

# Cradle of Mankind

## Remote Tribes of Northern Kenya



- Day 1** Met on arrival and transferred to hotel  
- 1 o/n Norfolk, Nairobi
- Day 2** 'Behind the scenes' Museum tour with expert Anthropologist from the National Museums of Kenya,  
- 1 o/n Norfolk, Nairobi
- Days 3-4** AM private charter flight to Lake Turkana  
- 2 o/n Oasis Lodge  
- Cultural immersion with El Molo and Turkana Tribes
- Days 5-6** Full day drive across Chalbi Desert to Kalacha Oasis  
- 2 o/n Kalacha Community Lodge  
- Cultural immersion with Gabbra Tribe
- Day 7** Drive across Chalbi Desert to Mount Marsabit  
- o/n Marsabit Lodge  
- Cultural immersion with Rendille Tribe
- Day 8** Fly to Nairobi, o/n Norfolk
- Day 9** - Depart

### Days 1 & 2 - Nairobi

#### Day 1

- Arrive Nairobi
- Meet & Greet by Origins Safaris at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport
- Transfer to Hotel (25 mins approx)
- Accommodation: Fairmont Norfolk Hotel
- Meal Plan: All meals

#### Day 2

- Met & briefed by your safari guide;
- 'behind the scenes' Museum tour with expert Anthropologist
- PM optional Nairobi tour
- Accommodation: Fairmont Norfolk Hotel
- Meal Plan: Full Board

On arrival in Nairobi you will be met by Origins Safaris after arrival formalities at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and transferred to the Norfolk Hotel.

On your first full day in Kenya you will meet your Professional Safari Guide for an introduction to the journey ahead. He will accompany you to the Nairobi's National Museum for a 'behind the scenes' guided tour with a senior anthropologist from the National Museums of Kenya.

We recommend lunch at the hotel after which you can relax or opt for a city or Arboretum tour during the afternoon.

**Nairobi** is a bustling and cosmopolitan city with numerous attractions. Behind the All Saints' Cathedral, the open green swathe known as Uhuru (Freedom) Park overlooks the city, while colourful flowering trees and shrubs line many of the roads and highways.

Nairobi also has Museums, the century-old Arboretum and other places of historic interest, including the Railway Museum, the Karen Blixen Museum and a fascinating mix of old churches and buildings dating back to the Colonial era.

There are also modern shopping malls, craft markets, cinemas, theatres, cultural centres and night clubs, as well as horse racing, a polo ground, golf courses and motorbike racing amongst numerous other activities. Nairobi is home to many Kenyans from all walks of life, as well as expatriates, and is a buzzing, fascinating and lively place.



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**Nairobi National Museum**, currently closed while undergoing major renovations, offers a wealth of treasures from pre-historic to relatively recent. Origins Safaris, by arrangement, can book private guided tours 'behind the scenes' whilst the renovations are ongoing. Next door in the Museum grounds is the well-stocked Snake and Reptile Park is also fascinating.



On the outskirts of Nairobi is the **Giraffe Centre**, a sanctuary for the endangered Rothschild Giraffe, where you can feed these gentle creatures from a raised feeding platform, feel the brush of their tongues on your palm and study their long eyelashes. In the same neighbourhood the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust raises orphaned animals, mainly baby elephants – before rehabilitating them into the wild in Tsavo East National Park where the late David Sheldrick was warden. The sight of these vulnerable little elephants having their mud baths and going out to feed in the loving and watchful care of their individual keepers is extremely moving.



**The Nairobi Arboretum:** Kenya contains one of the greatest ranges of environments in the world and boasts over 800 tree species. Indigenous trees from 43 botanical families have been recorded in the highland location of Nairobi arboretum. *Leguminosae* predominate followed by *Euphorbiaceae*. The four commonest trees have over 100 specimens each and the two commonest trees are dominants of the Nairobi dry semi-deciduous forest whose remnants remain in and around the city outskirts. Since the arboretum has been a protected forest reserve since 1932 no trees have been cut or removed since then.

The arboretum has two principal trails: the White Tree Trail (with white arrows marking the route) designed specifically for tourists which takes around 40 minutes and the Yellow Tree Trail (yellow arrow markers) which takes about one hour. The walks combine indigenous and exotic species.

