

Content includes:

Itineraries	17
History	23
Culture	35
Places of Kenya	38
Food & Drink	51
Environment	58
Wars	65
Wildlife	73
Nairobi	95
Kenya National Park	140
Valley	150
Western Kenya	168
Masai Mara	171
Central Highlands	199
Northern Kenya	227
Nairobi	255
Kenya Archipelago	302
Transport	341

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written by a natural-
history expert

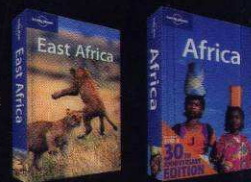
INTERVIEWS with locals
give you the inside scoop

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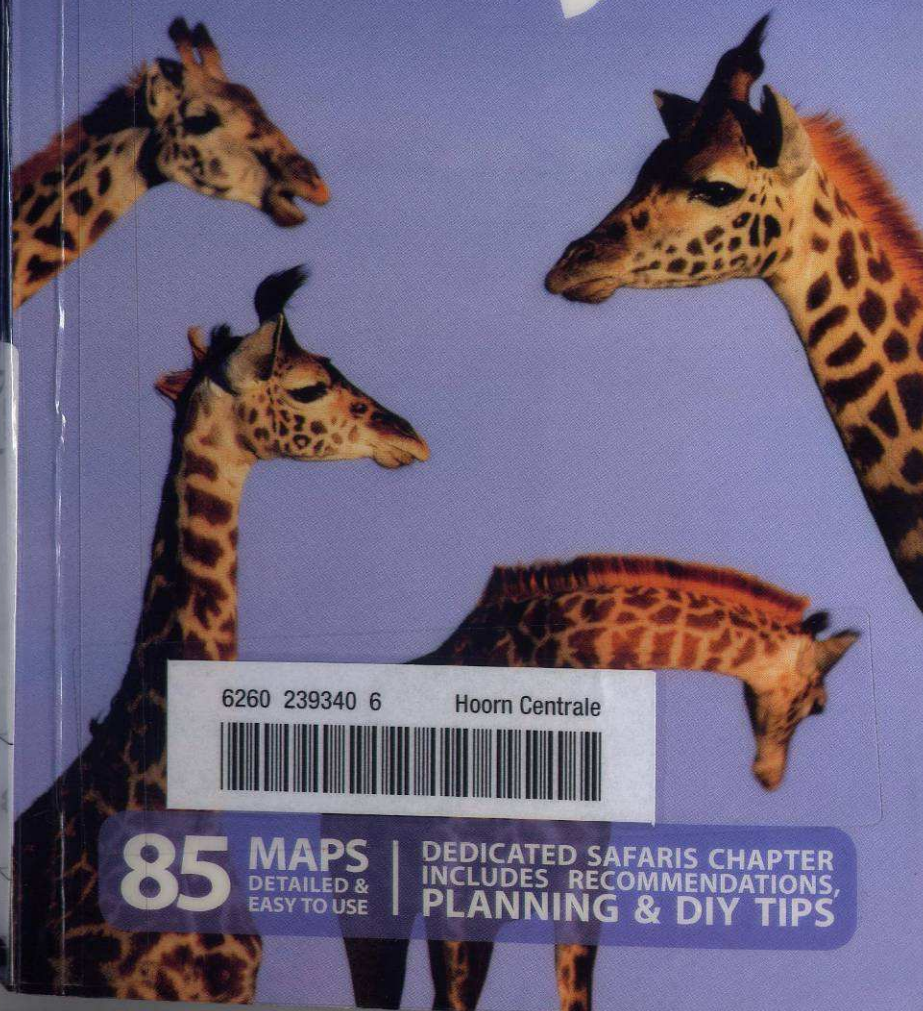
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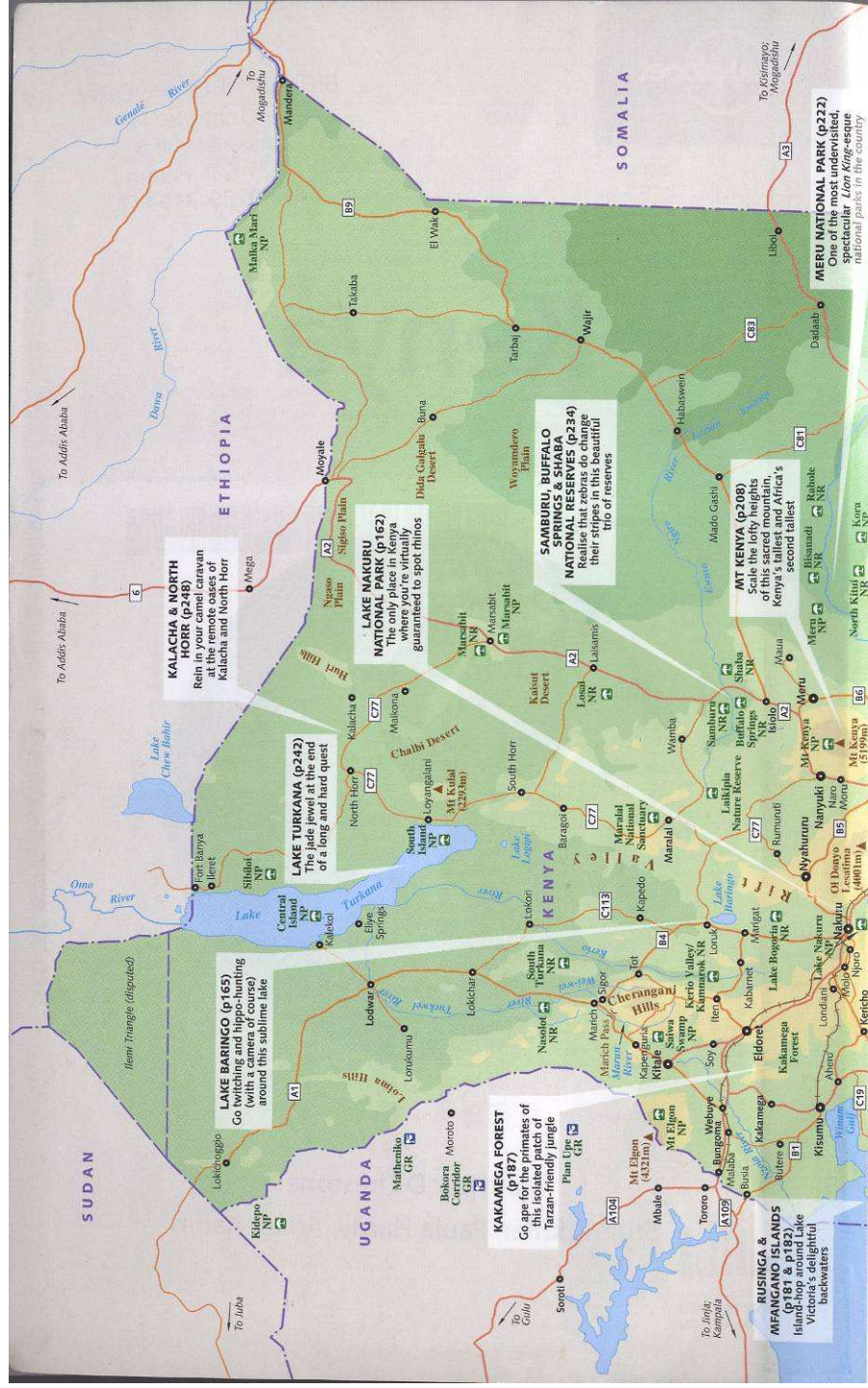
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85 MAPS
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DEDICATED SAFARIS CHAPTER
INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS,
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DRIVING TIPS & TRICKS

Still keen to give bush driving a go? Here are a few tips from past readers:

- When driving through high grass, seeds can quickly foul radiators and cause overheating. If the temperature gauge begins to climb, stop and remove plant material from the grille.
- If the road is corrugated, gradually increase your speed until you find the correct speed – it'll be obvious when the rattling stops.
- If you have a tyre blow-out, do not hit the brakes or you'll lose control. Steer straight ahead as best you can, and let the car slow itself down before you attempt to bring it to a complete stop.
- When you meet other cars it's like dust clouds passing in the night. When a vehicle approaches from the opposite direction, reduce your speed and keep as far left as possible. On remote roads, it's customary to wave at the other driver as you pass.
- In rainy weather, gravel roads can turn to quagmires, and desert washes may fill with water. If you're uncertain about the water depth in a wash, get out and check (unless it's a raging torrent, of course!), and only cross when it's safe for the type of vehicle you're driving.
- Look out for animals. Antelope, in particular, often bound onto the road unexpectedly.
- Avoid swerving sharply or braking suddenly on an unsealed road or you risk losing control. If the rear wheels begin to skid, steer gently in the direction of the skid until you regain control. If the front wheels skid, take a firm hand on the wheel and steer in the opposite direction of the skid.
- Dust permeates everything on dirt roads – wrap your food, clothing and camera equipment in dust-proof plastic or keep them in sealed containers. To minimise dust inside the vehicle, pressurise the interior by closing the windows and turning on the blower.
- Overtaking (passing) can be extremely dangerous because your view may be obscured by dust kicked up by the car ahead. Try to gain the attention of the driver in front by flashing your high beams, which indicates that you want to overtake. If someone behind you flashes their lights, move as far to the left as possible.

fuses, hoses, a good jack and a wooden plank (to use as a base in sand and salt), several spare tyres and a pump. A good Swiss Army knife or Leatherman tool combined with a sturdy roll of duct tape can also save your vehicle's life in a pinch.

Although 4WD exploration and bush camping go hand in hand, Kenya offers a remarkably extensive network of well-maintained campsites, even in the remotest of places. Camping equipment varies according to personal preference, though essentials include a waterproof tent, a three-season sleeping bag (you will need a warmer bag in the winter), a ground mat or Therm-a-Rest, fire-starting supplies, firewood, a basic first-aid kit and a torch with extra batteries. Although seasoned hikers stick to the adage 'less is best', again, it's best to err on the side of caution, especially if you have extra room in your 4WD.

Sand tracks are most easily negotiated, and least likely to bog vehicles in the cool mornings and evenings, when air spaces between sand grains are smaller. To further prevent bogging or stalling, move as quickly as possible and keep the revs up, but avoid sudden acceleration. Shift down gears in advance of deep sandy patches or the vehicle may stall and bog.

When negotiating a straight course through rutted sand, allow the vehicle to travel along the path of least resistance. Anticipate corners and turn the wheel slightly earlier than you would on a solid surface – this allows the vehicle to ski smoothly round – then accelerate gently out of the turn. Driving on loose sand may be facilitated by lowering the air pressure in the tyres, thereby increasing their gripping area.

Nairobi & Around



One of the most vilified cities in Africa, Nairobi has a reputation amongst foreign tourists as being an incredibly dangerous place racked by violent crime and extreme poverty. Indeed, the city has garnered the unfortunate nickname of 'Nairobbery', and most first-timers are keen on holing up in their hotel rooms, and counting down the minutes until their safari departure. While the crime statistics are unsettling, it's easy enough to sidestep the worst dangers here, and although you might not believe it at first glance, Nairobi is actually an extremely dynamic and cosmopolitan city full of tourist attractions.

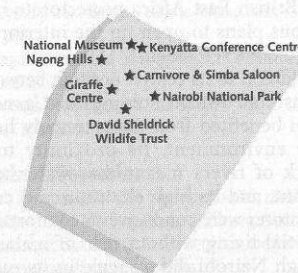
The central business district has more going for it than any other Kenyan conurbation: there's a comprehensive range of shops, the matatus are the funkiest around, most safari companies are based here, the cultural scene is thriving, the nightlife is unbridled and it's virtually the only place in the country where you can get a truly varied diet. Even cafe culture has reached the downtown area, adding a soupçon of sophistication to the supposed urban badlands.

Even if the inner city does terrify you, a quick matatu ride can whisk you into another world for that much-needed rural escape. From the secluded suburbs of Karen and Langata to the lush walking trails of the Ngong Hills, there's no need to forego all the creature comforts of urban living. And speaking of creatures, the outskirts of Nairobi can thrust you firmly into the domain of Kenyan wildlife, whether you're snogging giraffes at the Giraffe Centre, or watching lions prowl at Nairobi National Park.

Moral of the story: stop complaining about Nairobi, drop your pretences, and get out there and explore it – you might be surprised by what you find.

HIGHLIGHTS

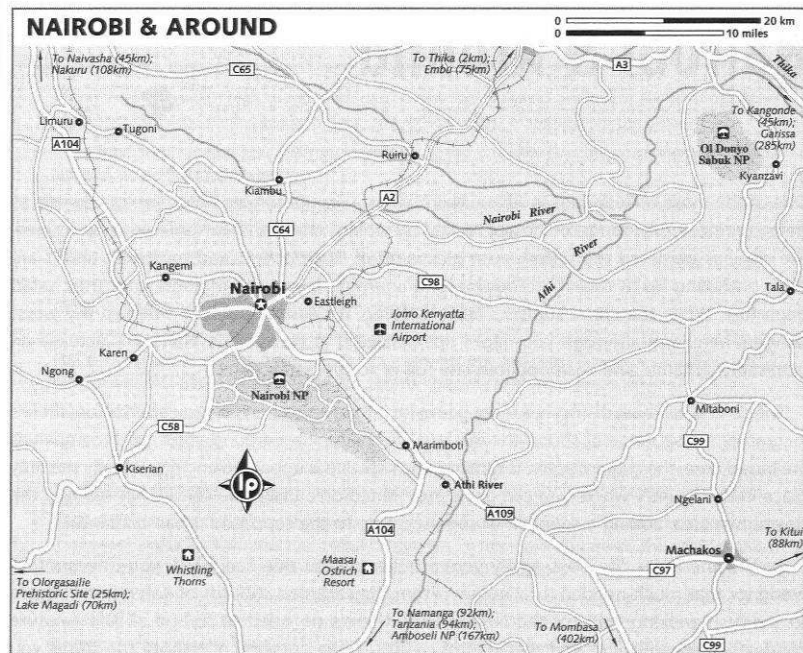
- Spotting wildlife in the most incongruous of surroundings at the **Nairobi National Park** (p109)
- Watching a gleeful group of baby elephants being bottle-fed at the **David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust** (p112)
- Tangling tongues with a rubber-necked ungulate at Langata's **Giraffe Centre** (p113)
- Broadening your appreciation of all things cultural and environmental at the **National Museum** (p103)
- Surveying the cityscape from the grand heights of the **Kenyatta Conference Centre** (p107)
- Making the essential foodie pilgrimage to **Carnivore** (p125) and dancing it off at **Simba Saloon** (p130)
- Striking out for some proper exercise, walking through the incredibly scenic **Ngong Hills** (p114)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 020

■ POPULATION: OVER 3 MILLION

■ AREA: 680 SQ KM



HISTORY

Nairobi is a completely modern creation, and almost everything here has been built in the last 100 years. In fact, until the 1890s, the whole area was just an isolated swamp. But, as the tracks of the East Africa railway were laid down between Mombasa and Kampala, a depot was established on the edge of a small stream known to the Maasai as *uaso nairobi* (cold water). Sadly, the Maasai were quickly and forcibly removed from the land as the British East Africa protectorate had ambitious plans to open up the interior to white colonial settlement.

In addition to its central position between the coast and British holdings in Uganda, Nairobi benefited from its extremely hospitable environment. Its proximity to a network of rivers meant that water was abundant, and its high elevation and cool temperatures were conducive to comfortable residential living without fear of malaria. Although Nairobi did struggle in its early years with frequent fires and an outbreak of the plague, by 1907 the booming commer-

cial centre replaced Mombasa as the capital of British East Africa.

Even when the first permanent buildings were constructed, Nairobi remained a real frontier town, with rhinos and lions freely roaming the outskirts. As a result, the colonial government built some grand hotels to accommodate the first tourists to Kenya – big-game hunters, lured by the attraction of shooting the country's almost naively tame wildlife. In 1946, Nairobi National Park was established as the first national park in East Africa – it remains the only wildlife reserve in the world bordering a capital city.

After achieving independence in 1963, Nairobi grew too rapidly by most accounts, putting a great deal of pressure on the city's infrastructure. Power cuts and water shortages became a common occurrence, and enormous shanty towns of tin-roofed settlements sprung up on the outskirts of the capital. In the name of modernisation, almost all of the colonial-era buildings were replaced by concrete office buildings, which today characterise much of the modern city.

However, Nairobi has been successful in establishing itself as East Africa's largest city and main transport hub. The capital is also situated firmly at the centre of national life and politics, though this position did the city no favours in 1998 when the US embassy on Moi Ave was bombed by militants with links to Al Qaeda. More than 200 Kenyans were killed in the attack, and although four suspects were convicted and sentenced to life without parole, many locals were angered by what they considered lenient sentences (they had wanted the death penalty) and meagre compensation. Even today, resentment still lingers in certain quarters of the city.

In recent years, the growth of the city has put tremendous pressure on the government to develop protected lands such as the Nairobi National Park. But the government has so far resisted, as these lands continue to support traditional migration routes for herd animals.

In December 2007, the shanty towns of Nairobi were set ablaze as riots broke out following the disputed presidential election. Hundreds of homes were burnt to the ground by protestors, and many suffered violent attacks. At the time of writing, order had been restored to the city, though deep scars remain, especially amongst those who were internally displaced.

ORIENTATION

The compact city centre is bounded by Uhuru Hwy to the west, Haile Selassie Ave to the south, Tom Mboya St at the east, and University Way at the north end. Northeast of the centre, on the eastern side of Tom Mboya St, is the rougher River Rd area where most of the bus offices are found.

Various suburbs surround the downtown area. Southwest of the centre, beyond Uhuru and Central Parks, are Nairobi Hill, Milimani and Hurlingham, with several hostels, campsites and hotels. Further out are Wilson Airport, Nairobi National Park and the expat enclaves of Langata and Karen. The country's main airport, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, is southeast of the centre.

North of the centre you will find the expat-dominated suburbs of Westlands and Parklands, home to large European and Indian communities. The suburbs further out, such as Kibera, Kayole and Githurai, are

mainly poverty-stricken shanty towns with terrible reputations for violent crime.

Maps

Many hotels and travel companies give out free promotional maps, which serve as rudimentary guides to the downtown area.

For more detailed coverage, the best option is the *City of Nairobi: Map & Guide* produced by Survey of Kenya, available at bookshops around the city. It covers the suburbs and has a detailed map of the central area.

Also adequate, with some hotels and places of interest marked, is the 1:15,000 *Map Guide of Nairobi City Centre* (KSh200) published by Interland Maps.

Much better, though bulkier, is *Nairobi A to Z* (KSh510) by RW Moss. Like the equivalents in other countries, the *A to Z* covers the whole city in detail.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

For newspapers and magazines, there are dozens of street vendors and hawkers selling current editions of the daily papers and old editions of Western publications.

Book Villa (Map pp104-5; ☎ 337890; Standard St) New, discounted and secondhand books. Also runs a borrowing scheme.

Bookpoint (Map pp104-5; ☎ 211156; Moi Ave)

Text Book Centre Westlands (Map p108; ☎ 3747405; Sarit Centre); Kijabe St (Map pp100-1; ☎ 330340) One of the best bookshops in East Africa. The sister shop on Kijabe St isn't as big or well stocked.

Westland Sundries Bookshop Downtown (Map pp104-5; ☎ 212776; New Stanley Hotel, Kenyatta Ave); Westlands (Map p108; ☎ 446406; Ring Rd)

Camping Equipment

Atul's (Map pp104-5; ☎ 225935; Biashara St) Hires out everything from sleeping bags to folding toilet seats – see p92.

Kenya Canvas Ltd (Map pp104-5; ☎ 343262; Muindi Mbingu St)

X-treme Outdoors (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 2722224; Yaya Centre, Hurlingham)

Clubs & Societies

East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS; off Map pp100-1; ☎ 574145; www.eawildlife.org; Riara Rd, Kilimani, PO Box 20110) This society is at the forefront of conservation efforts in East Africa.

Friends of Nairobi National Park (FoNNaP; Map p111; ☎ 500622; http://fonnap.wordpress.com; Kenya Wildlife

NAIROBI IN...

