

Kenya bans single-use plastics in protected areas

5 June 2020



Monster problem: A Greenpeace protest against single-use plastic packaging outside a Nestle food plant in Nairobi last year

Kenya on World Environment Day barred all single-use plastics such as water bottles and straws from its national parks, beaches, forests and other protected areas.

The implementation of the ban, first announced a year ago, was ordered in a letter from Tourism Minister Najib Balala last week.

It took effect on Friday, three years after Kenya announced one of the world's strictest bans on [plastic bags](#).

"This ban is yet another first in addressing the plastic pollution catastrophe facing Kenya and the world, and we hope that it catalyses similar policies and actions from the East African community," Balala said in a statement on Friday.

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, Kenya welcomed some two million tourists annually to see the Big Five animals in its national parks or visit its stunning coastline.

The ban was welcomed by environmentalist Dipesh Pabari, who led a project to make the world's first sailing boat made entirely of [plastic waste](#), which sailed 500 kilometres (300 miles) along the coast from Kenya to Tanzania in 2019 to raise awareness about plastic pollution.

"We have witnessed the catastrophic effect [single-use plastics](#) have on our ecosystems and our communities," Pabari said in a statement.

"And now, during the pandemic, we are witnessing first-hand what happens when we destroy our planet, which is that we destroy the system that supports human life."

Like much of the world, where [plastic bottles](#), caps, food wrappers, bags, straws and lids are made to be used once and then tossed away, Kenya is battling the curse of plastic pollution, which chokes turtles, cattle, and birds and blights the landscape.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates more than 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced globally since the early 1950s, about 60 percent of which ended up in landfill or the natural environment.

"By banning single-use plastics in [national parks](#) and protected areas, Kenya continues to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the global scourge of plastic pollution," UNEP said in a statement to AFP.

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