

Some Favorite Moments from Kenya

These first photos aren't exactly Kenya, but on the way to Kenya. The Turkish Air Lounge at Istanbul Airport (the mother of all chaos) is like nothing I've ever seen. You may remember that I wrote about the Virgin Airlines Clubhouse at London Heathrow. This runs circles around it.



It is huge, on two floors with multiple drink and food stations, a theater, spa, sleeping rooms, showers, fountains, library, supervised child-friendly places, several internet stations (with about 10 Apple computers each!) and best of all - lockers for luggage storage so I could walk around and enjoy everything without worrying about my luggage. I had a 8 hour layover and it flew by.



(Above) The Library is well stocked with books, magazines and newspapers.
(Below) White Orchids are everywhere -- even in the ladies room. And Joe would love the two golf stations!



My Sister Helen

On the day on our own, Vickie, Lilli, Ada and I visited the National Museum in Nairobi. It has excellent exhibits as well as a nice gift shop and I bought a pair of earrings that I think match a scarf (with the same beads at the edge) that I bought in Mali.

The next day, as part of Bill's tour itinerary, the group visited the Karen Blixon House and Museum. Guess what -- I found the PERFECT matching necklace for those earrings. Its price was quite high. As I was in a quandry about the price, Helen, the gift shop attendant, said the magic words - "Lets Trade," and I ended up trading my Chico's Leopard print jacket for the necklace. I also threw in a little extra money for the museum. Here Helen is wearing the jacket and I sport the necklace. As I was getting ready to leave, she hugs me and says "We are sisters now." It makes my day!



The Ensemble

My Daughter Kamok

The Sheldrick Trust rescues orphaned elephants (due to poaching or abandonment), raises them for 4 years, then returns them to the wild. It is a long-standing and well respected Nairobi organization and Lillie, Vickie and I each “adopted” an elephant. We had the privilege of visiting our charges twice -- the night before the Kenya tour begins, and again on the last night of the tour, before we leave for Rwanda.



My daughter is Kamok and she is two years old.



I had a wonderful conversation with her keeper, Eric. He will take care of her for the next few years and even sleeps in the same corral as she has to be fed every few hours. These kind, caring men make a commitment to stay with an elephant until he/she is ready to be released in the wild.

The Masai

One of the highlights of Kenya is interaction with the Masai. The first that I was able to talk with were the security guards at Loyk Mara Camp in the Masai Mara.



Because the camp has no fencing, we need to be escorted to/from our tents when we go to meals or the reception area. They are a tall, elegant, dignified people and part of traditional clothing includes beaded jewelry around neck, arms and legs.



We also visit a Masai Village (bit of a hard sell on trinkets here), and are able to meet and take photos of Masai women. Our tour includes a talk on customs and traditional medicine and a visit to a hut. Then about 15 women spread out a buffet of souvenirs, carvings and jewelry on individual blankets. We are “escorted” to each blanket, told to pick up what we want, then the “escort” works with us on a group price for everything. It was a strange way to shop, but I guess they have their reasons for doing it this way.



Favorite Restaurant

Carnivore in Nairobi is an experience. Vegetarians might have a difficult time here. See the menu? You are served ALL of these meats by roving waiters with the meat on long skewers. We ate here twice - once at the beginning of the trip and once on the last day.



Favorite Hotel

I loved the Sankara Nairobi - friendly and helpful staff, nice well-equipped rooms, great buffet breakfast, free and fast wi-fi and they even leave a little gift for you each evening.



The stone animals are stylized African animals. There is a different one each night with two styles of hippos. I was lucky enough to spend 6 nights at the hotel and the housekeeper made sure I had the whole set.

The Guide

The guide makes the trip and Bill Ball, who owns passport travel is one of the best. I've traveled with him about six times over the past 20 years and look for his more unusual itineraries. What brought me to Africa was his itinerary on Rwanda and the Gorillas, but Bill also added a Kenya segment in honor of one client's 50th trip.



What bird is that??? Bill will not only identify it right away, but show it to you in his book.

If you travel with Bill, you don't need a guidebook. He will tell you everything you need or should know about the destination - along with great showmanship. He has a dedicated and loyal client base - all friendly, well-educated, interesting people.

Bill is also a great photographer uses many of them in his travel documentaries of places all over the world.



And Finally, Some Cute Signs



At Nairobi National Park

After a mad rush to get to the launch site, then an hours hot air balloon ride -- this "Loo With a View" was very welcome!


