

TAITA TAVETA COUNTY TOURISM POLICY

Department of Trade, Tourism, Culture and Industrialization

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Definitions

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

1.1 Background

1.2 Rationale for the Tourism Policy

1.3 Policy Formulation Process

1.4 Policy Goal, Objectives and Guiding Principles

1.5 Scope of the Policy

1.6 Structure of the Policy

Chapter 2 – Situational Analysis of Tourism in Taita Taveta County

2.1 Overview of Tourism in the County

2.2 Key Tourism Assets in Taita Taveta County

2.3 Tourism Infrastructure

2.4 Tourism Institutional Framework

2.5 Key Challenges Affecting Tourism Development

2.6 Opportunities for Tourism Development

Chapter 3 – Policy Vision, Mission and Objectives

Chapter 4 – Tourism Development Strategies

Chapter 5 – Tourism Marketing and Destination Branding

Chapter 6 – Tourism Investment and Financing

Chapter 7 – Community Participation and Benefit Sharing

Chapter 8 – Tourism Infrastructure Development

Chapter 9 – Tourism Governance and Institutional Framework

Chapter 10 – Implementation Framework

FOREWORD

Tourism has been identified by the United Nations as one of the key sectors capable of driving the transition towards a Green Economy. It is recognized globally as a sector capable of making a significant contribution to sustainable development by generating employment, supporting local enterprises, strengthening cultural identity and preserving environmental resources.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, under the Fourth Schedule, devolves the function of local tourism development to County Governments. This constitutional mandate places the County Government of Taita Taveta at the forefront of nurturing and growing tourism within our communities.

Tourism remains one of the most strategic economic drivers for Taita Taveta County. The County hosts globally significant biodiversity, cultural heritage, World War I historical sites, unique landscapes, community conservancies, and strong cultural traditions. These assets provide the County with a unique opportunity to position itself as a major tourism destination.

Despite these advantages, the tourism sector within the County remains underdeveloped due to several constraints including infrastructure gaps, weak coordination between stakeholders, limited destination marketing, insufficient tourism investment, and limited retention of tourism revenue within the local economy.

The County Government of Taita Taveta has identified economic diversification as a key objective within its development agenda. Tourism has therefore been recognized as a strategic sector capable of driving economic transformation through job creation, enterprise development, and increased county revenues.

This Tourism Policy establishes a coherent and implementable framework for developing, managing, promoting and protecting tourism resources in Taita Taveta County over the period **2026–2031**.

Taita Taveta County shall be marketed as a **distinct tourism destination** and not solely as a transit location within the broader Tsavo tourism circuit. The County will pursue destination differentiation by highlighting its unique cultural heritage, landscapes, conservancies and historical sites.

Community engagement remains central to the success of tourism development. When local communities understand the benefits of tourism and actively participate in tourism enterprises, destinations flourish and tourism becomes sustainable.

This policy therefore provides a clear roadmap for tourism development within the County while ensuring environmental sustainability, cultural preservation and inclusive economic participation.

I trust that this policy will guide informed decision-making and strategic investments that will ensure tourism contributes meaningfully to the County’s development goals as outlined in the CIDP, Kenya Vision 2030 and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda.

HON. GERTRUDE SHUWE
CECM – Trade, Tourism, Culture and Industrialization
County Government of Taita Taveta

PREFACE

The development of the Taita Taveta County Tourism Policy has been a comprehensive and consultative process aimed at establishing a clear strategic framework for the sustainable development of tourism within the county.

Tourism functions are constitutionally shared between the National and County Governments under the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. While the National Government is responsible for tourism policy, regulation and international promotion, County Governments are responsible for local tourism development and destination promotion.

The genesis of this policy lies in the recognition that although Taita Taveta County possesses exceptional tourism assets, these resources have not been optimally harnessed due to fragmented planning, limited marketing, inadequate investment and weak institutional coordination.

This policy therefore establishes a structured framework for unlocking the county's tourism potential while ensuring sustainability, community participation and equitable economic benefits.

The policy development process involved extensive consultations with stakeholders including:

- government ministries, departments and agencies
- private sector tourism operators
- community organizations
- development partners
- non-governmental organizations
- academic institutions.

This document draws upon extensive background research conducted by the Directorate of Tourism and strategic insights from the **Taita Taveta Tourism Master Plan**.

The policy recognizes the mandates of national tourism institutions including:

- Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)
- Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA)
- Kenya Tourism Board (KTB)
- National Museums of Kenya (NMK).

This Policy:

- aligns with the Constitution of Kenya, 2010
- aligns with the Tourism Act and national tourism policy frameworks

- aligns with the Public Finance Management Act, 2012
- supports intergovernmental coordination
- anchors a dedicated County Tourism Development Fund
- establishes a **20% County Tourism Development Levy** and reinvestment framework
- integrates community benefit-sharing and co-management principles
- introduces cultural heritage protection mechanisms
- provides implementation clarity through structured monitoring and evaluation.

The policy outlines the current tourism situation in the County, presents clear policy statements, and provides frameworks for implementation and monitoring.

Elizabeth Mbinga

Chief Officer

Trade, Tourism, Culture & Industrialization

County Government of Taita Taveta

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The Department of Trade, Tourism, Culture and Industrialization wishes to acknowledge the team led by the Director of Tourism & Culture, Mr. Wallace Mwaluma, for conducting extensive background research and coordinating the drafting of this policy.

The County Tourism Policy Advisory Group and Steering Committee provided technical support and guidance during the policy development process.

The County Government also acknowledges the contributions of stakeholders including government agencies, private sector tourism operators, community groups and development partners who participated in consultative forums and contributed valuable insights to the formulation of this policy.

