

# Mozambique

Mozambique is one of the continent's insider tips, with long, stunning beaches, excellent diving and snorkelling, and magical offshore islands. Explore the crystal-clear depths around the Bazaruto Archipelago. Slip silently on a dhow through azure waters or laze under the palms in the Quirimbas Archipelago. Paint your face with *musiro* or watch the silversmiths at work on historical Ibo Island. Take an off-beat safari in the wilds of Gorongosa National Park. Wander along cobbled streets past whitewashed colonial-era buildings on Mozambique Island. Sip a cafe espresso at one of Maputo's lively sidewalk cafes (or maybe a *caipirinha* at one of its jazz bars). And dance the night away to the country's trademark *marrabenta* music.

Throughout the country (and in contrast to its more straight-laced neighbours, all of which are 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 and transport links (especially with neighbouring South Africa) are good and accommodation options abound. For more adventure, cross over the Zambezi into the wild north, one of Africa's last frontiers. Getting around here takes time, but the coastal panoramas and the islands, the sense of space and the sheer adventure of travel make the journey well worthwhile.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 800,000 sq km
- **ATMs** In all major towns
- **Borders** Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe
- **Budget** US\$30 to US\$150 per day
- **Capital** Maputo
- **Languages** Portuguese and 20-plus African languages
- **Money** Metical nova familia; US\$1 = Mtc25, €1 = Mtc45
- **Population** 21 million
- **Seasons** Dry (May to November), wet (December to April)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 258; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +2
- **Visa** US\$20 to US\$70 for 30 days; issued at most border posts for US\$25



**HOW MUCH?**

- **Plate of grilled prawns** US\$12
- **Single-day dive** US\$45
- **Short taxi ride** US\$4
- **Day dhow safari** from US\$40
- **Maputo–Inhambane bus fare** US\$14

**LONELY PLANET INDEX**

- **1L petrol** US\$1.20
- **1.5L bottled water** US\$1.20
- **2M beer** US\$1.60
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$12
- **Plate of xima and sauce** US\$2

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Maputo** (p965) Explore lively sidewalk cafes, pumping salsa bars, flame-tree-lined streets, and dynamic art and cultural scenes.
- **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p972) Swim and snorkel in a quintessential tropical paradise with turquoise waters full of colourful fish.
- **Tofo** (p971) Stroll past white sand dunes and dive with manta rays in this party-time town.
- **Mozambique Island** (p974) Delve into the past in the former capital of Portuguese East Africa, now a haunting town of pastel-painted mansions and white-washed churches.
- **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p976) Soak up Ibo's time-warp ambience amid ruined colonial-era villas that are covered with creepers, or luxuriate in exclusive island getaways.

**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 rainy summer season from about December/January through to April, when everything gets soggy and sticky, and temperatures exceed 30°C in some areas.

The best time to visit is from May to November, during the cooler dry season. During the Christmas/New Year holidays, around Easter and in August, the south-

ern resorts fill up; advance bookings are recommended.

**ITINERARIES**

- **One Week** In the south, spend several days enjoying Maputo's (p965) vibe before heading to Inhambane (p970) and Tofo (p971), or on to Vilankulo (p971) and the Bazaruto Archipelago (p972).
- **Two Weeks** Follow the one-week itinerary then continue north to Nampula (p974) and divide your remaining time between Mozambique Island (p974) and Pemba (p976), Ibo or elsewhere in the Quirimbas Archipelago (p976).
- **One Month** Follow the previous itineraries, but now with time for all the options mentioned, plus a detour to Gorongosa National Park (p973) en route north. Alternatively, from Nampula take the train west to Cuamba (p975), then continue on to Lichinga (p975) and Lake Niassa (p975).

**HISTORY**

While Europeans were still struggling in the Dark Ages, the light of the ancient world had already fallen on Mozambique. From the 9th century AD, Mozambique's coast was part of a chain of civilised merchant kingdoms, visited by ships from as far afield as India, Arabia and Persia. Following the monsoon winds, they came to buy slaves, ivory, gold and spices. Muslim merchants intermarried with African families, and set up trading posts along the coast.

Sailing onto this scene came the first Europeans – Portuguese explorers such as Vasco da Gama. These 15th-century buccaneers pursued their trade interests with raids on coastal towns, and constructed forts to protect themselves from their English and Dutch rivals. In the 17th century, the Mozambican interior was divided into huge agricultural estates, nominally under the Portuguese crown but in fact run as private fiefdoms with their own slave armies.

In the late 19th century, Portugal and other European powers began a political arm wrestle for Africa. Britain began to eye Mozambique, and Portugal reacted by strengthening its previously lax colonial control. The country was so wild, however, that the government had to lease large areas of land to private firms, which soon became