





The land of the wild boasts a beautiful coastline, inset with a gem of an island called Lamu.

Akanksha Sharma discovered it on her recent trip to Kenya

Like millions others on the planet, I grew up hearing stories about the great African wildlife. Then there were the pictures...the incredible annual migration of wildebeest, their hooves tossing up perfect photo opps for Nat Geo moments. The giraffes strutting their stuff (made me wonder if they could eat the clouds). And the hair-raising pictures of lions peering so close into safari jeeps you could smell the fresh blood on their breaths.

Now that I have been there and seen all of that, I insist you rise off that armchair and book yourself for a trip. It could change your life. Because being this close to Nature in its raw, elemental beauty puts you in touch with your primal self. Because it takes you back to the real cradle of your being...the beginning of all civilisation. And because it is, without doubt, a never-before experience.

But more about the wildlife on another day.

How about I whisper to you a little-known Kenya secret? Its beautiful 490 kilometre coastline. It's a stretch that will beguile you into thinking you are far from the wild heart of Africa. You will slide effortlessly into holiday mode, beachwear et al.

Check out the coastal town of Lamu. It is the oldest living Swahili town in Kenya as compared to Zanzibar in Tanzania. The Old Town of Lamu is recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for its cultural significance. After you are done with your gaming reserves and safaris, fly down to Lamu for a refreshing break.







The old town centre has large houses which are made of coral stone and mangrove timber. The coral stone helps the houses to stay cool. This Muslim-dominated town has a unique blend of Swahili, Arabic, Persian, Indian and European culture: a perfect example of how people from different religions can stay in harmony.

There are no vehicles on this island and donkey carts are the only mode of transport.

The serene beaches with the deep blue waters of the Indian Ocean and the white sand rich with history attracts a lot of travellers across the globe to this tiny town.

After the visit to the old town, we went for snorkelling. As I have grown up in the lap of the Himalayas, beaches have always fascinated me. Since childhood, I have always dreamt about what kind of world exists within the sparkling waters.

When we were on the speed boat I had butterflies in my stomach. The blue waters of the Indian Ocean were calling me. But, to be honest I was a little scared because I don't know how to swim. This feeling was

HOW TO REACH

There are scheduled flights from Nairobi, Mombasa, Diani Beach or Malindi. Yachts are also available from Shela Village.

WHAT TO DO

Take a walk through the local myths and tales in Lamu Old Town. Visit the Lamu Museum and the Siyu Fort. Take a safari and go snorkelling, fishing, donkey racing and dhow (boat) racing. If you're into boats, you can visit the Lamu dhow builders on the coast.

WHAT TO EAT

Lamu serves Swahili cuisine which is a blend of Arabic and African cooking styles. Any dining experience here is incomplete without seafood. Fish, crabs, lobsters and oysters, you name it and they have it. Also, Lamu is known for its locally prepared yogurt.

WHAT TO SHOP


Kikoy or Khanga are traditional wraparound garments, similar to sarongs. Both men and women wear these. Vibrant in colour, they make the perfect beach garments. Lamu locals are great woodcrafters. You will find intricately carved and designed doors, boxes, furniture and signboards here at good prices.

WHERE TO STAY

Look no further: I recommend the **Majlis Resort**. A little over a decade ago, a well-travelled Italian glimpsed these sparkling shores, fell in love with the place, and created Majlis. That man was the father of today's owner, Federico Moccia, who has helped transform the small property into a beachside retreat fusing the best elements of Swahili and European design.

holding me back. My instructor calmed me down by saying that it's not important to be a swimmer if you have passion.

Diving into the Indian Ocean and exploring the untouched coral reefs and an astounding array of exotic marine wildlife was out of this world. The clear water allows you a perfect view of pristine hard and soft corals. And an opportunity to get up-close and personal with hundreds of fishes.

Lamu offers plenty of opportunities for water sports, or for simply relaxing in the sun. It is a perfect getaway for unwinding from your hectic life and enjoying the slow pace in this town. 

With inputs from Rakhi Jerly & Aarohi Roy