

Nyika Plateau



Further Links

- Dramatic rolling hills and vast scenic landscapes
- Excellent birdwatching
- Great walking trails
- Fantastic flowers and interesting botany

Situation

Northern Malawi

Activities

Hiking, bird watching, specialist game viewing.

The Nyika, as it is locally known, is an area of dramatic landscapes with lower slopes covered in brachystagia woodland and a high plateau of rolling grasslands and hill with montane forests. From the top where Chelinda Lodge is situated there are 360 degree views.

The word Nyika means wilderness and this wild vast area of Malawi has probably remained the same for many centuries. Some ancient rock paintings have been found at Fingira Cave in the southern part of the plateau but the area was never properly settled or colonised. The first explorers from Europe came here in 1894 with the Scottish missionaries came to the area, their station at [Livingstonia](#), towards the northern part of the lake is still a thriving centre now and makes a fascinating stop. Hiking trails over a few days can be linked from Nyika to Livingstonia.

The wide open spaces at Nyika are perfect for horse riding but currently there are no horses here - this is being looked into and we hope that riding will be offered again in the future.

Nyika National Park was established in 1965 (the first in Malawi) though it has grown in size since then. The plateau is roughly 50km by 80km at its furthest points. It also extends into part of Zambia. The climate on the Nyika is different to the rest of Malawi being much cooler with clean mountain air and outstanding views. There are several peaks above 2000m, the highest being Nganda Peak at 2607m.

Wild flowers are also an attraction here with the best time being September to April when the grasses are covered with colour. There are also over 200 species of orchid.

The only natural lake on the Nyika is Lake Kaulime which has many local folklore tales attached to it. Roan Antelope are often seen here feeding on reed shoots.

Nyika is the only 'big game' Afro-montane area in southern and south-central Africa. Mammals here include zebra, roan, reedbuck, eland, bushbuck, warthog, bush pig, leopard, hyaena, side striped jackal and serval. Birding here is spectacular with over 400 species including quite a few endemics. One of the world's richest areas for orchids over 200 species occur here.

Rough guide to Nyika seasons

The main rains usually start in December and continue through Jan and Feb. Wildlife starts to hang around Chelinda area for shelter.

Jan - Feb is wettest but great for birding. March - not quite as wet and the best birding month. April - the rains usually end. May - the hills look like wheat fields! Lots of winter everlasting flowers. June - the parks board carry out 'burns'. July - very cold, frosts! August - Arrival of swallows and signs of the end of winter. September - March is the best game viewing. October - hottest month, a few storms, good for spring flowers after first rains. November - can be wet or dry - spring flowers dying off but orchids in full bloom in boggy areas (continues to Jan).