Two Days

Start by heading out to the suburbs of Karen and Langata, where you can get up-close-and-personal with wildlife at the Langata **Giraffe Centre** (p113) and the **David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust** (p112). A visit to the **Karen Blixen Museum** (p113) is recommended for fans of the book *Out of Africa*, which can also be paired with a shopping trip to the **Kazuri Beads & Pottery Centre** (p114). In the evening, dinner at **Carnivore** (p125) and dancing at the **Simba Saloon** (p130) is a must.

On the second day, head downtown to visit the **National Museum** (p103), view the city from the **Kenyatta Conference Centre** (p107), and browse contemporary art at the **National Archives** (p107). In the evening, you can eat posh at **Tamarind Restaurant** (p125) and dance dirty at **Simmers** (p129).

Four Days

With another two days, you can safari in **Nairobi National Park** (p109), and have dinner and catch a movie at the **Village Market** (p132).

For your final 24 hours, do a bit of shopping in the **curio markets** (p131), eat at Kenya's best Indian restaurant, namely **Haandi** (p127), and work off the calories at the massive club that is **Pavement** (p130).

Service Headquarters, Langata Rd) The society aims to protect migration routes between the Masai Mara and the national park.

Mountain Club of Kenya (MCK; ☎ 602330; www.mck.or.ke; Wilson Airport) The club meets at 8pm every Tuesday at the clubhouse at Wilson Airport (Map p111). Members organise frequent climbing and trekking weekends around the country and have a huge pool of technical knowledge about climbing in Kenya.

Nature Kenya (☎ 3749957; www.naturekenya.org; National Museum) Located just off Museum Hill Rd at the museum, it runs a variety of local outings – see p115.

Cultural Centres

All the foreign cultural organisations have libraries (opposite) open to the public.

Alliance Française (Map pp104-5; ☎ 340054; www.ambafrance-ke.org; cnr Moktar Daddah & Loita Sts; ☎ 8.30am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, to 5pm Sat) Has the best events program of all the centres, showcasing Kenyan and other African performing arts.

British Council (Map pp100-1; ☎ 334855; www.britishcouncil.org/kenya; Upper Hill Rd; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, to 1pm Sat)

Cultural Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Map pp104-5; ☎ 214352; Ambank House, Monrovia St; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4.30pm Sat) Hosts exhibitions and displays on Islam.

Goethe Institut (Map pp104-5; ☎ 224640; www.goethe.de/nairobi; Maendeleo House, cnr Monrovia & Loita Sts; ☎ 10am–12.30pm Thu–Tue, 2–5pm Mon–Fri)

Japan Information & Culture Centre (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2898515; www.ke.emb-japan.go.jp; Mara Rd, Upper

Hill; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri) Free video shows and Japanese cinema screenings.

Nairobi Cultural Institute (Map pp100-1; ☎ 569205; Ngong Rd) Holds lectures and other functions of local cultural interest.

Emergency

AAR Health Services (Map pp100-1; ☎ 271737; Fourth Ngong Ave)

Aga Khan Hospital (Map pp100-1; ☎ 3662000; Third Parklands Ave) A reliable hospital with 24-hour emergency services.

Emergency services (☎ 999) The national emergency number to call for fire, police and ambulance assistance. A word of warning, though – don't rely on prompt arrival.

Flying Doctors Service (☎ 602495, emergency 315454)

Police (Map pp100-1 & pp104-5; ☎ 240000) Phone for less-urgent police business.

St John's Ambulance (☎ 2100000)

Tourist helpline (☎ 020-604767) Twenty-four hour service.

Internet Access

There are hundreds of internet cafes in downtown Nairobi – most of them tucked away in anonymous office buildings in the town centre. Connection speed is decent assuming you're not streaming YouTube, though machine quality varies wildly. Rates range from KSh1 to KSh4 per minute.

AGX (Map pp104-5; Barclays Plaza, Loita St; per min KSh1; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat) Best connections in town, with a choice of browsers.

Avant Garde e-centre (Map pp104-5; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; ☎ 7.30am–9pm Mon–Sat, 11am–6pm Sun)

Capital Realtime (Map pp104-5; ☎ 247900; Lonhro House, Standard St; ☎ 8.30am–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat)

Dallas Communications (Map pp104-5; ☎ 223655; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St)

EasySurf (Map p108; ☎ 3745418; Sarit Centre, Westlands; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–2pm Sun)

Libraries

Many of Nairobi's cultural centres (opposite) also have libraries available to the public.

Kenya National Library (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2725550; www.knls.or.ke; Ngong Rd; ☎ 8am–6.30pm Mon–Thu, to 4pm Fri, 9am–5pm Sat)

McMillan Memorial Library (Map pp104-5; ☎ 221844; Banda St; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4pm Sat) A smaller collection in a lovely colonial-era building.

Medical Services

Nairobi has plenty of healthcare facilities used to dealing with travellers and expats, which is a good thing as you're going to want to avoid the Kenyatta National Hospital (Map pp100-1) – although it's free, stretched resources mean you may come out with something worse than what you went in with.

AAR Health Services (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2715319; Williamson House, Fourth Ngong Ave) Westlands (Map p108; ☎ 446201; Sarit Centre) Probably the best of a number of private ambulance and emergency air-evacuation companies. It also runs a private clinic in Westlands.

Acacia Medical Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 212200; ICEA Bldg, Kenyatta Ave; ☎ 7am–7pm Mon–Fri, to 2pm Sat)

Aga Khan Hospital (Map pp100-1; ☎ 740000; Third Parklands Ave; ☎ 24hr)

KAM Pharmacy (Map pp104-5; ☎ 251700; Executive Tower, IPS Bldg, Kimathi St) A one-stop shop for medical treatment, with a pharmacy, doctor's surgery and laboratory.

Medical Services Surgery (Map pp104-5; ☎ 317625; Bruce House, Standard St; ☎ 8.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri)

Nairobi Hospital (Map pp100-1; ☎ 722160; off Argwings Kodhek Rd; ☎ 24hr)

Transcom Medical Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 217564; Tsavo Rd)

Money

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport has several exchange counters in the baggage reclaim area and a **Barclays Bank** (☎ 24hr) with an ATM outside in the arrivals hall.

There are Barclays branches with guarded ATMs on Mama Ngina St (Map pp104-5),

Muindi Mbingu St (Map pp104-5) and on the corner of Kenyatta and Moi Aves (Map pp104-5). There are also branches in the Sarit Centre (Map p108) and on Woodvale Grove (Map p108) in Westlands, and the Yaya Centre (off Map pp100-1) in Hurlingham.

The other big bank is Standard Chartered Bank, which has numerous downtown branches.

Foreign-exchange bureaux offer slightly better rates for cash than the banks. There are dozens of options in the town centre, so it's worth strolling around to see who is currently offering the best deal.

American Express (Map pp104-5; ☎ 222906; Hilton Hotel, Mama Ngina St; ☎ 8.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri)

Cosmos Forex (Map pp104-5; ☎ 250582; Rehema House, Standard St)

Goldfield Forex (Map pp104-5; ☎ 244554; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St)

Mayfair Forex (Map pp104-5; ☎ 226212; Uganda House, Standard St)

Postbank (Map pp104-5; 13 Kenyatta Ave) For Western Union money transfers.

Travellers Forex Bureau (Map p108; ☎ 447204; The Mall Shopping Centre, Westlands)

Photography Equipment

Shops selling and developing film are still common across Nairobi, and most can also do instant passport-size photographs. Digital printing, however, is slowly becoming the norm and most places can burn images from your memory card onto a DVD.

Elite Camera House (Map pp104-5; ☎ 224521; Kimathi St)

Expo Camera Centre Downtown (Map pp104-5; ☎ 226846; Mama Ngina St; Westlands (Map p108;

☎ 441253; Mpaka Rd) Hires out SLR cameras and lenses.

Fedha Foto Studio (Map pp104-5; ☎ 220515; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St)

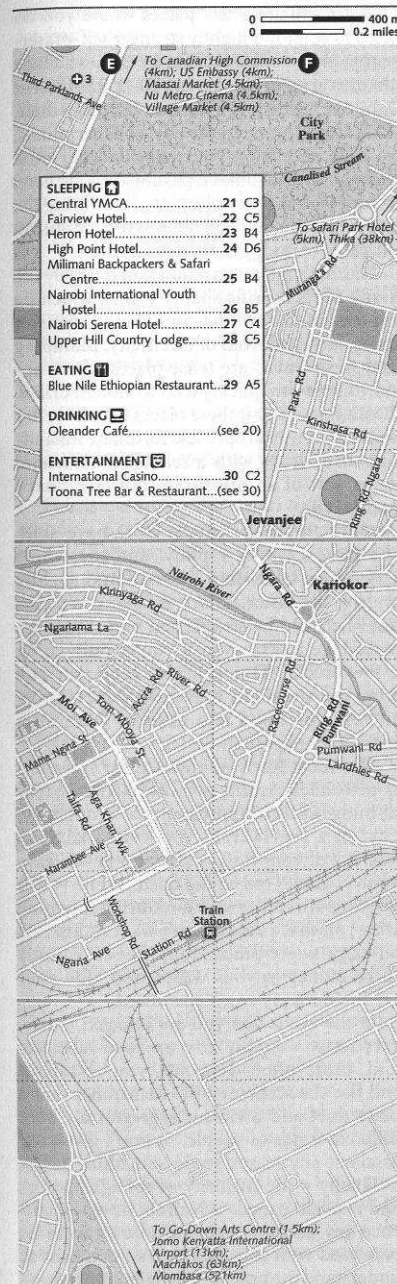
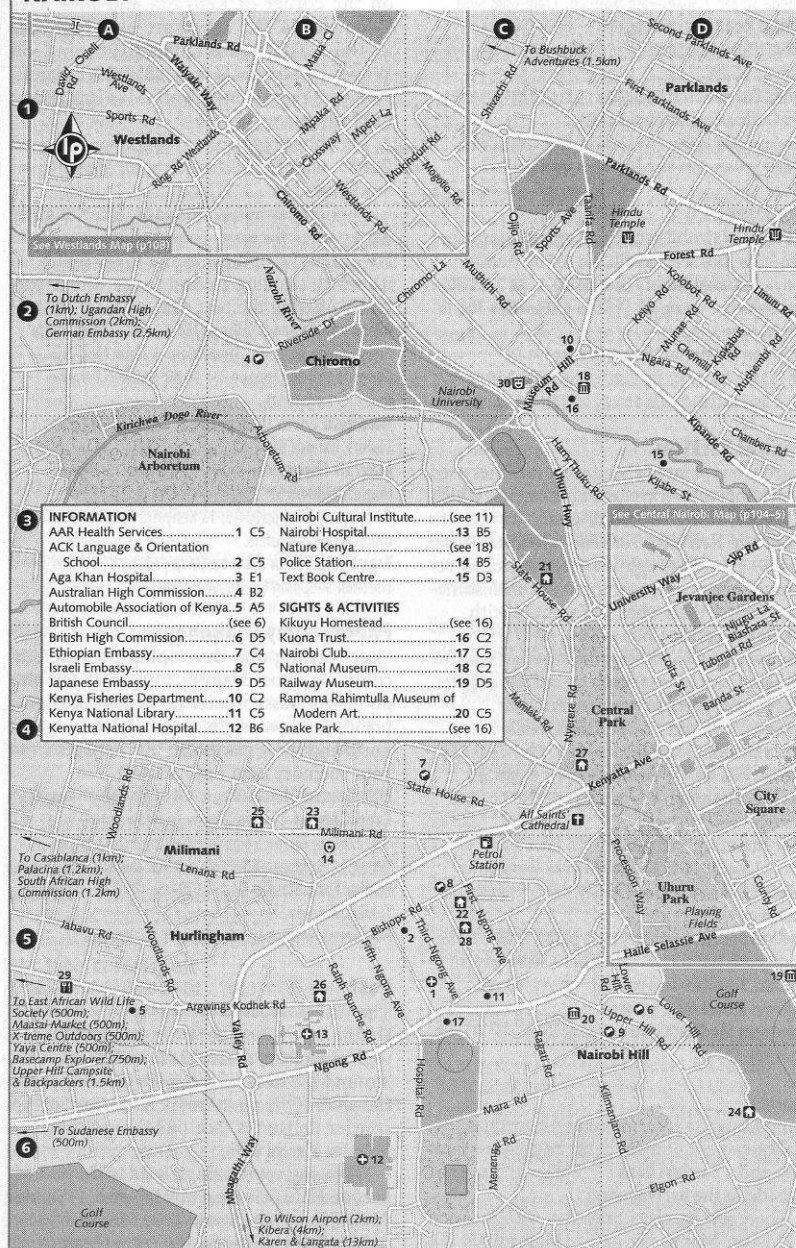
Fotoland (Map pp104-5; ☎ 343042; Moi Ave)

Post

The vast **main post office** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 243434; Kenyatta Ave; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) is a well-organised edifice close to Uhuru Park. Around the back of the main building is the **EMS office** (☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–12.30pm Sat), for courier deliveries (see p334), and there's a Telkom Kenya office upstairs.

If you just want stamps, head to the post offices on Haile Selassie Ave (Map pp104-5), Moi Ave (Map pp104-5) and Tom Mboya St (Map pp104-5), or in the Sarit Centre (Map p108)

NAIROBI



and on Mpaka Rd (Map p108) in Westlands. The Moi Ave office is a good place for sending parcels – packing boxes are available for KSh50 to KSh100.

DHL Downtown (Map pp104-5; ☎ 534988; www.dhl.co.ke; International House, Mama Ngina St); Westlands (Map p108; ☎ 6925120; Sarit Centre) Reliable private courier.

Telephone & Fax

Public phones are common in Nairobi, but many just don't work. **Telkom Kenya** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 232000; Haile Selassie Ave; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has dozens of payphones and you can buy phonecards. Many stands downtown sell Telkom Kenya phonecards and top-up cards for prepaid mobiles. Alternatively, there are numerous private agencies in the centre of town offering international telephone services.

Lazards (Map pp104-5; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave; ☎ 7am-10pm; ☎) International phone calls from as little as KSh10 per minute to North America or Europe and international faxes from KSh40 per page. You may need ID to get into the building.

Toilets

It may come as a shock to regular travellers to African, but Nairobi now has a handful of manned public toilets around the downtown area offering flush toilets with a basic level of cleanliness. Signs will indicate you need to pay to do your business (about KSh5). Some central shopping centres, such as Kenya Cinema Plaza, have free public conveniences.

Tourist Information

Despite the many safari companies with signs saying 'Tourist Information', there is still no official tourist office in Nairobi. For events and other listings you'll have to check the local newspapers or glean what you can from a handful of magazines, which take a bit of effort to hunt down. *Go Places* (free) and the *Going Out Guide* (KSh150) are probably the most widespread, available from travel agents, airline offices and some hotels.

The vast noticeboards found at the **Sarit Centre** (Map p108; Westlands) and **Yaya Centre** (off Map pp100-1; Hurlingham) are good places to look for local information. All sorts of things are advertised here, including language courses, vehicles for sale and houses for rent.

Langata Link (Map p109; ☎ 891314; www.langatalink.com; Langata South Rd; ☎) Aimed mainly at residents, the travel desk here has plenty of information about hotels and restaurants in Langata and Karen as well as further afield.

Travel Agencies

Bunson Travel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 248371; www.bunsonkenya.com; Pan Africa Insurance Bldg, Standard St) A good upmarket operator with offices around Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

Flight Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 210024; Lakhamshi House, Biashara St) This company has been doing discounted air tickets for years and is totally switched on to the backpacker market. It also acts as a broker for camping safaris and runs overland trips across Africa.

Let's Go Travel DOWNTOWN (Map pp104-5; ☎ 340331; www.lets-go-travel.net; Caxton House, Standard St); WESTLANDS (off Map p108 ☎ 447151; ABC Place, Waiyaki Way); KAREN (Map p109; ☎ 882505; Karen shopping centre, Langata Rd) Highly recommended, Let's Go is very good for flights, safaris and pretty much anything else you might need. It publishes an excellent price list of hotels, lodges, camps and bandas (thatched-roofed huts) in Kenya (also searchable on its website), and acts as main booking agent for many off-the-beaten-track and unusual travel options.

Tropical Winds (Map pp104-5; ☎ 341939; www.tropical-winds.com; Barclays Plaza, Loita St) Nairobi's STA Travel representative.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

First-time visitors to Nairobi are understandably daunted by the city's unenviable reputation. 'Nairobbery', as it has been nicknamed by jaded residents and expats, is commonly regarded as the most dangerous city in Africa, beating stiff competition from Johannesburg and Lagos. Carjacking, robbery and violence are daily occurrences, and the social ills behind them are unlikely to disappear in the near future.

However, shell-shocked first-timers should take comfort in the fact that the majority of problems happen in the shanty towns, far from the main tourist zones. The downtown area bound by Kenyatta Ave, Moi Ave, Haile Selassie Ave and Uhuru Hwy is unthreatening and comparatively trouble-free as long as you use a bit of common sense. There are also plenty of *askaris* (security guards) about in case you need assistance.

In fact, compared to Johannesburg and Lagos, where armed guards, razor-wired compounds and patrol vehicles are the norm rather than the exception, Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD) is quite relaxed and hassle-free. As long as you stay alert, walk with confidence, keep a hand on your wallet and avoid wearing anything too flashy, you should encounter nothing worse than a few persistent safari touts and the odd con artist.

But there are a few places where you do need to employ a slightly stronger self-preservation instinct. Potential danger zones include the area around Latema and River Rds (east of Moi Ave), which is a hotspot for petty theft. This area is home to the city's bus terminals, so keep an eye on your bags and personal belongings at all times if passing through here. Uhuru Park is a very pleasant place during the daylight hours, though it tends to accumulate all kinds of dodgy characters at night.

Nairobi's infamous reputation is largely the result of its horrific shanty towns, which lie on the outskirts of the city. These expansive areas, largely devoid of electricity, plumbing and fresh water, are tense places where opportunism can quickly lead to violent crime. If you want to visit these places to get a better sense of how Nairobi's less fortunate inhabitants live, do so with a reliable local friend or as part of an organised tour (see boxed text, p116).

Once the shops in the CBD have shut, the streets empty rapidly, and the whole city centre takes on a deserted and slightly sinister air. After sunset, mugging is a risk anywhere on the streets, and you should always take a taxi, even if you're only going a few blocks. This will also keep you safe from the attentions of Nairobi's street prostitutes, who flood into town in force for a bit of moonlighting.

The most likely annoyance for travellers is petty theft, which is most likely to occur at budget hotels and campsites around the city. As a general rule, you should take advantage of your hotel's safe and never leave your valuables out in the open. While you're walking around town, don't bring anything with you that you wouldn't want to lose. As an extra safety precaution, it's best to only carry money in your wallet, and hide your credit and bank cards elsewhere.

In the event that you are mugged, never resist – simply give up your valuables and, more often than not, your assailant will flee the scene rapidly. Remember that a petty thief and a violent aggressor are very different kinds of people, so don't give your assailant any reason to do something rash.

Finally – the majority of foreign visitors and resident expats in Nairobi never experience any kind of problem, so try not to be paralysed with fear. Again, it's important to understand the potential dangers and annoy-

ances that are present, though you shouldn't let fear exile you to your hotel room. Exude confidence, practise street smarts, and chances are you'll actually end up really enjoying your time in Nairobi.

Scams

Nairobi's active handful of confidence tricksters seem to have relied on the same old stories for years, and it's generally easy to spot the spiels once you've heard them a couple of times.

It is almost a certainty that at some point during your time in Nairobi you will be approached on the street by a safari tout. Most of these persistent guys are hoping to drag you into an operator's office, where they can expect to receive a small commission. A small minority are hoping to distract you with their glossy brochures while they deftly lift your wallet.

This is not to say that safari touts are bad people – a good number of them really do want to help you make a booking. With that said, it's better to err on the side of caution and work directly with a reliable operator. For more information, see the Safaris chapter (p65).

Apart from the regular safari rip-offs, you should be careful of something known as the 'Nairobi bump'. The usual tactic is for a scammer to bump into you in the street, and then try to strike up a small conversation. If this happens, keep walking, as it's probably the most effective way of preventing your wallet or backpack from being stolen.

You should also be wary of anyone who says they work at your hostel/hotel/campsite, even if they actually know the names of the staff there. We have received countless letters from travellers who have been duped into handing over money on the street for seemingly valid reasons, such as buying groceries for the evening's dinner. If someone claiming to be from your accommodation asks for money, be sceptical and just walk away.

Given the continuing severity of the conflicts in Sudan, another local speciality is the Sudanese refugee scam (see boxed text, p107).

In short, always exercise caution while talking to anyone on the streets of Nairobi. While there are genuinely good people out there, the reality is that foreign tourists are an easy target for scamming.

SIGHTS City Centre

Nairobi's most popular tourist attractions are out in the suburbs, though there are a handful of museums and cultural institutions scattered around the city that can easily occupy a full day.

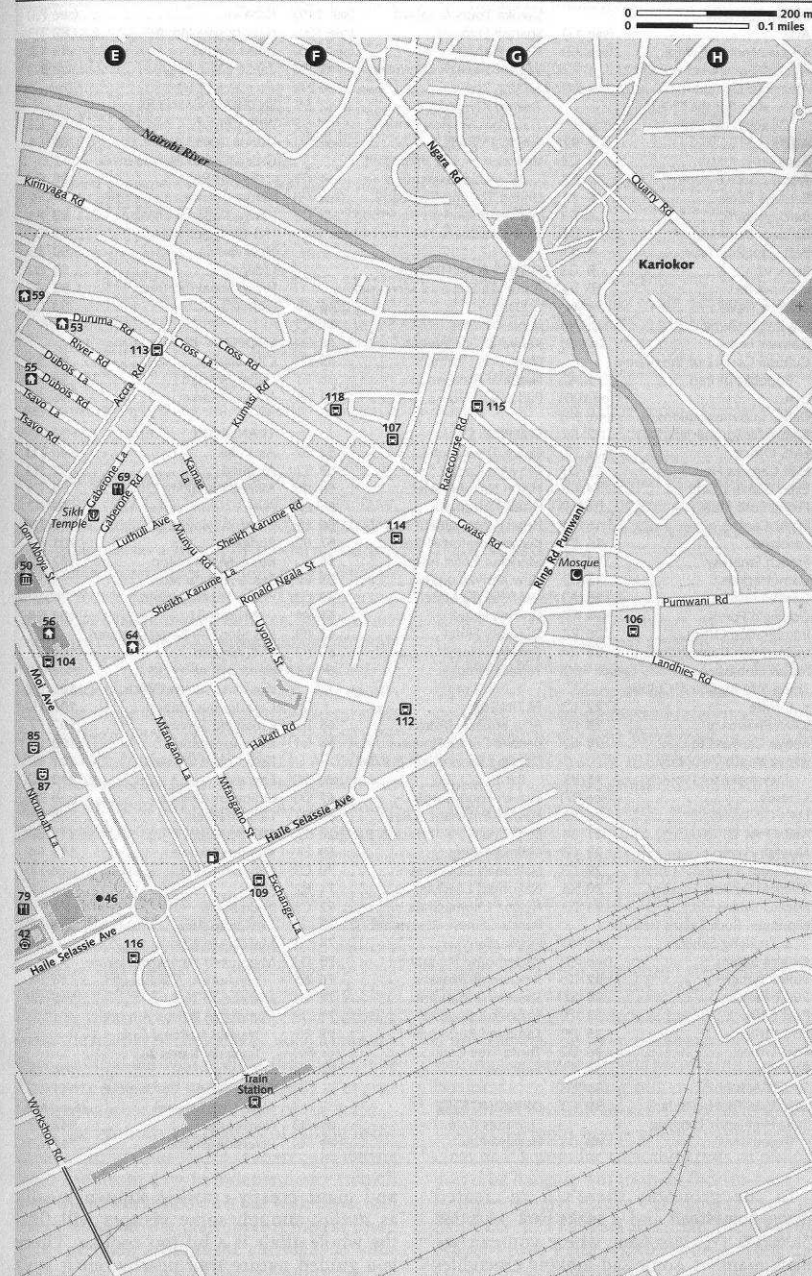
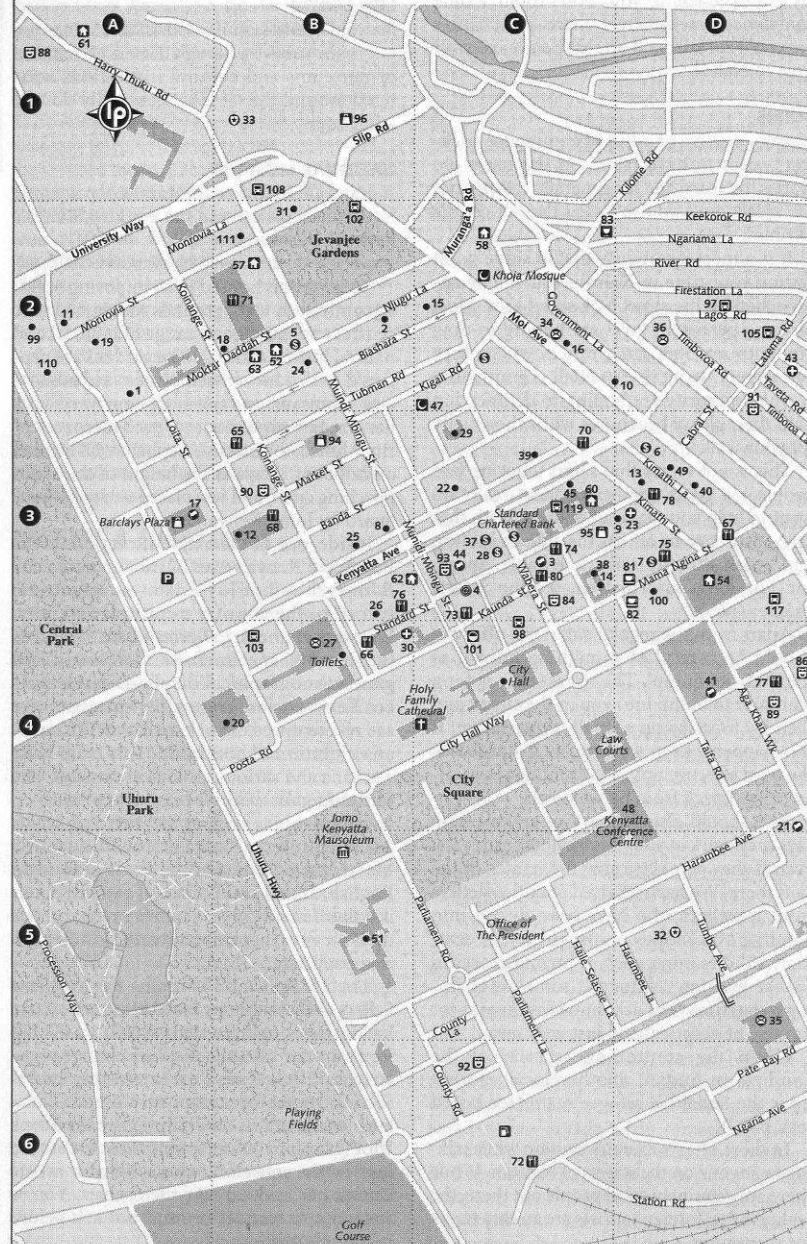
NATIONAL MUSEUM

A grand alternative to the dozens of poky little local museums around the country, Kenya's **National Museum** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 742131; www.museums.or.ke; Museum Hill Rd; adult/child KSh800/400; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) is housed in an imposing building amid lush leafy grounds just outside the centre, and has a good range of cultural and natural history exhibits. The gardens are peppered with random sculptures, including a large dinosaur, and the inner courtyard has a life-size fibreglass model of pachyderm celebrity Ahmed, the massive elephant who became a symbol of Kenya at the height of the 1980s poaching crisis, and was placed under 24-hour guard by Jomo Kenyatta.

Inside, one of the major attractions is the Peoples of Kenya series of tribal portraits by *Born Free* author Joy Adamson, a fantastic record of the country's cultural diversity. Upstairs are huge galleries of stuffed birds (at least 900 specimens) and animals, and good ethnographical displays on the various Kenyan tribal groups. Downstairs, there are re-creations of rock art from Tanzania, an exhibition of hominid fossils from Lake Turkana and various geological displays. The outlying gallery hosts temporary exhibits, covering topics such as Swahili and South Asian culture in Kenya and wildlife in the Masai Mara. Volunteer guides offer tours in English, Dutch and French; it's worth booking them in advance. There's no charge for their services, but a donation to the museum is appropriate.

The 1st floor also contains the excellent **Gallery of Contemporary East African Art**, where local artists exhibit their work; as all the items are for sale, the displays change regularly, and it's always an interesting cross-section of the contemporary scene. For a look at the artists in action, visit the **Kuona Trust** (Map pp100-1), a nonprofit art studio just by the museum, where Kenyan artists can gather and express themselves. You're welcome to wander around but ask before taking photos.

CENTRAL NAIROBI



INFORMATION

AGX.....	(see 17)
Acacia Medical Centre.....	(see 22)
Alliance Française.....	1 A2
American Express.....	(see 54)
Association for the Physically Disabled (APDK).....	(see 97)
Atul's.....	2 B2
Austrian Embassy.....	3 C3
Avant Garde e-centre.....	4 C3
Barclays Bank.....	5 B2
Barclays Bank.....	6 D3
Barclays Bank.....	7 D3
Best Camping Tours.....	8 B3
Book Villa.....	9 D3
Bookpoint.....	10 D2
Bunson Travel.....	(see 74)
Capital Realtime.....	(see 74)
Cosmos Forex.....	(see 9)
Cultural Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran.....	11 A2
DHL.....	(see 100)
Dallas Communications.....	(see 84)
Eastern & Southern Safaris.....	12 B3
EMS Office.....	(see 27)
Elite Camera House.....	13 D3
Expo Camera Centre.....	14 C3
Fedha Foto Studio.....	(see 4)
Flight Centre.....	15 C2
Fotoland.....	16 C2
French Embassy.....	17 A3
Gametrackers.....	18 B2
Goethe Institut.....	19 A2
Goldfield Forex.....	(see 73)
Immigration Office.....	20 B4
Indian High Commission.....	21 D4
Italian Embassy.....	(see 100)
Japan Information & Culture Centre.....	22 C3
KAM Pharmacy.....	23 D3
Kenya Canvas Ltd.....	24 B2
Kenya Youth Voluntary Development Projects.....	25 B3
Lazards.....	(see 87)
Let's Go Travel.....	26 B3
Main Post Office.....	27 B4
Mayfair Forex.....	28 C3
McMillan Memorial Library.....	29 C3
Medical Services Surgery.....	30 B4
Micato Safaris.....	31 B2
Mountain Rock Safaris Resorts & Trekking Services.....	(see 38)
Origins Safaris.....	(see 73)
Police Station.....	32 D5
Police Station.....	33 B1
Post Office.....	34 C2
Post Office.....	35 D5
Post Office.....	36 D2
Postbank.....	37 C3
Safari Seekers.....	38 C3
Safe Ride Tours & Safaris.....	39 C3
Sana Highlands Trekking Expeditions.....	40 D3

Savuka Tours & Safaris.....	(see 119)
Spanish Embassy.....	(see 100)
Swiss Embassy.....	(see 100)
Tanzanian High Commission.....	41 D4
Telkom Kenya.....	(see 27)
Telkom Kenya.....	42 E5
Transcom Medical Centre.....	43 D2
Tropical Winds.....	(see 17)
Ugandan High Commission (Consular Section).....	44 C3
United Touring Company.....	(see 73)
Westland Sundries Bookshop.....	45 C3
Yare Safaris.....	(see 108)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

American Embassy Memorial Garden.....	46 E5
Jamia Mosque.....	47 C2
Kenyatta Conference Centre.....	48 D4
Mzizi Arts Centre.....	49 D3
National Archives.....	50 E3
Parliament House.....	51 B5

SLEEPING

Down Town Hotel.....	52 B2
Eva May Lodge.....	53 E2
Hilton Nairobi Hotel.....	54 D3
Hotel Africana.....	55 E2
Hotel Ambassadeur Nairobi.....	56 E3
Kenya Comfort Hotel.....	57 B2
Meridian Court Hotel.....	58 C2
New Kenya Lodge.....	59 E2
New Stanley Hotel.....	60 C3
Norfolk Hotel.....	61 A1
Sixtyeight Hotel.....	62 B3
Terminal Hotel.....	63 B2
Terrace Hotel.....	64 E3

EATING

Alan Bobbe's Bistro.....	65 B3
Beneve Coffee House.....	66 B4
Dancing Spoon Café & Wine Bar.....	(see 84)
Etouch Food Court.....	67 D3
Fiesta Restaurant & Bar.....	68 B3
Lord Delamere Terrace & Bar.....	(see 61)
Malindi Dishes.....	69 E3
Nakumatt Downtown.....	70 C3
Nakumatt Lifestyle.....	71 B2
Nyama Choma Stalls.....	72 C6
Panda Chinese Restaurant.....	73 C3
Passara Café.....	74 C3
Porterhouse Restaurant.....	75 D3
Restaurant Akasaka.....	76 B3
Seasons Restaurant.....	77 D4
Seasons Restaurant.....	78 D3
Tamarind Restaurant.....	79 E5
Thorn Tree Café.....	(see 60)
Trattoria.....	80 C3

DRINKING

Dormans Café.....	81 D3
Hornbill Pub.....	(see 56)

Kahawa.....	(see 73)
Nairobi Java House.....	82 D3
Roast House.....	83 C2
Zanze Bar.....	(see 87)

ENTERTAINMENT

20th Century Cinema.....	84 C3
Florida 2000.....	85 E4
Green Corner Restaurant & Cactus Pub.....	86 D4
Kenya Cinema.....	87 E4
Kenya National Theatre.....	88 A1
Nairobi Cinema.....	89 D4
New Florida.....	90 B3
Odeon.....	91 D2
Professional Centre.....	92 C6
Simmers.....	93 C3

SHOPPING

City Market.....	94 B3
Gallery Watatu.....	95 C3
Maasai Market.....	96 B1

TRANSPORT

Air India.....	(see 21)
Akamba.....	97 D2
Akamba Booking Office.....	98 C4
Avis.....	99 A2
British Airways.....	100 D3
Budget.....	101 C4
Bus & Matatu Stop.....	102 B2
Bus & Matatu Stop (for Hurlingham & Millmani).....	103 B4
Bus Stop (for Langata, Karen & Airport).....	104 E4
Central Rent-a-Car.....	(see 62)
Coastline Safaris Office.....	105 D2
Country Bus Station.....	106 H3
Crossland Services.....	107 F2
Davatu Shuttle.....	108 B1
Easy Coach Office.....	109 F5
Emirates.....	110 A2
Ethiopian Airlines.....	(see 30)
Gametrackers.....	(see 18)
KBS Booking Office.....	111 B2
KBS Bus Station.....	112 F4
Kenya Airways.....	(see 17)
KLM.....	(see 17)

Main Bus & Matatu Area

Matatu Area.....	113 E2
Matatus to Kibera.....	(see 104)
Matatus to Naivasha, Nakuru, Nyahururu & Namanga.....	114 F3
Matatus to Thika.....	115 G2
Matatus to Wilson Airport, Nairobi National Park, Langata, Karen & Ngong Hills.....	116 E5
Metro Shuttle (for Airport).....	117 D3
Molo Line Services.....	(see 118)
Narok Line.....	118 F2
Riverside Shuttle.....	119 C3

SUDANESE SCAMMERS

One classic Nairobi con trick that you'll likely be subjected to is the Sudanese refugee story, commonly combined with the equally well-worn university scam. In this gambit, it turns out that your interlocutor has coincidentally just won a scholarship to a university in your country (the amount of research they do is quite astounding), and would just love to sit down and have a chat with you about life there.

Then at some point you'll get the confidential lowering of the voice as the Sudanese portion of the story kicks in with 'You know, I am not from here...', leading into an epic tale of woe that involves them having walked barefoot all the way from Juba or Darfur to flee the war.

Of course, once you've shown due sympathy they'll come to the crux of the matter: they have to get to Mombasa or Dar es Salaam or elsewhere to confirm their scholarship and fly out for their studies, and all they need is a few thousand shilling – not that they could ask you, their new friend, for that much money, though anything you could spare to help them out would be greatly appreciated...(you get the idea).

particularly exciting as it skirts alongside two main roads.

KENYATTA CONFERENCE CENTRE

Towering over City Square on City Hall Way, Nairobi's signature building (Map pp104-5) was designed as a fusion of modern and traditional African styles, though the distinctive saucer tower looks a little dated next to some of the city's flashier glass edifices. Staff will accompany you up to the **viewing platform** (adult/child KSh400/200; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) and helipad on the roof for wonderful views over Nairobi. The sightline goes all the way to the suburbs and on clear days you can see aircraft coming in to land over the Nairobi National Park. You're allowed to take photographs from the viewing level but not elsewhere in the building. Access may be restricted during events and conferences.

RAILWAY MUSEUM

The main collection at this interesting little museum (Map pp100-1; Station Rd; adult/child KSh200/100; ☎ 8.15am-4.45pm) is housed in an old railway building and consists of relics from the East African Railway. There are train and ship models, photographs, tableware and oddities from the history of the railway, such as the engine seat that allowed visiting dignitaries like Theodore Roosevelt to take potshots at unsuspecting wildlife from the front of the train.

In the grounds are dozens of fading locomotives in various states of disrepair, dating from the steam days to independence (which puts the newer trains on a par with those still being used on the Nairobi-Mombasa line). You can walk around the carriages at your leisure. At the back of the compound is the

steam train used in the movie *Out of Africa*. It's a fascinating introduction to this important piece of colonial history.

The museum is reached by a long lane beside the train station, or you can cut across the vacant land next to the Shell petrol station on Haile Selassie Ave.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Right in the bustling heart of Nairobi is the distinctive **National Archives** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 749341; Moi Ave; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), the 'Memory of the Nation', a vast collection of documents and reference materials housed in the fine former Bank of India building. It's mainly used by students and researchers, but the ground-floor atrium and gallery display an eclectic selection of contemporary art, historical photos of Nairobi, cultural artefacts, furniture and tribal objects, giving casual visitors a somewhat scattergun glimpse of East African heritage.

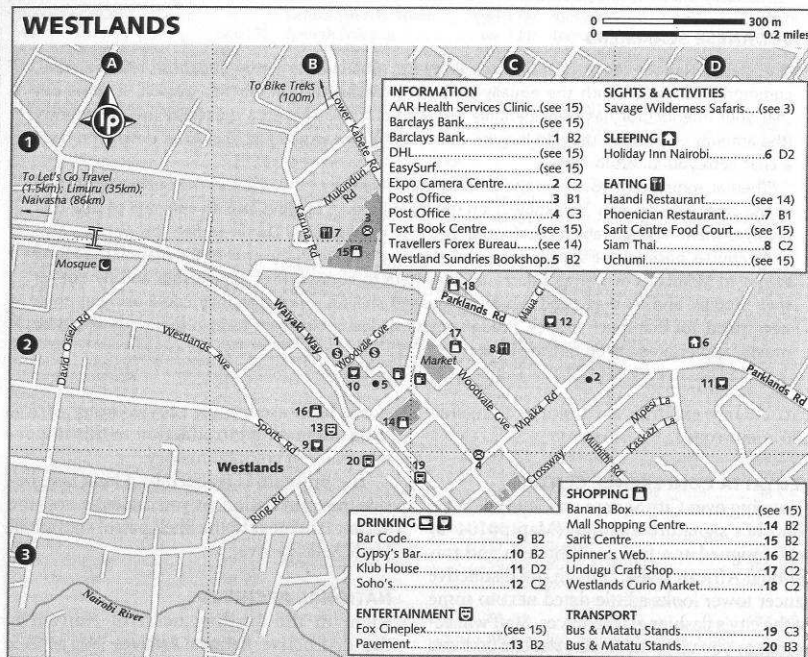
UHURU PARK

A huge expanse of manicured green edging on the concrete expanse of the CBD, this attractive **park** (Map pp104-5; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk) is a popular respite from the mean city streets. During the day, it attracts picnicking families, businessmen stepping out of the office and just about anyone in need of a little green. During the night, you're going to want to steer clear as it's popular with the kinds of people you'd be happier not to meet face-to-face.

