

Nairobi



Who's afraid of big bad Nairobi? Quite a lot of people – the city's reputation precedes it, so much so that most visitors dive in and out as quickly as possible. Unsurprising perhaps, as it's true that Kenya's capital requires more big-city common sense than most, and it's hard not to feel a little nervous once the shutters come down and the streets empty after dark.

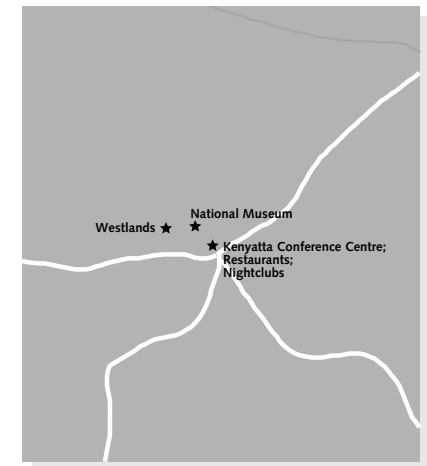
However, it's easy enough to sidestep the worst dangers here, and there's no reason why a streetwise traveller can't enjoy a stay here. In terms of facilities, the city has more going for it than any other Kenyan conurbation: there's a comprehensive range of shops, the matatus are the funkiest around, most safari companies are based here, the cinemas screen recent movies, the cultural scene is thriving, the nightlife is unbridled and it's virtually the only place in the country where you can get a truly varied diet. Even café culture has reached the downtown area, adding a soupçon of sophistication to the supposed urban badlands.

Even if the inner city does terrify you, it's easy to get out into the suburbs, where you can relax with the large local expat community and make the most of even more top-rank amenities, award-winning restaurants and friendly bars.

In fact, whatever its shortcomings, we actually like Nairobi. Take the time to look beyond the safari offices and supermarkets, throw yourself into the vibrant entertainment scene and, who knows, you might just come to agree.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Broadening your appreciation of all things cultural and environmental at the **National Museum** (p104)
- Surveying the cityscape from the grand heights of the **Kenyatta Conference Centre** (p106)
- Digging in to the country's most varied cuisine scene at any of Nairobi's posh **restaurants** (p111)
- Treating yourself to a **shopping spree** (p119), **feeding frenzy** (p111) or **boozy bender** (p117)
- Acclimatising yourself to Tusker and Kiswahili rap at one of the city's all-night **clubs** (p117)
- The smug feeling of surviving a stay here!



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 020

■ POPULATION: 2.9 MILLION

■ AREA: 680 SQ KM

HISTORY

As you might guess from all the tower blocks, Nairobi is a completely modern creation and almost everything here has been built in the last 100 years. Until the 1890s the whole area was just an isolated swamp, but as the rails of the East Africa railway fell into place, a depot was established on the edge of a small stream known to the Maasai as *uaso nairobi* (cold water). Nairobi quickly developed into the administrative nerve-centre of the Uganda Railway, and in 1901 the capital of the British Protectorate was moved here from Mombasa to allow more effective control of the interior.

Even when the first permanent buildings were constructed, Nairobi remained a real frontier town, with rhinos and lions freely roaming the streets, and lines of iron-roofed bungalows stretching ignominiously across the plain. However, once the railway was up and running, wealth began to flow into the city. The colonial government built some grand hotels to accommodate the first tourists to Kenya – big-game hunters, lured by the attraction of shooting the country's almost naively tame wildlife. Sadly almost all of the colonial-era buildings were replaced by bland modern office buildings following *uhuru* (independence) in 1963.

As East Africa's largest city and the region's main transport hub, Nairobi is situated firmly at the centre of national life and politics, a position that did the city no favours in 1998, when the US embassy on Moi Ave was blown up by militants linked to Osama bin Laden, killing more than 200 Kenyans. Four suspects were convicted but the lenient sentences and meagre compensation angered many locals, creating a resentment that still lingers in certain quarters.

ORIENTATION

The compact city centre is bounded by Uhuru Hwy, Haile Selassie Ave, Tom Mboya St and University Way. Northeast of the centre, on the eastern side of Tom Mboya St, is the rougher River Rd area, where most cheap hotels and bus offices are found; this district has a bad reputation for robbery, so be careful.

Various suburbs surround the downtown area. Southwest of the centre, beyond Uhuru and Central Parks, are Nairobi Hill, Milimani and Hurlingham, with several hos-

tels, campsites and midrange hotels. Further out are Wilson Airport, Nairobi National Park and the expat enclaves of Langata and Karen (see p124). The country's main airport, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, is southeast of the centre.

North of the centre you will find the expat-dominated suburbs of Westlands and Parklands, home to large European and Indian communities. The suburbs further out, such as Kibera, Kayole and Githurai, are mainly poverty-stricken slums with terrible reputations for crime, violence and carjacking, and are best avoided.

Maps

For a rudimentary guide to the downtown area, many hotels and travel companies give out free promotional maps. For more detailed coverage, the best option is the *City of Nairobi: Map & Guide* produced by Survey of Kenya. It covers the suburbs and has a detailed map of the central area, but it's difficult to get. Also adequate, with some hotels and places of interest marked, is the 1:15,000 *Map Guide of Nairobi City Centre* (KSh200) published by Interland Maps.

Much better, though bulkier, is *Nairobi AtoZ* (KSh510) by RW Moss. Like the equivalents in other countries, the AtoZ covers the whole city in detail.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

For newspapers and magazines, there are dozens of street vendors and hawkers selling current editions of the daily papers and old editions of Western publications.

Book Villa (Map pp102-3; ☎ 337890; Standard St) New, discounted and second-hand books. Also runs a borrowing scheme.

Bookpoint (Map pp102-3; ☎ 211156; Moi Ave)

Bookstop (☎ 714547; Yaya Centre, Hurlingham)

Text Book Centre Westlands (Map p104; ☎ 3747405; Sarit Centre); Kijabe St (Map pp98-9; ☎ 330340) One of the best bookshops in East Africa. The sister shop on Kijabe St isn't as big or well stocked.

Westland Sundries Bookshop Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 212776; New Stanley Hotel, Kenyatta Ave); Westlands (Map p104; ☎ 446406; Ring Rd Westlands)

Camping Equipment

Atul's (Map pp102-3; ☎ 225935; Biashara St) Hires out everything from sleeping bags to folding toilet seats – see p72.

NAIROBI IN...

Two Days

While most people use Nairobi as a base rather than a destination in its own right, there's still plenty to do if you find yourself with a day or two to kill. Start at the **National Museum** (p104), then head downtown later for **coffee** (p116), some **Chinese** (p113) and a **movie** (p118).

On the second day you can view the city from the **Kenyatta Conference Centre** (p106) and browse contemporary art at the **National Archives** (p105). In the evening, **Carnivore** (p129) in Karen is a must, or you can eat posh at **Alan Bobbé's Bistro** (p114) and dance dirty at **Simmers** (p118) or the infamous **New Florida** (p117).

Four Days

With another two days, you can also venture out towards the suburbs. Westlands has plenty of good eating between the shops at the **Sarit Centre** (p115) and Kenya's best Indian restaurant, **Haandi** (p112), not to mention the friendly **Gypsy's Bar** (p117) and massive club **Pavement** (p117).

For your final 24 hours, breakfast at the **Pasara Café** (p111), take a **swim** (p106), hang at the **Village Market** (p119) and finish at **Casablanca** (p116) for the city's hippest Moroccan food and drinks.

Kenya Canvas Ltd (Map pp102-3; ☎ 343262; Muindi Mbingu St)

X-treme Outdoors (☎ 272224; www.xtreme-kenya.com; Yaya Centre, Hurlingham)

Clubs & Societies

East African Wildlife Society (☎ 574145; www.eawildlife.org; Riarua Rd, Kilimani, PO Box 20110) This society is at the forefront of conservation efforts in East Africa. Annual subscription costs US\$65 for overseas members, including subscription to the bimonthly *Swara* magazine.

Friends of Nairobi National Park (Fonnap; ☎ 500622; Kenya Wildlife Service Headquarters, Langata Rd, PO Box 42076) The society aims to protect migration routes between the Masai Mara and the national park. Annual membership is US\$30. Meetings are on the first Sunday of every month at the main gate of Nairobi National Park.

Mountain Club of Kenya (MCK; ☎ 602330; www.mck.or.ke; Wilson Airport, PO Box 45741) The club meets at 8pm every Tuesday at the clubhouse at Wilson Airport (Map p126). Members organise frequent climbing and trekking weekends around the country and have a huge pool of technical knowledge about climbing in Kenya. Overseas membership costs US\$30.

Nature Kenya (☎ 3749957; www.naturekenya.org; National Museum, PO Box 44486) Located just off Museum Hill Rd, it runs a variety of local outings – see p106. Annual membership is US\$25.

Cultural Centres

All the foreign cultural organisations have libraries (p99) open to the public.

Alliance Française (Map pp98-9; ☎ 340054; www.alliancefrnairobi.org; cnr Monrovia & Loita Sts;

☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Has the best events program of all the centres, showcasing Kenyan and African performing arts.

British Council (Map pp98-9; ☎ 334855; www.britishcouncil.org/kenya; Upper Hill Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

Cultural Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Map pp98-9; ☎ 214352; Ambank House, Monrovia St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat) Hosts exhibitions and displays on Islam.

Goethe Institute (Map pp98-9; ☎ 224640; www.goethe.de/nairobi; Maendeleo House, cnr Monrovia & Loita Sts; ☎ 10am-12.30pm Thu-Tue, 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

Japan Information & Culture Centre (Map pp98-9; ☎ 340520; www.ke.emb-japan.go.jp; ICEA Bldg, Kenyatta Ave; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Free video shows and Japanese cinema screenings.

Nairobi Cultural Institute (Map pp98-9; ☎ 569205; Ngong Rd) Holds lectures and other functions of local cultural interest.

Emergency

AAR Health Services (Map pp98-9; ☎ 717376; Fourth Ngong Ave)

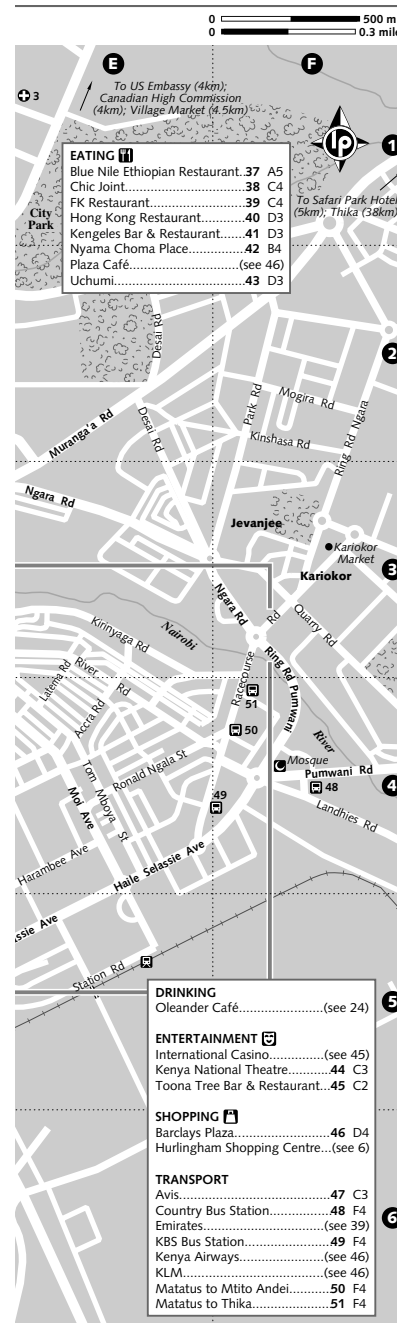
Aga Khan Hospital (Map pp98-9; ☎ 3662000; Third Parklands Ave) A reliable hospital with a 24-hour casualty section.

Amref flying-doctor service (☎ 502699)

Emergency services (☎ 999) The national emergency number for to call for fire, police and ambulance assistance. A word of warning, though – don't rely on their prompt arrival.

Police (☎ 240000) For less urgent police business.

St John's Ambulance (☎ 2100000)



Internet Access

There are literally hundreds of Internet cafés in downtown Nairobi, most of them tucked away in anonymous office buildings in the town centre. Connection speed is usually pretty good, though machine quality varies wildly.

AGX (Map pp98-9; www.agxinternetcafes.com; Barclays Plaza, Loita St; per min KSh1; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Best connections in town, with a choice of browsers.

Avant Garde e-centre (Map pp102-3; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; per min KSh1.50; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun)

Capital Realtime (Map pp102-3; ☎ 247900; Lonhro House, Standard St; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat)

Dallas Communications (Map pp102-3; ☎ 223655; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St; per min KSh1)

EasySurf (Map p104; ☎ 3745418; http://easysurfonline.com; Sarit Centre, Westlands; per min KSh4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

Laundry

Laundries are few and far between in Nairobi. Most people rely on the laundry services offered by the majority of hotels, though these are priced by the item and can work out pretty expensive. The average cost for the following places is around KSh150 per kilogram for a standard overnight service wash.

Lavage Laundrette & Dry Cleaners (Map p104; ☎ 4444111; Mpaka Rd, Westlands) One of the few laundrettes in Nairobi.

White Rose Drycleaners (Map pp102-3; ☎ 227724; Kenyatta Ave)

Libraries

Many of Nairobi's cultural centres (p97) also have libraries available to the public.

Kenya National Library (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2725550; www.knls.or.ke; Ngong Rd; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, to 4pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sat)

McMillan Memorial Library (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221844; Banda St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat) A smaller collection in a lovely colonial-era building.

Medical Services

Nairobi has plenty of healthcare facilities used to dealing with travellers and expats. Avoid the Kenyatta National Hospital (Map pp98-9) because, although it's free, stretched resources mean you may come out with something worse than what you went in with.

AAR Health Services (Map pp98-9; ☎ 715319; Williamson House, Fourth Ngong Ave) Westlands (Map p104; ☎ 446201; Sarit Centre) Probably the best of a number of private ambulance and emergency air- evacuation companies (see p358). It also runs a private clinic in Westlands.

Acacia Medical Centre (Map pp102-3; ☎ 212200; info@acaciamed.co.ke; ICEA Bldg, Kenyatta Ave; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat)

Aga Khan Hospital (Map pp98-9; ☎ 740000; Third Parklands Ave; ☎ 24hr)

KAM Pharmacy (Map pp102-3; ☎ 251700; Executive Tower, IPS Bldg, Kimathi St) A one-stop shop for medical treatment, with a pharmacy, doctor's surgery and laboratory.

Medical Services Surgery (Map pp102-3; ☎ 317625; Bruce House, Standard St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Nairobi Hospital (Map pp98-9; ☎ 722160; off Argwings Khodek Rd)

Transcom Medical Centre (Map pp102-3; ☎ 217564; Tsavo Rd)

Money

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport has several exchange counters in the baggage reclaim area and a **Bardays Bank** (☎ 24hr) with ATM outside in the arrivals hall.

There are Barclays branches with guarded ATMs on Mama Ngina St (Map pp102-3), Muindi Mbingu St (Map pp102-3) and on the corner of Kenyatta and Moi Aves (Map pp102-3). There are also branches in the Sarit Centre (Map p104) and on Woodvale Grove (Map p104) in Westlands and the Yaya Centre in Hurlingham.

The other big bank is Standard Chartered Bank, which has numerous downtown branches.

Foreign-exchange bureaux offer slightly better rates for cash. There are dozens of options in the town centre, so it's worth strolling around to see who is currently offering the best deal.

American Express (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222906; Hilton Hotel, Mama Ngina St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Handles travellers cheques and looks after mail for clients (see p362).

Cosmos Forex (Map pp102-3; ☎ 250582; Rehema House, Standard St)

Goldfield Forex (Map pp102-3; ☎ 244554; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St)

Mayfair Forex (Map pp102-3; ☎ 226212; Uganda House, Standard St)

Postbank (Map pp102-3; 13 Kenyatta Ave) For Western Union money transfers.

Travellers Forex Bureau (Map p104; ☎ 447204; The Mall, Westlands)

Photography Equipment

Shops selling and developing film are common across Nairobi (see p361) and most can also do instant passport-size photographs. Processing costs KSh410 to KSh690 for a 36-exposure film, depending on the print size, and digital printing is becoming more common, starting at around KSh30 per picture.

Stocks of film are generally pretty poor outside Nairobi so stock up here before you go on safari. There are plenty more camera shops on Mama Ngina St.

Elite Camera House (Map pp102-3; ☎ 224521; Kimathi St) Reductions for bulk purchases.

Expo Camera Centre Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 226846; info@expo.co.ke; Mama Ngina St); Westlands (Map p104; ☎ 441253; Mpaka Rd) Hires out SLR cameras and lenses.

Fedha Foto Studio (Map pp102-3; ☎ 220515; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St)

Fotoland (Map pp102-3; ☎ 343042; Moi Ave)

Post

The vast **main post office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 243434; Kenyatta Ave; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is a well-organised edifice close to Uhuru Park. There's a very basic poste-restante service in the same office as the parcel desk, where you'll need to bring your parcels so the contents can be examined. Bring a roll of parcel-wrapping paper and parcel tape so you can seal the package once it's been inspected – you can buy these at **Seal Honey** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 216376; 27 Kenyatta Ave). Around the back of the main building is the **EMS office** (☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat), for courier deliveries (see p362), and there's a Telkom Kenya office upstairs.

If you just want stamps, there are post offices on Haile Selassie Ave (Map pp102-3), Moi Ave (Map pp102-3) and Tom Mboya St (Map pp102-3), and in the Sarit Centre (Map p104) and on Mpaka Rd (Map p104) in Westlands. The Moi Ave office is a good place to send parcels – packing boxes are available for KSh50 to KSh100.

DHL Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 534988; www.dhl.co.ke; International House, Mama Ngina St); Westlands (Map p104; ☎ 6925120; Sarit Centre) Reliable private courier.

