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ZANZIBAR

Ancient Trade Route

Zanzibar once formed an important link on the East African Spice and Trade Route

Nowadays, it's one of the most popular beach destinations in Africa and with good reasons. Zanzibar's coastline offers some of the best beaches in the world, but sand and surf vary depending on what side of the island you're on. On the east coast, waves break over coral reefs and sand bars offshore, and low tide reveals small pools of starfish, small minnows, and anemones. Up north, ocean swimming is much less susceptible to the tides, and smooth beaches and white sand make for dazzling days in the sun.

About Zanzibar

The position of Zanzibar, which is washed by the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, made this archipelago a favourable base for traders voyaging between Africa, Arabia, and India. These three cultures shaped Zanzibar's history, traditions, food and language. Because of the traders' need to communicate with the natives, a new language emerged which combined Arabic, Persian, English, and Swahili.

Zanzibar is one of the main archipelagos of Tanzania, and the name Tanzania comes from combining the names Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The name Zanzibar comes from the Arabic Zanjibār and Persian Zang-bār. It combines the words Zang ("Black") + bār ("coast, land, country"). Zanzibar is also called "Coast of Black".

History

The first European power to gain control of Zanzibar was the Portugese, and their rule lasted nearly 200 years. Later, Zanzibar fell under the control of the Sultanate of Oman, which colonized the country. During that time, slavery was abolished and the 38-minute Anglo-Zanzibar War broke out, putting the country in the history books for the shortest war on record.

The islands gained independence from Britain in December 1963 as a constitutional monarchy. A month later, the bloody Zanzibar Revolution, in which several thousand Arabs and Indians were killed and thousands more expelled and expropriated, led to the Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba.

TODAY

The official status of Zanzibar is as a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania. Official languages are Kiswahili, English and Arabic. The main religion is Islam, and almost 95% of the inhabitants are Muslim.

Five unbelievable facts about Zanzibar

Zanzibar is famous for its tropical island charms, white beaches, crystal clear sea, and spices. But the island also has some intriguing history. For example, did you know that one of the shortest wars in history took place on Zanzibar? It lasted only 38 minutes. Or did you know that Zanzibar was the first African region with color television? You are sure to discover more about the fascinating history of the island, but here are five more facts to get you started.

1. SWAHILI TIME COUNTING

We usually start counting time at midnight. Swahili culture starts counting time at sunrise. For example, one o'clock in the morning is seven o'clock in Western time. The reason for this is Zanzibar's close proximity to the equator which gives it equal day and night lengths (12-hours for each part of the day).

2. AFRICA WITHOUT LIONS AND ELEPHANTS

Yes, Zanzibar is a part of Africa and Tanzania, which is known for its wildlife and safaris, but there are no lions, elephants, or giraffes in Zanzibar. Safaris in Zanzibar happen under water instead. In the Indian Ocean, you can find breath-taking views of ocean life and coral reefs.

3. EGGS WITH WHITE YOLKS

Imagine eggs for breakfast which have white yolks. Can you believe it? But don't worry, there's nothing wrong with them and they don't even taste differently. Chickens are fed with a grain that makes them produce monochrome eggs and this makes their yolks white.

4. THE AVERAGE ZANZIBARI MAKES LESS THAN 1 DOLLAR A DAY

Zanzibar has many beautiful and luxurious resorts, where you can spend an idyllic holiday. But on the other hand, the average daily wage amongst the locals is less than 1 dollar.

5. FREDDIE MERCURY WAS BORN IN ZANZIBAR

The famous lead singer of Queen was born in the oriental maze of narrow, curved lanes known as Stone Town.

Why you should visit this beautiful location -

From the markets in Zanzibar to the vibrant local culture & cuisine, shop for souvenirs such as spices, textiles, and jewelry and immerse yourself in a far away paradise. Whether you are seeking a tranquil getaway or an adventure-filled holiday, Zanzibar is the perfect destination to explore and discover places of interest for all travellers.

What to do to fill up your days:

Must-Visit Places In Zanzibar

Stone Town

Stone Town is the capital of Zanzibar and is a fine example of the Swahili coastal trading towns of East Africa. The town's urban fabric and original townscape is virtually intact and contains many fine buildings that reflect its particular culture; a culture that has brought together and homogenized disparate elements of the cultures of Africa, the Arab region, India, and Europe over more than a millennium. Visiting Stone Town is definitely one of the best things to do in Zanzibar.

