



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM SAMOEI
RUTO, PHD., C.G.H. PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE MAGICAL KENYA
TRAVEL EXPO**

OCTOBER 2, 2024

UHURU GARDENS, NAIROBI

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Afternoon,**

1. I am delighted to welcome you all to this important event. To our visitors from abroad: welcome to Nairobi, our vibrant, modern, and diverse capital city that embodies the spirit of Kenya, you will experience the rich hospitality and dynamic culture that Lonely Planet recognised when it named Nairobi the world's top city in its "Best In Travel 2024" rankings.
2. Kenya is the cradle of humanity, with a wealth of archaeological evidence identifying the East African savannah as the site where our earliest ancestors lived. Specifically, the Lake Turkana basin in northern Kenya is where some of the earliest human remains were discovered. We proudly embrace this heritage, welcoming you back to humanity's first home. As the Turkana people say, 'Tobong'u Lorre' - 'Welcome Home.' It is with great pride that I welcome you on behalf of the people of Kenya: 'Tobong'u Lorre.' Explore, connect, and celebrate: Welcome home.
3. Today marks the official opening of this year's edition of the Magical Kenya Tourism Expo, a critical event, especially as it takes place against the backdrop of a resurgent tourism sector. The name 'Magical Kenya' reflects our status as a premier global tourism destination, and the Expo serves as a top platform for stakeholders to showcase our country's unique offerings to the world.



4. Tourism is fundamental to Kenya's economy, contributing significantly to employment, foreign exchange, infrastructure development, and hospitality growth. By the end of 2023, Kenya welcomed over 2 million visitors, generating Ksh 352 billion in revenue, a clear indicator of our global appeal. Our target is to attract 5 million visitors annually by 2027. Achieving this requires concerted efforts from all players in the sector to position Kenya as a must-visit destination.
5. Platforms like the Magical Kenya Travel Expo are crucial, therefore, in realising this vision. For 14 years now, the Expo has provided a reliable platform for B2B meetings, connecting African tourism leaders with global buyers and offering local exhibitors cost-effective promotion and networking opportunities, thus enabling Kenyan businesses, even in the counties, to partner with important actors in the international market. This platform minimises international promotional costs and fosters partnerships that drive long-term growth.
6. For its part, the government is supporting the sector to achieve its full potential by implementing a number of key interventions:
7. In infrastructure development, we are investing heavily in upgrading transport networks in key tourism areas such as the coast, Maasai Mara, and northern Kenya. The recent opening of the Dongo Kundu road has enhanced coastal tourism by easing travel, and road expansion projects are ongoing to connect Mombasa, Diani, Malindi, and other coastal destinations.



8. In the hospitality sector, we have streamlined business operations to attract investments, offering incentives and an enabling environment to support private investment in diverse accommodations, from luxury resorts to eco-friendly lodges and budget hotels. The recent launch of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Nairobi highlights Kenya's potential to attract top hospitality brands, creating new job opportunities for our youth.
9. Our comprehensive development strategy for the tourism industry also caters for cultural preservation. Our incredible diversity, with over 40 distinct cultures, offers visitors the chance to immerse themselves in our rich cultural heritage. Cultural tourism not only boosts economic growth but also serves as a medium to preserve heritage and strengthen global ties. From vibrant pastoralist traditions to ancient coastal cultures, our cultural diversity enhances Kenya's global appeal.
10. This is closely intertwined with Kenya's unique identity as the home of human origins and, therefore, the first home of humanity.
11. To actualise this identity, we have implemented a visa-free policy, making it easy for us to welcome people from every part of the world- both tourists and business travellers- to visit Kenya and for all our visitors to come home without any difficulty.
12. In this respect, I am pleased to announce the introduction of a Digital Nomad Work Permit, specifically designed to welcome global digital professionals, allowing them to live and work in Kenya while enjoying the country's natural beauty and high-quality lifestyle.



Kenya can be your home, where you and your family can experience the wonders of Magical Kenya every day, all while serving clients from anywhere in the world.

13. Additionally, we are introducing a Transit and Long Connection Travelers Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA), which enables transit visitors to step out of the airport and explore the beauty of their home away from home. Travellers at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, with time between their connections, will now be able to immerse themselves in Magical Kenya instead of waiting at the terminals.
14. As you go about your various engagements in this Expo, I'd like to share a few highlights from my personal Kenya Bucket List-experiences that I believe will give you a window into the essence of Magical Kenya:
 - a. Explore the Lake Turkana Basin, the site of some of the earliest human remains, set against the backdrop of the majestic Jade Sea - earning Kenya its reputation as the 'Home of Human Origins.'
 - b. Discover the secrets behind Kenya's dominance in long-distance running by experiencing the legendary atmosphere of Iten. If you're lucky, you may even run alongside champions like Eliud Kipchoge and Faith Kipyegon, and you will understand why Kenya is known as the 'Home of Great Marathoners'.
 - c. Visit Nairobi National Park, the only city with a game park within its limits and a closed-canopy forest nearby, offering world-class urban and wildlife experiences.



- d. Scale Mt. Kenya, Africa's second-highest peak, or trek the Trans Rift Trail in the Kerio Valley. From the pristine white sands of our coastline to the dramatic escarpments of the Rift Valley, Kenya is a land of scenic wonders, truly the Home of Breathtaking Landscapes and Thrilling Adventures.
- e. Explore the rich cultural fusion along Kenya's coast, where centuries of trade have shaped a heritage that has profoundly influenced global civilisation.
- f. Embrace ecotourism by visiting community-run conservancies, where wildlife conservation is intertwined with local culture, supporting sustainable tourism.
- g. Savour our globally renowned Kenyan tea, coffee, and fresh produce directly from our agricultural heartlands while supporting local farmers and experiencing farm-to-table authenticity.
- h. Experience Kenya's iconic wildlife in its renowned national parks, from the spectacular Great Migration in Maasai Mara to the majestic elephants of Amboseli.
- i. Take advantage of Kenya's high-speed internet, mobile money systems, and innovation hubs that connect Silicon Savannah to the global tech scene - making it ideal for travellers, digital nomads, and innovators alike.



- j. Explore the dynamic business and leisure opportunities in cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Eldoret, which are driving Kenya's rapid urbanisation and growth.
- k. These are just a few of the experiences that make Kenya truly extraordinary. I invite you to explore, connect with our people, and celebrate everything that makes Kenya a top global destination.

Tobong'u Lore. Karibuni nyumbani. Welcome Home.

