



# Nairobi

Writer Lynn Gail

When people think of Kenya, they often imagine the big five roaming freely over vast savannahs and the wildebeest migration galloping in from Tanzania. Bustling Nairobi barely gets a look in, acting only as a pit stop before animal lovers head off on safari. But scratch the surface of Kenya's capital and you're in for a treat

**8AM** Start your stopover at the feel-good Kazuri Beads & Pottery Centre in the suburb of Karen. Established by an English expat in 1975 the centre teaches single mothers to become self-sufficient. A free tour takes you through the factory and steps of production of the quality marketable crafts which have changed these women's lives. The gift shop is lined with a range of beaded jewellery and pottery with part-proceeds going back into the centre.

**9AM** In keeping with the feel-good vibe, the Giraffe Centre is a short drive from the beads. The centre protects and

rears the endangered Rothschild's giraffe, the tallest animal in the world, and reintroduces them into their natural habitat. Pushed to the edge of distinction, they now number over 300. Grab a handful of giraffe feed and receive a wet bristled mouth-to-hand kiss. There's also a self-guided forest walk for a 'getting back to nature' boost.

**10AM** Whether you're going to, or from safari, shopping is limited in the camps, so a browse through Utamaduni, one of Nairobi's top African craft shops located in Karen, is sure to fill suitcase gaps reserved for gifts. There are 18 uniquely themed rooms throughout the converted Kikuya (African house)

offering an eclectic mixture of antiques, arts and African crafts. If you're in need of a mid-morning caffeine fix, take a break in the garden restaurant.

**11AM** Experience the humbling work of David and Daphne Sheldrick at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Nairobi's National Park. Founded in 1977 by Dr Daphne Sheldrick, the park was established in memory of her husband to raise and rehabilitate orphaned elephants and rhinos. Having reintroduced over 150 ex-orphans into the wild, it's the most successful orphanage in Kenya. At 11am, the elephants' keepers introduce the orphans by age and name as they swing their trunks past a small group of visitors and potential adoptees. It's quite possible you'll fall for one and come away with an adoption certificate. Adoptive parents can watch from afar as their elephant's keeper makes online diary entries.

**12PM** After a morning soaking up Nairobi's offerings it's time to decide how you'd like to dine at Karen Blixen Coffee Garden. Blixen was a revered coffee grower and author in Nairobi. Her memoirs, *Out of Africa*, first published in 1937, was made into an award-winning film starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. So respected was she by locals, the suburb Karen is named after her. In the garden there's a choice of five distinct areas, including the plush L'Amour room, the 1901 stylish Swedo section and an English country garden, all serving tasty Kenyan fare.

## Concierge Insider

Check out Karura Forest, one of the world's largest within a city's limits. The forest is eco-friendly where you can enjoy respite from the city's bustle and get up close to nature's large leafy foliage.

- Without leaving the city, you can see wildlife at Nairobi's National Park. Private vehicles and guides in-the-know are available to go in search of Kenya's big five.
- Shop 'til you drop at The Hub Karen Mall – it's all there – fashion, entertainment and fine dining, all under one roof, in the beautiful leafy suburb of Karen.

**2PM** After eating in the garden you can learn about Blixen, the aristocrat through the Karen Blixen museum, once the farmhouse she lived in. After personal tragedy and bankruptcy of her coffee plantation she returned to Denmark where she wrote the memoir. Wander through the museum to see original props donated by the movie producer, Sydney Pollack.

**3PM** Just five minutes from the museum, bust out some moves at the cultural centre, Bomas of Kenya. Talented tribal groups perform traditional rituals and warrior dances with guests invited to join them on stage. Walk through the grounds to see Kenya's major ethnic groups represented by a number of authentic villages.

**5PM** Wind down with a coffee or cold beer at the famous Nairobi Java House in Transnational Plaza, Mama Ngina St. They reputedly serve the best brew in town.

**7PM** Time to savour one of Kenya's top restaurants, the Talisman in Karen. Infused with European and African decor and a contemporary fine dining menu that makes dinner selection a challenge, it's no surprise the restaurant was described as "the best place in town" by *New York Times' Spirited Traveler*. Advanced bookings are essential.

**9PM** End the night soaking up the vibe listening to Kenya's newest musicians, at Live at the Elephant venue in Lavington. Expect to rub shoulders with Nairobi's upmarket crowd and city trendsetters.

**11PM** With soft pillows and lavishly furnished rooms beckoning from the House of Waine in Karen, it's time for some well-earned sleep. Once a family property, the house was converted in 2004 to an 11-bedroom boutique hotel to encapsulate the spirit of modern Africa, offering a home away from home. 🌿



OPPOSITE PAGE: Visit the Giraffe Centre to see the endangered Rothschild's giraffe. THIS PAGE: David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Nairobi's National Park is the most successful orphanage for elephants in Kenya