



Upgrades

What are Upgrades?

Upgrades are brief supplements to our most popular and/or changeable guidebooks. They're free online at www.lonelyplanet.com/upgrades

What kind of information do Upgrades contain?

Upgrades provide a snapshot of the most important changes that have occurred since the book was published that affect the usefulness of the book. They are written by Lonely Planet authors and often include research from media reports and unconfirmed news from travellers on the road.

Which books are upgraded and when?

We produce Upgrades to over 50 best sellers and guides to countries or regions that change rapidly. Our authors write the first Upgrade soon after the book is published and subsequent Upgrades every six months after that. When the fully updated new edition of the book is published the Upgrades cycle starts again.

Do Upgrades replace guidebooks?

No. Upgrades are supplements to our books designed to make each book even more useful. They're no substitute for the guidebooks, which are thoroughly updated by LP authors for every edition.

What else on LP's Web site can keep me up-to-date?

Subwwwway: For reviews of useful links sorted by topic

Scoop: For worldwide news aimed at travellers

Postcards: For unconfirmed news and recommendations from readers on the road

Thorn Tree: Our bulletin board for travellers

Destination Profiles: For background information to help plan your trip

The 4th edition of *Kenya* was published in April 2000. Until the 5th edition is published our Upgrades will help keep your book up-to-date.

This Upgrade was posted in September 2001. We'll post the next Upgrade around March 2002.



This Upgrade was written by **Matt Fletcher** and incorporates information from media reports. It also includes some unconfirmed reports from travellers on the road; be smart and treat their tips with caution until you check things out for yourself.

Things keep changing, so check the latest information on visa requirements at a Kenyan embassy, and safety warnings with your foreign affairs department (or state department, or whatever) prior to departure.

This supplement fits neatly in your guidebook when folded. Crease the centre and turn back the blue edge of each page over the previous page. Then wrap this page around to make a convenient cover.

Introduction

Along with a number of other countries on and around the Horn of Africa, Kenya has only just emerged from a debilitating drought that saw the country's reserves of water (and consequently its reserves of energy) virtually dry up.

The drought compounded endemic economic problems that have made Kenya even more reliant on aid from donor countries. Though the situation is improving after good rains in April and May 2001 (and an influx of international money and supplies), travellers should still be prepared for water and power shortages in some of the smaller regions of the country.

Travellers should also take into account recent ethnic and political tensions when planning their visit. Banditry in the country's north-west and north-east, plus protests against the government's gagging of opposition parties, occasionally flare up and you should get hold of the most up-to-date information before undertaking your trip.

Kenyan authorities also saw fit to introduce a new and expensive visa regime in March 2001 which leaves no nationality untouched, so get set to re-work that budget. Despite the above considerations, Kenya's tourism industry has gone from strength to strength, with an earnings increase of 20% in 2000. The country still has a profound diversity of cultures and wildlife to offer, so don't postpone your safari to the heart of East Africa.

Facts about Kenya

HISTORY Prehistory

Over the last year there have been two announcements of two remarkable fossilised discoveries. First to announce their find was a team of French and Kenyan scientists who believe they have discovered the fossilised remains of what may be the oldest hominid, or ape-man, ever found. The specimens were unearthed at Kapsomin in the Tugen hills in Baringo district. Body parts belonging to at least five individuals,

both female and male, have been found. The body fragments indicate that the Kapsomin hominid was about the size of a modern chimpanzee and an agile climber of trees, but when on the ground walked upright on two legs. Although the fossils are yet to be dated, the rock in which they were discovered is known to be six million years old, potentially making the species the oldest ape-man ever found.

Announcing their results second were researchers from the National Museum of Kenya. At Lomekwi, on the shores of Lake Turkana, they discovered an almost intact skull of a previously unidentified species of hominid dating back 3.5 million years. Flat-Faced Man – or Kenyanthropus playtops – represents a possible fourth group or genus of human-like creatures from which modern man could have eventually descended. Whether Flat-Faced Man is the granddaddy of Homo erectus or not, his discovery is causing anthropologists and historians to re-evaluate our lineage.

Kenya Today

The worst drought in 30 years made most of 2000 a horror year for many Kenyans, particularly in the arid north-west. By year's end, around three million people were threatened with starvation and millions of others were suffering from food shortages. As competition for grazing land and water holes increased so did inter-tribal conflict and banditry in the north-eastern and north-western parts of the country.

As Kenya is heavily dependent on hydroelectric power from natural water supplies, the drought not only led to strict water shortages but affected power supplies too.

