**Twala Women Did Not Ignore the Bell**

Participation of women in the growth of tourism medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) in Kenya have been constantly on the rise. This is proof that women have stopped focusing on their empowerment and channeled their passion, commitment and strength to implementing and accomplishing women empowering systems that challenge established concepts of addressing poverty. This approach complemented by the power of community-based tourism to serve as a tool for local economic development, brings us to the amazing narrative of the Twala Tenebo women cultural center in Laikipia.

Twala Tenebo women cultural center is located in Il Polei, Laikipia North sub-county. ‘**Twala’** is a Maasai word for a bell. ‘**Tenebo’** means come together. In 2007, the “bell rang” as a symbol of calling the Maasai women to action for their capacity enhancement. They joined hands and established a cultural center together. The centre works towards empowering women to work for themselves and preserve the rich cultural and historic heritage of the local Maasai people. This women owned and managed cultural center was privileged to benefit from EU funded Switch Africa Green Initiative through: **SUS-TOUR Project (1st phase: 2015-2017)** and is currently participating in the export coaching program component of the **GREEN TOUR Project (2nd phase: 2018 - 2021)**.

The center provides eco-tours, real Maasai cultural experiences as well as accommodation in modern eco-manyattas made from bricks and cement. There is also a resource centre where groups can come together to share ideas and information. The women of Twala are involved in agro-tourism as they plant Aloe secundiflora, which they do without using any chemical fertilizers so as to avoid soil and water pollution. They also keep bees for honey production. They use the aloe for production of natural beauty products, and sell it to beauty firms. At Twala, all profits go directly to the community and are utilized for the benefit of poverty reduction and sustainable development. 10% of the income earned in the centre goes towards supporting girls’ education. The cultural centre also empowers women as they get to work and provide for themselves.

Twala has a wide range of from incomparable experiences comprising traditional Maasai songs, dances and ceremonies; accompanying women in doing daily chores e.g. firewood collection and beadwork, or the men in their work of animal care; memorable baboon walks alongside troops to show that baboons and wildlife in general are a resource worth protecting; walks with the Maasai and their cattle to learn their authentic herding techniques; Landscape tours to learn about the medicinal plants and other importance of trees to the Maasai people. Learn how the people and their domestic animals as well as wildlife coexist in one environment in a sustainable manner. Neighbouring is the Mukogodo forest where one can see the beautiful landscape views of the Laikipia plains.
Through their engagement with Ecotourism Kenya and other supportive like-minded organizations, Twala Tenebo women cultural center has managed to build the capacity of local Maasai women to clearly understand their role in developing their livelihoods. Aside from the exposure they get during interactions with guests from diverse backgrounds and origins, the women have become highly receptive to the concept of sustainable community-based tourism. They participate actively in the activities of their cultural center and further engage the youths in the practices for the continuity of this transformative community initiative.

Read more about Twala [here](#).

Below are some of the highlights about Twala Tenebo Cultural Center as per their interaction with Ecotourism Kenya: