

Kenya revisited

29. November - 12. December 2007

Prologue

This story we write mainly to sustain our memory of this holiday. However, we hope that the story is so vivid and exiting that everybody who might read it will indulge in it, and that it might kindle an interest in Kenya.

On the general plan, we describe why Africa and Kenya attract and interest us so much that we go there second time. To get the full benefit of a visit you need some background information of the country and the people, and so we provide some facts about Kenya.

The main objective of the holiday is the game drives but an equally important part of our experiences is all, which is beyond the game drives. This makes our holiday complete and coherent. Thus, it makes a coherent story possible.

From the game drives, we describe the landscapes we have been enjoying, talk about our feelings being in the nature, pass on the information we got and the stories we heard from Charles. Rather than to make repetitive lists of everything we experienced on each game drive; we tell small stories from the game drives that varies from game drive to game drive. We give extended descriptions of some of the animals we have seen and others we just mention. At the end of each description of the reserves we visited, we write a complete list of animals we have seen including those we omit from the description.

The chapter about Nairobi and the visit to David and his family is an important chapter. We find it very special that David and his family, and we have been able to maintain the relationship after our first safari in Kenya. Therefore, our visit to Nairobi was a long expected event.

We add fact based information to our descriptions where necessary to get the full understanding of all our experiences and to put them in the right context.

The story is also a complement to Charles whom we got to know as a pleasant man and who made our safari a success and a great experience.

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. Wherever possible we have rewritten the information to our English usage.

In 2004 we visited Kenya first time on a safari. We were lucky to be the only participants on this tour, so we had our own car, driver and guide. This made us feel that the safari was not just a safari, but our safari, and it enabled us to get a close relationship with our guide David. However, the holiday was a standard tour provided by the travel agency that we chose to deal with. The aim, we

believe, was to see as many typical and different places as possible. Out of 7 seven days, we visited five different safari areas. No doubt that it was a beautiful holiday with many exiting and special adventures, but we felt a little that we were living in a suitcase.

We had of course bought a book about Kenya, but we only thought about the holiday as one big safari with a few days relaxing at the Indian Ocean. Therefore, we did not prepare ourselves for the experiences we had, driving between the different safari areas.

When we decided to revisit Kenya, we decided that driving between the game reserves, should be part of the holiday; so, no flying between the game reserves. Then we decided that the planning should be our own. First of all, this meant that we wanted our own guide and car and no question our guide should be David. We contacted both David and the Kenyan tour operator from our visit in 2004, Akorn Destination Management to hear about the possibilities of having David as our guide, and to get some good ideas about game reserves to visit. We had several contacts with both David and Akorn exchanging ideas. With David, we specifically arranged that we would stay one day in Nairobi to visit his family and to see Nairobi. When the plan was ready in our heads we went to Hemingway's our local Danish travel agency to discuss the plan and to hear their views. Our final conclusion, Hemingway's then carried out in cooperation with Akorn.

The game reserve that we most favour of those we visited in 2004 is Samburu. So, Samburu was a must for this holiday. We have read what a special experience it is to overnight in tents. You feel you are within nature, the life and the sounds are surrounding you, and you are absorbed in the African night. So, another must was that we should try a tented camp. We then decided for Amboseli National Reserve as it is the place where you have one of the most admired views to Mount Kilimanjaro. The last national reserve we decided for was Tsavo West. Tsavo is not the easiest place for game viewing as the vegetation is very dense. However, nature is beautiful and the dense vegetation makes game viewing more of a sport.

Originally, we also wanted some days at the Indian Ocean, but we decided to drop it to get more days at the safari lodges.

So, finally we had everything planned and settled for this our second safari holiday in Kenya. However, some time before the launch of this event we got the message from Hemingway's that David would not be our guide as he was getting married. We were a little bewildered as; to our knowledge David was happily married for many years and had three children. We felt disappointed as we had looked forward to meeting David again, as well as to meet his family in Nairobi. Then, some days later we got an email from David explaining the whole matter. David and his wife Hannah were solemnizing their church wedding after several years of legal marriage. Unfortunately, they had no choice as to the date of the ceremony and this date coincided with our holiday or rather, the whole preparation of the wedding, where more than 350 relatives, friends and acquaintances were invited coincided with our holiday. We were very honoured that David also invited us for the wedding. Alas, the wedding was to take place four days after our last day in Kenya on December 15, and we had no possibility of extending our holiday. We were very sorry that we could not celebrate the wedding with David and Hannah; it would have been a great experience for us to join this event, later described to us as being very colourful. By way of consolation we suggested David to send us photos from the wedding, and he agreed. David also confirmed our agreement of visiting him and his family in Nairobi. Finally, David informed us that we would have a 4 wheel drive jeep for the safari.

At the end all the pieces of the puzzle had fallen into place, and we were just waiting and preparing ourselves for November 29.

Thoughts about Africa and Kenya

In childhood the first contact with Africa was through the children's novels about Tarzan, the king of the apes. Later, the stories about the expeditions to Africa and the explorers carrying them out kindled the interest. The stories about this big Dark Continent as white man called Africa at that time were thrilling reading. Wild nature difficult to penetrate, flora and fauna very different from the one known in our part of the world and a population with completely different skin colour from that of the white man as well as a completely different culture.

What were the drivers of these explorers? Some had a well intentioned wish to convert these so-called savages to Christianity, some went of love of adventure, some were fortune hunters without future in their own country, and some came of pure greed and to exploit the peoples and the lands, encouraged by enterprises and states. Most of these people completely lacked the ability of recognizing other cultures. They did not understand that many of the African cultures they met, were very rich cultures. They only saw their own culture being superior to all other cultures. Alas for the Africans the white man took control of their lives. However, it is the fate of irony that the cradle of humanity is Africa.

In adulthood Karen Blixen's story "Out of Africa" has rekindled the interest of seeing Africa and especially Kenya. Certain Kenyans are criticizing Karen Blixen of being a racist, and they want her name wiped out from any place in Kenya. However, you have to bear in mind that Karen Blixen came to Kenya almost a hundred years ago, and that she belonged to the upper class in Denmark; so, she had an aristocratic approach to other people.

In our opinion Karen Blixen is describing the native population and Kenya with much affection and love and she maintained a life long contact with her Kenyan and African staff. Although that time will never return she has been a mental midwife to us in our wish to visit Kenya.

Today Africa consists of independent states and the peoples of Africa are equal to their former colonizers. In Kenya all the people, we have met have been extremely pleasant, straightforward and good humoured and it has been a pleasure to make their acquaintance. Our acquaintance with David, our guide from 2004, and his family has developed into a friendship, how much as it is possible from a distance of 7.000 km.

Facts about Kenya

Geography:

Kenya is situated in East Africa around the Equator. To the south east Kenya is meeting with the Indian Ocean. The neighbouring countries, listed from south and clock wise, are Tanzania, Uganda with Lake Victoria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The size of Kenya is about the size of France and make up 582.650 square km including about 13.600 square km of Lake Victoria.

The eastern part of the country towards the Indian Ocean is fertile lowland with tropical vegetation. Around the river mouths, you find mangrove growths.

From the eastern lowland, the land rises to a plateau at altitude ranging from 1.000 to 3.000 m. throughout the area runs the Rift Valley.

Rift Valley is part of the 6.400 km long rift that stretches from The Middle East to South Africa. In Kenya it divides into two branches, an eastern branch and a western branch. The rift is a depression formed by movements of the earth's crust. The valley contains all Kenya's lakes of which many are soda lakes. In the Rift Valley structure, you find Mount Kenya. The mountain is with its 5.199 m the second highest maintain in Africa only surpassed by Mount Kilimanjaro that reaches 5.895 m.

To the north the land turns into a semi arid to arid bush land and desert. In the central part of Kenya east of Rift Valley you find the Central Highlands that is a very fertile area with well developed agriculture. To the west the Western Plateau lies. This includes dry steppe areas and the shores of Lake Victoria.

Nairobi is the capital and the biggest city with 3.1 million - Greater Nairobi 2003. Other important cities mention after size is: Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu and Machakos.

Climate:

Generally, Kenya has two rainy seasons, the long rains from March to May and the short rains from October to December, varying from the four main climatic areas of the country.

The coastal area is warm and humid throughout the year with average temperatures from a minimum of 23 to a maximum of 29 centigrade and an average rainfall of 1200 mm. per year.

The north and north-eastern region is dry with sparse precipitation. The average temperatures in these areas range from a minimum of 18 to a maximum of 27 centigrade and the yearly average of the rainfall is between 250 mm. to 500 mm.

The Central Highlands including Rift Valley has a very pleasant climate. The average temperatures are 21 to 26 centigrade. The peak of rainfall during the long rains is April with 200mm and the yearly average is about 760 mm.

The south-western part of the country is warm and influenced by the presence of Lake Victoria with high humidity as a result. The average temperature ranges from a minimum of 17 to a maximum of 30 centigrade and the yearly rainfall average is 1150 mm.

Population:

The population of Kenya comprises 60 ethnic groups each with their own language. The main tribes are, Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, and Asian, European and Arab 1%.

Official languages are Swahili and English.

The population makes up 32.7 million (2003) and is expected to reach 40.0 million in 2015. Life expectancy is 47 years (2005).