Interestingly, Uhuru Park largely owes its existence to Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner who started the Green Belt Movement to plant more trees

In the grounds, there's a re-created **Kikuyu homestead** and a **snake park** (adult/child KSh200/100; ☎ 9.30am-6pm), where you can see black mambas, some sad-looking crocodiles

and giant creepy-crawlies known locally as *dudus*, though some visitors will find the whole affair is a bit too zoolike. There is a guided nature trail nearby but it isn't



across the continent. In the late 1980s, she fought to save the park from the bulldozers of the former Moi government. Moi had famously suggested that she should be more of a proper woman in the 'African tradition'. Since then, Maathai has emerged as a prominent public figure, pushing for peace, rights for women and sustainable development (see also p62).

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

If you fancy a look at how democracy works (or doesn't) in Kenya, it's possible to obtain a free permit for a seat in the public gallery at **parliament house** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 221291; Parliament Rd) – just remember, applause is strictly forbidden! If parliament is out of session, you can tour the buildings by arrangement with the serjeant-at-arms.

JAMIA MOSQUE

Nairobi's main **mosque** (Map pp104-5; Banda St) is a lovely building in typical Arabic Muslim style, with all the domes, marble and Quranic inscriptions you'd expect from an important Islamic site, plus the traditional row of shops

down one side to provide rental income for its upkeep. Sadly non-Muslims are very rarely allowed to enter, but you can happily examine the appealing exterior from the street.

AMERICAN EMBASSY MEMORIAL GARDEN

This well-tended walled **garden** (Map pp104-5; Moi Ave; admission KSh40; ☎ 8am-8pm) occupies the former site of the American embassy, which was destroyed by the terrorist bombings of 1998. It's a lovely little spot despite being right between busy Moi and Haile Selassie Aves – the entrance fee pays for maintenance.

ARTS CENTRES

The **Go-Down Arts Centre** (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 5552227; Dunga Rd; admission free), a converted warehouse in the Industrial Area, just south of the CBD, contains 10 separate art studios, and is rapidly becoming a hub for Nairobi's burgeoning arts scene, bringing together visual and performing arts with regular exhibitions, shows, workshops and open cultural nights.

The **Mzizi Arts Centre** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 574372; Sonalux House, Moi Ave; admission free), a smaller

centre in a central office building, is a good place to view contemporary Kenyan art, craft, dance, literature and performance art. 'Cultural Personality Evenings', when Kenyan cultural stars give lectures, and *sigana* performances are held here (see p49 for more information on the performing arts).

ART GALLERIES

There are few public art galleries in Nairobi, but plenty of shops sell work by local artists and they welcome browsers.

In Upper Hill, the impressive-sounding **Ramoma Rahimtulla Museum of Modern Art** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 729181; Rahimtulla Tower, Upper Hill Rd; admission free) is actually a small gallery situated in a large skyscraper, promoting and selling work by Kenyan artists.

Of the private galleries, the longest established is the central **Gallery Watatu** (p131), which has regular exhibitions and a good permanent display.

Work by many contemporary Kenyan and other African artists is often displayed in the foreign cultural centres (see p98) and in various museums.

Karen & Langata

These posh suburbs to the south of Nairobi, while still technically within the city limits, bear little resemblance to the urban sprawl of the capital. Inhabited mainly by the descendants of white settlers and foreign expats, these leafy environs conceal extensive ranks of houses and villas designed to recall provincial England, all discreetly set in their own colonial grounds. The genteel atmosphere and a relative wealth of attractions make Karen and Langata appealing destinations for a quick and easy escape from city life.

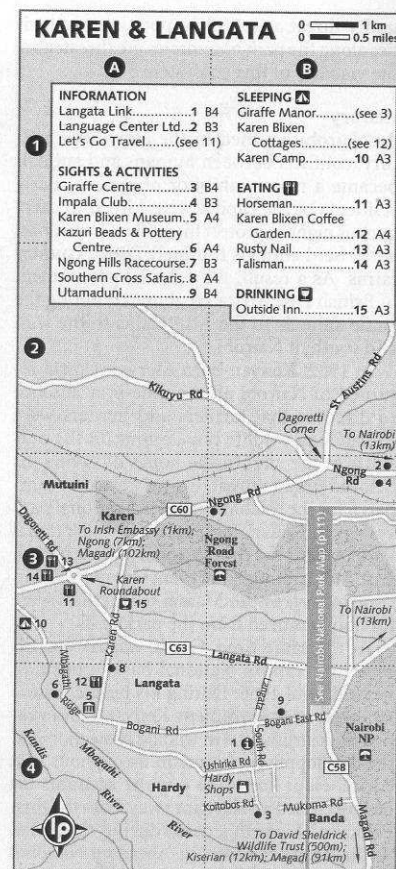
NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK

The incongruous suburban location of this **national park** (Map p111; adult/child/student US\$40/20/15, smartcard required), makes it unique in Africa, and adds an intriguing twist to the usual safari experience. Indeed, abundant wildlife plays out the drama of mother nature against a backdrop of looming skyscrapers, speeding matatus and jets coming in to land at the nearby airport.

Remarkably, the animals seem utterly unperturbed by all the activity around them, and you stand a good chance of seeing gazelles, warthogs, zebras, giraffes, ostriches,

buffaloes, lions, cheetahs and even leopards. The landscape is mixture of savanna and swampland, and is home to the highest concentration of black rhinos (over 50) in the world. The wetland areas also sustain approximately 400 recorded species of bird, which is more than in the whole of the UK!

Nairobi National Park is fenced in parts to keep the wildlife out of the city, though it is not a closed system; it is kept open to allow animals to migrate along a narrow wildlife corridor to the Rift Valley. Concentrations of wildlife are higher in the dry season as water is almost always available in the park. Sadly, this traditional migration route is



KAREN BLIXEN

The suburb of Karen takes its name from Karen Blixen, aka Isak Dinesen, a Danish coffee planter and aristocrat who went on to become one of Europe's most famous writers on Africa. Although she lived a life of genteel luxury on the edge of the Ngong Hills, her personal life was full of heartbreak. After her first marriage broke down, she began a love affair with the British playboy Denys Finch Hatton, who subsequently died in a plane crash during one of his frequent flying visits to Tsavo National Park.

Blixen then returned to Denmark, where she began her famous memoir *Out of Africa*. The book is one of the definitive tales of European endeavour in Africa, but Blixen was passed over for the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature in favour of Ernest Hemingway. She died from malnutrition at her family estate in Denmark in 1962.

Out of Africa was later made into a movie starring Meryl Streep, Robert Redford and one of the retired trains from Nairobi's Railway Museum. Needless to say, the final production was terrific from a Hollywood perspective, but leaves out enough of the colonial history to irk historians and Kenyan nationalists alike.

under threat as spiralling population densities along the park boundaries are threatening the viability of this ecosystem.

History

As Nairobi boomed in the early 20th century, conflicts between humans and animals became a major inhibitor of growth. Early residents of the capital were forced to carry guns at night to protect themselves from lions, while herd animals routinely raided country farms. As a result, the colonial government of British East Africa set about confining the game animals to the Athi plains to the west and south of Nairobi.

In 1932, Kenyan-born Mervyn Cowie returned to Nairobi after a nine-year absence to discover that farmers and herders were threatening wildlife populations on the outskirts of the city. In the hopes of saving his beloved urban retreat, Cowie started to campaign for the establishment of a national park system in Kenya. In 1946, Nairobi National Park became the first national park in British East Africa, though the event was not without controversy, as the Maasai pastoralists were forcibly removed from the parklands.

At the same time, Cowie was named director of Nairobi National Park, a position he held until 1966. During his tenure, Cowie emerged as a prominent Kenyan conservationist, instrumental in wildlife protection and the development of tourism throughout East Africa. He is known in popular accounts for having chased an elephant away from the then Princess Elizabeth's party during their visit to the Treetops Hotel in Aberdare National Park in 1952.

In 1989, Nairobi National Park was thrust into the international spotlight when Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi burnt 12 tons of ivory at a site near the main gate. This dramatic event improved Kenya's conservation image at a time when East African wildlife was being decimated by relentless poaching.

Orientation & Information

Nairobi National Park is easily the most accessible of all Kenya's wildlife parks, located just 7km south of the CBD. At just 117 sq km, the park is also one of the smallest in Africa.

The headquarters of the **Kenya Wildlife Service** (KWS; ☎ 600800; www.kws.org) is also located at the park entrance.

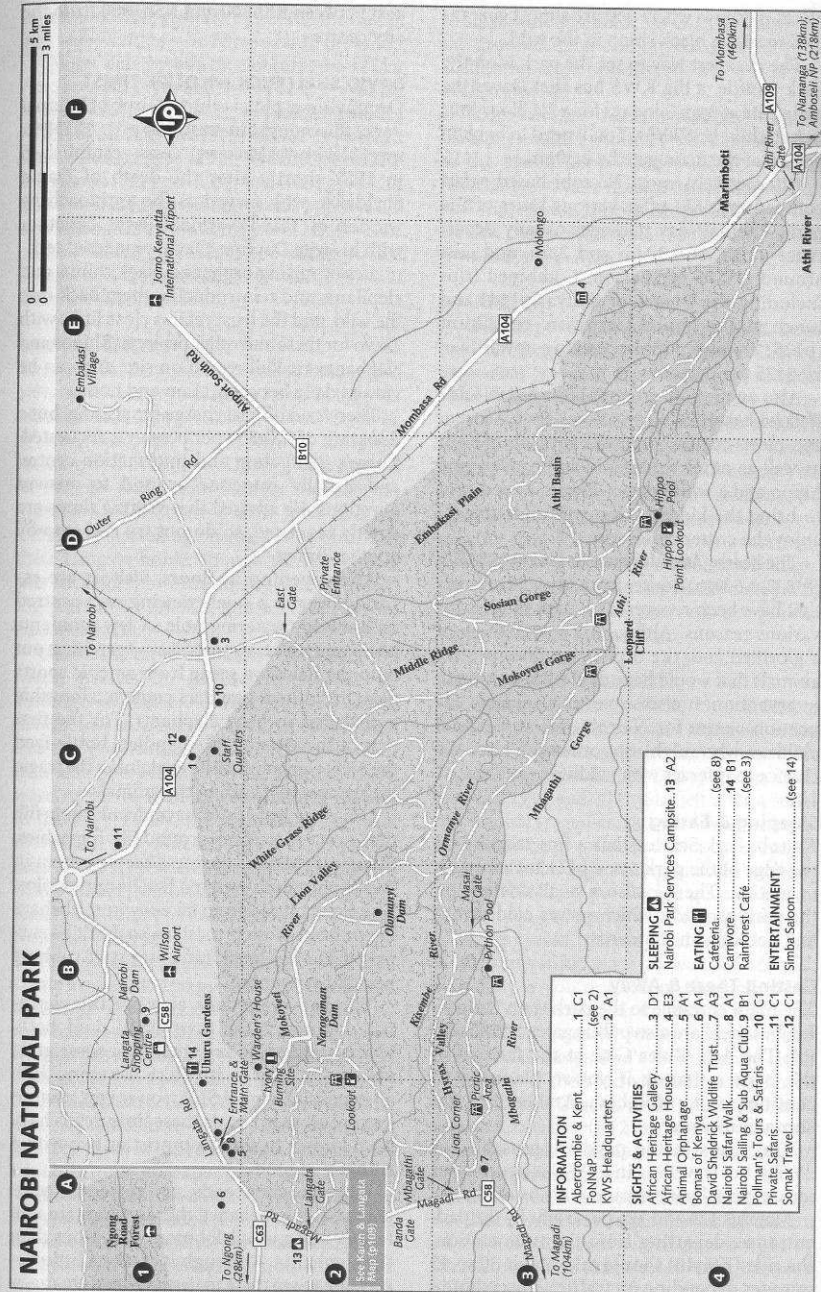
Keeping the wildlife migration pathway open is one of the principal aims of the Friends of Nairobi National Park (p97).

Sights & Activities

Despite its unusual location next to one of East Africa's largest cities, Nairobi National Park is all about the **safari**.

The annual wildebeest and zebra migration that takes place in July and August can be seen here (albeit in significantly less concentrations than in Masai Mara), and there are generally large aggregations of antelope and buffaloes here year-round. Lions and hyenas are also commonly sighted within the park, though you will need a bit of patience and a lot of luck to spot the resident cheetahs and leopards.

Nairobi National Park has acquired the nickname 'Kifaru Ark', a testament to its success as a rhinoceros (*kifaru* in Kiswahili) sanctuary. In fact, the park is one of the only



places in Kenya where you are almost guaranteed to spot a black rhino in the wild.

The cheapest way to see the park is on the Park Shuttle, a big KWS bus that leaves the main gate at 3pm Sundays for a 2½-hour tour (adult/child US\$20/5). You'll need to book in person at the main gate by 2.30pm.

Alternatively, most Nairobi-based safari companies (p65) offer various tours of the park. The half-day packages usually depart twice a day, at 9.30am and 2pm, and cost around US\$75 per person. Combined trips including the Bomas of Kenya (p114) and lunch at the famed Carnivore restaurant (p125) are also popular, costing upwards of US\$125 per person.

Also on the park grounds is the **Nairobi Safari Walk** (adult/child US\$20/5; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), a sort of zoo-meets-nature boardwalk with lots of birds as well as other wildlife, including a pygmy hippo and a white rhino. This is a good spot to bring the kiddies, who will undoubtedly enjoy the critter close-ups.

The nearby **Animal Orphanage** (adult/child US\$15/5; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) houses formerly wild animals that have been recovered by park rangers for various reasons. Although it's something of a glorified zoo, the orphanage does protect animals that would have died without human intervention. It also serves as a valuable education centre for Nairobi-ites and school children who might not otherwise have the chance to interact with wildlife.

Sleeping & Eating

Nairobi Park Services has a fine **campsite** on the edge of the park – see p121 for more information. There is also a small **cafeteria** on the park grounds, which serves cold drinks and hot Kenyan standards.

Getting There & Away

The main entrance to the park is on Langata Rd, but there are also public gates on Magadi Rd. The Athi River Gate at the far end of the park is handy if you're planning to continue on to Mombasa, Amboseli or the Tanzanian border.

The roads in the park are passable for 2WDs, but travelling in a 4WD is never a bad idea, especially if the rains have been heavy.

Matatus 125 and 126 pass right by the park entrance; departing from the train station, the ride (KSh40) should take about 30 to 45 minutes depending on traffic. A taxi should

cost between KSh800 and KSh1000 from the city centre.

DAVID SHELDRIK WILDLIFE TRUST

Occupying a plot within Nairobi National Park, this nonprofit **trust** (Map p111; ☎ 891996; www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org) was established in 1977 shortly after the death of David Sheldrick, who served as the antipoaching warden of Tsavo National Park. Together with his wife Daphne, David pioneered techniques of raising orphaned black rhinos and elephants and reintroducing them back into the wild, and the trust retains close links with Tsavo for these and other projects. Rhinos and elephants are still reared on site, and can be viewed daily between 11am and noon.

There's no official charge for visiting, but a donation of KSh300 per person is requested. There's a gift shop and information centre, and usually someone around to answer questions. Be advised that visiting times are strictly regulated, so do not try and stop by at other times.

After opening its doors, visitors are escorted over to a small viewing area centred on a muddy watering hole. A few moments later, much like a sports team marching out onto the field in a scene from an epic sports film, the animal handlers come in alongside a dozen or so baby elephants. For the first part of the viewing, the handlers bottle-feed the baby elephants while explaining the tragic backgrounds of each of the animals.

Once the little guys have drunk their fill, they proceed to romp around like big babies, though it's serious business keeping them in line as they each weigh a few hundred kilos. The elephants seem to take joy in misbehaving in front of their masters, so don't be surprised if a few break rank and start rubbing up against your leg!

The baby elephants also use this designated timeslot for their daily mud bath, which, needless to say, makes for some great photos. Of course, if you're travelling with an expensive digital SLR, you might want to keep your guard up as these little devils have been known to spray a tourist or two with a trunkful of mud.

Once the show ends, you're permitted to check out the orphaned rhinos, which are a bit feistier and a whole lot more dangerous than the elephants. Although it can be a little depressing to see these majestic animals in cages,

remember that they are being rehabilitated, and will eventually be released into the wild.

To get here by bus or matatu, take 125 or 126 from Moi Ave and ask to be dropped off at the KWS central workshop on Magadi Rd (KSh40, 50 minutes). It's about 1km from the workshop gate to the Sheldrick centre – it's signposted and KWS staff can give you directions. Be advised that at this point you'll be walking in the national park, which does contain lions, so stick to the paths. A taxi should cost between KSh800 and KSh1000 from the city centre.

GIRAFFE CENTRE

This vitally important **breeding centre** (Map p109; ☎ 891568; www.giraffecenter.org; Koitobos Rd; adult/child nonresident KSh500/250, resident KSh100/20; ☎ 9am-5.30pm), run by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW), was started in 1979 by Jock Leslie-Melville, the Kenyan grandson of a Scottish earl. Jock and his wife Betty started by raising a baby giraffe in their Langata home, though the late couple was successful in introducing several breeding pairs of Rothschild giraffes into Kenyan national parks.

Unlike the more common reticulated and Masai giraffes, the Rothschild giraffe is an endangered species, having suffered severe habitat loss in western Kenya. In 1979, when this nongovernmental, nonprofit organisation was just getting off the ground, there were no more than 130 Rothschild giraffes in the wild. Today, the population numbers more than 300, and the centre has successfully released these charismatic creatures into Lake Nakuru National Park, Mwea National Reserve, Ruma National Park and Nasalot National Reserve.

The mission statement of the centre is to create awareness and provide environmental education aimed at encouraging visitors to appreciate and conserve Kenya's biodiversity. Despite this serious take-home message, there is plenty of fun and games at this highly recommended attraction. At the centre you can observe, hand-feed or even kiss Rothschild giraffes from a raised wooden structure, which is quite an experience, especially for children or children at heart. There's also an interesting self-guided forest walk through the adjacent Gogo River bird sanctuary.

If you can't get enough of mother nature's vertically enhanced mammals, you might like

to stay at the phenomenal Giraffe Manor on the grounds here, one of Nairobi's grandest accommodation options. For more information, see p121.

To get here from central Nairobi by public transport, take matatu 24 via Kenyatta Ave to the Hardy shops, and walk from there. Alternatively, take matatu 26 to Magadi Rd, and walk through from Mukoma Rd. A taxi should cost between KSh800 and KSh1000 from the city centre.

UTAMADUNI

A charitable organisation set in a large colonial house near the Giraffe Centre, **Utamaduni** (Map p109; ☎ 890464; Bogani East Rd; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) is essentially a large crafts emporium, with more than a dozen separate rooms selling all kinds of excellent African artworks and souvenirs. You can visit the workshops in the garden, and there's a playground and restaurant. It's a regular stop for the more upmarket tour companies, so prices start relatively high, but there's none of the hard sell you'd get in town. A portion of all proceeds goes to the Kenya Wildlife Foundation.

KAREN BLIXEN MUSEUM

This **museum** (Map p109; ☎ 882779; www.museums.or.ke; Karen Rd; adult/child nonresident KSh200/100, resident KSh50/20; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) is the farmhouse where Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, lived between 1914 and 1931. She left after a series of personal tragedies, but the lovely colonial house has been preserved as a museum. It, along with the adjacent agricultural college, was presented by the Danish government to the Kenyan government at independence.

The museum is set in lovely gardens, and is an interesting place to wander around, especially if you're a fan of the Hollywood classic. With that said, the movie was *actually* shot at a nearby location, so don't be surprised if things don't look entirely right!

Just down the road you'll find the Karen Blixen Coffee Garden (p127) and the Karen Blixen Cottages (p121), just in case you want to make the most of your *Out of Africa* experience.

The museum is about 2km from Langata Rd. The easiest way to get here is by matatu 24 via Kenyatta Ave, which passes right by the entrance. A taxi should cost between KSh800 and KSh1000 from the city centre.

KAZURI BEADS & POTTERY CENTRE

An interesting diversion in Karen is this **craft centre** (Map p109; ☎ 883500; www.kazuri.com; Mbagathi Ridge; ☎ 8am-4:30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4:30pm Sun), which was started by an English expat in 1975 as a place where single mothers could learn a marketable skill and achieve self-sufficiency. Starting with just two employees, the workforce has burgeoned to over 100, including several disabled women who work from home. A knowledgeable foreman provides a tour (free of charge) of the various factory buildings, where you can observe the process from the moulding of raw clay to the glazing of the finished products. A tasteful gift shop is right on the premises, with prices considerably cheaper than at other retail locations. It's located on Karen Rd near the Karen Blixen Museum.

