

# On the Road



## MARY FITZPATRICK *Coordinating Author*

This photo was taken on the shores of Lake Niassa (p144), Mozambique's 'other' coastline. Getting there is half the fun, involving either a boat ride or an adventurous overland journey. It's the type of place where it's easy to stay for days, surrounded by the rhythms of traditional life, and mesmerised by star-filled night skies and waves lapping softly on the shoreline.

## MY FAVOURITE TRIP

I'd start out with as much time as possible in northern Cabo Delgado province (p152) between Pemba and Palma, especially island hopping in the Quirimbas Archipelago (p155) and time on Ibo Island (p156). Niassa province would be next on the list, exploring the Lake Niassa coastline (p144) and visiting the Niassa Reserve (p147).



Heading southwards, essential stops would include Mozambique Island (p133), the islands near Angoche (p131), lovely Gorongosa National Park (p106), Pomene (p92), charming Inhambane (p83), the long beaches around Chidenguele (p82) and windswept Ponta Malongane (p75), before finishing up in and around Maputo (p54).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary is from the USA, where she spent her early years in Washington, DC, dreaming, more often than not, of how to get across an ocean or two to more exotic locales. After finishing graduate studies, she set off for several years in Europe. Her fascination with languages and cultures soon led her further south to Africa, where she has spent much of the past two decades living and working all around the continent, including almost four years in Mozambique. She has authored and co-authored numerous other guidebooks to various African destinations, and heads off to Mozambique's beaches at every opportunity.

# Destination Mozambique

With its stately colonial-era buildings, remote island archipelagos, vast tracts of bush, sublime 2500km coastline and fascinating cultures, Mozambique is Africa's insider's tip.

It is also – unnoticed by much of the rest of the world – on its way up, fast. Mobile phones are everywhere; new high-rises and five-star hotels are opening almost overnight; the political arena is relatively stable; the cultural scene is booming; and the economy is slowly but steadily growing. A new bridge over the Zambezi River links north and south for the first time, wildlife populations are increasing and tourism is on the upswing, with international tourism revenues growing by an average 14% per year since 2005.

Underlying all this, of course, are more sobering statistics. Gross national income per capita is about US\$320 (compared with about US\$42,000 in the UK). HIV/AIDS continues to cast a long shadow, with adult infection rates well over 20% in some areas. Malaria also takes its toll and surpasses HIV/AIDS countrywide as the main cause of death. Illiteracy is common, especially in rural areas. Secondary education is out of reach for many students, and both unemployment and underemployment are widespread.

Yet, throughout the country, there is a palpable energy and a feeling of hope. For travellers, there is the increasingly rare chance to experience a country well away from established tourist circuits. A growing number of community-based tourism initiatives – including in the Chimanimani Mountains, in the Quirimbas Archipelago, around Gorongosa National Park and along the Lake Niassa shoreline – offer opportunities to gain entree and insights into traditional local cultures. They also offer a chance for travellers to leave the right sort of footprint, and to be a part of the great achievement-in-progress that is modern-day Mozambique.

In Maputo and other urban centres you will find a smattering of Westernised malls and glitz, but elsewhere most of the country moves to centuries-old rhythms, and it's likely that these will most profoundly shape your travel memories. In contrast to its more strait-laced neighbours – all former British colonies or protectorates – Mozambique's face reflects a unique blend of African, Arabic, Indian and Portuguese influences, and you'll see this intriguing mix wherever you turn.

Step in, slip away from the Western mindset and immerse yourself for a while: a dhow ride through silent mangrove channels, an Indian Ocean sunrise, a night or two on the shores of Lake Niassa or an afternoon listening to the rhythmic beats of *mapiko* drumming should do the trick. Let yourself be seduced by Mozambique's rich fusion of traditional and modern, its blend of tropical languor and rock-hard determination. Get hooked, and start to know the country and its people. Return again and yet again. Soon you may find that it's hard to break away.

## FAST FACTS

Population: 21.6 million

Area: 801,590 sq km

HIV/AIDS prevalence rate: 12.5%

Official language: Portuguese

Literacy rate: 48% (male 64%; female 33%)

Life expectancy at birth: 41 years

Inflation: 10.3%

Elephants in Niassa Reserve: about 12,000

Islands in the Quirimbas Archipelago: 22 plus numerous islets

Dugongs around Bazaruto Archipelago: fewer than 100

# Getting Started

Unless you have plenty of time, Mozambique is too large a country to cover in one visit, so it's worth giving some advance thought as to which areas you'd most like to include in your itinerary. Very roughly summarised: the south is optimal for a relatively easy beach holiday, while the centre and the north are ideal destinations for adventure travel or for pampered island and bush getaways.