Wallace Mwaluma
Director of Tourism & Culture
County Government of Taita Taveta

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism is a key economic sector with strong potential to contribute to economic growth, employment creation, environmental conservation and community livelihoods in Taita Taveta County. The County hosts a diverse range of tourism assets including the globally recognized Tsavo ecosystem, rich cultural heritage, historical World War I sites, unique natural landscapes and community conservancies.

Despite these assets, tourism development in the County has historically been concentrated within national parks, resulting in limited economic benefits for local communities and the broader county economy. There is therefore a need for a structured policy framework to guide sustainable tourism development, strengthen local tourism enterprises and enhance the County's ability to capture tourism-related economic opportunities.

This Tourism Policy provides a comprehensive framework for the development, management and promotion of tourism within Taita Taveta County for the period **2026–2031**. The policy aligns with the Constitution of Kenya, the Tourism Act, the County Governments Act, the Public Finance Management Act and other relevant national and county legislation.

The policy outlines strategies for tourism product diversification, tourism infrastructure development, destination marketing, tourism investment promotion, community participation and environmental conservation.

Key tourism development priorities identified in the policy include:

- diversification of tourism products beyond wildlife tourism
- development of cultural and heritage tourism experiences
- strengthening community-based tourism enterprises
- improving tourism infrastructure and accessibility
- strengthening tourism marketing and destination branding
- attracting tourism investment through public–private partnerships
- strengthening institutional coordination in tourism governance.

To support sustainable financing of tourism development initiatives, the policy provides for the establishment of a **County Tourism Development Levy equivalent to twenty percent (20%) of applicable tourism-related revenues generated within the county** and the creation of a **County Tourism Development Fund**.

The policy also establishes a coordinated governance structure involving the County Department responsible for Tourism, the Directorate of Tourism, the County Tourism Board and a Tourism Stakeholder Coordination Forum to ensure effective implementation and stakeholder engagement.

Through the implementation of this policy, Taita Taveta County aims to position itself as **“Kenya’s Gateway to the Tsavo Landscape – Where Wildlife, Culture and History Converge.”**

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIDP – County Integrated Development Plan
EMCA – Environmental Management and Coordination Act
GSTC – Global Sustainable Tourism Council
KFS – Kenya Forest Service
KIPI – Kenya Industrial Property Institute
KTB – Kenya Tourism Board
KWS – Kenya Wildlife Service
MICE – Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
NEMA – National Environment Management Authority
NMK – National Museums of Kenya
PFMA – Public Finance Management Act
PPP – Public–Private Partnership
SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
TRA – Tourism Regulatory Authority
TRI – Tourism Research Institute
UN Tourism – United Nations Tourism Organization

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy:

Tourism Resource

Means any natural, cultural, historical, ecological or recreational asset capable of attracting visitors, including landscapes, wildlife habitats, cultural heritage sites, historical landmarks, community tourism enterprises and tourism infrastructure.

Tourism Product

Means a tourism experience or service offered to visitors including wildlife tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism and recreational tourism activities.

Community-Based Tourism

Means tourism enterprises owned or managed by local communities that generate economic benefits for community members while promoting conservation and cultural heritage preservation.

Tourism Circuit

Means a structured tourism route linking multiple tourism attractions within a defined geographical area.

Tourism Development Levy

Means a levy imposed by the County Government on applicable tourism-related revenues to support tourism development initiatives.

Tourism Development Fund

Means a county-managed fund established to finance tourism infrastructure development, tourism marketing, tourism research and community tourism initiatives.

INDICATIVE IMPLEMENTATION BUDGET FRAMEWORK

To support implementation of the Tourism Policy, the County Government shall mobilize financial resources through county budget allocations, the Tourism Development Levy, development partner support and private sector investment.

Indicative priority investment areas include:

Strategic Area	Indicative Investment Priority
Tourism product development	Development of heritage sites, cultural villages, eco-tourism trails
Tourism infrastructure	Access roads, tourism signage, visitor centres
Destination marketing	Branding campaigns, tourism promotions
Community tourism	Community tourism enterprises and training
Tourism research	Data collection systems and tourism statistics
Investment promotion	Tourism investment forums and investor facilitation

The County Government shall incorporate tourism development funding within the **County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP)** and annual budget planning processes.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AG – Attorney General
AWF – African Wildlife Fund
BETA – Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda
CBTEs – Community Based Tourism Enterprises
CECM – County Executive Committee Member
CGTT – County Government of Taita Taveta
CIDP – County Integrated Development Plan
CTP – County Tourism Policy
EAC – East African Community
GIS – Geographic Information System
GSTC – Global Sustainable Tourism Council
ICT – Information Communication Technology
IFAW – International Fund for Animal Welfare
KFS – Kenya Forest Service
KIPI – Kenya Industrial Property Institute
KIPPRA – Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
KTFC – Kenya Tourism Finance Corporation
KTB – Kenya Tourism Board
KWS – Kenya Wildlife Service
MICE – Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
MSMEs – Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
NEMA – National Environment Management Authority
NMK – National Museums of Kenya

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background

Tourism is one of Kenya's leading economic sectors, contributing significantly to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment creation, and foreign exchange earnings. The sector plays a critical role in the country's socio-economic development and has consistently been recognized as a key pillar of Kenya's economic growth strategy.

The tourism sector has strong linkages with other sectors of the economy including agriculture, transport, manufacturing, trade and service industries, making it a powerful catalyst for economic growth, enterprise development, and livelihood creation.

