

Mozambique

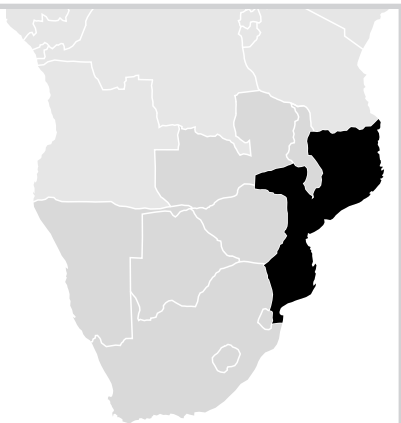
Mozambique is southern Africa's insider's tip. It offers beautiful, uncrowded beaches, romantic islands, diving and snorkelling, an intriguing history, and a fascinating melange of cultures. Choose between a comfortable, pampered beach holiday or a rugged bush adventure that lets you experience Africa wild and untamed.

Along the coast, the attractions are countless. Mozambique is renowned throughout the region for its fantastic beaches, where you can laze on white sands under swaying palms or slip through turquoise waters on a dhow in remote island archipelagos. Other highlights include Mozambique Island, with its cobbled streets and stately colonial-era churches, and Ibo Island, with its crumbling ruins and time-warp atmosphere. Inland are Gorongosa National Park and the Niassa Reserve, both of which abound in stunning vistas and wildlife – although it can take luck and persistence to spot the animals. Maputo, the country's lively capital, is unlike any other city in the region, with its Mediterranean vibe, sidewalk cafes, art galleries and renowned nightlife. Throughout – and in contrast to the more strait-laced neighbours, all former British colonies or protectorates – Mozambique's modern face reflects a unique fusion of African, Arabic, Indian and Portuguese influences. Its cuisine is spicier, its rhythms more tropical and its pace more laid-back.

If you're inclined to something tamer, stick to the south, where roads are good and accommodation options abound. Further north, allow plenty of time for getting around and be prepared to rough it – although there are some delightful surprises, especially on the islands.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 801,590 sq km
- **Capital** Maputo
- **Country code** ☎ 258
- **Famous for** Mozambique Island, *marrabenta* music, Makonde woodcarvings
- **Languages** Portuguese, various African languages
- **Money** Metical (Mtc)
- **Phrases** *Bom dia* (good morning); *obrigado/a* (thank you – m/f speaker)
- **Population** 21 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Plate of grilled prawns** Mtc300
- **Single-day dive** US\$50
- **Short taxi ride** Mtc100
- **Day dhow safari** about Mtc1500
- **Maputo-Inhambane bus fare** Mtc350

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** Mtc30
- **1.5L of bottled water** Mtc30
- **Bottle of 2M beer** Mtc40
- **Souvenir T-shirt** Mtc300
- **Plate of xima and sauce** Mtc40

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mozambique Island** (p263) Quiet, cobbled streets, pastel-painted mansions, whitewashed churches and waving palm trees.
- **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p276) Luxurious Indian Ocean getaways, enchanting Ibo, with its crumbling mansions covered with creepers, and the chance to island-hop on a dhow.
- **Maputo** (p226) Jacaranda- and flame-tree-lined streets, lively sidewalk cafes, art galleries and pumping salsa bars.
- **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p249) A quintessential tropical paradise with turquoise and jade waters full of colourful fish.
- **Off the beaten track** (p270) Secluded coves, crystal-clear waters, alluring wilderness and a wonderful ecolodge on Lake Niassa.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** In the south: start with a few nights enjoying Maputo's (p226) vibe before heading further north to Inhambane (p241), Tofu (p243) or another of the beaches. In the north: travel overland from Malawi to Nampula (p261) and on to Mozambique Island (p263). Finish in and around Pemba (p273) or the Quirimbas Archipelago (p276).
- **Two Weeks** In the south: follow the one-week itinerary, with more time in each place, and adding a few more destinations, including Vilankulo (p246) and a

dhow safari or snorkelling around the Bazaruto Archipelago (p249). In the north: proceed as under the one-week itinerary, finishing with time in both Pemba (p273) and on the Quirimbas Archipelago (p276), including Ibo Island. Alternatively, combine the southern and northern one-week itineraries.

- **One Month** Follow the previous itineraries' southern routings, and add Ponta d'Ouro (p237), Maputo Special Reserve (p239), or another beach or two. From Vilankulo, continue to Beira (p250) or Chimoio (p254) and then to Gorongosa National Park (p253). Alternatively, head to Nampula and Mozambique Island and continue with the northern two-week itinerary. Another option: travel by train from Nampula to Cuamba (p268), and then to Lichinga (p269) and Lake Niassa (p270), from where there are straightforward connections to Malawi and Tanzania.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Sunshine, blue skies and temperatures averaging between 24°C and 27°C along the coast are the norm, except during the wet summer season from about December/January until April when the heavy rains arrive and everything gets soggy. Temperatures are also higher during the rainy season – averaging 30°C and above in some areas. The hottest areas are in the north around Pemba, in the dry west around Tete and along the Zambezi Valley. Rainfall averages 750mm annually in Maputo.

The best time to visit is from May/June to November, during the cooler dry season, although Mozambique can be visited enjoyably at any time of year. At the height of the rainy season during February and March, be prepared for washed-out roads in more remote areas, and flooding in parts of the south and centre. During the Christmas/New Year holidays, around Easter and again in August, the southern resorts and Pemba fill up with vacationing South Africans.

HISTORY

From Bantu-speaking farmers and fishers to Arabic traders, Goan merchants and adventuring Europeans, Mozambique has long been a crossroads of cultures. For more on the country's early history, along with the history of Southern Africa, see p32.