

## **WHAT ARE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TOURISM IN KENYA AND HOW ARE THESE EFFECTS BEING MANAGED?**

People visit Kenya for a variety of reasons; the warm weather, the sandy beaches, the beautiful scenery, the film out of Africa, but most commonly, the wildlife seen on safari in one of the many game parks. Kenya has something for everyone as it could be anywhere in the world. It has the warm weather of any other equatorial country, the beaches of the Caribbean, the mountains of the Himalayas and the wildlife in South Africa. Kenya has everything.

On safari people can see lions, elephants, giraffes, rhinos, hippos, and more common animals such as buffalo, impala and zebra. There are forty game parks in Kenya in which some or all of these animals can be seen. You can experience the game parks and their animals from hot air balloons for a different view on the wildlife. The Masai Mara game reserve is 600 square miles of semi-wild animals living in their natural habitat. For most people, going on safari in Kenya is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The beaches on the east side of Kenya have lots of wildlife. You can snorkel or dive amongst many different types of fish on the coral reefs. Mombassa Marine Park is a preserved coral reef that tourists go and see. There is also lots of sailing on the sea. On shore you can have camel rides, swim in the swimming pools or walk around local towns seeing the cultural side of Kenya.

Kenya can offer some of the best safari and game parks, some of the best sandy sunny beaches and some of the best sunshine. Therefore, it isn't surprising that in the last year, the estimated number of tourists visiting Kenya was about two million going up 22%.

Tourism has a massive impact on Kenya. It includes ruined landscapes (from where the natural vegetation has been cleared to build large hotels), scared animals (where people drive too close), angry Kenyans (where the tourists' clothes offend the local culture or religion), eroded roads (where people have gone off road to look at the animals), polluted lakes (where people dump rubbish into the lake) and damaged coral reefs (where people stand on the coral and kill it). However there are some good impacts tourism has on Kenya. Local villagers can sell souvenirs to tourists for a fair amount of money, buildings can be repaired or preserved, lots of people get jobs and money can be spent developing cities like Nairobi and Mombassa.

Kenya is dependant on tourism as it employs about 500,000 people a year. Without tourism these people would be jobless and probably homeless. The money from tourism has helped fund building schools and putting in clean water supplies. This means that some Kenyan children are getting a proper education. In the Masai Mara game reserve tourists pay money to visit Masai people in their villages. The Masai people sell things to tourists meaning that they receive money. In Lamu tourists pay extra money to visit. This allows the buildings to be looked after in the traditional Lamu way. Without tourism lots of people wouldn't have a job and lots of Kenyan children wouldn't get an education. Money from tourism can go towards building and repairing schools, hospitals, roads, houses and many more things to help the Kenyan people. It is estimated that 20% of all of Kenya's wealth comes from tourism. Kenya is still relatively poor so, if the tourism money was taken away, Kenya would be even poorer. This would mean it would get into more debt with other richer countries.

Tourism severely damages the environment in Kenya. Tourists can scare animals, damage the coral reefs and hotels are being built on what used to be a grassy savannah. The roads and soil are getting eroded, lagoons are being polluted and sewage is being dumped into the sea.

Hot air balloon rides are very popular in the game reserves, but the noise of the burners can scare the animals. In coastal areas such as Mombassa, people go on boat tours to snorkel and swim in the warm, clear water. Here, they can look at the hundreds of different types of coral and fish. The coral gets damaged and can die because the tourists touch and stand on the delicate sea bed. In the game reserves, the minibus drivers get better tips if they get really close to the animals. Because of this, the drivers often go off road frightening the animals. Going off road also means that the grass turns into dust, destroying the natural habitat of the animals. In the rainy season these dusty patches turn into mud where minibuses get stuck. People then avoid these muddy patches causing even more mud. This is an ever lasting problem. The natural landscape is being cleared for big 5 star hotels to be built. This forces the animals to move to less pleasant areas of the game reserves.

Tourism also has a bad effect on the Kenyan people. The tourists can offend Kenyan people from the clothes they wear on holiday. In Kenya, most of the people are Muslim where the women completely cover their bodies up. Tourists in Kenya generally wear short tops, shorts, miniskirts or swim wear. Therefore, it is insulting to the Kenyans. Mass tourism also puts a lot of pressure on Kenyans who work in the tourism industry. When there are too many tourists, these workers have to cope

with all of these extra people asking questions. Most jobs in the rest of Kenya are in the big cities where the work is poorly paid and unskilled. Therefore, lots of Kenyans want to work in tourism where there is normally a good chance of tips from the foreigners. Therefore, there aren't enough jobs for everyone who wants one. When tourists visit Kenya they bring drugs into the country. There has been an increase in drugs, crime and HIV and AIDS since the first tourists arrived in Kenya. Near the Maasai Mara game reserve the traditional Maasai people have had to move out of the area they have been living in for generations. They have put up a fence around their land blocking the migration route of the animals. When animals do get into their land they normally stop to eat the crops the Maasai villagers have been growing. This makes the Maasai people angry so they shoot the animals.

The Kenyan government is trying to reduce these problems. They are using anti-harassment patrols in the game reserves that go around looking for any bus that is too close to the animals (less than 25 metres) or a bus that is off-road. These are both illegal and the company in charge of the bus gets a fine. The government is also trying to stop overcrowding in the bigger reserves by encouraging tourists to go to the smaller less crowded game parks. The Kenyan government has also banned people from permanently living in the game parks. The only people allowed to live inside the parks are the lodge workers. The government has also tried to keep the Maasai people happy by allocating them a share of all the money Kenya receives from tourism. They have also set up wildlife conservation areas where certain types of animals live to protect them. These are big sanctuaries that tourists can pay to visit.

Some of these management schemes are working such as no-one is allowed to live in the game parks. This is a sustainable idea as the people that have to be there are allowed to stay but no-one else is. The anti-harassment patrols are sustainable as they will keep the animals safe in the future and they will keep the animals happy. All of the other ideas are unsustainable. The conservation areas have to move with the animals. The scheme that gives money to the Maasai people isn't sustainable as the Maasai people will eventually want more money meaning the government has to give away money that could be spent on other things like water supplies and schools. Eventually tourists will stop going to Kenya so then, the Maasai people wouldn't receive any money so this idea isn't sustainable. By encouraging people to go to the smaller parks, these parks will get over crowded and the ones that are popular at the moment will become really empty.

So what can the Kenyan government do to keep the tourists visiting Kenya? I think they should restrict the number of people that enter the reserves to stop the problem of overcrowding. So the Maasai people still get given money, I would increase the prices a bit to help the traditional Kenyans survive in their traditional villages. People should have to pay to visit the Maasai villages so the villagers can buy food, get an education and get clean, safe water. There are problems that can't be stopped in Kenya such as the environment getting polluted as this is a worldwide problem.

Some of the problems that Kenya has got from tourism aren't deliberate and accidental but some are caused by people wanting to ruin Kenya's landscape and environment. Some of these problems need to stop such as the drugs but the Kenyan government needs help to make Kenya continue to be a popular tourist destination.