At the county level, tourism provides important opportunities for:

- local enterprise development
- employment creation
- infrastructure development
- conservation of natural resources
- promotion of cultural heritage
- stimulation of investment in hospitality and related services.

Tourism is also widely recognized as a driver of regional development, investment attraction, and inclusive economic growth. For counties with rich natural and cultural resources, tourism provides an opportunity to diversify local economies while generating sustainable livelihoods for host communities.

In accordance with the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, tourism policy and international tourism promotion are functions of the National Government, while **local tourism development and regulation fall within the mandate of County Governments under trade development and regulation.** This constitutional framework empowers county governments to develop strategies, policies and programs that promote sustainable tourism development within their jurisdictions.

Taita Taveta County is strategically positioned within Kenya's tourism landscape and possesses a wide range of tourism resources including wildlife ecosystems, mountains, forests, lakes, historical sites and vibrant cultural traditions. The county hosts a significant portion of the globally recognized **Tsavo Ecosystem**, one of the largest protected wildlife landscapes in Africa, including Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks. This ecosystem supports diverse wildlife populations and attracts international visitors while providing significant opportunities for tourism development.

In addition to wildlife tourism, the county is endowed with unique cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, historical sites including World War I battlefields, indigenous knowledge systems, and community-based tourism opportunities. These diverse tourism assets provide a strong foundation for the development of a competitive and sustainable tourism destination.

Despite this immense potential, tourism development in Taita Taveta County remains constrained by a number of structural challenges including limited tourism infrastructure, weak product diversification, inadequate marketing, limited community participation, and insufficient coordination among sector stakeholders.

The County Government shall position **Taita Taveta as a distinct tourism destination within Kenya's tourism landscape**, leveraging its unique wildlife ecosystems, landscapes, cultural heritage and historical assets, while complementing national tourism initiatives.

The development of this County Tourism Policy therefore seeks to provide a structured framework for the sustainable development, management, and promotion of tourism within Taita Taveta County.

1.2 Rationale for the Formulation of the County Tourism Policy

The County Government of Taita Taveta has identified economic diversification as a key objective and critical enabler of the county's economic competitiveness and sustainable development. The development of the tourism sector has the potential to significantly contribute to the county's socio-economic growth through job creation, revenue enhancement, and stimulation of local enterprises.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, in its Fourth Schedule, provides that tourism policy and development are functions of the National Government while **local tourism development is a function of County Governments**. This constitutional provision vests in the County Government of Taita Taveta the mandate and responsibility to develop, regulate and promote tourism within its jurisdiction.

The review of the **National Tourism Policy, 2025**, particularly with regard to strengthening policy, legal and institutional frameworks, and enhancing tourism quality standards, further underscores the need for counties to develop coherent tourism policies aligned with national frameworks while responding to local circumstances.

Tourism in Taita Taveta County remains underdeveloped due to several structural challenges including:

1. Limited infrastructure and access to tourism sites
2. Absence of guiding pricing policies for tourism products and services

3. Poor product packaging, branding and publicity
4. Lack of accessible tourism information for visitors
5. Weak promotion of intangible heritage and indigenous knowledge systems
6. Limited cooperation and coordination among stakeholders
7. Insecurity threats including human trafficking, illegal wildlife trade and biopiracy
8. Lack of structured benefit-sharing mechanisms with host communities
9. Sustainability gaps and inadequate biodiversity protection measures
10. Limited capacity building for tourism service providers
11. Land tenure challenges affecting tourism development
12. Undeveloped World War I heritage tourism product
13. Human-wildlife conflict affecting community support for conservation
14. Weak inclusion of youth, women and persons with disabilities in tourism
15. Erosion of indigenous knowledge systems
16. Substandard hospitality service standards
17. Weak enforcement of regulations and inadequate revenue capture
18. Inadequate destination marketing and branding
19. Weak coordination between county and national tourism agencies
20. Limited and unpredictable funding for tourism development.

This policy therefore seeks to address these challenges and establish a coherent framework for tourism development in the county.

The policy further establishes the foundation for the development of a **County Tourism Act and a County Tourism Development Fund** to provide sustainable financing, institutional coordination and strategic management of tourism development in Taita Taveta County.

1.3 Policy Formulation Process

The development of the County Tourism Policy involved a consultative and participatory process led by the Department of Trade, Tourism, Culture and Industrialization.

The process began with the establishment of a Tourism Policy Development Committee comprising local and regional experts nominated by the County Executive Committee Member responsible for Trade, Tourism and Industrialization. The Directorate of Tourism provided secretariat support and technical coordination.

Stakeholder views were obtained through:

- stakeholder consultation sessions across the county
- an online public survey
- consultations with national government agencies including the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife
- bilateral meetings with ministries, agencies, public bodies and non-governmental organizations
- consultations with the private tourism sector

- focus group discussions with community representatives, youth groups, women groups and persons with disabilities.

The drafting process incorporated background research undertaken by the Directorate of Tourism and insights drawn from the Taita Taveta Tourism Master Plan and the National Tourism Policy.

1.4 Policy Goal, Objectives and Guiding Principles

Goal

To transform Taita Taveta into a **competitive, sustainable and inclusive tourism destination that contributes significantly to the county's socio-economic development and improves the quality of life of its residents.**

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Promote sustainable local tourism development that enhances economic growth and environmental sustainability.
2. Provide a clear legal and institutional framework for tourism development and coordination.
3. Promote diversification of tourism products and experiences.
4. Mobilize resources for sustainable tourism development.
5. Strengthen tourism marketing and destination branding.
6. Promote research, innovation and technology in tourism development.
7. Enhance collaboration among stakeholders in the tourism sector.
8. Strengthen community participation and benefit-sharing in tourism.
9. Promote tourism entrepreneurship and enterprise development particularly among youth, women and persons with disabilities.
10. Integrate tourism planning into county spatial planning and infrastructure development frameworks.

