

Watamu Treehouse

Your
Amazing
Home
On The
Kenya Coast



Watamu Treehouse on Plot 31 Watamu

Welcome to Watamu. As one of my friends said yesterday, “there is no where on earth that I would rather be right now”.

Watamu Treetops is a family home, which is now rented out as an idyllic base for any dream vacation.

The house is situated on one of the most picturesque stretches of Watamu beach, ideally located right opposite the Coral Gardens of the Marine Park. There are no large hotels nearby, only private residences. Built high in the trees, its unique architecture affords a 360 degree panorama of the Indian Ocean coastline on one side and native forest on the other.

We have tried to provide you with everything you will need for your holiday. The only things you need are food and washing / toilet consumables which you can get locally.

You can contact me with any suggestions at paulkrystall@gmail.com

Please have a wonderful time in Watamu.

Paul Krystall



(Updated January 2010)

House Notes

You are staying at the house on a self-catering basis. Kingi Martin manages the house, assisted by Allan Yeri, and Shabaan is in charge of security. They will do all they can to assist you during your stay.

They have a small stock of mosquito coils, soap, toilet paper, etc for your first night, which you can use if you arrive too late for shopping. After this, you replace the essentials.

The house provides towels, sheets, mosquito nets, and everything you would need at the dining table and in the kitchen.

Kingi will prepare a daily shopping list of things that are needed in the house. You purchase the food and washing and toilet consumables.

Kingi and Allan will keep the house clean, and can also wash your clothes and help you with cooking. Please ask them for anything you need.

Also please report any problems or breakages to them, and leave a contribution for breakages.

Path to Beach

The path down to the beach starts by the outdoor shower. The path takes you down through 150 metres of indigenous forest. You should see butterflies, plated lizards, sykes monkeys and occasionally other wildlife like suni. Some people like to wear shoes, and these are recommended at night so you can see what you are stepping on! A torch is essential at night as the forest gets very dark. You also have to bend over in two places – unless you are a child, a dwarf or an elf. This path is good for people who really like the forest.

Please don't take house cushions or furnishings down to the beach.

Water, Power, Gas

We store water from the mains and rain water. Some people drink it, but most visitors buy drinking water at the shops.

Water is never abundant in Watamu, so showers should be kept short to conserve water. A home-made solar panel will give a few hot showers on sunny days (when you don't really need them...)

If power goes out, Kingi will run a generator when needed for pumping water or keeping the deep freeze cold. The generator can also give emergency lighting to the rooms, but we don't usually use it for that purpose. If you want the generator used for light, please give Kingi money to replace the petrol used.

Security and Common Sense

Although security is never guaranteed anywhere in the world, Watamu is just about the safest place for visitors in Kenya. The treehouse is open, and the following security measures are recommended:

The house has a askari (night guard) who patrols the area and can give you any help you need at night. We also have a security button with Group 4 Security.

The main entrances are locked each night when the staff leaves – the door in the main tower, the door to Lizard tower, and the iron grill coming up from the kitchen to the main tower. If you go out – to the beach or out for the evening, you can lock the doors and take the keys with you.

On the beach during the day, common sense applies: Don't flaunt your expensive cameras, watches or earrings. In the village – which is mostly Muslim - dress appropriately.

The rooms of the house are built high above the ground. Please be careful and supervise young children and people who have drunk too much.

When it rains, please note that the surfaces get more slippery. Take care.

Malaria

The Kenya Coast is a malaria area and malaria prevention is handled in this house by:

1. The house has mosquito nets for each bed. It is generally accepted that the best prevention is to be under a good (hole-free) net by 9.00 pm.
2. Mosquito coils are used if you want. If you buy them, they will be lit in the evenings and at dinner time.
3. Kingi will make you a cup of neem tea regularly. It is bitter and has a taste like your worst nightmare. But the neem tree has traditionally been used for a multitude of health benefits, including malaria and mosquito prevention. You can also rub the neem tea on your arms and legs to keep mosquitos away. (If you grow to like the neem tea, or want to take some back home with you – you can bath in water boiled with the leaves – ask Kingi to prepare a bag of leaves). Honey tastes good in the tea.
4. Whatever prophylactics you use, although most of the regular visitors do not use these.