Telephone & Fax

Public phones are common in Nairobi but many just don't work. **Telkom Kenya** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 232000; Haile Selassie Ave; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has dozens of payphones

and you can buy phonecards. Many stands downtown sell Telkom Kenya phonecards and top-up cards for prepaid mobile phones (see p365).

Alternatively, there are numerous private agencies in the centre of town offering international telephone services. Typical charges are KSh150 to KSh200 per minute to almost anywhere in the world.

Lazards (Map pp102-3; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave; ☎ 7am-10pm; ☎) International phone calls from as little as KSh10 per minute to North America or Europe and international faxes from KSh40 per page. You may need ID to get into the building.

Toilets

It may come as a shock to regular African travellers, but Nairobi now has a handful of manned public toilets around the downtown area offering flush toilets with a base level of hygiene. You'll pay about KSh5 to use them. Some central shopping centres, such as Kenya Cinema Plaza, have free public conveniences.

Tourist Information

Despite the many safari companies with signs saying 'Tourist Information', there is still no official tourist office in Nairobi. For events and other listings you'll have to check the local newspapers or glean what you can from a handful of magazines, which take a bit of effort to hunt down. *Go Places* (free) and the *Going Out Guide* (KSh150) are probably the most widespread, available from travel agents, airline offices and some hotels.

The vast noticeboards found at the **Sarit Centre** (Map p104; Westlands) and **Yaya Centre** (Hurlingham) are good places to look if you're trying to find local information. All sorts of things are advertised here, including language courses, vehicles for sale and houses for rent.

Travel Agencies

Bunson Travel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221992; www.bunsonkenya.com; Pan-African Insurance Bldg, Standard St) A good upmarket operator with offices around Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

Flight Centres (Map pp102-3; ☎ 210024; Lakhamsi House, Bishara St) This company has been doing discounted air tickets for years and is totally switched on to the backpacker market. It also acts as a broker for camping safaris and runs overland trips across Africa.

Let's Go Travel Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 340331; www.lets-go-travel.net; Caxton House, Standard St); Westlands (☎ 447151; ABC Place, Waiyaki Way); Karen (Map p125; ☎ 882505; Karen shopping centre) Also highly recommended, Let's Go is very good for flights, safaris and pretty much anything else you might need. It publishes an excellent price list of hotels, lodges, camps and bandas (huts) in Kenya (also in searchable form on its website), and acts as main booking agent for many off-the-beaten-track and unusual options.

Tropical Winds (Map pp98-9; ☎ 341939; www.tropical-winds.com; Barclays Plaza, Loita St) Nairobi's STA Travel representative.

Visa Extensions

Immigration office (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222022; Nyayo House, nr Kenyatta Ave & Uhuru Hwy; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Visa extensions (see p366) can be obtained at this office, round the side of Nairobi's once-feared main administrative building.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

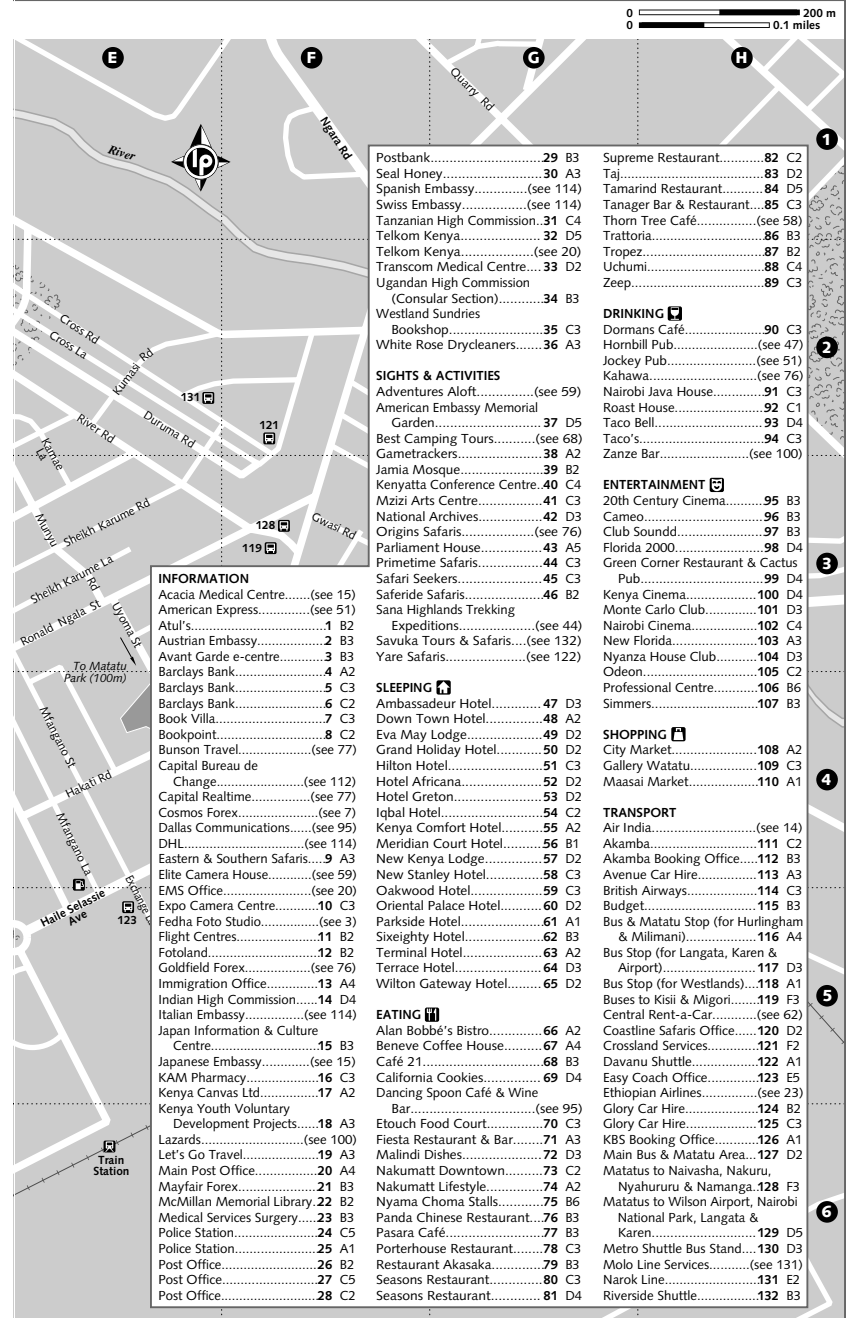
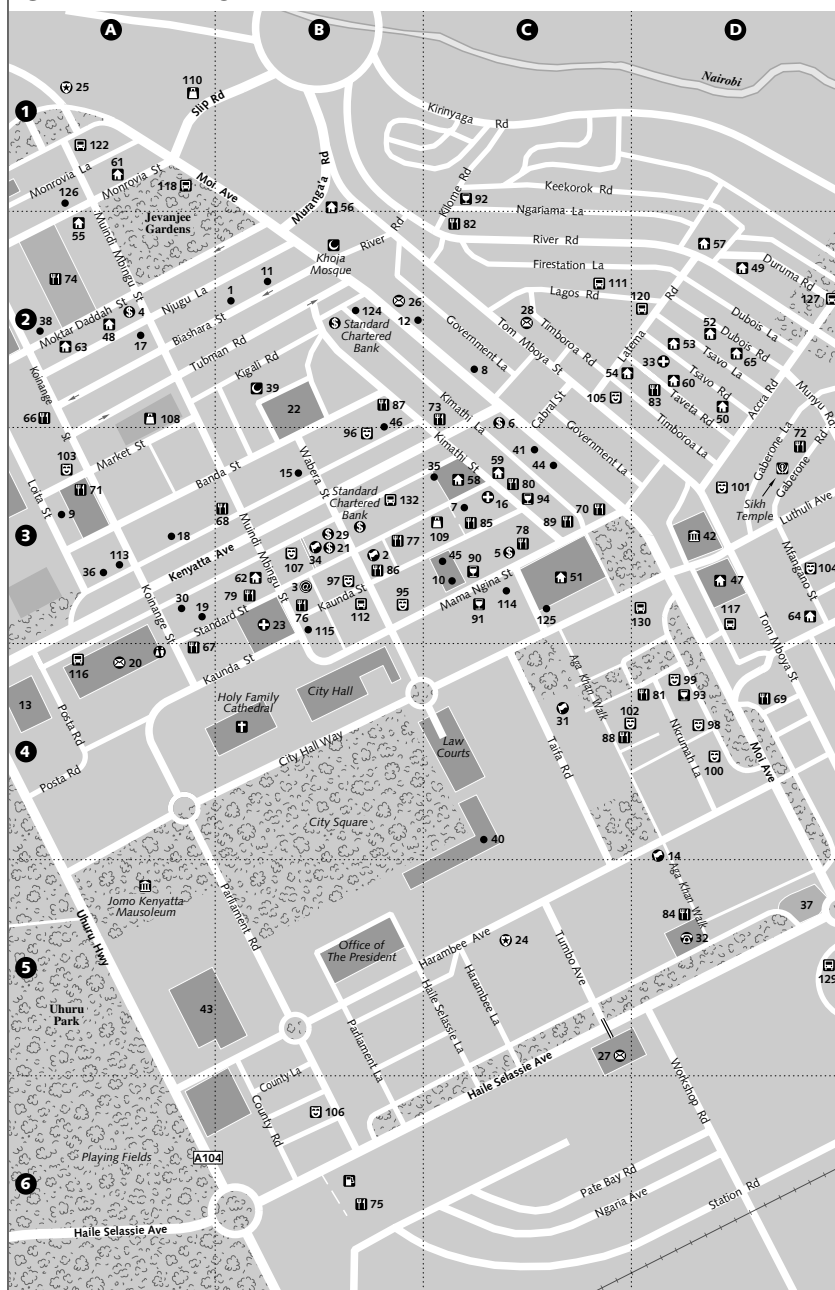
Prospective first-time visitors to Nairobi are usually understandably daunted by the city's unenviable reputation – 'Nairobi', as it is often called by residents, is commonly regarded as the most dangerous city in Africa, beating stiff competition from Johannesburg and Lagos. Carjacking, robbery and violence are daily occurrences, as the warning signs all round town indicate, and the underlying social ills behind them are unlikely to disappear in the near future.

However, the majority of problems happen in the slums, far from the main tourist zones. The downtown area bound by Kenyatta Ave, Moi Ave, Haile Selassie Ave and Uhuru Hwy is unthreatening and comparatively trouble-free as long as you use a bit of common sense, and there are plenty of *askaris* (security guards) around at night. Stay alert and you should encounter nothing worse than a few persistent safari touts and the odd wannabe con artist.

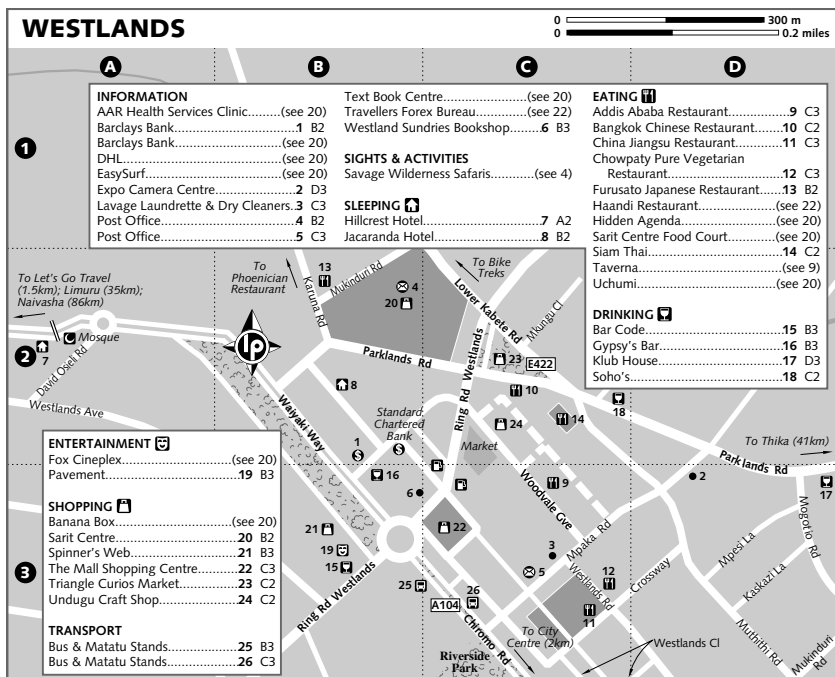
Even around the centre, though, there are places to watch out for: danger zones include the area around Latema and River Rds, a hotspot for petty theft, and Uhuru Park, which tends to accumulate all kinds of dodgy characters.

Once the shops have shut, the streets empty rapidly and the whole city takes on a deserted and slightly sinister air – mugging is a risk anywhere after dark. Take a taxi, even if you're only going a few blocks. This

CENTRAL NAIROBI



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will also keep you safe from the attentions of Nairobi's street prostitutes, who flood into town in force after sunset.

Scams

Nairobi's active handful of confidence tricksters seem to have relied on the same old stories for years, and it's generally easy to spot the spiel once you've heard it a couple of times. The usual tactic is to accost you in the street and try and strike up a conversation about current affairs in your country – keep walking; it's probably the most effective way of avoiding the inevitable follow-up.

Apart from the regular safari rip-offs, which can be minimised simply by doing your research, the local speciality is the Sudanese refugee scam (see boxed text opposite).

SIGHTS

There are very few attractions worthy of the name in Nairobi itself, and the most interesting places are out in the suburbs (see p123). That said, the handful of museums and cultural institutions scattered around

the city can easily occupy a spare day, particularly if you're interested in contemporary Kenyan art.

National Museum

A grand alternative to the dozens of poky little local museums around the country, Kenya's **National Museum** (Map pp98-9; ☎ 742131; www.museums.or.ke; Museum Rd; adult/child KSh200/100; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) is housed in an imposing building amid lush grounds just outside the centre, and has a good range of cultural and natural history exhibits. The gardens are peppered with random sculptures, including a large dinosaur, and the inner courtyard has a life-size fibreglass model of pachyderm celebrity Ahmed, the massive elephant who became a symbol of Kenya at the height of the 1980s poaching crisis and was placed under 24-hour guard by Jomo Kenyatta.

Inside, one of the major attractions is the Peoples of Kenya series of tribal portraits by *Born Free* author Joy Adamson, a fantastic record of the country's cultural diversity. Upstairs are huge galleries of stuffed birds (at least 900 specimens) and animals, and

good ethnographical displays on the various Kenyan tribal groups. Downstairs, there are recreations of rock art from Tanzania, an exhibition of hominid fossils from Lake Turkana and various geological displays. The outlying gallery hosts temporary exhibits, covering topics such as Swahili and Asian culture in Kenya and wildlife in the Masai Mara. Volunteer guides offer tours in English, Dutch and French; it's worth booking them in advance. There's no charge for their services, but a donation to the museum is appropriate.

The 1st floor also contains the excellent **Gallery of Contemporary East African Art**, where local artists exhibit their work; as all the items are for sale the displays change regularly, and it's always an interesting cross-section of the contemporary scene. For a look at the artists in action, the **Kuona Trust**, a nonprofit art studio where Kenyan artists can gather and express themselves, is just by the museum. You're welcome to wander around but ask before taking photos.

In the grounds, there's a recreated **Kikuyu homestead** and a **snake park** (adult/child KSh200/100; ☎ 9.30am-6pm), where you can see black mambas, some sad-looking crocodiles and giant *dudus* (creepy crawlies – see p52). The guided **nature trail** nearby isn't particularly exciting, being so close to two main roads.

National Archives

Right in the bustling heart of Nairobi is the distinctive **National Archives** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 749341; Moi Ave; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), the 'Memory of the Nation', a vast collection of documents and reference material housed in the fine former Bank of India building. It's mainly used by students and researchers, but the ground-floor atrium and gallery display an eclectic selection of contemporary art, historical photos of Nairobi, cultural artefacts, furniture and tribal objects, giving casual visitors a somewhat scattergun glimpse of East African heritage.

Railway Museum

You don't have to don an anorak to appreciate this interesting little **museum** (Map pp98-9; Station Rd; adult/child/student KSh200/20/100; ☎ 8.15am-4.45pm). The main collection is housed in an old railway building, and consists of relics from the East African Railway. There are train and ship models, photographs, tableware and oddities from the history of the railway, such as the Engine Seat that allowed visiting dignitaries like Theodore Roosevelt to take pot shots at unsuspecting wildlife from the front of the train.

In the grounds are dozens of fading locomotives in various states of disrepair, dating from the steam days to independence (which puts the newer trains on a par with those

KHARTOUM CHARACTERS

One classic Nairobi con trick that you'll almost certainly be subjected to is the Sudanese refugee story, commonly combined with the equally well-worn university scam. In this gambit it turns out that your interlocutor has totally coincidentally just won a scholarship to a university in your country (if you're British it'll be Reading, or Edmontone for Canadians – the amount of research they do is quite astounding) and would just love to sit down and have a chat with you about life there. Then at some point you'll get the confidential lowering of the voice and the Sudanese portion of the story kicks in with 'You know, I am not from here...', leading into an epic tale of woe that involves them having walked barefoot all the way from Juba to flee the civil war.

Of course once you've shown due sympathy they'll come to the crux of the matter: they have to get to Dar es Salaam to confirm their scholarship and fly out for their studies, and all they need is KSh1700 to get there, not that they could ask you, their new friend, for that much money, just anything you could spare to help them out. Giving money or anything else is likely to result in you being 'arrested' by fake policemen and forced to pay an exorbitant fine. In some cases these accomplices get so into their role that they beat up the original conman for the sake of authenticity, which is obviously quite intimidating!