Guiding Principles

The following principles shall guide the implementation of this policy:

Good Governance

Tourism development shall be guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, integrity and participation as provided for under Article 10 of the Constitution.

Sustainability

Tourism shall be developed in a manner that conserves natural resources and protects cultural heritage for future generations.

Participation

Tourism planning and development shall involve national government agencies, county institutions, private sector actors, civil society and local communities.

Subsidiarity

Tourism development decisions shall be undertaken at the most appropriate level to ensure efficient and responsive governance.

Constitutionality and Legality

All actions undertaken under this policy shall respect the constitutional division of functions and comply with applicable national and county laws.

Inclusivity

Tourism development shall promote equitable participation and benefit-sharing among all groups in society including youth, women, and persons with disabilities.

Climate Resilience

Tourism planning and development shall integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to protect ecosystems, landscapes and tourism assets.

1.5 Scope of the Policy

This policy provides a framework for the development, management and promotion of **local tourism in Taita Taveta County**.

For the purposes of this policy, **local tourism** refers to tourism activities undertaken within Taita Taveta County by residents of the county, residents of other counties within Kenya, or domestic visitors travelling within the country.

Tourism development within national parks and other protected areas shall remain under the mandate of the **Kenya Wildlife Service in accordance with the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act**, while the County Government shall support complementary tourism development, community tourism enterprises, destination promotion and tourism infrastructure within its jurisdiction.

For the purposes of this policy:

Tourism Resource means any natural, cultural, historical, ecological or recreational asset capable of attracting visitors, including landscapes, wildlife habitats, cultural heritage sites, historical landmarks, community tourism enterprises and associated infrastructure.

The scope of this policy includes:

- wildlife tourism
- cultural and heritage tourism
- adventure tourism

- eco-tourism and nature tourism
- sports tourism
- business tourism (MICE)
- community-based tourism
- agro-tourism and niche tourism products.

The policy further provides guidance on tourism promotion, investment, institutional coordination, quality standards, human resource development, sustainable tourism, community participation, research, technology and partnerships.

The policy also provides the strategic framework for future **tourism legislation, institutional arrangements and tourism financing mechanisms within the County.**

1.6 Structure of the Policy

This policy is organized into five chapters:

Chapter One provides the background and introduction.

Chapter Two presents the situational analysis of tourism in Taita Taveta County.

Chapter Three outlines policy statements and strategic interventions for tourism development.

Chapter Four provides the implementation framework including coordination mechanisms and stakeholder roles.

Chapter Five presents the monitoring and evaluation framework for assessing policy implementation and impact.

The policy shall guide tourism development in Taita Taveta County for a period of **five years (2026–2031)** and shall be subject to review based on implementation progress and emerging sector developments.

CHAPTER TWO

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF TOURISM IN TAITA TAVETA COUNTY

2.1 Overview of Tourism in the County

Tourism in Taita Taveta County is largely driven by wildlife tourism associated with the **Tsavo Ecosystem**. Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks together form one of the largest protected wildlife ecosystems in Africa and represent the most significant tourism attraction within the county.

The Tsavo ecosystem attracts both domestic and international visitors due to its vast landscapes, rich biodiversity, and iconic wildlife populations. As a result, wildlife tourism remains the backbone of the tourism industry within the county.

However, while the county hosts these globally recognized attractions, a significant proportion of tourism revenue generated within the parks does not sufficiently benefit local communities or the broader county economy. Many visitors enter the parks through national tourism circuits and exit without engaging with tourism products, services, or attractions located within the county.

This situation presents an opportunity for the County Government to strengthen **local tourism development and product diversification** in order to capture greater economic value from tourism activities and increase the retention of tourism-related revenue within the county.

2.2 Key Tourism Assets in Taita Taveta County

2.2.1 Wildlife and Biodiversity

Taita Taveta County hosts rich biodiversity within the Tsavo ecosystem. The ecosystem supports numerous wildlife species including elephants, lions, leopards, giraffes, zebras, buffaloes and a wide variety of bird species.

Wildlife tourism remains the primary tourism attraction within the county and continues to attract both domestic and international tourists. The presence of protected wildlife areas also provides opportunities for complementary tourism products such as photographic tourism, conservation tourism, and wildlife education experiences.

2.2.2 Community Conservancies and Ranches

The county hosts numerous ranches and community conservancies that serve as wildlife dispersal areas for animals migrating from Tsavo National Parks.

These conservancies play a critical role in wildlife conservation and ecosystem management while also providing opportunities for **community-based tourism enterprises** including eco-lodges, guided tours and conservation tourism initiatives.

Community conservancies contribute to environmental conservation while supporting local livelihoods and strengthening community participation in tourism development.

2.2.3 Cultural Heritage

The county is home to the **Taita and Taveta communities**, whose rich cultural traditions, folklore, cuisine, music, crafts and indigenous knowledge systems provide opportunities for cultural tourism development.

Cultural tourism has the potential to provide visitors with authentic cultural experiences while supporting the preservation of cultural heritage and promoting community participation in tourism activities.

2.2.4 Historical Heritage

Taita Taveta County hosts several important **World War I battlefield sites** that hold significant historical value.

These sites present strong potential for heritage tourism development through:

- battlefield tours
- heritage museums
- historical interpretation centres
- memorial tourism
- educational tourism.

The development of heritage tourism products can contribute to diversifying tourism experiences while preserving important historical assets within the county.

