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MOZAMBIQUE GUIDE

wordtravels



Situated on the southeastern coast of Africa, Mozambique has persevered through a violent civil war and terrible floods, and is emerging from a ruinous past to stake its claim once again as one of the jewels of Africa. A holiday in Mozambique provides a combination of glorious weather, gorgeous scenery, friendly people and great value for money, ensuring that this country is becoming an increasingly trendy destination for global travellers. In fact, Mozambique has become one of the most-visited countries in Africa in recent years, drawing around two million annual tourists to its welcoming shores.

The 1,500 miles (2,414km) of palm-fringed coastline is washed by the warm waters of the Indian Ocean and graced with long white beaches, excellent coral reefs and strings of pristine islands. The idyllic Bazaruto archipelago, off the coast of the Inhambane province, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country, consisting of four main islands that

make up one of the most beautiful places on the continent. The islands offer a classic tropical getaway, with superb fishing, water sports, shaded beaches, surf, and a marine park offering outstanding diving and snorkelling opportunities.

Attracted by rumours of pearls in the 1700s, the Portuguese established the capital city of Maputo, formerly Lourenço Marques, in the southern reaches of the country. It became one of the most stylish cities in Africa, with broad avenues lined with jacaranda and acacia trees, sidewalks paved with mosaics, tall buildings and a unique Mediterranean/African atmosphere that attracted a wealthy cosmopolitan crowd. The civil war left the city in a dismal state of disrepair, and although still tainted by shabbiness, Maputo is slowly recovering some of its former glory. Today the bustling capital reveals many Portuguese-style colonial buildings, and offers culture and old world charm along with numerous places to enjoy Mozambique's famous peri-peri prawns.

Lying just off the coast of Maputo is the popular Inhaca Island, which has extensive coral reefs, a fascinating maritime museum and a historical lighthouse. Most of the wildlife reserves are located in the central and southern parts of the country, with the exception of the important Niassa Reserve on the northern Tanzania border; and although they were largely decimated during the civil war, they are currently being restocked and improved, with large populations of elephant, buffalo and antelope. North of Maputo there are beautiful beaches, perfect for summer holidays, and a number of centres that offer some of the best fishing in the world, particularly the areas around Guinjata Bay and the Mozambique Channel.

Whether you're seeking a sun and sand beach holiday, or sport fishing and off-road adventures, warm and welcoming Mozambique will cater to your every desire.

THE BASICS

TIME

Local time is GMT +2.

ELECTRICITY

Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. The rounded three-pin plug is common, particularly near the border with South Africa and in Maputo. Two pronged, round- and flat-pin plugs are also found.

LANGUAGE

Portuguese is the official language, and there are 13 main national languages spoken. English is taught in secondary schools, but is only spoken in the southern tourist regions.

TRAVEL HEALTH

Health regulations in Mozambique require visitors to have a yellow fever certificate if travelling from infected areas. Malaria is a risk throughout the year across the country, and prophylactics are recommended, as well as precautions against mosquitoes. Vaccinations are recommended for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid. Visitors who will be spending a lot of time outdoors and may be at risk of animal bites should consider a rabies vaccination.

Diseases caused by unsanitary conditions are common throughout the country, and untreated water should be considered unsafe to drink. Cholera and other water-borne diseases are prevalent during the rainy season. The government has declared tuberculosis (TB) a national emergency and it is expected to be a problem for the next 15 years.

Hospital facilities are generally poor in Mozambique, and outside the major cities of Maputo and Beira medical facilities are limited. Comprehensive medical insurance is essential and it is recommended that visitors carry personal medical supplies with them. Make sure that all medication is in its

original packaging and accompanied by a signed and dated letter from a doctor, detailing what the medication is and why it is needed.

TIPPING

Tipping has become standard practice in Mozambique, particularly in tourist areas where a tip of about 10 percent is expected in restaurants.

SAFETY INFORMATION

Safety is not an issue for most visitors to Mozambique, but tourists should remain vigilant at all times. Violent crime is on the increase, particularly in the major cities and tourist areas. Mugging, bag snatching, and pick-pocketing is fairly common, and visitors are advised to be alert in public places, to keep valuables out of sight, and to avoid walking anywhere at night. All visitors, especially women, should avoid walking alone on the beach, as beaches and offshore islands are not policed, and there have been several rapes and attacks on tourists.