The level of education in comparison to other African countries is high with a literacy rate of around 80% for young people aged between 15 -24 years (2003).

The distribution of religions and beliefs in Kenya is, Protestants 38%, Catholics 28%, indigenous beliefs 26%, Muslims 7% and others 1%.

History:

Kenya is believed to have been inhabited as far back as 2 million years. The British born Kenyan archaeologist and anthropologist Louis Leakey and his wife Mary worked in East Africa where they excavated and described 2 million years old stone tools. In 1984 their son Richard Leakey found a 1.6 million years old Homo habilis skeleton of a 12 years old boy, the Turkana Boy.

The history of the central Kenya up to the 19th century is not very well documented. However, it is known that different people migrated into the interior country. Among these were Bantu, Neolithic people and Cushitic people.

The coastal areas came early under Arab influence. In the 6th century Persian Arabs came to the area. The Persian Arabs were followed by other Arabic people. By the 10th century, the Arabs had founded several cities, of which many developed into city-states including Mombasa. The Arabs traded gold, ivory and slaves. During the process the Arabs and the local population intermarried to a great extent, developing the Swahili culture. In the 16th century, the Portuguese entered the area and conquered Mombasa, where they founded the stronghold Fort Jesus. The Portuguese presence ended in the beginning of the 18th century.

At the end of the 19th century, the English gained control over the trade and trade routes in the interior Kenya. In 1895 Kenya became an English protectorate and in 1920, she became a crown colony. After Second World War a strong independent movement arose, and as a part of this the Mau Mau movement started a guerrilla fight against the English. Although defeated in 1956, this independent fight led to independence in 1963 on December 12, under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta.

At the independence a new flag was created. The colours of the flag and the Maasai shield and spears in the centre symbolizes: black for the colour of the population, red for the colour of the Africans' blood, green for the country, white for peace and unity and the shield and spears for the defence of the freedom.

On our way

At 17:15 on November 29 we took off from Copenhagen Airport heading for Amsterdam. In turn we took off from Schiphol Airport at 20:45 and landed next morning in Jomo Kenyatta Airport Nairobi at 7:15. Contrary to last time we visited Kenya, we had no thrilling experiences on board the plane and no delay.

At Nairobi Airport, we had as planned, to apply for visas. We got them in no time and without problems. In contrast to that it took more than one hour, to get our luggage. We were a little afraid that maybe something had gone wrong, but everything was all right, and we got our entire luggage as everyone else did.

Having passed through the customs we met Irene from the Akorn office and Charles our guide. Irene was briefing us about our holiday giving us useful and practical information. She urged us on as we were behind schedules and could have problems reaching Samburu in time for lunch and the afternoon safari.

When we were leaving the airport area we missed the giraffes to welcome us as last time, we visited Kenya. However, in Nairobi the round about with the big tree and lots of marabou storks was still there, and if they did not greet us, we greeted them.

Irene was right. The traffic in and out of Nairobi was heavy, and it took 1 ½ hours to leave Nairobi behind us. As Charles said, "Nairobi was built for 50.000 inhabitants, and now it has more than 3 millions and they all have become richer and buy more cars". The delay did not give us time enough to reach Samburu as planned and Charles arranged with his office to book lunch for us at the Trout-Tree Restaurant. The restaurant is located on the main road between Kiganjo and Nanyuki about 3 km from the Nanyuki airstrip and 2.5 hours driving under normal circumstances from Nairobi city centre.

100 metres off the road on the banks of Burguret River the Trout-Tree Restaurant is situated. Right above the trout ponds the restaurant is built in and around a very big mugumo (sacred fig) tree. In the trees around the restaurant are several colobus monkeys, very distinct with their black and white colours and bushy tails. Coming to the restaurant from the busy road is like entering a complete other world. There is no electricity installed and all cooking is done with charcoal. The scenery, the stillness, the monkeys in the trees, the babbling water and the design of the restaurant takes you to a fantasy land.

We invited Charles to sit down with us at our table, so we could talk together. The restaurant served a splendid trout with a cool glass of white wine. This was a very pleasant break from the time on the road. However, we had to continue our tour and were soon back on the road.

The road from Nairobi to Nanyuki goes through the Central Highlands with many beautiful sceneries including that to Mount Kenya when approaching Nanyuki. The land surrounding Mount Kenya is Kikuyu heartland and their chief god, Ngai, is believed to have his home on Mount Kenya. Mount Kenya is in Kikuyu language Kirinyaga, which means "the mountain of brightness".

After Nanyuki, the landscape slowly changes to the dry bush land of the northern Kenya. Although it is supposed to be dry it was all wet from the showers that had been following us the whole day from Nairobi. The last town we passed before Samburu was Isiolo.

Samburu

We arrived in Samburu National Reserve late afternoon and had, as we had already taken into account, no time for the planned game drive. However, we do not know if Charles was driving the straight way to Samburu Game Lodge, our home for the next three days, or he was driving a bit

around, but the tour from the gates of the reserve to the lodge was like a small game drive, and we did see several animals including the Somali ostrich, the gerenuk, the Grevy's zebra, the reticulated giraffe and the elephant.

When you are on safari in Africa an important goal is to spot the big five that are elephant, buffalo, rhino, lion and leopard. We can as well reveal already now that we did not see all the big five; we missed the rhino and the leopard. Charles told us, as you in Africa generally are talking about the big five, in Samburu you talk about the big five of Samburu namely; reticulated giraffe, Grevy's zebra, oryx, gerenuk and Somali ostrich. This species is typical for Samburu.

The reticulated giraffe, we believe, is the most beautiful of the giraffe subspecies that we have seen. All giraffes are covered by a lattice pattern where irregular darker patches are separated by a system of lighter bands. In the case of the reticulated giraffe, the bands are very thin and distinct making the pattern look very much like a net; thereof the name reticulated. The name giraffe derives from the Arabic word "xirapha" which means "the one who walks swiftly".

We also find the Grevy's zebra the most beautiful of the zebra species that we have seen. Grevy's zebra is the largest of the zebra species. It has narrow black stripes that extend to the legs that are completely covered with stripes. A clearly marked black stripe runs along the spine to the tail and the belly is white. The head is large and the mane long and erect. The Grevy's zebra is regarded an endangered species. Since 1960 there has been a decline in the population of about 90% leaving a population of some 1,500 in Ethiopia and 4,000 in Kenya mainly in Samburu, Buffalo Springs and Shaba National Reserves. If their conditions are not improved it is expected that the Grevy's zebra will become extinct within the next 50 years.

The oryx is divided into three subspecies, two northern called respectively beisa and callotis or fringed-eared beisa, and a southern called gazella or gemsbok. In Samburu the beisa is represented. The oryx is a large and strongly built gazelle. Both sexes have long straight horns with very sharp points that are dangerous even for a lion. The colour of the northern species is greyish-fawn with black markings in the face and on the front legs. A black stripe is running on each side of the body above the belly. The tail is horse like. They are forming herds up to 30 individuals normally containing both male and female.

The gerenuk is a medium-sized elegant antelope with very long legs and a long slender neck, the latter fact has given the gerenuk the second name "giraffe-necked" antelope. Only the rams are carrying horns that are the shape of a lyre. They are mainly solitary animals, but they can be found in small mixed groups. They have the ability to stand on their hind legs and in combination with their long neck it allows them to browse at a height that most other browsers cannot reach. It is a fascinating sight to see them standing as erect as a human being on their hind legs.

The Somali ostrich is contrary to the common ostrich more of a browser. It is living in areas with bushes and shrubs and is either living in pairs or solitarily. When the male is breeding the bill turns pink, the thighs and the neck turn bluer and the scutes (scales) on the upper part of the tarsi (leg/foot) change from deep pink to bright red. DNA studies show quite a big difference between the Somali ostrich and other species.

When we reached the lodge, we were welcomed the usual way with a nice glass of juice and a wet and warm cloth for cleaning hands and face after the long drive. This was as previously mentioned

our second visit not only to Samburu but also to Samburu Game Lodge. We felt that we received a special welcome, and we were offered one of the nicest and biggest rooms. The accommodation contained one very big bed room / sitting room, one dressing room and a big very nice bathroom. Outside there were two terraces one facing the lodge park and one facing the Uaso Nyeri River that runs along the lodge. The name means in local language the brown river and the colour of the river is a beautiful reddish brown colour that comes from the red soil of the surrounding area. The view to the river and the wildlife in and across the river is just beautiful. Since last time, the lodge had been renovated, and it was very comfortable and pleasant.

The usual paperwork and brief explanations were carried out, and we were shown to our room and got ourselves installed. Already at the reception they told us that this week would be a very quiet week with few guests in contrast to the previous weeks that had been reasonably busy. We must add that the period we have chosen for the holiday is not high season. We are still in the short rains that you could call a medium season; not too busy and not completely deserted. We enjoy very much that we are not queuing in the lodges and subject to noisy parties. In the reserves we do not feel like on a busy road with occasional traffic jams; on the contrary we somehow feel that we are part of the nature and not spectators at nature together with the rest of the crowd.

Both on our last holiday in Kenya that was also during the short rains and on this holiday we had very little rain and a good combination of blue sky and clouds with very pleasant temperatures as well during the day as during the night. So, we do not hesitate to choose that season another time.