2.2.5 Natural Landscapes

The county has diverse landscapes that support eco-tourism and adventure tourism activities.

These landscapes include:

- Taita Hills
- Sagalla Hills
- Mount Kasigau
- Lake Chala
- Lake Jipe
- Ngangao Forest.

These natural environments offer opportunities for hiking, bird watching, camping, scenic tourism, photography tourism and other nature-based tourism activities.

2.2.6 Agricultural Tourism Potential

Taita Taveta County produces several agricultural products that can support **agro-tourism initiatives**.

These include:

- sisal production
- bananas from Taveta
- macadamia farming
- bamboo cultivation.

Agricultural tourism provides opportunities for visitors to experience agricultural production systems while supporting local value chains and diversifying tourism experiences within the county.

2.3 Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure within the county remains limited and unevenly distributed.

Key infrastructure gaps include:

- poor access roads to tourism sites
- limited visitor information centres
- insufficient signage to tourism attractions
- limited accommodation facilities outside national parks
- limited tourism interpretation infrastructure
- inadequate public amenities at tourism sites.

Improving tourism infrastructure will be essential for expanding tourism activities within the county, improving visitor experiences, and attracting tourism investment.

2.4 Tourism Institutional Framework

Tourism development within the county currently involves multiple stakeholders including:

- County Government departments
- national tourism agencies
- private sector tourism operators
- community organizations
- conservation institutions.

Key national institutions involved in tourism development include the **Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA), Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), Tourism Research Institute (TRI), and National Museums of Kenya (NMK).**

However, coordination between these actors remains limited, resulting in fragmented tourism development efforts and duplication of initiatives.

Strengthening institutional coordination and collaboration between the county government, national agencies, private sector stakeholders and local communities will be critical for improving tourism planning, policy implementation and destination management.

2.5 Key Challenges Affecting Tourism Development

Several structural challenges continue to hinder tourism growth within the county.

2.5.1 Limited Tourism Marketing

Taita Taveta County lacks strong destination branding and coordinated tourism marketing strategies. Many potential visitors are unaware of tourism opportunities within the county beyond the Tsavo National Parks.

This limits the visibility of tourism attractions and reduces the county's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

2.5.2 Infrastructure Constraints

Limited access roads, inadequate tourism signage, insufficient visitor facilities and weak tourism support infrastructure reduce the accessibility and attractiveness of tourism sites within the county.

2.5.3 Limited Tourism Investment

Tourism investment within the county remains relatively low due to several factors including:

- inadequate tourism infrastructure
- limited incentives for tourism investors
- weak tourism promotion and marketing
- limited access to financing for tourism enterprises.

2.5.4 Weak Community Participation

Local communities often receive limited direct economic benefits from tourism activities, which reduces incentives for community participation in tourism development and conservation efforts.

Strengthening community participation and benefit-sharing mechanisms will be essential for promoting sustainable tourism development.

2.5.5 Environmental Pressures

Human-wildlife conflict, land use pressures and environmental degradation present significant risks to tourism resources within the county.

Sustainable tourism development will require effective environmental management and conservation of natural ecosystems.

2.5.6 Limited Tourism Data

The county lacks comprehensive tourism data required for effective planning, monitoring and decision-making.

Improving tourism research, visitor data collection and tourism information systems will be necessary to guide evidence-based tourism policy implementation.

2.6 Opportunities for Tourism Development

Despite the challenges identified above, several opportunities exist for strengthening tourism development within Taita Taveta County.

Tourism Product Diversification

The county has significant potential to diversify tourism beyond wildlife tourism into several niche tourism products including:

- cultural tourism
- heritage tourism
- eco-tourism
- agricultural tourism
- adventure tourism
- sports tourism.

Developing these products will expand tourism experiences and increase the length of visitor stays within the county.

Community Tourism Development

Community-based tourism enterprises can provide income opportunities for local communities while promoting cultural preservation and strengthening local participation in tourism development.

Supporting community tourism initiatives can also enhance equitable benefit-sharing from tourism activities.

Regional Tourism Circuits

Taita Taveta County is strategically located along the **Nairobi–Mombasa transport corridor**, which presents opportunities for integrating tourism circuits linking coastal and inland tourism destinations.

Developing structured tourism circuits can increase visitor flows into the county and improve the integration of tourism products.

Public–Private Partnerships

The County Government can attract tourism investment through **public–private partnerships (PPPs)** for tourism infrastructure development and tourism enterprise development.

Such partnerships can help mobilize investment resources while strengthening the tourism sector within the county.

CHAPTER THREE

POLICY VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Vision

To position **Taita Taveta County as a globally recognized sustainable tourism destination**, leveraging its wildlife ecosystems, cultural heritage, historical assets, natural landscapes and community participation to drive inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability.

3.2 Mission

To develop, manage and promote sustainable tourism within Taita Taveta County through strategic planning, responsible resource management, investment promotion, destination marketing and strong community participation, in order to enhance economic growth, environmental conservation and community livelihoods.

3.3 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. **Promote sustainable tourism development** that balances economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion.

