many people each year, usually when someone inadvertently blocks the animal's retreat to the water.

Size: Shoulder height 1.5m; weight 1000kg to 2000kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Usually found near large areas of fresh water throughout Kenya. **Status:** Common in major water courses and easy to see.

A giraffe's neck has seven cervical vertebrae, the same as all mammals.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL



GIRAFFE

Giraffa camelopardalis

There are several distinctly patterned subspecies of giraffe, including reticulated giraffes and the more common Masai giraffes. The 'horns' (skin-covered bone) of males have bald tips; females' are covered in hair. Giraffes form ever-changing groups of up to 50; females are rarely seen alone, while males are more solitary.

Giraffes exploit foliage out of reach of most herbivores – males usually feed from a higher level than females. Juveniles are prone to predation and lions even take adults; giraffes are most vulnerable when drinking.

Size: Height 4m to 5.5m (male), 3.5m to 4.5m (female); weight 900kg to 1400kg (male), 700kg to 1000kg (female). **Distribution:** Reticulated giraffe occurs in northern Kenya; Masai giraffe is widespread southwest of Nairobi extending into Tanzania; Rothschild's giraffe is restricted to western Kenya near Lake Baringo. **Status:** Relatively common and easy to see.

BUSHBUCK

Tragelaphus scriptus

Shy and solitary animals, bushbucks inhabit thick bush close to permanent water, where they browse on leaves at night. Bushbucks are chestnut to dark brown in colour and have a variable number of white vertical stripes on the body between the neck and rump, as well as a number of white spots on the upper thigh and a white splash on the neck. Normally only males grow horns, which are straight with gentle spirals and average about 30cm in length. When startled, bushbucks bolt and crash loudly through the undergrowth.

Size: Shoulder height 80cm; weight 45kg to 80kg; horns up to 55cm long; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout the region, favouring denser habitats. **Status:** Common, but shy and difficult to see.



Bushbucks can be quite aggressive and even dangerous when cornered.

PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

KUDU

Tragelaphus strepsiceros, (pictured); *Tragelaphus imberbis*

Greater kudus are Africa's second-tallest antelope; males carry massive spiralling horns (the largest of any antelope). They are light grey in colour, with six to 12 white stripes down the sides. Lesser kudus have 11 to 15 stripes; males are blue-grey and females are a bright rust colour. One to three females and their young form groups, and are joined by males during the breeding season. Kudus find their diet in woodland-savanna with fairly dense bush cover.

Size: Greater kudu shoulder height 1.2m to 1.5m; weight 190kg to 320kg. Lesser kudu shoulder height 95cm to 110cm; weight 90kg to 110kg. Males larger than females. **Distribution:** Greater kudus can be found throughout Kenya, except in the driest areas; lesser kudus prefer the arid regions of northern Kenya. **Status:** Greater kudus scattered; lesser kudus common.



Strong jumpers, kudus flee with frequent leaping, clearing obstacles more than 2m high.

PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

ELAND

Taurotragus oryx

Africa's largest antelope, elands are massive. The horns of both sexes average 65cm, spiralling at the base then sweeping straight back. The male has a distinctive hairy tuft on the head, and stouter horns. Herds consist of adults, or adults and young, or sometimes just young – group membership and composition change often. The most common large groups consist of 10 to 60 females and young. Males are less gregarious, coming together more sporadically and in smaller numbers, but one or more often join female-and-young herds.

Size: Shoulder height 1.5m to 1.8m (male), 1.25m to 1.5m (female); weight 450kg to 950kg (male), 300kg to 500kg (female); horns up to 100cm long. **Distribution:** Patchy distribution in arid zones; best seen in Nairobi and Tsavo National Parks. **Status:** Low density but relatively common and easy to see.



Aggregations up to 1000 elands form where new grass is growing.

PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

Male buffaloes associate with the females during breeding, and at other times they form male herds or are solitary.

PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER



AFRICAN BUFFALO

Syncerus caffer

Both sexes of African buffaloes have distinctive curving horns that broaden at the base to meet over the forehead in a massive 'boss' – the female's are usually smaller. Local populations of buffaloes inhabit large home ranges and at times herds of thousands form, but the population's social organisation is

fluid: groups of related females and their young coalesce and separate into larger or smaller herds. Although generally docile, buffaloes can be dangerous – especially lone bulls, and females protecting their young.

Size: Shoulder height 1.6m; weight 400kg to 900kg; horns up to 1.25m long; female somewhat smaller than male. **Distribution:** Widespread, but large populations only occur in parks. **Status:** Common and may be approachable where protected.

Duikers are predominantly browsers, often feeding on agricultural crops.

PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON



COMMON (GREY) DUIKER

Sylvicapra grimmia

One of the most common types of small antelope, common duikers are usually solitary, but are sometimes seen in pairs. They are greyish light brown in colour, with a white belly and a dark-brown stripe down the face. Only males have horns, which are straight and pointed and rarely grow longer than 15cm. Their habit

of feeding on agricultural crops leads to them being persecuted outside conservation areas, although they are resilient to hunting. Common duikers are capable of going without water for long periods, but they will drink whenever water is available.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm; weight 10kg to 20kg; females slightly larger than males; horns up to 18cm. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya. **Status:** Common; active day and night, but more nocturnal where disturbance is common.

The waterbuck's oily hair has a strong, musky odour, potent enough for humans to smell.

PHOTO BY DENNIS JONES



WATERBUCK

Kobus ellipsiprymnus

Waterbucks have a shaggy brown coat and white rump, face and throat markings; only males have horns. Females have overlapping ranges, coming and going to form loose associations of normally up to a dozen animals. Young, nonterritorial males behave similarly. Mature males hold territories, onto

which females wander (nonterritorial males are also often allowed access). These essentially independent movements sometimes produce herds of 50 to 70. They always stay near water and are good swimmers, readily entering water to escape predators.

Size: Shoulder height 1.3m; weight 200kg to 300kg (male), 150kg to 200kg (female); horns up to 100cm. **Distribution:** Wet areas throughout Kenya. **Status:** Common and easily seen.

REEDBUCK

Common reedbuck (Redunca arundinum); Bohor reedbuck (Redunca redunca, pictured); mountain reedbuck (Redunca fulvorufula)

Brown common reedbucks are found in woodland areas; yellowish bohor reedbucks are prevalent on floodplains; greyer mountain reedbucks inhabit grassy hill country. All have white underparts; males have forward-curving horns. Common reedbucks form pairs, though mates associate only loosely; female mountain reedbucks form small groups that range over the territories of several males.

Size: Common reedbuck shoulder height 90cm; weight 70kg; horns up to 45cm. Bohor reedbuck 30% smaller; mountain reedbuck 30% smaller again. Males larger than females in common and bohor reedbucks; sexes similar size in mountain reedbucks. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya wherever suitable well-watered grasslands occur. **Status:** Common.



Reedbucks whistle when advertising territories or when alarmed.

PHOTO BY DENNIS JONES

ROAN ANTELOPE

Hippotragus equinus

Roan antelopes' coats vary from reddish-fawn to dark reddish-brown with white underparts and a mane of stiff, black-tipped hair. Their faces are black and white, their long, pointed ears tipped with a brown tassel. Both sexes have long backward-curving horns. They prefer sites with tall grasses, shade and water. Herds of normally less than 20 females and young range over the territories of several adult males; other males form bachelor groups. Female herds of up to 50 are common during the dry season when food and water are more localised.

Size: Shoulder height 1.4m; weight 200kg to 300kg; horns up to 100cm. Females smaller than males, with shorter horns. **Distribution:** Mostly at Ruma National Park near Lake Victoria. **Status:** Populations are declining and the species is threatened in Kenya; easily seen where present.



Roan antelopes are among Africa's rarest and largest antelopes.

