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UNIQUE DESTINATIONS IN KENYA: THE NEW FACE TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

A visit to The Alamo in Texas in USA, the Great Wall of China, a palace in Warsaw and a few other places leaves no doubt that Africa has not marketed her destinations from traditional shrines or relics of Kingdoms like Ghana and Songhai, playgrounds of the various nationalities who once made Africa their home from Portuguese to British settlers. Destinations include Kenya's coastal strip and Happy Valley (Wanjohi Valley). Some destinations have been forgotten like a Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya and its sister institutions like schools. With Kenya's new constitution in 2010, devolved units showed lots of interest in such destinations. There are lots of cultural and physical destinations that we can package. Egypt has led us by making money from tombs(pyramids) and corpses(mummies). They got 11,196,000 tourists in 2018(World Bank, 2018). Kenya got 1,364,000 the same year. To emulate Egyptians, we must repackage the destinations -both in our minds and physically. And make the world realise there is no more than the big 5(elephant, lion, buffalo, rhino, and leopard) in tourism. The paper will explore some of the forgotten destinations in Kenya that would make the country join the league of Egyptians. The fact that Kenya has been a playground of different nationalities for over 1000 years means there is plenty of potential destinations or attractions.

KEYWORDS

destinations, tourism, settlers, Afrikaans, Aberdares, Mau Mau

INTRODUCTION

Generations to come would want to enjoy the sites of Taj Mahal, the pyramids, Machu Pichu, the wildebeest crossing the crocodile infested rivers in Kenya and other destinations, less known than the 8 wonders. This paper looks at some of the forgotten or unique tourist destinations. We consider Kenya a representative of Africa because of her diversity in culture, races and even landscape. By highlighting a few of these destinations, we can go beyond the big 5 and Safari drives. Of keen interest are destinations that are "emotional" creating connections across generations, region and continents. The author has visited some of the destinations and offers first-hand experience and observations.

The big game and Safaris coupled with beaches have defined East African destinations for the last 100 years. The myth about the big 5 are almost magical. National parks are some of the most popular destinations in Africa, from Masai Mara in Kenya to Kruger in South Africa. One American President Theodore Roosevelt even came hunting game in Kenya. "From 1909 to 1910, Roosevelt and his crew

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trekked through Kenya, Uganda, the Congo, and southern Sudan, exploring, shooting, and capturing footage and photographs that museums still treasure today", says Boeni (2014).

Covid-19 left no doubt that this model based on national parks is not sustainable. The empty beaches and national parks created the need for less traditional destinations. We could have used the covid-19 interruption to package new destinations. The paper builds the case for some forgotten destinations in Kenya. They are "forgotten" because they get few visitors; their potential has not been exploited. The number of tourists arriving in Kenya is low compared with other countries.



Figure 1. Tourist arrivals in Kenya

Source: Statista.

This is contrasted with Greece below.

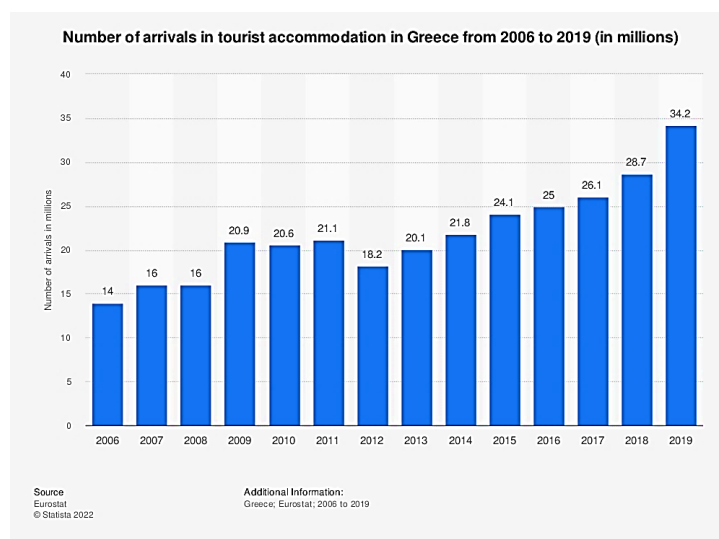
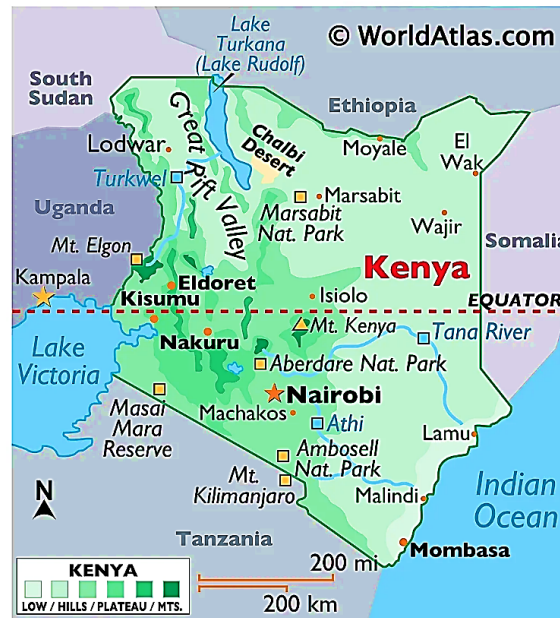


