Full Detailed Itinerary - Kenya: The Coolest Trip in Africa

Day 1: Nairobi

We arrive in Nairobi and are transferred to our hotel for a three-night stay in the city, which boasts the largest bird list of any city on earth!

Days 2-3: Nairobi

We visit Nairobi NP before beginning our exploration of the Great Rift Valley lakes. Highlights may include Von der Decken's Hornbill and the multicolored Red-and-yellow Barbet, or our first flamingos among many wintering Palearctic shorebirds on Lake Magadi.

Days 4-5: Mt. Kenya

Heading for the country's highest summit, our journey to Mt. Kenya could yield Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Hartlaub's Turaco, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Mountain Yellow-Warbler, and Yellow-crowned Canary. The lodge's waterhole attracts many mammals including African Buffalo. We'll spend the early mornings searching for White-starred Robin, Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Crowned Eagle, African Emerald Cuckoo, Moustached and Green Tinkerbird. A shaded riverside trail may reveal Crowned Hornbill, Mountain Wagtail, and up to eight species of sunbirds, including the stunning Tacazze Sunbird. Two nights will be spent just outside the park.

Day 6: Aberdare Mountains

In the morning, we bird the Solio Plains, where we hope to find Temminck's Courser, Jackson's Widowbird, Black-bellied Bustard, and various other grassland species. In the afternoon, we head for the Aberdares Mountains, where we overnight.

Day 7: Abadares to Nakuru

Today we explore the alpine moorland above the treeline, perhaps encountering Jackson's Spurfowl as we climb up into the highest accessible Lobelia-covered plains in Kenya. Our targets here include Moorland Chat and, with luck, we'll find the specialized and beautiful Red-tufted Sunbird. In the afternoon we drop down into the Rift Valley to Lake Nakuru where we overnight.

Day 8: Nakuru to Naivasha

We will awaken to vast flocks of flamingos, pelicans, and other waterbirds. The surrounding woodland holds Narina Trogon, Red-throated Wryneck, Arrow-marked Babbler, and African Firefinch. After lunch we venture to Naivasha, another of the Rift Valley gems.

Day 9: Naivasha to Baringo

We will spend the early morning at Lake Naivasha, sifting through vast flocks of waterbirds, and birding productive lakeside woodland. Later we drive to Lake Baringo, rich in arid-zone birds, where we search for

Hunter’s Sunbird, Three-banded Courser, Lichtenstein’s Sandgrouse, and Northern White-faced Scops-Owl. At dusk, we should see Slender-tailed Nightjars gliding along the hippo-covered shore. We overnight at Lake Baringo.

Day 10: Baringo to Kakamega

Today exemplifies birding in Kenya. We begin in the sub-desert and end up in the most eastern tract of lowland equatorial rainforest in Africa. First we visit the cliffs near Baringo, scanning for Fan-tailed Raven, Hemprich’s Hornbill, Mocking Cliff-Chat, and Bristle-crowned Starling. Later we explore the Kerio Valley, where we search rocky, scrubby hillsides for Green-backed Eremomela, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Meyer’s Parrot, White-crested Turaco, Pearl-spotted Owlet, and Black-headed Gonolek. Late in the day we arrive at Kakamega for a three-night stay.

Days 11-12: Kakamega Forest

Kakamega is full of birds and is justly famous as one of Kenya’s birding meccas. Many of Kenya’s fantastic forest birds are available only here. These include dapper Equatorial Akalats, comical Great Blue Turacos, and sensational Blue-headed Bee-eaters among other beauties like White-chinned and Banded Prinias, Jameson’s and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes, Gray-green and Luehder’s Bushshrikes, Black-billed and Vieillot’s Black Weavers, Gray-headed Nigrita, Red-headed Malimbe, and Red-headed Bluebill.

Day 13: Lake Victoria to Masai Mara

Today we head to Lake Victoria, searching for swamp specialties such as Blue-headed Coucal, Swamp Flycatcher, and the striking Papyrus Gonolek. Rice paddies may produce African Openbill, Southern Red Bishop, and Zebra Waxbill. In the afternoon, we head south to the Masai Mara National Reserve for a three-night stay.

Days 14-15: Masai Mara

The Mara, the northern portion of the magnificent Serengeti system, offers spectacular vistas over flat-topped acacia and grassy plains riddled with ungulates and other animals. We’ll spend the days in the western part of the reserve looking for East Africa’s famous Lions, Leopards, Cheetahs, African Elephants, Thomson’s and Grant’s Gazelles, and other wildlife. However, birding does not take a back seat, and we should be rewarded with views of many large raptors and vultures that gather at the kills, as well as storks, Kori Bustard, Southern Ground-Hornbill, and other species that suffer from disturbance outside these large protected areas. Other highlights may include Rufous-bellied Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, Temminck’s Courser, Sooty Chat, and Schalow’s Turaco.

Day 16: Nairobi

Today we return to Nairobi for a final night, searching for the endangered Sharpe’s Longclaw and other grassland specialties en route.

Day 17: Departure

Today we fly out on our international departures or join the Eastern Extension.

Tour Extension 1

Day 1: Nairobi to Tsavo

From the capital, we drive southeast to Tsavo National Park where we look for dry Acacia savanna species including Black-headed Lapwing, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Golden Pipit, Golden-breasted Starling, and with luck, Somali Courser and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Day 2: Taita Hills and Tsavo

In the early morning we'll visit the ancient remnant forest of the Eastern Arc in the Taita Hills, looking for Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis, and Taita White-eye. The afternoon will be spend down in the dry lowlands of Tsavo West NP.

Day 3: Tsavo to Sokoke

This is an exciting day spent driving through Tsavo East National Park, on our way to the coastal forest of Sokoke. We'll observe the remarkable transition from semi-desert to lush rainforest. Tsavo is excellent for mammals like African Savanna Elephant and Gerenuk, plus a diverse range of dry scrub birds.

Days 4-6: Sokoke

Early mornings are spent in the incomparable Sokoke Forest where we filter through bird parties looking for the three near-endemics, Sokoke Scops-Owl, Sokoke Pipit, and Kilifi Weaver. Other species here include Green Barbet, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, and Amani Sunbird. The nearby Mida Creek will provide the spectacle of hundreds of Crab Plovers and Palearctic shorebirds, as well as chances for Sooty Gull and Saunders's Tern.

Day 7: Flight to Nairobi

Departure

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