As with all these type of scams, the best way of avoiding real trouble is to be very choosy in who you talk to and decline any offers or invitations made on the street. After a day or two in Nairobi you'll quickly learn to spot a budding 'refugee', especially the third time the same guy approaches you...

still being used on the Nairobi to Mombasa line). You can walk around the carriages at your leisure. At the back of the compound is the steam train used in the movie *Out of Africa*. It's a fascinating introduction to this important piece of colonial history.

The museum is reached by a long lane beside the train station, or you can cut across the vacant land next to the Shell petrol station on Haile Selassie Ave.

Parliament House

If you fancy a look at how democracy works in Kenya, it's possible to obtain a permit for a seat in the public gallery at **parliament house** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221291; Parliament Rd) – just remember, applause is strictly forbidden! If parliament is out of session, you can tour the buildings by arrangement with the sergeant-at-arms.

Kenyatta Conference Centre

Towering over City Square, Nairobi's signature building (Map pp102-3) was designed as a fusion of modern and traditional African styles, though the distinctive saucer tower looks a little dated next to some of the city's flashier glass edifices. Staff will accompany you up to the **viewing platform** (adult/child KSh400/200) and helipad on the roof for wonderful views over Nairobi. The sightline goes all the way to the suburbs, and on clear days you can see aircraft coming in to land over the Nairobi National Park. You're allowed to take photographs from the viewing level but not elsewhere in the building. Access may be restricted during events and conferences.

Jamia Mosque

Nairobi's main **mosque** (Map pp102-3; Banda St) is a lovely building in typical Arabic Muslim style, with all the domes, marble and Quranic inscriptions you'd expect from an important Islamic site, and the traditional row of shops down one side to provide rental income for its upkeep. Sadly non-Muslims are very rarely allowed to enter, but you can happily examine the appealing exterior from the street.

American Embassy Memorial Garden

This well-tended walled **garden** (Map pp102-3; Moi Ave; admission KSh20; ☎ 8am-8pm) occupies the former site of the American Embassy, which

was destroyed by the terrorist bombings of 1998 (see p32). It's a lovely little spot despite being right between Moi and Haile Selassie Aves; the entrance fee pays for maintenance and keeps out any undesirables, but also puts it beyond the reach of many ordinary Kenyans, provoking some understandable anger among locals.

Arts Centres

The **Go-Down Arts Centre** (☎ 5552227; Dunga Rd), a converted warehouse in the Industrial Area, contains ten separate art studios and is rapidly becoming a hub for Nairobi's burgeoning arts scene, bringing together visual and performing arts with regular exhibitions, shows, workshops and open cultural nights.

The **Mzizi Arts Centre** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 574372; Sonalux House, Moi Ave), a smaller centre in a central office building, is a good place to view contemporary Kenyan art, craft, dance, literature and performance art. 'Cultural Personality Evenings', when Kenyan cultural stars give lectures, and *sigana* performances are held here (see p40 for more information on the performing arts).

Art Galleries

There are few public art galleries in Nairobi, but plenty of shops sell work by local artists and they welcome browsers.

In Upper Hill, the impressive-sounding **Ramoma Rahimtulla Museum of Modern Art** (Map pp98-9; ☎ 729181; Rahimtulla Tower, Upper Hill Rd) is actually a small gallery situated in a large skyscraper, promoting and selling work by Kenyan artists.

Of the private galleries, the longest established is the central **Gallery Watatu** (p119), which has regular exhibitions and a good permanent display.

Work by many contemporary Kenyan and African artists is often displayed in the foreign cultural centres (see p97) and in various museums.

ACTIVITIES

Nature Kenya (p97) organises a variety of outings, including half-day **bird walks** (non-members KSh100) from the National Museum at 8.45am every Wednesday.

Most international tourist hotels have **swimming pools** that can be used by non-guests for a daily fee of between KSh200 and KSh500. Hotels with heated pools near

the city centre include the Norfolk Hotel (p109), the Grand Regency Hotel (p109) and Milimani Hotel (p111).

A number of private **sports clubs** in the suburbs offer facilities for nonmembers. All are out in the posher suburbs and tend to be rather snooty. Temporary daily membership fees apply.

Impala Club (☎ 565684; Ngong Rd, Karen)

Nairobi Club (Map pp98-9; ☎ 725726; Ngong Rd, Nairobi Hill)

Nairobi Sailing & Sub Aqua Club (Map p126; ☎ 501250; Nairobi Dam, Langata Rd)

TOURS

There's not much to see in downtown Nairobi, but most travel agents and safari operators can take you on a tour of the National and Railway Museums, parliament and the city market for around US\$35. Also popular are trips to suburban attractions such as Nairobi National Park (US\$55), the Bomas of Kenya (US\$40) or the Karen Blixen Museum and Langata Giraffe Sanctuary (US\$45) – see p127 and p128 for more on these attractions. Tour companies and details of longer trips can be found on p59.

For an introduction to the world of jua kali, Kenya's open-air manufacturing industry, **People to People Tourism** (☎ 781531; www.peopletopeopletourism.com) combines tours of the usual tourist sights with visits to jua kali workshops producing crafts and other goods.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Kenya Fashion Week (☎ 0733-636300; Sarit Centre, Westlands) An expo-style fashion event held in June, bringing together designers and manufacturers from all over the country.

Tusker Safari Sevens (www.safarisevens.com; Impala Club, Ngong Rd, Karen) A high-profile international seven-a-side rugby tournament held every June. It's always hotly contested and the Kenyan team has a strong record, though in 2005 Samoa took the main cup.

Kenya Music Festival (☎ 2712964; Kenyatta Conference Centre) Held over 10 days in August, the country's longest-running music festival, established almost 80 years ago by the colonial regime. African music now predominates, but Western and expat musicians still take part.

SLEEPING

Nairobi has plenty of accommodation in all categories, but you'll pay more than you would for the same facilities elsewhere in Kenya, especially in the midrange category.

The main budget area is between Tom Mboya St and River Rd, where you'll find dozens of small hotels and guesthouses – they're convenient for transport and the centre, but note that the real rock-bottom cheapies are usually brothels or dosshouses for drunks. The area is a bit rough, so be careful with your belongings when you walk around, and always take taxis at night. Water shortages are a daily occurrence.

Midrange options are strewn all over town. The best ones are predominantly in the main downtown area, around Kenyatta Ave. There are a few top-end hotels found right in the centre, but most are on the outskirts of the downtown area or further out towards the suburbs. Several exclusive little hotels can also be found in Langata and Karen (see p128).

Of the outlying areas, the eastern districts of Nairobi Hill and Milimani have the most promising selection, catering for all budgets.

City Centre BUDGET

Iqbal Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 220914; Latema Rd; dm KSh300, s/d/tr KSh400/600/960) The Iqbal has been popular for years, and is still possibly the best place in the area to meet fellow budget-conscious travellers. There's supposedly hot water in the morning, but you'd have to be up early – the 7am services at the church next door might help! There's a storeroom where you can leave excess gear for KSh40 per day. It's very secure and the *askari* can arrange taxis at reasonable prices.

New Kenya Lodge (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222202; www.nksafaris.com; River Rd; dm KSh300, r with shared/private bathroom KSh350/650) Another long-standing travellers' haunt, staff here are very friendly and there's a sociable lounge area. Hot water may be available in the evenings. The notice board is well used and the lodge also runs its own safaris, although we've had mixed reports.

Hotel Africana (Map pp102-3; ☎ 220654; Dubois Rd; s/d/tw/tr KSh600/800/1000/1500) The Africana has clean, bright rooms and is better looked after than many places in its class, with a TV room and a roof garden offering a bird's-eye view of the busy streets. The plain but well-catered Coffee House restaurant specialises in Indian vegetarian food. Prices include breakfast, though you can opt out if you really want to save the money.

Wilton Gateway Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 341664; Dubois Rd; s/d KSh600/900) A decent, comfortable hotel popular with Kenyan salesmen. Breakfast is available for KSh100 per person. The Gateway Pub below claims it still sells beer at 1990s prices, which would certainly explain the slight evening noise factor!

Eva May Lodge (Map pp102-3; ☎ 216218; cnr River & Duruma Rds; s/d/tw KSh700/1000/1300) Standards here don't quite do the rather lovely-sounding name justice, but it's a decent guesthouse with small, perfectly reasonable rooms. Breakfast is included, and hot water comes courtesy of an electric shower attachment (when there's any water at all, of course).

Terrace Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221636; Ronald Ngala St; s/d KSh500/800) One of the better deals you'll get at the budget end, the hotel wears its worn atmosphere like a badge of honour, and compares very favourably to some of the cell-like establishments around it.

YMCA (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2724116; ymca@connect.co.ke; State House Rd; s/d KSh940/1480, with shared bathroom KSh690/1180) It might not convince the Village People, but this is an OK place with a range of passable rooms, though these prices only just scrape into the budget category. Rates include the daily membership fee.

MIDRANGE

Kenya Comfort Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 317606; www.kenyacomfort.com; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts; s US\$26-36, d US\$32-42, tr US\$42-45, q US\$2-55) An excellent addition to Nairobi's sleeping scene, this cheerily painted place is kept in top nick, offering a fine selection of modern tiled rooms and a lift for easy access. Breakfast in the popular 24-hour Sokoni bar-restaurant costs an extra US\$5 (US\$4 if booked in advance).

Down Town Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 310485; Moktar Daddah St; s/d KSh1200/1500) Just down the road from the popular Terminal, Down Town doesn't have quite the personality of its neighbour but provides much the same kind of standards for much the same kind of price. If the Terminal's full, chances are this is where they'll send you for alternative accommodation, and you're unlikely to hold it against them.

Meridian Court Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 313991; meridian@bidii.com; Muranga'a Rd; s/d/tr KSh2950/3650/4200; ☎ ☎) The elaborate lobby here is rather more prepossessing than the grey concrete blocks above it, but it's hardly worth complaining when you're essentially getting a suite for the price of a standard room. There's no great luxury involved but the hotel facilities make it good value.

Parkside Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 333568; parkside@insightkenya.com; Monrovia St; s/d/tr KSh1300/1700/2200) Just opposite Jevanjee Gardens, Parkside is modest but decent enough value, and manages to keep out a lot of Nairobi's seemingly all-pervading traffic and town noise. Breakfast in the rather nice downstairs restaurant will set you back KSh300 per person.

Ambassadeur Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 246615; Tom Mboya St; s/d/tr US\$35/45/65) Believe it or not this big hotel opposite the National Archives once belonged to the posh Sarova chain, and structurally not much has changed, though we suspect room standards were rather more exacting in those days. Breakfast costs US\$10 per room, which is obviously a better deal for triples than for singles!

Hotel Greton (Map pp102-3; ☎ 242891; greton@wananchi.com; Tsavo Rd; s/d/tr ind breakfast KSh950/1200/1700) A big block hotel in the heart of the budget district, with a balcony restaurant

overlooking the street. Rooms are spacious and comfortable, there's a salon and gym to keep you looking your best and the whole effect is a lot more inviting than most of the cheap dives nearby.

Grand Holiday Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221244; grandholidaykenya@yahoo.com; Tsavo Rd; s & d KSh1050, tr KSh2000, ste KSh2200) White faces seem to be a bit of a novelty here, judging by the curious whispering among some of the staff, but Kenyan businessmen have latched onto it as a good deal, particularly the suites, which come with huge beds, TVs and spacious red-hued bathrooms.

Oakwood Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 218321; www.madahotels.com/oakwood.html; Kimathi St; s/d/tr US\$60/75/85) It's questionable how they justify these prices, but this very central hotel does at least offer a bit of character, with lots of wood fittings and a lift that's so old-school it could probably draw a pension. The same chain runs several properties around Kenya and Uganda, and also operates balloon safaris in the Masai Mara.

Oriental Palace Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 217600; Taveta Rd; s KSh2290-2790, d KSh2790-3260; ☎) Possibly not what Kubla Khan had in mind – the foyer does at least try and live up to the name, with faux-ivory reliefs and lots of Indian touches, but the rooms opt more for a Western brown retro feel. It's all comfortable enough, albeit with a slight air of neglect in the corridors.

Sixeighty Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 332680; www.680-hotel.co.ke; Muindi Mbingu St; s/d/tr KSh4000/5600/7200; ☎) A big, slightly threadbare central hotel aimed squarely at local and international businesspeople. Facilities are good, it's secure and the location's convenient, though there's little inspired about the place. Wi-fi Internet available.

TOP END

It's a big jump even from the upper midrange to Nairobi's real top-end places. All the following rates include breakfast. You may get a better deal if you book through a travel agent, or you *may* be able to talk prices down in the low season. As an added bonus, most places provide access to the VIP lounges in Kenyatta airport for departing guests.

Nairobi Serena Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2822000; nairobi@serena.co.ke; Central Park, Procession Way; s/d US\$308/376, ste US\$418-736; ☎ ☎) Consolidating its reputation as one of the best top-flight

chains in East Africa, this entry in the Serena canon has a fine sense of individuality, with its international-class facilities displaying a touch of safari style. Given the choice, opt for one of the amazing garden suites, where you can take advantage of your own private patio garden, complete with mini-pergola for eating outside. As it's right opposite Uhuru Park, avoid walking anywhere from here at night.

New Stanley Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 316377; www.sarovahotels.com; cnr Kimathi St & Kenyatta Ave; s/d from US\$225/250; ☎ ☎ ☎) A Nairobi classic: the original Stanley Hotel was established in 1902, but the current site has only been in use since 1912 and the latest version is a very smart modern construction, run by Sarova Hotels. Colonial décor prevails inside, with lashings of green leather, chandeliers and old-fashioned fans in the public areas. The various house eateries are well regarded, especially the sophisticated Zen restaurant (international and fusion cuisine), and the poolside terrace on the roof is a fine touch.

Norfolk Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 216940; www.lonr.hohotels.com; Harry Thuku Rd; s/d US\$281/337, ste US\$361-557; ☎ ☎ ☎) Built in 1904, Nairobi's oldest hotel was the place to stay during colonial days, and it still attracts plenty of guests who at least look like they could be old-school settlers. Thanks to the leafy grounds, it has an almost rustic feel that provides an appealing contrast to the modern bent of the more central options. The stylish Ibis Grill Restaurant (mains KSh1300 to KSh3500) is one of the best in Kenya, and the Lord Delamere terrace bar and restaurant is a great place for a drink and snack.

Grand Regency Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 211199; www.grandregency.co.ke; Loita St; s/d US\$200/240; ☎ ☎ ☎) Grand Regency is one of Nairobi's classier modern complexes, decked out in stained glass and metal with a huge lofty atrium and great glass elevators. Everything looks brand new, and facilities include four restaurants, a casino and an entire small shopping centre. They add 28% to the bill for VAT and service.

Hilton Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 250000; rm.nairobi@hilton.com; Mama Ngina St; s/d from US\$179/209; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) The Hilton dominates the centre of town with its distinctive round tower, occupying virtually an entire block with its rooms, restaurants, shops and other facilities. Executive rooms (s/d US\$239/269)

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Terminal Hotel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 228817; Moktar Daddah St; s/d/tr KSh1200/1500/1800) Sure, there are plenty of bigger, flashier and fancier places to stay in Nairobi, but for our money the Terminal is still one of the only hotels in town where the price actually feels right. The emphasis here is on doing the basics well, with no overblown attempts at tourist frills, and it's an approach that works: staff are relaxed, tolerant and thoroughly amenable, the location's great, the water's hot, the beds are comfortable and most rooms are a decent size. There are a few downsides (street noise, no breakfast, the occasional cockroach) but you could pay over twice as much even in Millimani for shoddier accommodation and impersonal service. As an added plus, the equally personable Dove Cage bar/restaurant (☎ 242194; mains KSh100-380) next door acts as the house eatery and social club. For a reliable haven in fast-paced Nairobi you can't go wrong here, and in the time it takes everybody to learn your name you really will feel like a favoured regular.

include use of an exclusive lounge with complimentary drinks. Prices are exclusive of 26% tax and service charge.

Milimani & Nairobi Hill BUDGET

Upper Hill Campsite (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2720290; www.upperhillcampsite.com; Menengai Rd, Nairobi Hill; camping KSh300, tents KSh450-1000, dm/r KSh400/1000; 📍) Off Hospital Rd near the Indonesian embassy, Upper Hill offers a range of accommodation to suit all tastes in a pleasant and secure compound, plus a well-used little restaurant and bar. The core of regular overland clients are supplemented by an international mix of backpackers and budget travellers. Facilities include hot showers and a cosy fireplace with comfortable chairs for those wintry moments. There's a vehicle maintenance bay and the owners can help you find a mechanic. It's a 15-minute walk from the centre, or you can take bus or matatu No 18 from Kenyatta Ave to the Kenyatta National Hospital, which is just around the corner (should you need it).

Nairobi Youth Hostel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2723012; kyha@africaonline.co.ke; Ralph Bunche Rd, Milimani; dm KSh600-700, d with shared bathroom KSh800, apt KSh2000; 📍) A well looked-after budget option, Nairobi's Hostelling International (HI) branch is still usually a good place to meet other travellers. The apartments sleep three and have a small kitchenette, but they're often booked up. A year's HI membership costs KSh400, or you can pay a KSh100 surcharge per day. Any matatu or bus going down either Valley or Ngong Rds will drop you off. Many people have been robbed returning to the youth hostel by foot after dark; always take a matatu or taxi at night.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Heron Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2720740; www.heronhotel.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; s/d/tr KSh3295/4490/5780; 📍) Anyone who can remember Buffalo Bill's will be astounded at the transformation: management is obviously *very* keen to shake the reputation gleaned in the days not so long ago when the Wild West-themed house bar here was the most notorious brothel in Nairobi. Today it's a model of respectability, changed beyond all recognition, and the kitchenette doubles in particular are an absolute bargain (we actually thought they were suites at first sight!).