2. **Diversify tourism products and experiences** by developing cultural tourism, heritage tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism and community-based tourism initiatives.
3. **Increase tourism investment and enterprise development** through improved investment promotion, public–private partnerships and supportive policy frameworks.
4. **Strengthen community participation in tourism development** by promoting community-based tourism enterprises and ensuring equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.
5. **Improve tourism infrastructure and accessibility** including roads to tourism sites, visitor facilities, tourism information centres and tourism signage.
6. **Enhance tourism marketing and destination branding** to position Taita Taveta County as a distinct tourism destination within national and regional tourism markets.
7. **Protect environmental and cultural heritage resources** through sustainable tourism practices, conservation initiatives and protection of historical and cultural sites.
8. **Strengthen institutional coordination in tourism management** through improved collaboration between county government departments, national agencies, private sector actors, community organizations and development partners.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

4.1 Tourism Product Development Strategy

Taita Taveta County shall promote **diversified tourism products and experiences** in order to increase visitor numbers, extend the duration of visitor stay, and enhance economic benefits to local communities.

Tourism product diversification will reduce over-reliance on wildlife tourism while creating new opportunities for investment, enterprise development and community participation in the tourism sector.

The County Government shall support the development, promotion and packaging of the following priority tourism products.

Wildlife Tourism

Wildlife tourism shall remain the **flagship tourism product** within the county due to the presence of **Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks** and surrounding wildlife dispersal areas.

The County Government shall collaborate with the **Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), wildlife conservancies, private sector operators and local communities** to enhance wildlife tourism experiences within the county.

Key wildlife tourism initiatives shall include:

- development and promotion of wildlife conservancy tourism
- promotion of photographic safari tourism
- support for eco-lodges and safari camps outside national parks
- guided wildlife viewing experiences
- conservation education and wildlife interpretation programs.

These initiatives will help strengthen linkages between national park tourism and tourism enterprises located within the county.

Cultural Tourism

The County Government shall promote **cultural tourism** by supporting the development and promotion of cultural heritage experiences across the county.

Cultural tourism initiatives shall include:

- development of cultural villages and heritage centres
- promotion of traditional festivals and cultural events
- preservation and promotion of cultural heritage sites
- development of traditional crafts and artisan products.

Cultural tourism shall be developed in partnership with local communities in order to preserve cultural heritage while generating sustainable income opportunities.

Battlefield and Heritage Tourism

Taita Taveta County hosts historically significant **World War I battlefield sites**, which provide strong potential for heritage tourism development.

These sites shall be developed into heritage tourism attractions through:

- development of battlefield heritage trails
- establishment of interpretation centres and museums
- promotion of memorial tourism programs
- development of structured historical tourism circuits
- collaboration with national heritage institutions and international heritage organizations.

Heritage tourism development will contribute to historical preservation while expanding tourism experiences within the county.

Eco-Tourism

Eco-tourism shall focus on **nature-based tourism experiences** that promote environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Eco-tourism activities shall include:

- forest tourism
- bird watching tourism
- nature trails and guided nature walks
- hiking and mountain tourism.

Key eco-tourism sites within the county include:

- Ngangao Forest
- Taita Hills
- Mount Kasigau
- Sagalla Hills.

The County Government shall promote eco-tourism development in collaboration with conservation institutions, local communities and environmental agencies.

Agricultural Tourism

Agricultural tourism shall promote **farm-based tourism experiences** that showcase local agricultural production, traditional farming practices and local food culture.

Agricultural tourism initiatives may include:

- farm tours and farm-stay experiences
- agro-tourism learning experiences
- agricultural festivals and food markets
- promotion of local food tourism.

Agricultural tourism will support local value chains while diversifying tourism experiences for visitors.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism shall promote outdoor recreation and adventure-based tourism activities taking advantage of the county's mountainous landscapes and scenic environments.

Adventure tourism activities may include:

- hiking and trekking
- rock climbing
- mountain biking

- endurance races and sporting events
- nature exploration activities.

Adventure tourism development will target both domestic and international tourism markets interested in outdoor recreation and experiential tourism.

4.2 Tourism Circuits Development Framework

The County Government shall establish **structured tourism circuits** in order to organize tourism attractions into integrated visitor routes.

Tourism circuits help to:

- increase visitor length of stay
- promote movement of visitors across multiple attractions
- distribute tourism benefits across different parts of the county
- improve tourism product packaging and marketing.

The following indicative tourism circuits shall guide tourism development and destination planning within the county.

Tsavo Wildlife Circuit

This circuit will focus on wildlife tourism experiences linked to the Tsavo ecosystem.

Key attractions include:

- Tsavo East National Park
- Tsavo West National Park
- community wildlife conservancies
- surrounding wildlife viewing areas and safari facilities.

Taita Hills Cultural Circuit

This circuit will highlight cultural and eco-tourism attractions located within the Taita Hills region.

Key attractions include:

- Wundanyi town
- Ngangao Forest
- traditional cultural villages
- cultural heritage sites.

World War I Heritage Circuit

This circuit will focus on the development of historical tourism experiences linked to World War I heritage sites.

Key attractions include:

- battlefield sites
- historical memorial sites
- museums and heritage interpretation centres.

Lakes Tourism Circuit

This circuit will promote water-based tourism experiences.

Key attractions include:

- Lake Chala
- Lake Jipe
- bird watching sites
- water-based recreation activities.

Adventure and Mountain Circuit

This circuit will focus on adventure tourism experiences associated with the county's mountainous landscapes.

Key attractions include:

- Mount Kasigau
- Sagalla Hills
- Taita Hills hiking routes
- mountain adventure activities.

These tourism circuits shall guide **tourism infrastructure investment, tourism product development, tourism marketing strategies and destination planning initiatives** within the county.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOURISM MARKETING AND DESTINATION BRANDING

5.1 Destination Branding

The County Government shall develop and promote a **distinctive tourism brand for Taita Taveta County** in order to enhance the visibility, competitiveness and market positioning of the county as a tourism destination.

The County shall position itself as:

“Kenya’s Gateway to the Tsavo Landscape – Where Wildlife, Culture and History Converge.”