Figure 2. Tourist arrivals in Greece

Source: Statista.

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The possible destinations are explained. They have been chosen based on their historical significance and appeal to global audience. A map of Kenya gives the context.



Old Mombasa town

This is an intersection of centuries old cultures involving the indigenous Africans, the Arabs, Indians, Portuguese and Indians. A visit to the cemeteries in the old town leaves no doubt how cosmopolitans the town is, even in death. Rarely has this been sold as a tourist destination. Visitors to Mombasa mention Fort Jesus, built by Portuguese and beaches. The old town could rival Zanzibar's stone city.

Happy Valley and old houses



Figure 3. Happy Valley Facing South in Nyandarua county, Kenya (own photo)

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Its Kenya's most famous landmark appearing in movies like Out of Africa and several books including Ghosts of the Happy Valley. It's only 150 km north of Nairobi. Several old houses and their history dot the small valley. No one has really sold it as destination. Yet from 1920 to around 1941 when its doyen Lord Errol died it was the playground of the rich and affluent from UK, America, France and other parts of the world. Some like American Alice De Janze is buried there.



Figure 4. A house in the Happy Valley formerly owned Alice de Janze (own photo)

Tea plantations

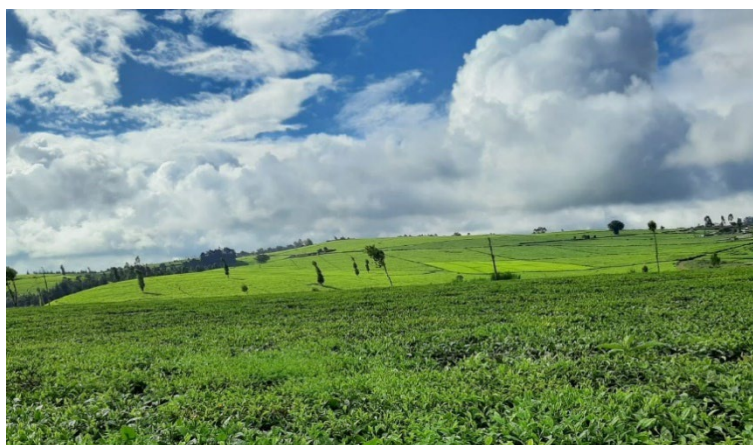


Figure 5. Tea farm near Limuru, Kenya

Tea plantations in Sri Lanka, India or Kenya are some of the most breath-taking scenes but rarely marketed as destinations. We are eager to visit wineries and taste wine. Why not tea estates? Curiously, most tea estates are very near urban centres like Nairobi. But their link to farming makes them lose their coolness. Add tea processing from picking to packaging the destination becomes more attractive. The history behind tea plantation passing from old colonial era to present add to the allure.

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Police Stations and prisons



Figure 6. A plaque at a Kenyan police Station celebrating history (own photo)

Police Stations and prisons may be feared because we rarely visit there for fun. But as this plaque in a Kenya police station show, they hold lots of history. Can they allow access to records from those imprisoned during the colonial era to the present? The fact that we know men and women who have ever had a brush with law makes police stations and prisons more homely. My dad spent four months in a prison in Embu, Kenya. Would love to see the records. Their architecture has been preserved too.

Carnegie House: The Scotland Connection



Figure 7. Carnegie Houses (own photo)

Major Robert Francis Carnegie build these houses on the Nyahururu-Nyeri Road overlooking Mr. Kenya. The house on the left is clinic while the right one is the administrative block of Ngobit girls School. Next to these houses was an airstrip, now disused. There several such houses in the former white highlands, white because British and Afrikaan settlers made them their home. Some of the houses are in private hands while others are in owned by institutions. They form an important link between the past and the present. Of great ineptest is the way the new settlers used local materials to build houses.