High Point Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2724312; www.highpointcourt.com; Lower Hill Rd, Nairobi Hill; ste KSh4000-5000, apt KSh4000-7000; 📍) If you're looking for space and seclusion without laying out a fortune, this World Bank-affiliated suite and apartment complex is an excellent choice and provides ample eye candy for view vultures – you can supposedly see both Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro from the penthouse balcony, though it would have to be an incredibly clear day. The split-level rooms come with kitchenette and living room, and a range of on-site facilities add to the value.

Palacina (☎ 2715517; www.palacina.com; Kitale Lane, Milimani; ste per person US\$190, penthouses US\$490; 📍) Possibly the first genuine boutique hotel in Kenya, this fabulous collection of impossibly stylish suites must be one of the country's top addresses for those well-heeled sophisticates who still like the personal touch. DVDs and private Jacuzzis help outdo the competition, and there's a separate apartment complex for long-term renters, just in case you don't want to leave.

Fairview Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2711321; www.fairviewkenya.com; Bishops Rd, Milimani; s/d from KSh5900/8200; 📍) A good top-end choice nicely removed from the central hubbub. The winding paths and green-filled grounds of this hotel create a refined atmosphere, especially around the courtyard restaurant, and the rooms are helpfully classified like airline seats, ranging from Economy to First. There are also flexible family rooms, charged at KSh8900 basic rate plus KSh2000 to KSh2900 per child (under fives free). It's near the scarily well-guarded Israeli Embassy.

Hotel Salama Annexe (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2729272; Milimani Rd, Milimani; s KSh1500, d KSh2500-3000) The Salama Annexe has a budget feel to it, even in the generously furnished 'deluxe' rooms, and it may be possible to camp here if you're really strapped. Rates include breakfast in the popular but shabby *nyama choma* (barbecued meat) bar-restaurant.

Lenana Mount Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2717044; Ralph Bunche Rd, Milimani; s/d KSh3000/4500; 📍) A quiet three-star hotel with its own health club and sauna. The rooms are a good size, though particularly tall guests might have to duck slightly for the showers, and some have small balconies.

Milimani Hotel (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2722358; www.hotelmilimani.com; Milimani Rd, Milimani; s/d KSh3500/5000; 📍) Next door to the Heron, this is a plain but decent business hotel with a rather confusing layout, tucked in among the surrounding apartment buildings. Rates are a bit high for the standards on offer, but it does have one of the cheaper swimming pools in town (nonguests KSh200).

Westlands & Parklands

Hillcrest Hotel (Map p104; ☎ 4444883; hillcrest@africaonline.co.ke; Waiyaki Way, Westlands; s/d KSh1300/1700) Considering the number of restaurants and shopping centres in Westlands, it's surprising how little accommodation there is in the area – this is actually the only mid-priced option this side of Museum Hill Rd. It's set in grounds just back from Waiyaki Way, a short walk from the Sarit Centre. There's plenty of space, with some nice big wardrobes, and the general atmosphere is pleasant and relaxed.

Safari Park Hotel (☎ 3633000; www.safaripark-hotel.com; Thika Rd, Parklands; s/d from US\$190/220; 📍) A huge complex done out in mock traditional décor worthy of a real safari lodge, perfect if you don't want your luxury experience to end when you leave the national parks. The boma-style lobby is quite spectacular, particularly the liana chandelier, and there are so many facilities we won't even try to list them all (five different restaurants and the largest swimming pool in Africa, for starters). A 28% tax and service charge is added to the room rates.

Jacaranda Hotel (Map p104; ☎ 4448713; jacaranda hotel@africaonline.co.ke; Westland Rd; s/d US\$120/150; 📍) Westlands' other convenient tourist accommodation option is a smart former Block property, slightly worn around the edges but generally offering good standards, with plenty of dark wood, 'tribal' art and animal prints. There are several restaurants on site, and free shuttle buses run between the hotel and downtown three times daily.

EATING

Nairobi is well stocked with places to eat, particularly in the centre, where you can choose anything from the cheap workers' canteens around River Rd to Chinese feasts and full-on splurges off Kenyatta Ave. For dinner it's also worth heading out to the suburbs, which offer dozens of choices of

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Pasara Café (Map pp102-3; ☎ 338247; Lonrho Bldg, Standard St; dishes KSh120-350; ☎) from 7am-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) At the forefront of Nairobi's burgeoning café culture, this stylish modern bar-brasserie never fails to impress with its nifty selection of snacks, sandwiches, grills and breakfasts, always offering something that bit more ambitious than the usual cafeteria fare. Most importantly, it tends to taste pretty damn good too. The juices come highly recommended, and the atmosphere equals that of any European coffeehouse, making it a fine place to relax with a newspaper away from all the stresses of the capital's streets. After 5pm it turns into a popular upscale bar, with a limited menu of snacks to keep your stomach lined and your palate perky.

cuisine from all over the world; Westlands has the best range, and there are some good choices in Hurlingham.

All of the posher places listed here accept credit cards, and most of them add 17% VAT to the bill.

Kenyan & Swahili

Like the rest of the country, lunch is the main meal of the day, and city workers flock to the dozens of cheap canteens dishing up simple, classic Kenyan dishes along with Western staples like chicken and chips.

Chic Joint (Map pp98-9; ☎ 337119; Utalii House, Utalii St; mains KSh150-250) One of our favourite new bar-restaurant discoveries, chic might not be the first word that springs to mind but grills, stews and *nyama* by the kilo should never go out of fashion. Fresh fish is delivered daily and the tilapia is generally excellent. The patio seating is separated from Uhuru Hwy by a thick hedge, with some sizeable speakers providing music in the evening.

Malindi Dishes (Map pp102-3; Gaberone Rd; mains KSh80-200) A great little Swahili canteen. As the name suggests, this place serves great food from the coast, including pilau (curried rice with meat), biryanis and coconut fish, with side dishes such as *ugali*, naan bread and rice. You'll get a grand feed here, but it's a Muslim place, so it's closed for prayer at lunchtime on Friday.

FK Restaurant (Map pp98-9; ☎ 223448; Hazina Towers, Monrovia St; mains KSh120-200) This immaculate daytime cafeteria at the rear of an office block makes an appealing alternative to the rubbier canteens around it; there's an interior gallery area if you like to look down on your fellow diners. The special breakfast is good value at KSh130.

Dancing Spoon Café & Wine Bar (Map pp102-3; ☎ 227581; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St; dishes KSh200-350) Next to the 20th Century Cinema, this bright canteen serves good Western and Kenyan food into the evening, and it's a great place for a steak and beer before you take in a movie.

Beneve Coffee House (Map pp102-3; ☎ 217959; cnr Standard & Koinange Sts; dishes KSh20-140; ☎ Mon-Fri) A small self-service chop shop that has locals queuing outside in the mornings waiting for it to open. Food ranges from stews to curries, fish and chips, samosas, pasties and a host of other choices, all at low, low prices.

Tropez (Map pp102-3; Banda St; meals KSh200-290) A handy modern restaurant offering fast grills, curries, chicken and the like. The KSh280 lunchtime buffet is top value, and the KSh200 breakfast isn't bad either. There's another branch of the same chain, with sports bar, at Zeep (Norwich Union Towers, Mama Ngina St).

Seasons Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 227697; Nairobi Cinema, Uchumi House, Aga Khan Walk; mains KSh240-280, buffets KSh280); Kimathi St (Map pp102-3; ☎ 0720-846276; Mutual Bldg; ☎) Whatever the season, the cafeteria vats here always brim with cheap Kenyan and Western favourites. The Nairobi Cinema outlet has a popular bar and beer garden, and there are a couple of similar branches around the centre. You can bring in your own booze, food or *miraa* (twigs and shoots chewed as a stimulant) for a 'cockage' fee of KSh2500.

NYAMA CHOMA

Kenyan tend to give short shrift to vegetarianism – *nyama choma* (barbecued meat; see p89) is the national dish and just about every pub-restaurant in town will throw a goat leg on the coals for you any time of day.

For a more exotic take on things there are some amazing restaurants where you can really do *nyama* in style. The law now limits what game meat can be served, but should the fancy take you, you can still sample ostrich, camel and even crocodile (like

sweet, slightly fishy chicken). These places categorically do not cater to vegetarians.

The two most famous *nyama choma* restaurants here are Carnivore in Langata and Horseman in Karen. For details, see p130.

Nyama Choma Place (Map pp98-9; ☎ 2720933; Sagret Hotel, Milimani Rd; meals KSh400-600) This restaurant at the midrange Sagret Hotel is highly rated by Kenyans. There's a butchery here where you select your meat and then it's tossed on the barbie – any day of the week you'll see clouds of delicious-smelling smoke rising from the restaurant. It's best to come in a group, as meat is sold by weight in the form of whole goat legs or complete racks of ribs. Chips or *ugali* are available with the roast.

Nyama choma stalls (Map pp102-3; Haile Selassie Ave) A definite step down the scale, but worth it for the atmosphere, are the backstreet stalls near the Railway Museum, behind the Shell petrol station. Foreigners are a rare sight, but you'll be warmly welcomed and encouraged to sample other Kenyan dishes such as *matooke* (mashed plantains). A decent lunch should cost no more than KSh200. There are similar stalls near the Kenyatta National Hospital, but you might not want to eat so close to sick people!

Indian

Westlands is the centre of Nairobi's Indian population, but there are a few budget options downtown as well.

Haandi (Map p104; ☎ 4448294; www.haandi-restaurants.com/nairobi_aboutus.htm; The Mall Shopping Centre, Ring Rd Westlands, Westlands; mains KSh600-995; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; ☎) An international award-winner widely regarded as the best Indian restaurant in Kenya, Haandi has sister restaurants in Kampala, London and Middlesex and sells its own souvenir T-shirts. The menu reads like a recipe book crossed with a guide to Indian cuisine, and includes wonderful *mughlai* (North Indian) and tandoori dishes and plenty of vegetarian curries.

Chowpaty Pure Vegetarian Restaurant (Map p104; ☎ 3755050; Shimmers Plaza, Westlands Rd, Westlands; mains KSh200-350; ☎ 11am-11pm) A great Indian vegetarian restaurant. The menu is as much a manifesto as a food list, but the food is excellent and includes lots of South Indian dishes such as *dhosa* (lentil pancakes stuffed with vegetable curry).

Supreme Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 331586; River Rd; meals KSh170-250) Near the junction with Tom Mboya St, this place offers excellent Punjabi vegetarian *thalis* (plate meals) consisting of various curries, rice, dhal, *bhajia* (vegetables fried in lentil flour) and chapatis. It also has superb fruit juices.

Plaza Café (Map pp98-9; ☎ 227612; Bardays Plaza, Loita St; mains KSh300-600; ☎ 7-9.30am, noon-3.30pm & 6.30-10pm) The Minar chain used to have several branches in the city centre, but now there's just this one, set in the Plaza's basement courtyard. It specialises in *mughlai* dishes but also does standard breakfasts and African dishes, plus good buffet lunches and plenty of vegetarian options.

Taj (Map pp102-3; Taveta Rd; dishes KSh20-100) Basic, ultracheap Indian soul food around the corner from the Iqbal Hotel.

Ethiopian

Blue Nile Ethiopian Restaurant (Map pp98-9; ☎ 0722-898138; bluenile@yahoo.com; Argwings Kodhek Rd, Hurlingham; mains KSh300-450) One of those rare places with a character all its own, Blue Nile's quirky lounge couldn't be mistaken for anywhere else, painted with stories from Ethiopian mythology – if you've ordered one of the many goat dishes, it's best not to read the panels about poison until you've finished your meal! For the full communal African eating experience, order the seven-person *doro wat* (spicy traditional chicken stew, KSh3500) with a few glasses of *tej* (honey wine, KSh125).

Addis Ababa Restaurant (Map p104; ☎ 4447321; Woodvale Grove, Westlands; mains KSh400-500; ☎ noon-3pm Mon-Sat & from 6pm daily) Unlike the Ethiopian capital itself, this place is easily missed as it's tucked away up some stairs in an otherwise unremarkable block. Locate it and you'll also find good authentic food and occasional live music.

Italian

With Kenya's huge Italian expat population, it's not surprising that there are some good Italian choices here.

Trattoria (Map pp102-3; ☎ 340855; cnr Wabera & Kaunda Sts; mains KSh400-1800; ☎ 7.30am-midnight) A very popular downtown restaurant swathed in trellises and plants, offering excellent pizzas, pasta, varied mains and a whole page of desserts. The atmosphere and food are excellent and it's packed every night, especially

the upstairs balcony section. Try the penne with vodka and smoked salmon (KSh550). A minimum spend of KSh500 per person applies for dinner, which is seldom a problem.

Taverna (Map p104; ☎ 4445234; Woodvale Grove, Westlands; mains KSh390-800) A quite sophisticated place tricked out in typical checked-tablecloth style, with lots of pasta choices and good seafood – tasty cognac prawns will set you back KSh1500.

Chinese & Thai

Nairobi has plenty of Chinese restaurants but they aren't a cheap option. Almost all offer 'large' (good for two people) and 'small' portions (enough for one). Food is generally excellent, but all these places add 16% VAT to the bill, so prices can soon mount up.

Panda Chinese Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 213018; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh380-1480; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm) A spacious, very classy Asian restaurant hidden away on Kaunda St. The staff are attentive to the point of overzealousness, especially when it's quiet, and the food is the best Chinese chow we found in Nairobi. Lovers of muzak will also be in their element here.

Hong Kong Restaurant (Map pp98-9; ☎ 228612; rhk@wananchi.com; College House, Koinange St; mains KSh300-600; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm) A bright-red restaurant with good food and not *too* much clichéd décor. It's the cheapest proper Chinese in town and is accordingly popular.

Bangkok Chinese Restaurant (Map p104; ☎ 3751312; Rank Xerox House, Parklands Rd, Westlands; mains KSh290-890; ☎ 11am-3pm & 6pm-late) The Bangkok has been in business for a number of years but was clearly named by someone with no grasp of geography, as there's virtually nothing Thai on the menu at all. If the disappointment gets too much you can always crack open a bottle of Moët (KSh8900).

Tanager Bar & Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221615; Rehema House, Kaunda St; mains KSh280-350; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat) A cheap and simple Chinese-African eatery right in the city centre.

China Jiangsu Restaurant (Map p104; ☎ 4446700; Westlands Rd; mains KSh200-600; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6-10.30pm) A stylish rooftop restaurant above the Soin shopping centre. Prices are very reasonable considering the classy balcony setting, and the food's not to be sniffed at either.

Siam Thai (Map p104; ☎ 3751728; Unga House, Muthithi Rd, Westlands; mains KSh250-680) This attractive restaurant has an extensive menu of actual Thai food (gasp!) and a very good reputation. Unga House can be reached from either Woodvale Grove or Muthithi Rd.

Japanese

Restaurant Akasaka (Map pp102-3; ☎ 220299; Standard St; mains KSh450-800; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat) A wonderful Japanese restaurant next to the Sixeighy Hotel. It's always a little quiet, but this fits the stylish Japanese décor and the food is very authentic. There's even a tatami room (reserve in advance) where you can eat at traditional low tables. Akasaka runs the full gamut of Japanese cuisine including *udon* noodles, sushi sets, tempura, teriyaki and *sukiyaki* as well as great miso soup. Good-value set lunches are also available.

Furusato Japanese Restaurant (Map p104; ☎ 4442508; Karuna Rd, Westlands; set meals KSh700-1500) Behind the Sarit Centre, this is a very stylish place with seductive set Japanese meals including sushi, *teppanyaki* and tempura. The sushi and sashimi are delicious. Reservations are recommended.

International

Nairobi has plenty of good upmarket restaurants serving mixed cuisine from around the world. For some other sophisticated choices, head to Karen and Langata (p129).

Fiesta Restaurant & Bar (Map pp102-3; ☎ 240326; Koinange St; mains KSh450-1800; ☎ 7am-midnight) Despite the Latin resonances of a Hispanic name and bright adobe-style décor, the brand-new Fiesta doesn't have anything remotely Tex-Mex on offer, concentrating instead on a fine selection of upmarket international dishes. Staff are smiley and almost unnervingly eager to please, and the chefs do themselves particular credit on some very un-Kenyan recipes such as nasi goreng and pork chops with a honey and mustard glaze. The popular bar area occasionally hosts low-key live crooners.

Alan Bobbé's Bistro (Map pp102-3; ☎ 226027; Gianda House, Koinange St; mains KSh987-1850) The talented M Bobbé established this superb French bistro in 1962, and Nairobi gourmets and gourmands alike have been worshipping at his culinary altar ever since. Even reading the chatty handwritten menu is enough to send the palate into raptures.

The interior, doused in red velvet, adds perfectly to the *recherché* ambience. Reservations and smart dress are encouraged, cigars and pipes are not. Look out for the poodle above Koinange St.

Thorn Tree Café (Map pp102-3; ☎ 228030; New Stanley Hotel, Kimathi St; mains KSh350-1380) The Stanley's legendary café still serves as a popular meeting place for travellers of all persuasions, and caters to most tastes with a good mix of food. If you like a big breakfast the US\$15 buffet is worth a go. The original thorn-tree noticeboard in the courtyard gave rise to the general expression and inspired Lonely Planet's own Thorn Tree community; while the café is now on its third acacia and the noticeboard's not the paperfests it once was, a little nostalgia is *de rigueur*.

Tamarind Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 251811; www.tamarind.co.ke; Aga Khan Walk; mains KSh900-1800; ☎ 2.30-4.30pm & 8.30pm-midnight) Kenya's most prestigious restaurant chain runs Nairobi's best seafood restaurant, in the National Bank Building between Harambee Ave and City Hall Way. The splendid menu offers all manner of exotic flavours, and the lavish dining room is laid out in a sumptuous modern Arabic-Moorish style. Smart dress is expected and you'll need to budget at least KSh2500 for the full works, particularly if you want wine or cocktails and lobster (KSh330 per 100g).

