

# Running wild

Regarded as one of the toughest marathons in the world, the Safaricom Marathon will test your stamina, sanity and survival instincts against a backdrop of stunning beauty and all for a good cause

By **Elodie Sampere**

**O**n Saturday, the 26th of June, 1,000 runners from 20 different countries and about 3,000 spectators descended on the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy for the 11th Safaricom Marathon. For those of us who live on Lewa year around, it is a bit difficult to see our oasis of peace and tranquility being "invaded" by a bunch of people in shorts and tights.

## Making Tracks in Paradise

Situated about 260 km from Nairobi, the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy offers some of the most beautiful sceneries in Kenya. Mount Kenya lies to the south and there are breath-

taking views north towards Samburu and Ol Lolokwe. The heavily protected 62,000 acre wildlife sanctuary is home to two of the most endangered species in the country, the black rhino and the Grevy's zebra as well as herds of elephant, cheetah, lion and leopard, and a vast assortment of plains game including zebra, giraffe, buffalo and much more. It is a haven for wildlife.

## Making a Difference

So why have a marathon you ask? And why have it 11 years in a row? The facts are simple: throughout the years, the Safaricom Marathon has raised over \$2.25 million



### What you need to know

- ▶ The Safaricom Marathon takes place once a year, on the last weekend of June
- ▶ You can enter the full marathon as an individual or the half-marathon as a team
- ▶ It has been described as one of the toughest marathons in the world
- ▶ All the money raised from the Marathon goes towards a range of education, community development, health and wildlife conservation projects across Kenya
- ▶ The event is getting so popular that entries had to be closed in May this year

Opposite page: Running wild under Mount Kenya's watchful gaze. This page clockwise from top: The starting line; the first wheelchair athlete; a gazelle takes the lead.

dollars. These funds are used in a wide range of projects benefiting sustainable development, education, healthcare and wildlife. In other words, this event is using wildlife conservation as a catalyst to alleviate poverty, reduce conflict and improve education and livelihoods in rural areas rich in biodiversity. Its benefits cannot be denied.

## Things to Note

This year was full of "firsts". We had our first wheel chair athlete who completed the half marathon. It was the first time the CEO of Tusk Trust, the co-organisers of the event ran the race and it was a first for the number of spectators who cheered the runners on.

I ran the half marathon last year and promised myself I would never do it again.

Probably because of the lack of proper training, it was the toughest thing I have ever done. The terrain is brutal, the heat is unbearable and the full marathon runners that pass you at about kilometer 12 are really annoying. But I still highly recommend it. The energy and the spirit that surrounds the entire event is something not to be missed. The fact that you can say you have "run in the wild" is definitely to be bragged about and will help make all your family and friends extremely jealous. And to know that all your sweat and efforts are going straight to a good cause, to help communities and people around Kenya that really need it just makes the whole thing worth it. **D**

### Useful Info

Find out more at [www.tusk.org](http://www.tusk.org) or [www.lewa.org](http://www.lewa.org).

Photographs: Emma Craig, Elodie Sampere