Destination branding shall emphasize the county’s unique tourism assets including:

- wildlife experiences within the Tsavo ecosystem
- cultural heritage and community traditions
- historical tourism including World War I heritage sites
- community-based tourism experiences
- adventure tourism and eco-tourism opportunities.

The County Government shall ensure that the destination brand is consistently applied across tourism marketing platforms, tourism promotional materials, and tourism investment promotion initiatives.

5.2 Tourism Marketing Strategy

The County Government shall implement a coordinated tourism marketing strategy to promote Taita Taveta County as a competitive tourism destination.

Tourism marketing initiatives shall include:

- digital marketing campaigns and online destination promotion
- participation in national and international tourism exhibitions and trade fairs
- collaboration with the **Kenya Tourism Board (KTB)** for national destination marketing
- development and distribution of tourism promotional materials
- promotion of tourism through digital platforms and social media channels
- strategic partnerships with travel agents, tour operators and hospitality enterprises.

The County Government shall also promote tourism through **partnerships with private sector operators, national tourism institutions and development partners.**

5.3 Domestic Tourism Promotion

The County Government shall promote **domestic tourism** as an important driver of tourism growth and sector resilience.

Domestic tourism promotion initiatives shall include:

- school tourism programs and educational tourism visits
- county tourism festivals and cultural events
- discounted tourism packages for Kenyan residents
- promotion of sports tourism and recreational events
- collaboration with educational institutions and youth organizations.

These initiatives shall encourage greater participation of Kenyan residents in tourism activities within the county.

CHAPTER SIX

TOURISM INVESTMENT AND FINANCING

6.1 Tourism Investment Promotion

The County Government shall promote tourism investment in order to strengthen the tourism sector and expand tourism infrastructure within the county.

Tourism investment promotion shall include:

- promotion of **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** in tourism infrastructure development
- development of tourism investment incentives in accordance with national and county laws
- promotion of tourism investment opportunities to local and international investors
- facilitation of tourism enterprise development.

Priority tourism investments shall include:

- hotels, lodges and eco-lodges
- tourism information centres
- tourism transport and visitor access infrastructure
- tourism entertainment and recreation facilities
- cultural heritage tourism infrastructure.

6.2 Tourism Development Levy

To ensure sustainable financing of tourism development initiatives, the County Government shall establish a **County Tourism Development Levy equivalent to twenty percent (20%) of applicable tourism-related revenues generated within the county**, in accordance with applicable national and county legislation.

The levy shall support:

- tourism infrastructure development
- tourism destination marketing and promotion
- conservation of tourism resources and ecosystems
- development of community-based tourism enterprises
- tourism research, data management and innovation
- preservation and promotion of cultural heritage resources.

The levy shall be administered transparently and in accordance with the **Public Finance Management Act, 2012** and other applicable financial management regulations.

6.3 County Tourism Development Fund

The County Government shall establish a **County Tourism Development Fund** to mobilize, manage and allocate resources for tourism development initiatives within the county.

Sources of the Fund shall include:

- revenues generated from the Tourism Development Levy
- county budget allocations
- grants from development partners
- private sector contributions and partnerships
- tourism licensing and tourism-related revenues
- any other lawful sources of tourism financing.

The Fund shall prioritize financing for:

- tourism infrastructure development
- destination marketing and branding
- community tourism initiatives
- tourism training and capacity building
- tourism research and innovation programs.

The Fund shall be managed in accordance with the **Public Finance Management Act, 2012** and relevant county legislation governing public funds.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND BENEFIT SHARING

Community participation shall be a central principle guiding tourism development in Taita Taveta County.

The County Government shall promote community participation in tourism development through:

- support for **community-based tourism enterprises**
- promotion of cultural tourism initiatives
- development of tourism cooperatives and community tourism organizations
- strengthening community wildlife conservancies and conservation initiatives.

Community tourism initiatives shall ensure that local communities receive **equitable economic benefits from tourism activities**, including employment opportunities, enterprise development opportunities and revenue-sharing arrangements where applicable.

The County Government shall also support capacity building programs to strengthen community participation in tourism management, entrepreneurship and conservation activities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The County Government shall prioritize the development of tourism infrastructure in order to support tourism growth, improve visitor experiences and enhance tourism investment within the county.

Priority tourism infrastructure investments shall include:

- upgrading road access to tourism sites and attractions
- development of tourism information centres
- installation of tourism signage and interpretation facilities
- development of visitor facilities at tourism sites
- improvement of public amenities and support infrastructure for tourism.

Tourism infrastructure development shall be integrated with the **County Spatial Plan, infrastructure development programs and environmental conservation strategies.**

CHAPTER NINE

TOURISM GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Effective governance is essential for the successful implementation of tourism development initiatives in Taita Taveta County.

The County Government shall establish a coordinated tourism governance structure consisting of:

1. County Department responsible for Tourism
2. Directorate of Tourism
3. County Tourism Board
4. County Tourism Development Fund
5. Tourism Stakeholder Coordination Forum.

This governance structure ensures clear institutional roles and responsibilities in tourism planning, promotion and development.

9.1 County Department Responsible for Tourism

The County Department responsible for Tourism shall serve as the **lead government entity responsible for tourism development within the county.**

Key responsibilities shall include:

- formulation and implementation of tourism policies and programs
- coordination of tourism sector stakeholders
- tourism planning and development
- tourism investment promotion
- tourism data collection and research
- monitoring and evaluation of tourism programs.

