

Holiday in Kenya

19. November - 3. December 2004

Out-bound

Finally, the day of the adventurous holiday came. We arrived in due time at Copenhagen Airport, checked in and booked the seats for both the SAS plane to London Heathrow Airport and the Kenya Airways plane to Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta Airport. As always when we are travelling, we went to do some shopping and very quickly it was time for going to the gate.

Coming to the gate everything seemed to be ok, but after a while it was announced that our plane had technical problems, and thus we would have to be transferred to another plane. This caused a delay of half an hour, but the plane caught up with the delay, and we landed at scheduled time.

Heathrow is a very big airport, and getting to the terminal of Kenya Airways took a quarter of an hour by bus. We had altogether 3 hours in London, but the time passed very quickly, and well seated with lots of space for legs we took off.

Flying time was scheduled to approximately 8 ½ hours, so we had to sleep in the plane if we wanted to be ready for the safari that practically started at arrival. We both succeeded to sleep, but as usual I woke up several times. At about three o'clock in the morning I was dozing, when I suddenly felt that the plane was descending and shortly after I heard the captain announcing that we had to land in Khartoum due to problems with the plane. When Mira asked what was going on, I told her what I heard. I am sure it gave her a turn. However, shortly after the captain was back in the loudspeaker saying that a passenger was seriously ill, and that we had got permission to land in Khartoum to transfer the passenger to hospital. For us that was a better reason, but maybe the ill passenger would have preferred the other reason.

This incident resulted in a delay of about two hours, but this was surely better than the death of a person. The passenger was brought out of the plane, temporarily treated and taken away to the hospital. Then the plane was refueled, and the captain announced that we were ready to continue the flight. However, shortly after, the light went out and the engines stopped. Back in the loudspeaker the captain exclaimed: "Oh, what a day ", and told us that for unknown reasons the power supply had failed. They would have to start the alternative generator to re-activate all the navigation systems and other systems, and to restart the engines. That would take other fifteen minutes. I guess that we all hoped that this would be a one-off event.

Against the above mention odds, we landed at nine o'clock in the morning at Jomo Kenyatta Airport. We were a little anxious to see if our luggage had arrived with us. This appeared to be the case and considering our age, we decided that after retrieving our baggage it would be wise to have a pee before we continued on the safari. After relieving ourselves, we went to the exit where we met two employees from Akorn, the tour operator in Kenya. Eunice was there as the administrative representative of the company and David was our driver and guide on the safari. They showed us to the car, and we

expected that coming to the car we would meet other participants in the safari, but it appeared that we were the only two. Therefore, we had our own driver and guide and a Toyota Land Cruiser on our own. We liked to drive the Land Cruiser, but without David as a skilled driver and well-informed guide the safari would not have been such an event.

First impressions and thoughts

When we were settled in the Land Cruiser, we began our safari holiday. Still driving in the airport area we caught sight of several giraffes. David told us that they are the Masai giraffes coming in every morning about ten eleven o'clock from a game reserve close to Nairobi.

Having left the airport we entered the traffic of Nairobi. It was Saturday and everybody seemed to be in the streets, which made driving a slow affair. However, this enabled us to see the throbbing life of the city. A life more colourful and less organized than we are used to. As we passed through Nairobi, we saw several Marabou Storks in trees. We also saw some sights of political or historical importance such as the place where Jomo Kenyatta is buried and the parliament. Moreover, David showed us the old trains from the railway from Mombasa via Nairobi to Uganda built by Indians, who were imported to Kenya for that job.

Finally, we were out of Nairobi and landscapes opened in front of us.

Before we continue our story, there are some points about travelling in other countries or parts of the world that we would like to make. We believe, to get the full benefit of travelling you need to travel with an open mind. In our context this means that you are travelling to get new impressions, to experience new ways of life or to meet the adventure. You are only open for all this if you basically have a positive attitude to this new world. In this way you will be able to see all the qualities of a country, region or continent, and yet you can allow yourself to have critical or negative opinions about different facts because it is counteracted by a positive approach.

We believe that we are travelling with an open mind.

We have been driving on very bad roads in Kenya, the houses we have seen in the villages and towns we have passed through are in many cases merely huts or sheds. We have been confronted with poverty, and yet we have never met so smiling, so good humoured, so positive and so kind people as in Kenya. Surely there are a lot of qualities in the society and in the country. In that respect we are sure that the Kenyan people have a lot to teach us Danes. We are aware of the fact that crime is a widespread problem in Kenya, and that you need to take your precautions when you are moving around, but this does not change our overall view of the country.

In this time with globalization and its demand of conformity it is a relief to visit a country so different from what we are used to, and we hope that the globalization will never obliterate every trace of the distinctive character of the different cultures. We believe that it is with cultures as with species, if the number is decreasing the world is becoming poorer.

When we planned our holiday, we were only thinking about it as one big safari with four days of relaxing at the Indian Ocean. We did not think about it as a complete holiday encompassing safari, seaside holiday and the travelling between the different destinations. However, we came to like this so to speak “in between holiday” very much. To prepare ourselves for Kenya, we had got a copy of Lonely Planet’s book about Kenya. The book contains a lot of information about Kenya, but seen in relation to our driving around the information is fragmented. Returning to Denmark, trying to recollect the whole tour in our minds and on paper, we realised that we needed some coherence in our mental and physical script to avoid such a fragmentation of our best holiday ever. Therefore, we bought a map of Kenya, and retrospectively we reconstructed our route by the help of this map the Lonely Planet book, our photos and our own memory. It can seem a little odd to work this way, but so it happens to be.

To describe facts about Kenya and the places we have been visiting, we have used the sources specified at the end of this story. As English is not our mother tongue, you might find that we have borrowed words or parts of phrases that we would otherwise not use, but wherever possible we have rewritten the information to our English usage.

Aberdare

Back to the story and back on the road we headed north to the Aberdare National Park. We passed the towns of Kahawa, Ruiru, Thika, Sagana and Karatina. Between Sagana and Karatina, we made a stop at a parking place. There was a big shop selling arts and crafts, a small café or restaurant where you could have some refreshments, and a toilet. We found out later that the roads were full of those parking places, and that several of them acted as a meeting point for the safari guides. There they could relax, have some refreshment, read the paper and exchange information. Besides all of us would have the chance to relieve ourselves, and generally the toilets were quite clean. Normally, at those parking places there would be several small shops or stalls and not one big shop.

David told us that this specific shop was, as far as we understood, a co-operative sales company for the craftsmen of the area. It was our first time to try to do shopping in Kenya and really, we were not very used to the Kenyan way of doing business, so I am afraid that Mira’s skills in bargaining failed, and we paid reasonably more for the figures we bought, than the market price would indicate. However, we hope that the extra money will be of benefit to the craftsmen; after all they put a lot of efforts and skill in their work.

The way they do business or bargain in Kenya is that they start with an exorbitant high price. When you say that it is too high they will come down in price, and when you still reject they will ask for your bid by saying: “write your price down”. Not knowing the price level, it is really hard to come up with a bid. So, they will go further down in price and the reduction will look reasonable in comparison to their first offer. As a first time buyer you then find the offer good and accept it. A more skilled negotiator will not stop there, but will argue for a further reduction.

Aberdare is situated in the Central Highlands that is a very fertile area intensively cultivated and densely populated. Not far from our entry to the Aberdare National Park we passed the town of Nyeri

that is one of the largest towns in the area, and administrative headquarters of The Central Province. In Nyeri Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement is buried, and his cottage has been converted into a museum. Unfortunately, we forgot to stop there to see the place; I would have liked it, being a boy scout when I was young.

