

VARD AFRICA | DESTINATION GUIDE

Kilifi, Kenya

Where the Creek Meets the Ocean & the World Slows to a Beautiful Standstill

"There are places that ask nothing of you except your presence. Kilifi is one of them. It does not perform. It does not announce itself. It simply is a wide, warm, luminous place at the meeting point of land and sea and creek, where the light falls differently from anywhere else in Kenya and where, within hours of arriving, you find yourself wondering why you ever lived at any other pace." — Vard Africa, Destination Curators

DESTINATION INTRODUCTION

Kilifi, Kenya

A Creek Town Like No Other

Halfway along the Kenyan coast between the bustle of Mombasa and the elegance of Malindi, a wide, extraordinary estuary pushes inland from the Indian Ocean and creates one of the most beautiful natural settings on the continent. This is **Kilifi Creek** and the small, sun-warmed town that has grown up on its northern bank, along with the collection of private villas, cliff-top estates and secluded beach retreats that have gathered around it over the decades, constitutes what Vard Africa considers one of Kenya's most perfectly balanced and deeply satisfying coastal destinations.

Kilifi is not Mombasa. It has none of the city's scale, complexity or urban energy. It is not Diani Beach, with its resort hotels and packaged beach holidays. It is not even Lamu which carries the weight of its own extraordinary history and island mystique. Kilifi is simply, and essentially, itself: a coastal market town of modest scale, extraordinary natural beauty, an emerging community of artists and entrepreneurs, and a quality of light and air and silence that makes it the finest place on the Kenyan coast to do absolutely nothing, as well as one of the finest places to do a great deal.

The town's defining geographical feature is **Kilifi Creek** itself a wide, tidal estuary carved by the Goshi River as it reaches the Indian Ocean, extending approximately three kilometres at its widest point and lined on both shores with mangrove forests, coral cliffs, and the occasional white-walled villa glimpsed through the trees. Historically, the creek served as a crucial anchorage and commercial hub for Arab traders operating between the 14th and 17th centuries Kilifi occupied the midpoint between the great coastal cities of Mombasa and Malindi, and the calm, deep waters of the estuary provided safe harbour for the dhow fleets that knitted together the Indian Ocean trade network. The ruins of that era the **Mnarani Ruins** on the southern bank still stand on their cliff above the creek, visited today by the curious and the historically minded, their carved pillar tombs and Friday mosques quietly insisting on the antiquity and the dignity of this place.

The 420-metre **Kilifi Bridge**, completed in the 1990s, finally connected the northern and southern banks of the creek before that, a ferry was the only crossing, and the pace of life on both banks was correspondingly unhurried. The bridge brought connectivity without destroying character. Kilifi remains, even today, remarkably uncommercialized: no package beach hotel strips, no beach vendors, no manufactured nightlife. The commercial life of the town is centred on its daily market and its main street a lively, genuine, African market town in which travellers feel like guests rather than tourists. The north bank holds the town's business district; the south bank **Mnarani** holds the ruins and the boatyard and the beginning of several of the cliff-top estates from which Kilifi's most magnificent private villas look out across the Indian Ocean.

North of the creek mouth, **Bofa Beach** begins. And this this is arguably Kilifi's greatest single gift to the traveller. Bofa Beach runs for mile after uninterrupted mile in both directions from the creek mouth: **powder-white sand** of extraordinary fineness, sheltered from the open ocean by the second-longest fringing coral reef in the world (the Kenyan Barrier Reef stretches more than 140 miles from Shimoni to Malindi), which creates warm, calm, bath-temperature waters of a clarity that makes snorkelling and swimming a daily pleasure rather than an occasional adventure. In high season, there are very few other people. In low season, the beach can feel entirely your own. It is one of the most beautiful and least-crowded stretches of white sand in East Africa and it is freely and directly accessible from many of the properties in this guide.

Beyond the beach and the creek, Kilifi's surrounding landscape rewards exploration. The town borders the eastern edge of the **Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Reserve** East Africa's largest remaining coastal forest, ranked by Birdlife International as the second most important forest for bird conservation in mainland Africa, home to six globally threatened bird species including the rare Clarke's Weaver (found nowhere else on earth) and the Sokoke Scops Owl. The **Kilifi Sisal Plantation** a working agricultural estate of considerable historical interest, where the fibrous sisal plant that once drove the coastal economy is still grown and processed provides a fascinating and genuinely off-the-beaten-track excursion from the beach. And along the coast to the south, the extraordinary **Vuma Cliffs** dramatic coral limestone formations where the ocean crashes against ancient rock and the **Kuruwitu Marine Conservancy** Kenya's oldest locally managed marine reserve, where community-led conservation has produced some of the most abundant and diverse marine life on the entire coast offer natural wonders of entirely different character.

Kilifi's cultural life has grown, in recent years, into something quite exceptional. The town has quietly become Kenya's "**coastal think tank**" a community of artists, writers, musicians, conservationists, architects and entrepreneurs who have chosen the quality of life here over the convenience of Nairobi or Mombasa. The annual **Beneath the Baobabs Festival** a music and cultural celebration held in the extraordinary forest settings of Kilifi Plantation each December and January draws some of East Africa's finest artists and has established Kilifi's reputation as a place where culture and creativity are taken seriously alongside the more obvious pleasures of sun and sea. The **Food Movement** collective, tucked into the plantation forest on Bofa Road, gathers boutique shops, galleries, artisans and a café in a beautiful jungle setting a microcosm of everything that makes Kilifi's emerging scene so appealing.

The climate is warm and tropical throughout the year. **January through March** brings the finest beach weather warm, sunny and calm, with the southeast trade winds still dormant and the ocean at its most inviting. **June through October** is the Kusi season: the trade winds strengthen, bringing cooler temperatures, ideal conditions for kitesurfing and sailing, and the particular quality of light that the seasonal shift produces dramatic cloud formations, intensely blue skies, the ocean a deeper, more saturated colour. The short rains of November bring Kilifi's vegetation to a lush, emerald brilliance. The long rains of April to May are the one season to avoid.

This is Kilifi. Unhurried, unspoiled, unexpectedly beautiful, and ready on its own quiet, unhurried terms to receive the world's most discerning travellers.

THE VARD AFRICA PERSPECTIVE

Why We Love Kilifi & Its Sandy Beaches

We love Kilifi the way one loves a place that has not yet been discovered by the crowd which is to say, with a combination of genuine affection and mild possessiveness. There is something almost personal about our relationship with this destination, because finding it requires the kind of intentional search that casual travel does not encourage, and arriving there delivers the reward of that search: a place that exceeds expectation precisely because expectation has not been managed by brochures and TripAdvisor rankings.

We love it for **Bofa Beach** which is, we will say plainly, one of the finest stretches of white sand in Kenya and possibly in East Africa. Miles of it, powder-soft, barely populated, directly accessible from the finest private villas on the coast. The water is warm, clear and reef-protected. The reef itself, accessible at low tide by snorkel, is alive with colour and marine life. And the quality of simply existing on this beach lying in the sun with a book, or wading into the shallows as the tide turns, or watching the reef birds work the waterline at dusk is a pleasure that is hard to overstate.

We love it for the **creek**. Kilifi Creek is a world of its own mangrove-fringed, tidal, alive with bird calls and the creak of dhows at anchor and the extraordinary phenomenon of **bioluminescent plankton** that lights the water on dark, moonless nights with an otherworldly blue glow that guests who see it invariably describe as one of the most beautiful natural spectacles of their lives.

We love it for the **community of people who have chosen it** the artists and conservationists and farmers and sailors and chefs who have built something quietly remarkable here, and who welcome thoughtful visitors into the life of the place with a warmth that is entirely natural and entirely genuine.

We love it for the **properties**. The villas of Kilifi particularly the cliff-top estates of the south shore and the beachfront houses of Bofa are among the finest private house experiences in Kenya: beautifully designed, impeccably staffed, and positioned in settings of extraordinary natural beauty.

And we love it because it is **generous without being showy**. Kilifi does not announce its pleasures. It offers them quietly, allows guests to discover them at their own pace, and rewards those who take the time with experiences that stay with them long after departure.

Why Our Guests Will Love Kilifi

Honeymooners will find in Kilifi an almost ideal romantic destination the private villas provide complete seclusion, the beach is magnificent, the cliff-top positions of the finest properties offer sunsets of operatic beauty, and the creek provides one of East Africa's most magical private experiences: a moonlit bioluminescent boat ride through water that glows blue beneath the stars.

Families will discover that Kilifi is one of the most child-responsive destinations on the Kenyan coast. The reef-protected, calm waters of Bofa Beach are ideal for swimmers of all ages. The rockpools and tidal caves of the cliff-side coastlines are the world's finest adventure playgrounds for curious children. The creek provides sailing, kayaking, swimming and natural history in a safe, accessible environment. And properties like Sirai Beach, Kamili House and Mwangati House are specifically designed and staffed to support family groups with warmth and practical competence.

Seasoned travellers those who have seen the Kenyan coast in its more well-known incarnations and found it, increasingly, too easy to read will find Kilifi genuinely refreshing. The destination is still discovering itself; its best villas and experiences are not yet universally known; and the quality of what is available particularly at the level of accommodation this guide covers is exceptional by any international standard.

The wellness-minded will find that Kilifi's natural environment the sea air, the quality of the light, the pace of the days, the extraordinary beach walks, the yoga terraces above the Indian Ocean provides one of the finest natural settings for a genuine reset. Properties like Tarangau Retreat specifically offer wellness programming; others accommodate it seamlessly on request.

Why It Is a Vard Africa Essential Add-On

Kilifi sits in a perfect geographical and experiential relationship with both the safari and Lamu segments of a Vard Africa Kenya journey. From Nairobi and the major safari circuits of the Mara, Amboseli and Samburu, Kilifi is accessible by direct flight in under two hours a seamless transition from the red dust and vast skies of the savannah to the white sand and blue water of the coast.

For guests who have included Lamu in their journey as we almost always recommend Kilifi offers a complementary coastal character that is entirely distinct from Lamu's island mystique. Where Lamu is history and dhow sails and the quiet intensity of Swahili culture, Kilifi is beach and creek and the easy, contemporary pleasures of one of Kenya's most beautiful natural settings. The two together make a coastal chapter of extraordinary range and depth.

Vard Africa recommends a minimum of **four nights** at Kilifi enough to settle into the properties, explore the creek and beach properly, and undertake at least two or three of the excursions in this guide. Five to seven nights is ideal. Our most devoted guests return year after year, sometimes for two weeks at a time, and leave less because the destination has been exhausted than because they are reluctantly required elsewhere.