When we had unpacked, washed ourselves and rested a little, we went to have dinner. We sat down at a table in the pretty empty restaurant. An elderly small waiter came to us and served us. It turned out that he would attend to us throughout our stay; morning, noon and evening. He was a pleasant man who did everything to make us feel comfortable.

Next morning we were ready for our first real game drive this holiday. Usually the morning game drives start at half past six and last until about nine o'clock and the afternoon game drives start at half past three and last until sundown.

In the morning at the time of the game drive the air is usually clear and cool. There are no sounds except those of the nature itself and those you are making yourself, the latter completely in your own control. Stop the car, stand up with your head and upper part through the open jeep roof; take a deep breath to clear your lungs; take a view over the scenery, watch and listen; and feel a mental breath that clears your mind and thoughts. Your civilized life fades away and nature within you grows.

The vegetation was very green as precipitation had been plentiful during the short rains. Charles told us that he preferred the yellowish colours of the dry season. Once we came to a halt on a plateau with a beautiful view over the area he visualized for us what he meant. You see a yellow canvas with a green band winding across; the green band being the green vegetation alongside the river and the yellow background being the colour of the scorched vegetation; that is the real Samburu. Anyhow, we enjoyed the green colours, even though they made game spotting more difficult.

Our first game drive turned out to be as hard as we expected concerning game spotting. More than half the game drive was through without seeing any mammal. However, I am not that easy to knock out and instead of seeing the real animals I saw the shape of a giraffe head in a tree top and a dead

branch looked like a gerenuk standing on its hind legs. Another branch looked like a snake with raised head and a rock made up an elephant. Later during the drive we did spot some animals. We saw impala, Grant's gazelle, Thomson's gazelle, a few reticulated giraffes and some dwarf mongooses. The impala is in colloquial language called one eleven because seeing an impala from behind, there is a vertical black stripe on both buttocks and on the tail together looking like 111. When you see a Grant's gazelle or a Thomson's gazelle, and you are not sure which of them, it is, you just look at the part above the tail; if it is white it is a Grant's gazelle and if the colour is the same as that of the body it is a Thomson's gazelle.

Back from the morning game drives you might ask what to do for the next 6 to 7 hours until the afternoon game drive. First of all, no breakfast is served before the morning game drive only a cup of coffee or tea and some biscuits, so a nice breakfast with a variety of different choices is waiting for you at return. At around noon a comprehensive lunch is served and before the second game drive is served afternoon coffee and tea with some cakes. In between you can do some shopping in the lodge store or swim in the pool if you fancy that. Depending on the lodge different activities are offered such as performances by local tribes, bird walks and other activities. All lodges we have been visiting lie in nice park like areas where it is possible to go for short walks and from where you can enjoy the beautiful views to the surrounding reserves and watch the wildlife there. Coming back from a game drive you need to talk through the experience, look through the photos you have taken and maybe to write down what you have experienced for a later tale about the holiday.

Before you realize, it is time for the afternoon game drive from which you return at dusk. Then, soon the restaurant serves a superb supper, and after a few hours of enjoying the supper, a cup of Kenyan coffee, eventually a drink in the African night you turn in, very tired after an eventful day.

The afternoon game drive was not more successful than the morning game drive as far as the number of mammals we saw, is concerned. However, we still enjoyed the scenery, and we did meet our small friends from last time; the dik-dik antelopes. Suddenly, a pair of dik-diks is standing in the verge of the track or in an open space between the bushes; they are really cute animals.

We also met an elephant with a calf, and we were very anxious to spot the albino elephant we saw last time in Samburu, but we had no success, neither this particular afternoon nor the following day. In addition to the dik-diks and the elephants, we saw some buffaloes, waterbucks, gerenuks and three young male lions resting in the grass. One was lying on the back like a cat waiting being patted on the belly, but do not be mistaken, he is not a house cat.

Unless you are specifically interested in birds game spotting tends to concentrate on mammals. However, we saw many beautiful birds and the lack of mammals gave us time for these birds. Once we made a halt, Charles showed us a small yellow bird called Golden Pipit. When the bird set off and flew away it was like a flash of bright yellow, very beautiful. Everywhere in the savanna areas you meet the guinea fowl; here in Samburu both the helmeted guinea fowl and the vulturine guinea fowl. They are also beautiful birds with their blue colour and pearl pattern on the body.

On the way back from the afternoon game drive we arranged with Charles that we would have a full morning game drive the next day. A full morning game drive means in our context from 8 o'clock in the morning until about 12 - 1 o'clock noon. We really appreciated Charles' suggestion as it would give us twice as much time in the wild as a normal game drive, and we would extend our search area to Buffalo Springs National Reserve, a neighbour reserve to Samburu.

Next morning we set out as arranged at 8 o'clock. We went to the river, crossed it on a bridge guarded by a big Baboon that did not care much about our intrusion into Buffalo Springs. Shortly after, we saw two Martial Eagles sitting in the tree tops. The Martial Eagle is a big short-tailed eagle with a crest on the head. The under part is white with black spots and sitting there in the tree tops it looked pretty much like they were wearing an apron.

In the river area, we saw many dead trees completely black standing like they were silhouettes on a light background. They were victims of the elephants' appetite and taste for bark. We went to cheetah-land, a level country suitable for Cheetahs and their way of hunting. However, we met no cheetah. Having left this area we met three herds of reticulated giraffes, a troop of baboons and herd of elephants.

We are still fascinated by the giraffe, so gracious and yet a big and powerful animal with a kick of the legs that can kill or seriously hurt a lion. The giraffe is a pacer and seeing a giraffe walking is like watching a slow motion film. However, the walking pace is high and the running speed can be up to 60 km per hour. You find more species that are pacers, all long legged and among them the gerenuk. We had a funny incident with two young giraffes constantly moving their heads and necks on each other as if they were petting. Mira exclaimed: "How sweet, they are petting"! However, this was no petting; this was a ritualized fight of dominance called necking between two young bulls.

The troop of Baboons counted several members, and it is always funny watching these so human-like animals. There were several mothers with young ones hanging from their belly or carried on their back if not running around full of fun. In the troop was also a sick Baboon looking rather miserable with a shaggy coat.

Charles told us that the elephant during its life has six sets of teeth that are changed every ten years. This means that after sixty, worn out teeth will not be replaced so ultimately a very old elephant can end its life practically without teeth. Young male elephants leave the herd after puberty about seven years old.

We were heading for the springs and chose a small road or rather a big wheel track that we thought looked dry and safe. However, suddenly the car got stocked in a mud hole, and we did have some difficulties in getting out of it. Finally freed, we turned the car around to go for a safer road. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Shortly after, we literally bumped into a big herd of oryx and another big herd of Grevy's zebra. It was first time ever that we have seen big herds of this two species and this sight was worth all hardships.

At the springs, we got out of the car to stretch our legs and to look at the scenery. The landscape is open and you have a wide view over the plain and the bush land from there. Charles told us that the springs are old bomb craters that actually laid open the springs.

Back in the jeep we turned our face towards home. On the way we met a lying giraffe; a very vulnerable position we believe.

On the afternoon game drive, we went for the leopard. We started in typical leopard land close to the river and extended our search area to the rocky hillsides where we were driving on small tracks that no other car than a jeep can manage. We met an abandoned campsite where rangers had been

sleeping, and we felt further from civilization than ever. The feeling moving around under such circumstances is difficult to illustrate. Though, in spite of the jeep, you are moving within primeval time, feeling life as it was, freed from all constraints of modern society. You are feeling the tension from being on watch for animals, the joy when you spot the animals and the disappointment when luck fails to appear. You are nature and you feel the heart beat of nature.

We had no luck with spotting the leopard, but we met two gerenuks browsing through a bush standing on their hind legs and one Grevy's zebra. Besides we met our usual friends dik-dik, impala, Grant's gazelle, Thomson's gazelle, buffalo and guinea fowl.

At sunset we returned to the lodge a little in a sad mood as this was our last game drive in Samburu. However, we had spent a gorgeous time in Samburu and had still the evening left.

In Samburu, we have seen the following animals:

Mammals: Reticulated giraffe, gerenuk, Grevy's zebra, elephant, buffalo, beisa oryx, impala, Grant's gazelle, Thomson's gazelle, dik-dik antelope, waterbuck, lion, baboon, vervet monkey, warthog, dwarf mongoose,

Birds: Vulturine guinea fowl, helmeted guinea fowl, yellow-necked spur fowl, starlings, golden pipit, doves, parrots, grouse, hadada ibis, yellow-billed hornbill, red-billed hornbill, weavers, grey crowned crane, kingfishers, mouse birds, long crested eagle, martial eagle, palm nut vulture, kori bustard and ostrich.

Reptiles: Crocodile and iguana.

At dinner our waiter was very attentive and when we came to the dessert he asked us to remain seated as he would bring a special dessert for us. After a short time, all the staff came out from the kitchen carrying a cake decorated with lit sparklers. They were dancing towards us singing. The song is a song to welcome guests, and we knew the tune but of course not the words. After the song the manager made a short speech expressing their gratitude that we had come second time and stayed several days with them. She also expressed the hope that, we would return to Samburu another time. It was a very touching moment, and we believe that it was an honest and personal gesture to us.