BOMAS OF KENYA

A cultural centre at Langata, the **Bomas of Kenya** (Map p111; ☎ 891801; Langata Rd; adult/child nonresident KSh600/300, resident KSh100/25; ☎ performances 2.30pm Mon-Fri, 3.30pm Sat & Sun) is near the main gate to Nairobi National Park. The talented resident artists perform traditional dances and songs taken from the country's various tribal groups, including Arabic-influenced Swahili *taarab* music, Kalenjin warrior dances, Embu drumming and Kikuyu circumcision ceremonies. It's touristy, of course, but it's still a spectacular afternoon out, and the centre itself has such a high profile that the first meeting of the National Constitutional Conference was held here in 2003, producing the so-called Bomas Draft of the new constitution.

Bus or matatu 125 or 126 runs here from Nairobi train station (KSh30, 30 minutes). Get off at Magadi Rd, from where it's about a 1km walk, clearly signposted on the right-hand side of the road. A taxi should set you back between KSh800 and KSh1000.

AFRICAN HERITAGE HOUSE

Designed by Alan Donovan, an African heritage expert and gallery owner, this stunning **exhibition house** (Map p111; ☎ 0721-518389; www.africanheritagebook.com; off Mombasa Rd; admission free) overlooking Nairobi National Park can be visited by prior arrangement only. The mud architecture combines a range of traditional styles from across Africa, and the interior is furnished exclusively with tribal artefacts

and artworks. For those with a bit of money to burn, it's possible to negotiate overnight stays, formal meals and luxurious transfers by steam train or helicopter.

For more information, you can drop in at the **African Heritage Gallery** (Map p111; ☎ 890528; Libra House, Mombasa Rd), which sells the same kind of upmarket *objets d'art* you'll see in the house.

Ngong Hills

The green and fertile Ngong Hills were where many white settlers set up farms in the early colonial days. It's still something of an expat enclave, and here and there in the hills are perfect reproductions of English farmhouses with country gardens full of flowering trees – only the acacias remind you that you aren't rambling around the Home Counties of England.

Close to Pt Lamwia, the summit of the range, is the **grave of Denys Finch Hatton**, the famous playboy and lover of Karen Blixen. A large obelisk east of the summit on the lower ridges marks his grave, inscribed with a line from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', one of his favourite poems. The hills still contain plenty of wildlife (antelope and buffalo are common) and there are legends about a lion and lioness standing guard at Finch Hatton's graveside.

The hills provide some excellent **walking**, but robbery has been a risk in the past; ask locals for the latest information. If you're worried, take an organised tour or an escort from the Ngong police station or KWS office.

Several Sundays a month, hundreds of Nairobi residents flee the noise and bustle of the city for the much more genteel surroundings of the **Ngong Hills Racecourse** (Map p109; ☎ 573923; Ngong Rd), just east of Karen. In the past, races had to be cancelled because of rogue rhinos on the track, but the biggest danger these days is stray balls from the golf course in the middle!

The public enclosure is free to enter; entry to the grandstand is KSh100, or you can pay KSh250 for a platinum pass, which gives you access to the cushioned members' seating and the restaurant overlooking the course. A race card costs KSh30 and you can bet as little as KSh20 with some bookies (minimum KSh100 with the course Tote). There are usually three races every month during the season, which runs from October to July.

You can get here on the Metro Shuttle bus (KSh40, 30 minutes) and matatus 24 or 111 (KSh20), all from Haile Selassie Ave.

Lake Magadi

The most southerly of the Kenya's Rift Valley lakes, this **soda lake** (off Map p96) is rarely visited by tourists because of its remoteness. However, if you have your own vehicle, it makes an easy day trip from Nairobi, and is one of the more unusual diversions from the city.

The most mineral-rich of the soda lakes, it is almost entirely covered by a thick encrustation of soda that supports flamingos and other waterbirds, and gives the landscape a bizarre lunar appearance. A causeway leads across the most visually dramatic part of this strange landscape to a viewpoint on the western shore. It's worth a drive if you have a 4WD, otherwise you can head to the hot springs further south. The springs aren't particularly dramatic, but you can take a dip in the deeper pools, and there are large numbers of fish that have adapted to the hot water. You may run into local tribespeople, particularly Maasai, who will offer to show you the way and 'demonstrate' everything for you for a small fee.

The thick soda crust is formed when the mineral-rich water, pumped up from hot springs deep underground, evaporates rapidly in the 38°C temperature to leave a mineral layer. A soda-extraction factory 'harvests' this layer and extracts sodium chloride (common salt) and sodium carbonate (soda), which are then put straight onto trains to Mombasa. Not surprisingly, Magadi is purely a company town, run by the unimaginatively named Magadi Soda Co, for factory staff and their families.

On your way back to Nairobi, don't miss the chance to stop at the famous **Olorgesailie Prehistoric Site** (off Map p96). Several important archaeological finds were made at this site, 40km north of Magadi, by the Leakeys in the 1940s, including hand axes and stone tools thought to have been made by *Homo erectus* about half a million years ago.

Fossils have also been discovered and some are still there, protected from the elements by shade roofs. A guided tour (KSh200) is available, and there are numerous noticeboards and displays.

If you want to stay out here, camping is your only option. The **Olorgesailie campsite** (Hwy

C58; camping KSh200, bandas s/d KSh500/800) is not a bad place to stay for the night; you'll need to bring your own food, bedding and drinking water. It can get pretty windy out here, but you'll certainly feel like you're properly in the bush and it's likely you'll have the place to yourself.

The C58 road from Nairobi is in good condition, although there is very little traffic on it after Kiserian. There is also at least one matatu a day to Nairobi (KSh200), leaving in the morning and returning to Magadi in the evening.

ACTIVITIES

Nature Kenya organises a variety of outings, including half-day bird walks that depart from the National Museum – contact them for more information (p98).

Most international tourist hotels have **swimming pools** that can be used by nonguests for a daily fee of between KSh200 and KSh500. Hotels with heated pools near the city centre are all of the top-end variety – see p118.

A number of private **sports clubs** in the suburbs offer facilities for nonmembers. All are out in the posher suburbs, and tend to be rather exclusive, so it's probably best to come here with either nice clothes or thick skin. Temporary daily membership fees apply.

Impala Club (Map p109; ☎ 565684; Ngong Rd, Karen)

Nairobi Club (Map pp100-1; ☎ 725726; Ngong Rd, Nairobi Hill)

Nairobi Sailing & Sub Aqua Club (Map p111; ☎ 501250; Nairobi Dam, Langata Rd)

TOURS

There's not much to see in downtown Nairobi, but most travel agents and safari operators can take you on a tour of the National and Railway Museums, parliament and the city market for a small fee. Also popular are trips to suburban attractions such as Nairobi National Park, the Bomas of Kenya, the Karen Blixen Museum and the Giraffe Centre – prices are negotiable depending on the size of your party and your intended itinerary. See p109 for more on these attractions. Also see p65 for tour companies and details of longer trips.

For an introduction to the world of *jua kali*, Kenya's open-air manufacturing industry, **People to People Tourism** (☎ 786193; www.peopletopeopletourism.com) combines tours of the usual tourist sights with visits to *jua kali* workshops producing crafts and other goods.

KIBERA

Home to an estimated one million residents, the shanty town of Kibera (off Map pp100–1) is second in size only to Soweto in Johannesburg, South Africa. Kibera, which is derived from a Nubian word *kibra*, meaning forest, is a sprawling urban jungle of shanty town housing. The neighbourhood was thrust into the Western imagination when it was featured prominently in the Fernando Meirelles film *The Constant Gardener*, which is based on the book of the same name by John le Carré. With the area heavily polluted by open sewers, and lacking even the most basic infrastructure, residents of Kibera suffer from poor nutrition, violent crime and disease.

Although it's virtually impossible to collect accurate statistics on shanty towns, which change their demographics almost daily, the rough estimates for Kibera are shocking enough. According to local aid workers, Kibera is home to one pit toilet for every 100 people, suffers from an HIV/AIDS infection rate of more than 20%, and four out of every five people living here are unemployed. These stark realities are compounded by the fact that the social services needed to address the situation are largely absent from governmental policies.

History

The British established Kibera in 1918 for Nubian soldiers as a reward for service in WWI. However, following Kenyan independence in 1963, housing in Kibera was rendered illegal by the government on the basis of land tenure. But this new legislation inadvertently allowed the Nubians to rent out their property to a greater number of tenants than legally permitted and, for poorer tenants, Kibera was perceived as affordable despite the legalities. Since the mid-1970s, though, control of Kibera has been firmly in Kikuyu hands, who now comprise the bulk of the population.

Orientation

Kibera is located southwest of the CBD. Although it is 2.5 sq km in area, it's home to somewhere between a quarter and a third of Nairobi's population, and has a density of an estimated 300,000 people per sq km.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Kenya Fashion Week (☎ 0733636300; Sarit Centre, Westlands) An expo-style fashion event held in June, bringing together designers and manufacturers from all over the country.

Tusker Safari Sevens (www.safarisevens.com; Impala Club, Ngong Rd, Karen) A high-profile international seven-a-side rugby tournament held every June. It's always hotly contested and the Kenyan team has a strong record in the tournament.

Kenya Music Festival (☎ 2712964; Kenyatta Conference Centre) Held over 10 days in August, Kenya's longest-running music festival was established almost 80 years ago by the colonial regime. African music now predominates, but Western and expat musicians still take part.

SLEEPING

It shouldn't come as too much of a surprise that Nairobi, being the capital, has the largest breadth of accommodation in the country. The strength of Nairobi's sleeping scene is clearly its variety – from rough-and-ready cheapies on the wrong side of the tracks to palatial country estates out in the verdant suburbs. As a result, your experience bedding down in the capital will be largely depend-

ent on where you choose to lie, since each of Nairobi's neighbourhoods varies considerably in character.

The heart and soul of Nairobi is the city centre, so if you want to go to bed and wake up in the centre of it all, then look no further. The main budget area is between Tom Mboya St and River Rd, where you'll find dozens of small hotels and guest houses, though most of the rock-bottom cheapies are usually brothels or dosshouses for drunks. A much better option is to spring for a midrange or top-end crash pad, several of which have prominent locations in the CBD and offer surprisingly comfortable surrounds.

Of the outlying areas, the eastern districts of Nairobi Hill and Milimani have the most promising selection, catering for all budgets. This is where you'll find Nairobi's preferred backpacker spots, as well as a clutch of reliable business hotels and upmarket lodges. If you want to be a bit further out, there are also a handful of comfortable spots in the expat-friendly Westlands and Parklands.

For a decidedly different take on Nairobi, consider heading out into the 'burbs, namely

The railway line heading to Kisumu intersects Kibera, though the shanty town doesn't actually have a station. However, this railway line does serve as main thoroughfare through Kibera, and you'll find several shops selling basic provisions along the tracks.

Visiting Kibera

An increasing number of tourists to Kenya are interested in visiting Kibera, though the jury is still out on whether or not these trips are constructive. On the one hand, it does lead to awareness, and many Kibera residents want their story to be told to the outside world. On the other hand, going to see humanity living in depraved conditions has a zoo-like quality to it that is impossible to dismiss, and some residents don't appreciate these kinds of visitors.

With that said, visiting Kibera with a trustworthy local resident or with an NGO worker who knows the scene can be a wonderfully eye-opening experience. After all, there is nothing quite like the enjoyment of playing a bit of footy with street children aspiring to be the next Pelé. But be aware that a number of establishments in Nairobi are starting to offer 'cultural tours' to Kibera – many of which visitors may feel are not much more than organised voyeurism promoting little human interaction.

If you are considering a visit to Kibera, ask questions about the nature of your trip, and consider the potential positive and negative impact that it may have on the community.

Getting There & Away

If you're not visiting Kibera as part of an organised tour, you can get there by taking bus 32 or matatu 32c from the Kencom building along Moi Ave. Be advised that this route is notorious for petty theft, so be extremely vigilant and pay attention to your surroundings. Again, it is highly recommended that if you visit Kibera, you do so under the supervision of a local resident or NGO worker.

Karen, Langata or Ngong Hills. For the most part, accommodation out here is at the top of the top end, though the bucolic charm exuded by many of these properties is worth every shilling. If that's out of your price range, however, there are a couple of campsites out here that are worth checking out.

Regarding budget, you can expect to pay a bit more in Nairobi than you would for the same facilities elsewhere in Kenya, especially in the midrange and top-end categories. However, in a city where personal safety is something of an issue, it's worth shelling out more for secure surroundings, especially if you're travelling with expensive gear. The majority of midrange and top-end places also tend to throw in a hearty buffet breakfast, which can certainly keep you going throughout the day.

In this section, accommodation is broken down by neighbourhood and then by budget. Keep in mind that economic inflation and political instability in Kenya can have drastic consequences, and prices are likely to change – use the prices here as general comparisons as opposed to fixed and non-negotiable rates. Also, rates vary consider-

ably at the top-end properties, so it's best to contact them in advance as you can usually secure slight discounts.

This is by no means a comprehensive laundry list, but following are a selection of the better options.

City Centre

Budget accommodations in the city centre are extremely bare bones and can be a bit intimidating to unseasoned travellers, though they'll do in a pinch. Midrange accommodation options offer a significant step up in quality. At the top end are several of Nairobi's most storied hotels, which occupy some of the choicest locations around.

BUDGET

New Kenya Lodge (Map pp104–5; ☎ 222202; River Rd; dm/r KSh500/1000) Staff here are very friendly, and there's hot water in the evening (or so they claim) at this long-standing shoestring's haunt. This spot has seen better decades, though it's got an aged charm if you're not too fussy about things like, well, cleanliness.

Eva May Lodge (Map pp104-5; ☎ 216218; cnr River & Duruma Rds; s/d KSh1000/1300) Low standards here don't quite do the rather lovely-sounding name justice, but it's a decent guest house with small, perfectly reasonable rooms. When there is water, it comes courtesy of the electric shower attachment, so make sure you're not wearing any metal jewellery before you jump in.

Hotel Africana (Map pp104-5; ☎ 220654; Dubois Rd; s/d KSh1000/1500) The Africana has clean, bright rooms, and is better looked after than many places in its class, with a TV room and a roof garden offering a bird's-eye view of the busy streets. The plain but convenient onsite restaurant specialises in tasty Indian grub.

Central YMCA (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2724116; State House Rd; s/d 1000/1500) While it might not inspire the Village People to dedicate a song to it, this central spot has a decent range of passable rooms. Note that you don't need to be a man or a Christian to stay at the YMCA, though you'll certainly be in the majority here if you're either.

Terrace Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 221636; Ronald Ngala St; s/d KSh1000/1500) One of the better deals you'll get at the budget end, the hotel wears its worn atmosphere like a badge of honour. While it compares very favourably to some of the cell-like establishments around, it's still spartan by most standards.

MIDRANGE

Terminal Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 228817; Moktar Daddah St; s/d KSh2000/2500) Although it's lacking in quality compared to other midrange offerings, the Terminal Hotel is preferable to budget crash pads in the city centre. The emphasis here is on doing the basics well, with no overblown attempts at tourist frills, and the clean and adequate rooms speak for themselves.

Down Town Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 310485; Moktar Daddah St; s/d KSh2000/2500) Just down the road from the Terminal, Down Town doesn't have quite the personality of its neighbour, but provides much the same kind of standards for much the same kind of price. If the Terminal's full, chances are this is where they'll send you for alternative accommodation, and you're unlikely to hold it against them.

Sixtyeight Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 332680; www.680-hotel.co.ke; Muindi Mbingu St; s/d KSh2400/3200; ☎ ☎) A significant step up from cheaper offerings, this central hotel is aimed squarely at local and international businesspeople.

There's little inspired about the place, though facilities are adequate, it's very secure and there's even the occasional wi-fi signal.

Kenya Comfort Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 317606; www.kenyacomfort.com; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts; s/d from US\$38/56; ☎ ☎) This cheerily painted place is kept in top nick, offering a fine selection of modern tiled rooms and a lift for easy access. Meals are also available in the popular 24-hour Sokoni bar-restaurant, and the rooftop guest-lounge is a nice place to survey the city.

Hotel Ambassadeur Nairobi (Map pp104-5; ☎ 246615; Tom Mboya St; s/d from US\$60/70; ☎ ☎) Believe it or not this big hotel opposite the National Archives once belonged to the posh Sarova chain, and structurally not much has changed. We do suspect room standards were rather more exacting in those days, though it's still a very attractive place to post up for a few nights.

Meridian Court Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 313991; Muranga'a Rd; s/d from KSh5250/6750; ☎ ☎ ☎) The elaborate lobby here is rather more prepossessing than the grey concrete blocks above it, but it's hardly worth complaining when you're essentially getting a suite for the price of a standard room. There's no great luxury involved, but the pool, bar and restaurants make it good value in this price range.

TOP END

Hilton Nairobi Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 250000; www.hilton.com; Mama Ngina St; s/d from US\$135/150; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A distinct Nairobi landmark, the Hilton dominates the centre of town with its round tower, occupying virtually an entire block with rooms, restaurants, shops and a whole slew of business facilities. Although its overwhelming modernity isn't as atmospheric as some of Nairobi's more seasoned top-end hotels, the Hilton remains one of the best deals in town for upmarket travellers.

New Stanley Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 316377; www.sarovahotels.com/stanley; cnr Kimathi St & Kenyatta Ave; s/d from US\$225/250; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A Nairobi classic: the original Stanley Hotel was established in 1902, though the latest version is a very smart and modern construction run by the sophisticated Sarova Hotels. Colonial decor prevails inside, with lashings of green leather, opulent chandeliers and old-fashioned fans, though the real highlight (at least from our perspective!) is the Thorn Tree Café (see p124), which inspired Lonely Planet's online community.

Norfolk Hotel (Map pp104-5; ☎ 216940; www.fairmont.com/NorfolkHotel; Harry Thuku Rd; s/d from US\$275/300; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Built in 1904, Nairobi's oldest hotel was the place to stay during colonial days – the hotel remains the traditional starting point for elite safaris, and the Lord Delamere Terrace (see p124) is still Nairobi's most famous meeting place. Thanks to the leafy grounds, it has an almost rustic feel, providing an appealing contrast to the modern bent of more central options, and it is by far the best spot in town for those looking for a bit of historical authenticity. To learn more about the colourful antics of Lord Delamere, one of the Norfolk's legendary patrons, see the boxed text, p126.

our pick Nairobi Serena Hotel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2822000; www.serenahotels.com; Central Park, Procession Way; r/s from US\$400/500; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Consolidating its reputation as one of the best top-flight chains in East Africa, this entry in the Serena canon has a fine sense of individuality, with its international-class facilities displaying a touch of safari style. A member of the prestigious 'Leading Hotels of the World' group, the Nairobi Serena is considered by many to be the capital's most elegant accommodation. Of particular note is the onsite Maisha health spa, which offers a wide range of holistic cures aimed at soothing your travel-worn bones and balancing your wanderlust-ridden mind. Given the choice, opt for one of the amazing garden suites, where you can take advantage of your own private patio garden, complete with minipergola for eating outside. As the hotel is right opposite Uhuru Park, avoid walking anywhere from here at night.

Milimani & Nairobi Hill

Milimani and Nairobi Hill really do have it all – the city's top three backpacker spots are all here, pleasantly removed from the congestion of the city centre. If you're a midrange traveller looking for more stable digs, there are a number of hotels out here that will provide biz amenities without breaking the bank. And these two tranquil neighbourhoods are also home to their fair share of upmarket lodges, all of which provide copious amounts of luxury and style.

BUDGET

our pick Upper Hill Campsite & Backpackers (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 6750202; www.upperhillcampsite.com; Othaya Rd, Kileleshwa; camping KSh350, dm KSh500, banda 1200,

d with/without bathroom 2000/1500; ☎ ☎) An attractive, secure compound and an oasis from the mean city streets, Upper Hill offers a range of accommodation, attracting a loyal following of overland trucks and an international mix of backpackers and budget travellers. It is centred on a restored colonial house that rests elegantly on a sprawling estate in the embassy district of Kileleshwa. Competing for the title of Nairobi's top backpacker spot, Upper Hill organises just about every kind of safari and outdoor excursion you can imagine, and they'll even take the time to tune up your ride if you're on a self-drive expedition.