Visitors are advised that it is extremely risky to wander off well-travelled paths and roads, as a few unexploded landmines still lie scattered about the southern parts of the country. Local information should be sought before going off-road outside provincial capitals.

Remain vigilant when driving, as traffic accidents are common due to the poor condition of the roads, and car-jackings are on the increase as well. Many roads can become impassable in the rainy season (November to April), when there is also a risk of cyclones. Overland travel after dark is not recommended, and travellers should be especially alert when driving near the Mozambique-South African border. Police checkpoints are common, where foreigners may be at risk of harassment. There have been many reports of police attempting to solicit bribes, but travellers should insist on a written citation that can be paid at a police station.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Identity documents should be carried at all times. Taking photographs of public buildings is prohibited by law. Drug offences are taken very seriously, and can receive long jail terms and heavy fines.

BUSINESS

Mozambique has largely been cut off from foreign investment, and has only in recent years started opening up to the worldwide business community. Conducting business in Mozambique can be difficult, as many people only speak Portuguese or their own ethnic language. Translators may be hard to come by, and most are found in Maputo.

Generally, business in Mozambique follows the Portuguese model in terms of business etiquette; punctuality is important, and dress is usually conservative (though lightweight materials are recommended). Business associates should be addressed by their professional titles unless otherwise stated, and meetings generally start and end with a handshake. Men and women may shake hands, but any additional physical contact will be interpreted as romantic interest.

Business hours are usually 7.30am or 8am to 12.30pm, and 2pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

COMMUNICATIONS

The international dialling code for Mozambique is +258. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0027 for South Africa). City/area codes are also in use. Outgoing international calls, other than for South Africa, must go through the operator. Mobile phone GSM 900/1800 networks provide limited coverage in and around Maputo, Beira, some coastal locations and a few other isolated towns. Internet cafes are available in Maputo and other major tourist hubs.

DUTY FREE

Travellers to Mozambique may enter the country with the following items without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco, perfume for personal use, and 750ml of spirits or three standard bottles of wine. Drugs are strictly prohibited and a permit is required for firearms and ammunition.

CLIMATE

The climate of Mozambique is typically tropical, with a wet season during the long summer, between October and March, and a dry season in the winter, from April to September. There is little variation of temperatures between the seasons, differences in climate being dependent mainly on altitude. The wet season brings the heaviest rain along the coast, and cyclones may be experienced during this period.

Mozambique's climate varies in different regions of the country, but generally the inland areas are slightly cooler and more humid than the coastal areas during the rainy season. Rainfall is generally heaviest between December and March. The southern parts of the country are generally drier and less tropical than the north, with temperatures along the coast averaging 80°F (27°C) during winter. The rainy season can get swelteringly hot and humid with average coastal temperatures of 88°F (31°C).

The best time to visit Mozambique is in the cooler, dry winter season between April and September, when it is sunny and the water is still pleasantly warm. The country is also a popular New Year's destination, particularly for South Africans, but those travelling in December and January should be prepared for rain.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR SOUTH AFRICANS

South African citizens must have a passport that is valid for at least six months after their arrival in Mozambique. No visa is required.

PASSPORT/VISA

All foreign passengers to Mozambique must hold return/onward tickets, the necessary travel documentation for their next destination, and proof of sufficient funds to cover their expenses while in the country. Until recently visitors of most nationalities could obtain a 30-day tourist visa on arrival in Mozambique, but visas can now no longer be purchased at points of entry and must be organised beforehand. Those visiting Mozambique from a country where there is no Mozambican diplomatic mission should be able to get a visa on arrival but this should be confirmed in advance. Note that a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required to enter Mozambique, if arriving within six days of leaving or transiting through an infected area. NOTE: It is highly recommended that your passport has at least six months validity remaining after your intended date of departure from your travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

MONEY

The official currency is the Mozambican Metical (MZN), which is divided into 100 centavos. In the southern parts of the country, South African Rands, US Dollars and Pounds Sterling are often also accepted to pay for accommodation. Credit cards are accepted in some upmarket hotels in Maputo, but card facilities throughout the rest of the country are limited; it is advisable to carry cash. ATMs are scarce and tend to be unreliable, but local banks have branches in most cities.

BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO

Consisting of five paradisiacal islands off the coast of Vilanculos, in Mozambique's Inhambane Province, the Bazaruto Archipelago is the most popular tourist area in Mozambique and widely considered to be the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean'. It is a luxury destination sought after by divers, fishermen, nature lovers and sun seekers.

The main islands of Bazaruto and Benguerra, as well as the smaller Santa Catalina, Magaruque and Bangue islands, are protected within a national park, which is one of the largest of its kind in the Indian Ocean. The warm seas are home to whales, dolphins, manta rays, turtles and the endangered dugong, as well as many fascinating species of fish. This rich marine life is attracted by the unspoiled coral reefs, which provide underwater enthusiasts with first-rate scuba diving and snorkelling opportunities. On land, miles of deserted sandy beaches shaded by palm trees offer frazzled city executives a dream holiday getaway, where the most stressful thing required of them is deciding between activities like bird watching, fishing and shell collecting, or simply lying on the sand and enjoying the sunshine.

The largest and most popular island is Bazaruto, which gives the archipelago its name. To the west is the smallest island, Santa Carolina, nearly two miles (3km) long and less than half a mile (500m) wide, surrounded by protective coral reefs and deep water ideally suited to big game fishing. A narrow channel separates Bazaruto from its southerly neighbour Benguela, the second largest in the chain, followed by Magaruque, which is the closest island to Vilanculos on the mainland and primarily a diving resort. From Magaruque, the tiny uninhabited island of Bangue can also be explored.

ATTRACTIONS IN BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO

Bazaruto Island



The largest island in the archipelago, Bazaruto Island is about 23 miles (37km) long and four miles (7km) wide, surrounded by magnificent stretches of white sand. Enormous sand dunes comprise the eastern strip, while the interior contains large freshwater lakes inhabited by crocodiles and frequented by a wide variety of water birds, including flamingos. On the northern tip of the island is a lighthouse built by the Portuguese over 100 years ago, which signals to the large number of ships travelling the historic Mozambique Channel and affords spectacular views from its tower.

World famous for its large game fishing, Bazaruto is also well known as a popular diving destination, with a rich variety of marine life surrounding the island. The Bazaruto Marine National Park offers coral reefs, crystal-clear waters and diverse underwater life. Reef sharks, dolphins, manta rays and even turtles are regular visitors to these waters, and the turtles lay their eggs on the beaches of the island. Humpback whales can be found between August and October, and whale sharks between April and July. Tourist facilities, upmarket lodges and exclusive resorts dot the island and are geared towards luxury tourism. Bazaruto is accessible by boat or plane from Vilanculos.

Benguerra Island



Benguerra is the second largest island of the Bazaruto Archipelago, less than half a mile (1km) south of Bazaruto, and like its neighbour, boasts stunning beaches, large sand dunes and freshwater lakes. Its forest and wetland areas attract a huge variety of birds and animals, while its surrounding reefs offer some of the best diving and snorkelling opportunities on the African continent. Two-Mile Reef is to the east of Benguerra, and its protected lagoon, known aptly as the Aquarium, is an underwater paradise with beautiful corals and a wealth of tropical fish, popular with both divers and snorkellers. On the sandbanks to the north of the island the famous Pansy shells can be found. Most visitors come to Benguerra for the big game fishing though, as its deep waters teem with the likes of marlin and barracuda, and the area is world-renowned as a sport fishing destination.

Accessible by boat or plane from Vilanculos, there is plenty of accommodation on the island and tourist facilities are good, with a number of upmarket lodges and exclusive resorts geared towards luxury tourism. Benguerra is a popular honeymoon destination and remains an unspoiled natural paradise, which is fast becoming one of the best luxury beach destinations in Africa.

Vilanculos



Vilanculos is a popular tourist destination and the gateway to the Bazaruto Archipelago, a group of islands incorporated into Mozambique's stunning underwater national park. On day trips from Vilanculos, visitors can go scuba diving and snorkelling in the clear waters, or enjoy the wonderful views on horse safaris and day rides along the long unspoiled beaches of the Vilanculos coast. Sailing around the archipelago in a traditional dhow is a great way to enjoy the azure waters, sandy beaches, palm trees and coral reefs of the islands. Vilanculos is also a great fishing area, ranked as the best black marlin destination in the eastern Indian Ocean.

