

My first trip to Kenya

In February of this year I took my first ever trip to Kenya. I have to admit my only knowledge of this country was what my dad would tell us about his days growing up in Nairobi and of course Comic Relief. I didn't know what to expect when I landed but as soon as I stepped out of the airport (after a battle at immigration) I felt a sense of familiarity...it reminded me of Pakistan! During the drive to the hotel I couldn't help but notice the lack of discipline on the roads and the slums. If I hadn't been to Pakistan before I would have been in a state of shock but I soaked it all in and was excited about the adventures that lay ahead.

I was there primarily for a wedding but would also be going on safari and then heading to Diani Beach just near Mombasa. I had a free day before the wedding kicked off to explore Nairobi. I visited the elephant orphanage where I got to see cute baby elephants up close. I then went to the giraffe centre where I had the dubious pleasure of feeding a giraffe, with its coarse tongue slobbering all over my hands! Despite the look of disgust on my face it was one of the highlights of my trip.

During the wedding I got to experience the cosmopolitan side of Nairobi with its upmarket shopping plazas and international vibe. I wasn't expecting this at all and it really challenged my perception of Kenya and indeed of Africa. Nairobi was much more diverse than I thought but the difference between the rich and the poor was



apparent. I did enjoy the haggling at the Village Market, though my English friends found it overwhelming. I clearly learned something whilst watching my mum bargain with the salesman in Pakistan!

After the wedding I went on safari. We travelled by car from Nairobi to Masai Mara, taking in the spectacular sights of The Great Rift Valley. We also had the added surprise of stopping at a small village whilst our driver fixed our flat tyre. We finally arrived at our lodgings and to what can only be described as the fanciest tent I'd ever seen - complete with its own ensuite bathroom! Safari itself was a truly breath-taking experience. No amount of pictures can relay just how vast and beautiful Masai Mara is. We saw the big five except a rhino but the highlight was seeing a herd of elephants at sunset. Truly something I will never forget. We also crossed the border in to Tanzania in to the Serengeti where we were so close to convincing our American friends that Pride Rock in The Lion King was a real place!

After our safari we took a flight from the middle of Masai Mara to Diani Beach near Mombasa. I had never been on a beach holiday or a resort but I quickly came to realise why they are so popular. The chance to soak in the sun and relax by a pool reading a book is an opportunity I would love to do again. I had never seen a beach so white whilst indulging in an hour long massage. We enjoyed the resort so much we never made it in to the main part of Mombasa, which is a shame because I've heard it's a great place. I even got a braid in my hair and saw where they made the wooden souvenirs.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first ever trip to Kenya and I would definitely go again and recommend you do the same...