In major cities and coastal tourist areas, all budgets and travel styles are catered for. Here you'll find a decent selection of sleeping and eating options, and good flight and bus connections. In much of the interior and in the far north, travel is more rugged. At the budget level, plan on at least several long bus rides. For top-end travel, charter flights are readily arranged.

## WHEN TO GO

Mozambique is best visited during the cooler dry season from May to October/November, although travel is enjoyable at any time of year. In the early part of the rainy season (November to January), temperatures are warmer. At the height of the rainy season during February and March – which is also the travel low season – be prepared for washed-out roads in more remote areas, and flooding in parts of the south and centre.

Apart from weather, another consideration – primarily in the south – is South African school-holiday period. During the travel high season – Christmas–New Year holidays, around Easter and again in August – the southern coastal resorts fill up with holidaying South Africans, and advance bookings are recommended.

## COSTS & MONEY

Mozambique has a well-deserved reputation for being expensive in comparison with its neighbours. Accommodation and internal flights will be your highest-cost items; fruit, produce and seafood bought at local markets, together with local road transport, are among the least costly items.

See Climate Charts (p169)  
for more information

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

You can get most things you'll need in Maputo and other major cities, except for specialised camping and sporting equipment, and certain toiletries (eg contact lens solution). Some essentials to bring from home:

- mosquito repellent, net and prophylaxes
- torch (flashlight)
- shore-shoes for beach walking
- sunscreen and sunglasses
- travel alarm (to help you wake up in time to catch those early morning buses)
- Visa card for accessing cash at ATMs
- sturdy water bottle
- travel insurance, including cover for medical air evacuation to Johannesburg
- Portuguese phrasebook
- jerry cans for carrying extra fuel (if driving)
- passport and a notarised copy of front and visa pages

### COST-CUTTING TIPS

Some tips for saving money, whatever your budget:

- Focus on one area of the country to minimise long-haul transportation costs
- Use public transport
- Eat local food
- Always ask about children's, midweek and low-season discounts
- Keep your schedule flexible to take advantage of last-minute deals
- Avoid peak-season travel (eg Christmas and New Year, Easter), when prices are highest
- Watch for flight/accommodation packages from Johannesburg, especially for the southern resorts and Pemba, and for special-offer fares on Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique

For accommodation, especially at the budget and midrange levels, you'll need to hunt to find value for money (and you should expect to pay more than in South Africa), although there are an increasing number of places catering to backpackers in the south and the far north, as well as a good network of midrange options. Staying in basic lodging, eating local food and travelling with public transport will cost from US\$30 per day.

Midrange travel with some comforts will cost between US\$50 and US\$150 per day, excluding airfares. At the top end, plan on between US\$150 and US\$500 (or more) per day at some of the exclusive island lodges, excluding hire cars and flights.

### TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Tourism is rapidly increasing in Mozambique, and making environmentally and culturally sensitive choices can have a significant impact. This is especially true along the coast, where quad biking and beach driving often go unchecked. For some guidelines, see p46. Also check out the GreenDex (p215) for community oriented and environmentally friendly organisations.

ResponsibleTravel.com ([www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)) has several volunteer holiday opportunities in Mozambique.

### TRAVEL LITERATURE

*Kalashnikovs and Zombie Cucumbers: Travels in Mozambique* (1995) by Nick Middleton – part travelogue and part historical overview – is a highly entertaining read, covering everything from colonial times and the war, to aid and development.

*With Both Hands Waving: A Journey Through Mozambique* (2003) by Justin Fox is another insightful and often humorous look at Mozambique in the early 1990s.

Lisa St Aubin de Terán's *Mozambique Mysteries* (2007) is as much about the author as it is about Mozambique, but it offers insight into a little-visited corner of the country.

*Empires of the Monsoon* (1998) by Richard Seymour Hall is a scholarly yet easy-to-read book, which covers a broad historical and geographical sweep, including Mozambique, and gives an excellent overview of the influences shaping coastal cultures.

*A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (1993) by William Finnegan examines the roots of Mozambique's civil war through a series of vivid close-ups on various areas of the country, and is essential reading for anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the country's post-colonial era.