After having passed Nyeri, we arrived at Aberdare Country Club where we had lunch, and from where the transport to our lodge, The Ark, was arranged. Aberdare Country Club is beautifully situated with a tremendous view over a park like area with green hills in the background. On the area there is a wildlife sanctuary, and we have seen warthogs and baboons there. The park has a lot of shrubs and one of these resembles very much the Poinsettia which we in Denmark have as an indoor flower plant named, Christmas Star and sold at Christmas time.

After we had finished a delicious lunch we were transported to The Ark together with other guests. On the way to the lodge, we saw our first elephants and buffaloes. A litter of young spotted hyenas lying in the middle of the road made the chauffeur stop the car, so we could watch them. Moving slowly towards the puppies, they finally ran away. Shortly after we could see the mother laying under some bushes in the direction the puppies disappeared.

Half an hour later we arrived at The Ark. The only access to the lodge is a wooden footbridge connected to the first floor or deck as it is called. The lodge comprises three decks with several balconies and lounges from where there is a perfect view over the surroundings. On the ground floor, there is a bunker through whose vantage holes you can have a quite close look at the animals and make photos of just the same motive.

The rooms are modest, but for one night they are quite ok.

Close to the lodge, there is a lake and a small waterhole. On the soil around the waterhole, the lodge spreads salt every day, which attracts the wildlife. You can be lucky to see all the big five which are elephant, buffalo, rhino, lion and leopard. During the night an alarm buzzer will sound in your room if one of the big five appears, and the sound indicates which of the big five it is about.

During our stay we saw lots of elephants and buffaloes, a few bushbucks, different gazelles and one white rhino. The difference between the white rhino and the black rhino is not the colour but other characteristics. The white rhino that is the bigger of the two species is also called the square-lipped rhino and is a grazer. The black rhino is also called the hook-lipped rhino and is living from twigs and shoots of bushes and trees. We were allowed to sleep throughout the night; no buzzer was heard as only elephants turned up during the night.

In the morning they were feeding birds, but as we are not very familiar with the bird life of Africa, we did not know the different species. However, we were pointed out three of them, the mouse birds, the honey birds and the hornbills.

At The Ark we met a younger couple from Taiwan that we talked to a little. It turned out that we later on during our safari should meet them again, but we will revert to them later. After our breakfast and the bird feeding, we had to leave The Ark. We were brought back to Aberdare Country Club, where

David was waiting for us.

Samburu

The next stop was the Samburu National Reserve. From Aberdare Country Club, we were driving towards Nanyuki. Half-way we passed the village of Naro Moru, a string of shops and houses. Nanyuki is a small town that lies close to the equator at an altitude of approximately 1.830 meters. We made a halt at the equator and got the water test demonstrated. We should probably have remembered this phenomenon from our physics lessons at school, but we did not. The phenomenon is that water running out of a container with a hole in the bottom, north of the equator will form a whirl that will run clockwise, south of the equator the whirl will run the opposite direction, and right at the equator there will be formed no whirl. For this demonstration we paid 100 shilling. We could also have got a certificate stating that we had been at the equator, but we refrained from that.

From Nanyuki we continued towards Isiolo that lies at the frontier of North Eastern Kenya. The population of Isiolo is to great extent descendants of Somali ex-soldiers resettled in the town and the surrounding area after World War 1. Passing Isiolo the landscape changed completely. The land became more deserted and barren, and the vegetation consisted of those for Africa typical flat Acacia trees and of different shrubs. Furthermore, the domestic animals changed, and we now met mainly camels. Fitting into this change we passed a camel research centre. As everywhere in Kenya it was mainly small boys that acted as shepherds.

During our first two days in Kenya, we noticed that no matter where we were driving, we met many walking people, as if the whole population constantly were on the move on foot. This was also the case in this sparsely populated area, and actually it counted for all the areas we passed through during our holiday. For us this was very interesting because it gave us the time and possibility to see all the variety of very colourful clothing in Kenya.

We arrived at the Samburu Lodge in time for lunch at about two o'clock. We were welcomed by the staff which offered us a fresh wet cloth to clean our hands and face and a nice glass of juice from the local fruit. We were surprised when we were met like this at the Aberdare Country Club and thought it was a specific gesture in this club/lodge, but it appeared that all lodges and hotels we visited met us the same way.

Samburu Lodge is situated at the outskirts of the Samburu National Reserve on the banks of the Ewaso Ngiro River. The position of the lodge is beautiful, with a view to the river and all the wildlife of the river as well as the animals of the surrounding areas coming to the river on the opposite riverbanks. The colour of the river is red from the soil of this area.

The area of the lodge was full with vervet monkeys and guests were warned not to leave their doors open, as the monkeys would enter the room and search their luggage. We talked with two families that had forgotten to close the door for less than a minute, and in that short time the monkeys had rummaged through their luggage.

We noticed especially two species of birds that were constantly coming to the lodge. The one was one type of starling that has strong blue almost fluorescent colours and the other was the crowned hornbill.

There were many crocodiles in the river, and you could watch them laying in the water like wooden logs, or on the riverbanks. Once a day in the evening they were fed by the lodge and ten to fifteen or more crocodiles gathered at a fenced area close to the restaurant. The biggest crocodiles can weigh up to one ton and the oldest ones can reach an age of about 70 years.

The general schedule for the safaris was a morning safari that started at half past six and lasted until about nine o'clock and an afternoon safari starting at half past three and lasting until latest half past six when all safari parties were obliged to be back.

The plan for us was to stay two nights at the lodge giving us the possibility of three game drives in the game reserve. So, the first game drive was planned just two hours after arrival.

The nature of the reserve is beautiful with green hills or small mountains, open plains with scattered vegetation and thorn brushes.

First time you try a game drive is a very exciting experience. You are in the middle of the open wild nature, close to animals you have only seen in the zoo. You just get the feeling of being one with nature. We can't say that the feeling is different on the following game drives, but while first time is a thrilling experience, the following times are a familiar experience.

On this first game drive, we saw our first lions, two lionesses and one lion, all young animals we guess, as the mane on the lion was not yet profuse. Apart from these first lions, it is difficult to distinguish between the three game drives and not crucial as several of the animals we saw and want to mention are repetitions.

There were Leopards in the area, but unfortunately we did not see them here. However, we saw more lions and two Cheetahs. The lions were a group of two lionesses and 5 half grown cubs. One of the lionesses and three of the cubs were eating a buffalo. The Cheetahs were two young males preparing for a hunt, David believed. However, so many cars were closing in on them that they were stressed. Therefore, David decided and we agreed that we would break off and leave them. David was a little annoyed as we are there on the animal's terms and not vice versa.

In the thorn brushes, we saw the dik-dik antelopes that are living in pairs. David told us that they are so monogamous that if one dies, the other one just withers away. The dik-dik antelope is one of the smallest antelopes with a shoulder height of up to 38 cm. We also saw the gerenuk or long necked gazelle as David called it. It is a gazelle with long legs and a slender long neck. Due to the long neck, it can browse at heights that other animals are not able to, and it sometimes stands on its hind legs to reach even higher. We often saw it standing in a bush partly hidden by the branches.

The Grevy's zebra lives in Samburu. This zebra has narrow stripes and a white belly. The number of this species is declining, and we saw only one of them standing alone between the trees and shrubs. You more often find this zebra alone than the Burchell's zebra, we know from e.g. Masai Mara.