It's not all about trees, the arboretum is host to a number of indigenous and eye-catching mammals and birds and many (harmless) reptiles including

chameleons and skinks. Visitors will see both the Vervet (black faced guenon) monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) as they walk around and some Sykes monkeys (*Cercopithecus mitis*).

Other interesting small mammals to look out for include the Kenya mole rat, the four-toed hedgehog, fruit bats, mongooses and squirrels although the majority are nocturnal.

Common birds include the African Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone viridis*), the White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher (*Melaenornis fischeri*) and Kenya's most widespread (and bold) variety the Common Bulbul (*Pycnonotus barbatus*).



Nairobi's most unique attraction is the **Nairobi National Park**: nowhere else in the world does a wildlife sanctuary exist so close to a major city. One boundary of the park (fenced!) is only 6.4 km (4 miles) from the city centre!

The area of the park is only 64 sq km (40 sq miles), although the side bordered by the Mbagathi River always remained unfenced to allow the animals to continue their natural migration patterns onto the adjoining Kitengela plains. However a rapidly increasing population and development of the area is beginning to cause problems, while the debate of fencing the park entirely becomes increasingly controversial.

Small as it is the park boasts a diversity of habitats - each with their own animal and bird species: from highland forest, to riverine forest, deep valleys and gorges, broken bush country and open plains.

It is possible to see Lion and Leopard in the park, as well as more commonly Giraffe, Buffalo and plains game. Black Rhino were also successfully re-introduced. More species of birds have been recorded here than in the entire British Isles.



**Norfolk Hotel.** Older than the Ritz, younger than the Savoy, no other hotel in Kenya has as rich a history as the Norfolk. Built in 1904 as a watering hole for early settlers, some say Nairobi grew up around the Norfolk.

When Roosevelt set off on safari he left with 150 porters and his entourage from the steps of the Norfolk, only to

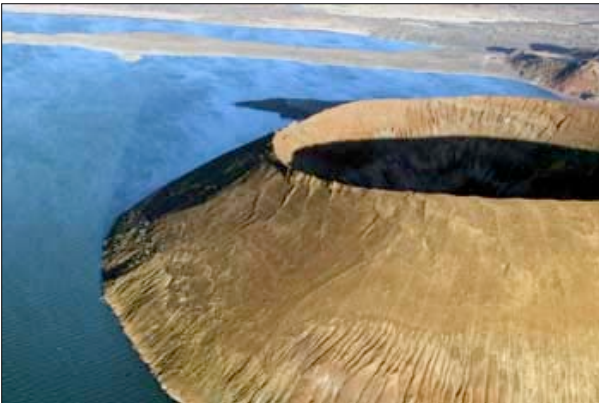
grind to a halt 200 yards away in a swamp...

No longer overlooking a swamp, the Norfolk is now an extremely well run town hotel, with 167 bedrooms, many overlooking the famous courtyard gardens, a swimming pool and spa, 2 restaurants and 2 terrace/lounge bars.

The hotel has a fully equipped business centre, beautiful gardens, excellent food and service and its famous verandah bar: the Delamere Terrace attracts an eclectic mix of people for nightly sundowners.



## Days 3 & 4 – Loyangalani, Lake Turkana – El Molo



### Days 3 & 4

- **Early wake up, breakfast & transfer to Wilson Airport**
- **Meet your guide & fly to Loyangalani, Lake Turkana (2 hours approx)**
- **Met & transferred to lodge**
- **Lunch at Oasis Lodge**
- **Observe & interact with the Turkana & El Molo people**
- **Accommodation: Oasis Lodge**
- **Meal Plan: Full board**

Today the adventure begins: with an early wake-up call and breakfast at the Norfolk before you are met and transferred to Wilson Airport where you have a private charter flight waiting to take you across Kenya to the remote northern border. You will be accompanied on the flight by your trip leader and guide.

As you step of the plane you are hit by the heavy dry heat and the feeling of having stepped back in time. You will be met and transferred the short distance to Oasis Lodge, a mid-range but comfortable base (with a much needed swimming pool and bar) ideal for exploring this incredibly remote region of Kenya and a welcome refuge from the desert heat.

