

CheckIn

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40+

Species still rated as Critically Endangered on the Galápagos Islands, despite their recent removal from Unesco's World Heritage Sites In Danger list

\$3.6 billion

Sum the Ecuadorian government will receive to not drill for oil. In a unique agreement with the UN, the South American nation will be paid to leave its black gold in the ground, leaving Yasuni NP untouched for at least ten years

\$14

New cost of Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), required by UK nationals for entry to the USA. You must apply before you travel. <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>

▶ ISTANBUL 7 THINGS TO DO FOR FREE

There's not long left to make the most of the Turkish hotspot's reign as 2010 Capital of Culture. And if you do, here's how to make all that exoticism easy on the wallet...

1 Drink Turkish tea In the sprawling Grand Bazaar, the carpets aren't free but there are many sellers eager to offer you a gratis cuppa if you look at their wares.

2 Take in the old Istanbul Wander round Istanbul's Sultanahmet district, full of historic buildings and intricate architecture.

3 Winter-walk in the park Yildiz Park, once part of Yildiz Palace, is today a forest in the city, filled with flowers, lakes and pavillions. If it's chilly, warm up on the park's free exercise equipment.

4 Marvel at modern art Find sculptures, photography, film and more at Istanbul Museum of Modern Art (www.istanbulmodern.com), free to enter on Thursdays.

5 Make a mosque visit One of the most striking features on Istanbul's skyline, the Blue Mosque is open daily (admission limited at prayer times). The lesser known but equally magnificent Suleymaniye Mosque is also open daily.

6 View free films Every November the Istanbul International Short Film Festival puts on free screenings of innovative movies, with English subtitles. (8-14 Nov; www.istanbulfilmfestival.com)

7 Admire dancing dervishes Watch mesmerising sufi mystics whirl for free at the Mevlana Cultural Center every Thursday, from 7.30pm (www.emav.org).

▶ KENYA Local Maasai celebrate new conservancy

Launching in November, Naibosho is the first conservancy in Kenya to provide direct income to individual Maasai landowners – irrespective of the tourism income generated.

Covering an area almost half the size of the Masai Mara Game Reserve, the conservancy is a partnership between 500 Maasai landowners and ecotourism operator Basecamp Explorer (www.basecampexplorer.com), which runs three local eco-lodges and already finances the Koiyaki Guiding School for young Maasai.

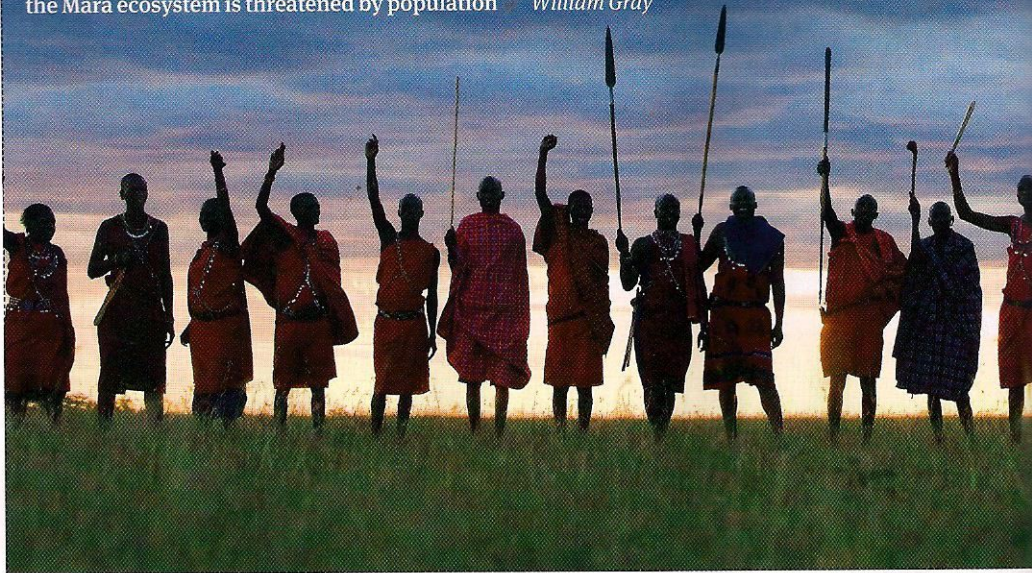
Each landowner will earn monthly rent based on the size of land they have contributed Naibosho (which means 'coming together' in the local Maa language) comes at a time when the Mara ecosystem is threatened by population

growth, commercial agriculture and privatisation of communal land. Naibosho aims to combat these factors by supporting local livelihoods and guaranteeing income to landowners while safeguarding wildlife – including the annual wildebeest migration.

The core area of the conservancy (around 20,000ha) will be dedicated to conservation, while surrounding areas will integrate grazing management, wildlife and human settlements.

The conservancy is also good news for Kenya's dwindling lions – around 100 of the big cats (5% of the country's total population) live in the area. It remains to be seen, however, whether all the good work of Naibosho will be undone by the proposed Serengeti Highway in Tanzania.

William Gray



▶ WE WANT TO TRY... Petroglyph peering, Jordan

Hike to recently revealed 2,000-year-old art. After a lengthy restoration project, a number of ancient Nabataean paintings have been cleaned up and unveiled at Little Petra. Make the four-day trek from Wadi Rum to Petra, via the site, for the most atmospheric entrance.