Tipping

The most common question we get is about tipping the staff. Of course, tipping is optional. But most guests who find the staff helpful and useful normally tip the staff. Tips are given to Kingi who distributes them to the other staff. A guideline for tipping is Shs 350 per person per night, with a fraction of that for children (2008 figures). For example, two families using the house with 4 children would normally leave Shs 2000 per night for the staff – to be divided.

Activities

Apart from resting and swimming, which is what most people do, here is a list of other activities you might want to try:

Snorkelling: With a mask and snorkel, you can swim out straight from the house and see an amazing variety of fish, coral heads and other sea life. Just swim and look. There are often Blacktip Reef Sharks and Rays in just in front of the house that you can see swimming or feeding in the sand.

There are coralheads all over that permanently have moray eels, lionfish, grouper, parrot fish and sometimes lobsters, octopus and many others.

The most popular place to snorkel is the Coral Gardens. This is an area marked by a ring of white buoys directly east from the house. A good swim (for good swimmers) is to go straight out to sea from the house until you get to the line of the coral gardens, and then turn left and swim to the gardens. Or you can hire a boat to take you out.

Note 1: All of the sea inside the reef in Watamu is protected Marine Park. You should never do any fishing, disturb anything you find, remove shells or stand on coral heads.

Note 2: If you use a mask inside the park, you need to get a ticket from the KWS office at Temple Point. (Drive out of the driveway, turn left, and go to the very end of the Watamu road). Tickets are Shs 300 for adult residents and Shs 150 for child residents. Proof of Kenya residency is required, otherwise you will have to pay tourist rates. You should take your tickets with you when you go out snorkeling.

Beach Walking: You can walk in either direction on the beach from the house. If you turn left (north), you will get to the hotels after a hour's walk on uninterrupted beach. If you turn right (south) you can walk for a half-hour to an hour towards Mida Creek, depending on the tides. Go at low tide, take some shoes and explore the coral rock pools before Mida Creek.

Mida Creek: The entrance to Mida Creek is directly opposite Whale Rock. The creek goes inland about 5 miles and can be seen from the roof of the main tower.

If you have a boat, you can fish and waterski and explore in the creek. You can moor your boat at the Hemmingways boatyard or at Captain Andy's. It is best to go with someone who knows the coralheads the first time you go up the creek.

You can also take boat or Dhow trips up the creek, for example the Taratibu Dhow Trip

Dhow-Trips: Enjoy private dhow trips on the "Taratibu", in Mida Creek or the ocean. You can go on sundowner cruises, or sail in the full moon. These unique trips can be arranged privately for your group. Contact: JJ on 0734-747845 or Titch on 0734-759930

Dolphin Trips: At certain times of year you can see and swim with dolphins just off the reef near Watamu. A recommended trip is organized by Hemmingway's Resort, as it is reliable, leaves on time, provides safety, and all of the snorkeling equipment.

Windsurfing and Other Watersports: Windsurfing is very popular in Watamu. If you want equipment rental / lessons, these are offered at Hemmingway's and Turtle Bay. Reiner Kasse at plot 20 also rents out some good windsurfing equipment, and takes people on Hobie Cat safaris.

Fishing: See Hemmingway's or Ocean Sports to charter a boat., or one of our neighbours JJ has a 20 foot Boston-Whaler for hire.
Contact: JJ on 0734-747845 or Titch on 0734-759930

Kitesurfing: If you have your own equipment, you can kitesurf right from in front of the house. If you need to rent or have lessons there are 2 places to go Kitesurfing. You can either call Carlo who has a kite school at Garoda Resort at plot 40 , just 5 minutes walk from the house(0729-322341). Or you can go to Che Shale – a small hotel built on the sand dunes about 30 miles north of Malindi. Justin has a full kitesurfing school and you can book a course. Che Shale is also a beautiful place for spending the day and having lunch.

Arabuko Sokoke Forest: The Arabuko Sokoke Forest is a gazetted forest reserve close to Watamu. It is the last indigenous coastal forest left in Kenya. There are many entrances, walks and drives, but if you are new to the forest, the best thing you can do is to go to the forest station and hire a guide to take you walking. The forest a good place for walking, birdwatching, evening sundowners in the treehouse and for running.

Golf : If you can't do without the game, there is a course in Malindi at the Malindi Golf and Country Club. There are 18 tees and nine holes. Preferred lie on fairways and greens. Further away, but among Kenya's best courses are Nyali Golf Club in Mombasa (2 hours drive), and Leisure Lodge on Diani Beach (3 hours drive)

Malindi: People go to Malindi for shopping, surfing or boogie-boarding in Malindi Bay, and for meals.