This spot is not actually in Upper Hill, though it's easy enough to access by public transport from the city centre – take matatu or bus 46 along Othaya Rd until you pass the Egyptian embassy on the left-hand side; the entrance to the property is just past here on the right-hand side. It's a long and not too recommendable walk from the city centre, but you can take a taxi out here for between KSh400 and KSh1000, depending on the time of day and your bargaining skills.

Milimani Backpackers & Safari Centre (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2724827; www.milimanibackpackers.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; camping KSh350, dm KSh600, permanent tent KSh450, s/d cabin KSh1300/1500; ☎ ☎) Formerly known as Nairobi Backpackers, this up-and-coming spot has great potential. At the time of writing, things were still getting started, though it looks like the new owners are going to do a great job with the place. Whether you camp out back, cosy up in the dorms or splurge on your own cabin, you'll end up huddled around the fire at night, swapping travel stories and dining on home-cooked meals with fellow travellers. The friendly staff can also help you book a safari, organise onward travel or simply get your bearings. Any matatu or bus going down either Valley or Ngong Rds from the train station will drop you off near the hostel, though you can walk here from the city centre in about 30 minutes (assuming of course that you're not carrying all of your heavy bags, which might also make you a target for theft).

Nairobi International Youth Hostel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2723012; www.hihostels.com; Ralph Bunche Rd, Milimani; dm/d from US\$10/25; ☎ ☎) A well-looked-after budget option, Nairobi's Hostelling International branch isn't as atmospheric as the Upper Hill Campsite and Milimani Backpackers though it's a comfortable and

relaxed spot to meet other travellers. Kenya's HI instalment offers the usual range of hostel-catered amenities including an activity centre, booking desk, cybercafe, bar-restaurant and a communal lounge. Any matatu or bus going down either Valley or Ngong Rds will get you here. Note that many people have been robbed returning to the youth hostel by foot after dark, so it's best to always take a taxi at night.

MIDRANGE

our pick **Upper Hill Country Lodge** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2881600; www.countrylodge.co.ke; Second Ngong Ave, Milimani; s/d from KSh5100/7800; (P) (Q) (R)) This brand-spanking-new property was constructed by the owners of the adjacent Fairview Hotel, though rather than striving for over-the-top opulence, the focus here is on affordable luxury for business travellers. With prices starting at around KSh5000 a room, the Country Lodge is one of the best-value midrange options in Nairobi, though its minimalist yet stylish living quarters can compete with the best of them. The big news here for anyone travelling with their laptop is that free wi-fi is available throughout the premises, and it is strong and reliable enough to actually get some work done. Travellers can also unwind in the small gym, relax in the rock garden or take advantage of the bars and restaurants at the Fairview next door.

Heron Hotel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2720740; www.heronhotel.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; s/d from US\$75/110; (P) (Q) (R)) Anyone who can remember Buffalo Bill's will be astounded at the transformation: management is obviously very keen to shake the reputation garnered in the days not so long ago, when the bar here doubled as a notorious brothel! Today it's a model of respectability, changed beyond all recognition, and is a good choice for business travellers or comfort queens looking for a bit of affordable privacy.

High Point Hotel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2724312; www.highpointcourt.com; Lower Hill Rd, Nairobi Hill; r from KSh6000; (P) (Q) (R)) If you're looking for space and seclusion without laying out a fortune, this World Bank-affiliated suite and apartment complex is an excellent choice that provides ample eye-candy for view vultures – you can supposedly see both Mts Kenya and Kilimanjaro from the penthouse balcony (though it would have to be an incredibly smog-free day!). The split-level rooms have

kitchenettes and living rooms, and the range of onsite facilities adds to the great value offered here.

TOP END

Fairview Hotel (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2711321; www.fairviewkenya.com; Bishops Rd, Milimani; s/d from KSh7500/11,000; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) An excellent top-end choice that is nicely removed from the central hubbub, the Fairview is defined by its winding paths and green-filled grounds, which create a refined atmosphere, especially around the charming courtyard restaurant. Rooms of varying degrees of luxury are helpfully classified like airline seating, ranging from Economy to First Class.

Palacina (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 2715517; www.palacina.com; Kitale Lane, Milimani; ste 1-2-person US\$210/360, penthouses US\$550; (P) (Q) (R)) The fabulous collection of stylish suites, at what is possibly the first genuine boutique hotel in Kenya, is perfect for well-heeled sophisticates who still like the personal touch. Intimate rooms are awash with calming tones, boldly accented by rich teak woods, lavish furniture and private jacuzzis – on that note, there's a separate apartment complex for long-term renters, just in case you don't want to leave.

Westlands & Parklands

Considering the number of restaurants and shopping centres in Westlands and Parklands, it's surprising how little accommodation there is in the area. However, there are two noteworthy upmarket properties worth checking out.

Holiday Inn Nairobi (Map p108; ☎ 3740920; www.holidayinn.com; Parklands Rd, Parklands; s/d from US\$200/250; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) Forget everything you think you know about the Holiday Inn, especially if you've stayed at any one of these generic properties in North America. The Nairobi instalment of this hotel chain is housed in a 1930s Edwardian-style hotel that exudes timeless class and colonial ambience.

Safari Park Hotel (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 3633000; www.safaripark-hotel.com; Thika Rd; s/d from US\$250/300; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) A huge complex done out in mock traditional decor worthy of a real safari lodge – perfect if you don't want your luxury experience to end when you leave the national parks. The boma-style lobby is quite spectacular, particularly the chandelier, and there are so many facilities we won't even try to list

them all (five different restaurants, casino and what is dubbed as 'the largest swimming pool in Africa' for starters). Note that Safari Park is located on the outskirts of Parklands, so you're better off choosing the Holiday Inn if you want to be closer to the city centre.

Karen & Langata

Staying in Karen and Langata puts you pretty far from the city centre, though that's precisely the point. These leafy suburbs are a welcome respite from the grit of the CBD, and you'll be within easy striking distance of some of Nairobi's top tourist attractions. Accommodation in these parts gravitates towards either basic campsites or hedonistic luxury, though you're spoilt for choice at either extreme.

Karen Camp (Map p109; ☎ 8833475; www.karencamp.com; Marula Lane; camping/dm/r US\$4/6/20; (P)) You wouldn't expect to find a backpacker-friendly option out here in affluent Karen, which is why we like this friendly little spot so much. The quiet location and smart facilities are reason enough to make the trek out to the shady campsites, spic-and-span dorms and permanent safari-style tents.

Nairobi Park Services Campsite (Map p111; ☎ 890661; www.nairobicampsite.com; Magadi Rd; camping/dm/r US\$4/6/20; (P)) Located on the edge of Nairobi National Park, this campsite is set in a garden complete with a great wood-finished bar and restaurant with satellite TV, cold beers and cheap meals. The vehicle work-bays make it a good pit stop for overland trucks and self-drivers, so you can expect to have some good company here.

Karen Blixen Cottages (Map p109; ☎ 882130; www.blixencoffeegarden.co.ke; 336 Karen Rd; per person US\$175; (P) (Q) (R)) Located near the Karen Blixen Museum, this lovely clutch of cottages is centred on a formal garden, and adjacent to a small coffee plantation and a country restaurant. If you're keen on having an *Out of Africa* experience, then look no further as this country charmer is for you.

our pick **Giraffe Manor** (Map p109; ☎ 891078; www.giraffemanor.com; Mukoma Rd; s/d half board US\$375/580, full board US\$425/625; (P)) Built in 1932 in the typical English style, this elegant manor is situated on 56 hectares, much of which is given over to the adjacent Giraffe Centre (p113). As a result, you may have a Rothschild giraffe peering through your bedroom window first thing in the morning, which is, needless to say, just

about one of the most surreal experiences you could imagine!

As if that wasn't enough of a hard sell, the real appeal of the Giraffe Manor is that you're treated as a personal guest of the owners, which means you can use their chauffeur, sample their wines and dine in lavish excess. Literary buffs should ask for the Karen Blixen room, decked out with furniture the famous author gave the owners when she left Africa for the last time.

Ngong Hills & Athi River

If Karen and Langata aren't far enough away from the city centre for you, then consider bedding down amongst the famed Ngong Hills. Arguably one of the most stunning parts of the greater Nairobi area, the Ngong Hills are home to a popular ranch a world away from the urban bump and grind. Near the Athi River, also on the south side of the city, is another recommended spot, especially good if you want to get up-close-and-personal to some fine, feathered friends.

Whistling Thorns (Map p96; ☎ 072-721933; www.whistlingthorns.com; Isinya/Kiserian Pipeline Rd, near Kiserian; camping KSh250, cottage per person KSh2500-3500; (P) (Q) (R)) This scenic ranch located in the Maasai foothills of the Ngong is a wonderfully rural spot to launch or wind down your Kenyan holiday. While the owners specialise in offering horse-riding safaris through the area, less active guests are contented by walking the trails, bird-watching on the open plains or just feasting on the delicious home cooking. To get here by public transport, take bus or matatu 111 or 126 from Moi Ave to Kiserian (KSh50, one hour) and change to an Isinya/Kajiado matatu. Ask to be dropped at Whistling Thorns, which is 200m from the roadside. Count on a two-hour trip from central Nairobi.

Maasai Ostrich Resort (Map p96; ☎ 020-350014; www.mericagrouphotels.com; off A104; camping adult/child KSh400/250, s/d from US\$60/82; (P) (Q) (R)) Combining an ostrich farm and a hotel is a fairly unusual idea, but, then again, why not? Certainly the luxury farmhouse accommodation and gardens provide a nice setting, and there's a range of activities to keep you busy in an otherwise unpromising area, from tennis to ostrich rides. To get out here, take the road towards Namanga (A104) and turn left at the sign – southbound public transport can get you to the turn-off, but it's another 7km to the farm itself.

CAN KENYA BOUNCE BACK? *Kennedy O Opalo*

Before December 2007, Kenya was famous for being an oasis of peace in the volatile East African region. With troubles in Somalia, southern Sudan and northern Uganda, Kenya served as a safe haven for refugees fleeing from violence back home. But that is not all that Kenya was famous for. With its unique blend of tourist attractions, Kenya remained a favoured destination for tourists from all over the world.

But all this was to be put on the line after a disputed presidential election on 27 December 2007. The election was a close call, and was marred by various misdeeds on the part of the two leading parties. In the end, the electoral commission proclaimed the incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki, the winner, sparking riots from opposition supporters who were convinced that their man, Raila Odinga, had won the election. The riots soon degenerated into all-out violence that very nearly plunged the country into civil war. The images on TV screens across the world were both shocking and disappointing. Kenyans turned on each other with machetes and all manner of crude weapons.

Unfortunately the local and international news reporting of the violence did not get the entire picture. While it is true that most of the fighting was along tribal lines, the real causes were economic and political.

Economic causes included perceived historical injustices in the distribution of land in the Rift Valley province (where casualties were highest) and the unequal distribution of government resources. The political causes were obvious – supporters of the opposition fought against supporters of the government. Most of those killed for political reasons died from bullet wounds as police forcefully quelled protests over the disputed election in cities and major towns all across country.

Although the media erroneously labelled the clashes as tribal, most analysts agree that the violence was not inherently tribal. After all, Kenyans had coexisted peacefully for over four

the coals for you any time of day. For a more exotic take on things, there are some amazing restaurants where you can really do *nyama* in style. The law now limits what game meat can be served, but should the fancy take you, you can still sample ostrich, camel and even crocodile (think sweet, slightly fishy chicken).

Nairobi has plenty of upmarket restaurants serving internationally inspired cuisine. In fact, first-timers to Nairobi are often surprised by the cosmopolitan nature of the capital's dining scene, especially out in the well-heeled suburbs. The capital is also famous for its Indian cuisine, which makes an appearance in some form or another on just about every menu.

At budget and some midrange eateries, it's recommend that you pay in cash, especially if you haven't racked up too large a bill. However, all of the upmarket places listed in this section do accept credit cards, though be advised that most add 17% VAT to the bill. As in just about anywhere else, be sure to check your bill carefully before signing your name.

Note that in this section, eating options are broken down by neighbourhood and then by budget. Also be advised that restaurants come

EATING

Nairobi is well stocked with places to eat, particularly in the city centre, where you can choose anything from the cheap workers' canteens around River Rd to Chinese feasts and full-on splurges off Kenyatta Ave. For dinner it's worth heading out to the suburbs, which offer dozens of choices of cuisine from all over the world – Karen and Langata have the best range, though there are some good choices in Westlands and Parklands and in Milimani and Upper Hill.

Like in the rest of the country, lunch is the main meal of the day, and city workers flock to the numerous canteens dishing up simple, classic Kenyan and Swahili dishes along with Western staples like chicken and chips. Any of the Kenyan and Swahili places listed here can whip you up a feed in next to no time. There are also innumerable indistinguishable fast-food joints around town following the Western model – Kimathi St and Moi Ave have particularly high concentrations.

Kenyans tend to give short shrift to vegetarianism – *nyama choma* (barbecued meat) is the national dish, and just about every pub-restaurant in town will throw a goat leg on

decades in one state. However, for many people the disputed election served as an opportunity to seek redress for the various injustices they had endured since Kenya achieved independence in 1963.

Luckily for the people of Kenya, the international community acted to prevent the country from descending into the mess that some other African countries have found themselves in over the last few decades. A concerted effort on the part of the UN, the US and the EU ensured that the president and the opposition reached an agreement, resulting in the formation of a unity government. Since then, the situation in the country has returned to normal, although a section of those displaced by the violence are yet to return home.

The brief crisis had enormous human and material costs. More than 1000 people died, and hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes. Government estimates put the economic cost at KSh60 billion (around US\$770 million). Tourism, a mainstay of the Kenyan economy, was particularly affected. With the sector contributing about 12% of GDP and 9% of wage employment, the decline in visits was devastating.

The new unity government has tried to woo back tourists. The charismatic tourism minister, Najib Balala, has spearheaded an effort to rebrand Kenya as a safe tourist destination – most recently with a swanky commercial on CNN, the first ever of its kind about Kenya. To the ministry's credit, tourists have been trickling back, and the country's wounds seem to be healing.

This should not come as a surprise. Kenya's wildlife, beautiful beaches, geographical features and cultural diversity remain attractive to tourists from all over the globe. From the annual wildebeest migration in Masai Mara to the picture-perfect beaches of the Swahili coast, Kenya remains one of Africa's most alluring destinations.

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and go quickly in the fickle capital, though these popular spots have thus far stood the test of time.

City Centre

Nairobi's lifeblood flows through the CBD, which is why you'll find the lion's share of restaurants here. Cheap canteens and fast-food eateries fuel a good number of Nairobi's office workers, though there are several upmarket places that can set the scene for that crucial business lunch. If you're planning on having dinner anywhere in the city centre, be sure to take a taxi back to your accommodation as the streets empty out once the sun goes down.

BUDGET

Beneve Coffee House (Map pp104-5; ☎ 217959; cnr Standard & Koinange Sts; dishes KSh50-150; ☒ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) A small self-service cafe that has locals queuing outside in the mornings waiting for it to open. Food ranges from African- and Indian-influenced stews to curries, fish and chips, samosas, pasties and a host of other choices, all at low, low prices.

Nyama choma stalls (Map pp104-5; Haile Selassie Ave; lunch around KSh200) A definite step down the scale,

but worth it for the atmosphere, are the backstreet stalls near the Railway Museum, behind the Shell petrol station. Foreigners are a rare sight, but you'll be warmly welcomed and encouraged to sample other Kenyan dishes such as *matoke* (cooked mashed plantains).

Malindi Dishes (Map pp104-5; Gaberone Rd; mains KSh100-250; ☒ lunch & dinner) A nice, little Swahili canteen – as the name suggests, this place serves great food from the coast, including pilau (curried rice with meat), birianis (spicy rice casseroles) and coconut fish, with side dishes such as *ugali* (maize- or cassava-based staple), naan and rice. You'll get a grand halal feed here, but true to its Muslim roots, it's closed for prayer at lunchtime on Friday.

Dancing Spoon Café & Wine Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 227581; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St; dishes KSh200-350; ☒ lunch & dinner) Next to the 20th Century Cinema, this bright canteen serves good Western and Kenyan food well into the evening hours. If you're planning on a night out that the cinema, stop by – there is nothing quite like a sizzling steak and a frothy beer before you take in a movie.

Seasons Restaurant (Map pp104-5; mains KSh250-300, buffets KSh450; ☒ lunch & dinner; Nairobi Cinema

(☎ 227697; Uchumi House, Aga Khan Walk); Kimathi St (☎ 0720846276; Mutual Bldg) Whatever the season, the cafeteria vats here always brim with cheap Kenyan and Western favourites, which is probably why this local chain has taken on a strong following. The Nairobi Cinema outlet has a popular bar and beer garden, where you can even bring your own bottle and pay a small corkage fee.

Etouch Food Court (Map pp104-5; Union Towers, cnr Moi Ave & Mama Ngina St; meals KSh350-500; ☎ lunch & dinner) We all need a bit of greasy comfort food from time to time, and Nairobi-ites are certainly no exception. If you find yourself craving a quick fix, head to the Etouch Food Court, a central collection of cheap 'n' easy fast-food joints such as Nando's, Chicken Inn, Creamy Inn, Pizza Inn...you get the idea.

MIDRANGE

Lord Delamere Terrace & Bar (Map p260; ☎ 216940; www.fairmont.com/NorfolkHotel; Harry Thuku Rd; light meals KSh300-600; ☎ lunch & dinner) Since 1904, this popular rendezvous spot at the Norfolk Hotel has existed as the unofficial starting and ending point for East African safaris. While it has been patronised by almost all of the first European pioneer settlers, it is named after the colourful character that is Lord Delamere (see boxed text, p126). While atmosphere may be a bit too colonial for some people's taste, there's no denying the palatable sense of history that ebbs from the walls.

Pasara Café (Map pp104-5; ☎ 338247; Lonrho Bldg, Standard St; dishes KSh300-750; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat) At the forefront of Nairobi's burgeoning cafe culture, this stylish modern bar-brasserie never fails to impress with its nifty selection of snacks, sandwiches, grills and breakfasts, always offering something that bit more ambitious than the usual cafeteria fare. The atmosphere equals that of any European coffeehouse, making it a fine place to relax with a newspaper away from all the stresses of the capital's streets.

Fiesta Restaurant & Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 240326; Koinange St; mains KSh500-750; ☎ 7am-midnight) Despite the Latin resonances of the name and the bright adobe-style decor, the Fiesta doesn't have anything remotely Tex-Mex on offer, concentrating instead on a fine selection of upmarket international dishes. Staff are smiley and almost unnervingly eager, and the chefs do themselves particular credit with some very un-Kenyan recipes, such as *nasi*

goreng (Indonesian rice dish) and pork chops with a honey and mustard glaze.

Panda Chinese Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 213018; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh500-750; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm) A spacious, very classy restaurant hidden away on Kaunda St, this is where you should head if you have a sudden and incurable craving for beef and broccoli. The staff are attentive to the point of overzealousness, especially when it's quiet, and the food is some of the best Chinese chow you'll find in these parts.

Thorn Tree Café (Map pp104-5; ☎ 228030; New Stanley Hotel, Kimathi St; mains KSh500-850; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Stanley's legendary cafe still serves as a popular meeting place for travellers of all persuasions, and caters to most tastes with a good mix of food. The original thorn-tree noticeboard in the courtyard gave rise to the general expression, and inspired Lonely Planet's own online Thorn Tree Travel Forum. While the cafe is now on its third acacia and the noticeboard's not quite the paperfest it once was, a little nostalgia is *de rigueur*, even if only to pause and recognise an original landmark on the Cape to Cairo overland trail.

Restaurant Akasaka (Map pp104-5; ☎ 220299; Standard St; mains KSh550-900; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat) A wonderful Japanese restaurant next to the Sixeighy Hotel, the Akasaka is always a little quiet, but this befits the stylish Japanese decor. The food is surprisingly very authentic – there's even a *tatami* room (reservations required), where you can eat at traditional low tables. Akasaka runs the full gamut of Japanese cuisine including udon noodles, miso soups, sushi sets, tempura, teriyaki, sukiyaki and even great value bento boxes for lunch on the go.

