

TRAVEL

HOSPITALITY | DESTINATION

# HOLIDAY IN THE WILD

WITH KENYA OFFERING VISA-FREE TRAVEL NOW,  
THE AFRICAN WILDLIFE FANTASY HAS COME  
HOME TO ROOST.

By PALLAVI PASRICHA

Dreaming of close encounters with the Big Five in Masai Mara, watching the Great Migration on a hot air balloon or a brush with Kenya's colonial past? As you ponder choices for board and lodge, Spice picks out the cream of the crop—whether its the newest on the block, hotels where history plays mannequin or uber luxury camps in the heart of the African bush that will give the Kenyan adventure an extra edge.





### Giraffe Manor

Tuck into pancakes and waffles as the endangered Rothschild giraffes, who live in the surrounding forest sanctuary, stick their long necks in through the hotel's glass windows looking for their breakfast fix—grass pellets. Sprawling over 12 acres, the ivy covered manor house that dates back to the 1930s, lies in the Langata suburb of Nairobi. The 12 rooms (named after giraffes of course) are divided between the Historic Manor and Garden Manor and some come with giraffe feeding access. These graceful creatures may even put in an appearance at the swimming pool or keep you company at high tea on the lawns. [www.thesafaricollection.com/properties/giraffe-manor/](http://www.thesafaricollection.com/properties/giraffe-manor/)  
**Price** £963 (Approx. ₹1.02 lakh) per person per night

### Sarova Stanley →

“She arrived as a Princess and left as Queen Elizabeth II after learning of her father’s (King George VI) death when she was visiting Kenya,” Steve Kinguli, Head of Concierge at Sarova Stanley, tells me as he takes me around this iconic luxury hotel where she stayed in Nairobi. I get goosebumps. From old photographs, an ancient gramophone and telephone to the chequered black and white floor in the lobby, which was a sign of luxury back in the day, every nook and corner whispers nostalgic tales. Punkah-type ceiling fans that were installed when Princess Elizabeth was due to visit still grace the Exchange Bar—in those days men riding on bicycles made them whir. Take a heritage walk through the hotel to gather other trivia about writers, poets, presidents to Hollywood actors who have stayed here since it opened in 1902. Today, it is home to 210 rooms and suites and three restaurants. The rooftop pool has a beautiful al fresco restaurant that serves local food. After breakfast at The Thorn Tree Café, another historic spot, spend a few minutes reading handwritten messages that used to be stuck on a tree standing in the centre—the only means of communication back then. [www.sarovahotels.com/stanley-nairobi/](http://www.sarovahotels.com/stanley-nairobi/)  
**Price** US\$ 310 (Approx. ₹25,700) per person per night



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### Fairmont The Norfolk ↑

From U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to writer Ernest Hemingway, this hotel served as the hunting lodge for many luminaries. Featured in the movie *Out of Africa*, it hosted actors Meryl Streep and Robert Redford during the filming. Billed as Kenya’s first luxury refuge from the dusty countryside, it has witnessed much history since its opening on Christmas Day in 1904. It got caught in the tumult of two world wars, becoming a meeting ground for the military and

civilians and a home to soldiers. On New Year’s Eve in 1980, a bomb planted at the hotel killed about 20 people. Set amid tropical gardens in the heart of the city, the colonial style hotel has 108 rooms, 17 suites and two restaurants. The iconic Lord Delamere Terrace has been around since the hotel opened and serves international and Kenyan cuisine. At Tatu, a new menu offers a twist on Kenyan cuisine with South American flavours. [www.fairmont.com/norfolk-hotel-nairobi/](http://www.fairmont.com/norfolk-hotel-nairobi/)  
**Price** US\$348 (Approx. ₹28,800) per person per night

## NEW HOTELS

### JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge

Cross a suspension bridge across the Talek river to reach the lounge out on a wooden deck at the Marriott group’s first luxury wildlife safari camp. Twenty spacious tents with four-poster beds, canopied balconies and outdoor hot tubs offer stunning views of the river. When hungry, Sarabi restaurant offers a set menu that changes daily with the garden finding a way to your plate. Have breakfast in the bush during a safari, immerse yourself in local culture by learning traditional arts or archery, visit a local Masai village or simply vegetate by the pool. [www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/nbomj-jw-marriott-masai-mara-lodge/overview/](http://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/nbomj-jw-marriott-masai-mara-lodge/overview/)  
**Price** US\$ 1750 (Approx. ₹1.45 lakh) per person per night





