



CULTURAL SAFARI

Kenya is a country full of contrasts. The tribes of Kenya are as diverse as it's country and many people still practice a traditional lifestyle, even amidst the modernity of urban Kenya. It is not uncommon to hear five or six different native Kenyan languages as you walk down the streets of Nairobi. With many years experience working with the Samburu, The Laikipia Masai, The Pokot and The Turkana we have made many friends in these traditional communities.

Many people express concern that the tribal life in Kenya will be commercial or artificial. On our trips you will only meet real people living real lives. Often times, we travel to these communities in order to learn a skill or craft, like making beadwork, identifying medicinal plants, or tracking animals. Other times we are simply visitors and depending on the situation and the tribe, we may be allowed to take photographs. Mostly, we will travel with a lightweight mobile camp that is easy to pack and move and these safaris can be easily combined with game viewing and a trip to the coast.





LAIKIPIA MASAI – An offshoot of the Masai people this small group settled on the edge of the Laikipia Plateau and were originally hunter-gatherers. They speak the same tongue as the Masai and look very similar to the Samburu people in the adjoining area. They are well known for honey gathering and we buy a lot of their honey to sell to wider markets. They have become more sedentary and have livestock now but they remain very close to the land which they share with Laikipia's rich wildlife.



TURKANA - The Turkana are also a Nilo-Hamitic people and like the Pokot migrated from Eastern Uganda. The Turkana occupy land in the northern section of Kenya. They take great pride in their elaborate Ostrich headresses and are generally thought of as a very tough people, surviving off a harsh, dry land. The Turkana keep camels, goats, cattle and sheep and supplement their diet with Nile Perch that they net and spear from the shallows of Lake Turkana.



SAMBURU – The Samburu are part of the Masai group and have common customs and language (Maa). They range from Laikipia to Mt Nyiro and these graceful people are charming, beautiful and witty. Their lifestyle is

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very similar to that of the Laikipia Masai living in a mud and wattle style houses with the livestock enclosure in the middle of the boma. Steeped in tradition, the Samburu mark each stage of life with a ceremony and like the Masai, these ceremonies observe large age groupings.



POKOT - The Pokot are a Nilo-Hamitic peoples who migrated from the Nile Valley of Sudan about 200 years ago. They occupy north-eastern Kenya, stretching from Lake Baringo to Lake Turkana. They are nomadic people and live of the land in this remarkably dry area. Some Pokot are sedentary while others keep livestock. Some Pokot farm on the steppes of the Rift Valley while others herd livestock in semi arid lands.. They are very decorative people, often wearing plumes of ostrich feathers in a mud and wattle cap that is moulded on the back of their head.

RENDILLE - The Rendile are a handsome people ranging from Lake Turkana to Marsabit and are always on the move with their camels and livestock. The Rendille are Mohammedan and they are the only tribe in East Africa whose women wear a coxcomb hairstyle. They live chiefly on camel milk, blood and occasionally meat and for water they often must travel great distances. A long time ago the men were circumcised between twenty to twenty five years, but now the age is between fifteen and twenty and each young man has to present the circumciser with a goat.



GABRA– The Gabra are originally a Somali people and they still speak this language. The Gabra split off from the Somailis, mixed with the Borania and gave up Islam. Most Gabra live in Ethiopia today while some live in

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the Huri Hills and the Kaisut desert of Kenya where they are able to find good grazing for their camels. Gabra women decorate themselves beautifully with white metal bands that they wrap around their heads.

MASAI - One of Kenya's best known tribes, the Masai believe that God gave them exclusive rights over all cattle in the world. They were a warring tribe and may have dominated Kenya at one time, had there not been three catastrophes that brought them under British rule. In the 1880's there was a Rinderpest outbreak that dwindled their herds. This was followed by an outbreak of smallpox and finally, their great leader Mbatiany, died and they could not decide on a new leader. This led to a great deal of fighting amongst themselves during which time the British were able to gain control of the land. The Masai people do not hunt wildlife but they can be lethal killers of Lions, as a tribal custom as well as to protect their livestock.

There are many more tribes in Kenya, the Luo people near Lake Victoria, the Bajun and Boni people of the Lamu area, the Giriama from the Malindi region, the Meru group of people at the foothills of Mt Kenya; the list goes on and if you would like we will make every effort to visit certain tribes.

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