

# TOURIST INFORMATION

Kisumu, Kenya's third-largest city, is the bustling heart of the Lake Victoria region. It is known for its stunning sunsets, friendly atmosphere, and rich Luo culture.

## Accommodation

Kisumu offers a wide range of accommodation to suit different tastes and budgets.

### Luxury Hotels:

- ✓ The Vic Hotel Kisumu:
- ✓ Acacia Premier Hotel:
- ✓ Imperial Express
- ✓ Sovereign Hotel:
- ✓ Pinecone
- ✓ Victoria suites

### Mid-Range Hotels

- ✓ Kisumu Hotel
- ✓ The Clarice house
- ✓ Jumuia hotel
- ✓ Le savanna country **lodge**
- ✓ Hotel Palmers
- ✓ Whirlspring hotel

### Budget & Backpacker-Friendly

- ✓ Tom Mboya:
- ✓ Kisumu Backpackers:
- ✓ Many guesthouses and Airbnb options are available in residential areas like Milimani.

The conference organizing committee would prefer that participants in the conference be accommodated within [Kisumu Hotel Maseno University](#).

## Transport

### *Getting Into Kisumu*

**By Air:** Kisumu International Airport (KIS) has frequent daily flights from Nairobi (Approximately 1 hr) and other cities. It's a 15-minute drive to the city center.

**By Road:** A modern highway connects Nairobi to Kisumu (approx. 4-6 hours by bus/shuttle). Transport companies like **Easy Coach**, **Modern Coast**, and **Mash** offer comfortable rides.

#### ***Getting Around Kisumu:***

**Boda Bodas (Motorbike Taxis):** These are considered the fastest and most common way to navigate traffic. **Always negotiate the price before riding and insist on a helmet.**

**Tuk-tuks (Auto-rickshaws):** Good for short trips within the city center. Safer than boda bodas and also require fare negotiation.

**Matatus (Minibuses):** These are the local public transport, following set routes. Very cheap but can be crowded. Best for the adventurous traveler.

**Taxis:** **Uber** and **Bolt** operate efficiently in Kisumu. Recommended for airport transfers and evening travel.

**Car Hire:** Available at the airport and in town for self-drive or with a driver for day trips

## **The People of Kisumu**

### **(Jo-Luo)**

Kisumu is the epicenter of **Luo culture**. The people are famously friendly, hospitable, and known for their vibrant social energy. You'll hear **Dholuo** widely spoken, alongside Swahili and English.

The Luo are known for their musical heritage (**Ohangla** and **Benga** music). Cultural performances are often held at some hotels during the weekends.

### **The Cosmopolitan Blend**

Kisumu has longstanding communities of **Kenyans of Indian descent** running successful businesses from shops to industries. There's also a visible **European & Asian expatriate** presence linked to NGOs, research institutes (like ICIPE), and the UN.

**Kisumu is also home to** other Kenyan professionals, traders, and students. The city is also a gateway to East Africa, with a notable influx of **Ugandans, Tanzanians, Rwandese, and Congolese** (from DRC) for trade, education, and transit. This makes the **Kibuye Market** one of East Africa's largest and most fascinating markets.

The people are **hospitality personified** but also fiercely proud and direct. The city has a relaxed, lakeside pace but with a strong entrepreneurial and social drive. It's common to see impeccably dressed professionals, vibrant market mammas, and students all sharing a *matatu* or a meal of fish.

## Security

Kisumu is generally safe for tourists, especially in the main tourist hotel and residential areas. However, as with any city it's always advisable to be vigilant.

- ✓ Use registered taxis (Uber/Bolt) or hotel transport at night. Avoid walking alone in poorly lit, deserted areas.
- ✓ Be wary of overly friendly strangers offering unsolicited guides or deals.

## The Cuisine

Kisumu's cuisine is dominated by the fresh bounty of Lake Victoria.

### **Local Dishes:**

- ✓ **Fried Tilapia** or **Nile Perch** (whole or filleted), served with **ugali** (maize meal) and **kachumbari** (tomato & onion salad).
- ✓ **Omena**: Small, sun-dried sardines from the lake, often fried or stewed. A local delicacy.
- ✓ **Aliya** (smoked beef),
- ✓ **Kienyeji** (vegetables like jute mallow)
- ✓ **Chapati** served with beans or green grams
- ✓ **Nyama Choma** (Roasted meat)

**Indian Dishes:** This is a major part of Kisumu's culinary identity. You'll find exceptional "**Kisumu-style**" **Indian food** such as **biryani**, **bhajias** (potato fritters) and **samosas** at longstanding cafes and restaurants.