OUR ACCOMMODATION & TRADE PARTNERS IN KILIFI

Best Places to Stay in Kilifi

Every property in this guide has been personally visited, vetted and curated by the Vard Africa team. Our recommendations are based on quality, character, setting, service and the capacity of each property to deliver the kind of transformative experience that defines a Vard journey.

UA HOUSE

Takaungu Creek, Kilifi | The Eco-Architect's Masterpiece

Location: Ua House sits along the mesmerising banks of **Takaungu Creek** in Kilifi on the creek-facing side of the coastline, south of Kilifi Town, approximately 10 kilometres from Kilifi Bridge. The property occupies a position of extraordinary tranquility on the creek's edge, with views across the mangrove-fringed waterway and access to both creek and ocean environments.

Introduction & History

Ua means **flower** in Kiswahili and the name is entirely apt for a property that has bloomed from an extraordinary design philosophy into one of the most original and quietly beautiful retreats on the Kenyan coast. Ua House is not simply a villa; it is an architectural statement a home built in what its creators describe as "**Accessible Sustainability**", using reimagined limestone blocks salvaged from local construction sites (85% of all building materials were given a new purpose rather than sourced new), finished in a blend of limestone dust and sheep dung that gives the exterior walls a texture and warmth that no conventional plaster could replicate, and designed throughout to sit in genuine conversation with the semi-arid coastal landscape that surrounds it.

The philosophy here that eco-living and genuine luxury are not contradictory but complementary is expressed in every detail of the property, from the architecture that minimizes the need for artificial cooling through careful orientation and natural ventilation, to the viewing deck that allows guests to observe the creek's bird and marine life without disturbing it, to the creek access that connects guests directly to the living waterway system of the Kilifi coastline.

Ownership & Management

Ua House is a **privately owned eco-villa**, managed directly by its owners through a dedicated team that reflects the property's commitment to community engagement and sustainable practice. Local craftspeople and community members are involved in both the maintenance and the hospitality operation.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ Ua House accommodates **up to 6 guests** across **3 beautifully appointed ensuite bedrooms**, each designed to maximise the natural light and the views across Takaungu Creek.
- ✓ The architecture's open-plan sensibility means that the boundary between interior and exterior is deliberately blurred rooms open onto terraces and viewing decks that feel as much a part of the sleeping experience as the rooms themselves.
- ✓ A **private swimming pool** provides the essential coastal pleasure of cool water at any hour of the day.
- ✓ A scenic **viewing deck** elevated above the creek allows guests to watch the tidal rhythms, the bird life kingfishers, herons, egrets and the occasional African fish eagle and the passing boats at any hour.
- ✓ **Direct creek access** from the property allows guests to swim, kayak or simply wade into the extraordinary ecosystem of Takaungu Creek.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ Private pool with creek views. Elevated viewing deck. Direct creek access.
- ✓ Natural ventilation throughout the property has been designed to stay cool without air conditioning, using the orientation of the building, the thickness of the limestone walls and the prevailing coastal breeze.
- ✓ Fully equipped kitchen for self-catering.
- ✓ WiFi throughout.
- ✓ All airport and local transfers arranged on request. Snorkelling equipment, kayaks and creek activity arrangements available.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Ua House operates on a **self-catering basis** with the option to bring on board a private chef for groups who prefer a fully staffed culinary experience.
- ✓ The proximity to Kilifi town's daily market just minutes away ensures access to the freshest local produce, seafood caught that morning and the full pantry of the Swahili coast.
- ✓ The viewing deck doubles as an extraordinary alfresco dining location: dinner above the creek at sunset, with the water glowing beneath the mangroves, is one of those meals that guests speak of long after the flavours have faded.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The property's eco-construction philosophy includes high-quality water filtration and safety systems throughout.
- ✓ The creek and pool are supervised environments; guests are briefed comprehensively on tidal patterns, currents and creek safety on arrival.
- ✓ The property's remote but not isolated position 10 km from Kilifi Town with full mobile coverage and WiFi ensures that medical assistance is readily accessible if required.

Why We Love Ua House

We love Ua House for its **moral architecture** the way it demonstrates, quietly and beautifully, that a commitment to the environment and a commitment to the highest standards of guest experience are not in tension but are, in fact, expressions of the same values. In a region where eco-labelling is often applied to properties that have done little to earn it, Ua House is the real thing.

Why Our Guests Will Love Ua House

Guests with a genuine interest in design, sustainability and the living world of the Kilifi coastline will find Ua House deeply satisfying. The creek environment with its extraordinary bird life, bioluminescence and tidal rhythms provides a depth of natural engagement that beach-only properties cannot match.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

Visit the creek after dark on a new moon to experience the bioluminescent plankton it is one of the most extraordinary natural spectacles Kilifi offers, and Ua House's direct creek access makes it uniquely well-positioned for this experience. And ask the team about the best creek swimming spots at low tide the sandbar formations within Takaungu Creek at low water are extraordinary.

Families & Children

Ua House is well-suited to small families and couples. The creek environment is endlessly engaging for older children and teenagers; families with very young children should be aware of the unfenced pool and creek access and supervise accordingly.

TARANGAU RETREAT

Bofa Road, Kilifi | The Garden of the Soul

Location: Tarangau Retreat sits on **4.5 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds** on Bofa Road in Kilifi, just a few minutes' stroll from the extraordinary white sands of Bofa Beach. The address is Bofa Road, P.O. Box 1526, Kilifi approximately 4 kilometres from Kilifi Town centre and easily accessible from both Mombasa and Malindi airports.

Introduction & History

There are properties that house guests and there are properties that heal them. Tarangau Retreat is firmly in the second category. Completed in **2018** with traditional Swahili architecture, and set in grounds of extraordinary botanical beauty, Tarangau was conceived from the outset as a private sanctuary a place specifically designed to enable the kind of deep rest, genuine reconnection and personal reset that only very few destinations in the world can actually deliver.

The name comes from the word for a diving bird a creature that plunges beneath the surface to find nourishment and returns changed by what it has encountered. It is an apt metaphor for what Tarangau offers its guests. The property's signature open-plan design with its seamless indoor-outdoor flow, its multiple distinct spaces for gathering and solitude, its rooftop yoga and massage terrace, its sensory gardens and its pool creates an environment in which the nervous system, almost involuntarily, releases its accumulated tension within hours of arrival.

The visionary behind Tarangau is its owner and host, **Michelle Richmond** a woman of remarkable intuition, warmth and creative intelligence, whose personal investment in every guest's experience gives the property a quality of hospitality that formal luxury hotels, for all their technical excellence, rarely achieve. Guest reviews describe her, consistently, as one of the most gifted and genuinely caring hosts they have ever encountered. One guest, in a review that has been widely circulated, described Tarangau as *"the Garden of Kilifi"* a place of restoration created by someone who understands, at a very fundamental level, what people actually need.

Ownership & Management

Tarangau is **owned and personally managed by Michelle Richmond**, who lives on the property and is deeply involved in the daily experience of every guest group. This is not an absentee-owner operation managed by a remote agency; it is a labour of love, overseen by someone who is genuinely invested in the outcome of every stay.

Awards & Recognition

- ✓ Tarangau Retreat holds a **TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award**, ranking in the top 10% of specialty lodging in Kilifi, and maintains a perfect 5-star rating across all major review platforms.
- ✓ It has been recognised by several leading luxury travel operators as one of the most genuinely transformative retreat experiences on the Kenyan coast.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ Tarangau accommodates **up to 10 guests** across a range of configurations designed to serve both couples and larger groups with equal elegance.
- ✓ **The Main House** — A palatial **4-bedroom house** set across multiple levels, each with its own character and orientation.
- ✓ The bedrooms are individually designed cocoons of comfort spacious, beautifully furnished, each with its own private quality of light and aspect. Two large living rooms provide ample space for the group to gather or separate as mood dictates.
A terrace with pool views, four full bathrooms with baths and showers, and a fully equipped kitchen complete the main house.

Tarangau Cottage — A **1-bedroom garden cottage** set slightly apart from the main house in its own garden setting, providing private accommodation for a couple or solo traveller who wants the Tarangau experience in a more intimate configuration. The cottage is decorated in the same thoughtful, characterful style as the main house, with its own covered veranda and garden views.

The two can be rented together (accommodating 10 guests) or independently, providing exceptional flexibility for different group configurations.

Amenities & Facilities

The property's facilities are designed with the complete picture of wellbeing in mind. A **rooftop terrace** serves double duty as a yoga studio and massage treatment room elevated above the gardens with views across the coastline, it is one of the most beautiful outdoor wellness spaces on the Kenyan coast.

The **swimming pool** central to the property's social life is surrounded by the extraordinary tropical gardens, with loungers and shaded day beds positioned for both sun-worship and lazy afternoon reading. Two full living rooms, a fully equipped kitchen, a terrace patio for outdoor dining, a guest bar, and multiple garden seating areas across the 4.5 acres of grounds.

Yoga sessions are available on request, delivered by visiting instructors of professional qualification. **In-house massage and beauty treatments** are offered at the rooftop terrace by skilled therapists. Concierge services for all Kilifi activities and excursions. Free WiFi throughout. Laundry service. Daily housekeeping. Private parking.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Michelle's kitchen philosophy reflects the property's broader character: nourishing, joyful, deeply personal.
- ✓ An **à la carte, continental or full English breakfast** is available each morning.
- ✓ Meals whether at the poolside terrace, in the dining room or on the garden patio are prepared using the finest local produce, fresh seafood from the morning market, and the full repertoire of Swahili-coastal cuisine alongside international options.
- ✓ Guests who request the **8-piece band for dinner** an option that has generated its own enthusiastic following among returning visitors experience one of the most memorably atmospheric evenings in Kilifi.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The property requires that guests supervise children closely around the unfenced pool and garden ponds at all times.
- ✓ Michelle's team maintains the highest standards of food hygiene and property safety.
- ✓ Full first aid is available. Mobile coverage and WiFi ensure rapid communication with medical services.
- ✓ The property does not accommodate bachelor or bachelorette parties.

Why We Love Tarangau

We love Tarangau for what it does to people in the first 24 hours. There is a characteristic arc to a Tarangau stay: guests arrive carrying the accumulated weight of their lives, move into the extraordinary space of the property, breathe in the garden and the air and the quality of the welcome, and then gradually, noticeably let it all go.

Michelle has created a place that has this effect on almost everyone who visits, and the consistency with which it is reported in reviews is not coincidental. It is the result of extraordinary intentionality.