Nairobi was the scene of protests involving hundreds of people in August 2000 after the murder of outspoken government critic and human rights advocate Father John Kaiser. The memorial service for the American priest, who had worked as a missionary for nearly 40 years in Kenya and had been found shot to death outside the capital, attracted nearly 3000 people.

With presidential and parliamentary elections due by December 2002 and no appointed KANU presidential candidate to replace Moi, political tension and violence

is a possibility in 2002. However, political or inter-tribal violence is very rarely directed at travellers and the main problems facing Kenya today are economic.

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Nairobi received a new eco-tourism attraction in March 2000 with the opening of an African butterfly centre. Established by the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) to help promote the conservation of the continent's butterflies, the centre reputedly holds the second-largest collection of fluttery specimens in the world after the British Museum of Natural History in London. The centre also has a research library which is now the favoured meeting place for globe-trotting lepidopterists.

A month after putting butterflies on display, Nairobi was the venue for the 11th biennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). After a week and a half of talks involving over 2000 delegates from 150 countries and nongovernment organisations (NGOs), it was decided to extend a ban on the international trading of ivory for another two years, due to continuing concerns over elephant poaching in Africa. If you're interested in seeing more about CITES, visit www.cites.org.

More recently, fishing trawlers were banned from operating within Kenya's territorial Indian Ocean waters in an effort to halt the overfishing which has threatened the existence of a number of marine species. Furthermore the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) have embarked on a US\$10 million program to save the coral reef systems of coastal Kenya, which have been in severe decline.

The reefs are under considerable pressure from coastal development and their destruction threatens the livelihood of millions of coastal inhabitants, marine wildlife, global sea levels and tourism.

The first part of the project will be research and education projects in at least three sites. These are likely to include Malindi and Watamu marine parks. These projects will serve as prototypes for future reef protection programs worldwide.

In other positive news CORDIO (Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean) reports that coral reefs are regenerating steadily after being extensively bleached in 1998. Species richness is now about 50% of it's pre-bleached level.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

See the 'Major National Parks & Reserves' section later for details about the new 'SmartCard' electronic ticketing system.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The government, headed for the past 23 years by the wily President Daniel arap Moi, continues to brew an ever-changing political cocktail.

Anti-government activities are still decidedly unwelcome, efforts against corruption face problems at every turn (most recently from the opposition) and political power for its own sake (there are no distinct political ideologies in Kenyan political parties) is frequently put above the good of the country.

In August 2000, a riot involving up to 1000 people broke out in Nairobi after pro-government supporters forcefully prevented a public rally planned by opposition supporters. More political violence occurred when the opposition member of parliament who had organised the aborted August rally, James Orengo, was arrested by police for holding an 'unauthorised rally' in the west Kenyan town of Kisii.

On 11 June 2001 President Moi reshuffled his Cabinet to allow two senior NDP (National Democratic Party) members (including its leader, Raila Odinga) to take up Cabinet posts, while two other NDP MPs were given junior ministerial positions.

This is the first time since independence that opposition MPs have been brought into the government. Kenyan political parties are frequently divided along tribal lines and while the coalition between KANU (Kenya African National Union) and NDP can be seen as a Moi ploy to ensure a KANU victory in the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, the arrangements do bring another large tribe (the Luo) into the government fold, creating more inclusive decision-making.

At first the opposition parties declared that they would unite behind one candidate to fight the KANU-NDP alliance in 2002, but then typically the various party leaders began to expound on their individual presidential ambitions. The only thing they seem to agree on is fighting the government's anti-corruption bill (see the following Economics section).

Though the KANU presidential candidate has not yet been chosen (many KANU ministers are actually urging Moi to stand again despite the fact that it's constitutionally illegal) anything other than a KANU victory is looking unlikely – they won't even have to rig the election.

Just who will be the KANU candidate is anyone's guess. It's possible that Moi will wait until the last minute to announce his preferred successor in order to prevent excessive political infighting and divisions. Sure as eggs are eggs there will be some disappointed and embittered KANU politicians by the time the election is over.

ECONOMY

The economy grew at only 1.4% in 1999, (against population growth of 2.4%) and contracted by 0.3% in 2000 thanks to the crippling drought. Per capita GDP is now only US\$271.

However, the tiny voice of optimism voiced at the end of the 4th edition of *Kenya* wasn't *totally* misplaced. The Recovery Strategy was launched in July 1999, and headed by the internationally respected Richard Leakey along with a number of young, capable technocrats (nicknamed 'the dream team' by some observers).

Positive steps were taken to put the economy back on a sound footing. These included considerable anti-corruption measures, prudent economic management and public service reforms. Many continue despite Leakey stepping down in March (by mutual agreement apparently).