We saw lots of elephants, and it is a very exciting experience to watch these huge animals, and to realize that you are hardly able to hear them move even if they are moving fast. On one of the game drives, we saw a herd of elephants with one young, partly albino elephant. David said he had heard about an albino elephant, but he had never seen it, so it was also a special event for David.

We met a big herd of the reticulated giraffe passing very close to the car. These extremely tall animal moves so graciously, and seeing so many of them so close is very special.

Driving along the river we saw on the opposite river bank a herd of buffaloes approaching two crocodiles of which the one was very big. It did not seem to bother the buffaloes and especially one of the buffaloes went grazing very close to the bigger crocodile. Probably, it would have been a too big mouthful for the crocodile on land, but we believe that in the water the buffalo would have been at great risk.

Of other herbivores we saw the impala in great number and the oryx, which is a large antelope that lives in dry open terrain. The oryx does not need to drink surface water, so it is well adapted to dry areas.

Finally, we saw a bat eared fox, a tortoise and many ground squirrels.

David seemed to take special interest in birds, and he showed several birds to us. As we don't know very much about the bird-life of Africa, it was difficult to remember what David told us, so we bought a book about birds of Eastern Africa. By the end of the safari and by the help of the book, we tried to recollect the birds David showed us. Therefore, at the end of the tale about our safari, we will list all the birds we remember we saw. However, as Mira took a lot of interest in the weavers, we are here going to mention this bird. There are a lot of different species of the weaver bird, but they are all characterized by the way they build their nest. The male is weaving a nest that is placed hanging from the branch of a tree, hence the name of the bird, and offering the nest to the female. If the female is not satisfied she continues to another nest and if that is satisfactory she will mate with that male bird. The rejected male will have to improve the nest and find another female. I should know that because as a boy scout I was named Darzee, the name of the weaver bird in Kipling's Jungle Book.

After our last game drive in Samburu, we asked David if he would like to join us for a drink. We sat down for about an hour talking about our private lives. David showed us photos of his wife and three children, two boys and one girl, and judging from the photos he is a lucky man. David's wife had chosen to be at home while the children were small, but now that they had become older, she wanted to start working again. She is educated as a nursery teacher. David has been working ten years as a guide, and he loves his job, both the driving and the safari. He is very much interested in the wildlife.

David told at some other time that he has family and friends in Europe both in Holland and France. He would very much like to visit them. However, if he visits one of them, the others would expect him to visit also them, and such a trip is very expensive.

David also told us that his friend in France had suffered racial harassment in Paris. We could only

answer that we will never understand why it is so important which colour a person has. We believe it is important how the person is. You find bad persons in both white and coloured communities, persons you would never dream about associating with. We accept that cultures can be so different that it is difficult really to make friendships, but at least you can respect the individual person for what he or she is, and not judge them for what you think they are.

The second day we became acquainted with an English woman who had been living in Kenya 20 years ago. She was now a widow and had decided to come back to the country for a holiday, to see how the country had developed. She sat down beside our table at the restaurant, and after a while she asked us, if we came from Sweden. When we told her we were from Denmark, she became rather embarrassed. She told us that she had been working with IBM in a department responsible for Scandinavia, and she had been many times in Denmark. She was sure she could recognize any Scandinavian speaking English. Next time at the restaurant, she told us she would stop guessing from where people come, because she had met some other foreigners, and she thought they were Danish, but on inquiry, they appeared to be German.

In the evening we had coffee and a drink with her. We told her about our plans for the holiday, and although we were travelling the same areas, we would not stay in the same lodges and hotels. She would finish her holiday at the Indian Ocean, as we would, go diving. Coincidentally we met her again at Nairobi airport at the gate of the Mombasa plane.

We had previously arranged with David that rather than visiting a Masai village in Masai Mara, we would visit a Samburu village here. So, in the morning at departure we headed for this village. When we came to the village, expressed our wish to visit it and paid the fee, we were met by a group of dancing women approaching us. They wore richly coloured dresses and bead necklaces. Being close to us, they called on Mira to join them in the dance. I guess she had no choice. They put necklaces around her neck, and she joined them.

Both of us have the feeling that it does not feel natural somehow that we as outsiders join their dances. However, maybe they don't feel it that way and after all, when we are in Greece, we also sometimes join their dances.

A young very nice woman emerged from the group and introduced herself. She would be showing us around in the village explain about their habits, their life and their village.

She started to tell us about the tradition of circumcision of both boys and girls. Circumcision is one, of more rites that prepares for the transition to adulthood. Boys are circumcised when they are around thirteen years old and become murrain or young warriors. After about five years they become senior warriors. Before they can marry, they go through a last ceremony that finalizes the transition to adulthood. Girls normally marry when they are 12 to 15 years old. Shortly before the marriage ceremony the girl is circumcised.

This tradition of mutilating especially the female genitals is a tradition we in our culture don't understand and are likely to condemn as cruel and very degrading for the female gender. Rather than always to condemn traditions that are not in accordance with our view of human nature, we should

maybe try to understand what the background for this tradition is and offer alternative ceremonies. We have read that circumcision of girls was forbidden in Kenya in 1996, but that it has not been possible to enforce it in rural areas. However, a project called circumcision with words is offering an alternative to the physical circumcision, and if not for the present generation, it might be an alternative for generations to come.

We then went to meet a girl that was going to get married. We met her outside a hut that we afterwards entered. The girl was 12 years old and wearing a special outfit due to the marriage. Round her face she had a very nice bead ornament and on her head a headband also made of beads. It was equipped with an upright ornament.

Before we entered the hut, our young woman guide showed us how they store their favourite food, milk mixed with blood.

The huts are made of branches, mud and cow dung. We entered the hut at the girl. The hut consisted of one big section in which several persons were lying on the floor, a fireplace with a fire burning that made the inside very smoky, and beside the fireplace a small section we don't know what was used for.

Coming out of the hut we proceeded to the place where the elder's council is meeting. The place is fenced with branches and, at least when not in use, it is just bare ground. Members of the elder's council are only men, and men are not becoming an elder until their thirtieth. The importance of the council and the place is indicated by the fact that the area is regarded as defiled if animals or women enter the place. In such a case it has to undergo a cleansing process - again a conflict with our view of human nature.

The Samburu tribe is related to the Maasai tribe and speaks the same language. Originally, they migrated from Sudan, and coming to present day Kenya, they divided. The Samburu people headed east and the Maasais went south. Our young woman guide told us the saga, but we are afraid that our retelling of the saga is incomplete. However, the two peoples were one at a time, but they decided to split. They divided all their possessions and finally only one object was left. This was a kind of folder made of goatskin including contents that we have forgotten. However, they decided that this one object should be divided in two, the folder and the contents. They drew lots for these last two items and the Samburu people got the goatskin folder.

We then walked to see the smith at work and all the ornaments he is making. We don't know which metal is used, but many of the ornaments were very nice.

The whole village was fenced with branches from thorny bushes to protect from the wild animals. Outside the fence there was a brick building in which the village school was set up. Our young woman guide acted as teacher there. She showed us the school and introduced us to one class with small children. She demonstrated how she was teaching the children in reading and speaking English. The teaching material was very sparse, but witnessing the enthusiasm of her and the pupils was a very encouraging experience.

Back inside the fence we had a demonstration of how they make fire. This task only man is allowed to

perform. They use a fire drill. The tool consists of a drill that is a round stick made of hard wood, and a wooden plank with a small hollow or hole. The rounded end of the drill is placed in the hollow and the drill is turned fast between the palms. During this process easily flammable material is added to the area where the drill touches the plank and where the friction is producing heat. This is just the way I was taught to make fire as a boy scout.