### HOW MUCH?

Plate of grilled prawns  
Mtc300

Single dive (day) US\$50

Short taxi ride Mtc100

Dhow safari (day)  
Mtc1500

Maputo–Inhambane bus  
fare Mtc350

# TOP 10



## THINGS TO DO IN MOZAMBIQUE

### ...If You Have Plenty of Money

- 1 Treat yourself to several days in the Bazaruto Archipelago (p96)
- 2 Enjoy your own tropical paradise at one of the private island getaways in the Quirimbas Archipelago (p53)
- 3 Base yourself at Nkwichi Lodge on the shores of Lake Niassa (p144) and explore the surrounding Mozambican bush
- 4 Do a multinight walking safari in Gorongosa National Park (p106)
- 5 Visit the Niassa Reserve (p147)

### ...If You're on a Shoestring Budget

- 6 Sail on a dhow around the Quirimbas Archipelago (p157)
- 7 Visit Mozambique Island (p133) – also add this to the list if you have plenty of money
- 8 Spend a week chilling out at Tofo Beach (p87), a long arc of white sand near Inhambane
- 9 Take the train between Cuamba and Nampula (p141), and enjoy the passing glimpses of rural life
- 10 Go sailing and snorkelling around the islands of the Bazaruto Archipelago (p93)

## MOZAMBIKAN MUSIC

For an introduction to Mozambique's music scene, dip into some of the following:

- |                                                |                                        |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1 <i>Bumping</i> – Massukos                    | 6 <i>Timbila</i> – Eduardo Durão       |
| 2 <i>Karimbo</i> – Mabulu                      | 7 <i>Katchume</i> – Kapa Dêch          |
| 3 <i>King Marracuene</i> – Fany Mpumo          | 8 <i>Dilon</i> – Dilon Djindji         |
| 4 <i>Timbila Ta Venâncio</i> – Venâncio Mbande | 9 <i>Afrikiti</i> – Stewart Sukuma     |
| 5 <i>Vana Va Ndota</i> – Ghorwane              | 10 <i>Automy Dzi Txintxile</i> – Léman |

## CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Whatever your budget, there's nothing better than immersion for getting to know local life. Give the following a try:

- 1 Spend an early morning or late afternoon sitting at a dhow port, watching the boats arrive with their catch
- 2 Watch *mapiko* dancing (p160)
- 3 Listen to church singing
- 4 Browse a small-town market
- 5 Sail in a dhow (p167)
- 6 Share a plate of *xima* or *matapa* with locals
- 7 Watch the sun rise over the Indian Ocean
- 8 Walk around Mozambique Island (p133) or Ibo Island (p156) at dawn
- 9 Spend an afternoon in a small village without a camera
- 10 Observe Makonde woodcarvers at work in the villages around Mueda (p161)

Peter Stark's *At the Mercy of the River* (2005) is an adventurous read before visiting the Niassa Reserve.

Although not travel literature as such, any of the novels of Mia Couto, Mozambique's foremost author, make an excellent introduction to the country. Two to start with are *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* (2004) and *Sleepwalking Land* (2006).

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**African Studies Centre Mozambique Page** ([www.africa.upenn.edu](http://www.africa.upenn.edu)) Follow the 'Countries' link.

**Club of Mozambique** ([www.clubofmozambique.com](http://www.clubofmozambique.com)) A Mozambique business portal with free tourism-related newsletters, events listings and more.

**Images du Mozambique** ([www.imagesdumozambique.com](http://www.imagesdumozambique.com)) Check the 'Gallery' section of this site when planning your trip for a preview of what to expect.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Travel tips, the Thorn Tree bulletin board and other links.

**Mozambique Guide** ([www.mozguide.com](http://www.mozguide.com)) Helpful if you'll be visiting Mozambique with your own vehicle, with a chat site and information on routes and road conditions.

**Moçambique** ([www.visitmozambique.net](http://www.visitmozambique.net)) The Ministry of Tourism's official site.

**Mozambique News Agency** ([www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/](http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/)) Mozambique news in English.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### THE SOUTHERN COAST

10 to 14 days / Maputo to Vilankulo

For an introduction to Mozambique's wonderful beaches, spend a few days in **Maputo** (p54) getting oriented. Take the bus north to **Inhambane** (p83), with its flamingos and dhows, before heading to the beaches at **Tofo** (p87) or **Barra** (p89). Divers should add two or three extra days to the itinerary (more for a certification course). Continue north to **Vilankulo** (p92) for snorkelling or a dhow safari around the **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p96) before returning to Maputo by bus, or flying from Vilankulo directly out to Johannesburg.

Recommended detours along the way include **Inhaca Island** (p71) and the **Maputo Special Reserve** (p78) – allow two to three extra nights from Maputo for either – or one of the beaches around **Xai-Xai** (p82).

If driving (4WD), consider entering Mozambique through South Africa's Kruger National Park and **Limpopo National Park** (p80) en route to the coast. Alternatively, travel via the Kosi Bay border crossing with time at **Ponta d'Ouro** (p75) and **Ponta Malongane** (p75). Another possible coastal stop for self-drivers is **Pomene** (p92), with its beautiful beach and estuary.