Why Our Guests Will Love Tarangau

- ✓ Guests seeking a genuinely restorative experience whether as a couple, a family, a group of friends, or as part of a wellness retreat will find in Tarangau a level of care and quality that exceeds what can be expressed in a description.
- ✓ The rooftop yoga at sunrise.
- ✓ The pool in the late afternoon. Michelle's hospitality. The food. The garden. It adds up to something that is, in our experience, close to perfect.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

Book for at least five nights Tarangau takes time to fully reveal itself, and guests who come for three nights often extend their stay when they realise the depth of the experience. Arrange the evening band dinner for at least one night it is Tarangau at its most celebratory. And ask Michelle about her Kilifi her knowledge of the destination and its people is extraordinary and adds immeasurably to the guest experience.

Families & Children

Tarangau is warmly welcoming to families. The grounds are vast, the pool is central to family life, and Michelle's team is genuinely warm with children of all ages.

The cottage provides ideal separation for grandparents or teenagers who want their own private space within the property.

TAKAUNGU HOUSE

Takaungu Village, 10km South of Kilifi Town | The Colonial Masterpiece

Location: Takaungu House occupies a commanding bluff position above the Indian Ocean and a long stretch of virtually private white beach, approximately **10 kilometres south of Kilifi town** in the sleepy coastal village of **Takaungu** a settlement of fishermen and farmers that sits on coral cliffs above the beautiful Takaungu Creek, its streets and architecture largely unchanged from the 19th century when the Mazrui family established it following their exodus from Mombasa.

The house is 5 kilometres off the main B8 coastal highway; the village is the last thing you pass before the track descends to the beach.

Introduction & History

The history of Takaungu House is the kind of story that only happens to people who follow their instincts without fully understanding where they are leading. Some **50 years ago**, the property's founder **Philip Mason** was following goat tracks along Kilifi's coral cliffs in search of a rumoured dive site, when he came across the white walls of a ruined building overlooking a deserted beach and the blue Indian Ocean. He bought it within days. He spent years restoring it. And he never really left.

What Philip found was the **original dwelling house** of an Arab trader a man who had built his summer seaside retreat here, on the edge of a bluff with the whole Indian Ocean in front of him and the sheltered waters of Takaungu Creek behind, sometime in the centuries of coastal commerce that created so many of the most beautiful buildings on this coast. The walls are thick limestone and coral rag the traditional building material of the Swahili coast, which naturally insulates against the heat and carries the memory of the reef in every block. The house sits like an extension of the cliff itself.

Over the five decades since its discovery, Philip has added to the property with great care: **Takaungu Main House** a substantial three-storey building in traditional Zanzibari style, with generous rooms and high ceilings now sits alongside the original Private House, together creating what is arguably the most historically atmospheric private house experience on the Kenyan coast. A third house on the property is kept for the family. The two rental houses together can accommodate 18+ guests ideal for multi-family or multi-generational stays.

Takaungu village itself is a destination within a destination: its coral-stone streets, its ancient Friday Mosque, its dhow-building workshops and its extraordinary cliff-top setting above Takaungu Creek make it one of the most genuinely preserved historic coastal settlements in Kenya, frozen in a kind of amber of cultural and architectural integrity that has not been disturbed by development.

Ownership & Management

Takaungu House is **owned by the Mason family**, who live nearby and are intimately involved in the management and character of the property. Philip Mason himself is, by all accounts, wonderful company and a deep repository of knowledge about the coast, its history and its marine environment. The house is managed by a dedicated team of resident staff including the legendary **chef Bakari** whose fish preparations, lemon cake and crab beignets have generated their own devoted following among returning guests.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Takaungu Private House — The original building: a **3-to-4-bedroom** property (including a master room that can accommodate a couple plus a child, and a separate double and single in an adjacent building). The large lounge and dining room open onto an expansive deck with seating options and a pool that overlooks the beach and ocean directly. En-suite bathrooms, mosquito nets, fans, luxurious bedding. Sleeps 6 to 8.

Takaungu Main House — A substantial three-storey building in traditional Zanzibari style, its downstairs comprising a large, airy veranda along with an elegant drawing room and dining room with Moorish arches. The top floor 2,000 square feet in all is a vast bedroom with an open ensuite bathroom and a morning veranda. Colourful tropical gardens surround the house. Sleeps up to 12.

Together, the two houses accommodate up to **18+ guests** — the ideal configuration for multi-family or large group stays where everyone wants to be together but with space and privacy for each sub-group.

Both houses are surrounded by several acres of tropical garden leading directly to the beach. A **private freshwater pool** at the Private House; the beach itself is the swimming area of choice for the Main House. The beach is essentially private the only regular traffic is a handful of fishermen at dawn.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ The remarkable natural amenities at Takaungu House are its greatest facility: 100 metres of virtually private white sand beach, directly accessible from the gardens of both houses.
- ✓ Spectacular snorkelling at the reef at low tide (masks, snorkels and fins provided).
- ✓ **Sea turtle monitoring:** green turtles feed inshore at high tide off the beach and nest on this stretch of sand the Mason family operates a turtle watch system with local fishermen. **Big game fishing** can be arranged locally.
- ✓ **Diving** through a local operator to the celebrated Vuma Caves rated among the finest dives on the Kenyan coast, with deep water caves, blowholes, grouper, snapper, giant Napoleon wrasse and visiting pelagics.
- ✓ The **Vipingo Ridge Golf Course** designed to USGA standard is just 15 minutes' drive. Kayaks, rock pools, caves and beach walks complete a comprehensive natural adventure offering.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Bakari's kitchen is, quite simply, one of the best private house cooking experiences on the Kenyan coast.
- ✓ Fresh fish arrives daily from the local fishermen often the same boats whose nets guests can watch being brought ashore from the beach terrace.

- ✓ The crab beignets are legendary. The lemon cake has its own admirers.
- ✓ The fish and chips are the finest imaginable.
- ✓ All meals are taken al fresco on the deck, by the pool, or on the beach itself at sunset.
- ✓ A full-board option is available on request. Guests provide and purchase their own food and drink; the Kilifi market and local suppliers make this simple and pleasurable.

Health & Safety

- ✓ The swimming pool at the Private House is unfenced; children must be supervised at all times.
- ✓ Sea currents at high tide can be strong guests are briefed on safe swimming times and locations on arrival.
- ✓ The house operates 24-hour informal security.
- ✓ The tidal reef at Takaungu provides world-class snorkelling but must be accessed within an hour either side of low tide.
- ✓ The Mason family's long-term knowledge of the site ensures that guests receive comprehensive and accurate safety briefings.

Why We Love Takaungu House

- ✓ We love Takaungu House for its **irreplaceable character**.
- ✓ This is the place that gave Philip Mason a life, and a lifetime of investment shows in every detail the antique furniture, the Persian rugs, the paintings, the prints, the objects gathered from a long love of this coast.
- ✓ It is one of those rare properties that feel like they are genuinely, essentially, themselves as if they could not exist anywhere else and could not be anything other than what they are.

Why Our Guests Will Love Takaungu House

- ✓ Guests who are moved by history, by authenticity, by the sense of inhabiting a place rather than simply visiting it, will find Takaungu House among the most deeply satisfying properties on the entire Kenyan coast.
- ✓ The beach, the snorkelling, the turtles, the chef, the silence these are pleasures that compound over time rather than diminishing.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

Book the two houses together for a large group the configuration is ideal and the value exceptional. Ask Philip about the dive sites: the Vuma Caves are genuinely world-class and not widely known. And watch the green turtles at high tide from the beach terrace they feed inshore with extraordinary regularity and represent one of the most quietly spectacular wildlife encounters on the Kenyan coast.

Families & Children

- ✓ Takaungu House is exceptional for families the beach, the snorkelling, the rock pools and caves, the turtles, the tide pools and the rag coral caves are genuinely world-class children's environments.
- ✓ Children are explicitly welcomed; the Mason family has hosted generations of family groups.
- ✓ Supervision around the pool and at high tide is essential.

USHAWISHI

Kilifi Creek, Kilifi | The Boutique Tower Gem

Location: Ushawishi is a uniquely positioned property on **Kilifi Creek** just a five-minute walk from the serene red-brick beach on the creek's edge and within easy reach of both Kilifi Town and the broader creek ecosystem. It sits within the broader Kilifi Creek neighborhood, characterised by the extraordinary tidal rhythms and birdlife of this protected waterway.

Introduction & History

Ushawishi is a Kiswahili word that speaks to elegance, style and a quality of presence and the name precisely captures the character of this delightfully original property. Ushawishi is described, with justifiable pride, as a "**rustic two-bedroom boutique tower house gem**" and it delivers precisely what that description promises: a beautifully characterful, architecturally interesting property that occupies its own distinct niche in the Kilifi accommodation landscape.

- ✓ Unlike the larger villas that dominate kilifi, Ushawishi is an **intimate retreat** designed specifically for couples, small families or friend groups of up to four who want a genuinely private, completely self-directed Kilifi experience without the scale and structure of a fully staffed estate.
- ✓ Its tower house format multiple levels with distinct living areas and sleeping spaces at different heights gives it an architectural interest and a relationship with the surrounding landscape that conventional ground-floor villas cannot match.
- ✓ The creek proximity is central to the Ushawishi experience.
- ✓ The five-minute walk to the red-brick beach means that guests have immediate access to the bioluminescent plankton experiences that Kilifi Creek is famous for, to the dhow cruises and creek swimming that define a creek-side Kilifi stay, and to the extraordinary bird and marine life of the mangrove ecosystem.

Ownership & Management

Ushawishi is **privately owned and managed** by its owners on a self-catering basis, with the option to arrange a private chef at additional cost subject to advance booking and availability.

The property operates with a light but attentive management touch, providing guests the freedom and privacy of a fully self-directed stay while ensuring that the property is impeccably maintained and that practical needs are addressed.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ **2 ensuite bedrooms** across the tower's upper floors, each thoughtfully appointed with the character and quality of finish that the boutique positioning of the property demands. Natural materials, careful lighting, the textural warmth of the Swahili coastal aesthetic.
- ✓ The tower's verticality means that upper levels enjoy elevated views across the creek and the surrounding coconut palms and mangroves a perspective on Kilifi that the ground-level properties cannot provide.
- ✓ Total capacity: **up to 4 guests** optimal for couples, a pair of couples travelling together, or a small family.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ Self-catering kitchen fully equipped for independent cooking. WiFi throughout. The creek beach five minutes on foot provides the primary outdoor recreation environment.
- ✓ Optional private chef service can be arranged in advance.
- ✓ The property's intimate scale means that all facilities are personal and immediately accessible.
- ✓ Transfer arrangements to and from Kilifi Town and wider attractions available on request.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Self-catering, with the option of an in-house private chef arranged in advance.
 - ✓ Kilifi Town's daily market accessible in minutes provides fresh fish, local produce and the full range of coastal ingredients.
 - ✓ Several excellent restaurants within easy reach, including The Twisted Fig, The Food Movement and Salty's on Bofa Beach.
- The property's intimate scale and kitchen make it ideal for guests who enjoy the pleasure of cooking in an extraordinary location.