Pleased with these measures, the IMF agreed to a US\$198 million aid package in July 2000, for poverty reduction over three years. Meanwhile, the World Bank was considering a US\$75 million loan to help Kenya expand its electrical generating

capacity, though the privatisation of power companies was also on its agenda.

A mere eight months later, however, hopes of financial relief took a dive. In mid-January 2001, the IMF and World Bank indefinitely postponed US\$20 million in payments – the reason, as it turned out, was that Kenya had reneged on a promise to pass two anti-corruption bills through parliament. Last year, a court outlawed the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority on the basis that the constitution vests powers in the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute, not a separate authority.

At the time of writing this Upgrade, a new anti-corruption bill had just been defeated in parliament, despite having the vote of the president. It was vigorously opposed by opposition MPs, who claimed it contained constitutional conflicts, was badly drafted and served the agenda of international donors, not Kenya. In fact, it's more likely that they saw a possible government defeat (the bill needs a two thirds majority) and wanted to score political points.

The defeat will come at the expense of the economy. Without the bill, foreign aid will remain suspended and the economic crisis will deepen. It also seems likely that the lack of an amnesty for corruption cases before 1997 (which was originally proposed) is causing unease among some MPs.

Though prospects for the economy are gloomy with the vital agricultural sector (especially tea and sugar) and industry (which suffered energy cutbacks) still reeling after the drought, there are a few rays of hope. The Kenyan economy is faring better than its immediate neighbours thanks to increased privatisation and deregulation. It's better placed for economic growth if the right government policies are taken and corruption restrained. It would also be helpful if all the government's political energy was not spent on fighting the 2002 elections (sadly a very real possibility).

One success story is the tourism industry, which had an earnings increase of 20% in 2000, according to government figures. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Zimbabwe's loss has been Kenya's gain.

In October 2000 Kenya joined with Djibouti, Egypt, Madagascar, Malawi,

Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe to inaugurate COMESA-FTA, the first free-trade zone on the continent. Just two months after the creation of COMESA-FTA, Kenya signed up to the East African Community (EAC), which unites Kenya with Tanzania and Uganda in pursuing a common market, parliament and court. EAC was formally launched on 15 January 2001. It provides for rapid progress towards a customs union and a common market for the three countries. The trade protocols in the Treaty allow for a common market to be negotiated over the next four years.

SOCIETY & CONDUCT

In a landmark human rights case in December 2000, a court ruled in favour of two teenage girls who were seeking to stop their father from forcing them to undergo circumcision (known less euphemistically as the mutilation of female genitalia). The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Kenya, which helped the 15-year-old and 17-year-old present and win their case in the Rift Valley, alleges that this type of mutilation is a frequent occurrence in the local Kalenjin tribal group to which the girls belong, as are young pregnancies and forced marriages. The judges also ordered the girls' father to continue paying child support.

Tribal Groups & Cultures

'You have indicated that the Luo are Kenya's second-largest group (after the Kikuyu). According to last year's population census, the Luyha now take second place and the Kalenjin third – the Luo have dropped to fourth place.'

Source: Sanjeev Parmar (Sep '00)

Facts for the Visitor

TOURIST OFFICES

The Kenya Tourist Board has closed all its international tourist offices in a drive for increased efficiency and cost savings. The job of promoting Kenya as a tourist destination has been put out to private tender with an announcement on successful applicants

expected before the end of the year. Check the Kenya Tourist Board Web site (www.kenyatourism.org) for up-to-date details.

VISAS & DOCUMENTS

Visas

All visitors must now have a visa – that means everyone, no exceptions. The new regulation has been vigorously protested by the Kenyan tourist industry, but the government is unmoved. The new tourist visas cost a staggering US\$50 for single-entry, US\$20 for transit and US\$100 for multiple-entry. In anticipation of bureaucratic chaos with the scheme now in effect, you'd be best off getting your visa before you leave home.

In November 2000, a number of travellers who entered Kenya by land from Uganda were issued fake visa stamps by con artists posing as immigration officials at the main border crossings of Malaba and Busia. If you still plan to pick up a visa at the land border, make sure that you're getting the real thing.