**Ethiopian/Eritrean:** There are restaurants that cater to the community and lovers of *injera* and stews.

**Chinese:** Found in upmarket hotels and a few dedicated restaurants.

**Urban Cafés:** There are modern cafés serving artisan coffee, sandwiches, and pastries. (e.g., **JAVA**, **Art Cafe**).

## The Local "Fast Food"

- ✓ **Kachumbari & Chips:** A box of crispy fries topped with the fresh *kachumbari* salsa is a beloved quick meal.
- ✓ **Smokies & Sausages:** Boiled or grilled sausages, often sold by street vendors
- ✓ **Fresh Juices & Fruits:** The climate yields fantastic mangoes, pineapples, watermelons, and passion fruit. Fresh-squeezed juice is a must.

## Tourist Sites & Attractions in Kisumu

Kisumu and its surrounding region offer a diverse mix of natural wonders, cultural experiences, and historical sites centered around Lake Victoria.

### *Lake Victoria & Waterfront Attractions*

- ✓ **Dunga Beach:** Watch fishermen bring in their daily catch, see traditional boats (dhows), and buy fresh fish to be grilled on the spot at local restaurants.
- ✓ **Dunga Hill Camp:** An eco-friendly campsite with walking trails through papyrus wetlands, excellent bird watching, and stunning sunset views.
- ✓ **Kisumu Impala Sanctuary:** Home to a herd of impalas, hippos, olive baboons, and over 100 bird species. Activities include guided nature walks, boat rides along the lake shore, picnic sites, and a "Animal Orphanage".
- ✓ **Hippo Point** A popular public viewing area (not a formal park) where hippos often come ashore in the evenings. Famous for spectacular sunsets over the lake.

### *Natural Wonders & Islands*

- ✓ **Ndere Island National Park** A small island park about 30 minutes by boat from Kisumu. The island is a sanctuary for hippos, monitor lizards, fish eagles, and impalas. Activities include guided walking safaris, bird watching (over 100 species), picnicking, and cultural performances.
- ✓ **Kit Mikayi** ("Stone of the First Wife") A stunning rock formation about 30km from Kisumu, sacred to the Luo people. It is a pilgrimage site for followers of the Legio Maria church and those seeking spiritual solace. Local guides explain the folklore of the rock and its importance.

### ***Cultural & Historical Sites***

- ✓ Kisumu Museum Excellent introduction to Luo culture and the Lake Victoria basin.

Exhibits: Traditional homesteads (siwindhe), fishing techniques, pottery, and witchcraft displays.

- ✓ Kibuye Market One of East Africa's largest open-air markets - an experience in itself!

### ***Architectural & Religious Sites***

St. Theresa's Cathedral The oldest Catholic church in Western Kenya (built 1920s).

### ***Activities & Experiences***

- ✓ Lake Victoria Boat Rides Options range from short trips to see hippos and birds, to sunset cruises, to full-day fishing expeditions.

Boat types: Traditional wooden dhows with sails, or modern motorboats.

- ✓ Bird Watching Hotspots: Dunga Wetlands, Impala Sanctuary, Ndere Island, and along any shoreline.

Key species: Fish eagle, kingfishers, marabou stork, hammerkop, pied kingfisher, and many migratory waterbirds. Local bird guides are available for hire.

**Entry Fees:** Most formal sites (museums, parks) have modest entry fees

## **Nightlife**

Kisumu has a vibrant and social nightlife often fueled by live music.

- ✓ **Live Music & Clubs:** The city is the home of Benga music. Venues like **Dunga Hill Camp** and Clubs like **Mamba** are popular for dancing.
- ✓ **Waterfront Bars:** An evening at a lakeside bar is a perfect way to relax.
- ✓ **Hotels & Lounges:** Most upmarket hotels have lively bars on weekend nights. **Acacia's rooftop** is a fantastic spot for city views and cocktails.
- ✓ **Local Pubs ("Pubs"):** There are countless local pubs where you can enjoy a **Tusker** beer and mingle with residents in a casual setting