## NATURE RESORTS IN AND AROUND MASAI MARA

### Ishara →

With no fences, there's no guessing what one wakes up to at this luxury safari lodge. At Ishara, it's even possible to spend the night under the stars—the first of its kind in Masai Mara. Staying at Starbed means sleeping on a king sized bed on a private observation deck. It also has river and family suites and a villa suite. Ishara has a watering hole for animals and an observation deck where you can view the hippos, hyenas and other animals from a height. For those wanting to dabble in photography or get a professional photoshoot, the lodge has tied up with Canon. <https://ishara.ke/>  
**Price** US\$1,300 (Approx. ₹1.07 lakh) per person per night



### Mahali Mzuri ↓

Lying in the path of the spectacular Great Migration when two million animals cross over from Tanzania to Masai Mara around July, location is front and centre at this safari camp. The thrill of allowing the wildebeest to be up close and personal promises the experience of a lifetime. This chic 12-tented luxury safari camp is not fenced, so wildlife has the run of the manor. Located in the private Olare Motorogi Conservancy in Masai Mara, it is one of just five camps allowed to operate here. When the game drives are done, spend time at the spa, by the infinity pool or hit the gym. Fresh greens from the garden, local food and hot water bottles tucked in bed make sure that delight rests in details. <https://mahalimzuri.virgin.com/>  
**Price** US\$ 1,650 (Approx. ₹1.35 lakh) per person per night



### Mara Plains Camp ↑

This small, exclusive glamping retreat by Relais & Chateaux, built along the Ntiakitiak river, is all about experiencing wildlife from the lens of luxury. There are seven tents including a two bedroom suite. Breakfast in the bush, cocktails by the bonfire, wine tasting sessions, candlelit dinners in the camp is what this place is all about. Located in the Olare Motorogi Conservancy, which teems with big cats and other wildlife, it is even possible to do hot air ballooning here and go for a night game drive. [www.relaischateaux.com/us/hotel/great-plains-mara/](http://www.relaischateaux.com/us/hotel/great-plains-mara/)  
**Price** US\$1,445 (Approx. ₹1.19 lakh) per person per night



### Angama Amboseli ↑

Wake up to the sight of the imposing Mount Kilimanjaro from your bed in the luxury tents at Angama Amboseli or soak in stunning views from every corner of this small lodge set against the backdrop of Africa's highest peak. The 10 tents in Kimana Sanctuary take glamping to the next level with a personalised drinks cabinet, butler's lobby, floor to ceiling doors, a private patio with a lounge area and an outdoor shower. The special viewing tower, from where you can spot the endangered Super Tusker elephants, is ideal for a picnic lunch or sundowners. Apart from game drives, opt for hot air ballooning at sunrise to watch the animals from mid-air. Don't be surprised if the resident elephants show up at the circular swimming pool. There's a lot to do at the resort—a games room, art gallery and a weaving and photography studio. Local food completes the quintessential African experience. <https://angama.com/stay/angama-amboseli/>  
**Price** US\$ 1,650 (Approx. ₹1.35 lakh) per person per night

### Kwetu Nairobi, Curio Collection by Hilton

A city hotel that offers horse riding, bird-watching, cycling and jogging—that's a first in Nairobi. It's not surprising because this new hotel by Hilton lies close to Karura Forest and its 102 rooms overlook the forested landscape. The food-focussed hotel offers five dining options. For coffee lovers, 1893 Brew Bar, conducts coffee tastings and stirs up coffee-inspired cocktails. Upepo is the high energy rooftop lounge while Zabe is a cocktail bar designed like a speakeasy. Meko is the main restaurant while Cool Waters, located by the pool, serves healthy and light bites. There's a spa and heated pool too. [www.hilton.com/en/hotels/nboknqq-kwetu-nairobi/](http://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/nboknqq-kwetu-nairobi/)  
**Price** US\$277 (Approx. ₹22,900) per person per night