Be aware that visa regulations change constantly. Kenyan embassies will be able to provide you with current information.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Kenyan Embassies & Consulates

The address of the Kenyan embassy in Germany has changed to Markgrafenstrasse 63, 10969 Berlin (☎ 030-2592660, fax 25926650, email embassy-kenya.bn@uumail.de)

Source: Ingo Haberland (Apr '01)

Embassies & Consulates in Kenya

Details of the following diplomatic offices in Nairobi have changed:

Tanzania

Embassy: (☎ 331056/7, 331104, fax 054-2-721874, email tanzania@users.africaonline.co.ke)

High Commission: 9th floor, Reinsurance Plaza (you'll find this plaza in the city centre between Taifa Rd and Aga Kahn Walk, just south of the Hilton Hotel)

In November 2000, the Somali government announced that it would soon reopen its embassy in Nairobi, after having hung an

‘Out to War’ sign on the front door for the past 10 years. However, a weekend break in Mogadishu is not recommended.

MONEY

A number of readers have reported bank closures across Kenya. Apparently, Watamu no longer has any banks, and readers report that among Barclays’ 22 bank closures those at Voi and Isiolo have fallen under the corporate axe. The Barclays Web site (www.africa.barclays.com) has details of branch and ATM locations, but cross-reference the lists and phone ahead if you’re relying on ATM machines (the ATM list seems out of date).

The Web site of Standard Chartered Bank (www.standardchartered.com/ke) also lists ATM locations and the Kenya Commercial Bank Web site (www.kcb.co.ke) has branch locations – note that 14 KCB branches have closed.

Exchange Rates

The Kenyan shilling has been hovering at KSh 79 to US\$1. However, it’s always risky to pin down a currency on paper (or on screen), so try this currency converter to give you the current value of the Kenyan shilling: www.oanda.com

POST & COMMUNICATIONS Email & Internet Access

Over 2000, the number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Kenya grew from eight to 47, but costs remained high due to the lack of a data exchange point for Kenyan Internet servers – data had to be sent overseas to be exchanged between Kenyan ISPs.

To solve this money-chewing problem, the ISPs got together to set up the local Kenyan Internet Exchange Point (KIXP), which began operation in mid-November 2000. Only a few weeks later, however, KIXP was closed down by the government, which then dutifully instructed Telkom Kenya to establish exactly the same system. The moral of the story is: never challenge the government to a game of Monopoly.

INTERNET RESOURCES

For more up-to-date information on Kenya, try the following links:

The Jambo Kenya site doesn’t do itself justice by having a lion yawning in complete and utter boredom on its front page – the site is actually packed with info (and links) on the country, safaris, getting around, news, Swahili and more:

www.jambokenya.com
Daily Nation on the Web is a good source of Kenyan news:
www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/Today/

AllAfrica.com is an excellent source of news gathered from a variety of African publications, including Africa News Online – it posts hundreds of stories from more than 60 African publications:
www.allafrica.com/kenya

Cyber-Africa provides comprehensive information on and about Kenya, with plenty of Kenya-related Web sites:
www.cyber-africa.net

Kenyanews.com describes itself as Kenya’s premier journal of human rights, democracy and the media:
www.kenyanews.com

African Perspective is an online weekly that presents news and analysis on political, economic, historic and cultural events in Africa and elsewhere in the world:
www.africanperspective.com

No, I’m not interested in golf, but maybe you are – check out the corporate bravado of the ‘mission statement’:
www.golfkenya.com

Kenyaibirds.org is not a substitute for a decent birding book, but does have some useful information:
www.kenyaibirds.org.uk

See the Internet Resources section in your guidebook for other useful sites.

HEALTH

A particularly nasty batch of the illegal alcoholic brew known as *chang’aa*, a cheap and industrial-strength spirit sometimes laced with poisonous methanol to make it stronger, killed over 130 drinkers and hospitalised another 500 in Nairobi in November 2000.

Chang’aa is the drink of the impoverished, mass-produced in poorer areas for those who cannot afford highly taxed beers and spirits – because of its potentially lethal effects, it’s known by local aficionados as ‘kill-me-quick’.

The new year was meant to mark the beginning of the first human trials of a

newly developed AIDS vaccine in Nairobi, but the government abruptly cancelled the planned trials by announcing that it didn’t yet feel right about exposing human guinea pigs to potential side-effects. Some cynics dismissed the government’s explanation for the about-face, citing pressure from pharmaceutical companies intent on protecting a market saturated with their own highly expensive patented drugs as the real reason.

An orphanage for HIV-positive kids in Nairobi recently waded into the issue of affordable AIDS treatment by announcing its intention to import cheaper drugs from an Indian manufacturer, contravening a deal worked out between Kenya’s government and international drugs companies and setting up a landmark legal confrontation. The director of the orphanage says that the far less expensive Indian drugs will let him treat up to two dozen more children every month.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical giants are crying foul over infringement of their precious patents, while NGOs attack them for not making good on last year’s promise to reduce their prices by 85% for financially struggling countries.

