



EL KARAMA LODGE

L A I K I P I A

FAQS

What should I bring/wear?

We are considered to be at the heart of Laikipia 'Kenya's high country' and the altitude ensures we have hot days and cool evenings/early mornings, making life here very comfortable. Bring a fleece and long trousers though, as well as shorts and t-shirts, as morning and evening drives can be chilly. Please do not worry about formal wear of any kind, life in the bush is informal and based on comfort. Colours: Try to pack 'bush' colours – beige, khaki, grey etc. - these will allow you to blend in when driving in the open cars, walking and riding, which will improve your chances of seeing wildlife immeasurably. Binoculars are essential for best game viewing and to enjoy the amazing bird life here – with over 430 species on El Karama you do not want to miss out on seeing them up close! Cameras for photography are of course on the list. Hats, sunglasses and sunscreen are necessary to avoid sunburn and heatstroke as we're on Equator and at a higher altitude. It's also worth bringing some anti-diarrhea sachets and rehydration sachets as people can sometimes get sensitive stomachs on the first few days in a new country.

How do we get there?

Guests have the choice of reaching us by air using private charters (book with us) and landing on the registered El Karama Wildlife Conservancy airstrip just 10 minutes game drive from the lodge. They can also land at the Nanyuki Civil Airstrip using scheduled flights and be transferred via road with us. Finally, guests can be transferred by road to the Lodge: we are 1 hour and 15 minutes from the Nanyuki airstrip and 5 hours drive from Nairobi (Karen side).

What are the seasons, when does it rain?

Traditionally, Kenya has two rainy seasons: April/May and November into early December. The lodge usually has a closed period during these months for at least three weeks, but do check with us first in case there's variation in this schedule as the 'green' seasons can be a beautiful and lower cost time to visit Kenya and with our all-weather roads we are not as restricted as some lodges in these times.

How can I / will I spend an average day at the lodge?

We encourage guests to take part in all our activities. We tailor make your day as much as possible: but those keen on seeing as much wildlife as possible can begin with a 6:00 a.m. wake up call with tea/coffee and biscuits. Shortly after, guests depart in their vehicles for a game walk on the central plains overlooking Mt Kenya or a game drive. Come back to camp for a cooked breakfast or have a bush breakfast under a tree. Then you can choose to relax in camp, reading, fishing, swimming, having a massage in our spa or walking up to our organic garden to see where we grow your food! Children can join Bush School between 10am and 12:30pm and get stuck into our wild activities! Lunch is usually around 1 p.m. after which you can catch up on a bit of sleep or reading/writing – the early starts can take some adjustment! At 4:30 p.m. tea and cake are served before you can head out for evening game drives and sundowners – for families we always cook supper for the children so they can take it out with them. Arrive into camp after plenty of sightings, in the dark with the spotlight searching for bush babies before settling down by the fire for dinner. If you still have plenty of energy you can add on a night drive to look for predators. Because of early rising most people don't last much past 10 p.m. when the waiters close up the bar and retire to warm beds and the sound of the river and night creatures.

How long is the average stay at this lodge?

Guests usually stay 4 – 5 nights at El Karama. This is the recommended length of time and ensures that you have time to see and

experience all we have to offer including fly camping, tracking wildlife, walks, birding, rock hide, bush meals, game drives, night drives and all the relaxation that is on offer outside of the wildlife activities.

Malaria?

Because of being at high altitude we are considered to be a very low risk environment for malaria. In the green seasons we do get 'grass mozzies' and for these repellent is very useful. We also have mosquito nets available for the bandas and cottages – however, these are more for comfort than necessity. N.B we do find that guests on some anti-malaria medication experience sensitive stomachs so do bear this in mind when packing your medical kit. We always have a ready stock of fennel seeds and fresh ginger for sore tummies to help travellers!

Can I charge my camera?

Yes, we have 24 hour solar-powered electricity throughout the lodge. There are charging plugs and points in your bandas/cottages as well as in the shared central areas. The solar system is on day and night, but we do ask guests to only charge cameras and laptops. No hair-dryers, hair tongs or other heavy-duty electrical items!

What animals can I see here?

We are lucky to have four of the BIG FIVE here on El Karama and over 80 mammal species big and small. Obviously, in wildlife areas with no fences there are no guarantees, but on an average 4-5 night stay with guests going out twice a day, you should have a the chance of seeing elephant, buffalo, hippo and all the plains game, as well as – if you are lucky - leopard, lion and cheetah. Sighting of big cats often depends on factors like weather, grass length etc. We also have endangered species here like the Grevy's zebra, Laikipia hartebeest and wild hunting dogs (passing through). We also see smaller species such as aardwolf, striped hyena, bat-eared fox, zorilla and very occasionally aardvark!