Porterhouse Restaurant (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221829; Mama Ngina St; mains KSh420-480; ☎ 5-10.30pm) Steak-lovers should make this discreetly swish 1st-floor restaurant their first port of call: apart from a few token dishes such as chicken Kiev, the menu here is entirely dedicated to the art of carving chunks of cow, and with a two-person Chateaubriand for just KSh900 it's easy to get into the moo-d (ahem).

Phoenician Restaurant (☎ 3741524; Karuna Rd, Westlands; mains KSh500-800; ☎ Tue-Sun) This new garden restaurant, tucked away behind the Sarit Centre, may well be the first Lebanese restaurant in Kenya. We've heard mixed reports of the food, but there's plenty for veggies and with more starters than main courses, assembling your own mixed mezze offers plenty of scope for a Middle East feast. Live music on Friday.

Kengeles Bar & Restaurant (Map pp98-9; ☎ 344335; Koinange St; mains KSh270-560) Run on the lines of a Western chain restaurant, Kengeles' impressively varied menu encompasses

burgers, grills, Mexican, African, Indonesian, Asian and buffet options, and the open-air balcony is a fine place to dine. On a quiet night, though, the service can be truly lousy. The chain was rumoured to be in financial difficulties at time of writing, and had also seemingly fallen out of favour with Nairobi council – see the boxed text on below.

Quick Eats

Traditionally Nairobi's office workers have relied on budget canteens and takeaways for cheap meals; any of the Kenyan and Swahili places listed here (p111) can whip you up a feed in next to no time. There are also innumerable indistinguishable fast-food joints around town following the Western model – Kimathi St and Moi Ave have particularly high concentrations.

FOOD COURTS

Sarit Centre (Map p104; ☎ 3747408; www.saritcentre.com; Parklands Rd, Westlands) This huge food court on the 2nd floor has a variety of small restaurants and fast-food places, including Indian, Chinese, Italian and African food. The Hidden Agenda pub-restaurant (mains KSh360 to KSh800) comes recommended, with Western and Thai menus.

Village Market (☎ 522488; www.villagemarket-kenya.com; Limuru Rd, Gigiri) The open food court here includes Italian, Turkish, German, Thai, Japanese and seafood outlets.

SIDEWALK STRIFE

One recent trend in Nairobi has seen all kinds of bars and restaurants extending their seating areas onto the pavement European café-style, often with brightly coloured awnings, plants and other trappings to jazz up the drab street surroundings. A positive development, surely? Apparently not as far as the city council is concerned.

The first sign that all was not well came when an entire vanload of council *askaris* descended on the Kengeles Bar & Restaurant on Koinange St, leaving a startled crowd of punters and passers-by in their wake. The council claimed the owners were warned repeatedly about new regulations banning street extensions and had been told to remove the offending structure; the restaurant, however, said this was the first time they'd heard anything about it at all.

In the wake of the incident other cafés removed their own pavement patios with quite remarkable alacrity, fearful of further action from above. Several nearby rivals have a different take on matters, however – as one competitor suggested to the *Daily Nation* shortly after the event, Kengeles may well have been targeted for personal reasons, as it's rumoured that the proprietors have had wrangles with the council in the past.

Whatever the truth, only a handful of pavement restaurants have dared to hold their ground, and it seems we'll have to wait a while longer before Kenyan café culture finally hits the streets. Until it does, reach for the skies – Nairobi's many 1st-floor balcony restaurants are still the best places in town to catch and shoot the breeze.

Yaya Centre (Argwings Khodek Rd, Hurlingham) A smaller food court with a reasonable selection of cafés and kiosks. The Saffron restaurant upstairs (mains KSh245 to KSh460) does great Indian eat-in and takeaway food.

Etouch food court (Map pp102-3; Union Towers, cnr Moi Ave & Mama Ngina St) A central collection of cheap'n'easy fast-food joints such as Nando's, Chicken Inn, Creamy Inn, Pizza Inn... you get the idea.

Self-Catering

There are very few places to stay with self-catering facilities, but you can buy supplies for snack lunches, safaris etc as well as cooking ingredients from the many supermarkets downtown and in the suburbs.

Nakumatt Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 335011; Kenyatta Ave); Lifestyle (Map pp102-3; ☎ 340015; Moktar Daddah St); Village (☎ 522508; Village Market, Limuru Rd, Gigiri) The principal supermarket chain in Nairobi and Kenya as a whole, Nakumatt invariably has a huge selection of Kenyan and Western foods and other products. The brand-new Lifestyle store spreads over several floors, with departments stocking all kinds of useful household and outdoor goods.

Uchumi Downtown (Map pp102-3; ☎ 227001; Uchumi House, Aga Khan Way); Comet House (Map pp98-9; Monrovia St); Westlands (Map p104; Sarit Centre, Parklands Rd) Once the main supermarket chain in town, Uchumi has faded fast in Nakumatt's wake

and several central branches have closed. Those that remain open still have a good range of items.

California Cookies (Map pp102-3; ☎ 246365; KTDA Bldg, Moi Ave; biscuits KSh35/100g) If your sweet tooth needs pulling, try this busy biscuit bakery for a dose of sugar.

DRINKING Cafés

Western café culture has hit Nairobi big style, seized on enthusiastically by local expats and residents pining for a decent cup of Kenyan coffee. All these places offer at least some form of food, whether it's a few cakes or a full menu, but none serve alcohol.

Nairobi Java House (Map pp102-3; ☎ 313565; www.nairobijava.com; Mama Ngina St; snacks KSh80-180; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) This fantastic coffeehouse is rapidly turning itself into a major brand, and you may see its logo on T-shirts as far afield as London or even beyond. Aficionados say the coffee's some of the best in Kenya, and there are plenty of cakes and other sweet and savoury treats. It's nicely laid out, with art exhibits on the walls, and very popular, so you may have to share a table.

Kahawa (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221900; zulmawani@ispnbi.com; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh190-410) Also new, Kahawa has an unusual coastal theme – the counter even resembles a traditional dhow, complete with mast. The menu, however, is anything but old-fashioned, proffering an ever-changing cavalcade of unexpected specials to complement the grills and steaks, from frittata to a 'Mexican breakfast'. Speaking of breakfast, this is indeed another good spot to take the most important meal of the day.

Dormant Café (Map pp102-3; ☎ 0724-238976; Mama Ngina St; coffee KSh100-190) Established in the 1960s, this venerable firm has only recently branched out into the café business but has certainly made an aggressive Starbucks-style start, opening a shiny pine outlet right opposite its main rival Nairobi Java. The coffee's good and the selection of teas is impressive, but so far the food just doesn't compete.

Oleander Café (Map pp98-9; Rahimtulla Tower, Upper Hill Rd, Nairobi Hill; drinks KSh40-100) This small elevated café has limited stocks of food and drink, but the terrace is so surrounded by greenery that you barely even notice the busy road below, providing a perfect respite

from town if you happen to be around the Nairobi Hill area.

Café 21 (Map pp102-3; ☎ 341524; I&M Bank Tower, Kenyatta Ave; mains KSh150-380) More of a cafeteria than a purebred coffeehouse, the neat little 21 does both full meals and snacks or 'bitings'. Sandwiches, grills, pasta and lamb chops all feature, and there's a KSh500 lunch buffet.

Bars

There are plenty of cheap but very rough-and-ready bars around Latema Rd and River Rd. These places aren't recommended for female travellers, and even male drinkers should watch themselves. There are some safer and friendlier watering holes around Tom Mboya St and Moi Ave, and many of the restaurants and hotels listed previously are fine places for a drink. You can also head to Westlands, where the drinking scene brings in a lot more expats.

Even in cosmopolitan Nairobi, foreign women without a man in tow will draw attention virtually everywhere. To avoid this entirely, you can head for the fancier hangouts in the outer suburbs (see p130).

Casablanca (☎ 2723173; Lenana Rd, Hurlingham; ☎ from 6pm) This hip new Moroccan-style lounge bar has been an instant hit with Nairobi's fastidious expat community, and you don't have to spend much time here to become a convert. Shisha pipes, wines and cocktails conspire to ease you into what's bound to end up as a late night.

Zanze Bar (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222532; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave) A lively and friendly top-floor bar with pool tables, a dance floor, cheap beer and reasonable food. During the week things are relatively quiet, but from Friday to Sunday it rocks until the early hours, with a much more relaxed vibe than the big clubs.

Taco Bell (Map pp102-3; Tumaini House, 15 Moi Ave) On the 1st floor, with an open balcony overlooking the street, this popular bar has DJs from Thursday to Sunday. Food is served but there's not a burrito in sight – we suspect the Taco Bell Corporation doesn't know they've borrowed the name...

Taco's (Map pp102-3; Kimathi St) Smaller but otherwise almost identical to Taco Bell, it sells beers by the dozen (!). An over-21s policy applies, for no apparent reason.

Hornbill Pub (Map pp102-3; ☎ 246615; Ambassador Hotel, Tom Mboya St) A large, dark but friendly bar

stretching the width of the block between Moi Ave and Tom Mboya St, with lashings of cold Tusker and sizzling *nyama choma*.

Jockey Pub (Map pp102-3; Hilton Hotel, Mama Ngina St) The Hilton's house boozier is a cosy English-style hostel, but nonguests are subject to a hefty minimum-spend requirement. There's a free yard of ale if you can drink it in under three minutes without stopping, a feat possibly not to be attempted on a full stomach.

Roast House (Map pp102-3; Kilome Rd) This split-level green bar-restaurant is one of the better specimens in the River Rd area, with regular DJ nights, but caution is still advised if coming here.

WESTLANDS

Gypsy's Bar (Map p104; ☎ 4440836; Woodvale Grove) Don't be confused by the contradictory signs – this long-running bar is made up of several parts, none of which actually seem to be called Gypsy's! Identity crisis aside, it's probably the most popular bar in Westlands, pulling in a mixed crowd of Kenyans, expats and prostitutes. Snacks are available and there's decent Western and African music, with parties taking over the pavement in summer. This is also as close as you'll get to a gay-friendly venue in Kenya.

Bar Code (Map p104; Westview Centre, Ring Rd) It's nowhere near as cool as it thinks it is, but this very modern late-opening lounge bar does at least have a good range of international spirits and cocktails (KSh300 to KSh550), plus semi-competent DJs spinning R&B and hip-hop for the tiny dance floor. The lurid painted toilets are probably the best bit, in keeping with the vague gangster theme.

Soho's (Map p104; ☎ 3745710; Parklands Rd) A lively and popular place that pulls in a smart Kenyan and expat crowd. As well as the crisp cold beers, there's a good selection of wines and cocktails.

Klub House (Map p104; ☎ 749870; Parklands Rd) Further west, past the large Holiday Inn complex, the Klub House is another old favourite. The spacious bar has more pool tables than anyone else and is a good place to party until late. Music is predominantly Latino, Caribbean and African.

ENTERTAINMENT

For information on all entertainment in Nairobi and for big music venues in the

rest of the country, get hold of the *Saturday Nation*, which lists everything from cinema releases to live music venues. There will also be plenty of suggestions run by the magazine *Going Out*.

Nightclubs

There's a good selection of dance clubs in Nairobi's centre and there are no dress codes, although there's an unspoken assumption that males will at least wear a shirt and long trousers. Beer in all these places is reasonably priced at about KSh100, but imported drinks are a lot more expensive.

Due to the high numbers of female prostitutes, men will generally get the bulk of the hassle in all these places, though even women in male company are by no means exempt from approaches by either sex.

Pavement (Map p104; ☎ 4441711; Waiyaki Way, Westlands; admission KSh500) Split between a relaxed ground-level bar and the big, modern basement club where the action happens, Pavement is the dance floor of choice for most resident expats, and isn't as messy as its counterparts in town. Leavening the usual mix of hip-hop and chart pop, weekends here favour the kind of proper jump-up funky house, trance and techno you might get on a night out in Europe. Thursday is Latin night and there are also Sunday jazz sessions.

New Florida (Map pp102-3; ☎ 215014; Koinange St; men/women KSh200/100; ☎ to 6am, later Sat & Sun) The 'Mad House' is a big, rowdy club housed in a bizarre blacked-out saucer building above a petrol station. The music policy ranges from jazz (Monday to Wednesday) to the customary weekend mish-mash of all things naff and Western, with dubious semi-clad floorshows on Friday and Saturday. Whichever night you choose, it's usually mayhem, crammed with bruisers, cruisers, hookers, hustlers and curious tourists, but it's great fun if you're in the right mood (or just very drunk). Entry is usually free before 9pm.

Florida 2000 (Map pp102-3; ☎ 229036; Moi Ave; men/women KSh200/100) The original blueprint for the New Florida, this big dancing den near City Hall Way still works to exactly the same formula of booze, beats and tight-packed bodies. All-hours eats are provided by the Water Margin Chinese restaurant. Monday is salsa-zouk-mamba night, Wednesday is straight-up dance/trance and Sunday is Rasta night.

Club Soundd (Map pp102-3; Kaunda St; admission free-KSh200; ☎ from 3pm) Another central night-spot following much the same pattern, but with a bit more to offer those who take their music seriously: high-profile local posse the HomeBoyz DJs play on Friday, there's salsa on Sunday and a rare trance night on Wednesday. It opens earlier than most similar places, and has a happy hour until 8pm to suck in premature punters.

Two real earthy local hangouts are the **Monte Carlo Club** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 223181; Reata-House, Accra Rd; admission KSh100) and **Nyanza House Club** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 228692; Sheikh Karume Rd; admission KSh100); you'll see posters plastered all over town advertising reggae parties at both. A night out here will be as authentic a modern African experience as you can get, but we couldn't in good conscience suggest that unaccompanied women go anywhere near here.

Live Music

Green Corner Restaurant & Cactus Pub (Map pp102-3; ☎ 335243; Tumaini House, Nkrumah Lane) This very popular after-work bar and restaurant just opposite the Nairobi Cinema has live bands on Thursday and Sunday and DJs the rest of the week. Music is generally modern, East African and enthusiastically received.

Toona Tree Bar & Restaurant (Map pp98-9; ☎ 3740802; toonatre@africaonline.co.ke; International Casino, Museum Hill Rd) Part of the massive International Casino complex by the National Museum, Toona Tree has live bands on Friday and Saturday, playing jazz, blues and 'classic hits'.

At the New Stanley Hotel, the Thorn Tree Café (p114) also has live bands most nights.

Cinemas

Nairobi is a good place to take in a few films at a substantially lower price than back home. The upmarket cinemas show a mix of Western blockbusters and even more popular Bollywood extravaganzas. Tickets range from KSh150 to KSh240, with the best deals available on Tuesdays.

Nu Metro Cinema (☎ 522128; numetro@swiftkenya.com; Village Market, Gigiri; tickets KSh350) The first entry in a chain of modern multiplexes springing up around Nairobi, showing new Western films fairly promptly after their international release. Seats here are pretty

steep, but that's still cheaper than the popcorn at a London picture house.

Fox Cineplex (Map p104; ☎ 227959; Sarit Centre, Westlands) Another good modern cinema in the same price bracket as Nu Metro, located on the 2nd floor of the Sarit Centre.

20th Century Cinema (Map pp102-3; ☎ 210606; 20th Century Plaza, Mama Ngina St), **Kenya Cinema** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 227822; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave) and **Nairobi Cinema** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 338058; Uchumi House, Aga Khan Walk) are all owned by the same chain. The first two show mainly Western movies, while the Nairobi Cinema goes through phases of only screening Christian 'message' films.

Odeon (Map pp102-3; Latema Rd) is one of several local cinemas showing a mix of Indian, South African and Western films. Tickets are very cheap but reels are often scratched.

The flea-pit **Cameo cinema** (Map pp102-3; Kenyatta Ave) is well placed but appears to show mainly sex films.

Theatre

Professional Centre (Map pp102-3; ☎ 225506; www.phoenixplayers.net; Parliament Rd) Local theatre troupe the Phoenix Players put on regular

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Simmers (Map pp102-3; ☎ 217659; cnr Kenyatta Ave & Muindi Mbingu St; admission free) If you're tired of having your butt pinched to the strains of limp R&B in darkened discos, Simmers is the place to come to rediscover a bit of true African rhythm. The atmosphere at this open-air bar-restaurant is almost invariably amazing, with the ever-enthusiastic crowds turning out to wind'n'grind the night away to incessant parades of bands playing anything from Congolese rumba to Kenyan *benga* (contemporary dance music). Refreshingly, the women here are more likely to be local girls out for a giggle than working girls out for business, so for once you shouldn't have to worry too much about being hassled, and most people are very friendly should you feel the need to, say, compliment someone on their *lingala* (Congolese) dancing. With free-flowing Tusker, a separate shots bar and plenty of *nyama choma* to keep the lion from the door, it's no wonder the place always feels like a party.

performances at this venue with an unlikely name. Many of the plays are by foreign playwrights but a good proportion are by Kenyans, and new works are well represented. Tickets cost KSh650, though strictly it should be US\$20 for nonresidents.

Kenya National Theatre (Map pp98-9; ☎ 225174; Harry Thuku Rd; tickets from KSh200) Opposite the Norfolk Hotel, this is the major theatre venue in Nairobi. As well as contemporary and classic plays, there are special events such as beauty pageants, which are less high-brow but still culturally interesting.

For African theatre, the foreign cultural centres (p97) are often the places to head for. Also, check the *Daily Nation* to see what's on.

SHOPPING

Nairobi is a good place to pick up souvenirs but prices are usually higher than elsewhere in the country. There are loads of souvenir shops downtown and in the area northwest of Kenyatta Ave. Most places sell exactly the same stuff, but there are a few speciality shops with better-than-average crafts. The 'Little India' area around Biashara St is good for fabric, textiles and those all-important souvenir Tusker T-shirts.

If you're interested in buying local music, just wander round the River Rd and Latema Rd area and listen out for the blaring CD kiosks.

City Market (Map pp102-3; Muindi Mbingu St) The city's souvenir business is concentrated in this covered market, which has dozens of stalls selling wood carvings, drums, spears, shields, soapstone, Maasai jewellery and clothing. It's a hectic place and you'll have to bargain hard (and we *mean* hard), but there's plenty of good stuff on offer. It's an interesting place to wander round in its own right, though you generally need to be shopping to make the constant hassle worth the bother.

