

# EAST AFRICA EXPERIENCES UNWANTED POPULARITY



Tourism industry has also its dark sides. One of them is the sex business. World has many places known as popular sex tourism destination - Thailand or Amsterdam are among the best known. Nevertheless, it seems that the popularity of Africa for this kind of visitors is growing.

East Africa witnesses an influx of sex tourists and the number of various sex offences in these countries is growing. An Italian chef, for example, has been declared an illegal immigrant in Tanzania's island of Zanzibar after he made four local girls, housemaids, pregnant. Italian tourists also like Kenya and beach holidays rather than wildlife photographic safaris. Some of these holiday makers however come solely for Kenyan girls. The coastal towns of Malindi and Mombasa are allegedly the East Africa's leading destinations for child sex tourism.

As in other parts of world the problem is caused especially by the country's poverty. Young Kenyan girls as well as boys often become prostitutes to improve their families' economic situation. Others are offered a legal job but than they are forced to have sex with foreigners. Some of them then become regular sex workers. According to a UNICEF study there are approximately 15 000 girls aged 12 - 18 involved in this nasty business.

Not only men travel to Africa to have sex. Another segment of customers are wealthy older women who travel to Africa to seek company of young Kenyan men. To be seen as a wealthy woman in Kenya you do not have to be a millionaire. Women who are nurses or real estate agents in the UK may well play the role of a rich lady here.

Kenyan officials are trying to fight against the unwanted popularity since it damages the image of the country as a tourist destination. After the post election violence the government tries hard to lure tourists back in here but promoting the country as a sex tourism destination is not one of their goals.

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