The Vilanculos area can be explored on foot, and offers a number of good restaurants, a few bars and shops, and a central market in the village of Vilankulo. Although Vilanculos has been experiencing a tourism boom and has decent amenities and great accommodation options, it has retained its local flavour. There is even a new international airport on the outskirts of town, with flights to both Johannesburg and Maputo.

MAPUTO

The sprawling capital of Mozambique was, under Portuguese influence in the 18th century, one of the most beautiful and fashionable cities on the African continent, with a sophisticated multi-national atmosphere, elegant buildings, and wide, shaded avenues. Maputo, or Lourenço Marques as it was known before independence, became the capital of Mozambique in 1898 and the city was established as a major trade and industry centre, boasting the country's most important harbour.

Following the process of decolonisation, the 17-year civil war that raged during the 1970s and 80s had a devastating effect on Maputo, reducing the proud city to a state of grubby disrepair, with thousands of immigrants taking over from where the wealthy socialites left off. The city has worked hard to recreate some of its former grandeur, with the five-star Polana Hotel once again abuzz with the gossip of the rich and famous, and restaurants serving up their famous peri-peri prawns.

Today, the city is a lively mix of people, with lots of markets and street vendors, a vibey café culture, buzzing nightclubs and live music venues, and a relaxed pace of life. It is run-down and still somewhat dilapidated, but Maputo can be a fun and interesting stop on a Mozambique holiday. Many visitors to Maputo are simply passing through on their way to popular coastal regions and islands like Inhaca, situated just off the coast and a popular spot for diving and snorkelling, but it is worth spending at least a few hours walking around the city. Those who decide to use Maputo as a base for further travel will discover many beautiful beaches and lakes just beyond the city.

ATTRACTIONS IN MAPUTO

Central Market



The Central Market spills out of the shabby yet beautiful old building in which it is housed, and is a hub of activity where all kinds of goods can be bought, from fruit and vegetables, a variety of seafood and household items, to handicrafts, basket ware and carvings. This is a market designed to serve local needs, not tourists, which makes it an authentic experience and a good opportunity to meet some locals and see how people in Maputo shop and eat. Although it is primarily a food market, many interesting souvenirs and trinkets can usually be found.

Vendors are ready to haggle, and you can often negotiate yourself big discounts, though knowing a little Portuguese will be a real help in this respect. Bear in mind that the merchants will usually charge foreigners exorbitant prices, so don't be afraid to walk away and compare prices at other stalls to make sure you aren't being taken advantage of. It is also a good idea to have small change ready. Unfortunately, the market is a haven for pickpockets and thieves, so visitors should be very vigilant about their surroundings and ensure that all valuables are concealed from view.

Polana Hotel



The grand dame of Maputo, the Polana Serena Hotel boasts one of the city's most desirable addresses, overlooking the bay. The historic hotel is a majestic building, evoking the style and sophistication of colonial times with its gardens, Victorian lift and five-star luxury. The Polana was built in 1922 and is widely considered to be one of Africa's finest old luxury hotels.

If you are looking to splurge while visiting Maputo, the Polana Serena Hotel is your best bet. The hotel is centrally located and close to many of the city's most popular tourist attractions. There are three restaurants at the hotel: the Varanda Restaurant, which is open all day; the Delagoa fine-dining French restaurant; and the Aquarius sushi restaurant. The hotel boasts a stunning outdoor pool area, surrounded by tropical gardens, with a view of the bay, as well as a casino, a spa, and many other luxury features. A sunset drink in one of its cocktail bars is a must for those passing visitors not tempted to splash out on an extravagant stay. At the very least, it is worth asking permission to stroll around the gardens and see the view.

Xai Xai

Just 124 miles (200km) north of Maputo, the small town of Xai Xai is a popular excursion for those seeking a relaxing day on the beach. Xai Xai has a scattering of shops, bars, restaurants and accommodation, but the real draw is the superb scuba diving and snorkelling on offer.

The coral reef running parallel to the main beach creates ideal diving conditions, and there are some fun dive sites nearby, including the natural underwater tunnel at Wenela Tidal Pool, just one mile (2km) south. The sandy white beaches with



their calm waters are a fantastic place to swim, and there are fresh water lakes nearby for kayaking, paddle skiing and windsurfing. The resort town of Bilene is also nearby; the lagoon at Bilene is very popular for watersports, and with safe and shallow waters, it is an especially good destination for families. Visitors should anticipate attention from the locals selling crafts and trinkets in the region.