Porterhouse Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 221829; Mama Ngina St; mains KSh550-1000; ☎ 5-10.30pm) Steak-lovers should make this discreetly swish 1st-floor restaurant their first port of call: apart from a few token dishes such as chicken Kiev, the menu here is entirely dedicated to the art of carving chunks of cow, and with a two-person chateaubriand for just under a thousand shillings, it's easy to get into the moo-d (ahem).

Trattoria (Map pp104-5; ☎ 340855; cnr Wabera & Kaunda Sts; mains KSh650-1000; ☎ 7.30am-midnight) A very popular downtown Italian restaurant swathed in trellises and plants, offering excellent pizzas, pasta, varied mains and a whole page of desserts. The atmosphere and food are excellent, and it's packed every night, especially the upstairs balcony section,

where you can lord it over the city streets like a wannabe Mafioso.

TOP END

Alan Bobbé's Bistro (Map pp104-5; ☎ 226027; Cianda House, Koinange St; mains KSh750-1000; ☎ lunch & dinner) The talented Mr Bobbé established this superb French bistro in 1962, and Nairobi gourmets and gourmands alike have been worshipping at his culinary altar ever since. Even reading the chatty handwritten menu is enough to send the palate into raptures. The interior, doused in red velvet, adds perfectly to the *recherché* ambience. Reservations and smart dress are encouraged, cigars and pipes are not. Look for the poodle above Koinange St.

our pick Tamarind Restaurant (Map pp104-5; ☎ 251811; www.tamarind.co.ke; Aga Khan Walk; mains KSh1000-2000; ☎ 2.30-4.30pm & 8.30pm-midnight) Kenya's most prestigious restaurant chain runs Nairobi's best seafood restaurant, located in the monumental National Bank Building. The splendid menu offers all manner of exotic flavours, and the lavish dining room is laid out in a sumptuous modern Arabic-Moorish style. Starters range from locally raised Kilifi oysters to red snapper in spicy harissa, though save room for the crustacean onslaught of flambéed lobster with cognac, sunset Pwani crab and tikka masala prawns. Smart dress is expected, and you'll need to budget at least

FOR THE LOVE OF MEAT

Love it or hate it, **Carnivore** (Map p111; ☎ 605933; www.carnivore.co.ke; off Langata Rd; veg/meat buffet KSh1200/1550; ☎ lunch & dinner; P) is hands down the most famous *nyama choma* in Kenya, beloved of tourists, expats and wealthier locals alike for the past 25 years. It is also something of an institution for overlanders on the Cape to Cairo route, who make the obligatory pilgrimage here for the purpose of consuming copious amounts of chargrilled meat.

Owned by the established Tamarind chain, Carnivore has twice been voted among the 50 best restaurants in the world. In the past, this honour was largely in recognition of the fact that you could dine here on exotic game meats. This was made all the more poignant by the fact that live versions of the dinner menu were prancing about in nearby Nairobi National Park.

In recent years, however, strict new laws mean that zebra, hartebeest, kudu and the like are now off the menu, which makes things distinctly less exotic. If this hampers your dinner plans, fret not, as you can still sample camel, ostrich and crocodile in addition to the more standard offerings of beef, pork and chicken. But if you're heading overland to South Africa, you can always dine at the Johannesburg instalment of Carnivore, which isn't affected by game-meat laws.

At the entrance to Carnivore is a huge barbecue pit laden with real swords of beef, pork, lamb, chicken and farmed game meats. As long as the paper flag on your table is flying, waiters will keep bringing the meat, which is carved right at the table with a healthy amount of bravado. While this blood-soaked feast will be off-putting to a good number of vegetarians, it might come as a surprise that the menu at Carnivore does cater for its animal-loving patrons.

While dinners at Carnivore ultimately devolve into hedonistic binge feasts, you can tip the flag over temporarily to give yourself a break to digest everything. If you do manage to save some space, note that dessert and coffee are included in the set price. A hefty 26% tax and service charge is added to the bill, and alcoholic drinks are extra.

A healthy number of cynics, including both resident expats and jaded travellers, label Carnivore as a tourist circus worth skipping out on. Whatever the argument, it is a quarter-of-a-century-old Nairobi tradition that continues to thrive. And, while it's certainly not for everyone, a lot of fun can be had here, especially if you go with the right people, as well as a serious craving for hunks of dead animals.

At lunchtime, you can get to Carnivore by matatu 126 from the city centre – the turn-off is signposted just past Wilson Airport, from where it's a 1km walk. At night, it's best to hire a taxi, which should run to about KSh650 to KSh800 each way depending on your bargaining skills. While your driver will most likely offer to wait for you, it's not necessary, as plenty of taxis mill about in the hopes of scooping up a late-night fare.

One last thing – if you end up gorging yourself on absurd quantities of red meat, you can justify your excesses with an all-night danceathon at the adjacent Simba Saloon (p130).

THE LORD OF HAPPY VALLEY

During the colonial heyday, Happy Valley (the highland area outside Nairobi) played host to an eccentric cast of British elites, who had a reputation for fondness of drinking, drug abuse and wife swapping. However, few can rival Hugh Cholmondeley, third Baron of Delamere, one of the first Britons to settle in Kenya. Immortalised in history books and local lore, Lord Delamere was a controversial yet celebrated hunter, pioneer, farmer, soldier, socialite, statesman and – quite frankly – a total nutter.

Lord Delamere first set foot on the African continent in 1891 to hunt lion in then British Somaliland. He is widely credited with coining the term 'white hunter', which came to describe the professional big-game hunters in British East Africa. Five years after his arrival, he led an expedition across the deserts of southern Somaliland into the verdant highlands of what is now central Kenya. By the early 1900s, Lord Delamere owned more than 300,000 acres of land, and was already one of Kenya's most influential colonists.

For more than twenty years, he doggedly farmed his vast country estates by mere trial and error, experimenting with various crop strains from around the British Empire. He is famous for stating, 'I started to grow wheat in East Africa to prove that though I lived on the equator, I was not in an equatorial country'.

Lord Delamere was also active in recruiting English landed gentry to buy up holdings in British East Africa, and helped put Happy Valley on the map. He was also reportedly something of a drunken lout, and was particularly fond of inciting emotions through his antics. At the Norfolk Hotel, which still bears a restaurant named his honour (p124), Lord Delamere once rode his horse through the dining room, wooing dinner guests with his ability to leap over banquet tables.

In his later years, Lord Delamere became fully convinced of white supremacy, and established himself as a firebrand politician determined to protect British holdings in Africa. Often described as the 'Cecil Rhodes of Kenya', he once wrote of his support for the 'extension of European civilisation', stating that the British were '...superior to heterogeneous African races only now emerging from centuries of relative barbarism...'

In 1931, Lord Delamere died at the age of 61, leaving behind a mixed legacy that still has prominent repercussions today. On the one hand, he helped build the foundations of Kenya's modern agricultural economy, while, on the other, he exemplified the deeply resented policies of the British colonial government that would ultimately drive Kenyans to seek their independence. Although Nairobi's main thoroughfare once bore the name Delamere Ave, it was immediately renamed Kenyatta Ave in 1963.

Even today, Lord Delamere's progeny continue to capture both Kenyan and British headlines. In April 2005 Lord Delamere's great-grandson, Baron Thomas Cholmondeley, was suspected of shooting and killing Samson ole Sisina, a Maasai game warden, though charges were dropped despite public outcry. One year later, Robert Njoya was shot and killed when caught poaching on Cholmondeley's property. Cholmondeley was arrested and charged with murder, though his case remained unresolved at the time of print. The police spokesman on the case was reported as saying, 'The Delameres used to be untouchable. But that's all changed now.'

KSh2500 for the full works – much more if you want wine or cocktails and lobster – though seafood gourmands the world over agree that it's money well spent.

Milimani & Upper Hill

While not quite as restaurant-rich as other neighbourhoods of Nairobi, Milimani, Upper Hill and Hurlingham are still home to a few recommended spots.

Yaya Centre (off Map pp100-1; Argwings Kodhek Rd, Hurlingham) This expat favourite is home to a

speciality food-court as well as a reasonable selection of cafes and kiosks. The Saffron restaurant upstairs (mains KSh400 to KSh800) does great Indian eat-in and takeaway food, as evidenced by the near-steady stream of diners coming and going.

Blue Nile Ethiopian Restaurant (Map pp100-1; ☎ 0722898138; bluenile@yahoo.com; Argwings Kodhek Rd, Hurlingham; mains KSh500-700; ☎ lunch & dinner) One of those rare places with a character all its own, Blue Nile's quirky lounge, painted with stories from Ethiopian mythology, couldn't

be mistaken for anywhere else. For the full, communal, African eating experience, order the five- to seven-person *doro wat* (spicy traditional chicken stew, KSh3500) with a few glasses of *tej* (honey wine; KSh125).

Westlands & Parklands

The preferred commercial areas for moneyed Kenyans and resident expats, Westlands and Parklands have eateries that cater for their wealthy clientele, offering up impressive international spreads. While there are fewer bargains here than in the city centre, you can expect a high level of quality, and the relaxed and pleasant surroundings are certainly preferable to the mayhem of the CBD.

Sarit Centre food court (Map p108; ☎ 3747408; www.saritcentre.com; Parklands Rd, Westlands; prices vary; ☎ lunch & dinner) This huge food court on the 2nd floor of this popular shopping mall has a great variety of small restaurants and fast-food places catering to discerning palates. Standard Kenyan and Indian offerings are available here, as are other international eats including Italian, Chinese and Continental cuisines.

Phoenician Restaurant (Map p108; ☎ 3741524; Karuna Rd, Westlands; mains KSh500-800; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) This garden restaurant, tucked away behind the Sarit Centre, may well be the only dedicated Lebanese restaurant in Kenya. There's plenty here for veggies, and with more starters than main courses, assembling your own mixed meze offers plenty of scope for a Middle East feast.

Siam Thai (Map p108; ☎ 3751728; Unga House, Muthithi Rd, Westlands; mains KSh500-900; ☎ lunch & dinner) While Asian food in Kenya tends to gravitate towards greasy Chinese, this attractive restaurant has an extensive menu of actual Thai food (gasp!). Curries here are rich, thick and spicy, which is exactly the way they're supposed to be. Unga House can be reached from either Woodvale Grove or Muthithi Rd.

ourpick Haandi Restaurant (Map p108; ☎ 4448294; The Mall Shopping Centre, Ring Rd, Westlands; mains KSh750-1250; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; ☎) An international award-winner that is widely regarded as the best Indian restaurant in Kenya, Haandi has sister restaurants in Kampala, London and Middlesex, and even sells its own souvenir T-shirts. While you might not expect to find a restaurant of this calibre in a shopping mall, your doubts will disappear the moment the waiter brings the tome of a menu to your table. Indeed, it reads something like a

recipe book crossed with a guide to Indian cuisine, and includes wonderful Mughlai (North Indian) spreads, tandoori dishes and plenty of vegetarian curries. Be sure to come here with an empty stomach as it isn't exactly the lightest fare, especially when served with Haandi's signature stacks of naan and piles of basmati rice.

Karen & Langata

Long regarded as ground zero for epicureans living in Nairobi, Karen and Langata are home to most of the city's finest and most famous eateries, including the legendary meat-lover's establishment that is Carnivore (see boxed text, p125). You're going to need to bring a heavy wallet (and an empty stomach) to get the most out of a meal in these parts, though Karen and Langata are arguably the best neighbourhoods for a dinner out on the town.

Rainforest Café (Map p111; ☎ 555872; Libra House, Mombasa Rd; meals KSh350-500, buffet KSh900; ☎ lunch & dinner) The fact that Rainforest is owned and operated by NAS Airport Services might ring alarm bells at first, but you won't find any pre-packed trays here. In fact, locals reckon this is one of the few places in town you can get a decent sandwich, and the all-encompassing buffets are good value. There's no à la carte menu, though you can order individual dishes from the display.

Rusty Nail (Map p109; ☎ 882461; Dagoretti Rd; mains KSh450-800; ☎ lunch & dinner) The combination Moroccan/Turkish styling of this pavilion restaurant belies the range of food on offer – lunch and dinner menus change every week, offering anything from felafel and kebabs to snapper and coronation chicken. Cream teas and traditional Sunday roasts cater for nostalgic English foodies, though diners in the know are quick to feast on the rotating Middle Eastern specialities.

Horseman (Map p109; ☎ 884560; Karen shopping centre, Langata Rd; mains 500-1000; ☎ lunch & dinner) Horseman is three restaurants in one, set in a leafy patio garden straight out of rural England, with a surprisingly authentic pub to match. One section specialises in roasted meats, one serves pizzas and the third offers Chinese, Indian and Kenyan food. There's even a takeaway section on the main road outside, offering fast-food versions of various dishes (KSh150 to KSh300).

Karen Blixen Coffee Garden (Map p109; ☎ 882138; www.blixencoffeeandgarden.co.ke; Karen Rd; mains KSh750-1200;

(☎ 7am-10pm) Just down the road from the Karen Blixen Museum, this upmarket option offers diners and snackers five different areas in which to enjoy a varied menu, including the plush L'Amour dining room, the historic 1901 Swedo House and the main section, which is a smart restaurant set in a veritable English country garden. The food is excellent, especially the hand-thrown pizzas cooked in a stone oven; there's also a friendly and very popular pub for throwing down an *Out of Africa*-inspired nightcap.

Talisman (Map p109; ☎ 883213; 320 Ngong Rd; mains KSh800-1400; ☎ from 9am Tue-Sun) This classy cafe/bar/restaurant is incredibly fashionable with the Karen in-crowd, and rivals any of Kenya's top eateries for imaginative international food. The comfortable loungelike rooms mix modern African and European styles, the courtyard provides some welcome air, and specials such as *tajine* (Moroccan stew) perk up the palate no end. The cakes and desserts also come highly recommended, especially if your sweet tooth has been thus far neglected in Kenya.

Self-Catering

There are very few places to stay with self-catering facilities, but you can buy supplies for snack lunches, safaris etc, as well as cooking ingredients, from the many supermarkets downtown and in the suburbs.

Nakumatt Downtown (Map pp104-5; ☎ 335011; Kenyatta Ave); Lifestyle (Map pp104-5; ☎ 340015; Moktar Daddah St); Village Market (☎ 522508; Village Market, Limuru Rd, Gigiri) The principal supermarket chain in Nairobi and Kenya as a whole, Nakumatt invariably has a huge selection of Kenyan and Western foods and other products. The new Lifestyle store spreads over several floors, with departments stocking all kinds of useful household and outdoor goods.

Uchumi (Map p108; Sarit Centre, Parklands Rd) Once the main supermarket chain in town, Uchumi has faded fast in Nakumatt's wake and several central branches have closed. They have a good range of items for sale.

DRINKING Cafes

Western cafe culture has hit Nairobi big-style, seized upon enthusiastically by local expats and residents pining for a decent cup of Kenyan coffee. All these places offer at least some form of food, whether it's a few cakes or a full menu, but none serve alcohol.

CITY CENTRE

Dormans Café (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0724238976; Mama Ngina St; coffee KSh100-190) Established in the 1960s, this venerable firm has only recently branched out into the cafe business, but has certainly made an aggressive Starbucks-style start, opening a shiny pine outlet right opposite its main rival, Nairobi Java. The coffee's good, the selection of teas is impressive, and the food definitely hits the spot.

Kahawa (Map pp104-5; ☎ 221900; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh200-400) Kahawa has an unusual coastal theme – the counter even resembles a traditional dhow (Arabic sailing vessel), complete with mast. The menu, however, is anything but old-fashioned, proffering an ever-changing cavalcade of unexpected specials to complement the grills and steaks, from frittata to a 'Mexican breakfast'.

Nairobi Java House (Map pp104-5; ☎ 313565; www.nairobijava.com; Mama Ngina St; snacks KSh100-200, meals KSh300-750; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) This fantastic coffeehouse is rapidly turning itself into a major brand, and you may see its logo on T-shirts as far afield as London and beyond. Aficionados say the coffee's some of the best in Kenya, and there are plenty of cakes and other sweet and savoury treats.

Oleander Café (Map pp100-1; Rahimtulla Tower, Upper Hill Rd, Nairobi Hill; drinks KSh40-100) This small elevated cafe has limited stocks of food and drink. However, the terrace is so surrounded by greenery that you barely even notice the busy road below, providing a perfect respite if you happen to be in the Nairobi Hill area.

Bars

There are plenty of cheap but very rough-and-ready bars around Latema Rd and River Rd, though these places aren't recommended for female travellers, and even male drinkers should probably watch themselves. There are some safer and friendlier watering holes around Tom Mboya St and Moi Ave, and many of the restaurants and hotels listed previously are fine places for a drink. You can also head to Westlands and Karen, where the drinking scene brings in a lot more expats. Even in the 'burbs, however, foreign women without a man in tow will draw attention virtually everywhere.

CITY CENTRE

Hornbill Pub (Map pp104-5; ☎ 246615; Hotel Ambassador Nairobi, Tom Mboya St) A large, dark but

friendly bar stretching the width of the block between Moi Ave and Tom Mboya St, with lashings of cold Tusker and sizzling *nyama choma* on the hot coals.

Roast House (Map pp104-5; Kilome Rd) This split-level green bar-restaurant is one of the better specimens in the River Rd area, with regular DJ nights, but caution is still advised if coming here at night – bring a local friend if you want to take part in the action.

Zanze Bar (Map pp104-5; ☎ 222532; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave) A lively and friendly top-floor bar with pool tables, a dance floor, cheap beer and reasonable food. During the week things are relatively quiet, but from Friday to Sunday it rocks until the early hours, with a much more relaxed vibe than the big clubs.

WESTLANDS & PARKLANDS

Bar Code (Map p108; Westview Centre, Ring Rd) It's nowhere near as cool as it thinks it is, but this very modern late-opening lounge bar does at least have a good range of international spirits and cocktails, plus semicompetent DJs spinning R&B and hip hop for the tiny dance floor. The lurid painted toilets are probably the best bit, in keeping with the vague gangster theme.

Gypsy's Bar (Map p108; ☎ 4440836; Woodvale Grove) This is probably the most popular bar in Westlands, pulling in a large, mixed crowd of Kenyans, expats and prostitutes. Snacks are available, and there's decent Western and African music, with parties taking over the pavement in summer. This is also as close as you'll get to a gay-friendly venue in Kenya, though it's still best to be discreet.

Klub House (Map p108; ☎ 749870; Parklands Rd) Further west, past the large Holiday Inn complex, the Klub House is another old favourite. The spacious bar has more pool tables than anywhere else and is a good place to party until late. Music is predominantly Latin, Caribbean and home-grown Swahili.

Soho's (Map p108; ☎ 3745710; Parklands Rd) A lively and popular place that pulls in a smart Kenyan and expat crowd. As well as the crisp cold beers, there's a good selection of wines and cocktails.

UPPER HILL & MILIMANI

Casablanca (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 2723173; Lenana Rd, Hurlingham) This Moroccan-style lounge bar has been an instant hit with Nairobi's fastidious expat community, and you don't have to

spend much time here to become a convert. Shisha pipes, wines and cocktails conspire to ease you into what's bound to end up a late night.

KAREN & LANGATA

Outside Inn (Map p109; ☎ 882110; Plains House, Karen Rd) Perfect for a bit of rowdy drinkage, this semiopen barn of a bar is a firm favourite with residents for its relaxed, boozy atmosphere, and stays friendly even when it's packed for televised football or rugby fixtures.

ENTERTAINMENT

For information on all entertainment in Nairobi and for big music venues in the rest of the country, get hold of the *Saturday Nation*, which lists everything from cinema releases to live-music venues. There will also be plenty of suggestions run in the magazine *Going Out*.

Nightclubs

There's a good selection of dance clubs in Nairobi's centre and there are no dress codes, although there's an unspoken assumption that males will at least wear a shirt and long trousers. Beer in all these places is reasonably priced at about KSh150, but imported drinks cost a lot more.

Due to the high numbers of female prostitutes, men will generally get the bulk of the hassle, though even women in male company are by no means exempt from approaches by either sex.

CITY CENTRE

Florida 2000 (Map pp104-5; ☎ 229036; Moi Ave; men/women KSh200/100) The original blueprint for the New Florida (below), this big dancing den near City Hall Way still works to exactly the same formula of booze, beats and tightly packed bodies.

