

# HOLIDAY OF A LIFETIME

Kenya is the most popular safari destination from Cairo. Many Egyptians and expatriates living in Egypt capitalise on their proximity to East Africa by taking a safari and beach holiday there

By Ted Cookson

## The Safari

A Kenya safari holiday normally lasts six nights or longer and includes a visit to at least two game reserves and a lake resort in the Great Rift Valley. Other options include a stay in one of the tree hotels near Mt. Kenya, an overnight in Nairobi and/or a visit to Mombasa, Malindi or Lamu on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast. In addition, of course, a visit to Kenya may be combined easily with a beach holiday in the Seychelles or with a visit to another of the many African destinations now served by Kenya Airways.

Both lodge accommodation and luxury tents are available in Kenya. Luxury tented accommodation, which costs no less than staying in a lodge, features all of the facilities of a regular

hotel room, including furniture, shower and flush toilet. A much less expensive option is a basic tented group camping safari. While the animals are the same no matter where one sleeps, anyone who elects to combine two of the shorter group camping safaris (rather than taking one longer group camping safari) will need to spend an extra hotel night in Nairobi in order to connect.

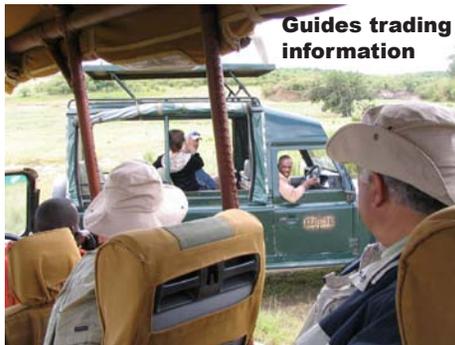
## The Game Reserves

Masai Mara is considered to be Kenya's premier game reserve. A rolling grassland beautiful to behold, the Mara plays host to the great migration every summer when millions of animals, chief among them wildebeest, migrate north across Tanzania's Serengeti plain into Kenya's Masai Mara. There is still game

aplenty after the animals have returned to the Serengeti by early autumn. A visit to Masai Mara is usually combined with a visit to either Amboseli Game Reserve or Samburu Game Reserve.

Amboseli is situated in what had been a dry lake bed until the El Nino/La Nina phenomena of the 1990s. The wildlife inhabiting this reserve seeks sustenance near several small streams that run through it. The primary attraction of Amboseli is its proximity to 19,340-foot (6,447-metre) Mt. Kilimanjaro, which lies just across the border in Tanzania. With luck, visitors will be able to photograph game animals while using the mountain as a backdrop.

A typical Kenya safari also includes a visit to one of the lake resorts in the Great Rift Valley since it is too far to





Hyena

drive comfortably between any two of the three game reserves in a single day. Lake Nakuru, for instance, is famous for its flamingos and pelicans. A rhino sanctuary has also been established there. Nowadays this may be the only opportunity for tourists to view rhino in Kenya.

### Other options in Kenya

So called because they are essentially hotels on stilts, the three tree hotels – The Ark, Mountain Lodge and Treetops – all offer the opportunity to view mountain, forest and nocturnal animals as opposed to the plains game seen in the large, open parks. The tree hotels are all situated in forests in the vicinity of Mt. Kenya north of Nairobi, and the game viewing routine is the same at them all. Visitors arrive for lunch, perhaps rest briefly in the afternoon, and then before and after dinner until well into the night feast their eyes on the sights and sounds of the various species as they come to drink from the water hole in front of the lodge.

Viewing is done from one's bedroom, open balconies, glassed rooms or from an underground blind. It is necessary to bring along warm clothing for a stay at a tree hotel in order to photograph at night outside under the floodlights. Anyone who hasn't seen all of the species by bedtime may notify the game spotter who will buzz one's room if that elusive leopard does turn up at 3am! To minimise noise, children less than about seven years of age are not allowed at the tree hotels.

Nairobi, with a population of over three million, offers some excellent shopping. Tourists will find distinctive woodcarvings and woven purse baskets for sale at rest stops along the highways in Kenya. Similar items can be found at gift shops at the lodges in the parks, but they will be more expensive. If one doesn't see what one wants in the



Bed in tent

bush, it is likely to be found in Nairobi. There one can buy everything from a safari suit to camera lenses. One should be cautioned, however, that Nairobi continues to have a street crime problem.

### When to go

The absolute best time to visit Kenya is between July and September when the migration is at its peak in Masai Mara. But the game is generally excellent in Kenya even if one cannot travel when the migration is on. Travellers from Egypt tend to visit Kenya from Christmas through March, typically during school holidays.

Nairobi's average high temperature varies between 81F/27C (March) and 73 F/23C (July-August). Nairobi's average low temperature varies between 55 F/13 C (January-February) and 59 F/15C (April-May). Average rainfall in Nairobi varies from 1 inch/3 cm (July-September) to 8 inches/20 cm (April).



Guinea fowl



Luxury tent

### Getting there

The best airfare between Cairo and Nairobi can be obtained by flying the same airline round trip, and airfares begin from as low as EGP 2,450 round trip. Egypt Air flies non-stop from Cairo to Nairobi six times a week, while Kenya Airways operates daily flights to Nairobi via Khartoum where there is a 50-minute transit stop in each direction. Disembarkation at Khartoum is allowed only for those passengers ending their journey there. While Egypt Air's non-stop flights might at first glance appear to be more convenient, Kenya Airways offers several important advantages, so check them out first.

### Visas and health requirements

Citizens of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Egypt require tourist visas to visit Kenya. The web site of the US Centre for Disease Control, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), is an excellent resource regarding health requirements for all international travel.



Lion

**ABOUT TED COOKSON:** Egypt's most widely-travelled travel agent, Ted has been to every country in the world. He has also visited 316 of the 321 destinations on the list of the Travellers' Century Club (visit [www.eptours.com](http://www.eptours.com) and refer to World Travel Club). A travel agent in Cairo since 1986, Ted manages Egypt Panorama Tours a full-service travel agency, at 4 Road 79 (between Roads 9 and 10, near the El Maadi metro station) in Maadi. Contact Egypt Panorama Tours (open 7 days a week 9am-5pm) at: Tels. 2359-0200, 2358-5880, 2359-1301. Fax 2359-1199. E-mail: [ept@link.net](mailto:ept@link.net). Web site: [www.eptours.com](http://www.eptours.com). The password for residents is eptcool. Both text and PDF versions of all of Ted's travel articles published since 2002 are archived online at [www.eptours.com](http://www.eptours.com) under Ted's International Travel Articles. Many of the archived articles also contain video clips!