Health & Safety

Standard self-catering safety protocols. The creek beach and swimming environment are subject to tidal variation; guests are advised on safe swimming times. Medical services accessible via Kilifi Town.

Why We Love Ushawishi as a home

We love Ushawishi for being **exactly what it says it is** a boutique gem, characterful and intimate, perfectly suited to its creek-side setting and entirely honest about what it offers.

In an accommodation landscape dominated by large private estates, Ushawishi serves an important and underserved niche: the couple or small group who want genuine privacy, genuine character and genuine creek access in a format that doesn't require renting an eight-bedroom villa.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

For couples who want the creek-side Kilifi experience in its most intimate and private format, Ushawishi is the answer. Combine it with a guided bioluminescence creek night cruise arranged through Vard Africa arriving back at your own private creek access after that experience is one of the purest Kilifi moments available.

Families & Children

Ushawishi accommodates families of up to four ideal for a couple with young children who want a private, self-contained retreat with creek access. The five-minute walk to the creek beach is manageable for children of walking age.

SIRAI BEACH

Southern Shore of Kilifi Creek, Kilifi | The Cliffside Pinnacle

Location: Sirai Beach occupies one of the most coveted positions in Kilifi a **clifftop estate** on the southern side of Kilifi Creek where the Goshi River meets the Indian Ocean, approximately 56 kilometres north-east of Mombasa. The property looks directly out across the Indian Ocean from its 4.5-acre clifftop grounds, with ancient baobab trees framing the view of the infinity pool and the water beyond. The Kilifi airstrip is a five-minute drive.

Introduction & History

Sirai Beach is, by any measure, the most architecturally accomplished and comprehensively facilitated private villa experience in Kilifi. Building commenced in **2016** and the property was completed in **2018** designed and built as the coastal counterpart to the celebrated **Sirai House** in the Borana Game Conservancy in Laikipia, creating what its owners describe as an unbeatable private beach-bush combination. The same exceptional standards of contemporary design, style, comfort and gastronomy that define Sirai House in the bush are expressed here, at the ocean, in their full coastal glory.

The property was designed in **contemporary Swahili coastal style** capturing the gentle breeze as it rolls in from the Indian Ocean, the interior spaces and their styling infused with the flavours of the Kenyan coast.

The main house is arranged around a beautiful open veranda, the sweeping view of the **25-metre infinity pool** and the sparkling ocean beyond framed by those magnificent ancient baobab trees. Private and secluded, Sirai Beach sits in a class entirely of its own in the Kilifi accommodation landscape.

The stretch of ocean below the house is blissfully undisturbed by engine noise from motorised boats the headland's position creates a naturally quiet marine zone that makes the swimming and snorkelling experience here uniquely peaceful.

Ownership & Management

Sirai Beach is a **privately owned family estate** managed through the **Sirai Collection** the same family group that operates Sirai House in Laikipia, bringing to the coastal property the same extraordinary standards of management, culinary excellence and guest experience that have made Sirai House one of the most celebrated private houses in East Africa.

Awards & Recognition

Sirai Beach is consistently listed among the **finest private villas experiences in Kenya** by the world's leading luxury travel operators. The property's sister operation, Sirai House in Laikipia, is one of the most awarded private houses in Africa and the family's reputation for hospitality excellence is unmatched.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Sirai Beach accommodates **up to 12 guests** across **6 individual ensuite suites** each appointed with the same meticulous attention to quality that defines every aspect of the Sirai experience.

- ✓ **Master Suite** — Occupying the entire first floor of the main house, the master suite stretches across a vast space with its own private sitting room, two covered terraces connected by an elevated veranda, a large bathroom with polished concrete bath, twin basins, indoor and outdoor showers. Views of the Indian Ocean from every window.
- ✓ **5 Garden Cottage Suites** — Arranged in individual cottages on either side of the main house, each featuring a large bathroom with polished concrete bath and indoor and outdoor showers, a private veranda, and an outside staircase leading to a covered private **roof terrace** furnished with inviting day beds — the perfect place for an afternoon siesta in the ocean breeze.

All suites feature **silent ceiling fans and air conditioning, 400-thread Egyptian cotton linen** sourced directly from the Nile Valley, and bathrooms stocked with products made with essential oils to the Sirai specification by a community enterprise in Nanyuki.

The property also maintains a **pilot's room** for additional accommodation if required.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ The facilities at Sirai Beach are comprehensive and of the highest quality.
- ✓ Within the 4.5-acre clifftop grounds: a 25-metre infinity pool and poolside bar; an astro-turf flood-lit tennis court; a fully equipped gym; a spa with a resident therapist offering Ayurvedic, Swedish, hot stone and bespoke coastal treatments (including beach massage sessions on request); glass-bottomed kayaks and paddleboards for ocean exploration; snorkelling equipment provided.
- ✓ A guest kitchen allows guests to fix their own snacks and drinks whenever the impulse strikes, independent of the professional kitchen.
- ✓ The house is equipped with a state-of-the-art Sonos music system connected in every room and by the pool. The wine cellar — one of the finest on the Kenyan coast — is stocked with wines and champagnes from the world's most prestigious vineyards, available at additional cost. High-speed WiFi throughout.
- ✓ For sea-based activities: scuba diving, deep-sea fishing from the property's own 38-foot Viking Billfish crewed fishing boat, sailing, kitesurfing, wakeboarding, water-skiing, jet-skiing and windsurfing can all be arranged. Dhow sunset cruises along the creek. The PGA Baobab Course at Vipingo Ridge — 30 minutes' drive — is the finest golf course in East Africa and is included in the Sirai Beach activities portfolio.
- ✓ A private aircraft (Pilatus PC12 NG) is available for charter through the Sirai Collection, providing direct access to and from the Kilifi airstrip, Borana Game Conservancy, Wilson Airport in Nairobi and any other airstrip in Kenya.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

The culinary experience at Sirai Beach is the property's most celebrated attribute and in a property of this quality, that is a high bar. **Head Chef Katana** creates menus of extraordinary sophistication around locally sourced ingredients and line-caught fish delivered daily by a trusted local fisherman who follows the Sirai Collection's responsible fishing protocols. All meals are included; all beverages including house wines personally selected from around the world, spirits and liqueurs are included in the all-inclusive rate.

- ✓ The signature dishes are already legendary among the property's returning guests: **lobster ravioli with saffron butter, tuna carpaccio**, whole grilled reef fish with coconut and chilli. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and sundowners can be served in the house, on the clifftop terrace, poolside, or al fresco in the baobab shade of the gardens.
- ✓ The beach below accessible via a private path and steps provides the setting for occasional beach picnic and barbecue arrangements.
- ✓ The property maintains two kitchens: the **professional house kitchen** where Chef Katana works his daily magic, and a **guest kitchen** for independent snacking and self-directed refreshment.

Health & Safety

- ✓ All guests visiting Sirai Beach are **required to travel with an AMREF/Flying Doctors membership** a requirement that reflects the property's commitment to guest safety and the practical reality of the remote coastal environment.
- ✓ The property's own helicopter landing pad allows for direct medical evacuation if required. 24-hour security.
- ✓ Food hygiene standards maintained to international luxury hotel benchmarks.
- ✓ Children of all ages welcome; children aged 0-5 are accommodated complimentary.

Why We Love Sirai Beach

We love Sirai Beach for its **absolute completeness**. In a landscape where many excellent villas offer some combination of beauty, service and amenity, Sirai Beach offers all of it, simultaneously, at the highest possible standard reimagined in Ultra luxury travel.

- ✓ The baobabs.
- ✓ The pool.
- ✓ Chef Katana's kitchen.
- ✓ The wine cellar.
- ✓ The fishing boat.
- ✓ The tennis court.
- ✓ The spa.
- ✓ The view.
- ✓ There is simply nothing left to want.

Why Our Guests Will Love Sirai Beach

- ✓ Guests who want the most comprehensively excellent private villa experience on the Kenyan coast will find at Sirai Beach a property that sets the standard against which all others are measured.
- ✓ It is equally extraordinary for couples seeking the ultimate romantic coastal retreat, for families with children who want the full spectrum of activities and facilities, and for groups of friends who want to celebrate something extraordinary in a setting worthy of the occasion.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Book Sirai Beach in conjunction with Sirai House in Borana Conservancy for the definitive Vard Africa bush-and-beach Kenya experience the two properties share a design philosophy and a hospitality standard that makes the combination seamless and extraordinary.

The Sirai Air private aircraft charter between the two is the optimal way to make the connection. And do not underestimate the fishing boat a day offshore in search of marlin and yellow fin tuna, coming back with a catch that Chef Katana prepares as sashimi within the hour, is one of the finest experiences available anywhere on the Kenyan coast.

Families & Children

- ✓ Sirai Beach is outstanding for families. Children aged 0-5 are accommodated complimentary.
- ✓ The babysitting facilities, the tennis court, the pool, the sea kayaks, the glass-bottomed kayaks for reef exploration, and the full range of supervised water activities make this the most comprehensively family-equipped property in Kilifi.

KAMILI HOUSE

South Seafront Cliffs, Kilifi Creek | The Quintessential Cliff-Top Estate

Location: Kamili House sits on the **south seafront cliffs of Kilifi** perched high above the Indian Ocean on a clifftop that smells of brine and frangipani and freshly cut grass, with direct views across Kilifi Creek to the striking white sands of Bofa Beach on the north shore.

A stone staircase leads down the cliff to a **private sandy cove**, and at low tide the beach extends northwards to the mouth of Kilifi Creek a wonderful beachcombing environment of rock pools, caves and tidal patterns.

Introduction & History

Kamili means **perfect** in Kiswahili. The name is either the most confident property branding decision on the Kenyan coast or simply the honest truth and those who have stayed at Kamili House tend strongly toward the second interpretation. Built in **2014** by **Heather Stewart** an entrepreneur with a deep love for old buildings and a philosophy that whatever the state of an existing structure, it was bad luck to tear its heart down Kamili House was created from the bones of an older coastal cottage, whose heart is now the TV and reading room, around which the rest of the house has grown.