A recently concluded study at the University of Nairobi has revealed some unnerving facts about the popular miraa leaf (known as khat in hipper terms), a commonly chewed stimulant and mainstay of 1000 matatu drivers.

According to researchers khat contains extremely high levels of cathinone, a chemical notorious for its unfavourable effects on the central nervous system. It’s also a mood enhancer and trigger for dopamine. Dopamine may cause euphoria, but an oversupply of it can bring about frightening hallucinations, paranoia, schizophrenia and even respiratory problems.

Miraa is widely cultivated in Kenya and plays a significant role in some tribal traditions. Despite the health risks the government is all too aware of its vital importance to the economy and culture.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Reports about the danger and volatility of the north-western region continue. The UN has described the worsening situation as

‘precarious’ and has cited serious security concerns over the region which is only just emerging from drought. With an increasing number of bandit attacks and violent clashes between rival communities over livestock, travel here generally now only takes place with police escorts.

Though raids by rival communities are certainly not unusual, the sophisticated weaponry now used gives the attacks a new – and often fatal – dimension. In April 2000, the army was called in to patrol the Baringo-Turkana border to try to quell the violence. It’s essential to check on the current situation with your embassy or foreign affairs department before considering travel in the region.

Security problems were also reported in the south-east late last year, due to rising tensions between the coastal area’s ethnic groups and migrants from provinces further afield – the latter have been blamed by the former for taking local jobs and land.

Be aware that 2002 is an election year, and politics can often cause inter-tribal violence. While travellers are very rarely targeted seek advice locally.

Also see the warnings under the Nairobi, Mombasa and Tiwi Beach sections later in this Upgrade.

Getting There & Away

AIR Departure Tax

The international departure tax has increased to US\$40 (or the equivalent in a major hard currency). However, if your ticket is bought outside East Africa, then the tax is usually included in the price. Make sure you’re aware of your ticket’s status as far as departure tax is concerned.

LAND Ethiopia

When crossing from Ethiopia into northern Kenya at Moyale, travellers should be aware of a number of factors. Firstly, Kenyan border police appear to enjoy going through travellers’ bags (out of curiosity apparently) and secondly you

will need to produce a yellow fever vaccination certificate at every roadblock on the way to Isiolo.

Furthermore, touts pedalling flights to Nairobi from Moyale have made getting onto a truck bound for Nairobi a real hassle (though it's recommended you travel as far as Isiolo by truck and then take public transport, which is more comfortable). Some touts have strong-armed non-flying travellers into buying a passage on a truck through them at over double the going rate!

'...dismiss all the 'border guides' and 'travel agencies' as soon as possible and head straight for the truck drivers at 7 am and arrange everything themselves. To get a truck is actually quite easy since there are convoys every day and the number of seats is unlimited! The 'local price' for a seat has decreased to KSh700-800.'

Source: Ehsan Shariati (Mar '01)

Tanzania

Nairobi to Arusha/Moshi 'Anyone travelling between Arusha and Nairobi: Fly! The road journey can only be described as the bus ride from hell. While we can look back now and laugh at the experience, I still don't know how our luggage wasn't thrown off from the top of the bus. Evidently the bus drivers get paid by the number of round-trip journeys they can complete in a day, so they drive fast – really fast – and the pot holes, animals, people or cars don't stand a chance.'

Source: Anna Woltschenko (Sep '99)

Uganda

Someone who recently entered Kenya from Uganda told us that they were asked for their yellow fever vaccination certificate at the border crossing – don't forget your own card if you're planning on following in this person's footsteps.

Getting Around

CAR & 4WD

'The road from Mtito Andei to Mariakani (what was the worst stretch of road between Nairobi and Mombasa) is wonderful new tarmac, but the rest of the road is still potholed, bumpy and dangerous, due to heavy lorry traffic, especially at night. We would not recommend anyone drive on this road after dark due to the danger of oncoming lorries without headlights.'

Source: John K Magerer (Apr '01)

Safaris

OTHER SAFARIS

Lake Turkana Safaris

The email address for Special Camping Safaris and Whistling Thorns (see Ngong Hills in the Around Nairobi section in the guidebook) has changed. Try scs@iconnect.co.ke or visit the company's Web site at www.camping-safaris.com.

Camel Safaris

In Nairobi, Yare Safaris has moved to the 2nd floor of Windsor House, on University Way opposite the central police station – their contact numbers are unchanged.

