

RECREATION AND TOURISM

TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

The first hotels directed at tourism were built in Malindi during the early part of this century. In the last thirty years, rapid expansion in the recreation and tourism industry has occurred. The main attractions for this new industry include the warm coastal climate slightly mellowed by a cool sea breeze, the beautiful coastal scenery and foremost, the beautiful and clean sandy beaches. All the facilities that support the new expansion in the tourism industry are therefore located next or adjacent to beach environments.

In this category are the hotels with accommodation facilities located directly adjacent to the good swimming beaches. This has resulted in the concentration of tourism centres in areas with the most favourable facilities. Among the most important centres are, Diani, Tiwi and Shelly beach on the south coast, and Nyali, Bamburi, Shanzu and Kikambala in the middle sector. These are within the influence of Mombasa. North of Kilifi are Watamu, Silversands, Malindi and a new centre in Mamburi. Lamu District, in the extreme north, is also developing into an important tourist centre.



Figure 53 : Tourist facilities abound all along the Kenya coast

Coastal Resources and Their Use

The new tourism centres have stimulated the development of a support infrastructure. Good examples are Diani, Kikambala and Watamu where completely new restaurants, shopping centres, banks and tour companies have developed to form major business centres on the landward side. In most of the cases, sea sport centres and marinas have developed along the shoreline attached to the main hotels. Important marinas and sea sport centres are located in Mtwapa and Kilifi Creek. There are sport fishing lodges and clubs at Shimoni, Mtwapa, Kilifi and Malindi.

At the time of writing there were 16 hotels on the Coast which boast a 5-star category, 21 hotels each of 4-star and 3-star, and 55 other standard hotels. Three hotels have 600 or more beds, while five have 400 or more.

In 1964 the share of foreign exchange earnings from tourism was only 8.0% of the total export of goods and services. By 1989 this had risen to 22.0% with an annual growth rate of around 20.6%.

In some areas, such as the coastal strip around Mombasa, the rapid development of tourism has put pressure on the sustainable use of coastal resources such as the coral reef. Demand for seafood, shells and coral souvenirs has risen sharply and as local supplies have become depleted. The pressure on the coastal ecosystem extends further and further from the resorts, spreading the impact.

DIVING, SNORKELLING, SCUBA

Diving facilities are available all along the Kenya Coast within reach of most coastal towns and tourism centres. Arguably, Kenyan waters are irresistibly attractive, constantly warm all the year round, clear and abundant with marine life. There is a variety of diving sites along the Coast offering underwater cliffs,



Figure 54 : Diving is a popular activity which is sustainable

wrecks, canyons, caves and spectacular reefs where visibility is normally in excess of 20m. The aquatic life within these waters is often very prolific and one usually sees moray eels, scorpion fish, lion fish, large groupers, octopus, lobsters, rays and, occasionally, whale sharks and manta rays.

Diani, on the south Coast, is a popular diving area with many diving and watersport centres. Just to the north of Diani is Tiwi Beach, approximately 25km from Mombasa. Tiwi reef is only 10 minutes by boat from the centre and offers diving sites marked by permanent buoys.

Diving has become one of Kenya's most important tourist attractions. It is a coastal resource with tremendous potential.

BIG-GAME FISHING

The Kenya Coast is fortunate in having one of the best big-game fishing spots in the Indian Ocean. Not only is there a wide variety of top sporting gamefish, but there is also a variety of sealife to be observed. Many of the All-Africa record catches are fish caught off the Kenya coast and they include five varieties of billfish. Fishing normally takes place between 1.0 and 30km offshore in open waters and the main areas are offshore from Malindi, Watamu, Kilifi, Mtwapa, Mombasa and in the vicinity of the Pemba Channel.

The fishing season starts in August and ends in April. The highlights of the early months in the season are the yellowfin tuna which can weigh up to 10kg. From December onwards it is the marlin season on which most of the clubs base their fame. Most of the marlin recorded in Kenya are caught at the Pemba Channel. Sailfish, sharks, wahoo, dorado and many other species are also caught throughout the season.

A number of charter boat operators cater for the growing number of local and visiting anglers who take part in this sport. There are also well-established Fishing Clubs and most of these are members of the International Game Fishing Association and abide by its rules.



Figure 55 : Striped marlin and sailfish are among the prized trophies of big-game fishing along the Kenya coast