



Medjumbe Island

TERRA INCOGNITA

INCREDIBLE MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique: a country that is still relatively undiscovered compared with its neighbours, but yet offers a unique life experience.



Matemo beach

When life comes down to daily major choices such as whether to go for yet another swim in the beautiful, warm clear blue sea, taking a stroll along a deserted beach before quenching your thirst with a locally grown fresh fruit

cocktail or whether to dine on fresh crab or fish that night for dinner, it could be said that a certain 'pure pleasure' point had been reached. And, with some 2,400 kilometers of coastline, including some of the most beautiful, sandy, unexplored

palm-fringed beaches in the whole African continent, Mozambique offers so much more than you can imagine.

FOR A FIRST-TIME VISITOR, IT CAN ALL SEEM CHAOTIC BUT, WITHOUT DOUBT, IT IS THIS VIBRANCY THAT GIVES THE PLACE ITS IDENTITY

HISTORICAL VIEW

The country lies on the western coast of southern Africa, enjoying the warm waters of the Indian ocean with South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mali and Tanzania as its neighbours. Originally the home of the African Bantu people, its colonisation by Portugal in the mid-20th century was a major influence in terms of economic and social history.

Ruled by the Portuguese for more than 400 years – explorer Vasco de Gama arrived in 1497 – Mozambique achieved its independence in 1975 after a ten-year war against its colonial owners. However, in its quest to establish itself as a country in its own right after years of rule, it suffered terribly in one of the most violent civil wars in African history. Lasting around 16 years, the fighting finally ended in 1992 and since then peace has allowed the country to rebuild itself.

MAPUTO: THE PLACE TO BE

The country's capital, Maputo, lies to the south and is a busy, developing port. Investment, particularly from South Africa, has brought prosperity and, while the visitor may be amazed at the beautiful tree-lined avenues dominated by impressive colonial-style houses, it is nevertheless a city of contrasts. As with many cities in Africa, people have come from the countryside where life can be

difficult to find a living so, for a first-time visitor, it can all seem chaotic but, without doubt, it is this vibrancy that gives the place its identity.

The capital often serves as a starting point, although it warrants a few nights stay in itself to allow the visitor to experience Mozambique for the first time. For those who wish to do so in style, there is only one place to stay – The Polana Hotel.

Providing all that the discerning visitor could want from a quality establishment, this is an excellent base from which to explore the city. Mozambique offers great seafood; perhaps its most famous (and certainly its largest) export product is prawns. Beware, though; if you are not a fan of spicy food, go for the milder dishes. The prawns can be enormous, bigger than most people will ever see in their local restaurants and, because they are freshly caught, the flavour is unbeatable.

Using Maputo as a starting point to visit Mozambique can be ideal for many but, for those wishing to travel extensively throughout the country, a 4x4 is essential, as is either knowledge of this type of trek or an experienced guide or tour company to escort you. It is a big country and roads are often muddy tracks, especially in the wet season and, while very safe overall, be advised that there are areas,

predominantly in the central part of the country, where landmines were laid during the war and have not yet been cleared.

DREAMY ARCHIPELAGOS

The real treasures of Mozambique can be found in the archipelagos that lie off the coast towards its northern border with Tanzania. Here, the islands provide a stunning combination of unspoilt beauty and accessibility for the traveller who wants more than just squeaky-clean hotel rooms.

The Quirimbas Archipelago is made up of approximately 32 islands, with all but a few uninhabited. The islands, which form part of the Quirimbas National Park and are being considered for World Heritage Site status, stretch along 100 kilometres of coastline and contain some of the richest coral reefs in the world in terms of marine life.

The park was set up to protect the area's wildlife as well as the local people's way of life and, today, it's a truly exceptional area that has never been developed and continues to keep its distance from mass tourism.

The area's wealth of marine wildlife provides a great diving experience. All the islands, which are no more than a few metres above sea-level, have abundant species to encounter, from stingrays,



Mozambique local life

THE ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL FLORA AND FAUNA ON THE ISLAND, IN ADDITION TO ITS MARINE LIFE, MAKE THE PLACE SPECIAL

barracuda, dolphins, grouper, kingfish, angelfish and triggerfish to moray eels. It is also a prime breeding and feeding site for leatherback, loggerhead and green turtles and, for a lucky few, it is a unique experience to see laying their eggs on shore. Humpback whales also pass by between August and December.