- ✓ The result is one of the most aesthetically distinguished and genuinely welcoming private houses on the entire East African coast.
- ✓ The house and gardens sit across **two to three acres** of lush, perfectly maintained tropical grounds complete with ancient baobabs, expansive ocean views, an **irresistible infinity pool** and that stone staircase to the private beach.
- ✓ The interiors are a masterclass in coastal Swahili style: Persian rugs, extraordinary art, carved wooden furniture, a large games area with ping-pong, pool table and darts, and the characteristic warmth and organization of a house that has been loved into excellence.

Ownership & Management

Kamili House is a **privately owned estate** managed by a dedicated resident team under the direction of its owners.

- ✓ The celebrated **Chef Walter** — whose wide repertoire and mastery of fresh coastal seafood have made him a beloved figure among returning guests leads the kitchen. **Jennifer** supervises the housekeeping with a standard of immaculate care that guests consistently cite as exceptional. **Stanley, Karissa** and the wider team complete a staff operation that is widely considered one of the finest at any private villa on the Kenyan coast.

Awards & Recognition

Kamili House is consistently listed by East African Retreats and multiple leading international luxury travel operators as one of the most beautiful and best-run private houses in East Africa. The Vard designers call it a "**5-star luxury villa on the Indian Ocean**" a verdict that is borne out by the property's near-perfect review scores across all platforms.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Kamili House accommodates **up to 11 guests** across **4 ensuite bedroom suites**, with the Kamili Cottage (a separate 1-bedroom property on the same grounds) available to extend capacity to a combined 11+ guests.

- ✓ **4 Main House Suites** — Each suite is a thoughtfully individual space: enormous beds with premium pillows and throws for cooler evenings; bathrooms of generous proportion with hot powerful showers (notably reliable by Kenyan coast standards) and baths in select rooms; Cinnabar Green soaps and fluffy towels throughout; private verandas and terraces in several rooms looking out across the ocean or the garden.
- ✓ **Kamili Cottage** — The one-bedroom cottage on the property provides private ensuite accommodation for a couple or solo traveller, with its own covered veranda and garden views. Often rented with the main house for groups that want both scale and privacy.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ Three acres of landscaped tropical gardens.
- ✓ An **infinity pool** of considerable size and beauty overlooking the ocean from its clifftop position, it is one of the finest swimming pools in Kilifi.
- ✓ The **games area** ping-pong, pool table, dartboard, books and board games is the house's social hub on rainy days and long afternoons.
- ✓ The **private beach**, reached via the stone staircase cut into the coral cliffs, offers a secluded sandy cove with shallow tidal pools ideal for young children.
- ✓ **Stand-up paddleboards** are provided for ocean SUP practice directly off the private beach.
- ✓ WiFi throughout the property.
- ✓ A **comfortable sitting room** with television, DVD collection, good books and magazines. Poolside **pergola** for shaded socializing.
- ✓ Multiple outdoor dining and seating areas across the gardens. Laundry service.
- ✓ The **Wine Box** Nairobi's excellent wine retailer has a Kilifi branch a short drive away, ensuring that the cellar can be impeccably stocked.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ Chef Walter's kitchen is one of the great pleasures of a Kamili House stay.
- ✓ His wide repertoire encompasses beautifully executed fresh seafood the daily catch from trusted local fishermen is the centerpiece of most meals alongside Swahili coastal classics, international comfort food (his spaghetti Bolognese for younger guests is reported to be excellent) and the full range of East African fruit and produce in season.
- ✓ Meals are taken al fresco wherever possible on the terrace overlooking the ocean, under the baobabs, by the pool, or in the private cove at the foot of the cliff. The house provides all food and drink shopping in the Kilifi market as part of its service.

Health & Safety

- ✓ Kamili House maintains 24-hour security and impeccable housekeeping standards.
- ✓ The cliff path to the private beach requires careful supervision for young children and guests with mobility considerations.
- ✓ The swimming pool and tidal beach require appropriate supervision. Full first aid available.
- ✓ Vard Africa's emergency network covers all contingencies.

Why We Love Kamili House

We love Kamili House for the **quality of the welcome and the quality of the staff**. Walter, Jennifer, Stanley and the team are in our experience among the finest private villa staff on the Kenyan coast, and the care they bring to every aspect of a guest's stay produces an experience that is simultaneously deeply comfortable and genuinely moving. A house that has been loved this carefully for this long carries that love in its walls.

Why Our Guests Will Love Kamili House

Guests who appreciate the combination of architectural beauty, extraordinary natural setting, world-class service and a kitchen that genuinely delivers will find at Kamili House one of the defining private house experiences of their East African journey. It is equally wonderful for couples, families and groups of friends.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

The best moment at Kamili House is the morning: wake early, walk down the cliff path to the private beach before anyone else arrives, and stand in the tidal pool at low tide with the reef fish swimming around your feet and the whole of Kilifi Creek spread out to the north. It is one of the coast's quietly extraordinary experiences. Ask Walter to prepare a sunset snack board on the clifftop for at least one evening the view at that hour, with the sun behind the baobabs and the ocean turning gold, is unforgettable.

Families & Children

Kamili House is outstanding for families. The private beach and its tidal pools are particularly well-suited to young children. Older children will love the games room, the paddleboards and the rock pool exploration. The full-time staff are experienced and warm with family groups.

TULIVU HOUSE

Kilifi Creek, Kilifi | The Creek-Side Haven

Location: Tulivu House is nestled along the serene banks of **Kilifi Creek** positioned to make the most of the creek's extraordinary tidal rhythms, birdlife and bioluminescent evenings, with a garden that extends toward the water's edge and an infinity pool that reflects both the sky above and the creek beyond.

Introduction & History

Tulivu means **peaceful** or **tranquil** in Kiswahili and the name is the property's central promise, delivered with consistency and warmth by an owner team that has built something genuinely exceptional in one of Kilifi Creek's most beautiful positions. Tulivu House combines the architectural language of Swahili-inspired design with the spatial generosity and modern sophistication of a contemporary coastal villa, creating an atmosphere that is simultaneously grounded in the Kenyan coastal tradition and entirely responsive to the needs of modern guests seeking quality and comfort.

The property's creek-side position is its defining characteristic. Kilifi Creek with its extraordinary ecosystem of mangroves, tidal flats, marine birds, reef fish and, on moonless nights, the bioluminescent plankton that lights the water blue provides a living, dynamic backdrop to every aspect of the Tulivu experience. The infinity pool, designed to reflect the creek and the sky in a continuous visual flow, is positioned to maximise this effect.

The gardens are designed for both relaxation and gathering: whether reclining in the shade of indigenous trees with a book, cooling off in the pool, or sharing a barbecue with friends by the water, the outdoor spaces provide a variety of environments for every mood.

Ownership & Management

Tulivu House is **privately owned and managed** by its owners through a dedicated team of on-site staff, including a talented private chef who caters to guests' culinary preferences with skill and warmth. The property is available for exclusive private hire.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Tulivu House accommodates **up to 10 guests** (11 possible) across **5 double bedrooms**, each with an **ensuite bathroom** and **air conditioning** providing the full comfort of climate control alongside the natural creek breezes.

Rooms are decorated in the Swahili-inspired coastal aesthetic warm tones, natural materials, thoughtfully chosen furnishings with balconies or verandas that encourage the continuous indoor-outdoor connection that is fundamental to the Tulivu experience.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ **Infinity pool** with creek and garden views. Barbecue facilities and outdoor dining areas.
- ✓ Multiple shaded lounge areas across the garden. Dhow access and creek activities arranged through the team.
- ✓ WiFi throughout.
- ✓ Full laundry service.
- ✓ Daily housekeeping.
- ✓ Air conditioning in all bedrooms.
- ✓ All airport and local transfers available on request.

Activities beyond the property dhow cruises, snorkelling, kitesurfing, creek fishing, cultural excursions are arranged by the team in coordination with Vard Africa's local concierge network.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Tulivu's private chef creates menus in consultation with each guest group, sourcing the freshest local seafood and produce from Kilifi Town's daily market. The outdoor dining configuration poolside, garden terrace, or creek-view alfresco gives every meal a backdrop of considerable natural beauty. The team is responsive to dietary requirements and preferences across all international culinary traditions.

Health & Safety

- ✓ 24-hour security on site. Purified drinking water.
- ✓ Supervised pool environment.
- ✓ Medical assistance accessible via Kilifi Town.
- ✓ Vard Africa's emergency protocol covers all contingencies.

Why We Love Tulivu House

We love Tulivu for the **quality and generosity of its creek-side experience** it provides one of the most direct and immersive relationships with Kilifi Creek of any property in this guide, and the bioluminescence evenings here, watched from the garden or experienced from the pool itself on darkest nights, are genuinely among the most beautiful natural moments Kilifi offers.

Vard Africa Insider Note

Tulivu House is perfectly configured for groups of friends or families who want the creek experience in a spacious, fully staffed setting. Arrange a private dhow excursion from the property's own creek access for at least one evening the sunset on the water from a traditional dhow, with the mangroves on both sides and the creek lit by the last of the day's light, is one of Kilifi's signature moments.

Families & Children

Tulivu House is well-suited to families the pool, the garden, the creek access and the team's warmth with children all make it a comfortable and engaging environment for family groups of all configurations.

TRIBE BEACH HOUSE

Kilifi Shoreline | The Cultural Vanguard

Location: Tribe Beach House is situated **directly on the Kilifi shoreline** a beachfront location providing immediate access to the sand and the Indian Ocean, with rooftop decks oriented toward the full sweep of the sea view and pools that look out across the water.

Introduction & History

Tribe Beach House is Kilifi's most significant and exciting new hospitality development the first coastal expansion of **Tribe Hotels Group**, the celebrated Nairobi-based hospitality brand owned and operated by the **Ehsani family**, who have spent 30 years building what is arguably the most sophisticated and culturally engaged hospitality portfolio in East Africa.

Tribe Hotel in Nairobi is one of Africa's finest five-star urban hotels. **Hero Bar**, owned by the same family, has been named "**The Best Bar in Africa**" by the World's 50 Best Bars. This is a family and a brand that sets standards rather than follows them.

Announced in **January 2026** and opening in **summer 2026**, Tribe Beach House is organized across **two distinct houses** — **Big House** (8 rooms) and **Small House** (5 rooms) each with its own **rooftop decks, swimming pools, lounges** and the characteristic Tribe blend of indoor and outdoor spaces that frame the surrounding landscape with deliberate and beautiful intention.