Next morning, having said good-bye to everybody, we left for Sweet Waters Game Sanctuary.

Ol Pejeta Conservancy:

Our next accommodation was Sweetwaters Tented Camp that lies in typical savannah grassland in the heart of the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. Ol Pejeta Conservancy is situated in the Laikipia district a 9.500 square km plateau north west of Mount Kenya.

We had looked forward to sleep in a tent. We thought that we would feel closer to nature, surrounded by the life and sounds of the African night, but disappointingly we did not feel, that the experience was much different from that of a normal lodge. All the same, we had nothing to complain about. The standard of the tent and the camp site facilities was very good, and the staff was very pleasant.

The old farm house was arranged with several facilities including reception, restaurant, bar and sitting room with open fireplaces that were lit during the evening, where it could be quite cold.

The tent was standing with a beautiful view to the savannah and all the animals coming and going. Close to was a waterhole that was floodlit during the night. The tent was standing on a base of tiles that extended to a veranda and protected by a thatched roof. The tent included a big living and sleeping room; and a bathroom with shower, washbasin, table and water closet. Due to the cold nights, the beds were provided with hot-water bottles before bed time.

The camp site itself was very nicely arranged with tents both on ground level and on raised platforms. The site was planted with trees, shrubs and flowerbeds. Paths were winding through the site connecting the old farmhouse with the tents.

We arrived about noon and after having installed ourselves, we had a nice lunch. After lunch we sat down on our veranda, enjoying the wide view over the plains and all the animals coming up to the site. These were zebra, giraffe, impala, buffalo and warthog.

We were only staying one night in the lodge, and so we had only an afternoon game drive. Very quickly it was time for the game drive. First we went to visit the chimpanzee sanctuary. Separated from other animals by a fence, chimpanzees rescued from captivity and the hostilities in Central Africa lived. The idea of the sanctuary was originally that the chimpanzees should be repatriated to the rain forest but the continued unrest in Central Africa and the lack of rain forests in Kenya prevent the chimpanzees from being repatriated.

We continued our game drive and met waterbuck, eland antelope and the usual game. The eland is the largest antelope, with the weight of the bull about 700 - 900 kg and of the cow about 450 kg. Shoulder height for the bull is about 1,7 m and for the cow 1,5 m. We got a much closer look to this big antelope this time than last time we visited Kenya and could really feel the size.

Ol Pejeta Conservancy has a population of both white and black rhino. The black rhino is close to extinction and Ol Pejeta Conservancy is running a sanctuary where they protect and breed a population of black rhinos. We went to the area where you would normally find the rhinos, but we had no luck, no rhino within sight neither white nor black.

However, we did see a rhino. Morani is a tame black rhino that lives in an enclosure in Sweetwaters. His mother was killed by poachers in 1974, and he was brought to Sweetwaters. The aim was to bring him up in preparation for repatriating. Alas, he was imprinted on man and the repatriation failed. Instead of meeting him in the wild you can become acquainted with him in his enclosure. On your own responsibility, you enter the enclosure with an armed guard. It is quite an experience to be that close to a rhino. You can pat him and feel the roughness of his skin, you can feed him and feel the gentleness with which he is taken the titbits and experience his slow movements. We were warned not to make abrupt movements as his gentle and slow moving attitude can turn into a violent and fast moving reaction if he feels threatened.

After this experience, we continued back to the lodge. We prepared ourselves for dinner and after an enjoyable dinner and a cup of coffee, we went to the sitting room to watch the news on the TV. On December 27 an election for parliament and president was to take place in Kenya and one of the

items in the news was about some violence in the western part of the country about the election campaign. Charles, who also came to watch the news, told us there are often problems in that part of the country at elections.

Another item was about a car accident with 16 people killed. A truck with defective breaks smashed into a matatu. The truck was driving down a sloping road and not being able to break the truck, the driver lost control of the truck, hit a hole in the road and the disaster was unavoidable. The chauffeur of the matatu managed to jump out the car before the crash and disappeared without leaving a trace. This was, as bad as it was, the only accident that we heard of or saw during this holiday.

The name matatu derives from the word “three” because when the matatu transport started it cost three coins to travel. A matatu is most often a Nissan minibus that can carry up to 18 passengers but this limit nobody cares about. The shape of the matatu often looks very bad, the drivers are driving like madmen, and we are not sure that we would ever dare to enter one.

After these two, not positive news, we left to sleep. We passed the floodlit waterhole that was full of splashing and snorting buffalos, with the smaller antelopes and gazelles waiting at the edge of the waterhole. We came to our tent, went inside, switched on the light and found a small frog jumping around. Mira sent me on a frog hunt, but the frog disappeared quickly under Mira’s bed. She urged me down on all four to search the frog under the bed, but that was too late, no sign of the animal. I did not dare to tell Mira about frogs as poisonous as snakes until next morning.

In Ol Pejeta Conservancy, we have seen the following animals:

Mammals: Eland antelope, waterbuck, impala, Grant’s gazelle, Thomson’s gazelle, plains zebra, Maasai giraffe, buffalo, warthog, the tame black rhino and chimpanzees in the chimpanzee sanctuary.

Birds: Ostrich.

In the morning we left for next stop that was Nairobi.

Nairobi:

We were staying in The Holiday Inn Hotel formerly the Mayfair Court Hotel. The hotel was built in 1940’s Colonial Kenya and is today a modern hotel yet authentic in style and atmosphere. The hotel comprises several beautiful gardens with vigorous planting and lush lawns, big terraces, pools, restaurants, shopping facilities and several other facilities. It is located in a shopping and residential area close the city centre.

We arrived around noon and said a temporary goodbye to Charles. We were supposed to meet David and his wife Hannah at two o’clock pm. This gave us just time enough to get ourselves installed and to have a light lunch. We were both anxious about being able to recognize David, after all it was some time, since we saw him last. However, no need to worry, we all recognized each other, and both we and David and Hannah embraced each other as we were old friends.

There was a parking place just outside the hotel, where David had parked their car. We went to the car, got in and headed towards Kikuyu where David and Hannah lived. David explained that they would take us to the church in which they were getting married to show us the church and the surroundings. We did discuss a little religion with David when we were driving around on safari last time, and we know that David and his family profess Christianity, but we never asked which religious community they belong to. When we came to the church, we got to know that it was the Presbyterian community.

The Presbyterian Church in East Africa is the result of the work of the Church of Scotland. There are 4 mill members of the church in Kenya. It is engaged in education and medical work. It founded the first hospital in the country, and today it runs three hospitals and several health centres, two schools for deaf children, a home for old people and a home for destitute children. It sponsors 700 primary and secondary schools. The church is also engaged in development projects and operates community centres, rural development projects, centres for weaving, home craft, secretarial training for girls, HIV/AIDS control programmes, relief programmes and refugees programmes.

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa was founded in 1891 by Rev Thomas Watson. The first missionaries settled at Kibwezi, between Mombasa and Nairobi. The missionary work continued in Thogoto, west of Nairobi. From Thogoto the church developed further into Kenya. The first Kikuyu was baptized in 1907. After three years there were 53 Christians, increasing to 5,369 by 1929. Shortly after, the church split into two fractions, a European and an African fraction, due to disagreements on the question of female circumcision. In 1936 the two fractions formed their own church, but they reunited again in 1956.

The name of David's and Hannah's church is Church of the Torch, and it is located in Kikuyu. There are two churches on the site, the Watson Memorial Church, built in 1907 to commemorate the Rev Thomas Watson and the Church of the Torch built in 1921. The Watson Memorial Church is a wooden building, and it is the oldest surviving Scottish church in Kenya. The church was used as the scenery at the funeral of Berkeley Cole in the film Out of Africa. The Church of the Torch is a big stone building. When the Church was built it was filled with stained glass depictions. As we remember the inside of the church there were few if any decorations, and we noticed no stained glass depictions. This contrasts with many other religious communities e.g., the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Protestant Church, where church buildings are richly decorated. If it is true that the stained glass depictions were not there, they were probably removed during a campaign in the first half of the present decade, removing all such symbols from the Presbyterian churches.

When we entered the church, we found ourselves in an imposing church room. Moving around we met two women that David and Hannah knew, churchwardens or other staff of the church, we believe. We were talking with them for a longer time, about the church and also a little about Denmark and our background. When we had seen and heard about everything we said good-bye to each other and went outside.

David said that they would just go to see the vicar, and we should come along to say hello. The vicar appeared to be a pleasant looking woman vicar. We sat down in her office, and she offered us a cup of tea, but we declined the offer. She explained us about the wedding ceremony and the role that the church was playing in the arrangement of the wedding as such. The church took care of the invitations and the vicar told us that 350 invitations had been sent out. Ultimately, the number of guests could be higher, as an invitation could include more than one person, and the invited people

would eventually pass on the invitation or the information about the wedding, to other people. Besides, invitations were not sent to family.

The ceremony in the church would last about 2 hours. Afterwards there would be a reception for the main part of the invited people and in the evening they would continue the celebration at a restaurant with specially invited people and dance to the morning.

With so many people invited it is hard managing alone, and it is a custom that friends and acquaintances bring food or pay an amount.

In turn we told about our relationship to David and Hannah and how we were sorry that we could not respond positively to David's and Hannah's invitation to their wedding as we were leaving Kenya four days before, and I would have to return to work.

