

Taking a closer look at equine tourism

 By [Josephine Wawira](#)

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It is absolutely fascinating how artistic the horses are, their ability to coordinate and the super-duper relationship they are able to create with their masters. In all honesty, am a horse fanatic and while I'm still learning the horse tricks, I always anticipate my next encounter with the geldings/stallions or the mares.

Horses have since time immemorial been used by the human species for recreational activities, cultural practices, work activities like policing, in sports such as horse-racing and even on war fields; perhaps due to their preeminent skills and at-the-ready attitude.



While this much is known about these equine animals, little is known of the massive contribution by these majestic creatures to the tourism industry. Equine tourism has gradually developed across the world, being the center of attraction for some destinations globally, such as Iceland, Texas and Kentucky in the US, South Africa, and Kenya, just to mention a few.

Where horses and tourism meet

You may be wondering how horses and tourism are related. The main catch here is in the equestrian events and shows that attract spectators and horse aficionados from every corner, to experience one of the most beautiful and thrilling sports that is horseback racing. The participants and attendees of these events come from different parts of the host country as well as from abroad and require accommodation in nearby boarding facilities, thus boosting the hospitality sector. Some hotels like the Tafari Castle and Country Lodge have also gone a notch higher to provide horse riding adventures, giving their customers the dream cinderella horse carriage encounter.

Artisan businesses are also benefactors of equine tourism as a result of revenue generated from the sale of their artifacts to the equestrian tourists. In general, equine tourism contributes massively to the overall economy of the participating country. For instance, a 2005 study conducted by Deloitte Consulting LLP for the American Horse Council Foundation states that as of that year, the US horse industry contributed \$39 billion in direct economic impact.



Besides, individual entrepreneurs have established their own ranches around areas popular with horses, offering recreational horseback riding and even equine lessons to interested enthusiasts at a fee. Just recently, a ranch owner was highly delighted when I took along my friends during one of my regular trail rides at Ngong forest in Nairobi, Kenya. Being visitors in the country, they (my friends) passed for equestrian tourists and went a long way in promoting local entrepreneurs who are steering on the industry. The smiles on our thrilled faces as we rode along the bridle paths past playful monkeys, canopied by thick and tall mature trees of the Ngong (one of the world's few forests within a city), was clear evidence that equestrianism, in its tourism aspect, is a magical blend of nature and glee atop the horse's back.

Most countries practicing equestrianism have made great milestones in recognizing the value-added economic activities surrounding the horse market, both in the tourism and agricultural industries. A 2015, British Equestrian Trade Association's National Equestrian Survey indicates that the economic value of the equestrian sector in the UK alone has increased from £3.8 billion in 2011, to £4.3 billion of consumer spending across a wide range of goods and services each year. Besides, Britain has 19 million equestrian consumers with a range of associated interests, a figure that has remained fairly constant over the past 20 years.

ABOUT JOSEPHINE WAWIRA

Josephine Wawira is a consultant in communication and public relations with over six years of progressive writing and broadcast experience. She is currently a writer for Africa's online hotel booking portal, Jumia Travel, focusing in the areas of travel, tourism and hospitality as it relates to Africa.

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