What distinguishes Tribe Beach House from every other property in this guide and indeed from almost any property on the East African coast is its commitment to **creative and cultural programming**. Tribe Beach House does not simply offer accommodation and activities; it offers an intellectual and sensory curriculum: immersive workshops in Swahili poetry, African scent-making and coral-safe pigment dyeing; curated moonlit **Dhow Salon** cruises with artists, historians and musicians; **Ocean Wisdom Circles** talks and story circles under baobab trees with local marine biologists, community elders, philosophers and storytellers; a **Kilifi Creative Studio** for hands-on arts engagement; a **Chess and Chill Club** with handcrafted wooden boards and inventive cocktails; and **Astro-Night by the Sea** zodiac-inspired beach dinners aligned with moon phases.

The **Kilifi Equinox Gathering** a retreat, symposium and celebration held at the spring and autumn equinoxes and the **Blue Zone Beach Retreat** focused on connection, intergenerational wisdom and oceanic rituals complete a programming offer that is genuinely unprecedented in the coastal Kenya context.

This is a property for travellers who want their beach holiday to be intellectually as well as sensorially nourishing. It is, in our view, exactly what Kilifi a town that has been quietly positioning itself as a coastal creative hub needed, and the Ehsani family are exactly the right people to bring it.

Ownership & Management

- ✓ Tribe Beach House is **owned and operated by the Ehsani family** Shamim Ehsani (Co-Founder, Director and Developer) and her family have been building Nairobi's most celebrated hospitality portfolio for three decades.
- ✓ Their move to the coast brings to Kilifi a level of hospitality expertise, cultural sophistication and operational excellence that is entirely consistent with their Nairobi reputation.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ **13 rooms and suites** across two houses — Big House (8 rooms) and Small House (5 rooms).
- ✓ All rooms feature rooftop deck access, ocean views, pool access from the respective house, and the full Tribe Hotels standard of interior design, bedding and amenity. Specific room categories and configurations will be confirmed upon opening.
- ✓ Vard Africa will update this guide with full room details once the property has opened and been personally inspected.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ Two swimming pools (one per house).
- ✓ Rooftop decks with ocean views from both houses.
- ✓ **Dedicated wellness centre** with gym, sauna, spa and yoga studio facing the Indian Ocean one of the most comprehensively equipped wellness facilities at any Kilifi property.
- ✓ All cultural programming as described above.
- ✓ Full restaurant and bar operation.
- ✓ The **Kilifi Creative Studio** for workshop participation.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Tribe Hotel in Nairobi is celebrated for its food and beverage excellence Hero Bar's World's 50 Best Bars distinction is a reflection of the group's F&B standards. Tribe Beach House's coastal kitchen will reflect the same commitment to quality, creativity and local sourcing that defines the group's urban operations, translated into the Swahili coastal idiom of fresh seafood, Indian Ocean spices and the extraordinary produce of the Kilifi hinterland.

Why We Love Tribe Beach House

We love it for **arriving at exactly the right moment** in Kilifi's development and for arriving with the ambition and the expertise to do justice to the destination. The Ehsani family's deep commitment to Kenyan culture, to creativity and to excellence makes Tribe Beach House not simply a new hotel but a genuine addition to what Kilifi is becoming.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

Tribe Beach House is opening in summer 2026. Vard Africa will conduct a full property inspection upon opening and provide updated, first-hand reviews at that time. We expect it to become one of the most sought-after coastal addresses in Kenya within its first season. Book early.

Families & Children

Tribe Beach House's cultural programming is oriented toward curious, open-minded guests of all ages. The wellness centre, pools and beach activities will appeal across age groups; the creative programming may particularly resonate with older children and teenagers with interests in art, culture and natural history.

NDERIT HOUSE

Kilifi Plantation Estate, Kilifi | The Family Heritage

Location: Nderit House sits on a **4-acre estate within the Kilifi Plantation** an elevated position that enjoys **uninterrupted views over the Indian Ocean**, set a stone's throw from the beach and the marine adventures of the Kilifi coast below. The Kilifi Plantation setting provides the extraordinary backdrop of lush coastal forest combined with the full pleasures of ocean access.

Introduction & History

Nderit House carries within it a quality that cannot be designed or constructed: the warmth of genuine family history. Built as a **family getaway in the 1970s**, the house has evolved over five decades into a refined coastal retreat but it has evolved in the way that beloved family homes evolve, accumulating layers of character, memory and personal investment that give it a quality of atmosphere that newer properties cannot match.

- ✓ The house was designed to embrace the coastal breeze, its orientation and architecture capturing the prevailing winds that flow in from the Indian Ocean across its elevated position on the plantation estate.
- ✓ The result is a home that stays naturally cool in the heat of the day, that smells of salt air and frangipani at all hours, and that provides the quality of natural ventilation that the Swahili coastal tradition understood long before the invention of mechanical cooling.
- ✓ Guests who return to Nderit and return they do, consistently and with evident emotion describe the experience of arriving as *"coming home"*.
The team's genuine warmth, the quality of the light across the estate, the view from the ocean-facing terraces, and the continuity of a property managed by people who care about it deeply all contribute to this effect.

Ownership & Management

Nderit House is managed by a **permanent team of dedicated staff** who have, in many cases, been with the property for years and who bring the kind of continuity and personal investment that makes a private house feel like a genuine sanctuary rather than a transactional accommodation experience.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Nderit House is a well-appointed **multi-bedroom estate** sleeping multiple guests in ensuite bedrooms of considerable comfort, each designed to take advantage of the property's elevated position and the ocean views that this position commands. The estate's 4-acre grounds provide ample space for guest groups to spread out and find their own corners of privacy within the shared property.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ The 4-acre estate grounds. Ocean-view terraces and outdoor dining areas.
- ✓ Swimming pool.
- ✓ Private beach access (short distance from the estate).
- ✓ Boat and dhow charter arrangements.
- ✓ Diving at the Kuruwitu Marine Conservancy.
- ✓ Sunset dhow cruises, private day trips along the coast and family sailing adventures across Kilifi Creek all arranged by the team.
- ✓ WiFi and full staff services throughout.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

The kitchen team works in close consultation with each guest group to create menus that reflect their preferences and the finest available local produce. Fresh seafood sourced daily from trusted local fishermen; Swahili-coastal cuisine alongside international options; dietary requirements accommodated with warmth and skill.

Health & Safety

- ✓ Full-time security.
- ✓ Purified water.

- ✓ Vard Africa's emergency network.
- ✓ Medical assistance accessible via Kilifi.

Why We Love Nderit House

We love Nderit House for the **quality of its story** for the way that 50 years of family love for a place has produced something that no amount of capital expenditure and interior design consultancy could replicate. The soul of this house is in its history.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

Ask the team about the property's history the stories that have accumulated over five decades of family use are as enriching as the setting. And take the boat out for a day of creek and ocean exploration Nderit's team are skilled facilitators of the full Kilifi marine experience.

Families & Children

Nderit House is specifically suited to families the 4-acre estate, the ocean access, the boat, and the team's warmth with children make it an ideal multi-generational retreat.

MWANGATI HOUSE

Kilifi Creek Clifftop, Kilifi | The Terminalia Estate

Location: Mwangati House occupies one of the most enviable positions in Kilifi a **clifftop location overlooking the entrance to Kilifi Creek and the Indian Ocean**, with the beach accessible via private steps and the creek's extraordinary ecosystem visible from every major living area and terrace.

Introduction & History

The house takes its name from the magnificent spreading **Terminalia tree** the *mwangati* whose wood has been prized by traditional Swahili builders for its strength and durability for centuries, and one of whose great examples stands between the house, its dramatic swimming pool and the sea, providing both shade and beauty and serving as the botanical landmark around which the estate organizes itself.

- ✓ This tree is one of many tropical species baobab, neem, palm and frangipani among them that fill the lush, shady 2-acre plot.
- ✓ Mwangati House has been described by those who know Kilifi's private villa landscape as *"one of the most beautiful houses in Kilifi"* a characterization borne out by its extraordinary position, its thoughtful design and the consistently exceptional quality of its staff and kitchen operation.
- ✓ The property was recently renovated and redecorated to the highest standards, with the interior design being described in guest reviews as *"worthy of a Condé Nast Traveller feature"*.

Ownership & Management

Mwangati House is a **privately owned estate** managed through their local team here in Kenya with a full-time resident team led by the celebrated **chef Charo**, whose tuna sashimi has been compared, in at least one guest review, to the standard of Nobu.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

Mwangati House accommodates **up to 12 guests** across **6 ensuite bedrooms** each comfortable, colourfully appointed and positioned to take advantage of the clifftop views or the garden and pool setting. The house is designed to absorb a full complement of guests without feeling crowded or busy multiple outdoor spaces and sitting areas ensure that privacy is always available alongside communal gathering.

The magnificent **pool house** lofty, makuti-thatched and furnished with inviting wooden sofas and bright coastal kanga cushions is one of the most appealing social spaces at any Kilifi property, with its own bar area and dining table providing a shaded alfresco alternative to the main house dining room at any hour of the day.

Amenities & Facilities

The **dramatic swimming pool** positioned between the mwangati tree and the sea, with the creek and ocean visible from its edge is the centrepiece of the estate.

- ✓ A **pool house** with its own bar, dining area and living spaces.
- ✓ A **petanque court** in the shade behind the pool house.
- ✓ Seven poolside sun loungers.
- ✓ Clifftop baraza looking down toward the beach.
- ✓ Private beach access via steps.
- ✓ WiFi and full staff services.
- ✓ Full Laundry service.
- ✓ 24-hour security.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

Chef Charo is the acknowledged culinary star of Mwangati House and his tuna sashimi is as extraordinary as the most enthusiastic reviews suggest. The kitchen operation is built around daily fresh seafood from local fishermen, with the full complement of Swahili coastal cuisine produced alongside international dishes executed with genuine skill.

Alfresco dining in any of the property's multiple outdoor settings the pool house, the clifftop terrace, the garden beneath the mwangati tree is the norm rather than the exception.

Why We Love Mwangati House

- ✓ We love Mwangati House for its **position above the creek mouth** the view of Kilifi Creek entering the Indian Ocean, watched from the clifftop terrace or the pool's edge, is one of the most beautiful prospects in Kilifi. And for Charo's sashimi.
- ✓ These two facts, independently, would be sufficient.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

The petanque court in the shade of the pool house is Mwangati at its most sociably pleasurable a game in the late afternoon, followed by sundowners on the clifftop, followed by one of Charo's seafood dinners under the stars, is the definitive Mwangati evening. And ask the team about the creek swimming the tidal pool at the beach's edge below the cliff is one of Kilifi's finest natural swimming spots.