After the visit to the church, we continued to the home of David and Hannah. On the way we stopped at a market where Hannah bought some sweet potatoes. At their home the entrance was closed with a big iron gate and when we arrived, the children opened the gate, and we drove in. Their house was a terrace house or a semi detached house.

Inside we met David's mother and aunt, David's and Hannah's daughter Faith and their youngest son Steve. Later Walter, the oldest son came. David's father was supposed to be present also, but it was impossible for him to be there.

The house had one big combined dining and sitting room, and we were shown into the room. From the sitting room one door led to a spare room and another door to the bathroom and toilet. If there were more rooms, we don't know. All chairs and sofas were covered with pieces of lace. Whether it is like that every day or only when guests are coming, we do not know. However, it looked very nice. In general the whole house had a look of David's and Hannah's delight in and care for their home.

They bid us to sit down and served different fruit juice for us. We had brought some presents for them all. It is very hard to know what to buy for present when you do not know the persons that well, especially when they are from another nation and culture. What is an attractive and valued present in Denmark might be useless and unattractive in another nation or culture. However, for David and Hannah, we had bought typical Scandinavian applied art namely, two small glass bowls designed by the Finish architect Alvar Aalto and for the children a very nice edition of the Fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen, a very Danish book. We told that the presents for David and Hannah were a combined wedding present and thanks for inviting us, and they did not want to open it until the wedding. Faith, on the contrary, asked if she might open it, and of course we urged her to do so, and she liked the book. For them all we also brought the DVD the Life of a Storyteller about the life of Karen Blixen.

We were sitting talking enjoying the time. At such occasions you are often telling about your back ground, everyday life, experiences and dreams, and so we all did. During this conversation we learned that David's aunt was a school teacher. Besides being a nursery teacher Hannah is also a hairdresser. She would now like to take up hairdressing again as independent; she could start working at home for a beginning. Walter and Faith are in a boarding school away from Nairobi while Steve is still at the local school.

Later in the afternoon Faith started to busy herself in the kitchen and as time passed, we guessed that she was preparing something for all of us. At the end she came out from the kitchen and asked us if we would like tea or chocolate. We both chose tea. Shortly after Hannah brought an empty bowl and a jar filled with water holding it out to us. We were not quite sure what the idea was, and so we were a little hesitant. Then David said that Mira and Hans do not need to eat with their fingers they can have a knife and a fork. First then we realized the meaning, and of course we insisted to follow their habits, and we rinsed our hands in water poured from the jar. When the tea and coffee was ready, Faith served it for all of us. In addition, she served warm fried sweet potatoes. This was a strange combination for us, but it tasted very well and we both eat several potatoes.

At one time the whole family rose saying that they wanted to sing a gospel for us. David explained that it was praise and thanks to god that we made it to their village; they believe that it is the power of god that made it happen. They were singing beautifully and we were much moved by this their way of showing their appreciation of our visit.

We arranged that we would leave about six o'clock; this would make it possible to drive while it was still light. So, about that time we said goodbye to everybody except David who would take us back to the hotel. On the way back we went to see the place where the reception was to be. It was a bigger area with some buildings, and it looked very nice.

Back at the hotel we said goodbye and see you tomorrow; we had already arranged that David the following day would show us around a couple of hours in central Nairobi. It had been an interesting day, and we had enjoyed very much to stay with David, Hannah and their family.

Nairobi was founded in the 1890s as a camp used under the construction of the railway from Mombasa to Victoria Lake in Uganda. From 1899 to 1905 Nairobi acted as a British provincial capital and in 1905 the city became the capital of the British East Africa. At the independence of Kenya in 1963 Nairobi became the capital of the new country.

The name Nairobi derives from the Maasai phrase Enkare Nyorobi, which means "the place of cool waters" that was the Maasai name for the swamp on which the camp was set up. Today Nairobi is popularly known as the "Green City in the Sun". Nairobi is situated at an altitude of 1660m in the southern part of Kenya and has a pleasant climate.

The city is the main political, economic, administrative and cultural centre of Kenya as well as the traffic junction for East and Central Africa. It is one of the largest and fastest growing cities in Africa and important UN offices operate from Nairobi. The industry of Nairobi comprises processed food, clothing, textiles, communication equipment, transportation equipment and building materials.

The city centre is located within the streets Uhuru Highway, Haile Selassie Avenue, Tom Mboya Street and University Way. Kenyatta Avenue runs across the area and divides the area in two. The southern part houses government offices and other important offices. Within the northern part are other offices, mid and top range hotels and the city market.

Next morning we met at 10:30 in the hotel reception. We went straight to the car and started for the centre. The order in which we have chosen to describe the tour is at random as we cannot remember the exact route.

Driving along Haile Selassie Avenue, we saw, at the corner of Moi Avenue, the memorial of the bombing of the American embassy on August 7, 1998. Further on we passed the Railway's head office, the Central Bank and the Government Press building. Reaching the Uhuru Highway junction, we could see the Railway Museum on our left hand side. The museum has a collection of historical photographs and relics from old trains. After we passed Uhuru Highway, we had the Railways Golf Course on our left hand side. At Processional Way, we turned right and half way down the road we made a stop to enjoy the view over Uhuru Park that lies between Processional Way and Uhuru Highway.

East of Processional Way is Ngong Road and Bishops Road where we saw the Government Buildings.

Harambee Avenue runs beside and parallel with Haile Selassie Avenue. Harambee means, let's pull together in Swahili. On Harambee Avenue, we passed the Treasury, the Office of the President and the Parliament.

On City-Hall Way that runs further to the north we passed Nairobi City-Hall, Kenyatta International Conference Centre, where the conference room itself is built in the shape of a hut, the Holy Family Basilica and the Jomo Kenyatta Mausoleum.

Coming by Tom Mboya Street just across City-Hall Way, we met the National Archives. It is housed in the old Bank of India building. It contains drawings, amateur art, ethnographic objects and a collection of photographs of Arab Moi's early history as well as some Mau detention camps.

North of Kenyatta Avenue on Market Street that runs from Uhuru Highway to Muindi Mbingu Street parallel with Kenyatta Avenue, we saw the City Market. East of the City Market a few streets away we saw the Jamia Mosque.

Driving by the Uhuru Highway, we had the Uhuru Park on our left hand side. It stretches from Haile Selassie Avenue to Kenyatta Avenue. After Kenyatta Avenue, the park continues as Central Park. In Central Park, we saw the Nyajo Memorial, built in 1988 to commemorate the 25 years of independence. Where Uhuru Highway and University Way meet, there is a roundabout and on three of the corners there is a church, hence the place is called Church Square. The three churches are, the Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Chapel and the Synagogue.

Just north of University Way, we found Nairobi University. We continued further north by Uhuru Highway to the end and turned right at Museum Hill Road. Half way down on our right hand side we passed the National Museum. The collections of the museum include the Leaky family's discoveries in Tanzania and Kenya as well as a collection of weapons, ornaments and headdresses of Kenyan tribes. Beside the museum there is a new art centre.

During our tour around we saw the Foreign Office, the Aga Kahn Building, several of the main banks, some Hindu temples and mosques, but we are not sure where exactly where they are located.

We finished our tour at the Norfolk Hotel located north of University Way in Harry Thuku. Close to the hotel on the other side of the road is the National Theatre that we passed. The Norfolk Hotel was established in 1904 by an English major. It was a small hotel, but it has grown both in size and

importance. Several important persons have during the years visited the hotel. The hotel has played an important role in the history of as well Nairobi as Kenya. It is still the starting point for safaris. In the lobby a whole range of photos and pictures from colonial time is hanging on the walls. We sat down on a terrace in one of the gardens having a drink before we had to return to our hotel. While sitting here, David told us a little about the children. Walter, the oldest one, had not yet made up his mind what to study when he finishes the high school. Faith, the middle one, had already decided that she wants to graduate in medicine. The youngest Steve is still only a child, and so far he wants to be a guide as his dad. At one o'clock pm. we were back and said goodbye to David.

When we returned from David and Hannah the day before we found in our room, pushed under the door, a small letter saying, "Dear Hans, room 266. The management of the holiday Inn Nairobi would be delighted if you could join us for our guest cocktail party to be held in the Palm Rooms on Wednesday the 5th December 2007 from 5.30pm to 7.30pm. See you there."

Mira was delighted and was already planning what to put on, but I had to disappoint her, the letter was addressed to me, so I would be going alone. However, I took pity on her and agreed that she could join me; after all it was probably meant so.

When time came Mira dressed herself in a Kenyan dress that she earlier had bought in a hotel shop. She looked very exotic. There were already many guests when we came. They were standing in small groups around bar tables and obviously the people in the groups knew each other. All participants received a flag of their own country to fasten on their clothes so everybody could see from which country you came. We must admit there were several flags present that we did not know.

We went to an empty table and were served both canapés and drinks. At one time an Englishman with a Kenyan flag came to our table. He appeared to be the manager of the hotel. He was a very pleasant man, and we talked for some time with him. He had been two years in Kenya and liked it very much. Previously, he had worked in Namibia and South Africa. He strongly recommended South Africa for holidays, especially Garden Route and the western part of the country. He also told that he had once gone back to England to work, but he could not get accustomed to the life there and longed back to Africa. While we were talking with the manager, a Swiss woman and a Kenyan man joined us.