The Department shall implement its functions through the **Directorate of Tourism.**

9.2 Directorate of Tourism

The Directorate of Tourism shall function as the **technical arm responsible for implementing tourism programs and coordinating tourism sector activities.**

Functions of the Directorate shall include:

- implementation of tourism development projects
- coordination with national tourism agencies
- tourism product development initiatives
- tourism marketing and destination promotion
- tourism training and capacity building
- tourism research, statistics and data management.

9.3 County Tourism Board

The County Government shall establish a **County Tourism Board** to provide strategic oversight and advisory support for tourism development.

The Board shall serve as a **multi-stakeholder advisory and coordination body** bringing together key stakeholders within the tourism sector.

Composition of the Board

The Board may include representatives from:

- County Government department responsible for tourism
- private sector tourism operators
- community tourism enterprises
- wildlife conservancies
- cultural heritage institutions
- tourism investment stakeholders.

Functions of the Board

The Board shall:

- provide strategic guidance on tourism development
- advise the County Government on tourism investment opportunities
- support tourism destination marketing initiatives
- coordinate tourism stakeholders
- monitor the implementation of tourism policies and strategies.

9.4 Tourism Stakeholder Coordination Forum

The County Government shall establish a **Tourism Stakeholder Coordination Forum** to facilitate collaboration and dialogue between tourism stakeholders.

Participants may include:

- private sector tourism operators
- community tourism organizations
- conservation institutions
- development partners
- national tourism agencies.

The forum shall meet periodically to review tourism sector performance, identify emerging challenges and strengthen coordination among tourism stakeholders.

CHAPTER TEN

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Effective implementation of this policy requires coordinated action among county departments, national institutions, private sector stakeholders and community organizations.

The County Government shall prepare **annual tourism sector work plans** aligned with the objectives of this policy.

Implementation shall focus on the following strategic areas:

- tourism product development
- tourism marketing and destination branding
- tourism infrastructure development

- community tourism development
- tourism investment promotion
- environmental sustainability and conservation.

10.1 Implementation Matrix (2026–2031)

Policy Objective	Key Activity	Responsible Institution	Timeline	Indicator
Tourism product diversification	Develop cultural and heritage tourism sites	Tourism and Department	2026–2028	Number of sites developed
Improve tourism marketing	Develop county tourism brand	Tourism Directorate	2026	Brand launched
Promote community tourism	Support community tourism enterprises	Tourism Department	2026–2031	Number of enterprises supported
Improve infrastructure	Upgrade access roads to tourism sites	Department of Public Works	2026–2030	Roads improved
Increase tourism investment	Promote tourism investment opportunities	Tourism Board	2026–2031	Value of tourism investments

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation shall ensure the effective implementation of the Tourism Policy and achievement of policy objectives.

Key performance indicators shall include:

- number of tourist arrivals to the county
- tourism revenue generated within the county
- tourism sector employment levels
- tourism investment levels

- number of community tourism enterprises established
- visitor satisfaction levels.

The County Department responsible for Tourism shall prepare **annual tourism performance reports** to assess progress in policy implementation.

11.1 Policy Review

This Tourism Policy shall be reviewed **every five years** to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness and alignment with evolving tourism sector dynamics.

The review process shall incorporate stakeholder consultations and evidence-based assessment of policy implementation outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Tourism represents a strategic opportunity for economic transformation in Taita Taveta County. By leveraging its unique natural landscapes, wildlife ecosystems, cultural heritage and historical assets, the County can position itself as a leading tourism destination within Kenya.

Successful implementation of this policy will require strong partnerships between the County Government, national agencies, private sector stakeholders, community organizations and development partners.

Through coordinated action and strategic investment, tourism can become a major driver of economic growth, job creation and sustainable development within Taita Taveta County.

ANNEXURES

Annex I – Policy Implementation Matrix (2026–2031)

This table translates policy commitments into **specific actions, responsible institutions, timelines and outputs**.

Typical columns:

Policy Objective	Key Activities	Responsible Institution	Timeline	Expected Output
Tourism product diversification	Develop cultural tourism sites	Department of Tourism	2026–2028	Cultural tourism circuits established
Strengthen destination branding	Develop county tourism brand	Tourism Department / KTB	2026	Official destination brand launched
Promote community tourism	Support community tourism enterprises	Tourism Department	Continuous	Increased community participation

Assembly committees **expect to see this** because it shows the policy is implementable.

Annex II – Indicative Policy Implementation Budget

Policies normally include **indicative costing**, not a binding budget.

Example structure:

Programme Area	Estimated Cost (KES)	Funding Source
Tourism infrastructure development	400,000,000	County Government / National Gov / PPP

Programme Area	Estimated Cost (KES)	Funding Source
Destination marketing	80,000,000	County Budget / Partnerships
Community tourism support	60,000,000	Tourism Fund / Development Partners
Capacity building	40,000,000	County Budget

This helps the **County Treasury and Assembly Budget Committee** assess feasibility.

Annex III – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2031	Responsible Agency
Annual tourist arrivals	Baseline established	to be +50% growth	Tourism Department

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2031	Responsible Agency
Tourism revenue generated	Baseline	Increase by 40%	County Treasury
Community tourism enterprises supported	Baseline	20 enterprises	Tourism Department

This aligns with **CIDP monitoring requirements**.

Annex IV – Policy Alignment Framework

Shows the legal and policy basis.

Instrument**Relevance**

Constitution of Kenya 2010

Devolution and county economic development

Tourism Act 2011

National tourism governance framework

County Governments Act 2012

County planning and public participation

Public Finance Management Act 2012

Financial management

Taita Taveta CIDP

County development priorities

Assembly committees often check **whether the policy is anchored in law and planning frameworks.**