Gallery Watatu (Map pp102-3; ☎ 228737; Lonhro House, Standard St) If you want fine Kenyan art, this is a good place to check out what's happening prior to investing your hard-earned. There's a permanent display here and many of the items are for sale, but be prepared to part with at least KSh20,000 just for something small.

Spinners Web (Map p104; ☎ 4440882; Viking House, Waiyaki Way, Westlands) Works with workshops and self-help groups around the country. It's

SHOPPING IN STYLE

The beautifully conceived **Village Market** (☎ 522488; www.villagemarket-kenya.com; Limuru Rd, Gigiri; ☎) shopping centre has a selection of entertainment activities to while away an afternoon, including the Nu Metro cinema (opposite), a bowling alley, pool hall, water slides, mini golf and a children's playground complete with toy-car rides and a mini-train circuit. You can get here with matatu No 106 (KSh40) from near the train station.

a bit like a handicrafts version of Ikea, with goods displayed the way they might look in Western living rooms, but there's some classy stuff on offer, including carpets, wall hangings, ceramics, wooden bowls, baskets and clothing.

Triangle Curios Market (Map p104; Parklands Rd, Westlands) Near the Sarit Centre in Westlands, this is a cheaper collection of stalls at a road junction. There are lots of genuine tribal objects such as Turkana wrist knives and wooden headrests.

Maasai Market Nairobi (Map pp102-3; off Slip Rd; ☎ Tue); Gigiri (Village Market, Limuru Rd; ☎ Fri) These busy markets are held every Tuesday on the waste ground near Slip Rd in town, and Friday in the rooftop car park at the Village Market shopping complex (above). You can buy beaded jewellery, gourds, baskets and other Maasai crafts, but you'll have to bargain hard. The markets are open from early morning to late afternoon.

Undugu Craft Shop (Map p104; ☎ 4443525; Woodvale Grove, Westlands) Another good charitable venture, this nonprofit organisation supports community projects in Nairobi and has very good-quality crafts.

Banana Box (Map p104; ☎ 3743390; Sarit Centre, Westlands) Among the rather less altruistic commercialism of the Sarit Centre, Banana Box works in conjunction with community projects and refugee groups and offers modern uses for traditional objects.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Kenya Airways (Map pp98-9; ☎ 32074100; Barclays Plaza, Loita St) operates international and domestic services out of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, with at least six daily

flights to Mombasa plus services to Kisumu (one hour), Lamu (2¼ hours) and Malindi (1¼ hours). Fares come down rapidly if you can book more than a week in advance; if not, it's best to go through a travel agent.

Airkenya (☎ 501601; Wilson Airport, Langata Rd) has daily flights to Lamu (1¼ hours), Kiwayu island (two hours), Malindi and Nanyuki (45 minutes), as well as serving several national parks and Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. **Safarilink** (☎ 600777; Wilson Airport) offers similar services at virtually identical prices.

One-way fares:

destination	fare	frequency (daily)
Amboseli	US\$85	2
Eldoret	KSh5700	1
Kisumu	from KSh5605	1
Kiwayu	US\$163	2
Lamu	from US\$135	3
Lewa Downs	US\$115	2
Malindi	from US\$85	2
Masai Mara	US\$105	3
Mombasa	from KSh6835	6
Nanyuki	US\$60-80	2
Samburu	from US\$115	3

The check-in time for domestic flights is one hour before departure. The baggage allowance is only 15kg as there isn't much space on the small turboprop aircraft. Reconfirm flights with airlines 72 hours before you depart or you could lose your seat.

Bus

In Nairobi, most long-distance bus company offices are in the River Rd area, clustered around Accra Rd and the surrounding streets. Several companies go to Mombasa, including Akamba, Busscar, Busstar, Mash Express and Mombasa Raha. Most services leave in the early morning or late evening; the trip takes eight to 10 hours with a meal break on the way. Buses leave from outside each company's office. Fares range from KSh400 to KSh700. **Coastline Safaris** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 217592; cnr Latema & Lagos Rds) buses are the most comfortable and expensive.

Akamba (Map pp102-3; ☎ 340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke; Lagos Rd) is the biggest private bus company in the country and has an extensive network. It's not the cheapest, but is the safest and most reliable company. It

has buses to Eldoret, Kakamega, Kericho, Kisii, Kisumu, Kitale, Machakos, Mombasa, Kampala (Uganda) and Mwanza, Moshi and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). Buses leave from Lagos Rd and there's a **booking office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 222027; Wabera St), near City Hall.

The government-owned **KBS** (Kenya Bus Service; ☎ 229707) is a large, reliable operator, cheaper than Akamba but with slower buses. The main depot is east of the centre on Uyoma St, but there's a downtown **booking office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 341250; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts). There are loads of buses to Kisumu and Kakamega and less frequent services to Busia, Eldoret, Kisii, Kitale and Malaba.

Easy Coach (Map pp102-3; ☎ 210711; easycoach@wananchi.com; Haile Selassie Ave) is a reliable new company serving western Kenyan destinations on the Kisumu/Kakamega route (up to seven daily), with daily buses to Arusha in the other direction.

The **Country Bus Station** (Map pp98-9; Landhies Rd) is a hectic, disorganised place with buses to Machakos, Busia, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Nyeri, Nakuru, Nanyuki, Malaba and Meru. Eldoret Express is the biggest operator with plenty of buses to Kisumu and the Ugandan border, while Busscar has very frequent buses to Machakos.

See p377 for details on other bus companies operating out of Nairobi. Typical fares include the following:

destination	fare (Ksh)	duration (hrs)
Arusha	750-800	4 (Tanzania)
Dar es Salaam	1400-1600	12 (Tanzania)
Eldoret	350-500	3
Embu	200	1½
Homa Bay	450	6
Kakamega	400-500	5
Kampala	1000-1350	10-12 (Uganda)
Kisii	350-550	4
Kisumu	400-550	4
Kitale	400-600	5
Machakos	80-120	1
Malindi	800	9-10
Meru	250-350	3
Mombasa	500-1000	6-10
Moshi	700	5 (Tanzania)
Mwanza	1100	12 (Tanzania)
Naivasha	130	1-1½
Nakuru	200-300	2
Nanyuki	200	2
Nyeri	200	1½

Matatu

Most matatus leave from Latema, Accra, River and Cross Rds and fares are similar to the buses. The biggest operator here is **Crossland Services** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 245377; Cross Rd), which serves destinations including Eldoret (KSh350, three hours), Kericho (KSh450, three hours), Kisii (KSh500, five hours), Kisumu (KSh550, four hours), Naivasha (KSh150, one hour), Nakuru (KSh250, two hours) and Nanyuki (KSh250, two hours). On the same road are **Molo Line Services** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 0724-342966) with matatus to Eldoret, Naivasha, Nakuru and Kisumu, and **Narok Line** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 213020), which serves Kisii, Narok (KSh250, three hours) and Kericho.

Other companies are located on the surrounding streets. Head to Accra Rd (Map pp102-3) for matatus to Chogoria (KSh250, 2½ hours), Embu (KSh200, 1½ hours), Meru (KSh300 to KSh350, three hours) and Nanyuki (KSh200, 2½ hours). Matatus leave from Latema Rd for Nyahururu (KSh300, three hours) and Nyeri (KSh200, two hours). There are loads of matatus to Naivasha (KSh130, 1½ hours) and the Tanzanian border at Namanga (KSh250, three hours) from the corner of Ronald Ngala St and River Rd (Map pp102-3). For Thika (KSh70, 40 minutes), go to the Total petrol station on Racecourse Rd (Map pp98-9).

Peugeot (Shared Taxi)

Like matatus, most of the companies offering Peugeot shared taxis have their offices around the Accra, River and Cross Rds area. One reliable company is **Crossland Services** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 245377; Cross Rd), which has cars to Eldoret, Kabarnet, Kericho, Kitale and Nakuru. Other companies serve Isiolo, Kisumu, Meru and Malaba. Fares are about 20% higher than the same journeys by matatu. Most services depart in the morning.

Shuttle Minibus

Shuttle minibuses run from Nairobi to Kampala (Uganda), and to Arusha and Moshi in Tanzania (see p374 for details).

Train

Nairobi train station has a **booking office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 221211; Station Rd; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm). Only two useful passenger services currently run from Nairobi (see p384). For

Mombasa (1st/2nd class KSh3160/2275, 14 to 16 hours), trains leave Nairobi at 7pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; arrive early, as seats are only assigned at the last minute. The return services depart at 7pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

For Kisumu (1st/2nd class KSh1415/720, 13 hours), trains depart at 6.30pm on the same days as the Mombasa services. It's advisable to book a few days in advance for either of these routes.

There are also a handful of weekday evening commuter services to Thika, Embakasi and Limuru, but these are of little help to travellers as road transport is far more efficient.

GETTING AROUND To/From Jomo Kenyatta International Airport

Kenya's main **international airport** (☎ 827638) is 15km out of town, off the road to Mombasa. There's now a dedicated airport bus run by Metro Shuttle (part of KBS), which can drop you off at hotels in the city centre. Going the other way, the main departure point is across from the Hilton Hotel. The journey takes about 40 minutes and costs US\$5 per person. Buses run every half-hour from 8am to 8.30pm daily and stop at both air terminals.

A cheaper way to get into town is city bus No 34 (KSh30), but a lot of travellers get ripped off on the bus or when they get off. Always hold onto valuables and have small change ready for the fare. Buses run from 5.45am to 9.30pm weekdays, 6.20am to 9.30pm Saturdays and 7.15am to 9.30pm Sundays, though the last few evening services may not operate. Heading to the airport, buses travel west along Kenyatta Ave.

A much safer method (and also your only option at night) is to take a taxi. The asking price is usually about KSh1200 in either direction, but you should be able to bargain down to KSh800 from town, or even as little as KSh500 from the domestic terminal if you catch a returning or unofficial cab. If you book at one of the 'information' desks at the airport, you'll still end up in a public taxi, but it isn't any more expensive.

To/From Wilson Airport

To get to **Wilson Airport** (Map p126; ☎ 501941), for Airkenya services or charter flights, the

cheapest option is to take bus or matatu No 15, 31, 34, 125 or 126 from Moi Ave (KSh20). A taxi from the centre of town will cost you KSh600 to KSh800 depending on the driver. In the other direction, you'll have to fight the driver down from KSh1000. The entrance to the airport is easy to miss; it's just before the large BP petrol station.

Bus

The ordinary city buses are run by **KBS** (☎ 229707) but hopefully you won't need to use them much. Forget about them if you're carrying luggage – you'll never get on, and even if you do, you'll never get off! Most buses pass through downtown, but the main KBS terminus is on Uyoma St, east of the centre.

Useful buses include No 46 from Kenyatta Ave, for the Yaya Centre in Hurlingham (KSh10), and No 23 from Jevanjee Gardens, for Westlands (KSh10). There are services about every 20 minutes from 6am to 8pm Monday to Saturday.

There's also a useful Metro Shuttle service to Ngong Rd and Karen, passing the Karen Blixen Museum. Buses run every 15 minutes from 6am to 8pm Monday to Saturday and 7am to 7.30pm Sunday, departing from Moi Ave. All these services cost KSh20 to KSh40, depending on where you get off.

Car

See p378 for comprehensive information on car hire, road rules and conditions. If you are driving, beware of wheel-clampers: parking in the centre is by permit only (KSh70 per day), available from the parking attendants who roam the streets in bright yellow or red jackets. If you park overnight

in the street in front of your hotel, the guard will often keep an eye on your vehicle for a small consideration.

Matatu

Nairobi's horde of matatus follow the same routes as buses and display the same route numbers. For Westlands, you can pick up No 23 on Moi Ave or Latema Rd. No 46 to the Yaya Centre stops in front of the main post office, and Nos 125 and 126 to Langata leave from in front of the train station. As usual, you should keep an eye on your valuables on all matatus.

Taxi

As people are compelled to use them due to Nairobi's endemic street crime, taxis here are overpriced and undermaintained, but you've little choice, particularly at night. Taxis don't cruise for passengers, but you can find them parked on every other street corner in the city centre. At night they're outside restaurants, bars and nightclubs; a fleet of reconditioned old London cabs hangs outside the Hilton Hotel at most times of day.

Fares around town are negotiable but end up pretty standard. Any journey within the downtown area costs KSh200, from downtown to Milimani Rd costs KSh300, and for longer journeys such as Westlands or the Yaya Centre, fares range from KSh400 to KSh500. From the city centre to the Carnivore restaurant is KSh650 one way, or KSh1200 for a return trip with waiting.

You can also find a few Indonesian-style tuk-tuks operating from Kenyatta Ave. They're cheaper than taxis and good for short hops.



Around Nairobi

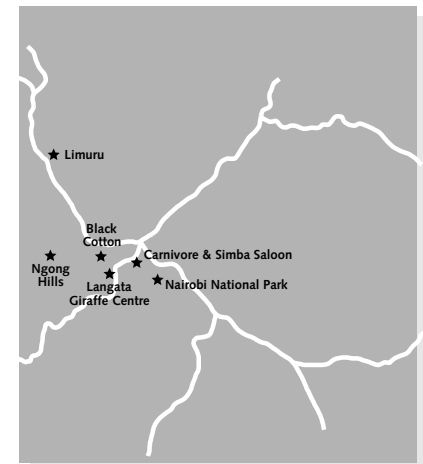
For most people, the area around Nairobi is far preferable to the stress of the city itself, and it's no coincidence that the green hills surrounding the capital are home to one of Kenya's largest expat communities. From the secluded suburbs of Karen and Langata to the lush walking trails of the Ngong Hills, a quick matatu ride can whisk you into another world for that much-needed rural escape, and with plenty of upscale restaurants and bars amid the villas there's no need to forego all the creature comforts of urban living. With money and time to spare, staying out this way can also be a special experience to rival even the best city hotels.

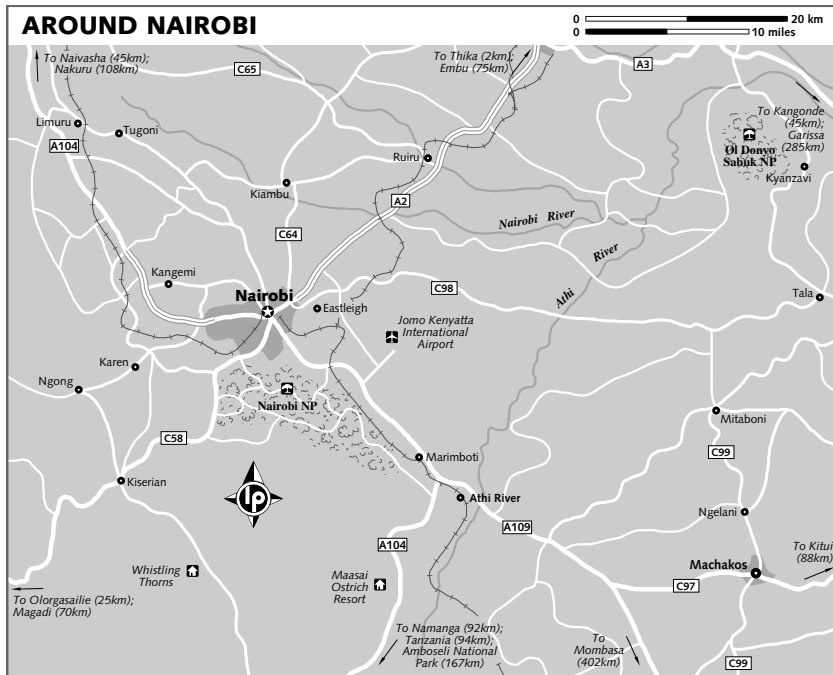
And speaking of creatures, taking that short trip out of Nairobi can thrust you firmly into the domain of Kenyan wildlife, whether you're chasing lepidoptera at Butterfly Africa, snogging giraffes at the Langata Giraffe Centre or watching flamingos feed at the raw soda gash of Lake Magadi. You don't even have to go out of sight of the city to feed those safari cravings – Nairobi National Park is literally right outside, with curious fauna peering over the ring road at the heaving metropolis next door.

Elsewhere you can stride the hills of the old Akamba territory around Machakos, brush up your tribal dance steps at the Bomas of Kenya, take in the span of the Rift Valley from the roads near Limuru and chew on succulent *nyama choma* (barbecued meat) at one of Africa's classic restaurants. So don't just sit there moaning about Nairobi: get out of it!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching wildlife amid the planes, trains and automobiles in **Nairobi National Park** (p125)
- Tangling tongues with a rubber-necked ungulate at **Langata Giraffe Centre** (p128)
- Making the essential foodie pilgrimage to **Carnivore** (p129) and dancing it off at **Simba Saloon** (p130)
- Striking out for some proper exercise walking the **Ngong Hills** (p130)
- Gawping at the views around **Limuru** (p133) as the road snakes down into the Rift Valley
- Partying the month away with the Langata expats at **Black Cotton** (p130)





National Parks

The only national park here is Nairobi National Park (opposite), just south of the city.

Getting There & Around

The whole area covered by this chapter, with the exception of Lake Magadi, is well served by matatus and buses from central Nairobi. Taxis are also readily available; initial asking prices can be as high as KSh1500 when heading into town, but you should be able to bargain them down considerably, especially for return journeys.

NAIROBI'S SOUTHERN OUTSKIRTS

020

The suburbs to the south of Nairobi, while still technically within the city limits, bear little resemblance to the urban sprawl of the capital. Inhabited mainly by white settlers and expats, these leafy environs conceal extensive ranks of houses and villas designed

to recall provincial England, all discreetly set in their own colonial grounds. The genteel atmosphere and a relative wealth of attractions make Karen, Langata and Ngong appealing destinations for a quick and easy escape from city life.