It was a quit interesting event, and we enjoyed it a lot.

Amboseli:

Next morning Charles picked us up at 7:30, and right away we set out on the 4½ hours drive to Amboseli. Nairobi was very busy so Charles took some short cuts to get quickly out of the town. The first part of the stretch was the Nairobi Mombasa highway. After we passed Jomo Kenyatta Airport, the road turned pretty bad. At Athi River, we turned right and headed towards Namanga, a border city to Tanzania. The road was quite good all along. Shortly before Namanga, we made a stop at a curio shop. The area, framed with beautiful flowering shrubs, was a relief to body and soul.

On the outskirts of Namanga, we turned left towards Amboseli. The road was a rough and bumpy gravel road making it a rough ride. We passed through dry bush land, and close to Amboseli, I saw a lake. The map showed that Lake Amboseli lies in that area, so I believed that this was the lake, and I

did not ask Charles about it. Not long after when we entered a completely flat, empty, dry and dusty space leading to Ol Tukai Lodge, I anyway asked Charles if it was Lake Amboseli, I had seen. He answered back that we were driving on the bed of Lake Amboseli that is a temporary lake that floods during years of heavy rainfall. The lake, I had seen was a mirage. This was first time ever that I experienced a mirage and thinking back it is amazing that it did not occur to me that it was not a real lake. Driving on the lake bed we saw in the horizon mirages of trees reflected in the shimmering air.

Lake Amboseli was 10.000 ago a large 40 meters deep permanent lake. A few thousand years ago Mount Kilimanjaro erupted, and alkaline white ashes, the remains of this eruption, today cover a big part of the lake and the area. The ashes you see everywhere as clouds of dust rising in the air like smoke from a fire.

Amboseli comprises open plains with elephant grass, acacia woodlands, dry and rocky bush land, and swamps. Increasing salinity of the soil caused by the alkaline ashes results in the death of the vegetation. This is worsened by the big herds of elephants and cars driving off the tracks. To protect the woodlands from elephants some areas have been fenced.

There are three swamps in Amboseli; Ol Tukai , Ol Okenya and Enkongo Narok. The swamps are supplied with water from underground streams running from Mount Kilimanjaro. The swamps have a rich wild life.

Ol Tukai Lodge is situated in the lush and green heart of Amboseli. North and east of the lodge the two swamps Ol Tukai and Ol Okenya lie and to the south the plains stretch out with Mount Kilimanjaro as backdrop. The whole area is fenced with an electric fence so you can safely watch the game coming close to the lodge. The area is beautifully arranged with gardens and big lawns with shady acacia trees. The rooms are part of four roomed cottages in African style made by timber, all with the view to the sceneries of the surrounding land and the wildlife.

From our terrace we had a wide view over the plains with big herds of elephants and buffalos as the dominant animals, but also zebras, waterbucks, Grant's gazelles, Thomson's gazelles and ostriches. Unfortunately, the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro did not reveal itself, so we did not get the sight, neither the photo of the quintessence of Kenya; elephants grazing with Kilimanjaro in the background. The trees on the lodge area were full of weavers and in front of our room several hadada ibises foraged. The hadada ibis is a dark and short-legged ibis, 75 to 90cm long. The colour is brownish grey with a bronze gloss and the wing-coverts are iridescent green and purplish. The call is raucous and is used rather noisily especially in the morning and evening when the bird flies to and from feeding ground.

Our first game drive was in the afternoon on the day of arrival. We went to the Ol Okenya swamp where we met several elephants. At places the swamps are as deep as half the height of a grown elephant, so when the elephants move to more shallow areas, you can see the waterline on their body. We met an elephant with big crossing tusks. This made feeding a bit difficult we imagine. The elephant had to twist its trunk to the outer side of the tusks to grab the food and to put it into the mouth, not the straight way as with normal growing tusks. Together with the elephants were many cattle egrets and yellow billed egrets. An egret is a heron bird. Cattle egret is gregarious and living in dry or wet open land. It is short legged and 50 to 55 cm long. The colour is basically white and

the bill yellow. The yellow billed egret is living in wetlands. It is 60 to 70 cm long, has as the name says a yellow bill and the plumage is basically white.

For hippos this must be paradise, they can lie in water the whole day and graze at the same time. They do not need to spend the night feeding. Whether they actually appreciate it, we do not really know. We met several hippos enjoying in the swamp. A reed buck was standing covered above the chest by the swamp. The species in this part of Africa is the bohor reed buck. It is a small to medium sized antelope with a shoulder height of 65 to 90 cm, a length of 1,3 to 1,7 m and a weight of 35 to 65 kg. The colour is yellowish to pale red-brown with white under parts. The ram carries short ringed horns. They live close to reed beds and flooded grasslands.

We left the swamps and entered the plains, where we came close to the usual animals. This may sound ordinary, but it is not. The sceneries, the animals and the feeling of being so close to the original nature is every time a unique experience that is hard to explain and to understand. At the end of the game drive, we were moving in an area with a lot of game and for the first and only time on this safari holiday we were amid many cars. Some of the participants caught sight of a cheetah, but it was not that close to the cars, and at least we did not see the cheetah.

On the way back to the lodge, we were driving in a cortege of ten cars. Although we could not see Mount Kilimanjaro, we could see the surrounding land rise to the foot of the mountain. Getting close to the lodge, we had Kilimanjaro in front of us. In the distance to the right Charles told us we could see Mount Meru that is 5.465m high. Behind the mountain the Tanzanian town Arusha is located.

Arusha is the starting point of many safaris and trekking to Kilimanjaro. In 1967 the adoption of the Arusha declaration was signed in the town. The declaration formulated the objectives of developing an African Socialism and self reliance in Tanzania. The development of agriculture played a significant role to reach the objectives. In 1996, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, ICTR was established, partly in Arusha and partly in Kigali in Rwanda.

Well back in the lodge, we prepared ourselves for supper. As in all the lodges we have been visiting both this year and in 2004 the food was plentiful, the variety of dishes was large and the quality superb. No wonder that we enjoyed the meal and were sitting long time in the restaurant. We finished with a cup of coffee in the bar.

Next morning we continued our game drives. We drove through the plains to the Nkongo Narok swamp. In the plains we saw one lioness, a group of four lionesses with one small and five bigger cups and four young lionesses in a group. Driving through the swamp, we saw the saddle billed stork that is uncommon in wetlands. It is a remarkable stork with a black and white plumage. The bill is black and red with a yellow saddle formed frontal shield. The legs are dark with pink joints and toes. It is a tall bird with a length of about 1,5 m.

We passed the Observation Hill which is located close to the swamp. With a view around the horizon over the park and the surrounding areas it was previously used by the rangers to fight poachers. It is the only place in the park where visitors are allowed to go out of the car to walk around. However, we chose to pass and continue the game drive.

We finished the game drive in a very dry part of the park with sparse vegetation and very few animals. This was pretty rough land, and we felt how little tempting nature can be.

The afternoon game drive took us to the swamps, the plains, the arid areas and the fenced forest. The swamps are like oasis in deserts with their lush grasses and water plants in shallow waters or pools amid arid land. They offer conditions that attract many different animals. We were always sure to meet both mammals and birds in the swamps. A very spectacular bird is the grey crowned crane. It is dark grey with white, black and reddish brown wings. The head is black with distinct white cheeks. On the top of the head, it has a crest of pale yellow bristly feathers. The length is about 1,1 m.

While we were driving around in the swamps Charles told us that he once during a safari found himself in the midst of a large herd of elephants with about 300 individuals. It had been a very awe-inspiring experience and also very time consuming.

On the plains we met first time in Amboseli a big herd of giraffes. The subspecies is the Maasai giraffe. The difference between the different subspecies is regional, mainly in the colour and the pattern of the skin. It was also first time, we saw the white bearded gnu.

We had a unique experience in the arid area. We encountered a hyena den with several puppies lying around. While we were watching them, suddenly an almost new born puppy appeared. Contrary to the bigger puppies that had already the greyish brown spotted fur the new born puppy was completely dark without any pattern. We stayed some time to watch the puppies and in all that time no adult appeared.

The last area we came to, was the fenced forest. Within the fence the vegetation was more vigorous than that of the surrounding area, where we could see the result of the elephant bull's desire to demonstrate their might, turned over trees. Inside the fence we did not see any mammals, but birds can go everywhere and be seen everywhere. We enjoyed the scenery and the tranquillity only broken by bird's voices.

Returning to the lodge the peak of Kilimanjaro suddenly peeped through a hole in the clouds right in front of us, creating a unique final to our Amboseli safaris.

This was the end of our Amboseli safaris.

In Amboseli, we have seen the following animals:

Mammals: Elephant, buffalo, reed buck, waterbuck, white-bearded wildebeest, Grant's gazelle, Thomson' gazelle, plains zebra, Maasai giraffe, hippopotamus, warthog, baboon, lion, spotted hyena and black-backed jackal.

Birds: Cattle egret, yellow-billed egret, white-bellied bustard, kori bustard, blacksmith plover, sacred ibis, hadada ibis, African jacana, lesser jacana, Egyptian goose, African spoonbill, grey crowned crane, saddle billed stork, helmeted guinea fowl, superb starling, weaverbird, African fish eagle and vulture.