After that it was my turn to dance with the men. The first dance was a very monotonous dance where one man at a time slowly moves forward, then stops and makes a jump in the air and return to the group. I made some very nice jumps. The next dance I joined was as far as I understood a love dance and of course, in that situation the participants were both men and women. My partner was a very black young woman.

Finally, we were offered to buy their arts and crafts, but as previously mentioned, we had already bought some figures so Mira only bought a bead bracelet.

While we walked around, Mira was talking with our young woman guide. She told Mira about her life in the tribe. She has three children and her mother helps her to take care of them. She dedicates her life to the school and teaching which gives her a meaningful purpose of life.

In Kenya the literacy rates are rather high compared with the neighbouring countries. Considering that you have to pay for school education the rates are surprisingly high. The fact that you have to pay for education was of a great concern to our young woman guide, as the Samburu people's economy is based on their livestock and not on money. They earn a little on tourists, but they lack money to pay the education of their children. Mira promised that when we would be back in Denmark, we would send her some money for this purpose.

This was the end of the tour that had taken us through the life of a culture so different from ours, and it was time to say goodbye. While standing by the car, my dancing partner told me that I was dancing very well, and that she would like to marry me. Mira told her that she was afraid that I was already married to her, but the young woman said that she did not mind to be a wife no. 2 and after all Mira had taught me the manners of a good husband.

Mount Kenya Safari Club

Our next destination was the Mount Kenya Safari Club. We were driving the same way back as we came, down through Isiolo towards Nanyuki. Before Nanyuki we turned left to Mount Kenya Safari Club. On the way we saw a serious accident between a jeep like car and a minibus type of car. It was the only accident we saw during our whole holiday and after all it was not so bad considering how much we were driving. For the person laying on the ground it was of course bad enough or maybe even disastrous.

When you hear that the roads in Kenya are not very good you would imagine that traffic safety has a very low priority. However, we learned during our driving around in Kenya that they use a lot of those bumps across the roads to slow down the speed of the cars, and we met many police check points

where they had placed caltrops across the road leaving only a small passage through. Here they checked the quality of the cars and the driver's license or rather the possible lack of the license.

Mount Kenya Safari Club is situated right at the equator on the slopes of Mount Kenya, at an altitude of 2.135 meters. Mount Kenya is the second largest mountain of Africa and the largest in Kenya with a height of 5.199 meters.

The surroundings are beautiful with a view to Mount Kenya, and the whole place seems very neat and tidy and with an air of exclusiveness.

The list of famous guests is long. Including us, it comprises Sir Winston Churchill, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Lyndon Johnson, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and many other celebrities.

We arrived in time for lunch. Our first impression of the hotel was that it was too distinguished for us. However, it appeared that everybody was just as pleasant and straightforward as we were used to.

Coming to the restaurant for lunch, we saw our Taiwanese friends from The Ark sitting at a table having their lunch. They had almost finished, and we arranged with them to meet for tea and coffee at four o'clock. They wanted to rest and to go for a walk, and we had decided that we wanted to see the orphanage.

Our accommodation was a very nice semi detached cottage. It included a nice big bathroom and a very nice and big sitting and bedroom equipped with a fireplace. Outside the room there was constantly a guard. Coming back from lunch and ready for the orphanage we asked the guard for the shortest way to there. He told us not to walk, he would call one of the hotel jeeps to take us there, and in five minutes the jeep came, and we were driven to the entrance of the orphanage. It had started to rain, but it stopped shortly after.

At the orphanage they raise animals that have lost their parents and release them to the wild when ready. We saw several animals there. They had many colobus monkeys, and we fed some of them with food supplied by the orphanage. When they took the food from our hands, we felt how soft their hands were. A warthog called Charley was walking freely around and followed us like a dog. He liked very much to be scratched on the back. A few days before we came, they had got a baby monkey that lacked one hand and whose mother was killed by the other monkeys. Mira tried to feed it with a feeding bottle, and it is amazing how it felt confident.

The main attraction, we believe, is the mountain bongo that has been close to extinction. The antelope is part in a repatriation project that aims to reintroduce the mountain bongo to the wilderness. The bongo is a large antelope that can weigh up to 350 kilos. It prefers dense forests and it is almost a nocturnal animal.

In addition to these animals we saw a 150 to 170 years old giant tortoise named Speedy Gonzales, one ostrich, cheetahs, porcupines, servals, genets and many others.

At four o'clock we met May and Kevin, as our Taiwanese friends are called. We were sitting a few hours talking about our lives. They were living in Hamburg where Kevin was Managing Director for the German branch of his Taiwan based company. The company is working within IT and electronics. They had decided to go back to Taiwan and Kevin had quit his employment with the company. He was thinking to set up his own business, maybe in a completely different branch. They had been visiting several countries in Europe and also been to Copenhagen. After returning from Kenya, they would go to Finland to visit Santa Claus' village and to go sledging with sledges drawn by reindeers.

Considering the election in Taiwan we asked them for their opinion about the relationship between Taiwan and China. They said they had different opinions about it, and we did not want to go into a further discussion because we have no feeling with what it means to the Taiwanese people.

We arranged to eat together in the evening and parted for a while. Back at our room a member of the staff came and offered to light the fire in the fireplace. We accepted and had a beautiful fire all through the night.

After dinner with May and Kevin, we enjoyed together the coffee in the sitting room in front of an open fire. Among other subjects we talked about the plans for the holiday and both May, Kevin, and we were going to Lake Nakuru next morning for one day, but to different lodges. However, we would again meet in Masai Mara at Mara Sopa Lodge.

Next morning we had breakfast together, then said good-bye and see you in Masai Mare.

Lake Nakuru

We went back the same way as we came, towards Nanyuki, passed through the town and continued west to Nyahururu that is situated at an altitude of 2.360 meters and is one of the highest located towns in Kenya. On the outskirts of the town, we visited the Thomson's Falls. The water from the Ewaso Narok River, falls about 72 meters into a ravine.

From Nyahururu we turned south to Lake Nakuru. We were driving along Rift Valley with some beautiful views over the valley. Rift Valley is part of the Afro-Arabian rift system that stretches from the Dead Sea to Mozambique. To get to the lake we had to pass through the town of Nakuru which is the fourth largest town in Kenya. The largest town is Nairobi, the second largest Mombasa and the third largest Kisumu at Lake Victoria.

We stayed at Lake Nakuru Lodge. It is very nicely situated with a wide view over the reserve, Lake Nakuru and the town of Nakuru. Impalas and baboons came quite close to the lodge. It was first time, we felt the mass tourism. Three big groups of tourists from Spain, France and Denmark arrived there, and as it often happens when people from one country are together in groups they are a bit noisy and dominating.

Lake Nakuru is a shallow soda lake as most of the lakes in Rift Valley. The drainage system of the valley is poor and the evaporation high; leaving the lakes with a very high concentration of volcanic

deposits that is a very alkaline material. This creates very good conditions for the food chain that sustains different species of water birds.

The most spectacular sight, which we felt very stunning, is the thousands of flamingos foraging in the lake, creating a completely pink surface on the lake. There is two flamingo species the lesser flamingo that has this very pink colour and the greater flamingo that is almost white.

At the lakeside steppe eagles and marabou storks were eating dead flamingos. We also saw the fish eagle and the crested fish eagle. Before we came to the waterfront we passed a very big group or colony of pelicans. At the waterfront we had the possibility to get out of the car and to get close to the birds.