Specialist Safaris

Motorcycling Fredlink Co Ltd (☎ 011-486456, 487552, 485335, email fredlink@swiftmombasa.com) is now based at Bamburi Beach, north of Mombasa – there is another office (☎ 0127-2468) south of Mombasa at Diani Beach. Itineraries are flexible and the two-wheelers of choice are Suzuki DR350cc bikes. Check out the Web site (www.motorbike-safari.com) for details.

Nairobi

INFORMATION
Dangers & Annoyances

Though theft is common in Nairobi, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs suggests that visitors should be particularly wary in and around the River Rd area, where muggings are a frequent occurrence.

We also received the following warning:

'We found that your warning against the area around the Iqbal Hotel (the River Rd area) played down the real dimension of the place. The tarmac road comes to an end, is pitch black, and all sorts of dubious people hang out in dark corners or squat around open campfires. The taxi drivers lock their doors and if they are of the considerate kind, they refuse to leave you there after dark until you are sure to get into the Iqbal. A friend stayed there for three nights and witnessed several fights outside his window and a man being shot.'

Source: Ann-Sophie Seliger (May '00)

There was a major outbreak of ethnic violence in Nairobi in early December 2000,

when fighting between thousands of Muslim and Christian youths in the city's slums continued for two days before police finally took control of the situation.

It's believed that post-riot hostilities between the two groups then led to arson attacks that destroyed four large market complexes around the city: namely, the Gikomba, Freemark and Kangemi markets, as well as the Garissa Lodge shopping centre in the suburb of Eastleigh.

NATIONAL MUSEUM

Admission to the National Museum is now KSh 200.

ACTIVITIES
Clubs & Societies

The office of the East African Wildlife Society has reportedly shifted to Riara Rd, Kilimani, off Ngong Rd.

PLACES TO STAY – BUDGET
Camping

The *Upper Hill Campsite* is now contactable via email (campsite@thornetree.com). The 'covered workshop for vehicle maintenance' was planned, but unfortunately never eventuated.

Contrary to what is stated in the Kenya guidebook, *Mrs Roche's* (☎ 562452) is still open and Ma Roche alive and well. It goes to show that you shouldn't believe everything you are told by friendly expats in Nairobi, especially if you're a guidebook author.

To get to Mrs Roche's take a matatu heading to the Aga Khan Hospital from the corner of Latema Rd and Tom Mboya St right outside the Odeon Cinema.

PLACES TO STAY – TOP END

The *Hilton Hotel* has a new phone number: ☎ 250000.

PLACES TO EAT

Chinese It's been rumoured that *Great Chung Wah* has closed and a bar specialising in loud music has opened in its place.

Western We've been told that the *Hard Rock Cafe* has closed and that *La Papa Loca* in Westlands has changed its name to *Dudley's* and no longer has live music.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Air

A traveller has told us that for flights from Nairobi to Lamu, Kenya Airways offers the best deal at about US\$108 one way. But she warns other travellers to ignore the different 'classes' promoted by Kenya Airways (which at the top end could cost you up to US\$40 more) because the company's planes are small and seat choice is usually open.

We've also heard that Eagle Aviation is planning to recommence flights from Nairobi to Lamu.

Bus

Shuttle Minibus Apparently, the Connection company no longer runs a shuttle service between Mombasa and Nairobi.

GETTING AROUND
To/From the Airport

One reader has reported that a shuttle bus now runs from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to any hotel in Nairobi. Heading back to the airport it only picks up from the Mayfair Hotel. The fare is reportedly KSh390 one way.

Around Nairobi

KAREN BLIXEN MUSEUM

We're told that the No 111 matatu will indeed take you from Moi Ave direct to the museum, but that the No 111 bus won't – you'll need to get off the bus at Karen village and change to the No 24 matatu.

The Coast
Mombasa

Information

Dangers & Annoyances In the middle of last year, the government decided to get tough with the hordes of curio and antique-selling hawkers who – according to locally conducted polls – were spoiling the ambience for (and occasionally rifling the pockets of) tourists on the beaches around Mombasa.

Thousands of the independent business-people were expelled from a strip of coastline extending as far north as Malindi,

though from recent traveller reports at least a few have crept back into the seaside picture.

Places to Eat

Restaurants The *Hard Rock Cafe* in Mombasa has reportedly closed.

A year ago we heard that the *New Chetna restaurant* had burned down. But there's good news:

'The New Chetna restaurant in Mombasa has reopened, just down the road from the old one: it has the same great food but now there is an air-conditioned section too.'

Source: *Julie Carter (Mar '01)*

Getting There & Away

Apparently, the Connection company no longer runs a shuttle service between Mombasa and Nairobi.

