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## My Experiences Touring Kenya’s Wildlife

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Working as an environmentalist I have come to appreciate wildlife in Africa majorly the diversity that it has in the variance of creation. To sample a few of theattractions that drew me to Kenya includewilderbeastmigrationandthebig five (elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and hippopotamus). I wasexcited to visit Africa with thepromise to feast my eyes on its wildlife. However, my visitwasalsodriven by environmental conservationinitiatives since there has beengrowingconcerns over poaching in Africa and Kenya to be specific. To thisend, I notethat elephants and rhinos havebecomethemainvictims of poachers for their ivory. Similarly, cheaters andleopardshave as wellfallenvictim of poachers for their hidethatfetcheshighprices in the Chinese marketandothersectors of theworldeconomy. My concernswere to see a firsthand account of thedamagethat poaching hadbrought to theparts of thecountry in terms of destruction of Kenya’s wildlife. Moreover, I alsowasinterested in investigatingthecause of the poaching menaceand in sodoingdevelopappropriatesuggestionsforsolutions to curbtheproblem.
My experience touring Kenya was one characterized by discoverybecause I came to learnhowthecountryhadbeenmade of securityloopholesthatplacedthe elephant and rhino at greatrisk of extinction. The elephant remainsthegreatestmammal in theworld in terms of sizeand is under a greatthreat of extinction as well. I discovered a powerstruggle in terms of economicandpoliticalauthority which creates a situational crisis in Kenya making wildlife vulnerable to poaching in theregion. In thisregard, I observethat there is a directcorrelation with the insurgency and terrorism activities in neighboring Somalia andthe poaching menaceexperienced in Kenya. Consequently, theextremistterroristgroupAl-Shabaab is a beneficiary of theillegaltrade in ivory from Kenya’s wildlife whofund their terrorism activities through poaching Kenya’s wildlife. Further, their poaching activitiesprovide them with funding thattheyutilize to carry out acts of terror against the United States of America.
The slaying of animals in the Maasai Mara is a sad tale as elephants are shot down and their Ivory cut for shipment into Chinese markets. Resultantly, their numbers dwindle as more and more elephants are killed for their tusks. Their numbers in the reserves continue to dwindle since poachers have no alternative means of extracting the Ivory from the elephants without having to kill them. Elephants being very aggressive animals poachers risk their lives when attempting to capture one and cut out its tusks. What is worse, elephants travel in groups such that they can be able to protect one another, as a result, the group of elephants can easily deter poachers by trampling on them like lice on the ground. However, poachers have an advantage over the elephants since they use sophisticated weaponry such as AK47 rifles and also the use of poison to subdue the elephants in order to deter any confrontation. Regrettably, the elephants have to be killed by the use of a gun or poison so that they do not put up a fight when their tusks are being cut off their bodies.
My investigations in theterroristactivities of Al-Shabaab havebrought me to theconclusionthatthe Al Shabaab is responsiblefortheinstability in the East African region. Theinsecurity in theregion has beenoccasioned by sporadicattacksmeted by Al-Shabaab insurgentswhohavelodgedattacks in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Hence, theinsecurity has traversed Somalia’s borderandspread into the East African region as a whole. Themorecrucialfactor to takenotice of is thefactthat Kenyan elephants are probablypayingthepriceforthe terrorism activitiesthatthe AL-Shabaab carries out on the East African region. Curbingtheivorytraderequiresthatthemoneytrail is visibleenough to be followedsothatthoseengaging in thetrade can be apprehended. However, in my experiencetouring Kenya, I discoveredthatoften than not theexchange of money cannot be traced. I havecome to learnthatthetradehadmanipulatedthe Middle East Hawala moneytransferplatform which westernfinancialsystems cannot access. Hence, trackingfinancialtransactions of thatnature has becomedifficult since thewesternauthoritiesdo not havethemeans to doso. China plays a central role in the poaching of elephants in Africa and in Kenya specifically because ivory is used as an ingredient for making medicine by the Chinese. To this end, the ivory fetches quite good prices in the Chinese market. Terrorist organization take advantage of this demand and use Al Shabaab insurgents to poach elephants in the Kenyan wildlife reserves for their ivory which is sold to the Chinese for millions of dollars.
Thetime I spenttouring Kenya’s wildlife alsoled to thediscoverythat poaching was not theonlythreat to theeconomic soundness of the tourism industry in thecountry. Internalconflictandpoliticalinstabilityhave as wellhas a greatrole to play in theconflict that wasexperienced in Kenya infamously referred to as the post-election violence of 2008. Thisconflictescalated into tribalclashes that painted a grimimage of a disintegratingcountry, whatfollowedweretraveladvisorieswarningtourists against visiting Kenya due to theensuingcrisis. Resultantly, the tourism sectorsuffered an enormouseconomicblow which wasoccasioned by lownumbers of touristsvisitingthecountry’s nationalparksorrathervisitingthecountry at all.
As I recounttheexperiencesthat I came across in Africa, I cannot helpbutwonderwherethesolution to thecrisislies. However, I wasansweredwhen I visitedthenorthernKenya. Here I foundthatthecommunityhadorganized itself into groups that could deter poaching activitiesmeted by Al Shabaab insurgents. To thisend, there may be a glimmer of hopefor Kenya’s wildlife as conservationists takeit upon themselves to preserveandconserve wildlife in thecountry. Nonetheless, I observethattheinternationalcommunity has a centralrole to play in mitigating effortsmade by Kenyan authorities to eradicate poaching in thecountry. Furthermore, jointefforts from theinternationalcommunity will serve to ensurethatterroristsare subdued since their source of revenuesforfinancing terrorism acts will havebeenapprehended. Moreover, there is a needfortheinternationalcommunity to confront China that is themainmarketforivory that is poached from Kenya andother wildlife reserves. Hence, it is importantthatall stakeholders take an activerole to ensurethat poaching of elephants in the Kenyan wild is brought to a halt. Thefuture of tourism in Kenya depends on the commitment toaddress poaching; furthermore, thesameefforts will ensuresurvival of theworld’s biggestmammalsavingit from extinction as a result of poaching.

## References

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