PHOTO BY JASON EDWARDS

SABLE ANTELOPE

Hippotragus niger

Widely considered to be the most magnificent of Africa's antelopes, sable antelopes are slightly smaller than roan antelopes, but are more thick-set. They have longer horns, often reaching more than 100cm. Sables have a white belly and face markings; females are reddish brown, while mature males are a deep, glossy black. They favour habitats slightly more wooded than that of roan antelopes. Social organisation of the two species is also very similar, but sable female-and-young herds are slightly larger – usually 10 to 30, but up to 70 or so.

Size: Shoulder height 1.35m; weight 180kg to 270kg; horns up to 130cm – the male's are longer and more curved than the female's. **Distribution:** Mostly at Shimba Hills National Reserve. **Status:** Common and easily seen.



Like roan antelopes, sable antelopes are fierce fighters, and are even known to kill attacking lions.

PHOTO BY DENNIS JONES

To conserve water, oryxes let their body temperature rise to levels that would kill most mammals.

PHOTO BY ANDREW MACCOLL



ORYX

Oryx gazella

Well adapted to aridity, oryxes can survive without drinking. Oryxes are solid and powerful; both sexes carry long, straight horns. Principally grazers, they also browse on thorny shrubs. In areas with abundant water and food, populations are sometimes resident and adopt a social system like that of roan antelopes.

More usually, nomadic herds number around a dozen, but can total up to 60. Herds normally contain males and females, but there are strict hierarchies within the sexes. Herds, especially if small, may also be single sex.

Size: Shoulder height 1.2m; weight 170kg to 210kg (male), 120kg to 190kg (female); horns up to 110cm. **Distribution:** Beisa oryx in northern Kenya; fringe-eared oryx in southern Kenya. **Status:** Relatively common and easy to see, but shy.

Hartebeests prefer grassy plains but are also found in sparsely forested savannas and hills.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN



HARTEBEEST

Alcelaphus buselaphus

Hartebeests are red to tan in colour, medium-sized and easily recognised by their long, narrow face and short horns. In both sexes, the distinctively angular and heavily ridged horns form a heart shape, hence their name, which comes from Afrikaans. Dominant males defend territories, which herds of females

and their young pass through; other males move in bachelor groups. Herds typically number up to about a dozen (male herds are generally smaller), but aggregations of hundreds and (in the past) thousands also occur.

Size: Shoulder height 1.2m; weight 130kg to 170kg (male), 115kg to 150kg (female); horns up to 85cm. **Distribution:** Wide ranging; Coke's hartebeest, also known as 'Kongoni', is common in Kenya; Jackson's hartebeest is confined to areas near Lake Victoria. **Status:** Common.

Topi's horns, carried by both sexes, curve gently up, out and back.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN



TOPI

Damaliscus lunatus

Topis are reddish brown, with glossy violet patches on the legs and face. Their social system is highly variable. In grassy woodlands, males hold territories with harems of up to 10 females. On floodplains with dense populations, nomadic herds of thousands may form, males establishing temporary territories whenever the herd halts. Elsewhere, males gather on breeding-season display grounds; females visit these 'leks' to select their mates. Both sexes often stand on high vantage points (commonly termite mounds) to view their surroundings and as territorial advertisement.

Size: Shoulder height 1.2m; weight 110kg to 150kg (male), 75kg to 130kg (female); horns up to 45cm. **Distribution:** Widespread throughout medium-length grasslands, common in the Masai Mara National Reserve. **Status:** Common.

BLUE WILDEBEEST

Connochaetes taurinus

Blue wildebeests often form herds in association with zebras and other herbivores. Wildebeests are grazers, and move constantly in search of good pasture and water, preferring to drink daily – this gives rise to the famous mass migration in the Serengeti–Masai Mara ecosystem. Elsewhere, especially where food and water are more permanent, groups of up to 30 are more usual, with larger congregations being less frequent and more temporary. In both situations, males are territorial and attempt to herd groups of females into their territory.

Size: Shoulder height 1.4m; weight 200kg to 300kg (male), 140kg to 230kg (female); horns up to 85cm; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout parks in southern Kenya. **Status:** Very common; 1.5 million occur in the Serengeti–Masai Mara ecosystem.



