

Kenya secures ninth position in top 10 places to visit this year

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Tourism has received a major boost after Kenya was named one of the world's top 10 destinations to visit in 2016.



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A United Kingdom travel publication, *Rough Guides*, ranked Kenya ninth globally and first in Africa largely due to its world-famous national parks, white sand beaches and the rich culture. *Rough Guides* is a travel guide book published by Penguin Random House, one of the leading publishers in Europe.

The new endorsement of Kenya as a must-visit destination comes barely a month after the country was voted the world's leading safari destination in 2015 by the World Travel Awards (WTA). Kenya scooped the global accolade after overcoming competition from other African safari destinations like South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Tourism cabinet secretary (CS) Najib Balala welcomed the latest endorsement: "I am glad that the *Rough Guides* recognised Kenya as among the top 10 countries to be visited by tourists in 2016. Kenya is indisputably a premier destination for both beach and safari and we call on tourists from across the world to come have fun."

Describing Kenya as safe for travel, Balala, who recently took over the tourism docket, welcomed holidaymakers to Kenya's world-famous parks for safari "and our awarding winning beaches at the coast for them to soak up the sun". The CS said the government would capitalise on the accolade to woo more international holidaymakers.

International winners

In the latest *Rough Guides*, Nepal was ranked as the Number One place to visit largely because of its varied landscape, including the Himalayas Mountain and jungles inhabited by tigers. Although the country has in the past been devastated by earthquakes, its tourism industry is once again on the rise.

Colombia was second, Cuba third, Jordan fourth and Albania was fifth. Romania was ranked sixth while El Salvador was ranked seventh overall ahead of Wales at position eight, Kenya at position nine and Sri Lanka, which completed the list of the world's top 10 countries to visit this year.

On the Rough Guides website, the UK travel and adventure publication says the foreign media hasn't been kind to Kenya in the recent past, and the terrorist attacks in Mombasa and Garissa in recent years have taken a toll on the country's tourism industry. However, the publication notes that travel advisories imposed by some European nations have been lifted and that "majority of this vast and breathtaking-country (is) safe for travel".

"Once you've had your fill of lion, leopard and elephant tracking, there are pristine white sands waiting along the Indian Ocean, the other worldly landscapes of Lake Turkana and the beautiful tribes of the northern Chalbi desert to discover," says a the endorsement from the travel publication.

Global recognition gives a boost

The Kenya Association of Tour Operators (Kato) Coast branch chairperson, Monika Solanki, said the country's recognition by *Rough Guides* was a major boost to the tourism sector. She said the latest ranking was a major achievement. "It demonstrates to the world that Kenya is best for leisure and safari," she said. "The Kenya Tourism Board should capitalise on the global accolade to help attract more international tourists to the country."

Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers (KAHC) Coast branch executive officer Sam Ikwaye said the recognition was evidence that the country has among the best tourism products. He said there was need for the national and county governments to conserve the wildlife, beaches and the local cultures for sustainable tourism.

While urging tourists to visit the country, *Rough Guides* said: "Go now and you'll support a struggling tourism industry, while reaping the benefits of having many of Kenya's most popular attractions all to yourself."

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