The shores of the lake are very broad and the outer parts are covered with grass. We found zebras, buffaloes, waterbucks, warthogs and for the first time Thomson's gazelles there. While we stayed in that area two rhinos came, moving quite close to the car. However, they did not pay much attention to us; they were merely interested in grazing. This gave us a good opportunity to watch this big and strong, yet endangered animal.

At the end of the grassland, you find bushes and an acacia forest. We saw a giraffe standing between the bushes, and we noticed that it had white socks, so to speak, on all four legs. We don't know if this pattern with white socks represents a special species of the giraffe, or it is just a coincidence.

We left the shores of the lake and went through the bush area to the acacia forest. Shortly after, we came to a passage that led into the forest. David chose the passage and we left the open land. The forest was very thick, and we almost felt like in the jungle. Here we were really quite alone, only the three of us and nature. We were moving ahead very slowly giving us the possibility to watch for animals, especially the leopard. However, the leopard we did not catch sight of, but at a turning of the passage we saw a rhino walking slowly in front of us. The rhino didn't seem to be bothered about us, and continued walking right in the middle of the passage. After a while it left and went into the thicket. Later we came to a glade where we met two waterbucks. Contrary to the rhino they seemed very surprised and a bit afraid, but they did not run away so we could study them at close quarters. In addition, we saw a lot birds. After some time we came to a ditch that we could not pass, so we had to turn the car and to go back the same way we came. On the way back we again met the waterbucks and the rhino. However, going back the same way is always another experience than going out that way, so we just felt it was one long drive.

Coming out of the forest we hurried to see something David didn't want to tell us about. After some driving we came to a place where other cars had gathered, - and what did we see there? The leopard, the last of the big five we missed. It was lying on a big branch as you often see them. Unfortunately, it was now too dark to use the telephoto lens on the camera, so I could not take a photo of the leopard, but we saw it very clearly in our binoculars. Then it was time to go to lodge.

Driving around in Nakuru National Reserve, we saw for the first time that dust was raised and when we said that to David, he told us that Nakuru in Swahili means dust.

Masai Mara

Next morning we set out for the longest drive during the holiday. Six hours it took to reach our destination, Mara Sopa Lodge in Masai Mare. From the lodge, we headed to the highway running from Mombasa to Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret and ending at Lake Victoria in Uganda. We went south towards the town of Naivasha. The road was very busy with many Lorries and the condition of the road was bad. On the roadside many baboons were sitting waiting for garbage to be thrown out of the cars. We believe we turned off the highway at Naivasha and went to Kijabe where we shortly after at a road junction turned west towards Narok. Narok is a small town and the gateway to Masai Mare.

After Narok we entered Maasai country. We saw several Maasais in their red coloured clothes both at distance and close to and we saw their big herds of cows and goats.

We arrived in due time at Mara Sopa Lodge and got ourselves installed in our room. Our room was in a cottage with two rooms. Entering the room we came to a spacious sitting room that we shared with the other room. Then we entered our own room that was also very spacious with two enormous double beds. The bathroom was a complete ballroom. Outside the cottage there was a terrace with a very nice view of the Ololaimutia valley and the game reserve.

We had our lunch and when we were about to finish our Taiwanese friends came. They had of course their own table, but we arranged with the waiters that for the rest of the meals we would sit together. We spent again a nice time with May and Kevin.

After lunch we went to the Manyatta Boutique in the lodge to look at their choice of articles. As always when we met people the shop assistant asked from where we come. When we told him that we are from Denmark, he exclaimed: "Oh, that's that country that does not want other people in the country, why is it so?" It is very nice to be 7- 8.000 km's from home and to be confronted with a statement like this about your country. It is a bit difficult to explain about the attitude of both the population and the politicians, especially when you disagree and feel that your country is moving in a more selfish and inhumane direction. However, we could tell him that even Mira's family and friends from Yugoslavia, except her sister and brother-in-law, are not allowed to visit us in Denmark.

Masai Mara is part of the Serengeti ecosystem. It is best known for the annual migration of the wildebeest in July and August when more than a million of these animals move north to Masai Mara from Serengeti and in October when they return. During the migration they have to cross the Mara River with crocodiles just lying waiting for dinner to be served. Standing at the river it is easy to imagine how it looks like. As far as we are concerned, we prefer the imagination from reality because spectacular events like that always attract lots of tourists. You can say many animals many human beings and vice versa, and we surely prefer the latter situation.

Masai Mara is situated at an altitude above 1.500 meters, and it is the national game reserve that most resembles people's ideas about a typical African landscape, open grass plains dotted with acacia trees and bushes, framed by green hills or mountains. In these plains an abundance of animals move freely around and the lion reigns as king of the animals.

In the afternoon we went on our first game drive in Masai Mara. The landscapes we passed through were beautiful and quiet. We saw many animals and only few safari cars, we almost felt that we had a look into the world as it was when God created it.

On this drive we met our first group of lions in Masai Mara. In the group there was one big lion with a profuse mane and two lionesses. The lion couldn't care less about us. He turned his back to us, laid flat down on his side and was not a photogenic lion at all. However, finally he changed his attitude, raised and lay down again, but now with his head held high in a beautiful profile, so I got my photo. In addition to this group we saw another group of two lions and one lioness as well as two lionesses hunting. Moreover, we met a pair of black-backed jackals, wildebeests, red hartebeests, eland antelopes, topis, impalas, Thomson gazelles, zebras, elephants and two Masai giraffes.

As we already said, David seemed to have a special interest in birds and on this game drive he showed us the Go-away Bird. It has got its name from the calling that almost sounds as if it says "go-wayeer". You usually see them sitting on a tree branch shouting their "go away." When a predator approaches their territory, they will call loudly and thus their call warns prey animals of the predator. David also showed us the Ross's turaco that is a beautifully blue coloured bird with a red crest on top of the head.

Close to the place where we saw the Go-away Bird David stopped the car. He shoved us a tree he called sandpaper tree. He picked a leaf and gave us to touch. It was very rough, hence the name, so rough that it is used by the Masais to grind the surface of the clubs they are all carrying. The wood itself is hard and the Maasais use it as fire-drill.

Because the next day would be our last game drive David suggested that we could have a full day safari. The lodge provides picnic meals and David would arrange for that. We accepted at once.

On the way back David asked us about the conflict in former Yugoslavia. We explained him our view of the conflict. None of us sympathize with Milosevic, his ideas and his actions, but he is not the sole responsible for the disintegration of the country and all the atrocities that took place. It seems there was an inner destructive tension between at least the leaders and their camp followers among the peoples of Yugoslavia. The last part of the conflict in Kosovo with the expelling and killing of the Albanian population resulted in the undeclared war against Serbia. With all due respect to the justice of the war, it was somehow strange and unpleasant to find your own country waging war against your wife's country.

The evening we spent together with May and Kevin. We told them about our full day game drive the next day and they in turn told us that they would go for a balloon fare over Masai Mara. We had a nice evening with them. However, we went reasonably early to bed as they would have to get up early in the morning for the balloon fare, and you are anyway tired from all the impressions you are receiving.

We woke up to a beautiful day, the sun shining from a blue and cloudless sky, as if Masai Mara wanted to show itself at the best. The framework for a marvelous day was there, we just had to fill up with events and impressions.

We started the game drive with spotting a family of bat eared foxes at their den. There were two adults and three puppies. The bat eared fox is a small carnivore weighing up to five kilos and with very large ears, up to fourteen cm long.

In comparison to the day before, we saw even bigger herds of animals. The most impressive sight was the herds of buffaloes that seemed to spread all over the savannah, but we also met bigger herds of wildebeests and zebras. In additions to the herbivores we saw yesterday, today we met reedbucks, waterbucks, bushbucks and Grant's gazelles.

