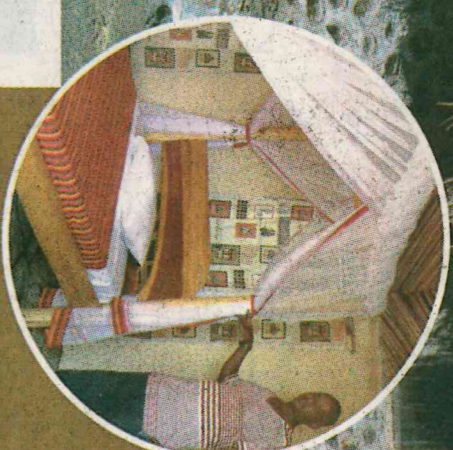
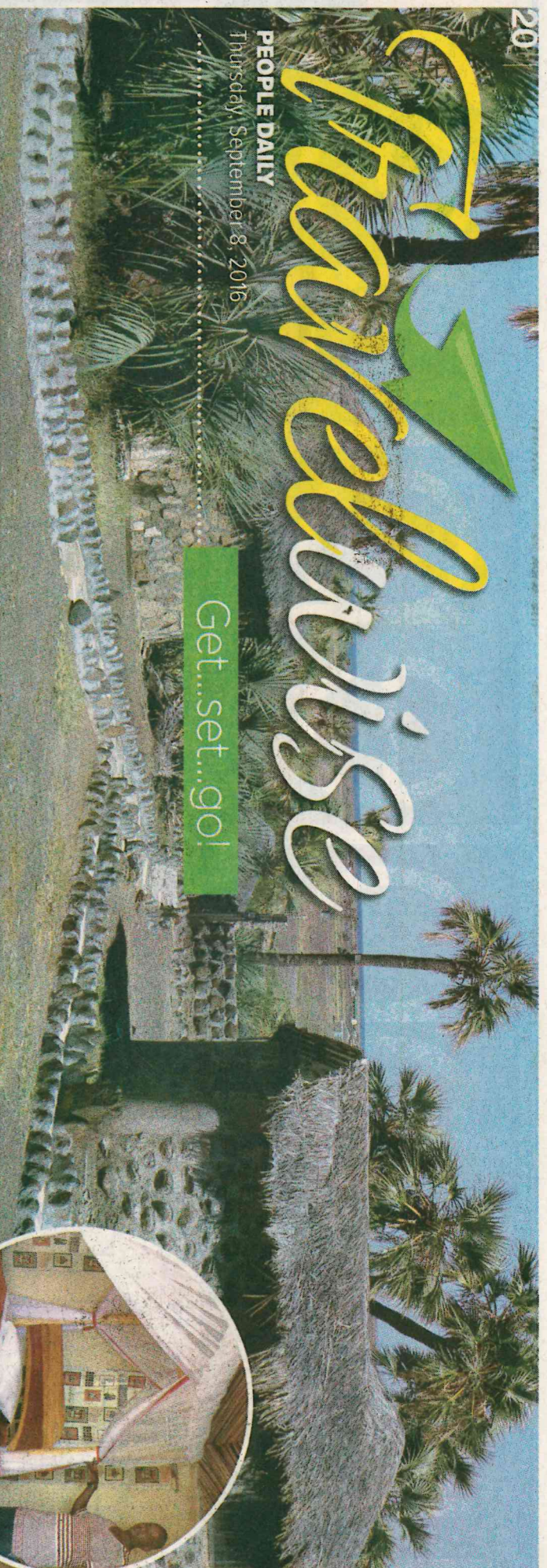


Travelwise

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Get...set...go!



Malabo Resort, the oasis of Turkana south

Known as 'the place of many trees' in the local Samburu language, Loiyankalani was the set for *The Constant Gardener*, a 2005 Hollywood blockbuster that put the dusty town in international limelight

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Standing on the south-eastern shores of Lake Turkana is the sparsely populated Loiyankalani town in Marsabit county.

This part of Northern Kenya experiences high tropical temperatures. It's a well-known town by archaeologists seeking access to the northern prehistoric sites, including the Desert Museum near the lake and Koobi Fora, a home of fossils.