South of Mombasa

TIWI BEACH

'While visiting Mombasa, extra care should be taken with possessions when swimming in the Coral Cave just north of Tiwi Beach. This area is not patrolled and we had our gear stolen while we were only three feet from it. One should not take anything with them that they do not want to lose.'

Source: *Shane & Andrea Peterson (Dec '00)*

Places to Stay & Eat

The phone number given in the guidebook for *Tiwi Sea Castles* (the full name of which is *Graceland Tiwi Sea Castle Hotel*) is incorrect – try ☎ 0127-51056 or fax 51048.

A reader says that the write-up for *Coral Cove Cottages* gives the impression that it has numerous small huts and open-plan cottages, but there are only three and prices have gone up (KSh 600/900/1800). Significantly more expensive are the numerous two-bedroom cottages, which cost KSh 3000 now. Lifts to Diani are possible, but taxis are another option.

North of Mombasa

WATAMU

'There are no more banks in Watamu. Both banks you mention have closed down.'

Source: *Ruediger Herrmann (Apr '01)*

Places to Stay – Mid-Range

Mrs Simpson's Guest House has a new email address (simpson@watamu.net) and its own Web site (www.watamu.net).

MALINDI

The number for *Malindi Cottages* has been changed to ☎ 0123-21071.

Lamu

The correct area code for Lamu is ☎ 0121.

Information

Tourist Office If you agree with the guidebook's claim that the tourist information office just up from the waterfront is of limited use, you might want to check out the recommendation we received from a traveller for a new 'tourism office': apparently, it's run by a very helpful individual who is keen on promoting sustainable travel in the area.

This new venture is reportedly just off the main drag right near the fort – keep your eyes peeled for a sign to the office.

Email & Internet Access Emails can be sent and received for KSh 100/40 from the German Postal Museum and Shemanga Secretarial Services, both located on Kenyatta Rd.

Museums

A reader reports that the *Swahili House Museum* has closed.

Places to Stay – Mid-Range

The phone number given for booking rooms at *Stone House Hotel* should read ☎ 02-446384.

We've also been told that *Amu House* is no longer open, though there's a possibility that it's just changed its name to *Sun and Sail* – let us know if you've visited Lamu recently and can verify any of this.

Places to Stay – Top-End

Though *Kijani House* is closed in May and June, it's actually open in April.

Places to Eat

You can no longer get food on the rooftop of *Petley's Inn*, but the bar is still open.

Islands Around Lamu

Kipongani Village is incorrectly located on the map of Lamu Archipelago. Its actual location is on the west coast (not the north coast) of Lamu Island.

The Rift Valley

NAKURU

One reader has reported that the *Oyster Shell Restaurant* is now only a bar.

The Central Highlands Around Mt Kenya

NANYUKI

A reader has reported that Outback Services no longer exists, and recommends Wildside Ventures (who are based in Nanyuki) for Mt Kenya treks.

Western Kenya Lake Victoria

Researchers claim that a project to rid Lake Victoria of its fast-growing aquatic weed, the water hyacinth, has been a success.

About 100,000 weevils were introduced into the lake at about 30 sites during a five-year, US\$2.5 million project funded by the World Bank. The researchers say that up to 60% of the 6000 hectares of weed have been gobbled up by the weevils, now estimated to number in the millions, and that up to 80% will have gone by the project's end.

Many beaches previously blocked by the weed are now passable; the researchers are confident that the weevils will not attack crops.

KISUMU

Places to Stay – Budget

Razbi Guest House has closed.

Getting There & Away

Bus & Matatu The bus and matatu station is now located 500m east of Kisumu

Museum on Nairobi Rd, a good 20-minute walk from the town centre.

Northern Kenya East of Turkana

ISIOLO

The Barclays Bank in Isiolo is now closed.

Though lawlessness and banditry have long been problems in northern Kenya, one of our readers has warned that particular care needs to be taken on the route from Isiolo to Marsabit. Suggested precautions include travelling in convoys or hiring an armed escort.

Major National Parks & Reserves

Park fees remain the same but the 'SmartCard' electronic ticketing system has been implemented at six of the main national parks (Nairobi NP, Lake Nakuru NP, Aberdares NP, Tsavo East NP, Tsavo West NP and Amboseli NP) and over time other parks are sure to become part of the scheme.

Travellers can buy these cards at a few locations, or Point of Issue (POI) offices, located in Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa and Voi. These SmartCards can be loaded with extra value (meaning multiple entries in parks) at Point of Sales (POS) offices in Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa, Malindi, Voi, Aberdares and at the main gate or Tsavo West at Mto Andei. The Amboseli POS is located at Meshanani Gate.