In short, for snorkelling, sailing, diving, fishing or just appreciating natural surroundings, it doesn't come much better than this, combined with accommodation that's kept to a simple balance between quality and understatement.

CUSTOMISED TRIP

For those who want true escapism, go to Medjumbe private island.

Only one kilometre long and 500 metres wide, it offers a limited number of guests seclusion from the world, palm-fringed beaches of white sand and, as far as the eye can see, clear blue water. Accommodation comes in the form of thatched-roofed beach chalets (13 in total), air-conditioning for those who need it and a plunge pool to take away the heat of the day. It's a place where you can be as active or as lazy as you want, completely free from pressure.

Boat fishing is available and, if going in search of sailfish or yellow fin tuna is your thing, it's available right outside your chalet door. However, in keeping with the need to keep the area protected and properly maintained, the island operates a 'tag and release' scheme in conjunction with the Oceanographic Research Institute. Medjumbe is also aiming to eradicate long-line fishing by

foreign trawlers in order to protect its natural wildlife.

This ethos is absolutely crucial to Medjumbe and other places in the archipelago, and is one of the many reasons why you should visit. The abundance of natural flora and fauna on the island, in addition to its marine life, make the place special. For those with families who still want to experience the adventure, suitable accommodation can be found on Matemo island.

Much larger than Medjumbe (eight by three kilometres) Matemo is renowned for its fine Maluane cloth – silk and cotton dyed with local indigo. Again, the visitor will be met by white beaches, palm and mangrove trees, clear blue water and accommodation that has been created using as many local materials as possible to ensure that the buildings blend in with the natural surroundings.

As with Medjumbe, there has been a concerted effort to limit the impact on the local environment and, while one could argue that just allowing holidaymakers has affected the balance, work with the local community and the propagation of 12,000 indigenous plants and trees around the lodge has been greatly appreciated and in keeping with the archipelagos' balance and sustainability.

YOUR COSY CHALET

The property has around 24 palm-thatched chalets, air-conditioning for those who need it as well as more traditional attractions such as swimming pools and simple spa treatments. Again, water activities including diving, sailing,

fishing, snorkelling, kayaking are right there for you, and guests can take advantage of activities centres.

Kimani-speaking residents, around 2,000 in number, are involved with the lodge in a joint venture to provide a community school and there are also plans to set up a local health centre. There is ample opportunity to visit the communities and indeed the lodge actively encourages it, as purchasing local crafts is an obvious way of contributing to the islanders' economy.

A nearby island, Ibo, can be visited and also very much worth a trip – a place with a history primarily shaped by the Portuguese and Arab slave trades. A prosperous island some 500 years ago, local silversmith craftsmen now sell bracelets and pendants primarily sourced from old coins trawled from the numerous shipwrecks that lie around the archipelago.

The Quirimbas have enormous cultural and historical value, being a combination of Arabian, Portuguese and African cultures. Coupled with a unique natural environment that allows any visitor to marvel at the surroundings and diversity, it is a place that offers much for discerning tourists.

The good news is that, for the moment and hopefully for the future, it's all relatively undiscovered but, for people who do want to experience a mix of Africa, protected natural wilderness and unspoilt beauty and are prepared to make the extra effort to get there, it is definitely time to go.

S.P.



It could be yours

Country: Mozambique
Capital: Maputo
Population: Around 20 million
Climate: Tropical/sub tropical
Language: Portuguese (official), local dialects, English in hotels/lodges
Religion: Christian/Muslim
Currency: Metical (\$US accepted in hotels/lodges)
Credit cards: Hotels/lodges, some restaurants
Travel visas: Required

GETTING THERE

Quirimbas Archipeligo
 International flights to Johannesburg, South Africa or Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
 Johannesburg – Pemba
Airline: SA Airlink
Frequency: Twice per week
Duration: Three hours 40 minutes

Dar es Salaam – Pemba

Airline: CFA Air Charters
Frequency: Twice per week
Duration: 1 hour 50 minutes
 Service due to launch in May 2008

Maputo – Pemba

Airline: LAM
Frequency: Daily
Duration: Five hours (includes two stops)

Pemba – Matemo (30 minutes)

Medjumbe (45 minutes)
Airline: RANI Aviation
Frequency: In conjunction with guests arrival arranged through lodge

PULSE AFRICA

T. South Africa +27 (0)11 325 2290
London +44 (0)208 9955 909
USA +1 (0)203 853 2805
www.pulseafrica.com