After we met Charley at the orphanage at Mount Kenya Safari Club, we felt a special attachment to the warthog. Yesterday we did not meet any Charley, but today he was back in place and revealed himself to us. When a warthog is running the tail is kept erected, and when grazing, they are often kneeling and both attitudes look somewhat funny or peculiar.

Crossing a small stream, I suddenly noticed an animal moving around at the banks of the stream. We stopped the car and the animal appeared to be an iguana type of animal. The size of the iguana was that of a genet apart from the length of the tail.

Because we arranged the full day safari we enhanced the area of operation. We crossed the Mara River and continued to the western part of Masai Mara. We crossed the river on a bridge and not like the wildebeests swimming, exposing ourselves as prey animals. Crossing the bridge we had a nice view to crocodiles and hippos, and we were glad that we were not in the water.

Close to the river just before we passed the bridge we met our first group of lions. During this game drive, we met all together four groups of lions making up a total of 23 lions. The biggest of the groups, we guessed, had finished their breakfast and was now seeking shelter for the sun. Another of the groups we shared with a big bus type of car filled with people from a company. They were not as disciplined as we were, and they started to make different noises to attract the attention of the lions. That way they broke the rule that you are supposed to keep a very low profile when you are close to the animals. David got a little annoyed because of that and we left the place in full agreement.

Masai Mara borders on Tanzania at Serengeti. We came to the border and just to say that we had been in Tanzania, we made a circle of few meters into Tanzania and back again.

The event of the day was the cheetah kill. David told us, that it is not very often you witness that. The cheetah was a mother with three cubs at about one year. The mother was stalking forward while the cubs were signaled to down. The mother stopped, looked around and signaled the cubs to come forward. Then the cubs were again signaled to down and the mother stalked forward again eventually moving up on a termite mound. This behaviour continued for some time. Then David saw that she had spotted two prey animals, an impala with lamb and another antelope. David told us to beware now because she would soon go for one of them. Suddenly, she took off and speeded towards the impala. Taken by surprise, the impala and the lamb ran in different directions and the cheetah caught the lamb in no time. The cheetah is the fastest land mammal on earth and can reach a speed of about 110 km per hour, but only for a few hundred meters. If it succeeds in creeping up on the prey to within about 60 meters, the prey has very little chance to escape.

We were three or four cars watching this event, and all of them restrained themselves and stayed completely quiet and calm. After the kill was done we all moved slowly in the direction the cheetah left, and we came to a group of bushes where she laid down with her prey. She was completely exhausted and left the prey to the cubs. However, they were not yet able to open the lamb to eat it, so they had to wait for the mother to recover. David told us that the cheetah is a good mother who always leaves the cubs to have their share before she eats hers. Watching for some time the cubs fighting in vain to eat the lamb we left to fight with our meal.

After driving a short time we passed a small mound with a tree on the top and some table and chair-like stone arrangements. David suggested that we should enjoy our picnic here and Mira, disbelieving, asked him if he was joking, but David was of course not joking. We drove around the mound to make sure that we would meet no surprises and as this was the case, we got out of the car and prepared our meal. So it happened that we were eating a nice lunch between the wild animals of Africa.

Having finished our lunch, we went back to see if the cheetahs had finished theirs. There were still some cars there. We could see that the cheetahs had almost done with the lamb. One cub was lying eating the skull and another one was trying with a leg but most meat was gone. This was the end of the cheetah kill, and we moved on.

After the carnivores leave the remains of their prey the vultures have their chance, and we did meet a big group of vultures ripping a small carcass for the remaining eatable tissue.

We went back towards the Mara River to watch the hippos. When we reached the river we drove alongside the river to the bridge we had passed earlier in the day. We hoped to meet some grazing hippos. However, hippos normally spent the day in the water and come out at night to graze. We were there mid afternoon, and we did not see any on land. We passed areas with dense vegetation and open areas with a view to the river. We, of course, also looked for other animals, but we met none. At one of the open areas, we made a halt and got out of the car. There was a very nice view to the river, and we saw a herd of more than twenty hippos lying in the water. We spent some time there enjoying the view of the river, the surrounding areas and the animals.

Coming to the bridge we crossed it and headed back to the lodge saying good-bye to the realms of the wild African animals. We had had eight days of intense experiences and, although it was sad to leave, we were full of these experiences and needed to digest them.

Back at the lodge, we asked David if he would like to join us for a drink this last safari afternoon, but he would rather that we had lunch together the next day at the Karen Blixen farm, and so we arranged. We went back to our room to leave our equipment and to refresh ourselves. When finished, we went to the bar terrace to have a drink on our own. While we were sitting there May and Kevin came back from their balloon fare and game drive. They had been up early and wanted to go to have a nap, but we urged them to join us telling them that they can sleep when they are old. So, after a little while they came to sit down with us. They had had a terrific tour. They were picked up early in the morning and went by a Toyota Land Cruiser to the lift off place. May said, that they thought it was an awful experience to go by the Land Cruiser for longer time, as the suspension of the car is very hard. She

added that they think that we are tough persons to enjoy going by such a car. However, everything else was a real adventure. They lifted off at dawn after a cup of coffee and some briefing. The flight was a very special experience and the stillness very stunning. After the flight they landed and celebrated their return with breakfast and champagne.

While we were sitting talking, our room neighbour came and sat down beside us. We had seen she was alone not only at the lodge but also on the game drives where we had met her once. She overheard our conversation about the balloon safari and asked May and Kevin how it was, as she was going the next day and was not very proud about it. We started then to speak with her, and she told us that she was travelling alone around in Africa to collect experience and information for a book she was writing about being a female traveler on her own in Africa. From her accent we believe she was American. Hearing that we were going to see the Karen Blixen farm the next day she told us how she was fascinated by Karen Blixen and how much she loved the film, "Out of Africa". At this stage of the conversation May and Kevin were lost as they did not know Karen Blixen or the film. They promised both themselves and us that they would make up for their negligence when they returned home.

We again spent a nice evening with May and Kevin and the next morning after breakfast it was time to say good-bye to them. Mira gave Kevin a hug and seeing that, I also gave May a hug. Then we told them that we were a little reluctant to do so because of an experience of one of our friends. He had been on a business trip to China bringing his wife with him, and they had spent a nice day with his Chinese business associate and his wife. The conversation and the day had not entirely been business oriented but also somewhat private. Saying good-bye to their hosts after a nice day our friend gave the wife of his business associate a hug and a light kiss on the cheek and the business associate got so angry that he and his wife left immediately. They did not meet them again and their cooperation ceased. May, Kevin and we had promised each other that we would stay in contact after returning home, and we do hope that we both keep our promise. Before we left, we had a family photo taken by May's and Kevin's guide.

Before we finally leave the safari part of the holiday we will mention all the birds we remember we saw. The birds are, secretary bird, ostrich, pelican, grey heron, marabou, lesser flamingo, greater flamingo, African fish eagle, crested fish eagle, vulture, African goshawk, steppe eagle, quail, guinea fowl, grouse, Ross's turaco, grey crowned crane, white-bellied go-away-bird, mouse bird, grey headed king fisher, ground hornbill, sun bird, starling and masked weaver.

Karen Blixen's farm

Next destination was Karen Blixen's farm close to Nairobi. We went back through Narok and continued to Limuru. On the way there we made a stop at a vantage point with a wide and beautiful view over Rift Valley. After Limuru we came back on the main road to Nairobi and Mombasa. Before Nairobi we turned off to Kikuyu and passed through the town where David happened to live. We continued towards the farm and came to a suburb called Karen City. Many places around were named after her, and it was somewhat strange to drive around so far from home meeting such a familiar name. Shortly after we came to the farm. David told us that Karen Blixen still means a lot to great many Kenyans, even after so many years.