Known as "The place of many trees" in the local Samburu language, Loiyankalani was the set of *The Constant Gardener*, a 2005 Hollywood blockbuster that put this dusty town in the international limelight. Palm trees line the lake as the town that glitters on an outcrop.

For most travellers, the rough tough road and terrain from Laisamis in Isiolo county calls for a stopover and a night rest in the town. Amazingly, it is only at



Malabo Resort is the only place one can get the best accommodation and ice cold drinks to quench their thirsts in the hot town of Loiyankalani on the Southern shores of Lake Turkana. PHOTOS: CHRISTINE MUSA

Malabo Resort that one can get ice-cold water and drinks to quench their thirsts in the hot town. The town's most famous lodge, Oasis Resort, was once ran down and has been undergoing renovation.

Malabo is also the place where temperatures can drop so low, making guests to open their bags in search of jackets amid the hot surroundings. The five-year-old resort, whose name means honey, is built using local natural materials and surrounded by hundreds of trees.

It has six traditional houses with four beds each known as the Turkana family houses and 16 self-contained cottages for accommodation. All houses are named according to fish species found in the Lake Turkana. Tents are also available at negotiable but affordable rates depending on size and seasons. Accommodation rates range from Sh2,500 to Sh6,000 a night.

Named after the founder's first-born daughter, Malabo offers mouth-watering delicacies. The staff are also friendly and cheerful, making your stay at the facility



worthwhile. The self-contained houses with instant showers and big, clean, comfortable king size beds make the night at the resort fascinating. The floor has a natural touch, reflecting good use of heaps of stones found along Lake Turkana. And when it gets hot, the fan enables you to cool the room.

Tour operator

According to the owner, Steve Lenayapa, who was brought up in the area, it has always been his dream to offer his guests the best. For instance, the resort runs a boat excursion where clients pay Sh5,000 for an hour's ride on the lake.

After a decade of being a tour operator, his dream came true and he injected the small capital he had saved from employment into the business. "I had been a tour operator for 10 years. It was always my dream to be a resort owner where I would use skills learnt from my interactions with tourist to ensure I offer them satisfactory services," he says.

His small capital made him opt for natural resources readily available in this

area. There are plenty of stones to construct houses in the area and a thatched roof was relatively cost-effective as he only required labour services, cement and a few other materials.

The floors are made of natural stones instead of the normal tiles or the more common, cemented floors. "All furniture and beds are also made from readily available natural trees, giving them a unique cultural touch," said Lenayapa. However, the cheap availability of materials meant that he had to involve professionals to give the final product such as furniture a neat quality finish. He spent three years to complete the construction.

"Meanwhile, I took advantage of the plenty of water available in the area to plant many trees and flowers and came up with a well-manicured and landscaped compound. A breath-taking environment can be attained in any environment however remote it is," he said.

Furniture and fittings are made from natural stones carved in different, eye-catching shapes to match with the sur-

About Loiyankalani

Loiyangalani or Loiyankalani is a small town located on the south-eastern coast of Lake Turkana. It was established around a fresh water spring and is often called an oasis in the desert.

The name means a place of many trees in the native Samburu tongue and is home to the El Moio, an almost extinct community, amongst other communities. Main activities include fishing, tourism and gold panning.

It is fast becoming a popular tourist destination in Northern Kenya as the surrounding El Moio and Turkana villages, amongst others, offer unique cultural experiences.

In June 2008, the National Museums of Kenya officially opened the first and only Desert Museum in Loiyangalani, which mirrors the cultures and lifestyles of the eight communities that live in this area. This is also the year when the First Lake Turkana Cultural Festival took place celebrating and uniting all tribes affiliated to Loiyangalani, that live around Lake Turkana. The three-day carnival is a celebration of the rich cultures of the El Moio, Samburu, Gabbra, Rendile, Wajir, Dasamach and the Turkana all who live around the Jade Sea.

rounding environment. The culture of Samburu, Turkana and Rendile people who are the dominant communities is well represented in the designs.

The main challenge facing his business is a poor road network to major towns in Kenya and lack of an airstrip, which bars many potential interested visitors from touring the area.

Yet, the friendly communities who freely interact with visitors at the facility are willing to entertain guests with their cultural songs and dance. Interacting with them also gives a visitor a chance to learn their rich cultural practices. Artifacts and ornaments are also readily available at affordable prices in the surrounding Marayattas.