Our last game reserve was waiting for us the next day and in the morning we left for Tsavo West.

Tsavo West:

We left Amboseli in a cortège of safari cars heading for Tsavo West. Each car had an armed guard to protect against poachers. Half way we made a halt, the guard left the car, and we waited for an escort car with armed guards. Charles told us that it wasn't really necessary anymore but anyhow the authorities maintained the security level.

Leaving Amboseli four lionesses as well as several Thommies bid us farewell.

After some time, the arid bush lands of Amboseli, changed to more vigorous growth. We passed through several cultivated areas with fields of corn and beans. On our left hand side, we had a beautiful view to the Chyulu Hills and backwards on our right hand side, we could see Kilimanjaro in the distance. When we entered the Tsavo district we were met by a Lesser Kudu, zebras, a giraffe and ostriches.

In Tsavo, we stopped at the Shetani lava flows. The lava covers an area of about 50 sq km at the foot of the Chyulu Hills that are a volcanic mountain range. The volcano last erupted about 200 years ago, and you see the wrinkled surface of the lava with scattered vegetation. Shetani translates to devil or evil, and it is easy to understand the name, when you know how devastating a volcanic eruption can be. The local people are still telling stories about the evil spirits released with the eruption.

We continued to Kilaguni Lodge that would be our home for the next three days. Kilaguni lodge was the first safari lodge built in a national park. It was opened in 1962 and the name Kilaguni derives from the word for young rhino in Kamba language. The lodge is situated with a magnificent view to the Chyulu Hills and the extinct volcano Chaimo. In clear weather you can even see the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro. Close to the lodge, there is a water hole that is floodlit during the night. It is surrounded by an open steppe area that farther away is replaced by a forest like area with scattered trees. During day and night the water hole is visited by a variety of the Tsavo game. Both the open air restaurant and all the rooms are overlooking the area. Close to the restaurant there are several bird feeding stands that are visited by beautifully coloured birds. However, baboons are equally interested in the fodder and help themselves.

Tsavo is the largest national park in Kenya and one of the largest in Africa. It covers almost 22.000 sq. km that is more than the size of Wales or Jamaica. It is divided into two administrative areas, Tsavo East and Tsavo West. The undergrowth is high and vigorous making game spotting more of a sport than in parks with open landscapes. The landscapes are gorgeous and on their own they make Tsavo worth a visit.

Tsavo is also known for the legend of the Man-eaters of Tsavo. In 1898 during the construction of the railway between Mombasa and Nairobi, two large lions found easy prey among the workers of the railway, resulting in more than 120 victims.

In the afternoon on the day of our arrival we had our first Tsavo game drive. Even if we just claimed that game spotting can be hard in Tsavo, we were favoured by the presence of several animals. We met one group of Maasai giraffe of 5 individuals, one small group of two and several solitary individuals. Our small friends dik-diks were plentiful, and we always enjoy them. Jackson's

hartebeest we saw first time on this safari, here in Tsavo. The hartebeest can be grouped in six races. They are medium sized antelopes with a shoulder height about 1,25m and a total length of 2,0 to 2,5 m. Shoulders are considerably higher than the rump, the face is long and narrow and both sexes are carrying horns. On all races the under parts and rump are paler than the overall body colour. We met three groups of the Jackson's hartebeest and though their body build is somewhat clumsy they are elegant anyhow and fast runners.

The largest bird on earth, the ostrich was numerous. We saw several male ostriches with pink legs and neck, and Charles told us that they get that colour when breeding. He also told that both male and female are brooding, the female during the day where her colour is a perfect camouflage and the male during the night when black is not easily seen. Besides the black colour absorbs heat which helps to keep warm the eggs and the young ones.

One item on the agenda for the afternoon was a visit to the Mzima Springs. The springs produce about 190 million litres of crystal clear water per day and are the main water supply for Mombasa. The source of the springs is the Chyulu Hills where rain filtered through the volcanic ash is caught in underground bedrock that leads to Mzima Springs.

We had a guided walk of half an hour along the three main pools of the springs. The wind was light, the air clear, fresh and with a scent of water. The colour of the pools was blue and the surface full of ripples. Walking along the path made for visitors we had many fine views. The area was very vigorous, a world of its own lying as an enclave in the surrounding country.

We met two small groups of tourist; one of them was two Dutch or Flemish speaking couples travelling together and for one of the couples, it was their fourth safari holiday in Kenya. However, we did not come to watch people, so we concentrated on the wild life and the flora. We saw one bigger crocodile and a young one on 20 - 30 cm. The guide told us that it would take about 17 years before the young one would be fully grown. The area had a population of approximately 67 hippos, and we saw several of them lying in the water snorting and grunting. We also met troops of vervet monkeys and heard and saw many birds.

The area had many different trees. Several of them had a plate with information placed in front. We noted one called toothbrush tree (*salvadora persica*). It is an evergreen shrub or small tree of 6-7 m. The trunk is erect or trailing and heavily branched. The crown is wide with crooked, hanging branches. The bark is slightly rough and the colour is greyish-brown. It is growing in areas with thorn shrubs, on river banks and grassy savannahs. The tree is able to grow in very dry environment; however, it prefers areas where groundwater is available. For more than 1.000 years the Islamic population of Africa has used toothbrushes made from the roots and small branches of the tree. The tree is believed to prevent caries and plaque, and to kill toothache. Besides it is used as a remedy for healing boils, treating sores and relieving rheumatism.

Another tree was the African corkwood tree also called umbrella tree (*musanga necropolises*). It is an evergreen tree with a straight stem and a height up 18 m. The bark is smooth and grey. The shape of the crown is like an umbrella, thereof the name. It is numerous in forest clearings, swamp forest, river or lakesides. The life span is approximately 20 years. Different parts of the tree are used in treating ailments such as chest related illnesses, toothache, coughs, and wound treatment.

Yet another tree was the sausage tree (*kigelia pinnate*). It is a semi-deciduous slow growing tree that can be up to 25 m of height. The bark is grey and smooth and the crown is dense and rounded. The name Sausage Tree derives from the shape of the fruit. The fruit can be up to one metre long and weigh up to 12 kg. It is abundant in wet savannah woodland and riverine areas. We saw many Sausage Trees when we were driving along the river in Samburu. The tree is used as medicinal for treating ailments like bladder trouble, kidney disease, haemorrhoids; wounds, sores and cuts; snakebite, syphilis, rheumatism and lumbago. It is also used as an ingredient in traditional beer to improve the fermentation process.

We celebrated our 39. wedding day this first day in Tsavo and invited Charles for a drink in the evening. We spent one and half hours in Charles' company, and we had an enjoyable evening.

Charles told about himself and his family. He was born in Nyeri where he lived until he was 18. Then he moved to Nairobi, and today he is living in a small town not far from Nakuru. He is married and he and his wife have three kids. The oldest is a boy of 18 who is about to finish his high school. They are living in a house they have built themselves. The plot is big and they have three dogs acting as guard dogs, lots of chickens and three cows. They are producing more milk than they can consume themselves and the surplus they are selling to a local dairy.

Charles is having a small flat in Nairobi that he is using in connection with his job as a guide, as all the safaris have a starting point in Nairobi.

Charles' wife is trained as a nurse, and at present she is studying further within the profession. For that reason she is not living at home and to take care of the children her sister is living in their house. They also have somebody to take care of the animals.

Charles showed us a photo of the house with the family in front, and we must say that both the house and his family look fine.

He also told us that Kenya has started to utilize the volcanic activity in the underground to produce electricity and that they in the future expect to be able to export this electricity. Talking about volcanic activities he told that tremors from the volcanic activities in Tanzania can be felt in Nairobi.

We, in turn told a little about Scandinavia including the Vikings and how they spread out to different parts of the world. We told about Denmark, the weather here, good and bad months, the short and long days, and the population.

Then it was time to go to bed.

Next morning the sky was overcast and around the lodge it was nice warm. However, leaving the lodge and entering the open country it became cooler. We met hardly any animals for the first one and half hours driving so we agreed that Sunday morning, the animals were sleeping long after a hard Saturday night. Though, our small friends dik-diks had apparently gone early to bed and were up early as was many of the birds. The area we were driving through was full of a very nice plant with beautiful bluish lilac flowers.

Finally, we turned the car and went back the same way we had come. This helped because after some time we saw a big herd of buffalos at close range which enable us to have a very good look at the animals. The landscape that framed the animals was very nice with a fine view over a big area with scrub and mountains in the background.

As we continued our driving we passed a big slanting fairly smooth rock. In the middle of the rock a baboon was sitting quietly relaxing and quite on the top of the rock was another baboon as well quietly sitting. Later we met both giraffes and zebras.

At the entrance to the lodge, we saw a juvenile Martial eagle in the top of a tree. You can distinguish the immature eagle from the grown eagle by the white face, under parts and legs.

The afternoon game drive took us to the area we were overlooking from the lodge. In the beginning the area had thick undergrowth, and we saw no animals. Later the area changed to more open country with scattered trees and brush enabling us to spot many animals. We met two small herds of zebras with foals. Although the foals were not quite small they still tried to suck. Later we met two herds of Fringed Eared oryx. They were not as stout as the beisa oryx of Samburu and looked skinnier.