This 1000km journey combines Maputo with some of Mozambique's best beaches in an easy route that can be done by driving, flying or a bit of both in an air–road circuit in/out of Johannesburg. It's also easy to do in reverse, from north to south.



## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

### GRAND TOUR

Two to three months / Maputo to Pemba

Except for the southern beaches, most of Mozambique is a 'road less travelled'. For a grand overland tour, start in the south, following the itinerary outlined under the Southern Coast (opposite), with stops in Maputo, Inhambane, Tofo or Barra, Vilankulo and the Bazaruto Archipelago. From Vilankulo, continue by bus north to **Beira** (p102), with a day or two in this old port city before detouring inland for a couple of nights in **Gorongosa National Park** (p106) followed by a visit to the **Chimanimani Mountains** (p113).

The overland route continues north via **Quelimane** (p119) and **Nampula** (p127) to **Mozambique Island** (p133), where it's easy to spend two or three days taking in the sights. Possible detours include **Gurúè** (p123) for some walking, or **Nacala** (p139) for relaxing and diving. Continue northwards by bus to **Pemba** (p149). Spend a few days enjoying this sunny, low-key beach town and the surrounding area before heading to the **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p155). **Pangane** (p160) is the next stop – it can be reached by road, after returning to Pemba, or by dhow from the Quirimbas Archipelago. Then it's on to **Moçimboa da Praia** (p162) and then over the Rovuma River into Tanzania. Alternative routes include returning from the Quirimbas Archipelago to Pemba, and flying directly to Maputo or South Africa from there, or taking the **Nampula–Cuamba train** (p141) west from Nampula (after visiting Mozambique Island) through to **Cuamba** (p140) and then continuing on to **Lichinga** (p142), **Lake Niassa** (p144) and into Malawi, or – from Lichinga – north into Tanzania.



Allow as much time as possible for this 3700km-long adventure along the coast, including inland detours. It's possible to use public transport (perhaps with a flight or two to break up the longer stretches) or as self-drive, and is just as good done from north to south.



## TAILORED TRIPS

### 'BEST OF MOZAMBIQUE' SAMPLER

Mozambique's highlights are its beaches and islands, its people and cultures, and the adventure of it all. Here's a small sampling of some of the best the country has to offer in each area. For beaches and islands, there are too many to name all of them, but among the highlights are **Ponta d'Ouro** (p75), **Tofo** (p87), **Chidenguele** (p82), **Pomene** (p92), the **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p96), **Angoche** (p131) and the **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p155). The two archipelagos, together with **Mozambique Island** (p133) – a Unesco World Heritage site – easily crown the list of island getaways.

Cultural highlights include **tufo dancing** (p33) on Mozambique Island, masked **mapiko dancing** (p160) in the far north, **Chopi timbila orchestras** (p83) around Quissico and a sampling of Maputo's **art museums** (p61) and its **nightlife** (p68). For pure adventure, it's hard to beat Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces, especially the coastal stretch from **Pangane** (p160) north to the Rovuma River; the **Niassa Reserve** (p147); and the beautiful **Lake Niassa** (p144) shoreline between Còbuè and Metangula. All are ideal destinations for getting an authentic taste of the African bush.



### INLAND IDYLLS

Many of Mozambique's attractions are along the coast, but there are some inland gems as well. If you're after greenery and something offbeat, don't miss the **Chimanimani Mountains** (p113), with cool forests, hiking and community-based tourism. The wilderness, birds and animals at **Gorongosa National Park** (p106) are another highlight for nature lovers, and both vehicle and walking safaris are possible.

For anglers, or anyone after something different, a few days at **Lake Cahora Bassa** (p117) makes a lovely respite, with attractive hill scenery, a cool, refreshing climate and the massive dam. **Gurúè** (p123), with its tea plantations, and the sacred **Mt Namúli** (p124) nearby, is another worthwhile stop.

**Limpopo National Park** (p80) is a convenient place to visit if you're arriving with your own vehicle from South Africa, and anyone interested in birdwatching should consider the area south and east of **Caia** (p118), perhaps with a detour to **Mt Gorongosa** (p107) en route.

The train ride between **Nampula** (p127) and **Cuamba** (p140) is one of southern Africa's classic journeys, cutting through striking, inselberg-studded landscapes and past remote villages, and offers a great slice of Mozambican life. At the top of the list of inland idylls are **Lake Niassa** (p144), with its unspoiled coastline and crystal clear waters, and the wild and remote **Niassa Reserve** (p147).



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