

Report on Dee and Peter's recent trip to Lewa Downs, Laikipia, Kenya

Recently Peter and I visited Lewa Downs in Kenya, home to the famous Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, one of the most successful examples of wildlife conservation in Africa.

Lewa was originally a cattle ranch owned by the Craig family, but in 1995 Ian Craig turned it into a conservancy. Now, a fence to protect the wild animals runs around the entire perimeter except for a small monitored entrance allowing for seasonal movement of wildlife.

I immediately fell in love with the place the moment we landed. Whilst we waited around the airstrip for other guests we were treated to sightings of 4 of the Big Five. The park is 55,000 acres of open grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and the rolling hills of the Rift Valley.

Our stay Lewa Safari Lodge was superb. The accommodation, meals and staff were wonderful, the wildlife prolific, and the many rhino sightings were a delight. We also saw the highly endangered Grevy's Zebras for the first time. Lewa is home to more than 20% of world's population of these exquisitely beautiful ungulates.

During our stay our extremely knowledgeable and helpful Masai game ranger facilitated a meeting for us with the Chief Conservation Officer, Richard Moller, and his assistant, Michael Ntosho. They went to great lengths to explain the work being done at Lewa, the problems they faced and the direction they were heading in the future.

Rhinos are very well looked after at Lewa, there are more rangers than rhinos and we constantly came across them dutifully patrolling on foot in the park.

Lewa has reached maximum carrying capacity for its Black and White rhinos; whilst a credit to its success it also means it's time to expand. Funding will be needed for more staffing, increased fencing, and new ranger outposts.

We came back knowing we had a mission ahead – to help raise funds for this wonderful haven for wildlife.

Dee Williamson

Sydney

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