Families & Children

Mwangati House is outstanding for families and was recently described by guests as a property that *"ripped our children away from technology to a real world of electric blue skies, heavenly rock pools and discovering what lies beneath the sand"*. The beach, the pool and the garden provide a complete and deeply engaging environment for family groups.

THE KASA KILIFI

Bofa Beach, Kilifi | The Glamorous Beachfront Arrival

Location: The Kasa Kilifi is positioned directly on **Bofa Beach** one of Kenya's finest stretches of white sand giving it one of the most immediate and direct beachfront positions of any property in Kilifi. The villa offers uninterrupted views of the Indian Ocean and the reef beyond, with the beach literally steps from the front door.

Introduction & History

The Kasa Kilifi is the newest and most glamorous addition to the **Kilifi Beach Villas** portfolio described, with justifiable confidence, as *"one of the most glamorous beachfront properties in Bofa Beach, Kilifi-Kenya"*. Designed specifically for **open, seamless indoor and outdoor living** connecting with and making the most of the extraordinary beachfront location The Kasa represents the contemporary, design-forward evolution of the Kilifi private villa experience.

The name is a fusion of the Italian *Casa* (house) and the Swahili *Kasa* (turtle) a nod both to the property's international design influences and to the marine environment in which it sits. Green turtles inhabit the reef off Bofa Beach; the occasional hawksbill nests on the sand. The name is both a design statement and a conservation declaration.

The property has been built with the philosophy of the **"1-mile diet"** at its culinary heart menus sourced from local farmers and fishermen within the immediate vicinity, ensuring the freshest possible ingredients and a direct connection between the kitchen and the landscape it inhabits.

Ownership & Management

- ✓ The Kasa Kilifi is managed by **Kilifi Beach Villas**, a Nairobi-based specialist villa management operation with deep knowledge of the Kilifi coast and a commitment to the highest standards of guest service.
- ✓ The property is available for exclusive private hire with a full-time team including 24-hour security, a professional on-site manager, private chef and housekeeping.

Barefoot Luxury — Rooms & Sleeping Arrangements

- ✓ The Kasa accommodates **up to 10 to 12 guests** across **5 ensuite bedrooms**, each air-conditioned and featuring traditional Swahili four-poster beds draped with mosquito netting combining the architectural vocabulary of the coast with the climate comfort of modern cooling technology.
- ✓ All rooms enjoy views of the Indian Ocean or the property's lush garden setting.

Amenities & Facilities

- ✓ Direct beachfront access the beach is the front garden. **Infinity pool** overlooking the Indian Ocean, with cascading terraces and loungers. Full bar and tea lounge. Library and media room. WiFi throughout. 24-hour security.
- ✓ Professional on-site management.
- ✓ The full suite of Bofa Beach activities kitesurfing, snorkelling, swimming, dhow cruises, deep-sea fishing, beach volleyball accessible directly from the property.

Culinary & Dining Experiences

- ✓ The Kasa's kitchen philosophy the **"1-mile diet"** ensures a culinary experience that is simultaneously sustainable, extraordinary in freshness, and deeply connected to the Kilifi coastal landscape.
- ✓ Fresh fish arrived from trusted local fishermen; organic produce from the Kilifi hinterland; the full Swahili coastal repertoire alongside international options.

- ✓ Vegan, gluten-free and superfood options are available. Gourmet coffee, craft cocktails and freshly prepared smoothies are available throughout the day.
- ✓ Meals can be served indoors or on any of the property's multiple outdoor dining terraces the beachfront setting makes al fresco dining at every meal both possible and deeply pleasurable.

Why We Love the Kasa

We love The Kasa for its **unapologetic beachfront glamour** the directness of the relationship between the house and the beach, the contemporary design intelligence, and the property's clear understanding of what guests who choose Bofa Beach actually want: to wake up to the sound of the Indian Ocean, walk three metres to the sand, and spend the day between sea and pool and table and sun.

Why Our Guests Will Love the Kasa

Guests who want the most immediate and sensually gratifying beachfront experience in Kilifi will find at The Kasa a property that delivers that experience without compromise or qualification.

The Vard Africa Insider Note

The Kasa is the optimal choice for guests who want the definitive Bofa Beach experience without the cliff-top separation of the south-shore properties. The beach is the garden; the sea is the view from bed. Book it for groups or families who want the beach to be the centre of gravity for every day of their stay.

Families & Children

The Kasa is ideal for families the direct beach access, the pool, the team's warmth with children and the property's spacious configuration make it one of the most practical and pleasurable family beach properties in Kilifi.

OUR SIGNATURE BAREFOOT LUXURY EXPERIENCES

What To Do in Kilifi

Kilifi is a destination that rewards both activity and stillness in equal measure. The following experiences represent our curated selection of the finest encounters this extraordinary destination provides from the ancient to the ecological, from the maritime to the meditative.

THE KILIFI SUNSET DHOW CRUISE

Sail the Creek as the Sky Turns to Fire

There are very few more deeply pleasurable ways to spend a Kilifi evening than on the deck of a traditional wooden dhow, sailing slowly through the channels of Kilifi Creek as the sun descends toward the horizon and the sky transforms from the white heat of the afternoon through gold, amber, rose and deep violet into one of the most spectacular natural light shows on the Kenyan coast.

Kilifi's creek is ideally designed for the sunset dhow experience.

Its mangrove-fringed channels, calm tidal waters and the extraordinary biodiversity of its bank's mangrove forests, coral cliffs, resident fish eagle populations and, in the summer months, extraordinary flocks of **Northern Carmine Bee-Eaters** that swirl in their hundreds around the creek to roost as the sun sets provide a constantly evolving and deeply beautiful backdrop for a two-to-three-hour cruise.

Vard Africa arranges **fully private sunset dhow cruises** on traditional wooden vessels, crewed by experienced local captains whose knowledge of the creek system is as intimate as their respect for its ecology.

Guests board from the nearest creek access to their property; a fully stocked bar cold Tuskers, Dawa cocktails, chilled wine, fresh coconut and a board of Swahili snacks are laid on deck; and the dhow departs with nothing to do and nowhere to be except precisely where you are, in this extraordinary place, in this extraordinary light.

For the full immersive experience, Vard Africa arranges the cruise to continue into darkness on moonless nights, when the water of Kilifi Creek begins its most extraordinary performance: the **bioluminescent plankton** that inhabits the creek's shallow waters lights up in response to any disturbance a paddle stroke, a hand trailed through the water, the wake of the dhow with an otherworldly blue-green luminescence that guests invariably describe as one of the most beautiful natural phenomena they have ever witnessed.

To sail through glowing water on a warm African night, under a sky dense with stars, in a boat that has been using these same channels for a thousand years, is to experience Kilifi at its most profound.

SUNSET & SUNDOWNER EXCURSIONS,

The Art of the Perfect Kilifi Evening

The Kilifi sunset is a spectacle that invites performance as much as observation and Vard Africa curates the full range of settings and formats in which to receive it, depending on the character and preferences of each guest group.

The Creek Sandbar Sundowner — At low tide, sandbars emerge within Kilifi Creek that exist for only a few hours before the returning water reclaims them. Vard Africa arranges private sundowner setups on these temporary islands: a table set in the sand, champagne on ice, freshly

prepared Swahili bites, the creek all around and the sky doing its evening work overhead. It is one of those experiences' ephemeral, site-specific, unrepeatable that defines the Vard Africa approach to curating extraordinary moments.

The Clifftop Sundowner — For guests at the south-shore cliff-top properties (Sirai Beach, Kamili House, Mwangati House, Nderit House), the clifftop terrace at sunset is the natural setting for the evening's opening ceremony. Vard Africa can arrange private mixologists, a freshly prepared grazing table of coastal produce, and the choice of watching the sun set into the mangroves of the creek or across the open ocean to the west.

The Bofa Beach Bonfire — On the empty stretch of Bofa Beach beyond the last property, Vard Africa sets a private bonfire at the waterline at sunset: champagne and sundowner cocktails, freshly grilled seafood prepared by your villa's chef, the beach entirely to your group and the ocean behind you turning from gold to dark. This is barefoot luxury in its most elemental and most satisfying form.

EXPLORING BOFA BEACH,

Kenya's Most Beautiful Stretch of Sand, Entirely Your Own

Bofa Beach is, by any measure, one of the finest beaches on the entire East African coast yet it remains almost completely unknown outside the community of travellers who have specifically sought it out. There are no package hotels lining its shores. No beach vendors working the waterline. No noise, no crowds, no disruption of any kind. Just mile after uninterrupted mile of powder-white sand, the turquoise water of the reef-protected lagoon, the coconut palms nodding in the trade wind, and the great fringing reef of the Kenyan Barrier Reef visible as a line of white water in the middle distance.

Vard Africa encourages guests to **explore Bofa Beach on their own terms** on foot at dawn, when the light is extraordinary and the sand is cool and unmarked; by beach walk at low tide, when the exposed reef flat reveals its extraordinary world of sea stars, octopus, reef fish and living coral; by kayak along the waterline, discovering the rhythm of the coast from the surface of the water; or simply by lying on the sand and being present in one of the most beautiful natural environments on the continent.

For those who wish to explore beyond their immediate vicinity, Vard Africa arranges **private guided beach walks** with knowledgeable local naturalists who can interpret the reef ecology, identify the birdlife, explain the Swahili history visible in the distant buildings and provide the context that transforms a beach walk into a genuinely enriching experience.

The reef at low tide accessible by snorkel from any point along Bofa Beach is one of Kilifi's greatest natural treasures: a living ecosystem of extraordinary colour and diversity, home to clownfish, parrotfish, lionfish, moray eels, sea turtles and hundreds of coral species in all states of growth and regeneration.

SWIMMING ACROSS THE KILIFI CREEK,

A Tradition as Old as the Town Itself

Swimming across Kilifi Creek is one of those local traditions that sounds more adventurous than it is the creek's waters are calm, warm and clear, and at the right tidal state the crossing is a gentle and deeply pleasurable experience but that carries a particular quality of thrill and satisfaction that more conventional swimming cannot replicate. It is the pleasure of accomplishment as well as immersion: arriving on the opposite bank with the whole creek behind you and the town ahead, feeling the particular freedom of having crossed water on your own terms.

