

Kenya, tourism

Located in East Africa (Figure 1), the Republic of Kenya has an estimated population of 42 million and has English and Kiswahili as its official languages. Kenya is one of the poorest countries in the world and agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. Tourism is also an important industry in its national economy, and a major foreign exchange earner, contributing approximately 10% to GDP, 10-12% of total wage employment and 19.2% of export earnings (Kenya 2013). The country is the 7th most popular destination in Africa (UNWTO 2013) and is known for ecotourism which features a game safari and viewing of wildlife in pristine natural environments. About 10% of the country has been set aside for wildlife conservation and promotion of tourism, however human-wildlife conflicts and poaching are major challenges.



Figure 1. Map of Kenya

Tourism in Kenya has experienced a steady growth in volume, revenues, and investments since its independence. The number of arrivals has increased steadily from 65,000 in 1964 to over one million in 2010 with a corresponding increase in revenues. In 2012, Kenya earned US\$935 million from 1.6 million tourists, making tourism the third largest foreign exchange

earner after tea and horticulture. Nearly half of the tourists visiting Kenya come from United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France (KNBS 2013). Domestic tourism is underdeveloped. However, in recent years, the industry is confronted with serious problems including declining visitor arrivals and decreasing revenues resulting from post-political violence in 2007, increased competition, insecurity, terrorist attacks, undiversified products and inadequate infrastructure.

The government has continued to encourage the growth of tourism through direct investment, financing local investors, and enactment of friendly policies. Tourism receives a high priority in the five yearly National Development Plans, and operates within a liberalized economic environment, characterized by a strong partnership between the public and private sectors. While the private sector plays an important role, the overall responsibility for tourism development rests with the Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism. The Ministry's responsibilities include policy formulation and implementation, and coordination of planning, promotion and marketing. The Ministry has devolved some of the responsibilities to quasi-government bodies, including Kenya Tourism Development Corporation which lends and advises investors in tourism, Kenya Wildlife Services which is responsible for conservation and management of wildlife, Kenya Tourism Board which does promotion and marketing, and Utalii College which trains manpower for the industry. Several private and public institutions and universities offer degree programs, with their faculty engaged in tourism research and scholarship.

Kenya has forecast that tourism will be beneficial to the country socio-economically. To enhance its competitiveness, the country must therefore develop new products, increase investment, address insecurity concerns arising from violent crimes and terrorist activities, deal with problems of human-wildlife conflicts and poaching, intensify marketing and promotional campaigns, and develop infrastructure to facilitate easy movement of tourists.

See also: Ecotourism, wildlife tourism, cultural tourism, Africa.

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Kenya

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Tom G. Ondicho
University of Nairobi, Kenya
tondicho@uonbi.ac.ke