Of course we also met warthogs. The Kenyans call them Kenya express, Charles explained, because when being chased by predators they run very fast, stop suddenly as if the chase has ceased and then continue in full speed.

Baboons are widespread and common, and we met two troops of which one was quite big. You never get tired of looking at animals so close to humans, and you can spend long time watching them. Shortly after we left them, we turned away from the road down to the river Tsavo which we followed a while. We passed a track made by hippos when moving between the water and the grazing grounds.

When safari parties meet it is normal that the guides stop the cars to exchange information and experiences of the areas they had passed through. It is quite interesting; during the game drives especially in Tsavo, that several members of these parties we met were sitting half sleeping as if only animals could keep them awaken. What a narrow aim of such an extraordinary event as a safari.

Alas, the following day was our last day on safari. Only the ride back to Nairobi and of course the flight back to Copenhagen remained.

We set out for the morning game drive at half past seven a little later than we used as we had arranged with Charles that we would spend the whole morning on the game drive. The weather was very nice, partly clouded and the air fresh from the rain during the night. The day started very promising; already after a few minutes driving, we met four giraffes, a herd of buffalos, impalas and dik-diks; we can't really imagine a safari without dik-diks.

Our first destination was the extinct volcano Chaimo. It is amazing to see a mountain and the surrounding area completely black from the deposits of the volcano.

We continued through beautiful areas with wide views over the country, to the mountains in the distance, to rocks with fantastic shapes further away or close to the car. On the rocks we found the yellow-spotted rock hyrax sun basking. The rock hyrax is 40-60 cm long with a shoulder height of 15-30 cm and without a tail. It is normally living in colonies of 4 to 8 individuals. The food consists of plants, leaves, flowers, fruits and bark.

As we had seen no rhinos neither white nor black except the tame Morani at Ol Pejeta Conservancy, we went on to Rhino Valley being sure that we could not fail. Believe it or not, this enormous animal managed to remain unseen. Contrary to that another enormous animal did not play games with us. In a small pool five big hippos were waiting for us.

At the pool bank in a tree, a Pied Kingfisher was sitting ready to throw itself into the water to catch a fish. The Pied Kingfisher is a 25 cm long bird, black and white of colour with a crest on top of the head. It is living at lakes, streams and in coastal areas.

In Rhino Valley we also saw D'Arnaud's barbet a 20 cm long very nice looking spotted yellow bird, and a Blacksmith Plover. The latter bird belongs to a widespread family of shore birds that lives in grasslands, fields, swamps and at the sea. The Blacksmith Plover is 30 cm long black, white and grey plover that lives in inland shores and swamps.

Leaving Rhino Valley we all three felt the need to relieve ourselves and Charles headed to Ngulia Lodge to borrow their toilets. Ngulia Lodge is situated on top of the edge of an escarpment with a tremendous view over the Rhino Valley and the Tsavo plains. Ngulia Lodge is well known for the yearly ringing of migrating birds during the period October to December. Comparing with Kilaguni Lodge we much prefer the architecture and style of Kilaguni.

After we left Ngulia Lodge, we did not meet many animals. Nevertheless, we were lucky to see some small groups of lesser kudu. The lesser kudu is a medium sized antelope with a length about 2 m. and a shoulder height of 1 m. The colour is greyish-brown with up to 15 vertical white stripes. Only the male is carrying horns. They are very shy animals that prefer acacia woodlands and thickets.

In spite of the fact that the elephant is the biggest terrestrial animal it is very difficult to spot in Tsavo. Though, we did manage to spot one elephant in the thicket a distance away, and later we met four elephants crossing the road disappearing into the thicket.

We were back at Kilaguni Lodge a quarter past twelve almost five hours after we left. Staying out that long reduces pressure to move on. You really can take your time just to enjoy.

Enjoy we also did our lunch. Knowing that this was our last day, we just experienced everything stronger; food, restaurant, the entire lodge, the surroundings, the sceneries and the wildlife.

The weather was still fine when we left for our last game drive. Rather than again to describe the different areas we passed through and to describe the mammals and birds we saw, we just want to describe our feelings on this our last game drive. We passed through all the landscapes, saw all the sceneries and had all the views that we enjoy so much. We heard the sounds of rustling trees, singing, chirping and calling birds, and the sounds of the big mammals. We saw many of the animals we know so well. We merged into this primeval world of landscapes, sounds and wildlife.

Yet, one incident we would like to talk about, the scoop of the day. We had stopped to watch a bird of prey. Charles tried to determine the species, but it was too far away to distinguish its characteristics. Anyhow, we did spend some time trying to make it up, but finally we decided to leave without any success. However, just when Charles started the car we caught sight of a lioness coming out of the thicket just beside our car. She went out in the middle of the road just in front of our car and stood there watching. Charles anticipated that she might be hunting. She could not care less about us; at least it looked like that. She walked slowly forward, stopped and watched again. This she repeated four to five times, and then finally she went off the road and lay down at the opposite roadside. At one moment she started to bare her teeth and to growl. She was attentive and looked a little troubled. Suddenly, on our side of the road, one and then several young lions at different ages came out from the thicket. One of them resisted the warnings of the lioness and crossed the road behind our car to lie down at the roadside. When we reversed to have a better look the young lion ran back to the others. We were now standing between 12 young lions on our one side and an alert lioness on the other side. Knowing that it is very hard at all to spot a lion in Tsavo, we experienced a unique event. We stayed half an hour to watch these lions, and then we left. We could not have had a more impressive farewell to Kenya. Back at the lodge everybody looked with disbelief at us when we told them about our seeing a pride of thirteen lions.

In Tsavo West, we have seen the following animals:

Mammals. Maasai giraffe, Jackson's hartebeest, dik-dik antelope, hippopotamus, buffalo, baboon, vervet monkey, zebra, impala, fringed eared oryx, warthog, black-backed jackal, lesser kudu, rock hyrax, common waterbuck, elephant, lion and klipspringer.

Birds: superb starling, purple starling, red-billed hornbill, yellow-billed hornbill, ground hornbill, African grey hornbill, eurasian roller, yellow-necked spur fowl, helmeted guinea fowl, namagua dove, weavers, red-billed buffalo weaver, black-billed bustard, woolly-necked stork, white stork, marabou stork, secretary bird, blacksmith plover, Egyptian goose, white-bellied go-away-bird, spotted thick-knee with young ones, pied kingfisher, D'Arnaud's barbet, black-shouldered kite, martial eagle - juvenile and ostrich.

Reptiles: Crocodile.

End

Life comes to an end and so does a safari holiday. What is the similarity between these two statements except that they both state: comes to an end? Somebody will argue that the conception of life itself is not comparable with the conception of a safari holiday. Let us explain. First of all, a safari holiday is part of life itself. What is life other than a long chain of events of which a safari holiday is one? Secondly, life is unique and the facts that life ends make you focus on this unique creation to get the most of it. A safari holiday, at least for us, is mentally a voyage, a great and unique event; we focus on this event to make the most of it. We enjoy the relationship with those of the population that we meet because tomorrow it will be over; we enjoy meeting different cultures because tomorrow it will be over, and we strongly feel the thrill and the enchantment of nature because tomorrow it will be over.

Back to Nairobi

The drive back to Nairobi was really an experience. First part of the road was very good. We made quick progress, enjoyed the sceneries through the windows and had a relaxed and pleasant drive. Then, roadwork ahead appeared. We were lead to a temporary off road track. It was narrow gravel tracks full of rocks and holes. The weather was dry and warm and dust was raised by all the vehicles in amounts that made it almost impenetrable by sight. All cars both in our direction and the opposite direction were zigzagging to avoid holes and rocks. We were sweating with closed windows fighting to keep movables in place. After that hard drive, we arrived later in Nairobi than planned, but still we had time enough to enjoy a splendid meal in the Carnivore Restaurant.

The Carnivore Restaurant serves roasted meat prepared on a very big round charcoal grill at the entrance of the restaurant. The meat is roasted on skewers made by Maasai swords. The swords are carried around in the restaurant by the waiters who cut how much meat you like onto your plate.

Irene was waiting for us, and she had arranged a table for two. We insisted that Charles would eat with us and Irene got a new table. She sat down with us a short while to have a drink, and then she left and we saw her next time at the airport.

Christmas was approaching and several companies were having Christmas parties in the restaurant. At one time they started dancing and singing in a rhythm that African people are so very good at.

Time came to leave the restaurant and Charles took us to the airport. Next morning we were back in Denmark safe and sound.

Epilogue

On December 27, the election for parliament and president was held and the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki from the Party of National Unity was declared winner of the presidential election. The opposition lead by Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement and the international observers claimed that fraud and election rigging had taken place. As a consequence violence and ethnic based riots erupted.

Through international pressure, with Kofi Annan as an intermediary and statesmanship from Kibaki and Odinga, a power sharing agreement was signed forming a coalition government with Kibaki as president Odinga as prime minister.

Fortunately this has lessened the tensions and riots have ceased. We have become fond of Kenya, and we are very happy on behalf of Kenya, the Kenyan people and especially David, Charles and their families that they can live in peace again and use their strength to develop the nation.

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Other information:

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Hans Bruun-Jensen
Overodvej 72
DK 2840 Holte
Denmark