For those wanting to extend their stay at Xai Xai there are some great accommodation options, including good budget accommodation for backpackers. The roads between Maputo and Xai Xai are in good condition and traversable without a 4x4 vehicle, which is a big advantage for day-trippers.

Ponta d'Ouro



'Surf's up' in Ponta d'Ouro, located along a sandy road just south of Maputo, which is home to some of the most perfect waves in Africa. Offering spectacular dive sites and a wealth of exciting sea creatures to encounter underwater, Ponta d'Ouro is a popular destination for divers as well as surfers, and swimming with dolphins is not to be missed, either - it can be a deeply rewarding, even life-changing experience. Stroll along white beaches stretching far into the distance, and explore the rock pools full of colourful shells and corals.

The locals sell carvings in all shapes and sizes, mostly in hard wood. Although the shells on offer are beautiful, they might well have been stolen off a reef and should therefore be avoided. *Shebeen* (local pub) tours allow visitors to explore the rustic drinking-houses along a stretch of rough road. Enjoy some locally produced Tipo Tinto Rum, which tastes slightly of vanilla and goes well with pineapple or raspberry juice, available at the local market.

Accommodation ranges from the rustic to the luxurious, with lovely campsites right on the beach. Ponta d'Ouro is easily accessible from South Africa, making it a wonderful addition to any tourist tour of southern Africa.

Jardim Tunduru Botanical Gardens



The Jardim Tunduru Botanical Gardens, located in downtown Maputo, offer a welcome shady retreat on steamy tropical days, and cannot help but hark back to the Mozambican capital's more grandiose colonial past. The gardens were designed in 1885 by Thomas Honney, who in his career also designed gardens for the King of Greece and the Sultan of Turkey, and are exquisitely laid out, if at times a little overgrown. These days, although still beautiful, the gardens are not as well-maintained as one might like, but they are still a worthwhile stop on a walking tour of the city, and a great place to enjoy a picnic or a stroll.

The Jardim Tunduru Gardens also feature tennis courts, a greenhouse, several wonderful old trees, some colourful tropical flora, and a statue of Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, at the entrance. The gardens are centrally located and situated close to a number of other attractions in Maputo, and there are several restaurants in and around them. Admission to the gardens is free and they are open daily. Homeless people sometimes sleep in the grounds at night and they are best avoided after dark.

INHAMBANE

As Mozambique continues to establish itself on the global tourism map, exciting new tourist areas are springing up. One of these areas is Inhambane, a small city on the southeastern coast, about 290 miles (470km) north of Maputo and easily accessed by a tarred road. Previously, tourists merely passed through Inhambane on their way to the spectacular beaches of Tofo, Cocos and Barra. These days more and more are stopping over to savour the historic city, with its sleepy atmosphere, faded colonial architecture and famously friendly local population. In fact, the city's original name - Terra de Boa Gente, meaning 'Land of the Good People' - was bestowed on it precisely because of the inimitable charm of its locals.

Must-see tourist sights in Inhambane include the Church of our Lady of Conception - a 175-year-old building that features a rusted ladder leading to its top spire, offering panoramic views of the city's old quarter and the harbour - and the Mercado Central (Central Market), where a colourful array of fresh produce, including spices and nuts, is for sale. Adventurous travellers can strike out for the more remote areas of Inhambane Province, where picturesque villages and mangrove swamps are waiting to be explored.

Although most tourist activities like diving, snorkelling and whale-spotting take place at the beaches located about 14 miles (22km) up the coast, tourists to Inhambane are urged to take a ride in a traditional dhow to Maxixe; a larger city located across the bay. The experience of approaching a historic trading port in a historic trading vessel is unique, and very memorable.

Of particular interest to those planning a tour around southern Africa is the fact that Inhambane can be directly accessed from Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport via flights landing at Inhambane International Airport.

PEMBA AND NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Pemba is a port town and the capital of the Cabo Delgado Province in the north of Mozambique. It has banks, patisseries, supermarkets and restaurants, yet it retains a ramshackle feel with its potholed streets. The town was built over rolling hills and most people live in wooden huts set among the many impressive baobab trees. The history of the people of the Cabo Delgado province lies in many centuries of African, Arab and Portuguese sailing, trading and settling. The Niassa Company founded Pemba in 1904 as Porto Amelia, named after a queen of Portugal. It was renamed Pemba at the end of Portuguese rule, in 1975. Tared roads connect Pemba to Nampula and Ilha de Mozambique, and international flights and tourist facilities are steadily on the increase.