The farmhouse did not look very impressive, but you recognize the house as you know it from books and the film, “Out of Africa”. Recalling the books and the film you feel somehow awed standing in front of the farm. The film about her life in Kenya is based on her own story, “Out of Africa” and the biography, “Karen Blixen” by Judith Thurman.

To earn money to maintain the farmhouse and the museum, the park that belongs to the museum is rented out to private persons or companies for special events. The day we were there, a great wedding celebration was being prepared. The whole park was full of tents for cooking, eating and dancing. We saw ten barbecues all with animals on spit, and we believe that about 200 persons would participate in the celebration. Pop orchestras were already rehearsing and Lorries filled with equipment arriving.

This scenery was not very supporting for our mood and imagination, but inside the farmhouse it was easier to travel back in time and to imagine the life at Karen Blixen’s time. Our guide on the tour around in the house was a young black woman dressed in white. While walking around with her, we told her that we were from Denmark living only ten minutes by car from Karen Blixen’s home in Rungsted, and that we have been there several times. She seemed a little afraid that we would know more about Karen Blixen than she did, but she did not need to be afraid because she knew a lot. At the end of the tour, we were standing talking with her, and she told us that her biggest wish in life was to visit Karen Blixen’s home in Denmark.

When Karen Blixen went bankrupt all the furniture and equipment of the house were sold. The museum has succeeded in regaining half of it and the rest of the objects in the museum are the copies made for the film and donated to the museum afterwards. The film was not shot on location as the house was too small and too dark. Therefore, a completely new, bigger and lighter house was built in the neighbourhood. After the shooting of the film was done the house was sold, and to day it serves as a home for a private family.

After the visit to the museum, we went to the Karen Blixen Coffee Garden to have lunch with David. The restaurant is set in the previous farm manager house. The tables were arranged in the garden that resembles a typical English country garden. During the lunch a jazz orchestra was playing soft jazz music. The sun was shining, the temperature was perfect, the atmosphere relaxed, the company good and the service and the meal were perfect, so we did not feel like leaving the place. However, time came to leave and David brought us to the airport for our flight to Mombasa. At the airport we had to say good-bye to David and after eight days alone with him in the car it was a little sad to apart.

Mombasa - Indian Ocean Beach Club

The plane left in time and at half past six in the evening we landed in Mombasa. We were met by two representatives from Akorn who took care that we would have a smooth transfer to the Indian Ocean Beach Club south of Mombasa. We went to a minibus that would drive us to the hotel, and again we were the only passengers. Before we left the airport it was completely dark. To come from the airport to the south coast of Mombasa, we crossed the central Mombasa that is situated on an island. Then at Likoni we took a ferry crossing a narrow sound to get to the south coast. The ferry is the main access to

the city for great many people and thus, there were quite a lot of passengers, most of them on foot, waiting to board. The place was very lively with street traders offering anything and pickpockets or thieves around waiting for a chance to grab your valuables.

We had to wait for one ferry before we could board. The crossing time was very short, and soon we set foot or rather wheels on the mainland. After a short time, we passed a market with a lot of stalls selling all kinds of stuff. Music was sounding from every second stall. The place was very lively with many people moving around. As it was completely dark the area was illuminated with all different light sources, streetlights, and bulbs and lamps, hanging from the stalls. We later learned that many of the traders had no place to live and thus slept at their stall.

Driving in the darkness was not dramatic, but I am happy that I was not driving the car. On many stretches there were no streetlights, and hardly visible, a lot of walking people and bicycles moved alongside the road. In Kenya they do drive differently from the way we are doing. First of all, they are driving in the left side of the road. When they overtake another car, they put the headlights on full beam so you are completely blinded. Flicking the indicator on the right side of the car means that the road ahead is busy and that the cars behind you should not overtake. If you see a car coming towards you on your side of the road, you can be sure that the road on his side is very bad. In the daylight, not being used to drive in Kenya, I think you can cope with this, but I am sure that in the darkness your interpretation of what you see could lead to wrong conclusions.

The distance from the airport to the hotel was about 35 km, and it took 1 ½ hours to drive there. We arrived about half past eight to nine o'clock. We were received, as usual, with a wet cloth and a glass of juice. Having finished the check-in, we were taken to our room. The employee from the reception who accompanied us made a show of presenting the room and the facilities to us. We both thought it was a bit too much, and we didn't really appreciate it. However, we got to know the employee as a nice and pleasant person, not much different from anybody else, and we believe that he was just very proud of his hotel. Having installed ourselves in the room we went to have dinner. The tables were arranged at the terrace close to the pool in a semicircle. On the free space, there was a performance of acrobats and later on dancing for the guests. At the dance the employee from the reception came down, and he was very active. The atmosphere was very relaxed and pleasant, and we were inclined to join the dance which we did after the meal. It had been a long day, and we were tired so we did not stay up very long.

We did not really have an impression of the hotel as it was dark when we arrived, so when we woke up in the morning we were eager to see how it all looked like. The hotel appeared to be both beautifully designed and situated. The style of the hotel was Swahili and all the rooms were either single, thatched cottages or double storey bungalows with flat roofs and all whitewashed. Our room was of the first type placed in second row from the beach. The view from our terrace was beautiful with a broad look to the ocean. The area was very nice with lots of flowering bushes and open spaces. There were several 600 years old baobab trees. The tree is leafless for nine months of the year, and it is said that it looks like it has been pulled out of the ground and put back upside-down, the trunk being the tap-root and the branches the capillary roots. In the reception there was a hundred years old crystal chandelier that British traders gave to the sultan of Zanzibar for granting them landing rights. Within the buildings there was a courtyard called the weaver garden. It had basins with fishes, and as the name of the yard tells, there were plenty of weaver birds and their characteristic nests.

The service of the hotel was in top. The staffs were very kind and service minded, and they had always time to greet you and wish you a pleasant day or ask how you were. The food was very good and the choice of dishes comprehensive. The cooks were standing at every meal ready to help you or even prepare for you. When you came to the beach, at once the staff brought mattresses and towels. During the day the staff came around serving fresh watermelon. In the afternoon coffee was served free and cooks were standing making pancakes at your request or serving cakes. For the accompaniment you paid a small fee. Every evening there was entertainment at the pool. The hotel offered several activities such as aerobics in the pool, water polo, windsurfing, catamaran sailing and courses in diving.

The Indian Ocean was just beautiful. The colour close to the beach was green blue and further out deep blue. The beach was broad, and the flat part emerging from the sea was public. At the back of the beach raised over the flat part was the hotel beach. Along the beach palm trees were growing, and sitting on the hotel beach with palms around you looking over the ocean was gorgeous. The temperature was every day above 30 degrees and up to 38 degrees. However, you didn't feel the heat because a mild breeze from the sea was constantly blowing. In the night we think the temperature stayed around the 30 degrees.

The public part of the beach was every day full of traders, Maasais selling their spears, shields and bracelets and others selling scarves and different handy crafts. They were not allowed to enter the hotel area and guards were walking around making sure that it didn't happen. The traders were quite nice and pleasant people, but very insistent. They would always ask you for yours and your partner's name and the next day when you met them, they would call you by your name or in many cases by your partner's name. They had written the names down, but they didn't know whether they were names for males or females, so until they had got to know you they would use the names at random.