**Loyangalani**, amidst a line of natural springs, this frontier town is a melting pot of characters and tribes, a familiar backdrop featured John Le Carre's famous novel '**The Constant Gardener**'. The town neatly divides into tribal quarters: the Samburu, Turkana, Rendille have each made one distinct area of this remote 'frontier' town their own. We spend our days exploring this fascinating landscape, interfacing with the proud El Molo, Turkana and other tribes people.

**The Turkana Tribe:** Renowned for their fighting prowess and recently purported to be the oldest tribal society in the world, the Turkana can trace their origins to the Dodoth escarpment in North East Uganda and their related tribal allies the Karamajong.



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Legend has it that some two to three hundred years ago the tribe started to move east, the reasons are lost in the mists of time. Of this powerful and influential people, who number over a quarter of a million, the majority live on the western flank of the great lake Turkana. Some, however have migrated still further east to make the eastern shores their home, living amongst the Samburu, El Molo, Rendille and Gabbra peoples that cluster around the meager water resources.

Unusually for this part of the world, the Turkana have shunned circumcision as a practice and instead usher their male children into their age set by means of a rite known as Athapan.

Opportunists by nature the hostile environment in which they live has made the Turkana into fine craftsmen. Their ability to draw iron from the rocks is renowned as is their ability to adorn themselves with the finery of their surroundings, making use of the leather, shells, seeds, bones, ivory and horns to fabricate fine jewelry and clothing. Especially worthy of note are the triangular leather aprons worn by unmarried women. Known as arrac locally they are decorated with ostrich eggshells and beads and are an object of great pride. Distinctive earrings of beaten metal hang in rows from the top to the bottom of each year and women are still often to be seen wearing the copper lip plugs of old.

Turkana men also decorate themselves, thrusting huge ostrich feathers into an elaborately made headpiece fashioned out of a cow's udder and often painted bright blue. Such elaborate coiffure clearly need to be kept from contact with the ground whilst asleep, hence the development of highly decorated head rests, often doubling up as a convenient stool during the day, which no self respecting Turkana male would be seen without - even when striding purposefully across the desert wearing nothing more than his beads, the Turkana are not shy by any contemporary measurement.



Great inventors, especially weaponry the Turkana reputation for fighting is born out by the array of wrist and finger knives to be found in any homestead.

Most reference sources point out the extremely individualistic nature of the Turkana, their lack of rules and institutions, and their loose social cohesion. By piecing together information from several sources, a clearer framework emerges, albeit one quite clearly much looser than the formalized age-sets and strictly hierarchical social organization of the Maasai, Samburu and Gabbra.

Aside from ceremonial and ritual roles, there are no tribal, sectional or 'political' leaders as such, although the wisdom of old age is highly valued, irrespective of sex, perhaps because to survive to old age in such an environment is clearly mark of success in its own right. The elderly are also the advisors on questions of grazing rights; their experience of weather cycles and the interactions of the various sections of the tribe means that their judgements on such matters are followed to word, and are rarely mistaken.

**El Molo:** The smallest and therefore most threatened ethnic group in Kenya today, the El Molo of the eastern shore of Lake Turkana inhabit a bay to the north of Loyangalani. Numbering about 250 in total, to the purist the present population is largely comprised of mixed blood, combining elements of Samburu, Turkana and El Molo, although many of the customs and the El Molo way of life are maintained by many. Unlike the Turkana the El Molo do practice circumcision, both of boys and girls.

Their island refuges are at the mouth of the bay, Loryam and Koran, (*island of goats*). Living in doum palm frond huts the El Molo truly eke out an existence in an environment that offers them few resources beyond the doum palm, stones, thorny bushes and the brackish waters of the Lake home to hippo and some of the largest Nile Crocodiles in Africa.





The Nile Perch that manage to avoid the crocodiles are hotly pursued by the El Molo, hunting from boats constructed literally of three doum palm trunks lashed together.