The system is ideal for tour operators with fixed itineraries, but not so good for individual tourists rocking up unannounced in hired 4WDs. There have also been teething problems with the scheme so check with KWS (www.kws.org) as to which parks now use 'SmartCards'.

LAKE BOGORIA NATIONAL RESERVE

Throughout the past decade there have been some dramatic drops in the population of lesser flamingo and 2001 is no exception.

Thousands of flamingos have recently died at Lake Bogoria and though poisoning is suspected, the cause is yet to be determined. It was initially stated that man-made pollution was to blame, but an almost total lack of industry or agriculture around the lake makes this unlikely.

Scientists are starting to believe this is a naturally occurring phenomenon caused either by the minerals brought up through the hot springs or simple over-population.

In any case, large numbers of lesser flamingos have left Bogoria for Lake Nakuru, which the birds deserted in favour of Lake Bogoria in 1997. The greatest ornithological spectacle in Africa may be moving location, but inquire locally for details.

MERU NATIONAL PARK

Improvements are being carried out on the road to Meru National Park, but the work is incomplete due to lack of funds.

Also improved are animal numbers, thanks to an energetic relocation and anti-poaching program established after animal numbers were decimated in the 1980s by bandits and poachers.

MT KENYA NATIONAL PARK

Herders who have brought thousands of head of cattle, sheep, goats and camels into the Mt Kenya Forest Reserve to graze – due to the effects of the prolonged drought on their traditional pastures – have been told to head 'em up and move 'em out by government authorities. Local conservationists have been pushing for the removal of the animals for a while now because of the damage they are doing to the reserve's ecosystem. However, the herders say that they have nowhere to move their animals to.

Meanwhile, on the summit of the mountain the glaciers continue to melt at an alarming rate.

TANA RIVER PRIMATE NATIONAL RESERVE

The World Bank-funded conservation program in this reserve on the north-eastern coast of Kenya has not been going smoothly recently. The development of the reserve, home to the Tana River red colobus and crested mangabay monkeys, will mean the relocation of 247 families and active protection of 169 sq km of the river delta (including 11 sq km of riverine forest). This means that local people will no longer be able to harvest forest products (including trees for canoes) and clear areas for cultivation at will.

Despite a 'relocation package' local people are upset. Most recently a team of researchers studying the Tana River red colobus were confronted by an angry group of bare-bottomed women and were forced to flee. In many Kenyan societies, public displays of the nude female body are thought to bring misfortune and mayhem. Accordingly, the women of a nearby village stripped down to their birthday suits hoping to curse the unwanted researchers away.

The Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) says that the management of Tana River Primate has been reorganised to involve community participation. According to the KWS, the 247 families have volunteered to move out of the reserve once alternative land is provided by the government and crop/housing compensation is worked out.

Though KWS says there is no longer a problem with bandits in the area, it's still advisable to check out the security situation when on the ground.

If you intend to visit this fascinating reserve contact KWS in Nairobi before setting out.

VOI

Now that the Barclays bank has closed, readers say the nearest ATM is in Mombasa.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to these travellers, whose contributions formed part of this Upgrade: Sandy Bornman, Julie Carter, Anthony Field, Ingo Haberland, Ruediger Herrmann, Miranda Hudson, John K Magerer, David Obura, Sanjeev Parmer, Sally Peters, Shane & Andrea Peterson, Ian Ripper, Ann-Sophie Seliger, Ehsan Shariati, Jennifer Solomon, Sandra van der Graff and Anna Woltschenko.

Feedback

Help other travellers avoid pitfalls and gain from your experiences. If you find things are better or worse, recently opened or long since closed, please tell us and help make the next guidebook and Upgrade even more accurate and useful.

Everyone who writes to us will, if they wish, find their name in the next edition of the appropriate guidebook. They will also receive the latest issue of *Planet Talk*, our quarterly printed newsletter or *Comet*, our monthly email newsletter. Subscriptions to both are free. The very best contributions will be rewarded with a free guidebook.

Excerpts from your correspondence may appear in new editions of Lonely Planet guidebooks, online Upgrades, *Planet Talk*, *Comet*, the Postcards section of our Web site or in promotional material, so please let us know if you don't want your letter published or your name acknowledged.

Email us at: talk2us@lonelyplanet.com.au

Or write to the Lonely Planet office nearest to your permanent address:

Australia: Locked Bag 1, Footscray, VIC 3011

France: 1 rue du Dahomey, 75011 Paris

UK: 10a Spring Place, London NW5 3BH

USA: 150 Linden St, Oakland, CA 94607

Although we have tried to make the information in Upgrades as accurate as possible, the authors and publishers accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this Upgrade.