One day at the beach Mira was talking with one of these traders. He told her that she had very nice nails, and that his sister would like such a nail polish. Mira said to him that he could have it for his sister if he came by the next day. He continued that his sister would also appreciate the lipstick and Mira agreed on that also. The next day we watched for him to pass by, but we didn't really see him. Finally, he passed and Mira went down to give the things. He was a little cross, saying that he had passed by several times, but we didn't see him. Anyway, he was happy to get the things.

Among the traders were women selling scarves or fabrics. Especially, one of them attracted our attention. She was looking very pleasant, and she had nice coloured fabrics. On our last day Mira wanted to buy one of her scarves with a very nice blue colour. She bargained it down to 300 Kenyan shillings. During their discussion the woman told her story. She was alone with three children as her husband was killed in an accident the year before, and she was making her living by selling these scarves and fabrics. Some of the scarves she was decorating herself with embroideries. The one Mira wanted was without embroideries. The cost price was 300 shillings she said, and she wanted 400. While Mira was talking with her, one of the managers of the hotel walked around to speak with the guest. He came to me and we started to talk about the traders on the beach. I told him that they didn't really bother us. In the same moment Mira came to take the money to pay the scarf and said that she wondered if the story about her husband's death was true. Hearing that the manager said that we could be sure of that, as people here never would lie about a thing like that. Mira went back to the woman and

talked to her a little more. She had three children and the youngest was still a baby. She had not found another man as it was impossible, as long as she was nursing her baby. What she earned from selling her goods was just enough to sustain hers and her children's life, but she had hardly anything for clothes. Mira promised her some of her blouses and went to fetch them in our room. Unfortunately, we had already packed everything, and she could only find one to give her. When we came back to Denmark, we still had left 100 shillings that we don't need here and that was exactly what we saved on the bargaining. That really puts the difference in conditions of life in perspective.

At the hotel we made acquaintance of one Danish woman. She was the only Dane there apart from us. She had been on safari with a Danish group, but as the only one, she had chosen to stay at The Indian Ocean Beach Club. Her English was not so good, and she was a little lost quite on her own. When she heard we were Danish, she was very happy and started to talk to us. She was leaving before us, so we spent two evenings with her and had a quite nice time with her. She had not long ago become a widow, but she had decided to go alone on that holiday she and her husband had planned together.

We had decided that the stay at the sea side was meant for relaxing. However, being close to Mombasa we wanted to visit the town. Mombasa is the largest port in East Africa and a melting pot of different cultures and races. The majority of the population is African including Swahilis. Swahilis are descending from Arabs, Persians and African slaves that intermarried from the 7th century onwards. The Swahili language is a Bantu language influenced by Arabic, Portuguese and English. Among the other cultures and races you find Omanis, Chinese and Indians, the latter population being the largest minority. The majority of the population is Muslim.

We arranged with our agent the visit to Mombasa. They sent a taxi that drove us to the town, made sure that we found a good guide to show us around, and were standby to pick us up and to take us where we wanted. The taxi driver was an Indian chap who gave us much information while driving around. He showed us the local residence of the president and told us about the Kenyan flag that represents different aspects of the Kenyan nation. The three major horizontal stripes of black, red and green respectively represent the people of Kenya, the bloodshed during the independence fight and the fertility of the land. The narrow horizontal white stripes represent peace and the shield and spears represent the pride and traditions of Kenya. On the way back to the hotel we stopped at the metal elephant tusks forming an archway over the Moi Avenue.

The main attraction of Mombasa is Fort Jesus. The fort was built by the Portuguese in 1593, but it changed hands at least nine times between the years 1631 and 1875. Our visit started there and our taxi driver found a good guide that he called Osama because he looked like Osama Bin Laden. Well, that was his joke, but our guide was an Arabic looking man. His real name was Musti. He showed us first the fort, and then he took us through the old town showing us the old Swahili houses, the narrow streets and the old harbour. Moreover, he showed us the fish market, meat market, vegetable market, poultry market and a street with a lot of spice shops. In the meat market, the choice included goat heads, brains, camel meat and other specialities. In one Indian spice shop, we had some kind of an incident. They charged an exorbitant high price that was not really at discussion. The spices were not pre packed, you chose from big backs standing in the shop. When we had chosen what we wanted, the price appeared to be three times the price we would pay in Denmark for the same type of spices and quantity. However, we insisted to get a lower price and after a lot of arguing and angry exchange of words among the staff

we got it down to a price we would pay in Denmark, but we were just to leave the shop by reason of the unpleasant atmosphere. It was first time, we met such behaviour from the local population.

In addition to what we have already told, our guide showed us two mosques that we saw from outside and the Lord Shiva Temple that is a Hindu temple. The temple includes a sculpture garden, and we went inside to see the temple and the garden.

One of Mira's wishes being in Mombasa was to buy fabrics, so we went to the Kanga Street where you buy those things. Kanga is a printed cotton wraparound that is worn by many women. We went to an Indian shop, and we were served by the owner. When he learned that we are from Copenhagen, he told us that he knows the town because his son was working two years with the Maersk Company in Copenhagen. Mira found four kangas that she liked, and somehow she managed to negotiate a good price for them. After the deal was made, we were served a small glass of strong, sweet tea with cinnamon added. You would think that it tastes awful, but actually it was quite nice. While we walked around in Mombasa it started to rain, and we were told that it more often rains in Mombasa than at the coast north and south of the town. It was a pity with the rain because it prevented us from really enjoying the old town and from photographing.

The last point on the agenda for our Mombasa tour was a visit to a company making the arts and crafts that you can buy everywhere in Kenya. The company employs 3000 people. When we came to the company we found a large area filled with wood and wood chips left from the carving of all the objects. Under long open sheds all the carvers were sitting working on their objects. It was incredible to watch how they formed all the shapes they worked with. From the raw piece of wood, they chopped off big chips with a hammer type of tool with a sharp end. This work made the first rough shape of the object. They continued to cut this roughly shaped object with special knives, and at the end of this work you found the final shape of the object. They continued to grind and polish the object and eventually paint it. Finally, you had a smooth and, on its own terms, a beautifully looking piece of art. Of course, you could buy their work at the company and all prices were fixed. At the end of our visit, we continued back to the hotel. On the way out as well as on the way back we had the opportunity see, what we didn't see the night we arrived, the area we were driving through, and it was very nice and green.

Home-bound

On our last day, we had to leave at four o'clock pm. We arranged with the hotel that we could keep our room until then. We had spent some very nice days there, and we were sorry to leave. It was not only a goodbye to Indian Ocean Beach Club but also a goodbye to Kenya. We were picked up by a taxi in due time and driven to the airport. We were met by an employee from Akorn who helped us with the check in and all the formalities with the customs. As our luggage would be handled by the airlines and not be in our hands until Copenhagen, there were some custom rules to adhere to. We said goodbye to the Akorn employee went through the passport control and came to the point of no return except to Denmark.

We were flying from Mombasa to Nairobi, from Nairobi to Amsterdam and from Amsterdam to Copenhagen. This time we had no problems whatsoever. In Amsterdam the whole airport was

decorated for Christmas, but the Christmas mood was far from the mood that we felt. Nineteen hours after we were picked up by the taxi, we landed in Copenhagen and this was the end of our Kenya adventure.

Sources:

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Web site:	www.pilotguides.com/destination_guide/africa/kenya/samburu.php www.honoluluzoo.org/go_away_bird.htm .
Brochures:	Our lodges and hotels.

Other information:

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Hans Bruun-Jensen
Overodvej 72
DK 2840 Holte
Denmark