The traditional "selah", a triangle of woven string worn as a form of skirt is still worn on significant occasions, although these are becoming fewer as the tribe's numbers dwindle. Otherwise the El Molo dress exclusively in the materials most readily available to them, the red cured hides of cattle and goats or Nile Perch skins. Great lovers of adornment the women and girls sport necklaces of ostrich shell disks and fish bones whereas the males traditionally wear only a small 'apron'.



They dress their hair much like their Turkana cousins - a skull cap often made from the hide of a cow or ostrich within which they may hide a totemic lock of hair from some brave or talented ancestor. Like most northern nomadic tribes they all carry the wooden headrest that helps them maintain their coiffure when sleeping.

Of the old and largely unrecorded traditions, that of the *ngwere* is the most revered. As El Molo society requires no chief as such the elders of the tribe convene and supervise the hunting of the hippo, often associated with *wacq*, the God of the lake.

Dances and songs pay tribute to the ancestors before the elders turn on the young warriors, slashing them across their bodies it whip them to a frenzy of excitement before spending them out to pursue the mammal probably responsible for more deaths in rural Africa than any other, the Hippopotamus.

A chosen hunter must hurl himself, literally, without hesitation at the target beast, whilst his companions slash at it with their razor sharp blades. This chosen warrior will not be allowed to consume any of this delicacy until he returns home, however he will be the hero of the whole tribe at the following feast and will be feted for his whole life, wearing a special animal bone earring to signify his bravery to all.

The El Molo bury their dead under a small cairn of stones on the lake shore, the whole village then moving away from the spot of burial to avoid offending the dead.

**Lake Turkana:** known variously as the "Jade Sea" and the "Cradle of Mankind" Lake Turkana offers the intrepid traveller unrivalled opportunities. This remote, arid area of northern Kenya never ceases to enthrall its visitors. The lake never appears at rest, sudden squalls, full blown storms ruffle its heart, this 180 mile long stretch of inland sea is serene one moment, vicious the next, as unpredictable as the huge crocodiles that lie sunning themselves on its banks.

Not far inland from the lake visit an ancient petrified forest, tree trunks standing forlorn testament to the passing of millions of years of world history. The area surrounding the lake is no less interesting, home to numerous arid lands adapted game such as the Grevy's Zebra, Gerenuk and Oryx, is an explorers paradise untouched by the modern world. The Chalbi Desert and the people that inhabit it, the Rendille, the Boran, the Merille and Gabra lead ancient lives and guard their traditional existence proudly. The contrasts here are phenomenal, no more so than when it comes to climate soaring temperatures and howling gales can be rudely interrupted by a violent thunderstorm and replaced just as quickly by the most silent evening and clearest of night skies ever.



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**Oasis Lodge:** This comfortable, rustic lodge is located in Loyangalani. Its natural shade and high thatched roofs a welcome refuge from the heat with two swimming pools and shaded seating areas.

There is a bar above the pools with lovely views of the sunset and the restaurant serves good meals – with fresh caught Nile Perch from the Lake a delicious speciality.

## Days 5 & 6 – Chalbi Desert – Kalacha Oasis - Gabbra

### Day 5

- Full day's drive with packed lunch across the Chalbi Desert
- Arrive late afternoon at the Kalacha Oasis
- Accommodation: Kalacha Community Eco-lodge
- Meal Plan: Full Board

### Day 6

- Early wake-ups
- Visit tribal villages to interact with The Gabbra
- Dinner in camp
- Accommodation: Kalacha Community Eco-lodge
- Meal Plan: Full board

Today is an incredible drive across some of East Africa's most dramatic scenery: the Chalbi Desert. You arrive late afternoon in the welcome shade and soothing ambience of Kalacha Community Lodge, a community run eco-lodge run for the benefit of the local community. After a welcome dip in the pool or cool shower and a long cold drink enjoy the night stars and incredible balmy atmosphere.



**Kalacha** is a desert oasis that sustains the Gabbra people and their cattle during the harsh dry season. Fiercely protective of their nomadic inheritance and culture, this striking tribe offers a warm welcome to all visitors. Established relationships with the local people allow us to offer an inside view of their lives and a chance to observe their daily rituals in a fascinating learning experience.

