Southeastern Tanzania

Time seems to have stood still in Tanzania’s remote and sparsely populated southeast. It lacks the development and bustle of the north, tourists numbers are a relative trickle and Arusha’s crush of Land Cruisers and safari companies is so far removed that it might as well be in another country. During the Mozambican war the southeast was considered to be a sensitive border zone and many areas were off limits to tourists. As a result – although travel restrictions have long since been lifted and the welcome here is as warm as it is elsewhere in the country – the region remains in many ways traditional and reserved. It makes an ideal destination for getting to know local life that has been relatively insulated from outside influences.

Among the southeast’s major attractions are the untrammelled expanses of the Selous Game Reserve, with a clutch of intimate lodges, boat safaris and top-notch wildlife watching. Another draw is the long coastline. Here, deserted white-sand beaches shimmer under an unrelenting sun, shoals of colourful fish flit past amazing coral formations in Tanzania’s two marine parks at Mafia island and Mnazi Bay, and the ruins on Kilwa Kisiwani and in other old Swahili towns testify to days when this part of the continent was the centre of trading networks stretching to the Far East.

Mafia and the Selous both offer a full range of accommodation and Western amenities. Elsewhere, while there are good air connections to major destinations, infrastructure is undeveloped, and road journeys can be long and rugged.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Taking a boat safari along the Rufiji River in **Selous Game Reserve** (p311)
- Diving amidst colourful fish or relaxing on white sands in the **Mafia archipelago** (p306)
- Exploring traces of bygone days at the old Swahili trading towns of **Mikindani** (p326) and **Kilwa Kivinje** (p319)
- Visiting the ruins of the famed medieval city-state of **Kilwa Kisiwani** (p318)
- Relaxing on the beaches around **Mtwara** (p322) and the **Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park** (p327)