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## **My Experiences Touring Kenya's Wildlife**

### My Experiences Touring Kenya's Wildlife

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 the attractions that drew me to Kenya include wilder beast migration and the big five (elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and hippopotamus). I was excited to visit Africa with the promise to feast my eyes on its wildlife. However, my visit was also driven by environmental conservation initiatives since there has been growing concerns over poaching in Africa and Kenya to be specific. To this end, I note that elephants and rhinos have become the main victims of poachers for their ivory. Similarly, cheaters and leopard have as well fallen victim of poachers for their hide that fetches high prices in the Chinese market and other sectors of the world economy. My concerns were to see a firsthand account of the damage that poaching had brought to the parts of the country in terms of destruction of Kenya's wildlife. Moreover, I also was interested in investigating the cause of the poaching menace and in so doing develop appropriate suggestions for solutions to curb the problem. My experience touring Kenya was one characterized by discovery because I came to learn how the country had been made of security loopholes that placed the elephant and rhino at great risk of extinction. The elephant remains the greatest mammal in the world in terms of size and is under a great threat of extinction as well. I discovered a power struggle in terms of economic and political authority which creates a situational crisis in Kenya making wildlife vulnerable to poaching in the region. In this regard, I

observe that there is a direct correlation with the insurgency and terrorism activities in neighboring Somalia and the poaching menace experienced in Kenya. Consequently, the extremist terrorist group Al-Shabaab is a beneficiary of the illegal trade in ivory from Kenya's wildlife who fund their terrorism activities through poaching Kenya's wildlife. Further, their poaching activities provide them with funding that they utilize 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 the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab have brought me to the conclusion that the Al Shabaab is responsible for the instability in the East African region. The insecurity in the region has been occasioned by

sporadic attacks meted by Al-Shabaab insurgents who have lodged attacks in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Hence, the insecurity has traversed Somalia's border and spread into the East African region as a whole.

The more crucial factor to take notice of is the fact that Kenyan elephants are probably paying the price for the terrorism activities that the AL-Shabaab carries out on the East African region.

Curbing the ivory trade requires that the money trail is visible enough to be followed so that those engaging in the trade can be apprehended. However, in my experience touring Kenya, I discovered that often than not the exchange of money cannot be traced. I have come to

learn that the trade had manipulated the Middle East Hawala money transfer platform which western financial systems cannot access.

Hence, tracking financial transactions of that nature has become difficult since the western authorities do not have the means to do so. 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 organizations 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.

The time I spent touring Kenya's wildlife also led to the discovery that poaching was not the only threat to the economic soundness of the tourism industry in the country. Internal conflict and political instability have as well as a great role to play in the conflict that was experienced in Kenya infamously referred to as the post-election violence of 2008. This conflict escalated into tribal clashes

that painted a grim image of a disintegrating country, what followed were travel advisories warning tourists against visiting Kenya due to the ensuing crisis. Resultantly, the tourism sector suffered an enormous economic blow which was occasioned by low numbers of tourists visiting the country's national parks or rather visiting the country at all. As I recount the experiences that I came across in Africa, I cannot help but wonder where the solution to the crisis lies. However, I was answered when I visited the northern Kenya. Here I found that the community had organized itself into groups that could deter poaching activities meted by Al Shabaab insurgents. To this end, there may be a glimmer of hope for Kenya's wildlife as conservationists take it upon themselves to preserve and conserve wildlife in the country. Nonetheless, I observe that the international community has a central role to play in mitigating efforts made by Kenyan authorities to eradicate poaching in the country. Furthermore, joint efforts from the international community will serve to ensure that terrorists are subdued since their source of revenues for financing terrorism acts will have been apprehended. Moreover, there is a need for the international community to confront China that is the main market for ivory that is poached from Kenya and other wildlife reserves. Hence, it is important that all stakeholders take an active role to ensure that poaching of elephants in the Kenyan wild is brought to a halt. The future of tourism in Kenya depends on the commitment to address poaching; furthermore, these same efforts will ensure survival of the world's biggest mammals saving it from extinction as a result of poaching.

## **References**

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