

MID-CONGRESS EXCURSIONS

1. BRACKENHURST

Located on one hundred acres of indigenous forest, Brackenhurst is an international conference centre and eco-destination approximately 20 kilometers northwest of Nairobi, Kenya.

In 1914, a farm began in the green hills of Tigoni. A place infamously known as “nothing but mist,” Tigoni was overlooked as a sanctuary for vibrant wildlife and dazzling forests. Progressing from a farm, wartime getaway, golf-course, and hotel into an environmentally-aware conference centre, Brackenhurst has spent over a hundred years reconnecting with the tremendous beauty of its natural surroundings.

Known as “Three Trees Farm” due to the three large muna trees left standing on the property, Brackenhurst began with the intention of creating a coffee farm. However, with the start of World War One, the owners of the farm soon found themselves providing holidays for battle-weary British soldiers. This marked the beginning of Brackenhurst’s heritage as a centre for hospitality.

Surviving several decades, an earthquake, and a well-concealed leopard, Brackenhurst Hotel was bought by the Baptist Mission of Kenya in 1964. It began to use its beautiful grounds for team-building, conferencing, and adventuring. In 2001, Brackenhurst developed a strong relationship with Plants For Life, an NGO focusing on environmental conservation. As a result, a vast indigenous forest grew on Brackenhurst soil for the first time since 1914. The forest provides a habitat for the restoration of some of the natural wildlife that once abounded in Tigoni.

Activities include:

Mountain Biking

Feel the crisp, fresh air of Tigonu rush against your face as you pedal your way through pristine tea fields and deep green forests. Overhead, birds sing, and, in the distance, you're lucky enough to hear the whooping of a Colobus monkey. Bike through early morning mists still lingering over seas of dewy chlorophyll, or through rays of sun evoking an equinox of red earth, blue skies, and emerald leaves. Find yourself pedaling to the crest of a hill to watch the glimmers of sunset, an incredible reward for any bike ride, be it a leisurely coast down dirt roads or an intense challenge through a labyrinth of forest trails. Mountain biking at Brackenhurst and in our surrounding area is an unmissable experience.

Bird Watching

After Plants for Life, our partner NGO, reforested Brackenhurst with indigenous trees, the biodiversity on our grounds has greatly increased. In the span of around fifteen years, the number of recorded bird species at Brackenhurst has risen from 35 to 187. Cinnamon-chested bee-eaters swoop overhead, iridescent sunbirds flirt with jewel-toned flowers, and augur buzzards make their nest in a giant muna tree. If you are attentive enough, you may have the rare pleasure of seeing an owl standing sentinel on one of Brackenhurst's oldest buildings, or an angelic heron ascend from outlying wetlands.

Nature Trails

Brackenhurst offers over 15 kilometers of mapped trails within the Brackenhurst property, as well as limitless options just outside our gates. Run, bike, or walk on rolling, twisting trails through dense forests and over hilltops overlooking rippling valleys of tea fields.

What to take with you

- Drinking water, binoculars, camera, hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, walking boots and guidebooks

Due to the cold climate, visitors are advised to dress in warm clothing

NB: It is the rainy season, appropriate clothing and footwear is advised

<https://brackenhurst.com/>

2. HELL'S GATE NATIONAL PARK

Hell's Gate National Park lies to the South of Lake Naivasha, some 90km north-west of Nairobi and is one of the few national parks where visitors are allowed to walk. The park is mainly a savanna ecosystem and harbors' a wide variety of wildlife. The vegetation is characterized by a continuous cover of perennial grasses, often 3 to 6 feet tall at maturity, such as *penisetum* spp. & *Themeda triadra*. There is also an open canopy of drought-resistant, fire-resistant, or browse-resistant trees i.e. the *acacias*. Sometimes the park may be termed as an acacia savanna – as it is dominant species. Other species include *sehima nervosa* and *chloris roxburghiana*.

Named for the intense geothermal activity within its boundaries, the Hell's Gate National Park is a remarkable quarter of the Great Rift Valley. Spectacular scenery including the towering cliffs, water-gouged gorges, stark rock towers, scrub clad volcanoes and belching plumes of geothermal steam make it one of the most atmospheric Parks in Africa. Hell's Gate is an ideal venue for a day trip from Nairobi where, in addition to the bio-diversity that includes raptors, visitors can enjoy mountain biking, rock climbing and a natural spa.

Key features

Wildlife

- African buffalo, zebra, eland, hartebeest, Thomson's gazelle and baboons are common. The park is also home to klipspringer antelope and Chandler's mountain reedbuck
- Prolific birdlife – there are over 100 species of birds in the park, including vultures, Verreaux's Eagles, augur buzzard and swifts.

What to take with you

- Drinking water, binoculars, camera, hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, walking boots and guidebooks

How to get there

- **By Road:** This park is accessible via tarmac road from Nairobi (90kms) via Naivasha town on the Lake Road South at a junction 5km south of Naivasha

Attractions

- Spectacular scenery including the towering cliffs, water-gouged gorges, stark rock towers, scrub clad volcanoes and belching plumes of geothermal steam make it one of the most atmospheric Parks in Africa
- Wildlife viewing
- Raptor nesting in cliffs
- Hot springs
- The Olkaria Geothermal Station
- The MervynCarnelley Raptor Hide
- Tourist circuits, nature trails
- Health spa

3. OLOGESAILIE ECOSYSTEM

Located along Magadi road, an hour's drive and 70kms away from Nairobi, Ologesailie pre-historic site is world renown as the "factory of stone tools" and the only place in the world with the largest number. On arrival, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of both the Ngong Hills and the Great Rift Valley. The vegetation is open *acacia* wooded grassland to dense thicket on the lower slopes and contains a great diversity of succulent species and other xerophytic flora.

Visitors to Ologesailie will encounter a large diversity of birds with over 400 species recorded; including a high number of both Palaeartic and afrotropical migratory bird species especially those using the Great Rift Valley flyway.

Peter Ballay, one of the most famous Botanists had established a succulent breeding/experimental garden here and its remnants are still found here.

The prominence and accumulation of human tools represents actual camping places of early men and evidence that human species had a tropical origin. The site is in a lake basin that existed about 100,000 to 200'000 years ago.

Researchers, Dr. and Mrs. Leakey, started investigations on the site in 1942 where they found important evidence that concerns the habits and activities of early prehistoric peoples of the Acheuleus or "Hand axe" culture.

Ologesailie has excellently preserved biological and cultural evidence about the evolution of man.

This was made possible by heavy falls of alkaline volcanic ash from the nearby Mt. Suswa and Mt. Longonot, which might have contributed much to the accumulated ash in the lake basin. There is evidence of humid climate during part of the middle Pleistocene that is given by temporary lakes and swamps that exist in the area today. The sediments left by the lake cover an area of 80 km².

Attractions

- Museum and site- the museum interprets the pre-historic site. One can then take a walk to see the actual site and the discoveries made here
- Bird watching- the site is a bird watcher's paradise citing the highest number of migratory bird species in Kenya.
- Mountain climbing- Mt. Olorgesailie was named after a renowned Maasai elder who used to meditate and hold meetings with village elders up the mountain. On average it takes 3 hours to ascend and the same to descend best climbed from 5:00 am.
- Camp site- affordable camping facilities available.
Picnic site
- Baboon camp- congregation of baboons in the evening 1 km from the campsite.

What to take with you

- Drinking water, binoculars, camera, hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, walking boots and guidebooks

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