

Ask Joan



Joan Scales

Last Updated: Wednesday, June 12, 2013, 13:11

I sponsor a child in Kenya and would like to visit him in September. He lives in Homa Bay, about 200km from [Kisumu](#) in the south west. I can only spend a day in my sponsored child's village. I hope to spend another two to four weeks or so in [Kenya](#) – times are flexible and my maximum budget is €3,000, including flights. I will be travelling alone. I love trekking, train journeys, eating well and dancing and I would love to go on safari. MH, Dublin

Kenya is a country of contrasts, and I have three varying ideas for you to explore around your budget. At one end of the scale it can be very expensive, especially safari, at the other end, very cheap but may not be what you are used to. There's the added cost of travelling alone and September is high season, with prices dropping in October. Your budget may not stretch to an extended stay.

Starting with a tailor-made itinerary from Adams & Butler Africa, an Irish Kenya specialist, a 10-day itinerary would take you from Nairobi on a tour of the country, seeing Mount Kenya, Samburu National Reserve, Lake Naivasha, Masai Mara National Reserve and a safari, staying in small owner-managed properties and finally dropping you at Homa Bay. The price is around €2,900, not including flights, and would provide all transport, safari with game drives, accommodation and full board on safari, treks, boat ride and fishing, adamsandbutler.com, tel: 01-288 9355.

The next option is a 10-night trip with Africasky, with four nights on safari and six nights staying in all-inclusive Papillon Lagoon Reef at Diani Bay, Mombasa.

Papillon Lagoon is not specifically aimed at couples and there are water sports and activities available. See africasky.ie, tel: 01-664 9940. The cost is around €2,720 including flights, and would give you the option to stay on to visit Homa Bay by public transport. [Kenya Airways](#) operate flights to Kisumu, kenya-airways.com. The train service from Nairobi to Kisumu is not in operation due to repair work; look at riftvalleyrail.com for updates, under Intercity trains. Coaches take about seven hours, easyccoach.co.ke. You will have to take a local bus/Matutu or taxi from Kisumu to Homa Bay.

The final option is to plan the trip yourself, taking a flight to Nairobi – it will cost in the region of €650-€900 from Ireland – and join up with tour groups there. Intrepidtravel.com has a number of tours at varying prices. An eight-day basic safari will cost around €700 and a Kenya Adventure tour exploring a lot of the country will cost from €1,500. You would have to make your own transport arrangements to Homa Bay.

There are five of us (mid-20s) looking for accommodation in Istanbul for four nights in mid- to late-August. We would like to be in the Sultanahmet area of the city in a hotel or apartment. As it is August, we'd like to chill by a pool between sightseeing. We don't have a massive budget either . . . is this too much to ask? AMD, Dublin

August is hot in Istanbul and the idea of having a pool to dip into is great, but not so easy to find. Quite a few hotels do have pools, but they tend to be indoors as part of a spa area. I have a few suggestions in and around Sultanahmet area, with the best value at the HHK Hotel, which is a restored Ottoman mansion. It has a rooftop terrace with small outdoor pool and rates in August are from €119 per night. See hhkhotel.com.

The President Hotel is a Best Western hotel and has a lovely circular pool that is indoors, but with an outdoor sundeck and bar area. Prices are from €159 per night. See thepresidenthotel.com.

The Pierre Loti Hotel in the Old Town has a great rooftop terrace and bar, with rates from €112 per night. They also offer a one-way airport transfer for bookings of four nights or more. See pierrelotihotel.com. There are plenty of apartments to rent in Istanbul, but not with pools. Prices vary from €100 – €500 per night, see a selection at holidaylettings.co.uk.

Flights in and out of Turkey have not been affected by the events at Taksim's Gezi Park, and are running as scheduled, according to the Turkish Culture and Tourism Office.

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