Your refuge from the heat and dust is the delightful Kalacha Community Lodge – an eco-tourism venture built using local materials around the fresh desert springs that feed this oasis – a green haven in this spectacular arid landscape.

The **Gabbra**: this striking tribe follows a traditional age-set system, common amongst the Northern nomads, known as the Gada system of passing through distinct age groups every seven years. Each age group elects two leaders or 'Hayu' to act as their representatives at meetings known as 'Dabela' and convened by the tribal elders.



The Gabbra calendar consists of a remarkably accurate 365 days but no leap year. Their religious worship is intended to create 'Nagaya' (peace in its most holistic sense) through appeal to 'Waqā' - the god of rain and peace. They are a warrior nation whose traditional enemies come from the south: the Samburu whom they term 'Korre'.



As a tribute to bravery a warrior who has killed an enemy will be awarded a large ivory ring or Arbora worn with pride on his arm. With no written language the continued existence of these tribal customs is a tribute to these hardy and resilient people who live very much beyond the confines of the modern world.

**Kalacha Community Lodge:** a hidden getaway that only a few people are privileged to visit, Kalacha blends into a permanent spring-fed oasis on the edge of the Chalbi Desert.

Created by an enterprising Kenyan safari character and legendary pilot, the camp is community owned and built by the Gabbra themselves.

Kalacha has 4 twin bandas (cottages) created from local materials such as Doum palm trunks and intricately woven thatch. Each room has an en suite bathroom and verandah, a shady private oasis in itself.

A plunge pool emerges 'organically' from the mess and takes the heat out of the desert air providing a comfortable and romantic setting for meals, long cold drinks and a refreshing dip



## Days 7 & 8 – Marsabit

### Day 7

- **Early wake-up**
- **Drive across Chalbi Desert to Marsabit**
- **Picnic lunch en-route**
- **Arrive at lodge mid afternoon,**
- **Accommodation: Marsabit Lodge**
- **Meal Plan: Full Board**

### Day 8

- **Explore this significant area and it's ceremonial associations**
- **Visit the 'singing well'**
- **Rendille tribal visit (time permitting)**
- **Pm fly back to Nairobi**
- **Accommodation: Norfolk Hotel**
- **Meal Plan: Dinner, Bed & Breakfast**

Today you drive further across the Chalbi to the town of Marsabit, with a picnic lunch en-route. You arrive at Marsabit Lodge mid-afternoon, ready for a shower and a cool drink. This conveniently located lodge is simple but adequate as a base for your final adventure: a trip to the so-called 'singing wells' of the **Rendille** Tribe. You take advantage of the cool of the morning to drive south east out into the Chalbi on a quest to meet the local Rendille tribe.

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At the Koroli (singing) Wells we watch the age-old custom of raising water by hand from deep wells dug into the desert, as hand over hand the carved wooden pails are raised accompanied by the rhythmic chanting and the gentle sounds of the wooden bells adorning the camels the core livelihood of these nomadic pastoralists.

After a full day's activities you will fly by private charter southwards, back to Nairobi. Origins Safaris will meet you at Wilson Airport and transfer you to the Norfolk Hotel for your last night. We recommend dinner at the Ibis Grill at the hotel.

## Safari Arrangements

### Included in the price of your safari

- **ALL accommodation and meals on safari as indicated in this itinerary (meal plan)**
- **ALL government hotel taxes and service Charges**
- **ALL Land transport in specially built safari vehicles**
- **ALL regional and internal air transport as specified in itinerary**
- **ALL National Park, entrance fees & nature walks**
- **ALL tips and gratuities to airport & hotel/lodge porters**
- **ALL Negotiations and entries to Tribal Villages**
- **ALL Origins administrative, development and operational costs**
- **ALL portorage and airport assistance**
- **Bottled mineral water with all meals**
- **Incredibly knowledgeable English speaking Professional Guide**
- **Temporary Flying Doctor (AMREF), emergency evacuation to Nairobi**

### Not included: (unless specifically requested)

- **Personal Laundry, alcoholic beverages and other personal expenses**
- **Tips to bar staff for personal beverages or room service**
- **Model fees for photos of tribal people.**
- **Gratuities to camp staff**
- **Visa fees**