

Kenya impressions

by Jo Kilborn
Judy Graper Travel

To adequately convey the fascination of this most beautiful country is difficult — probably impossible. These are some of my most vivid recollections of my Kenya safari in June:

The sprawling modern city of Nairobi with its tall buildings, parks, heavy traffic, streets teeming with Western-clad inhabitants, becoming nearly totally black after dark. Business buildings have few lights, almost no neon signs, and dim street lights few and far between.

The sudden and dramatic changes in the landscape; lush green hills with terraced fields of crops, the red clay soil, high plateaus with sparse vegetation save yellow

grass and lacy acacia trees (in reality covered with thorns), the snow-capped peak of Mt. Kenya, the distant blue mountains which ring the Great Rift Valley. And the flowers — riots of color of flame trees, oleander, bouganvillea and frangipani.

But mostly the game: a dignified herd of 23 elephants, silently emerging from the nighttime gloom surrounding the waterhole at Treetops; a solitary black rhino; the herds of graceful impala and gazelle, docile zebras, distinctive wildebeest grazing alongside the domestic cattle and goats of the red-robed Samburu tribesmen; the leisurely gallop of a group of beautiful reticulated giraffes; the pride of young lions patiently waiting while the females hunt and the males prowl about, looking regal

indeed; the leopard in early morning enjoying his breakfast of gazelle; which he has ingeniously draped among tree branches some 15 feet off the ground; the same leopard having his late afternoon siesta in the next tree which has flatter branches for his sleeping comfort; hippos snorting and wallowing happily in the Mara River; sinister crocs basking on the riverbank.

Some things I learned about Kenya: it is pronounced "Kehn-ya" by the black native, "Keen-ya" by white colonials. Celebrating 26 years of independence, Kenya is the only African nation that is making it work. Accommodations are comfortable and clean with private facilities (except at Treetops). Service is friendly and good, and the food is excellent. Kenya grows everything, from pineapples and bananas to excellent coffee and tea. It is a nation of meat-eaters, and the meat is

good. The fish is some of the best I have ever eaten. You do not drink the water from the tap outside Nairobi. Drinking water is provided in thermos jugs in your room, and the bottled water is always available for those susceptible to digestive upsets. I only saw two snakes, and I don't think I was bitten by an insect even once. I was uncomfortably warm only once, at Lake Baringo in the Great Rift Valley. We needed sweaters and jackets most evenings, as most of the country is 5,000 feet in elevation.

This was the trip of a lifetime! You must see to believe it. Judy Graper is planning several itineraries to Kenya and the other African countries during our winter months, and it's not too late to secure reservations, if you're willing to be flexible on dates. Call Jo or Judy at 385-3820.



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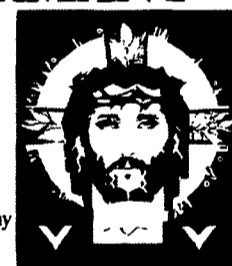
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