Kilifi Creek at its narrowest crossing point is approximately 400 to 600 metres across a comfortable open-water swim for confident swimmers in calm conditions. The water is warm throughout the year. The tidal state matters: Vard Africa always advises on optimal crossing times, ensuring that guests swim with rather than against the current and that tidal conditions are safe and manageable.

Vard Africa arranges **private guided creek swimming crossings** with a support boat maintaining close proximity for safety and comfort, and a waiting team on the far bank with towels, cold drinks and the quiet satisfaction of having done something that most visitors to Kilifi never do. The return crossing by boat provides a different perspective on the creek looking back across the water to the north shore, with its mangroves and the distant line of Bofa Beach that grounds the experience in its extraordinary natural context.

This is not an experience for non-swimmers or those with limited open-water confidence; Vard Africa assesses suitability individually and always prioritises safety.

For guests who prefer to experience the creek by boat rather than swimming, the creek's beauty is equally accessible from a dhow or motorboat at any state of the tide.

A VISIT TO THE KURUWITU MARINE CONSERVANCY,

Kenya's First Community-Led Marine Sanctuary

Approximately **24 kilometres south of Kilifi Town** on the B8 coastal highway, in the village of **Vipingo**, lies one of the most extraordinary conservation achievements on the East African coast and one of the most beautiful marine environments in Kenya.

Kuruwitu Marine Conservancy was born in **2003** when the fishermen of the coastal village of Kuruwitu made a decision of extraordinary courage and foresight: they voluntarily stopped fishing within a designated 30-hectare area of their reef system and declared it a **No-Take Zone**. Their reason was the simplest and most urgent imaginable the fish were disappearing, the reef was deteriorating, and their livelihoods were becoming unsustainable. By giving the ecosystem time to recover, they bet their future on the regenerative capacity of the natural world.

Twenty years later, the bet has paid off with astonishing completeness.

The Kuruwitu reef once heavily depleted is now **one of the most diverse and abundant marine ecosystems on the entire Kenyan coast**: over **200 fish species** have been recorded within the conservancy, including octopus that camouflage themselves against the coral with extraordinary skill, porcupine fish that puff to three times their natural size when disturbed, and a full complement of reef sharks, rays and sea turtles that have returned to waters that had largely lost them. The conservancy's data collected over 20 years by the **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)** provides one of the finest scientific records of marine ecosystem recovery in the western Indian Ocean.

In **2017**, the **Kuruwitu Conservation and Welfare Association (KCWA)** received the **Equator Prize** from the United Nations Development Programme one of the world's most prestigious awards for community-led conservation in recognition of what the fishermen of Kuruwitu had achieved.

Vard Africa arranges **private guided snorkelling excursions** to the Kuruwitu conservancy with KCWA-accredited marine guides, whose knowledge of the reef system and its inhabitants transforms a snorkelling session into a genuinely educational and deeply moving encounter with one of the world's great conservation success stories. The excursion includes a visit to the conservancy's **glass-bottom boat** for guests who prefer to observe the reef from above, and typically concludes with lunch at the beautiful beach restaurant at Kuruwitu, overlooking the reef and the Indian Ocean.

The excursion also supports the conservancy directly: all visitor fees are returned to the community and contribute to the ongoing management and expansion of the marine protection area, now being extended to cover an 800-hectare zone encompassing 12 kilometres of coastline.

A VISIT TO THE KILIFI SISAL PLANTATION

Working Kenya, Beautifully

One of the most distinctive and least-expected excursions available from any Kilifi property is a visit to the **Kilifi Sisal Plantation** one of the last working sisal estates on the Kenyan coast and a fascinating living remnant of the agricultural economy that shaped this coastline during the colonial period and beyond.

Sisal the agave-family plant whose tough, fibrous leaves are processed into rope, twine, matting and a range of industrial textiles was introduced to Kenya's coast in the late 19th century and became one of the major agricultural industries of the region during the colonial era. At its peak, the sisal plantations of the Kilifi coast employed thousands of workers and supplied rope to the world's shipping industry. Today, as synthetic alternatives have reduced global demand for natural sisal, the industry has contracted but the Kilifi plantation survives as a working agricultural enterprise, its extraordinary landscape of blue-grey sisal plants stretching in regular rows across the coastal plain an enduringly beautiful and historically resonant sight.

Vard Africa arranges **private guided visits** to the plantation exploring the growing fields and the processing facility where the sisal leaves are mechanically decorticated to extract their fibres, watching the traditional rope-making process, and understanding the full arc of the plant's journey from field to finished product. The **Food Movement** artisan collective, set within the plantation's forest margins, provides the ideal lunch stop a beautifully designed space of galleries, boutique shops and a café, built around an ancient tree in a jungle clearing that feels as far from the modern world as anything available in Kilifi.

The sisal landscape itself is extraordinary: walking through the ordered rows of these extraordinary plants, whose pointed leaves can reach two metres in height and which flower only once at the end of their seven-to-ten-year life cycle in an extraordinary single spike of yellow blossoms up to eight metres tall, is one of those experiences that stays with you strange, beautiful and utterly specific to this particular corner of the Kenyan coast.

A CLASSIC VISIT TO THE MNARANI RUINS

Walking Through 700 Years of Swahili History

On the southern bank of Kilifi Creek perched on a dramatic coral-limestone bluff that looks out over the creek toward the Indian Ocean beyond stand the Mnarani Ruins: the most significant and most atmospheric of Kilifi's ancient Swahili heritage sites, and one of the most evocative historical landscapes on the entire Kenyan coast.

The name Mnarani means "*the place of the minaret*" and the site's central structure, a Friday Mosque of the 14th century, still stands in sufficient preservation to convey the elegance and confidence of the Swahili civilisation that built it. The mosque is accompanied by twelve tombs (labelled A through L by excavators) including a magnificent pillar tomb the signature funerary architecture of the wealthy Swahili merchant class with layered arcs on the mihrab and stellar coral inscriptions in immaculate condition. The site also includes the remnants of a palace, residential areas, and for the historically curious slave tunnels that testify to the darker dimensions of the Indian Ocean trade economy.

The approach to Mnarani is itself part of the experience: 112 steps ascend from the old ferry road to the site's elevated position, and the view from the top across Kilifi Creek to the north shore, across the Indian Ocean to the east and south rewards every step of the climb. Ancient baobab trees of extraordinary size stand within and around the ruins, their roots penetrating the coral stone foundations in a slow, patient geological argument about who was here first.

Mnarani Ruins are managed by the National Museums of Kenya and accessible with a standard entry ticket that also includes the small Mnarani Snake Park at the site entrance home to a collection of Kenya's indigenous snake species and other reptiles, interpreted by knowledgeable guides who demystify these misunderstood animals with both expertise and enthusiasm.

Vard Africa arranges private guided visits to the Mnarani Ruins with expert local historians and archaeologists whose knowledge of the site's excavation history, cultural context and connection to the broader Indian Ocean trading world adds immeasurably to the experience. The visit is typically combined with a creek crossing by boat arriving at the Mnarani site from the water, as its original residents would have received their trading partners, gives the ruins a context and an atmosphere that no road approach can match.

GETTING THERE & LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Air Access

Kilifi is served by **three air access options**, each suited to different schedules and preferences.

Mombasa International Airport (MBA) — The primary scheduled air gateway to Kilifi, served by multiple daily flights from Nairobi's **Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (NBO)** via Kenya Airways and Jambojet, and from **Wilson Airport** via Safarilink, Air Kenya and Skyward Express. Flight time from Nairobi is approximately 55 to 75 minutes. From Mombasa Airport, Kilifi is a **2-hour road transfer** recommended via the inland C107/C111 route, which avoids Mombasa Island and is significantly faster and more scenic than the coastal highway.

Vipingo Ridge Airstrip — For scheduled services from Nairobi Wilson Airport, Fly ALS and Skyward Express operate regular scheduled services to the Vipingo Ridge Golf Estate airstrip, approximately **25 to 30 minutes' drive** from most Kilifi properties. This is the preferred option for guests staying at properties in the southern Kilifi area (Takaungu, Sirai Beach, Kamili House).

Kilifi Airstrip — Located just **5 minutes' drive** from properties on the southern shore of Kilifi Creek, the Kilifi airstrip is ideal for private charter flights from Wilson Airport or Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, and is directly accessible by helicopter. Sirai Beach has its own helicopter landing pad and can arrange direct transfers by private aircraft. Fly time from Wilson Airport to Kilifi is approximately **1 hour 10 minutes** by private charter.

Malindi Airport — Approximately **1 hour north** of Kilifi, Malindi Airport receives scheduled services from Nairobi and is an alternative gateway for guests combining Kilifi with a Watamu or Malindi extension.

Road Access

For guests with time and a spirit of adventure, Kilifi is approximately **90 minutes' drive** from Mombasa and **60 minutes** from Malindi on excellent tarmac roads. Vard Africa arranges all private road transfers with comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles and experienced drivers who know the coastal route intimately.

Driving directly from Nairobi is possible but involves an 8-to-10-hour journey flying is almost always the preferred option.

Vard Africa Logistical Support

Vard Africa provides comprehensive end-to-end logistical support for all Kilifi journeys, including pre-arrival consultation, air charter bookings, property meet-and-greet, all activity coordination, in-destination 24-hour support via our Nairobi operations team, and emergency protocol coverage via our AMREF/Flying Doctors network.

Best Time to Visit

January to March — Finest beach weather. Warm, calm, sunny and clear. High season — book well in advance.

June to October — Trade wind season. Cooler, more dramatic light. Excellent for kitesurfing, sailing and long beach walks. Wildlife in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest at its most active.

November — Short rains bring lush green landscapes and fewer visitors. Beautiful light.

April to May — Long rains. Some properties close. Generally, less suited to beach holidays.

A note from your Vard Designer's,

The guests who discover Kilifi through Vard Africa return. They return for the beach. For Bofa. For the bioluminescent evenings on the creek. For the extraordinary stillness of a clifftop sunset above the Indian Ocean.

For Chef Walter's kitchen, and Bakari's fish, and Michelle's healing garden, and the feel of the mwangati tree's shade at noon.

And they return because there is something about Kilifi something in its particular quality of light and air and time that makes ordinary life, when they eventually return to it, feel slightly improvable. That, in the end, is what the finest travel does. And it is what Kilifi does.

Prepared with care and first-hand knowledge by the Vard Africa Destination Curation Team. All information is accurate to April 2026. Property details, availability and pricing are subject to seasonal variation. Tribe Beach House information reflects pre-opening announcements; a full post-opening review will be added upon inspection.