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Major Robert Francis Carnegie came from Scotland and was born in 1869. He died in Ngobit, Kenya in 1947. His spouse who appears in CIVIL APPEAL NO. 57 OF 1981 was Violet Mabel Carnegie. She died in 1982 and was born in 1903. They had three sons. David James Carnegie (1915-1994), Robert Murray Carnegie (1917- 1954) and John Fraser Carnegie (1922- 2011). It is still an open question if he is related the American magnate Andrew Carnegie.

The graves of three Carnegies were desecrated by people looking for gold. There was a rumour that they were buried with treasures.

Anne Spoerry House: The German Connection



Figure 8. The front and back office of Dr Anne Spoerry House at Ol Kalou, Kenya (own photo)

The founder of Africa flying doctor service once worked in this clinic taking care of the mostly settler community from British to Afrikaans (Boers). Today its nondescript and even owners are not aware who owned it. Spoerry's time in a German prison during the world war II and the suggestion she collaborated with Nazi would make her former clinic and home a great destination (Komireddi, 2018).

Indian Connection



Figure 9. An Indian duka(shop) build in 1940 at Ol Kalou, Kenya (own photo)

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Figure 10. Major White, as Australian is buried in Kenya, 200 km northwest of Nairobi

Not far from Spoerry house are Indian build houses in 1940. With a population of over 1.4 billion, this would be a great destination for Indians looking for their kin and kith. Other houses like this, their architecture intact dot the country. While Indians have been in Kenya for 100 years, we rarely think their landmarks as worthy destinations. Their most memorable landmark is the rail line from Mombasa to Uganda.

The Australian connection



Figure 10. A historical house once owned by J. Etherington (own photo)



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This house was formerly owned by J. Etherington who immigrated to Australia. The house is now a health clinic. Two other Australians whose parents lived in Kenya came back to Kenya as Ambassadors. Can we build that connection and make Kenya a popular destination for Australians? Harold White's grandson became Australia's ambassador to Kenya.

Schools



Figure 12: University of Nairobi and Starehe Boys Center (own photo)

The University of Nairobi on the left dates to 1956 and was the pioneer university in Kenya with its unique architecture. Starehe, a boy's school was built in 1959. It caters for less fortunate members of the society. These two destinations hold an emotional attachment across generations.

Afrikaans (Boers) connection



Figure 13. The Dutch Reformed Church in Kenya which was sold after Kenya gained independence.
(Own photo)

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Figure 14. This house was owned by an Afrikaan who married two African women Wangechi and Kagure

The shingles roof shows clearly the age of the house. The house is about 170 km northwest of Nairobi 25km. Many Afrikaans would love visiting this place.

Golf courses



Figure 15. Golf courses are not just playgrounds, they hold history.

The first golf course in Kenya was built in 1906. We now have about 40 golf courses in Kenya. They can be great attractions like Royal & Ancient in Scotland. We have the advantage of endless summers with sunshine 265 days a year.

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Graveyards



Figure 16. A Commonwealth cemetery in Nairobi (own photo)

Graves represent the link between the past and the present. Egyptians through pyramids have exploited our attachment to the past to make their country one of the most popular destinations. In Kenya, we have commonwealth cemeteries where British soldiers who died in WWI and WWII are buried. Old churches have cemeteries too.



Figure 17. Wreckage of a WW II Blenheim bomber in the Aberdares mountains in Kenya.

This plane went down on a training mission during WWII.. It had a crew of three South Africans on board and crashed on July 4, 1942. The plane wreckage was found on January 9, 1943 by Morgan-Grenville who lived in Kenya. The crew were deemed as 'Missing in Action' and despite the plane being found, the bodies were never recovered. This is a great destination that would include mountain climbing.



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CONCLUSION

The Britons and Afrikaans who first visited Kenya were fascinated by the flora and fauna, including huge herds of wild animals. The writer Earnest Hemingway found the herds which he hunted and took away trophies in 1933. President Theodore Roosevelt had hunted big game in East Africa before him around 1909. Since then new attractions have been added by technology. But they are unknown, uncelebrated. They could be marketed to put Kenya at par with Egypt, Greece or Morocco in attracting tourists and their dollars. These attractions need minimal investment beyond publicity. If county and national governments took up the marketing, and package them, tourism in Kenya would flourish. Other countries in the region would use Kenya as model. Covid-19 was awake up call, demanding that we think beyond the traditional destinations.

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