Kenya is endowed with natural beauty and a rich pre-historic record that dates back over 100 million years ago, way back into the age of dinosaurs. The Lake Turkana National Park is unique and is amongst the six World Heritage Sites that Kenya boasts of. It is believed that this is where life began as we know it, therefore proving that Kenya truly is the Cradle of Mankind.

A little history...
Where is the Cradle of Mankind located?
In 1968, research work began on the eastern shores of Lake Turkana (Koobi Fora) led by Dr. Richard Leakey, a world renown paleontologist. By 1994, over 200 hominid and animal fossils were found here, more than any collection the world had ever produced in 60 years. To-date, research continues with the National Museums of Kenya team of expert scientists, in the quest to find the missing link. Over 100 archaeological sites exist today.
This archaic Kenyan forest has been fortified for preservation. It is 12.8 million years old.

So what is so special about Kenya, and why Turkana?

Lake Turkana is the world’s largest desert and alkaline lake. The lake also contains the largest population of the Nile crocodile.

- The Lake Turkana National Park is a World Heritage Site serving as a stopover for migrant waterfowl and a major breeding ground for the Nile crocodile, hippopotamus and a variety of venomous snakes. Koobi Fora deposits, rich in mammalian, molluscan and other fossil remains has contributed more to the understanding of human evolution than any other site in the continent.

- Commonly referred to by anthropologists as the Cradle of Mankind, Kenya holds an unsurpassed archive of Human Prehistory. It holds the world’s richest record of human pre-history, the longest and most complete record of human ancestry spanning over 27 million years and a rich fossil heritage stretching back over 100 million years into the dinosaur age. This is the largest and most well-documented collection of human related fossils that exists. It is unmatched anywhere in the world and can only be found at the National Museums of Kenya Headquarters.

- Not only are all species of human related fossils represented, but also some fauna (animal life) and plant species related to the evolution theory e.g. elephants, crocodiles, etc.
Kenya, Truly the Cradle of Mankind

In addition to fossil records, the existence of a long record of technological evolution with tools as old as 2.3 million years old also exist.

Other than Turkana, a wide environmental representation of fossil evidence and tools also exists in other parts of the country. Each region in Kenya has a story to tell e.g. Rift Valley, Turkana, etc.

There is a wide genetic representation among some people (e.g. the Turkana) pointing to the fact that humans have been here for a very long time.

There is a connection with the Far East, through the Red Sea, where humans are believed to have dispersed to other regions of the world.

There is evidence of other factors that relate to the evolution of humans e.g. humans made fire as far back as 1.8 million years ago and the existence of footprints dating back to 1.55 million years.

Kenya’s human fossil record dates back to the last 6 million years, making Kenya undisputedly the oldest record holder and truly the Cradle of Mankind.
The study of human evolution began in the early 20th century and still continues to date through the tireless efforts of Kenyan scientists at the National Museums of Kenya. Amongst the most famous discoveries that have put Kenya on the world map is the Turkana Boy, discovered by a Kenyan - Mr. Kamoya Kimeu, dating back to 1.6 million years ago. This young boy of about 9-12 years old and 1.6 meters tall, is the only almost complete skeleton of a human related fossil ever found in the world and can be viewed at the National Museum, amongst other discoveries in Nairobi.

In terms of tourism, the Northern Tourist Circuit offers visitors an opportunity to make pilgrimage visits to Kenya, truly the Cradle of Mankind.
Kenya, Truly the Cradle of Mankind

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For visitors looking for adventure, this semi-desert like environment offers amazing opportunities to discover Kenya’s hidden treasures of the north. These include spectacular scenic viewing; a rich cultural heritage; bird watching; three national parks in one location; a visit to the Cradle of Mankind (archaeological sites) which also have extinct species related to the tortoise, elephant and crocodile; Koobi Fora Museum and campsite amongst many other attractions.

So next time you want to discover a unique part of the world, why not make a pilgrimage trip to Kenya, Truly the Cradle of Mankind. It will take you 3 days by road or 2 hours by air through the most spectacular scenery in Kenya. Along the route, expect to see minority communities such as the El Molo and the rich cultural heritage of the Samburus, Pokots, Rendilles, Gabbra, Dassanach, Turkans and Wattas some of whom are distant cousins of the more popular Maasai community.
The 1.6 million year old fossil of an extinct tortoise.

This is the shell and limb bones of a giant tortoise, 1.6 million years old. The tortoise is lying upside down and may have died by falling from a river bank on its back.

Tortoises and turtles are reptiles unique in having a protective bony shell enclosing their body. They do not have teeth but instead have a horny beak on the upper and lower jaw. The earliest turtles lived over 200 million years ago and have changed very little.
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