Although Pemba is renowned for its Portuguese colonial architecture, many of its attractions are natural, as it is a prime location for water sports and diving. Nearby Ibo Island offers empty stretches of beach to explore some of the world's richest coral reefs, and Quipaco Island is just 12 miles (20km) to the north. Nacole Baobab Nature Estate and Nkwita Lake are also within an hour's drive. There is an authentic local market (souk souk) in the centre of Pemba selling arts and crafts, as well as traditional silverware. It is quite large, extending 1.2 miles (2km) along one of the town's main thoroughfares. Avoid the ivory on sale at the market, as this is sold contrary to Mozambican and international law. Maconde arts and crafts are popular Mozambican souvenirs available from Pemba.

ATTRACTIONS IN PEMBA AND NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Cahora Bassa Lake



Situated in the Tete Province of Mozambique, Cahora Bassa is one of Africa's largest artificial lakes. One of three major dams on the Zambezi river system, along with Kariba and Itzhi-Tezhi, the Cahora Bassa Dam powers the largest hydroelectric scheme in southern Africa. The nearest town is called Songo, established in 1969 to house workers for the construction of the dam. There are a number of lodges and camps where tourists can stay, including Ugezi Tiger Lodge, which is quite close to Songo and has an à la carte restaurant, as well as a campsite with floodlights and security.

Great fishing is the dam's biggest drawcard and fishing trips are very popular, as the vast stretch of water contains a huge variety of fish, including tigerfish, sharp-tooth catfish, vundu, bream, longfin eels, and Zambezi parrotfish. Other attractions in the area include boat cruises and waterskiing. The lake and surrounding landscapes are very picturesque, with lush vegetation and dramatic mountainous scenery. There is a large population of hippos in the dam, and majestic Baobab trees can be found on the southern shores, while the area's rich birdlife will enthrall bird enthusiasts. Sunset cruises and boat tours down the beautiful gorges of the dam are a must for travellers in the region.

Gorongosa National Park



Often referred to as 'the place where Noah parked his Ark', Gorongosa National Park was a popular tourist destination for the rich and famous back in the 1960s, when the area's abundant wildlife attracted stars like John Wayne, Joan Crawford, and Gregory Peck. The subsequent years of war and poaching decimated the wildlife count, but programmes have since been implemented to restore the park to its previous status as one of the richest wildlife refuges in the world.

The park contains a variety of terrain, but is dominated by savanna and grassland, alongside some woodland and impressive limestone gorges. With lush rainforest covering her slopes, the park now includes the verdant Mount Gorongosa, source of the life-sustaining rivers that traverse the reserve. The mountain is sacred to locals and features prominently in

traditional folklore.

Even after being ravaged by 17 years of civil war and extensive poaching, Gorongosa National Park supports astounding biodiversity, with 398 bird species, 122 mammals, 34 reptiles and 43 amphibians that have been documented. Comfortable lodgings are available for visitors, and game viewing highlights include elephants, buffalo, lions, crocodiles and zebra.

Ilha de Mozambique



Ilha de Mozambique (Mozambique Island) is an island in the Nampula Province of northern Mozambique, up the coast from Beira, with a fascinating historical heritage. It was the capital of Mozambique for nearly four centuries under Portuguese rule before the move to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), and was used as a base for Arab traders long before that. It is not only a wonderful tourist destination in Mozambique, but also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Ilha de Mozambique is an exquisite mix of old Portuguese and Muslim architecture, dividing old Stone Town in the north and Reed Town in the south. There is a great museum in the form of the Palacio Governo, a big red building in Stone Town.

Also worth seeing is the fort at the northern tip of the island, home to the Church of Nossa Senhora Baluarte, which is quite possibly the oldest surviving European building in the southern hemisphere, dating back to 1522. On a beach at the northern end of the island, there is a dive centre where visitors can take boat trips or just laze on the sand. For the more adventurous, a dhow can be taken to Chaga or Mossuril on the mainland to explore the coast. Requillas and Escondidino are two popular restaurants in Stone Town, and there are a number of local places serving fish and rice, or chima. One of the best options for accommodation is the campsite on the mainland, next to the bridge.

