

Kenya Travel Brief

14–16 November 2026 · Shamba Events Centre, Loresho Ridge, Nairobi. Convened with UNIDO, FAO, Creative Coffee Events, the Coffee Board of Kenya, A Shot in The Dark and Torch Coffee. Read the entry sections first. There are now two steps to complete before you fly: travel health insurance, then the eTA.

Updated 16 October 2026: the cupping schedule and Kenya’s new mandatory travel health insurance added.

SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER Sign-in and training, 17:00 Mandatory for all cuppers. The same day is Creative Coffee day : speakers and activities all day, closing with evening events. Ticketed separately; KES 1,000 (about USD 7.70) for Flavor Map cuppers.	SUNDAY 15 AND MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER Cupping Running alongside at the venue: the Coffee Flavor Map public expo and farmer engagement activities , from roasting to biochar, vermiculture and more.
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Booking flights: if you fly in on the 14th, land by early afternoon so immigration, the drive to Westlands and the shuttle still get you to Shamba by 17:00. Better still, arrive the day before and make a day of Creative Coffee. Until the schedule is out, don’t book a flight home before Monday evening.

01 ENTRY, STEP 1: TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE

New since 6 October 2026. Every visitor now needs Kenya’s government inbound travel health insurance, and the eTA application will not go through without it. The High Court upheld the rule on 7 October. **Buy the insurance first, then apply for the eTA.**

Who needs it	Every non-Kenyan visitor staying under 12 months. Exempt: Kenyan residents, citizens of East African Community states, and children under three.
Other African passports	If you don’t need an eTA, the position is not yet settled. Buy it anyway; USD 52 is a small price against a problem at the immigration desk.
Where	insurance.ecitizen.go.ke , under “Inbound Travel Health Insurance.” The eTA application also offers it before you pay.
Cost	USD 44 plus fees, about USD 52 per person. Each traveler needs their own policy.
Covers	Up to USD 50,000: medical treatment, emergency evacuation, repatriation, prescriptions and mental health care.
Have ready	Passport, a selfie (matched to your passport photo) and your travel dates.
Proof	No certificate is emailed. Save the reference number and a screenshot of the “Valid” status on eCitizen. Immigration may ask to see it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Your own travel insurance does not replace it. The portal accepts only the Kenyan scheme policy. Keep your own cover too, for cancellation, baggage and costs above the scheme’s limits.Already have your eTA? Buy the insurance on eCitizen anyway. You don’t need a new eTA.	

02 ENTRY, STEP 2: THE KENYA ETA

Who needs one	US, UK, EU, Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Australian and most other non-African passports.
Who does not	African Union nationals, except Somalia and Libya, enter visa-free for two months. EAC citizens (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda) get up to six months.
Where	etakenya.go.ke and nowhere else. Third-party sites replicate the form and add fees.

Cost	USD 30 standard, roughly USD 32–34 once bank charges land. Expedited processing adds USD 100 and is near-immediate.
Timing	Approvals usually issue within 72 hours. The authorization is single-entry and you must travel within 90 days of approval, so apply between mid-October and 1 November . The portal finds your insurance from your passport.
Have ready	Passport with six months validity and a blank page, a passport photo or selfie, your return ticket, a hotel booking, and a payment card.

Two things people get wrong. Save the approval PDF to your phone, or print it. You will be asked for it at the immigration desk, before you have a local SIM and before airport wifi can be counted on. And an eTA admits you as a visitor to attend the event; it does not authorize paid work in Kenya. If your participation is contracted, talk to us and we will arrange the right pass.

03 HEALTH

- Yellow fever.** A certificate is required only if you are arriving from or transiting a yellow-fever endemic country. Several African and South American routings qualify, so carry your card if there is any doubt.
- Malaria.** Nairobi sits at 1,795 m and city risk is negligible. If you are extending to the coast, Lamu or western Kenya, speak to a travel clinic about prophylaxis.
- Routine.** Hepatitis A and typhoid are the standard recommendations. No COVID requirements remain.

04 WEATHER AND WHAT TO PACK

November is the tail of the short rains. Days run about 24°C / 75°F, nights drop to 16°C / 60°F, and roughly one day in three sees rain, usually in the afternoon.

- Layers and a light rain shell. Nairobi evenings are cooler than most people expect from an equatorial city.
- Closed shoes. The venue sits on working farm and wetland ground and it may be soft underfoot.
- Type G plugs, 240V. Bring an adapter.
- Altitude is real. Drink more water than you think you need on day one.

05 MONEY

- The currency is the Kenyan shilling, trading around **KES 130 to the US dollar**. Confirm the rate close to travel.

- Cards work at Nairobi hotels, restaurants and malls. Outside those, **M-Pesa is the real payment system in Kenya**: register a Safaricom SIM with your passport, load cash at any agent, and you can pay for essentially anything.
- ATMs are everywhere, including JKIA arrivals. Expect KES 200–350 per withdrawal plus whatever your own bank charges.
- If you bring USD in cash, bring clean notes issued after 2006. Torn or marked bills get refused.
- **Tipping**. 10 percent in restaurants where no service charge appears, KES 200–300 per bag for porters, round up KES 50–100 on Uber and Bolt.

