

Marketing Kogelo – Visit to Grandmother Sarah Obama 3rd March 2009

Mr Ken Mahar of San Mateo, California, visited the Kenya home of President Barack Obama and the roots of his father, personally meeting Grandmother Sarah Obama.

Mahar was visiting Kenya for a photographic wildlife safari organized by As You Like It (Safaris) Ltd., and was given the option to travel to Kogelo.

Vivien Prince (As You Like It Safaris), is the first Kenya Tour Operator to test the route, by road and by air. Mahar was the first American tourist to do this particular itinerary, retracing Barack Obama's footsteps.

Arriving to pay their respects to Grandmother Sarah Obama, Mahar stated; "I have been on the trip of a lifetime, a 12-day photographic safari, arranged by Vivien Prince, which covered many miles of vast plains and dense jungle settings. The wildlife photographic opportunities exceeded my wildest dreams. I found the Kenyan people friendly and welcoming, and was greeted with respect and a great sense of security throughout my Safari. I highly recommend Kenya travel with As You Like it (Safaris) Ltd to anyone. I plan on returning to Kenya in the future with friends and family. I feel humbled to have seen and realized how much I have, in comparison to the majority of the African population."

The safari from Transmara to Kilgoris can be described as "adventure motoring," through a lush and clean environment. Green grass, looking like a natural Golfing green, interspersed with darker green bushes. Goats and cattle enjoying the sun on their backs as they grazed. Children walking to and from school, were neatly dressed in uniforms, from blue and white to purple or red. Big smiles, gleaming white teeth, and friendly waves were present all along the way. At Magena there is a good tarmac road, with a short detour on dirt. About ten minutes drive past Gucha a dirt road once more, but within ten minutes you hit the old tarmac road at Gekomu. Plain sailing then through Kisii, Oyugis, Sondu, Kadongo/Katito junction, Ahero, and at last Kisumu. Along the fertile route, farming was evident, and crops such as Tea, Coffee, Pineapple, Maize, Bananas, Pawpaws, Sugar Cane, Mangos, and Napier grass could be seen growing.

At Kisumu, the local contact comes in to play by meeting up with Mr Benjamin Magawi, who had performed the recce and booked our visit to Kogelo.

After a rest, and night in Kisumu, we headed out next morning for the now famous village. A must-see en route is Kit-Mikayi Rock .

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Kit Mikayi, a large rock with three rocks on top, is located off Kisumu Bondo Road towards Bondo. It is a weeping rock; it is believed that Mikayi (which means, literally, "the first wife") went up the hill to the stones when her husband took a second wife, and has been weeping ever since.

Being that men are polygamous, the cultural belief is that the first wife is the most respected "rock" of the family. More than that, it is believed if anyone wants anything, they go to the rock for blessings; for example, if they need rain, they might go to the rock to pray for rain.

After approximately 65 Kilometres we reach the humble home of Mama Sarah. Evident are new security measures, uniformed police, a nice new water tank, and a friendly welcome from a cousin of the President, Masat Obama.

A seemingly healthy and jubilant lady, immensely enjoying her position with pride, reveled in telling stories of Barack Obama senior and even his father. She said they knew Barack Jr would be someone famous in the world one day as he showed high intelligence at a young age. Cousin, Masat Obama, brought out a picture showing America's President as a young man, carrying vegetables from the market, where he had been with his grandmother. A walk to the graves of both Obama's father and grandfather, was deeply moving, but this is a very proud family. And so they should be.

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