I am a birdwatcher, what will I see?

We have over 430 identified bird species here on El Karama – that is more than some entire countries have! We are also visited through the migratory seasons by travelling species such as European Bee-Eaters, Steppe Eagle and many more. Over 80 resident bird species have been counted just around the lodge mess and swimming pool including the hard-to-see African Finfoot at the river. We have nesting sites all over the lodge compound including in the bamboo eaves of the dining room and in our home made nest boxes. Our staff leave food out at various bird tables, which mean close encounters are a daily occurrence.

Will I be hosted at mealtimes?

Guests are looked after by a local team of Kenyan professionals who speak very good English and who have been here since the beginning – some building the lodge with Murray and Sophie, the owners, and others even growing up here. They are kind, hard-working and attentive. Although the owners do not host day to day, Sophie often remains in the background to help answer additional questions and loves to meet guests and share their story. Murray is a professional sculptor and works from a private studio next to the lodge and their home Stand Fast House. Art collectors interested in his works, are welcome to get in touch through his website www.murraygrantbronzes.com to discuss his pieces.

What currency should I bring?

We are cashless environment here on site. But in Kenya the main currencies of use are KES and USD.

Do you take credit cards?

Yes. We have a credit card machine on site in the shop/office and we request that any additional payments are done by card or MPESA paybill. No cash will be accepted here for security reasons.

Language?

The team speak English and Kiswahili. Sophie Grant, the owner also speaks fluent French and good Spanish and can be called upon to assist when required for some translation when she is on site!

Drivers/Self Drive?

The conservancy does not allow self drive inside the property, guests are driven in Lodge cars with our guides only. Please note that this

lodge has no accommodation for driver guides, therefore all guests must be dropped and picked up only at the boundary. We can arrange all road transfers from anywhere in the country so please get in touch when booking for full rates and information.

Are children/babies welcome?

YES. Family groups are very welcome here and our team has experience with children. We have developed Bush School activities aimed directly at children between 4 and 12 yrs to introduce them to bush life and to encourage learning and creativity. We feel passionately about getting children involved in every aspect of lodge and conservancy life. Babies are also welcome here too – we can provide a cot and a high chair and adapted meal times. Kenya is the perfect country for children as people are extremely kind and generous. We ensure that with private car options and private dining those with children and those without all have their own space and serenity in this camp.

Will my phone work?

There is no phone signal in our lodge compound due to our remote location! It means that guests can really 'switch off' and you won't have to worry about fellow travellers chatting on mobiles anywhere in the main lodge. We follow nature's rhythm here: early to bed, early to rise, without digital technology! However, guests who need to make phone calls can be accompanied to the nearest ridge where we usually get 'full bars' for phones. The reception has wifi access available for emergencies or urgent work use.

Should I get insurance?

YES. We ask that all guests take out travel and full medical insurance that includes evacuation coverage to visit. As we are located over 1 hour by road from the nearest local hospital and 4 hours drive to Nairobi hospitals we request that all guests are covered for accidents and evacuation. AMREF flying doctors provide extremely cheap and effective coverage - www.flydoc.org and can land here within 15 minutes. Please get this before visiting.

How fit do I have to be for walks?

Because we are at a higher altitude, some guests may find they are more tired on their first day or two with us. Walks however are usually gentle and paced to match the fitness levels of the group. Bush walks are designed to be peaceful and interesting not marching or overly vigorous because one has to be aware at all times of what is going on around you. We walk guests on the top of open plains giving good visibility and low risk of encountering dangerous wildlife at close quarters. This means there are no steep climbs or major rocky patches. Walks are usually 2 hrs in length and always accompanied by an armed guide, however if you love to walk we can extend walks to half day or even full day with some notice.

Jogging/Running?

We love keeping fit. If you like to jog we can accompany runners with a vehicle on the airstrip and also offer the 1.7km running track inside the farm HQ as the perfect area to run without low risk. If you want longer distance running just get in touch and we will see what we can organise for you.

How far is the lodge from the nearest town?

We are 42 km or 1 hour's drive from Nanyuki, our nearest town, where all local amenities can be found including banks, internet cafés, ATMs (Barclays Bank Kenya), Nakumatt Supermarket and most importantly the Nanyuki Cottage Hospital and pharmacy!

Reference books

The lodge has a selection of natural history books including Fanshawe and Stephenson's East African birds and Jonathan Kingdon's mammal guides. We also have copies of Lavinia Grant's natural history memoirs 'A Small Piece of Africa' and 'On a Kenya Ranch' – these are the most beautifully written descriptions of ranch life on this property and the flora and fauna found here. Our latest book is the lodge story and cook book The Bush Kitchen: Notes and Recipes from the Wild. All are available from the shop and all profits from the family works are donated to the conservancy.