

## The bustling city of Nairobi

In Nairobi hustle is found in a number of facets. Spatially it is a saturated city. Nairobi's version of minibus - Matatu - serves to initially exemplify it. People carrying animals, vegetables, bags with grains, sticks (essential for tribes such as the Maasai), get on these tight wagons while a loudly stereo playing mostly Kenyan music rumbles the small buses. This multiplied



by hundreds of matatus dodging more matatus and vehicles make the streets a chaotic public space. In Nairobi there are more rush hours than non-rush hours. Traffic jams occur in an hourly-basis generating kilometeric rows due to the low area allocated to streets.



I always wanted to make a photo-album of Matatus. They are partakers of the city's character. It is a quite particular transport as well given the range of paintings that cover them up. Whenever you get on them you better keep an alert-ear. As soon as the guy who shouts out the route notices you are not local, they charge you more. However, getting familiar with the city enables to navigating with certain ease.

Not compared at all with Paris or London, the city is diplomatically quite international and vibrancy is what characterizes it. It is home to innovative start-ups and well-renowned enterprises such as Safaricom that continue to have a tremendous impact on the daily life of both poor and wealthy. There are also youth discovering the social and economic benefits the city brings as main host in East Africa of multilateral organizations and therefore to the multicultural environment that comes with it. A large community of both expats and displaced people live and work in Nairobi. It is precisely that cosmopolitan face of Nairobi which makes it exciting.

With an average temperature of 18-20 °C, it enjoys a perfect climate. Situated on the equatorial line, wherever you go a subtropical green and ample vegetation is witnessed.

The so-called “Nairobbery” did not show its dark face to me in the nearly 6 months I lived there (Nairobi Half Life Movie is recommended, Link: <http://123movies.to/film/nairobi-half-life-4570/watching.html> ). Was it a matter of luck? It is probably. Was it a matter of self-confidence when strolling that I learnt in the first days to survive? It is also likely. Do not think there is no crime though. A world of unjust spaces exists. The truth is that I found quite diverse people as it is normal in a capital city. Street-men selling food, clothes, devices, art (See soon an entry on: how I got unique African souvenirs), business men, people who absolutely ignore me as if I were one of them, a Nairobiian.



At restaurants 2 phenomena take place to keep on exemplifying. On the one hand, there are several food options. All the Kenyan, Ethiopian, Indian, Chinese, Middle-east, Greek, American cuisines have a spot. Food business is vast. For instance, Ocean Basket at The Oval offers prime quality sea-food while quiet music makes the moment more pleasant. As it is expected, “Mexican” cuisine is also present. Java House offer Tex-Mex specialities. Literally from the menu: *Mexican roast pork “carnitas”, fajitas, quesadillas, Mexican beans and rice served with guacamole and salsa*. I did not know this last mixed dish but anyway. Caramel at ABC is a classier restaurant with a bohemian environment. The city centre also remains active at night unlike others I have been in.

On the other hand, it is possible to glimpse diversity of cultures and costumes. The same happens in shopping centres such as Westgate. Bars-karaoke in Westlands and Parklands and spaces as Pawa 254 with cultural exchange are a good place for internationally mingle. Nightlife is heterogeneous. Yet, all this diversity has not brought tolerance at large, particularly when it comes to sexual diversity and equal marriage rights.

Sadly, there are other not so good features in Nairobi. Probably the most seen face is poverty. Life in slums is rooted in a big part of society. In spite of governmental efforts to take slum dwellers out from miserable living conditions not all accept moving out. Why? Some may ask. For some slum dwellers because the rent is cheap. Others affirm they are happy and like living there. They prefer to stay in the environment they know and feel comfortable with in part due to the fact that they do not know another one. Still, buoyancy is present in slums. Gathering to drink heavy home-made beer is usual and a festivity sensation is notorious. They somehow find a satisfactory life.

Inequalities are clear as well. While some own American-style houses, others see their lives passing with no clear delimitations. In Eastleigh for instance, commerce mainly sells clothes beneath buildings overrunning sidewalks and streets leaving tiny room for cars and trucks to pass by. The amount of people crossing where there is no space to cross by make of this noisy neighbourhood a city miracle.



To conclude, Nairobi offers a good range of alternatives to discover and learn from, not to mention the natural attractions. It is easy getting along with Nairobians, although experiencing the city's essence walking by your own is something I would recommend with some exemptions in not-so-safe areas. Personally, it was an open book of African culture. Things like a future husband giving livestock to the bride's family as sign of thankfulness still surprise me.

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