KAREN & LANGATA Information

Langata Link (Map p125; ☎ 891314; www.langatalink.com; Langata South Rd; ☑) Aimed mainly at residents, the travel desk here has plenty of information about hotels and restaurants in Langata and Karen as well as further afield.

Bomas of Kenya

The **Bomas of Kenya** (Map p126; ☎ 891801; Langata Rd; nonresident adult/child KSh600/300, resident KSh100/25; 🎫 performances 2.30pm Mon-Fri, 3.30pm Sat & Sun) is a cultural centre at Langata, near the main gate to Nairobi National Park. The talented resident artistes perform traditional dances and songs taken from the country's 16 various tribal groups, including Arab-influenced Swahili taarab music, Kalenjin warrior dances, Embu drumming

and Kikuyu circumcision ceremonies. It's touristy, of course, but it's still a spectacular afternoon out, and the centre itself has such a high profile that the first meeting of the National Constitutional Conference was held here in 2003, producing the so-called Bomas Draft of the new constitution.

Bus or matatu No 125 or 126 runs here from Nairobi train station (KSh30, 30 minutes). Get off at Magadi Rd, from where it's about a 1km walk, clearly signposted on the right-hand side of the road. Note that if you bring a video camera there's an extra KSh500 charge.

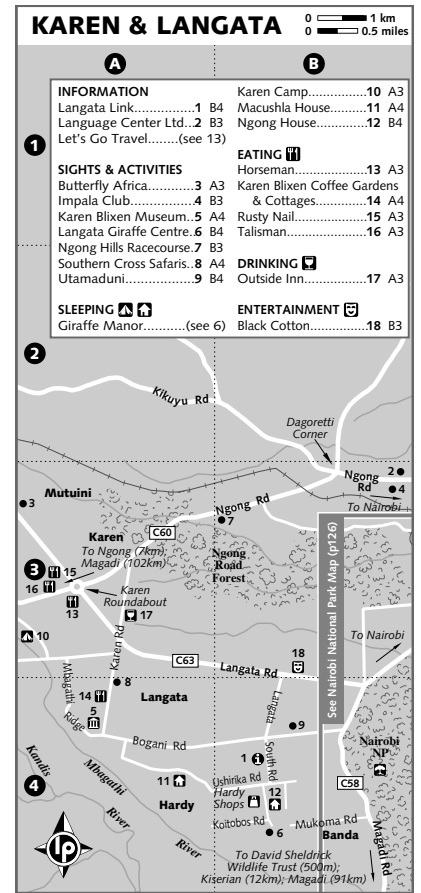
Nairobi National Park

This somewhat underrated **park** (Map p126; nonresident adult/child US\$23/10, smartcard required) is the most accessible of all Kenya's wildlife parks, being located only a few kilometres from the city centre. It's possible to visit the park as part of a tour or even by public transport, as the park runs its own wildlife bus (Sunday only).

Founded in 1946, the park's incongruous suburban location makes it virtually unique in Africa and adds an intriguing twist to the usual safari experience, pitting the plentiful wildlife against a backdrop of looming skyscrapers, speeding matatus and jets coming into land at Kenyatta airport. As the animals seem utterly unperturbed by all the activity around them, you stand a good chance of seeing gazelles, warthogs, zebras, giraffes, ostriches, buffaloes, lions, cheetahs and leopards. The landscape is mixture of savanna and swampland and is home to the highest concentration of black rhinos in the world (over 50). The wetland areas sustain over 550 recorded species of bird, more than in the whole of the UK!

Nairobi National Park is not fenced and wildlife is still able (for the time being) to migrate along a narrow wildlife corridor to the Rift Valley. The concentrations of wildlife are higher in the dry season as animals migrate into the park where water is almost always available. Keeping the migration pathway open is one of the principal aims of the **Friends of Nairobi National Park** (Fonnap; ☎ 500622; Kenya Wildlife Service Headquarters, Langata Rd, PO Box 42076) campaign.

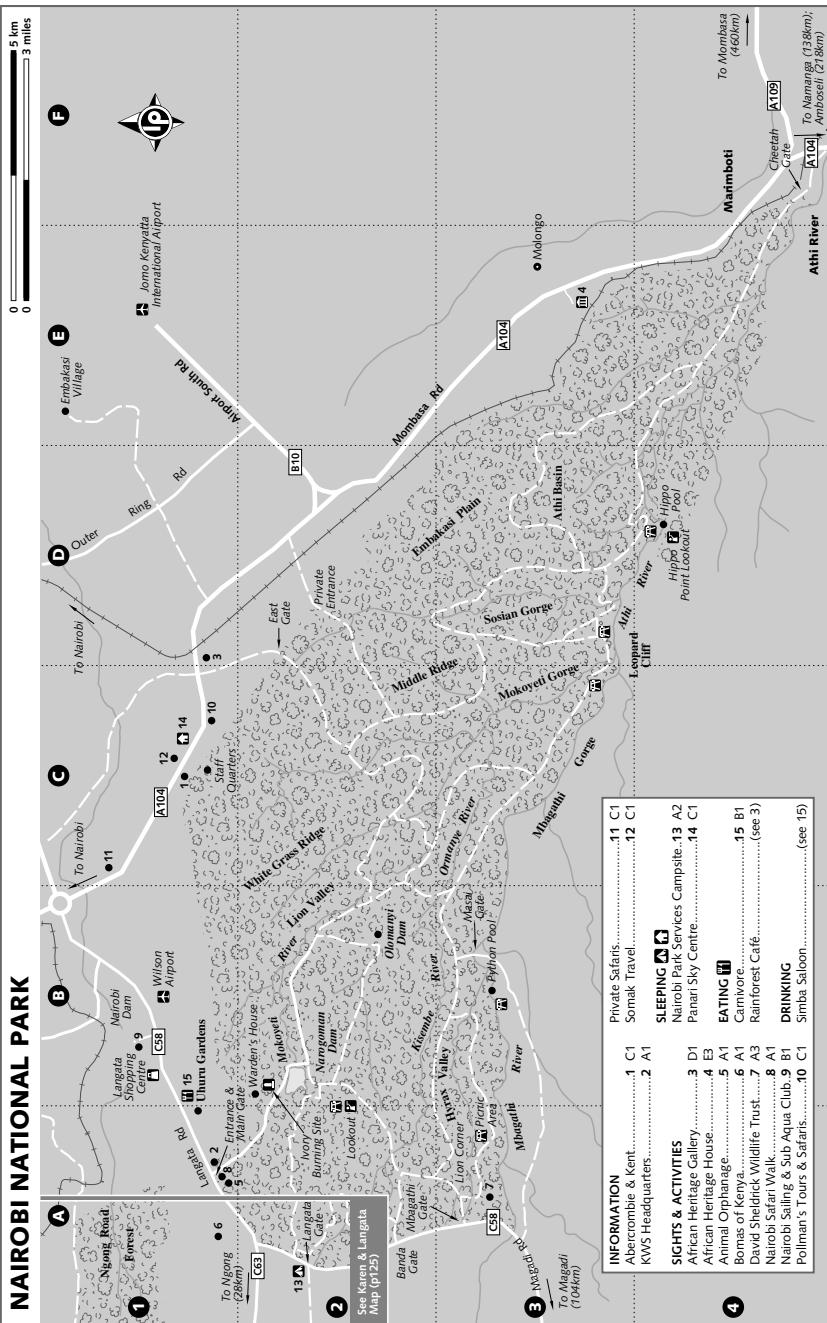
By the main gate you will find the site where former President Moi famously burned 10 tons of ivory in 1989 in protest at the



international trade in ivory. Nearby is the **Nairobi Safari Walk** (nonresident adult/child US\$5/5, resident KSh500/100; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm), a sort of zoo-meets-nature boardwalk with lots of birds as well as other wildlife, including a pygmy hippo and a white rhino. The nearby **Animal Orphanage** charges the same rates, but it's basically a rather poor zoo and not a patch on the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (see p127).

The headquarters of the **Kenya Wildlife Service** (KWS; ☎ 600800; www.kws.org) are at the park entrance. There's an office right by the gate that sells and recharges smartcards, plus a small education centre.

Nairobi Park Services has a fine campsite (p129) on the edge of the park.



GETTING THERE & AWAY

The cheapest way to see the park is with the 'Park Shuttle,' a big KWS bus that leaves the main gate at 3pm Sunday for a 2½-hour tour of the park. The cost is US\$20/5 per adult/child and you'll need to book in person at the main gate by 2.30pm. Matatu Nos 125 and 126 pass the park entrance (KSh40, 45 minutes).

Alternatively, most safari companies (p59 and p107) offer various tours of the park. The half-day packages usually depart twice a day at 9.30am and 2pm and cost US\$55 to US\$75. Combined trips with the Bomas of Kenya and lunch at the Carnivore restaurant (p129) are also popular, costing US\$75 to US\$130.

The roads in the park are OK for 2WDs, but travelling in a 4WD is never a bad idea. The main entrance to the park is on Langata Rd, but there are also public gates on Magadi Rd. The Athi River Gate at the far end of the park is handy if you're planning to continue on to Mombasa, Amboseli or the Tanzanian border.

Butterfly Africa

This butterfly sanctuary (Map p125; ☎ 884972; www.african-butterfly.org; 256 Dagoretti Rd; adult/child nonresident KSh400/200, resident KSh200/100; 🕒 9am-4.30pm) is housed in a large greenhouse of tropical plants. There are up to 1000 butterflies fluttering around at any one time, with some interesting display boards to help identify them, plus the usual information centre, shop and café. It's out past the Karen roundabout on Dagoretti Rd; you can get here from Moi Ave on the No 111 bus or matatu.

Karen Blixen Museum

This museum (Map p125; ☎ 882779; karenblixen@bidii.com; Karen Rd; adult/child nonresident KSh200/100, resident KSh50/20; 🕒 9.30am-6pm) is the farmhouse where Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, lived between 1914 and 1931. She left after a series of personal tragedies, but the lovely colonial house has been preserved as a museum. It was presented to the Kenyan government at independence by the Danish government along with the adjacent agricultural college. It's set in lovely gardens and is an interesting place to wander around.

Just down the road you'll find the Karen Blixen Coffee Garden (p130) and also Karen Blixen Cottages (p129).

KAREN BLIXEN

The suburb of Karen takes its name from Karen Blixen, aka Isak Dinesen, a Danish coffee planter and lady aristocrat, who went on to become one of Europe's most famous writers on Africa. Although she lived a life of genteel luxury on the edge of the Ngong Hills, her personal life was full of heartbreak. After her first marriage broke down, she began a secret affair with the British playboy Denys Finch-Hatton, who was subsequently killed in a plane crash during one of his frequent flying visits to Tsavo National Park.

Blixen then returned to Denmark, where she began her famous memoir *Out of Africa*. The book is probably one of the definitive tales of European endeavour in Africa, but Blixen was passed over for the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature in favour of Ernest Hemingway. She died from malnutrition at her family estate in Denmark in 1962.

Out of Africa was subsequently made into a movie starring Meryl Streep, Robert Redford and one of the retired trains from the Nairobi Railway museum!

The museum is about 2km from Langata Rd. The easiest way to get here is via the Karen Metro Shuttle bus from City Hall Way (KSh20, 40 minutes). A taxi will cost about KSh900 one way. You can also come on an organised tour.

Utamaduni

A charitable organisation set in a large colonial house near the Langata Giraffe Sanctuary, **Utamaduni** (Map p125; ☎ 890464; Bogani East Rd; 🕒 9.30am-6pm) is essentially a large crafts emporium, with 16 separate rooms selling all kinds of excellent artworks and souvenirs from around Africa. You can visit the workshops in the garden, and there's a playground and restaurant. It's a regular stop for the more upmarket tour companies, so prices start relatively high, but there's none of the hard sell you'd get in town. A portion of all proceeds goes to the Kenya Wildlife Foundation.

David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

Occupying a plot within Nairobi National Park, this nonprofit conservation trust

was established shortly after the death of David Sheldrick in 1977. David and his wife Daphne pioneered techniques of raising orphaned black rhinos and elephants and reintroducing them back into the wild, and the Trust has close links with Tsavo National Park for these and other projects. Rhinos and elephants are still reared on site and can be viewed between 11am and noon, at their daily mud bath. There's no charge for visiting, but a donation of around KSh300 per person would be appropriate. There's a gift shop and **information centre** (Map p126; ☎ 891996; www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org) and usually someone around to answer questions.

From Moi Ave, take bus or matatu No 125 or 126 and ask to be dropped off at the KWS central workshop, on Magadi Rd (KSh40, 50 minutes). It's about 1km from the workshop gate to the Sheldrick centre; it's signposted and KWS staff can give you directions.

Langata Giraffe Centre

The **giraffe centre** (Map p125; ☎ 890952; www.giraffecentre.org; Koitobos Rd; nonresident adult/child KSh500/250, resident KSh100/20; ☎ 9am-5.30pm), run by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW), is about 18km from central Nairobi, reached by Langata South Rd. Here you can observe, hand-feed or even kiss Rothschild's giraffes from a raised circular wooden structure, which is quite an experience, especially for children. There's a display of information about giraffes, and across the road is an interesting self-guided forest walk through the Gogo River bird sanctuary. Booklets are available from the ticket office.

To get here from central Nairobi, take matatu No 24 to the Hardy shops in Langata and walk from there, or take matatu No 126 to Magadi Rd and walk through from Mukoma Rd.

African Heritage House

Designed by Alan Donovan, an African heritage expert and gallery owner, this stunning **exhibition house** (Map p126; ☎ 0721-518389; www.africanheritagebook.com; off Mombasa Rd) overlooking Nairobi National Park can be visited by prior arrangement only. The mud architecture combines a range of traditional styles from across Africa, and the interior

is furnished exclusively with tribal artefacts and artworks. For those with the money, it's possible to negotiate overnight stays (single/double US\$125/250), meals (US\$25 to US\$30) and steam train or even helicopter transfers.

For information, you can drop in at the **African Heritage Gallery** (Map p126; ☎ 890528; Libra House, Mombasa Rd), which sells the same kind of upmarket *objets d'art* you'll see in the house.

Sleeping

As you might expect, Karen and Langata have some rather exclusive accommodation options tucked away amid their leafy lanes, and if you want to splash out for something special you're certainly better off here than in Nairobi. Reservations are mandatory for most places here, as you're rarely permitted just to walk in off the street.

Giraffe Manor (Map p125; ☎ 891078; www.giraffe Manor.com; Mukoma Rd; full board s/d US\$385/595) Built in 1932 in the style of a typical English country manor, this elegant house is situated on 56 hectares, much of which is given over to the giraffe centre next door. The food is excellent (you dine as the personal guests of the owners) and you may have a Rothschild's giraffe peering through your bedroom window first thing in the morning. Literary buffs should ask for the Karen Blixen room, decked out with furniture the famous author gave the house's owners when she left Africa for the last time.

Ngong House (Map p125; ☎ 891856; ngonghouse@form-net.com; Ndovo Rd; s/d US\$450/600) Also a short walk from the giraffe centre, this is an altogether different sort of hotel. The four luxurious two-tier tree houses are set on 4m-high stilts, with fine views out across the Ngong Hills. Rates include transfers and all meals and drinks, and a number of free excursions are provided. It's a magical place, but you certainly pay for the experience.

Macushla House (Map p125; ☎ 891987; fax 891971; Nguuruwe Rd; s/d US\$95/170; ☎) A beautiful place, more like a private house, catering for just 10 guests. Located west of the Langata Giraffe Centre, it has beautiful gardens, an excellent restaurant and the rates, which include breakfast, are really very reasonable all things considered.

Karen Camp (Map p125; ☎ 883475; www.karencamp.com; Marula La; camping US\$3, dm US\$5, r US\$20) Back-

packer options are few and far between in affluent Karen, so it's good to see a new venture aiming to draw the budget crowd out into the suburbs. The quiet location and smart facilities are already attracting travellers; as well as the standard accommodation, there are also permanent safari-style tents (US\$15) and a regular 'pig spit'. We hope they mean 'hog roast'...

Nairobi Park Services (Map p126; ☎ 890325; nps@swiftkenya.com; Magadi Rd; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$6, d/tr US\$15/18) You'll find this place in a quiet residential area on the edge of Nairobi National Park. Established by two former overland drivers, it's set in a garden with a great wood-finished bar and restaurant with satellite TV, cold beers and cheap meals. The vehicle work bays make it a good pit stop for overland trucks and self-drivers. Security is tight and parking costs US\$2 per vehicle per night. To get here from the centre, take a No 125 or 126 bus or matatu from near the train station; the entrance is opposite the Langata Gate.

Karen Blixen Cottages (Map p125; ☎ 882130; www.blixencooffeearden.co.ke; 336 Karen Rd; per person US\$170; ☎) Near the Karen Blixen Museum, this is a lovely complex for up to 34 guests, set in a pretty formal garden with the coffee-garden restaurants conveniently to hand. Rates include breakfast.

Panari Sky Centre (Map p126; ☎ 553894; www.panarihotel.com; Mombasa Rd) Now that it's finally commencing operations, this extravagant modern glass'n'chrome building will be the nearest Nairobi has to an airport hotel, and a lot more besides – the complex includes space for a massive shopping centre, a casino, two cinemas and the first ever ice rink in East Africa!

Eating

Many of the expats and white Kenyans who live out in Karen and Langata never set foot in central Nairobi at all if they can help it, so there are a number of very good restaurants, cafés and bars catering for this exclusive but friendly resident community. Prices are high but so are standards, and high security means you're virtually guaranteed a break from prostitutes, hawkers and all the other day-to-day attentions of the city.

