

Sustainability Guidelines: Kenya

You are about to embark on a wonderful trip to the Eastern African country of Kenya, known for its stunning natural beauty and wildlife. Your trip will show you all that Kenya has to offer, leaving you with a great appreciation of this country. The reality of Kenya, however, is that its natural beauty is threatened by environmental problems.

The main environmental struggles that Kenya faces are as follows:

- soil erosion,
- deforestation,
- water pollution and shortage
- desertification and decline of biodiversity.

All of these environmental problems are connected to each other, affecting one another perpetually.

Soil erosion and deforestation go hand in hand. The forests of Kenya are essential not only for water storage and biodiversity, but also because the trees keep the soil in place. When it rains, deforested areas flood more frequently and wash away sediment into the local dams and rivers, contaminating the water supply.

The recent drought is the largest environmental problem in Kenya; only 7.6% of the population has access to piped water, while the rest gather from streams and mountain rivers. This natural source of water is often polluted from urban and industrial wastes and pesticides. Unsustainable farming practices also lead to environmental issues in Kenya. The farmers clear the forest to have land to farm, but without water (due to the drought), food production is shrinking and it is hard to use best practices in farming during times of desperation. Once the land is used for farming, it is only fertile for a short time after; eventually the land is barren and creates a desert-like environment. Human growth and expansion have encroached on the habitats of the natural wildlife species in Kenya, leading to a decline in biodiversity.

While these problems may seem overwhelming, many environmental conservation movements have emerged from the roots of the Kenyan people. In 2004, Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize in the environmental field. As the founder of the ***GreenBelt Movement***, she was the first Kenyan woman to win such an award. The ***GreenBelt Movement*** is a non-government organization that empowers women to claim ownership of their environment by planting trees to combat deforestation and to also provide food and wood to local communities. This movement has been met with great respect from not only the Kenyan population, but also the global community. Other groups such as the ***Tearfund*** are providing education to local people about sustainable farming and water conservation. The largest issue in Kenya is lack of clean water; ***The Samburu Project*** is bringing clean water to Kenyan people one well at a time. Their goal is to build 25 wells throughout the country; currently they have drilled 22.

As a visitor to this beautiful country, you can help to preserve the natural beauty and not further the environmental problems. Be mindful of your water usage while you are abroad. Water is a precious commodity in Kenya, so use it wisely, do not leave the water running in the sink, shorten shower time, and follow the conservation practices used by your hotels. In order to preserve the wildlife, be mindful of your litter when in national parks or anywhere on your trip. Make sure to dispose of it in the proper receptacles. You are very fortunate to be staying in many eco-lodges that promote sustainability and environmental consciousness in Kenya.

Guide to Eco-Lodges in Kenya

Ol Donyo Wuas is an eco-lodge with stunning views of Mount Kilimanjaro. The rooms are in stand-alone lodges placed right into the Chyulu Hills. These lodges are lit by solar powered electricity and the hot water showers are also powered by solar energy. The lodge has partnered with the Maasailand Preservation Trust which has various projects such as predator conservation, education, water management, and reforestation. This eco-lodge wants to share the natural safari beauty of Kenya, but not destroy it.

Il Ngwesi Eco-Lodge was built in 1996, constructed with only local materials. It is situated on Il Ngwesi Group Ranch which promotes wildlife conservation. The rooms, bandanas, have wonderful views of the animals that roam the land around the lodge. The Maasai Cultural Manyatta provides insight into the Maasai tribe; the lodge feels very connected to these people as they have a great respect of the land and wildlife. The Il Ngwesi Community Trust focuses on projects in wildlife conservation, the preservation of Maasai culture, education, health, water and infrastructure of the community around the lodge. The main mission of Il Ngwesi is to improve the livelihoods of community members; it is able to do so from the revenue from the lodge.

Ol Malo Lodge was built on an over-grazed cattle ranch and has since turned the land not only into a world-renowned sanctuary for wild animals but also provides a look into Kenyan culture and the Samburu tribe. The Lodge was built from natural local materials with help from the local Samburu people, providing employment for local people. Those who work at Ol Malo are natives to the countryside, again providing community employment. Ol Malo is committed to the Samburu tribe and with the Ol Malo Trust they are helping with issues presented by the drought and maintaining their traditional values.

Olonana Camp is a small luxury camp situated on the banks of the Mara River. The Camp is powered by solar energy and has received a Silver rating under Ecotourism Kenya's Eco-rating scheme. This rating system is a voluntary initiative by the Kenyan tourism industry furthering goals of sustainable tourism by recognizing efforts aimed at promoting environmental, economic, and social/cultural values. They also have a tree planting project, a wetlands project, and are active in the local community.

Lewa Tented Camp is a tented camp focused on wildlife conservation. The openness of the accommodations allows you to fully appreciate the wildlife as it wanders by.



Shompole Lodge is located in a private conservancy on the edge of the Ngruman Escarpment in Southern Kenya, overlooking the Great Rift Valley. The rooms are designed to harness the natural landscape, the colors and textures in the surrounding topography. The materials used to construct the accommodation are all local resources such as white quartz stone, pale thatch, and fig wood. The Lodge is located on the 35,000 acres of the Conservancy and the Shompole Group Ranch which provide wildlife conservation and serve as a buffer zone to human settlement and development. The mission of the Lodge is aimed at conservation, community, commerce and capacity building. In order to initiate change the Lodge designed the Asali Community Trust aimed at providing funding for important social-development projects in rural communities. The projects are done hand in hand with the communities and rely on their skills and resources to keep the projects in action.

Tassia Lodge is located on the Northern Frontier District overlooking Lolokwe Mountain. The architecture is in the Maasai tradition, is inspired by the natural area, and was constructed using low impact materials. For example, no trees were cut down to build the accommodations and the whole project was centered on environmental conservation. The lodge is on a 60,000 acre Maasai owned group ranch. It is powered by solar energy with paraffin hot water heaters. The Lodge is very focused on wildlife conservation and connecting with the local community.

Tembo Camp is committed to Africa's core principles: Care of the Land, Care of the Wildlife and Care of the People. Tembo Camp has contributed significantly to improving the prosperity and living conditions of the Maasai community. Such projects include a bee-keeping project, school building, conservation education to school children, AIDS/HIV awareness, education programs, and ongoing enrichment initiatives.