Blue wildebeests are gregarious, and in some areas form herds of up to tens of thousands.

PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

KLIPSPRINGER

Oreotragus oreotragus

Small, sturdy antelopes, klipspringers are easily recognised by their tip-toe stance – their hooves are adapted for balance and grip on rocky surfaces, enabling them to bound up impossibly rough and steep rockfaces. Klipspringers normally inhabit rocky outcrops; they also sometimes venture into adjacent grasslands, but always retreat to the rocks when alarmed. Klipspringers form long-lasting pair bonds and the pair occupies a territory, nearly always remaining within a couple of metres of each other.

Size: Shoulder height 55cm; weight 9kg to 15kg; horns up to 15cm; female larger than male. **Distribution:** Rocky outcrops and mountainous areas throughout the region. **Status:** Common but wary; often seen standing on high vantage points.



When disturbed, a pair of klipspringers often gives a duet of trumpet-like alarm calls.

PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

STEENBOK

Raphicerus campestris

Steenboks are pretty and slender antelopes; their back and hind-quarters range from light reddish-brown to dark brown with pale underpart markings. The nose bears a black, wedge-shaped stripe. Males have small, straight and widely separated horns. Although usually seen alone, it's likely that steenboks share a small territory with a mate, but only occasionally does the pair come together. Steenboks are active in the morning and afternoon and by night; they may become more nocturnal where frequently disturbed.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm; weight up to 16kg; horns up to 19cm; female a little larger than male. **Distribution:** Restricted to central and northern Kenya. **Status:** Relatively common, but easily overlooked.



If a predator approaches, steenboks lie flat with neck outstretched, zigzagging away only at the last moment.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

A dik-dik's territory is marked by up to a dozen large piles of dung placed around the boundary.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN



KIRK'S DIK-DIK

Madoqua kirkii

Dik-diks are identified by their miniature size, the pointed flexible snout and a tuft of hair on the forehead; only the males have horns. Dik-diks are monogamous and pairs are territorial. If one is seen, its mate is usually nearby, as well as that year's young. Both members of the pair, and their young, use

dung piles to mark their territory, placing their deposits as part of an elaborate ceremony. Dik-diks feed by browsing on foliage and, being well adapted to their dry environments, don't drink.

Size: Shoulder height 35cm to 45cm; weight 4kg to 7kg; horns up to 12cm. **Distribution:** Throughout Kenya. **Status:** Common but wary and easy to miss; active day and night.

Often dismissed by tourists because they are so abundant, impalas are unique antelopes with no close relatives.

PHOTO BY ABI



IMPALA

Aepyceros melampus

Male impalas have long, lyre-shaped horns averaging 75cm in length. They are gregarious animals, forming resident herds of up to 100 or so. Males defend female herds during the oestrus, but outside the breeding season they congregate in bachelor groups. Impalas are known for their speed and ability to leap – they

can spring as far as 10m in one bound, or 3m into the air. They are the common prey of lions, leopards, cheetahs, wild dogs and spotted hyenas.

Size: Shoulder height 85cm; weight 40kg to 80kg; horns up to 90cm; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Savanna regions from central Kenya extending south. **Status:** Very common and easy to see.

Gazelles are often the main prey of predators – so they are very fleet of foot and wary of attack.

PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN



GAZELLE

Thomson's gazelle (Gazella thomsonii, pictured); Grant's gazelle (Gazella granti)

One of the most common medium-sized antelopes, Thomson's gazelles are smaller and form large aggregations (often of many thousands) on the open plains. They often occur with impala-sized Grant's gazelles, which lack the distinctive black

side stripe of the 'tommy'. The social structure is flexible; herds often consist of females and young, with males defending territories around the feeding grounds of females.

Size: Thomson's gazelle shoulder height 65cm; weight 15kg to 30kg; horns up to 45cm. Grant's gazelle shoulder height 85cm; weight 40kg to 80kg; horns up to 80cm. Females of both smaller than males and have much smaller horns. **Distribution:** Thomson's and Grant's gazelle common in savanna and woodland. **Status:** Very common.

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