

Topic Page: [Nairobi \(Kenya\)](#)

Summary Article: **Nairobi**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(nīrō'bē), city (1996 pop. 3,000,000), capital of Kenya, S Kenya, in the E African highlands. Nairobi is Kenya's largest city and its administrative, communications, and economic center. It is the trade and distribution center for a productive agricultural area specializing in coffee, tea, and cattle. The city has a large industrial complex which manufactures automobiles, food products, beverages, construction materials, cigarettes, chemicals, textiles, clothing, glass, and furniture. The city is linked by road with the rest of Kenya and by railroad with Mombasa (on the Indian Ocean coast), W Kenya, and Uganda. Although Nairobi is only 90 mi (145 km) south of the equator, it has a moderate climate, largely because of its high altitude (c.5,500 ft/1,680 m). Many tourists are attracted to Nairobi National Park, a large wildlife sanctuary on the city's outskirts, and to nearby scenic areas. Nairobi was founded in 1899 on the site of a waterhole of the pastoral Masai as a railhead camp on the Mombasa-Uganda line. In 1905 it replaced Mombasa as the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya Colony, 1920–63). Nairobi became the center of the prosperous European-dominated highlands farming area. In the 1950s the Mau Mau insurgency flared among Kikuyu people near Nairobi; there were related disturbances in the city. Nairobi Univ., Kenyatta Univ., and several medical and technical schools are in Nairobi. The National Museum of Kenya, which has extensive collections of Kenya's prehistory and natural history, and the Sorsbie art gallery are in Nairobi. Many international organizations have their African headquarters in the area, including the United Nations Environmental Program.

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