

EL KARAMA LODGE

2017

IMPACT

The lodge operates a sustainable and holistic approach to fostering positive and mutually beneficial relationships in our region. We consider small businesses with long-term strategies to have the power to act as economic drivers in our communities, by creating opportunities through employment, development, local procurement strategies and educational initiatives. We do not currently receive donations or outside investment of any kind.

This business is just one of many tourism businesses generating over 4 billion Kenya Shillings into the Laikipia eco system (LFA report April 2017).

All tourism products in Kenya including conservation fees, accommodation bed nights, transfers and transport, food and drink are all taxable in this country. This business pays 16% VAT and 2 % Catering Levy on our gross monthly turnover to the Government of Kenya. National Health, National Insurance and income tax contributions are made for each member of staff and we purchase a minimum of 6 licences per year from the local government in order to operate.

In 2016 this business spent 64% of its entire turnover in the Laikipia region on people, products and a local supply chain.

HOW DOES THIS LODGE BUSINESS POSITIVELY BENEFIT THE REGION?

Conservation:

The overall aim of this business is to generate an additional income for the El Karama habitat in order to successfully steward and manage this eco system for future generations. The lodge is involved in wildlife monitoring and research as part of the wider property protocol.

Tourism is a fantastic way to monitor and protect animals. Every vehicle or group going on whether on foot or in a vehicle, plays a crucial role in monitoring activity on this property. Every guide submits reports on wildlife counts done, incidents and sightings and other notes of interest after every outing. This feeds into the wider ranch and regional system to give us a holistic picture of wildlife numbers, trends and points of interest.

The lodge collects a conservation fee on behalf of the property, which is a ring fenced fund, taxable to the government of Kenya (16% VAT) and covers all wildlife protection costs including an anti poaching team of 16 people, restoration of dams for wildlife, road building, fencing when relevant (as on the south) and all other associated wildlife costs.

The overall impact to the environment here is that a piece of crucial habitat and a storehouse of biodiversity is being preserved and stewarded responsibly for future generations.

Employment

This company employs to date 16 Kenyan men and women, full time on annual contracts. We ensure we offer opportunities, are compliant and create a positive working environment for the whole team. This employment allows our team to plan for their futures, apply for business loans from the local banking system to grow their home projects (using their contracts as collateral) and to provide for their families.

We also employ consultants for graphic design, for internet service provision, electricians and solar, transport, accountancy and human resources. All our consultants are Kenyans and all are from the local region.

During building and infrastructure projects we can hire up to 50 people locally at the lodge to assist as masons, builders and labourers when required. So far since 2009, we have done a minimum of one large project a year. Most of these workers come from the local region and have worked with us for over 12 years. The latest large ranch project was a solar powered, bio gas milking dairy, to produce milk for sale into the local community. This dairy is named 'The Stephen Karanja' Dairy after the Head Mason who built it. Stephen trained with Murray on lodge building projects as far back as 2006 and comes from Endana on El Karama's boundary.

Local Procurement Strategy:

We ensure a strict local buying policy to ensure that our business buys and sources locally at all times. Whatever food we cannot produce ourselves we buy from the local market, the same goes for wholesale goods, clothing and soft furnishing.

Development and Training:

We take personal development seriously and acknowledge that our greatest asset to date are the people who work here. All our team receive training throughout the year whenever possible in every relevant area to ensure the highest working standards and to assist them where we can in their personal development.

Recent training programmes in 2017 include:

Red Cross First Aid and emergency Response – 3 days

Pediatric First Aid training – 1 day

Botany and Entomology, Suyian– 1 week

Tracking, Walking and Animal Behaviour, Eco Training– 1 week

The Fundamentals of Ornithology, Elementaita – 1 week

Antonia's Kitchen, El Karama – 1 week

Camera trap and photography training, El Karama – 2 days

Educational Visits:

We bring our team to visit other entities including lodges, conservancies and wildlife operations so as to understand the 'bigger picture' of what we are all part of in wildlife conservation here in Kenya. We also welcome school groups from the local region to visit free of charge throughout the year. The aim of these visits is to show them the working operations of an eco tourism lodge and to share ideas on innovative, green technologies and wildlife conservation and tourism best practice.

The lodge has a link with Daraja Academy, a school located 30 minutes away from the lodge. With the assistance of the Director there, we have created a reward system of visits to show the students a little more about eco tourism and to offer career ideas for those interested in Eco tourism and conservation. We believe if young people at grassroots level see what goes into these working environments and have an opportunity to talk to the team, they will understand the many and varied challenges of protecting habitat and wildlife in this country. These visits are great opportunities both for the students and for our team, who can share the knowledge they have acquired over the years here.

Artisanal Products/Lodge shop:

This country is a fantastic breeding ground for entrepreneurial activities and we have discovered many hugely creative collectives in our region that produce items of artistic value both for us as a client and for our guests.

Our décor is cosy and inviting, we have tried to create a homely feel for you using soft furnishings, art, and even plates and glasses made in the local region. Through this we have managed to support the following social enterprises:

Mitumba Art: This collective of Kenya artisans, uses recycled materials from the local street market to create beautiful soft furnishings. We can be involved in the design of each item from start to finish, safe in the knowledge that we are recycling good material, employing skilled artisans and contributing to a local business.

Cinnabar Green: In each bathroom you will find deliciously scented, paraben free natural bath products and soap made by this small business based in Nanyuki. CG employs a large group of men and women from the region, they grow all most of the herbs here and package everything on site ensuring maximum contribution into the local economy.

NRT Beadwork: This bead-working enterprise grew out of Lewa Conservancy and now employs well over 200 women from the North of Kenya in a livelihood enterprise. The items are high quality, innovative and practical.

Antassia: These stunning beaded clutch bags are some of Kenya's best fashion items, designed by Kenya's own Antonia Stogdale and made by the women of the Tassia community, an environment Antonia has lived and worked in for over 10 years as a lodge owner/manager and now as one of Kenya's best cooks and designers. Antassia bags are being sold in New York and London and are firmly established as responsible purchase with all proceeds feeding back to each beadworker.

Have a look at our shop to see more about local artisanal from the region. Everything you buy is feeding directly back into the local economy, so shopping here is guilt free! (please note all shop prices include 16% VAT!)

For more information on the lodge CSR/Environmental Practices or the wider property El Karama Ranch, please contact us on sophie@elkaramalodge.com.