06 STAYING CONNECTED

Safaricom is the dominant network. **There is a Safaricom branch at JKIA, just outside Terminal 1A arrivals, open 24 hours**, so it makes no difference how late you land. Reckon on KES 100–250 depending on whether you take a physical SIM or an eSIM line; registration takes a passport and a few minutes. Buy one there and you walk out of the airport with M-Pesa already working. A travel eSIM bought before you fly will get you data on landing, but it is not a Kenyan line and will not give you M-Pesa.

07 LANDING AT JKIA

- Immigration runs 30–60 minutes when several long-haul flights land together. Have your eTA approval, insurance reference, return ticket and hotel address to hand.
- Uber and Bolt operate from a designated pickup area; download the apps before you fly. Reckon on KES 1,000–2,500 to the city centre and KES 2,500–4,000 to Westlands. Airport taxis run KES 3,000–5,000 to Westlands and save you hunting for a pickup bay after a night flight.
- Ask your driver to take the Nairobi Expressway. The toll is KES 300–500 and it turns a punishing Mombasa Road crawl into a straightforward run.
- Rush hour is 07:00–09:30 and 17:00–20:00. Outside it, Westlands is 40 minutes from the airport; inside it, allow 70 or more.

08 GETTING TO THE VENUE

Shamba Events Centre occupies three acres inside the University of Nairobi's College of Agriculture and Veterinary Science at Loresho Ridge, looking out over wetland and some of the last coffee still growing inside the city.

We run electric shuttle buses from Westgate Mall, Westlands, to the venue and back each day of the event, departing every 30 minutes. There is no need to plan around a single departure: turn up at Westgate and you will wait half an hour at most, in either direction. First and last runs will circulate ahead of the event. Stay within easy reach of Westgate and your logistics are solved for all three days.

Making your own way is straightforward too: 20–30 minutes from Westlands off-peak, appreciably longer in rush hour.

Open the venue in Google Maps

–1.24999, 36.74314 · read these to a driver who does not know Loresho Ridge, or paste them into Waze.

09 WHERE TO STAY

All but one of these sits in Westlands, within a short ride of the Westgate shuttle pickup. Rates are indicative for November and worth confirming direct.

UPSCALE

Villa Rosa Kempinski · Chiromo Road · 10 min · ~USD 250

Sankara Nairobi, Autograph Collection · Woodvale Grove · walk · ~USD 180

Its coffee studio is worth an hour of anyone's time.

MID-RANGE

Kingfisher Nest Hotel Suites · 6 Mwanzi Road · walk · ~USD 100
Apartment-style suites, good if you are staying on.

Golden Tulip Westlands · 65 Muthithi Road · walk · ~USD 90

Best Western Plus Westlands · Karuna Road, behind Sarit Centre · 5 min · ~USD 90

Park Inn by Radisson Westlands · Waiyaki Way · 10 min · ~USD 95
On Waiyaki Way, the road the shuttle takes toward Loresho.

Ibis Styles Nairobi Westlands · Rhapta Road · 10 min · ~USD 75

Pridelnn Azure · General Mathenge Drive · 10 min · ~USD 80

VALUE

Raha Suites · Westlands · 5 min · ~USD 50
Small boutique property, the best value close in.

Adventist LMS Guest House · Jakaya Kikwete Road, Kilimani · 25–35 min · ~USD 45
The only one outside Westlands; morning traffic to Westgate is heavy. Alcohol-free, vegetarian kitchen.

One for the UN delegations. If your trip also takes in the UN complex at Gigiri, the **Trademark Hotel** at Village Market (~USD 200) is minutes from the compound and 15–20 minutes from Westgate. Tell us and we will sort out your transfer.

Beyond hotels. Westlands has plenty of Airbnb listings and serviced furnished apartments, often better value than a hotel for longer stays. Write to info@coffeeflavormap.com and we will point you to the good ones.

Book early. November is high season in Nairobi and the better rooms in Westlands go first.

10 MOVING AROUND TOWN

Uber and Bolt cover the city and cost a fraction of a hotel car; most cross-town trips land between KES 400 and KES 1,200. Use the apps rather than street taxis, especially after dark, and take a car rather than walking unfamiliar streets at night.

11 IF YOU ARE STAYING ON

November is the heart of Kenya's main crop harvest, which makes it an unusually good week to be here.

- **Farms.** Kiambu, Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Murang'a are one to three hours away and in full cherry. Tell us and we will help you arrange a visit.
- **Safari.** Nairobi National Park is twenty minutes from town; the Maasai Mara is a short flight from Wilson Airport.
- **The coast.** Lamu is an hour's flight away, and Bahari Coffee in Shela Village has its door open. Diani is the easier beach option.

12 BEFORE YOU FLY

- ☐ Travel health insurance bought on eCitizen, reference number and "Valid" screenshot saved
- ☐ eTA applied for and approval PDF saved to your phone
- ☐ Passport valid six months past arrival, blank page available
- ☐ Return ticket and hotel confirmation to hand for immigration
- ☐ Yellow fever card packed if your routing requires it
- ☐ Type G adapter and a light rain shell
- ☐ Clean post-2006 USD notes if you carry cash
- ☐ Your bank has been notified of your travel dates

Questions: info@coffeeflavormap.com. A day-of contact number will circulate closer to the event. Current at 16 October 2026; the insurance rules are new, so confirm at insurance.ecitizen.go.ke and etakenya.go.ke before you apply.