Traditional Giriama Dancers: Traditional songs, dances and drumming by the Giriama – the indigenous people of this area. Walk a short distance to the village, enjoy the dancing, meet local people and try the palm wine!
Ask Kingi to organize this activity.

Boardwalk on Mida Creek: Walk on the boardwalk above the mangroves of Mida Creek. Enjoy the trees and birds and views of Watamu and Kirekwe Island.
Learn about the local environment.
Ask Kingi to organize this activity.

Gede Ruins: Gede Ruins is a 12th Century Swahili village that was mysteriously abandoned some 600 years ago due to unknown causes. It is now a National Museum, and the ruins are heavily overgrown with beautiful indigenous forest trees, baobabs and tamarind. Well worth a walk and a visit. Look out for Syke's Monkeys, and the Golden Rumped Elephant Shrew can also be seen here. Ask Kingi to organize this activity.

Kipepeo Butterfly Project

Right at the entrance to Gede Ruins is the Kipepeo Butterfly Project. This innovative project is aimed at giving the forest edge communities opportunities to get an income directly from the forest, by live breeding the unique butterflies of the Arabuko-Sokoke forest, and sending them to live butterfly display centres around the world.

Watamu Village Walk. Ask Kingi to organize this activity.

Land

The plot you are staying on runs from the three towers back to the main road. It was purchased when Pat and Anne Donelly divided their plot in 1991. Their wishes, and ours too, were that we would not interfere with the trees or undergrowth of the forest. All of the building that has been done is on land that had previously been cleared.

The Dongo Kundu (Red Soil) area of Watamu, on which the plot sits, can be seen clearly from the rooftop. There has been little development. Unlike other areas of Watamu, most of the neighbors have also left their forests rather than clearing them.

From the roof, you can also see Whale Rock out to sea and Mida Creek.

The forest has a wide range of indigenous trees, including lot of beautiful bamba-kofi trees and three baobabs.

Construction

The concept of the house came from conservationist and artist Nani Croze – to build connected tree houses above the trees, rather than clear the forest. The house is comprised of three separate towers. The Main Tower ties into the Forest Tower via a staircase and over to Lizard Tower across the bridge.

The base of the Main Tower and Lizard Tower was built between 1993-1996. The top 3 stories of the Main Tower and the Forest Tower were built in 2002. Building was done by Andrew Melesi and about 30 builders.

The stunning glasswork was provided by Kitengela Glass, just outside Nairobi – www.kitengelaglass.com

The cushions and curtains were provided by Kamili Designs in Nairobi – www.kamilidesigns.com

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Useful Numbers:

Codes: Watamu and Malindi - 042
 Nairobi - 020
 Mombasa - 041

Airlines	Air Kenya, Malindi Malindi Airport	Malindi – 30808 Malindi – 31201
Doctor	Dr. Irungu	Watamu – 32248
Ambulance		Watamu – 32533
Police	Emergency Police Station	999 Watamu – 32286
Shops	Watamu Supermarket Mama Lucy's	Watamu – 32309 0733-795330 Watamu - 32584 0722-794925
Hotels	Ocean Sports Hemingways Resort Turtle Bay	Watamu – 322878 Watamu – 32624 / 32724 Watamu – 32080
House Managers Ivor and Sarah	Home Mobile	Watamu – 32504 0733-809982
Scuba Diving	Steve Curtis – Ocean Sports	Watamu – 32420 / 32199 0733-897661
Kite Surfing	Justin – Che Shale Carlo – Watamu	0722-2230931 0729-322341
Snake Park	Sanda Ashe – BioKen	Watamu – 32303 0733-290324
K.W.S.	Forest Station Marine Park	0733-809919 Watamu - 32393
Dhow Trips or Fishing	J.J. Titch	0734-747845 0734-759930
Courier and Security	Securicor	Watamu - 32557
Taxis	Kariuki @ Malindi Airport Peter @ Watamu	Malindi – 31006 0727-628489
Telephone	Watamu Exchange	Watamu - 32201
Electricity	KPL, Malindi	Malindi - 30841
Hardware	Timboni Traders – Kadri Karimjee Hardware	0733-616024 Watamu – 32317 Watamu – 32325 / 32334