Quirimbas Islands

Soon to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Quirimbas Archipelago is fast becoming Mozambique's new tourist hotspot. This island chain - 31 in total, stretching south from Cape Delgado for 200 miles (320km) - is not only home to some fantastic sun-soaked beaches, incredible fishing opportunities, and world-class snorkelling and diving sites, but some



truly fascinating cultural sites as well.

Easily accessed from Pemba, the Quirimbas Islands should be one of the first destinations on any tourist's Mozambique travel itinerary. Visitors can explore the historic Stone Town on Ibo Island, or the mangrove-fringed Quirimbas National Park, or go diving from one of the 1,300-foot (400m) drop-off sites sprinkled around the archipelago. The fishing and scuba diving are extremely rewarding, and the islands make a wonderful honeymoon destination. Whether you choose to hide away from the world in a wooden chalet on the resort-island of Medjumbe, or rent a villa on the ultra-exclusive Vamizi Island, you are sure to leave this little corner of paradise vowing to return. Beautiful, exotic and full of exciting things to do, Mozambique's Quirimbas Islands are a sure bet for an unforgettable beach holiday to rival any in the world.

Niassa Game Reserve



Spanning an area of 42,000 square kilometres (10 million acres), the Niassa Game Reserve is the largest protected area in Mozambique, and one of the most pristine wilderness areas in the whole of Africa. Twice the size of South Africa's famed Kruger National Park, making it roughly the size of Denmark, the Niassa Reserve boasts an abundance of wildlife, incredibly varied bird life, and absolutely stunning natural scenery. The park is special because it is essentially a wilderness area and is relatively unexplored.

Visitors to the Niassa Game Reserve will be spellbound by the changing landscape, ranging from mountain forests to miombo forests and savanna grasslands, not to mention the high concentration of wild animals, including something like

13,000 elephants, 200 endangered wild dogs, lions, leopards and a huge assortment of birds. Giant rock formations called the inselbergs, of which Mecula Mountain is the largest, are another exciting feature of the park. Tourists are urged to visit between April and October, as this is the prime game viewing season. The best place to stay in the Niassa Reserve is definitely the world-class Lugenda Wilderness Camp, which offers visitors comfortable lodgings, game drives, hiking trails, rock climbing and incredible star-gazing opportunities.

AIRPORTS

BEIRA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BEW)

LOCATION

The airport is situated six miles (10km) north east of Beira.

GETTING TO THE CITY

There are buses and taxis available to the city centre.

TIME

Local time is GMT +2.

CONTACTS

Tel: +258 (0)3 301 071/2, +258 (0)3 302 011.

CAR RENTAL

Car hire companies include Imperial and Avis.

FACILITIES

The airport has a restaurant, shops and a post office.

DEPARTURE TAX

INHAMBANE AIRPORT (INH)

LOCATION

The airport is located on the outskirts of the city of Inhambane in Mozambique.

GETTING TO THE CITY

Taxis are readily available at the airport. Ask one of the friendly airport staff members what they feel a reasonable fare into Inhambane city is, and agree on this price before getting into the taxi.

TIME

GMT +2

CONTACTS

Tel: +258 29 320 312

FACILITIES

Inhambane has very limited facilities, although there are a few snack kiosks available. On the plus side, queues are ridiculously short at the airport, so you will not have too much time to kill.

DEPARTURE TAX

None.

MAPUTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (MPM)

LOCATION

The airport is situated three miles (5km) northwest of the city centre of Maputo.

GETTING TO THE CITY

Buses service the airport during the day, but the schedule is a bit erratic. Some hotels will organise airport transfer and taxis are available.

TIME

Local time is GMT +2.

CONTACTS

Tel: +258 (0)1 465 038/9, +258 (0)1 465 036/7, +258 (0)1 465 003.

CAR RENTAL

Several car rental companies are represented at the airport including Avis and Europcar.

AIRPORT TAXIS

Taxis are usually available at the airport, and some hotels will arrange airport shuttles for guests if contacted in advance.

FACILITIES

Facilities are not extensive, but food and drinks are available and there is a VIP Lounge.

DEPARTURE TAX

WEBSITE

www.aerportos.co.mz

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