New Florida (Map pp104-5; ☎ 215014; Koinange St; men/women KSh200/100; ☎ to 6am, later Sat & Sun) The 'Mad House' is a big, rowdy club housed in a bizarre blacked-out saucer building above a petrol station. The music policy ranges from jazz to the customary weekend mish-mash of Western pop. Whichever night you choose, it's usually mayhem, crammed with bruisers, cruisers, hookers, hustlers and curious tourists, but it's great fun if you're in the right mood (or just very drunk).

our pick **Simmers** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 217659; cnr Kenyatta Ave & Muindi Mbingu St; admission free) If

SIDEWALK STRIFE

One recent trend in Nairobi has seen all kinds of bars and restaurants extending their seating areas onto the pavement, European cafe-style, often with brightly coloured awnings, plants and other trappings to jazz up the drab street surroundings. A positive development, surely? Apparently not, as far as the city council is concerned.

The first sign that all was not well came when an entire vanload of council *askaris* (security guards) descended on the Kengeles Bar & Restaurant on Koinange St, leaving a startled crowd of punters and passers-by in their wake. The council claimed the owners were warned repeatedly about new regulations banning street extensions and had been told to remove the offending structure; the restaurant, however, said this was the first time they'd heard anything about it at all.

In the wake of the incident, other cafes removed their own pavement patios with quite remarkable alacrity, fearful of further action from above. Several nearby rivals have a different take on matters – as one competitor suggested to the *Daily Nation* shortly after the event, Kengeles may well have been targeted for personal reasons, as it's rumoured that the proprietors have had wrangles with the council in the past.

Whatever the truth, only a handful of pavement restaurants have dared to hold their ground, and it seems we'll have to wait a while longer before Kenyan cafe culture finally hits the streets. Until it does, reach for the skies – Nairobi's many 1st-floor balcony restaurants are still the best places in town to catch and shoot the breeze.

you're tired of having your butt pinched to the strains of limp R&B in darkened discos, Simmers is the place to come to rediscover a bit of true African rhythm. The atmosphere at this open-air bar-restaurant is almost invariably amazing, with the ever-enthusiastic crowds turning out to wind and grind the night away to incessant parades of bands playing anything from Congolese rumba to Kenyan *benga* (contemporary dance). Refreshingly, the women here are more likely to be locals out for a giggle than working girls out for business, so for once men shouldn't have to worry too much about being hassled. And most people are very friendly should you feel the need to, say, compliment someone on their *lingala* (Congolese) dancing. With free-flowing Tusker, a separate shots bar and plenty of *nyama choma* to keep the lion from the door, it's no wonder the place always feels like a party.

WESTLANDS & PARKLANDS

Pavement (Map p108; ☎ 4441711; Ring Rd; admission KSh500) Split between a relaxed ground-level bar and the big, modern basement club where the action happens, Pavement is the dance venue of choice for most resident expats, and isn't as messy as its counterparts in town. Leavening the usual mix of hip hop and chart pop, weekends here favour funky house, trance and techno you might get on a night out in your own country.

KAREN & LANGATA

Simba Saloon (Map p111; ☎ 501706; off Langata Rd; admission KSh200-300; ☎ Wed-Sun) Next door to Carnivore, this large, partly open-air bar and nightclub pulls in a huge crowd, particularly on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. There are video screens, several bars, a bonfire and adventure playground in the garden, and unashamedly Western music on the dance floor. It's usually rammed with wealthy Kenyans, expat teenagers, travellers and NGO workers, plus a fair sprinkling of prostitutes. You can also get a range of well-priced food at all hours, and there's a Dormans coffee-stall to keep those eyelids open til closing.

Live Music

Green Corner Restaurant & Cactus Pub (Map pp104-5; ☎ 335243; Tumaini House, Nkrumah Lane; admission free) This very popular after-work bar and restaurant just opposite the Nairobi Cinema has live bands on Thursday and Sunday and DJs the rest of the week. Music is generally modern, East African and enthusiastically received.

Toona Tree Bar & Restaurant (Map pp100-1; ☎ 3740802; toonatre@africaonline.co.ke; International Casino, Museum Hill Rd; admission free) Part of the massive International Casino complex by the National Museum, Toona Tree has live bands on Friday and Saturday, playing jazz, blues and classic hits.

Cinemas

Nairobi is a good place to take in a few films at a low price. The upmarket cinemas show a mix of Western blockbusters and even more popular Bollywood extravaganzas. Tickets range from KSh150 to KSh250, depending on the time and the cinema.

Nu Metro Cinema (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 522128; numetro@swiftkenya.com; Village Market, Gigiri) The first entry in a chain of modern multiplexes springing up around Nairobi, showing new Western films fairly promptly after their international release. Seats here are generally expensive, but still cheaper than the popcorn at a London picture house.

Fox Cineplex (Map p108; ☎ 227959; Sarit Centre, Westlands) Another good modern cinema in the same price bracket as Nu Metro, located on the 2nd floor of the Sarit Centre.

20th Century Cinema (Map pp104-5; ☎ 210606; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St), **Kenya Cinema** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 227822; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave) and **Nairobi Cinema** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 338058; Uchumi House, Aga Khan Walk) are all owned by the same chain. The first two show mainly Western movies, while the Nairobi Cinema goes through phases of only screening Christian 'message' films.

Odeon (Map pp104-5; Latema Rd) is one of several local cinemas showing a mix of Indian, South African and Western films. Tickets are very cheap but reels are often scratched.

Theatre

Professional Centre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 225506; www.phoenixplayers.net; Parliament Rd) Local theatre troupe the Phoenix Players put on regular performances at this venue with an unlikely name. Many of the plays are by foreign playwrights but a good proportion is by Kenyans, and new works are well represented.

Kenya National Theatre (Map pp104-5; ☎ 225174; Harry Thuku Rd; tickets from KSh200) Opposite the Norfolk Hotel, this is the major theatre venue in Nairobi. As well as contemporary and classic plays, there are special events such as beauty pageants, which are less highbrow but still culturally interesting.

For African theatre, the foreign cultural centres (p98) are often the places to head for. Also, check the *Daily Nation* to see what's on.

SHOPPING

Nairobi is a good place to pick up souvenirs before heading home, though be warned as

prices are usually higher than elsewhere in the country. With that said, there are loads of souvenir shops downtown and in the area northwest of Kenyatta Ave, so you're spoilt for selection.

Although most places sell exactly the same things, there are a few speciality shops with better-than-average crafts. The 'Little India' area around Biashara St is good for fabric, textiles and those all-important souvenir Tusker T-shirts. If you're interested in buying local music, just wander around the River Rd and Latema Rd area and listen out for the blaring CD kiosks.

City Market (Map pp104-5; Muindi Mbingu St) The city's souvenir business is concentrated in this covered market, which has dozens of stalls selling wood carvings, drums, spears, shields, soapstone, Maasai jewellery and clothing. It's a hectic place and you'll have to bargain hard (and we mean hard), but there's plenty of good stuff on offer. It's an interesting place to wander around in its own right, though you generally need to be shopping to make the constant hassle worth the bother.

Gallery Watatu (Map pp104-5; ☎ 228737; Lonrho House, Standard St) If you want fine Kenyan art and/or potential museum pieces, this is a reliable place to make a big purchase. There's a permanent display here, and many of the display items are for sale, though you need to be prepared to part with upwards of KSh20,000.

Spinners Web (Map p108; ☎ 4440882; Viking House, Waiyaki Way, Westlands) This place works with workshops and self-help groups around the country. It's a bit like a handicrafts version of Ikea, with goods displayed the way they might look in Western living-rooms, but there are some appealing items, including carpets, wall-hangings, ceramics, wooden bowls, baskets and clothing.

Westland Curio Market (Map p108; Parklands Rd, Westlands) Near the Sarit Centre in Westlands, this complex of stalls located at a road junction has the usual tourist kitsch as well some genuine tribal objects, such as Turkana wrist-knives and wooden headrests. Like at the City Market, you're going to need to bargain hard here, though the sales pressure is a bit softer.

Maasai Market Central Nairobi (Map pp104-5; off Slip Rd; ☎ Tue); Gigiri (off Map pp100-1; Village Market, Limuru Rd; ☎ Fri); Yaya Centre (off Map pp100-1; Argwings Kodhek; ☎ Sun) These busy curio markets are held every Tuesday on the waste ground near

SHOPPING IN STYLE

The beautifully conceived shopping centre, **Village Market** (off Map pp100-1; ☎ 522488; www.villagemarket-kenya.com; Limuru Rd, Gigiri; ☎), has a selection of entertainment activities to help you while away an afternoon, including the Nu Metro Cinema (p131), a bowling alley, pool hall, water slides, mini-golf and a children's playground complete with toy-car rides and a minitrain circuit. You can get here with matatu 106 (KSh40) from near the train station.

Slip Rd in town, Friday in the rooftop car park at the Village Market shopping complex (above) and Sunday next to the Yaya Centre. The markets are open from early morning to late afternoon. Check with your accommodation as locations and schedules do change.

Undugu Craft Shop (Map p108; ☎ 4443525; Woodvale Grove, Westlands) A good charitable venture, this nonprofit organisation supports community projects in Nairobi and has top-quality crafts.

Banana Box (Map p108; ☎ 3743390; Sarit Centre, Westlands) Amid the rather less altruistic commercialism of the Sarit Centre, Banana Box works in conjunction with community projects and refugee groups and offers modern uses for traditional objects.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Nairobi is the main arrival and departure point for international flights, although some touch down in Mombasa as well. For information about international services to and from Nairobi, see p341.

Kenya Airways (Map pp104-5; ☎ 32074100; www.kenya-airways.com; Barclays Plaza, Loita St), the principal international and domestic carrier, has a booking office in the city centre, though their website is efficient and reliable. Fares are generally lower if you can book more than a week or two in advance.

Airkenya (☎ 605745; www.airkenya.com; Wilson Airport) services domestic airports throughout the country. As for Kenya Airways, it's best to book online, though you can always visit their office at Wilson Airport.

Safarilink (☎ 600777; www.safarilink-kenya.com; Wilson Airport) offers similar services as Airkenya,

though it's a much smaller player on the domestic scene.

Note that the check-in time for domestic flights is one to two hours before departure. Also be aware that the baggage allowance is only 15kg, as there isn't much space on the small turboprop aircraft.

Fares and frequency of flights vary considerably depending on availability and the season, so it's best to check the internet for current information.

Bus

In Nairobi, most long-distance bus company offices are in the River Rd area, clustered around Accra Rd and the surrounding streets. Several companies go to Mombasa, including Akamba, Busscar, Busstar, Mash Express, Mombasa Raha and Falcon. Most services leave in the early morning or late evening; the trip takes eight to 10 hours with a meal break on the way. Buses leave from outside each company's office. Fares range from KSh500 to KSh100 and tickets can be purchased on the buses, at bus stops and at surrounding shops.

Coastline Safaris (Map pp104-5; ☎ 217592; cnr Latema & Lagos Rds) is the most comfortable and expensive service. **Akamba** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 340430; Lagos Rd) is the biggest private bus company in the country and has an extensive network. It's not the cheapest, but it's the safest and most reliable. It has buses to Eldoret, Kakamega, Kericho, Kisii, Kisumu, Kitale, Machakos, Mombasa, Kampala (Uganda) and Mwanza, Moshi and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). Buses leave from Lagos Rd and there's a **booking office** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 222027; Wabera St), near City Hall.

The government-owned **KBS** (Kenya Bus Service; ☎ 229707) is a large, reliable operator, cheaper than Akamba but with slower buses. The main bus station is east of the centre on Uyoma St, but there's a downtown **booking office** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 341250; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts). There are loads of buses to Kisumu and Kakamega and less frequent services to Busia, Eldoret, Kisii, Kitale and Malaba.

Easy Coach (Map pp104-5; ☎ 210711; easycoach@wananchi.com; Haile Selassie Ave) is a reliable company serving western Kenyan destinations on the Kisumu/Kakamega route with daily buses to Arusha in the other direction.

The **Country Bus Station** (Map pp104-5; Landhies Rd) is a hectic, disorganised place with buses

to Machakos, Busia, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Nyeri, Nakuru, Nanyuki, Malaba and Meru. Eldoret Express is the biggest operator with plenty of buses to Kisumu and the Ugandan border.

See p348 for details on other bus companies operating out of Nairobi.

Matatu

Most matatus leave from Latema, Accra, River and Cross Rds and fares are similar to the buses. The biggest operator here is **Crossland Services** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 245377; Cross Rd), which serves destinations including Eldoret (KSh500, three hours), Kericho (KSh600, three hours), Kisii (KSh800, five hours), Kisumu (KSh800, four hours), Naivasha (KSh150, one hour), Nakuru (KSh250, two hours) and Nanyuki (KSh400, two hours). On the same road are **Molo Line Services** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 0724342966) with matatus to Eldoret, Naivasha, Nakuru and Kisumu, and **Narok Line** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 213020), which serves Kisii, Narok and Kericho.

Other companies are located on the surrounding streets. Head to the main bus and matatu area on Accra Rd (Map pp104-5) for matatus to Chogoria (KSh350, 2½ hours), Embu (KSh300, 1½ hours), Meru (KSh500, three hours) and Nanyuki (KSh400, 2½ hours). Matatus leave from Latema Rd for Nyahururu (KSh300, three hours) and Nyeri (KSh300, two hours). There are loads of matatus to Naivasha (KSh150, 1½ hours) and the Tanzanian border at Namanga (KSh300, three hours) from the corner of Ronald Ngala St and River Rd (Map pp104-5). For Thika (KSh100, 40 minutes), go to the Total petrol station on Racecourse Rd (Map pp100-1).

WARNING - THINGS CHANGE

Transport information is extremely vulnerable to change. At the time of writing, fuel prices in Kenya were soaring and it is almost certain that prices for bus routes will increase.

You should get local opinions, quotes and advice before parting with your hard-earned cash – a good place to inquire is at your hotel. In addition, tickets for private buses should always be booked at least one day in advance given the uncertainty of the transport grid.

Peugeot (Shared Taxi)

As with matatus, most of the companies offering Peugeot shared taxis have their offices around the Accra, River and Cross Rds area. One reliable company is **Crossland Services** (Map pp104-5; ☎ 245377; Cross Rd), which has cars to Eldoret, Kabarnet, Kericho, Kitale and Nakuru. Other companies serve Isiolo, Kisumu, Meru and Malaba. Fares are about 20% higher than the same journeys by matatu. Most services depart in the morning.

Shuttle Minibus

Shuttle minibuses run from Nairobi to Kampala (Uganda), and to Arusha and Moshi in Tanzania (see p345 for details).

Train

The train from Nairobi to Mombasa receives divided reviews – some acclaim it as a sociable and comfortable means of avoiding the highway while spotting some wildlife from the windows; for others it's too shabby and time-consuming. The latter isn't helped by inconsistent scheduling and lax timetable enforcement.

Nairobi train station has a small **booking office** (Map pp104-5; Station Rd; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm), though don't bother trying to get in touch with them – you need to stop in person to book tickets a few days in advance of your intended departure. For Mombasa (1st/2nd class US\$65/43, 14 to 16 hours), trains leave Nairobi at 7pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; arrive early.

GETTING AROUND

To/From Jomo Kenyatta International Airport

Kenya's main **international airport** (Map p111; ☎ 827638) is 15km out of town, off the road to Mombasa. There's now a dedicated airport bus run by Metro Shuttle (part of KBS, p134), which can drop you off at hotels in the city centre. Going the other way, the main departure point is across from the Hilton Nairobi Hotel. The journey takes about 40 minutes and costs US\$5 per person. Buses run every half-hour from 8am to 8.30pm daily and stop at both air terminals.

A cheaper way to get into town is by city bus 34 (KSh30), but a lot of travellers get robbed on the bus or when they get off. Always hold onto valuables and have small change ready for the fare. Buses run from 5.45am to 9.30pm

weekdays, 6.20am to 9.30pm Saturdays and 7.15am to 9.30pm Sundays, though the last few evening services may not operate. Heading to the airport, buses travel west along Kenyatta Ave.

A much safer method (and also your only option at night) is to take a taxi. The asking price is usually about KSh1500 in either direction, but you should be able to bargain down to KSh1000 from town. If you book at one of the 'information' desks at the airport, you'll still end up in a public taxi, but it isn't any more expensive.

To/From Wilson Airport

To get to **Wilson Airport** (Map p111; ☎ 501941), for Airkenya services or charter flights, the cheapest option is to take bus or matatu 15, 31, 34, 125 or 126 from Moi Ave (KSh20, from 15 minutes depending on traffic). A taxi from the centre of town will cost you KSh600 to KSh800, depending on the driver. In the other direction, you'll have to fight the driver down from KSh1000. The entrance to the airport is easy to miss – it's just before the large BP petrol station.

Bus

The ordinary city buses are run by **KBS** (☎ 229707) but hopefully you won't need to use them much. Forget about them if you're carrying luggage – you'll never get on, and even if you do, you'll never get off! Most buses pass through downtown, but the main KBS terminus is on Uyoma St, east of the centre.

Useful buses include 46 from Kenyatta Ave, for the Yaya Centre in Hurlingham (KSh20), and 23 from Jevanjee Gardens, for Westlands (KSh20). There are services about every 20 minutes from 6am to 8pm Monday to Saturday.

Car

See p349 for comprehensive information on car hire, road rules and conditions. If you are driving, beware of wheel-clampers: parking in the centre is by permit only, available from the parking attendants who roam the streets in bright yellow or red jackets. If you park overnight in the street in front of your hotel, the guard will often keep an eye on your vehicle for a small consideration.

Matatu

Nairobi's horde of matatus follows the same routes as buses and displays the same route numbers. For Westlands, you can pick up 23 on Moi Ave or Latema Rd. Matatu 46 to the Yaya Centre stops in front of the main post office, and 125 and 126 to Langata leave from in front of the train station. As usual, you should keep an eye on your valuables while on all matatus.

Taxi

As people are compelled to use them due to Nairobi's endemic street crime, taxis here are overpriced and undermaintained, but you've little choice, particularly at night. Taxis don't cruise for passengers, but you can find them parked on every other street corner in the city centre – at night they're outside restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

Fares around town are negotiable but end up pretty standard. Any journey within the downtown area costs KSh300, from downtown to Milimani Rd costs KSh400, and for longer journeys such as Westlands or the Yaya Centre, fares range from KSh500 to KSh650. From the city centre to Karen and Langata is around KSh850 one way.

You can also find a few Indonesian-style *tuk-tuks* operating from Kenyatta Ave, though they're slowly being phased out.

Southern Kenya



Although this tiny region is straddled by Nairobi and Mombasa, southern Kenya is quite simply safari country par excellence. With the sole exceptions of Masai Mara and Lake Nakuru, Amboseli and Tsavo rank at the top of Kenya's national park offerings. Along the border with Tanzania, where the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro meet the Amboseli plains, enormous herds of elephants roam the imperial court of Africa's highest peak. At Tsavo, a national park so massive it's divided into east and west sectors, you can bush camp in some of Kenya's wildest landscapes.

While the tourist trail definitely swings towards Amboseli and Tsavo, southern Kenya is also home to a number of natural wonders, including the extensive lava tubes of the Chyulu Hills, and the lush landscapes of the Taita Hills. The region also plays host to a number of community-run reserves and projects that are bringing the good conservation fight to the grass-roots level. Boasting a wide range of tented camps, lodges, bandas and campsites awaiting the weary traveller, it's certainly no hardship finding somewhere to wake up in the wilds of southern Kenya.

The majesty of nature aside, southern Kenya is a major transport route for anyone heading south to Tanzania's northern circuit. The Nairobi–Mombasa road also serves as the region's principal artery, which makes it easy to spend some time exploring the area before being seduced by the tropical climes of the coast. So, before you break out the beach blanket and the sunscreen, spend a bit more time on safari, and get to know a few more of Kenya's charismatic creatures.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Snapping that quintessential safari photo of elephant herds framed by Mt Kilimanjaro at **Amboseli National Park** (p137)
- Spotting hippos and crocs in the pristine oasis of **Mzima Springs** (p141) at Tsavo West National Park
- Catching a rare glimpse of some of Kenya's last remaining black rhinos at the **Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary** (p141) in Tsavo West National Park
- Braving the country's scariest lions in the back country of **Tsavo East National Park** (p144)
- Spelunking in **Leviathan** (p140), the world's longest lava tube, part of the Chyulu Hills National Park