Carnivore (Map p126; ☎ 605933; www.carnivore.co.ke; off Langata Rd; set meals KSh1325) Owned by the Tamarind chain, this is hands-down

the most famous *nyama choma* restaurant in Kenya, beloved of tourists, expats and wealthier locals alike for the last 25 years. Just to reinforce the point, it has twice been voted among the 50 best restaurants in the world. At the entrance is a huge barbecue pit laden with real swords of beef, pork, lamb, chicken and farmed game meats; sadly new laws mean zebra, hartebeest, kudu and the like are now off the menu, which makes things distinctly less exotic, but you can still sample camel, ostrich and crocodile. As long as the paper flag on your table is flying, waiters will keep bringing the meat, which is carved right at the table. It's worth knowing that you can tip the flag over temporarily to give yourself a break to digest everything! If you do manage to save some space, dessert and coffee are included in the set price. Note that a hefty 26% tax and service charge is added to the bill.

At lunchtime, you can get here by matatu No 126 from the centre – the turn-off is signposted just past Wilson Airport, from where it's a 1km walk. At night, you're best off hiring a cab for the return trip. With waiting the fare should be about KSh1200, or KSh650 one way. The very popular Simba Saloon (p130) is next door.

Talisman (Map p125; ☎ 883213; talisman@swiftkenya.com; 320 Ngong Rd; mains KSh500-900; ☎) from 9am Tue-Sun) This classy new café/bar/restaurant is incredibly fashionable with the Karen in-crowd right now, and rivals any of Kenya's top eateries for imaginative international food. The comfortable lounge-like rooms mix modern African and European styles, the courtyard provides some welcome air, and specials such as *tajine* (Moroccan stew) perk up the palate no end. The cakes and desserts also come highly recommended.

Rusty Nail (Map p125; ☎ 882461; rustynail@wananchi.com; Dagoretti Rd; mains KSh450-900) The combination Moroccan/Turkish styling of this pavilion restaurant belies the range of food on offer – lunch and dinner menus change every week, offering anything from felafel and steak to snapper and coronation chicken. Cream teas and traditional Sunday roasts cater for nostalgic English foodies.

Rainforest Café (Map p126; ☎ 555872; Libra House, Mombasa Rd; buffet KSh880) The fact that Rainforest is owned and operated by NAS Airport Services might ring alarm bells at first, but you won't find any pre-packed trays here.

In fact, locals reckon this is one of the few places in town you can get a decent sandwich, and the all-encompassing buffets are good value (there's no à la carte menu, though you can order individual dishes from the display).

Horseman (Map p125; ☎ 884560; Karen shopping centre, Langata Rd; mains KSh300-500, game meat KSh680-1000) Three restaurants in one, set in a leafy patio garden straight out of rural England, with a surprisingly authentic pub to match. One section specialises in game meat, one serves pizzas and the third offers Chinese, Indian and Kenyan food. It's currently fashionable for expats to sneer at the food, but this apparently has no effect on its popularity, and unlike its British counterparts the cosy bar is open till late. There's a takeaway section on the main road outside offering fast-food versions of various dishes (KSh150 to KSh300).

Karen Blixen Coffee Garden (Map p125; ☎ 882138; www.blixencoffeegarden.co.ke; Karen Rd; mains KSh300-900; ☎ 7am-10pm) Just down the road from the Karen Blixen Museum, this upmarket option offers diners and snackers five different areas to enjoy a varied menu, including the plush L'Amour dining room, the historic 1901 Swedo House and the main section, which is a smart, upmarket restaurant set in a veritable English country garden. The food is excellent, a stone pizza oven is under construction and there's a friendly and very popular pub.

Drinking & Entertainment

Simba Saloon (Map p126; ☎ 501706; off Langata Rd; admission KSh200-300; ☎ Wed-Sun) Next door to Carnivore, this huge, partly open-air bar and nightclub pulls in a huge crowd, particularly on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. There are video screens, several bars, a bonfire and adventure playground in the garden and unashamedly Western music on the dance floor. It's usually rammed with wealthy Kenyans, expat teenagers, travellers and NGO workers, plus a fair sprinkling of prostitutes. You can also get a range of well-priced food at all hours, and there's a Dorman's coffee stall to keep those eyelids open til closing.

Black Cotton (Map p125; Langata Rd) A real insider tip; the sign opposite the junction with Langata South Rd is the only evidence this monthly club night even exists. If you're around on the first Friday of the month and

feel like cutting loose, Black Cotton is without a doubt the biggest, messiest expat party in the whole Nairobi area.

Outside Inn (Map p125; ☎ 882110; Plains House, Karen Rd) Perfect for a bit of rowdy drinkage, this semi-open barn of a bar is a firm favourite with residents for its relaxed, boozy atmosphere, and stays friendly even when it's packed for televised football or rugby fixtures. Try the toffee vodka.

NGONG HILLS

The green and fertile Ngong Hills were where many white settlers set up farms in the early colonial days. It's still something of an expat enclave, and here and there in the hills are perfect reproductions of English farmhouses with country gardens full of flowering trees – only the acacias remind you that you aren't rambling around the Home Counties of England.

Close to Pt Lamwia, the summit of the range, is the grave of Denys George Finch-Hatton, the famous playboy and lover of Karen Blixen. A large obelisk east of the summit on the lower ridges marks his grave, inscribed with one of his favourite poems, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The hills still contain plenty of wildlife (antelopes and buffaloes are common) and there are legends about a lion and lioness standing guard at Finch-Hatton's graveside.

The hills provide some excellent walking, but robbery has been a risk in the past, so consult locals for the latest information. If you're worried take an organised tour or pick up an escort from the Ngong police station or KWS office.

Ngong Races

Several Sundays a month, hundreds of Nairobi residents flee the noise and bustle of the city for the much more genteel surroundings of the **Ngong Hills Racecourse** (Map p125; ☎ 573923; jck@karibunet.com; Ngong Rd), just east of Karen. In the past, races had to be cancelled because of rogue rhinos on the track, but the biggest danger these days is stray balls from the golf course in the middle! The public enclosure is free; entry to the grandstand is KSh100, or you can pay KSh250 for a platinum pass, which gives you access to the cushioned members' seating and the restaurant overlooking the course. A race card costs KSh30 and you can bet as little

as KSh20 with some bookies (minimum KSh100 with the course Tote), so everyone should be able to afford a flutter. There are usually three races every month during the season, which runs from October to July. You can get here on the Metro Shuttle bus (KSh40, 30 minutes) and matatus No 24 or 111 (KSh20) from Haile Selassie Ave.

Sleeping

Whistling Thorns (☎ 072-721933; www.whistlingthorns.com; Isinya/Kiserian Pipeline Rd, near Kiserian; camping KSh250, with tent KSh450, d cottage per person KSh2500-3500; ☎) An excellent place to stay in the Maasai foothills of the Ngong Hills. Horse riding is on offer at KSh1200 per hour, and there are numerous walking trails in the area. Cottage rates include breakfast. To get here, take bus or matatu No 111 or 126 from Moi Ave to Kiserian (KSh50, one hour) and change to a Isinya/Kajiado matatu. Ask to be dropped at Whistling Thorns, which is 200m from the roadside. Count on a two-hour trip door to door from central Nairobi.

SOUTH OF NAIROBI

OLORGASAILIE PREHISTORIC SITE

Several important archaeological finds were made at this site 40km north of Magadi by the Leakeys in the 1940s, including hand axes and stone tools thought to have been made by *Homo erectus* about half a million years ago. Fossils have also been discovered and some are still there, protected from the elements by shade roofs (sadly the 'elephant butchery' site, which contains the preserved remains of an elephant killed and eaten by primitive men, is not one of these). A guided tour (KSh200) is available and there are numerous notice boards and displays.

The **Olorgasailie campsite** (camping KSh200, bandas s/d KSh500/800) is not a bad place to stay for the night; you'll need to bring your own food, bedding and drinking water. It can get pretty windy out here, but you'll certainly feel like you're properly in the bush, and it's likely you'll have the place to yourself.

LAKE MAGADI

☎ 045

The most southerly of the Rift Valley lakes in Kenya, Lake Magadi is rarely visited by tourists because of its remoteness, although

it actually makes an easy day trip from Nairobi if you have your own vehicle. The most mineral-rich of the soda lakes, it is almost entirely covered by a thick encrustation of soda that supports many flamingos and other water birds and gives the landscape a weird lunar appearance, somewhere between Ice Station Zebra and Mission to Mars!

A causeway leads across the most visually dramatic part of this strange landscape to a viewpoint on the western shore. It's worth a drive if you have a 4WD, otherwise you can head to the hot springs further south. The springs aren't particularly dramatic, but you can take a dip in the deeper pools, and there are large numbers of fish that have adapted to the hot water. You may run into local tribespeople, particularly Maasai, who will offer to show you the way and 'demonstrate' everything for you for a fee.

The thick soda crust is formed when the mineral-rich water, pumped up from hot springs deep underground, evaporates rapidly in the 38°C temperature to leave a mineral layer. A soda-extraction factory 'harvests' this layer and extracts sodium chloride (common salt) and sodium carbonate (soda), which are then put straight onto trains to Mombasa.

The town of Magadi is purely a company town for factory staff and their families; it was originally built by the multinational ICL, and is now run by the unimaginatively named Magadi Soda Co. Facilities here are limited, but there are a couple of small bars, cafés, shops and a large swimming pool.

If you want to stay here, camping is your only option. There's no shortage of space – ask at the roadblock for the best spot. The best accommodation within a reasonable distance (around 60km to 70km) is Whistling Thorns (left), near Kiserian.

Getting There & Away

The C58 road from Nairobi is in good condition, although there is very little traffic on it after Kiserian. Akamba no longer runs bus services here and there seems to be only one matatu a day to Nairobi (KSh200), leaving in the morning and returning to Magadi in the evening.

ATHI RIVER

This industrial export zone has nothing of interest to visitors in itself, but does have

one interesting accommodation option, convenient for breaking the journey down to Mombasa or Arusha.

Maasai Ostrich Resort (Map p124; ☎ 020-350014; www.mericagrouphotels.com; off Namanga Rd, near Kitengela; camping adult/child KSh400/250, s/d/ste US\$35/40/55; 🚗) Combining an ostrich farm and a hotel is a fairly unusual idea, but then again why not? Certainly the luxury farmhouse accommodation and gardens provide a nice setting, and there's a range of activities to keep you busy in an otherwise unpromising area, from tennis to ostrich rides (KSh100). The rates quoted on the website are double those given at reception, so make sure you check prices if you book in advance! To get here, take the road towards Namanga and turn left at the sign, about 10km past Kitengela town; southbound public transport can get you to the turn-off, but it's another 7km to the farm itself.

MACHAKOS

☎ 044

This small, busy town was the centre of the former Akamba territory (see p43 for more), and was chosen by the Imperial British East Africa Company as an upcountry trading post a decade or so before Nairobi was even established. The main motivation was the reputation of the Akamba people as mediators between the coastal Swahili and the inland Maasai and Kikuyu – the cooperation of the latter two tribes seemed essential for anyone wishing to reach the shores of Lake Victoria. When this attempt at diplomacy failed, the British simply built a railway right through the middle of the Maasai and Kikuyu territory. Topography meant that the railway had to bypass Machakos, so the provincial headquarters shifted to Nairobi in 1901.

The white settlers may have gone but Machakos is still bustling on a good day, its lively centre served by an active crew of *boda-bodas* and tuk-tuks. Being at a lower altitude than Nairobi, it avoids the cloud that hangs over the capital, providing a breath of country air. Once you've seen the decorative mosque and the large Catholic cathedral there are no attractions as such, but the unhurried pace and African atmosphere make it a good place to come and unwind.

As the town is hemmed in by attractive valleys, there are plenty of walking options,

especially south of the centre, where numerous trails lead up to farms in the surrounding hills. Apparently there's a magnetic hill a few kilometres from town that has its own laws of gravity, but you'll need local help to find the spot and we can't vouch for what you'll find when you get there!

Information

There are branches of Barclays and Standard Chartered banks on the main street and a Kenya Commercial Bank on Syokimau Ave. The post office and Telkom centre are opposite each other off the main road, near the cathedral.

Cooperative Curio Shop (C97 Hwy) A handy place to buy crafts, employing local artisans.

eNet Cybercafé (Susu Centre; per min KSh1.50; ☎ 24hr)

Telkom Centre (☎ 20161; Kinyali Hse, Mbolu Malu Rd) Opposite the post office.

Sleeping

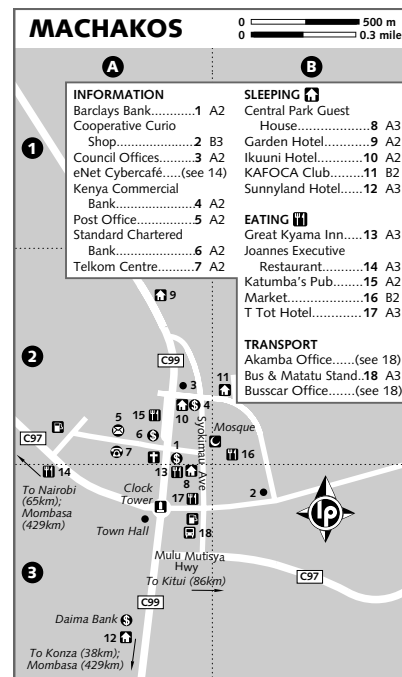
Garden Hotel (☎ 20037; www.gardenhotelmachakos.com; Mwatu Wa Ngoma Rd; s/d KSh1940/3350, ste s/d KSh4340/5590) Past the council offices to the north of the centre, this is the best hotel in town. It is a huge and busy conference hotel with its own restaurant, bar and beer garden and a range of rooms including some big suites with garden-facing balconies. Rates include breakfast. If you ask nicely you may be allowed to camp in the quiet grounds.

Central Park Guest House (☎ 21866; Shanbad House, off Syokimau Ave; s/d KSh1400/1700) The name comes not from New York but from the tiny Mulu Mutisya Gardens opposite this decent central option. Rooms have TVs and prices include breakfast in the small terrace café.

Sunnyland Hotel (☎ 20402; s/d KSh500/700) One of the best places to stay, out along the road to Konza next to the Daima Bank. All rooms have mosquito nets and hot water, making them good value, and the modest hotel restaurant is popular with guests and locals alike.

Ikuuni Hotel (☎ 21166; r with shared/private bathroom KSh600/1000) The accommodation takes second place to the restaurant/bar/club trade here, but the small rooms circling the internal courtyard are tidy and serviceable enough, with some TVs for added entertainment. Breakfast costs an extra KSh260 per person.

KAFOCA Club (☎ 21933; d KSh800, s/d with shared bathroom KSh300/400) The Kenya Armed Forces



Old Comrades Association Club seems a bit short on military types these days, but it's a good secure compound with a bar, beer garden and cafeteria. Rooms are unfancy but reasonable, and could even be quite good if/when the ongoing renovations are complete.

Eating & Drinking

Apart from the various hotel restaurants, there are a handful of small canteens, cafés and pubs around town.

T Tot Hotel (Ngei Rd; snacks & meals KSh20-100) Right in the centre of town, this place is hard to beat. It's clean, well organised and seems to have an incredible number of waiters! The samosas, stews and side dishes are top class.

Joannes Executive Restaurant (Susu Centre, C97 Hwy; mains KSh165-200) 'Joanne' plies her trade from this little courtyard cafeteria in the Susu office complex, and may well count a number of budding executives among her regular clients, especially at lunchtime.

Great Kyama Inn (☎ 20086; C97 Hwy; mains KSh100-200) This popular pub-restaurant is

an institution in the Machakos scene, with regular DJs and live bands, including local stars and former Band of the Year the Everest Kings Band.

Katumba's Pub (C99 Hwy; nyama choma per kg KSh200-220) On the main road, features an upstairs bar and restaurant with a veranda overlooking the street. There's also a pool table.

For self-caterers, the town market is open from 6.30am to 6.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and there are plenty of stores and supermarkets to fill the gaps.

Getting There & Away

The Machakos bus station is off Syokimau Ave, behind the Mobil petrol station. The best way to get here is to take a matatu from the country bus station on Landhies Rd in Nairobi (KSh80, one hour). There are also very frequent buses from companies such as Busscar.

There's an Akamba office at the bus station where you can book transport to destinations throughout Kenya, mostly travelling via Nairobi. There's a direct service to Mombasa at 10am and 8.30pm (KSh500, six hours).

NORTH OF NAIROBI

KIAMBU

☎ 066

The main reason to come to Kiambu, 15km northeast of Nairobi, is to visit **Paradise Lost** (☎ 315273; paradiselostcaves@yahoo.com; Kiambu Rd; admission US\$10, camping KSh400), an attractive picnic spot that's around 20km from Nairobi. Here are some 2.5-million-year-old caves set in 52 acres of forest and there's a waterfall and scenic dam where you can go fishing or swim (the owners insist there are no crocodiles!). Free boats are provided and horse and camel rides are also possible. If you want to camp, tents can be provided. You can get here by matatu No 100 from Racecourse Rd in Nairobi.

LIMURU

☎ 066

About 30km northwest of Nairobi, Limuru possibly has even more of a European feel than the Ngong Hills, except here there are vast coffee and tea plantations blanketing the rolling hills, cut by swathes of conifer

and eucalypt forest. The village itself is unremarkable, but there are some interesting detours in the surrounding hills.

The best places to see the **escarpments of the Rift Valley** are the roads that descend into the valley just past Limuru. The views are stunning; if you're on the new road, which runs direct to Naivasha, Mt Longonot is directly in front, while the plains of the Maasai sweep away to the south towards the Masai Mara National Reserve.

The old road, northwest of Limuru, was originally built by Italian POWs in WWII

(there's a memorial chapel halfway down) and goes past the turn-offs for Mt Longonot, the Masai Mara and Hell's Gate. It's now been resurfaced and is in better condition than the 'new' road.

A number of **viewpoints** are signposted along these roads and are generally the safest places to stop. Predictably, there are souvenir stalls at all these places, selling Maasai blankets, sheepskin hats and other trinkets; there are few bargains to be found because of the number of tourists passing through.