- **Freddie Mercury Museum**
 - The first ever Museum dedicated to the world legend Freddie Mercury, located in Shangani, in the heart of Zanzibar Stone Town.
 - The Freddie Mercury Museum is officially partnered with Queen Productions Ltd. in the United Kingdom, who have loaned us exclusive pictures of Freddie Mercury throughout different stages in his life. This project aims to showcase a detailed account of the birth town of Farrokh Bulsara, his roots with the Zoroastrian religion, his childhood and upbringing in Zanzibar, followed by his schooling in Panchgani, and then the rest of his journey to becoming one of the greatest stars of all time.
- **Hurumzi Henna Art Gallery**
 - The women of the Hurumzi Henna Art Gallery transform traditional henna body art into paintings and prints. Using the centuries old tradition of adorning women's hands and feet for celebrations such as weddings and festivals, the artists translate the patterns of the body art onto canvas, creating a new and soon to be iconic art style through their elaborate paintings.
- **Slave Market**

- The slave market of Stone Town has been inactive for decades, but memorials provide a stark reminder of the horrific acts that once took place here. Visit this site and reflect on the atrocities of the past as you stand in the shadow of the Anglican Church. Learn about the important role slavery played in Zanzibar's history, where, for nearly 1,000 years, Arab traders traveled to the interior of Africa, sometimes as far as the Congo, to purchase or kidnap healthy young people.
- **Emerson Spice**
 - 'Emerson Spice' consists of three adjoining World Heritage site buildings in the exotic kasbah of Zanzibar's Stone Town. Two of the buildings' facades face a quaint square at the end of the historic Tharia Street, a principal thoroughfare for walking tours of the city. The third façade looks down Tharia Street toward the Anglican Cathedral and the slave market. Nestled amongst the rear facades is a square private courtyard containing an ancient well.
- **Forodhani Gardens Night Market**
 - Although not a traditional restaurant, no list of Stone Town's best eateries would be complete without mentioning the night market in the Forodhani Park. Every day, from 6pm onwards, the park is home to a fantastic open-air food market, where locals and tourists stroll amongst the many different vendors to try the wide variety of cuisines on offer, from pizza and samosas to sugar-cane juice. This is one of the best things to do in Zanzibar, especially if you want a real taste of the local culture whilst enjoying delicious street food, and is a key experience for travelers that want to get in touch with Stone Town's warm and vibrant community.
- **Prison Island**
 - Prison Island, also known as Changuu Island, is about 30 minutes by boat from Stone Town. The island was formerly owned by an Arab who used it for the confinement of refractory slaves, but no prisoners were ever properly housed there; instead, the island became a quarantine station for the yellow fever epidemic. The actual jail was built in 1893, hence the name "PRISON ISLAND", and is still standing. Whilst on the island you will be able to observe and feed the tortoises, swim, sunbathe and snorkel. You should also keep your eyes peeled for the shy and elusive Duikers – an unusual and tiny antelope species.
- **Jozani Forest**
 - This forest is one of the last remaining sanctuaries of the red colobus monkeys in the world and it was declared a nature reserve in the 1960's. At one time, the monkeys were an endangered species, but numbers have increased in recent years thanks to the conservation work by the nature reserve, working closely with the local people. A walk through this impressive flora and fauna offers wonderful photo opportunities as

well as sightings of these rare creatures, which, together, make this tour one of Zanzibar's highlights.

- **Tumbatu Island**

- Tumbatu Island, the third-largest island in the Zanzibar Archipelago, is a hidden gem off the coast of Tanzania, steeped in rich history and unique culture. Known for its secluded beaches, lush vegetation, and vibrant local life, Tumbatu offers a tranquil retreat from the bustling mainland. The island's inhabitants, the Watumbatu people, are renowned for their traditional Goma music and dance, which visitors can experience firsthand. Tumbatu's historical significance is evident in its ancient ruins, including those of the medieval Swahili town of Jongowe. The island is also home to a variety of marine life, making it a paradise for snorkeling and diving enthusiasts. With its blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and historical intrigue, Tumbatu Island offers a unique and immersive experience for travelers seeking to explore the lesser-known facets of the Zanzibar Archipelago.

- **Spice Tour**

- The Spice Tour is one of the most popular things to do in Zanzibar. The island got its nickname 'the Spice Island' as a result of it being one of the world's leading producers of spices such as clove, nutmeg and cinnamon during the 19th century. Your tour guide will describe how the various different plants can be used and you will have the chance to smell and taste a variety of spices, herbs and tropical fruits, including clove, lemongrass, nutmeg, cinnamon, turmeric, vanilla, coconut, papaya, chili, black pepper, jackfruit, cardamom, cassava and oranges.

- **Paje**

- **Mwani Center**

- On the coast of Paje beach, the Mwani Center embodies the spirit of Zanzibari community and sustainable living. This local women's cooperative practices seaweed farming, nurturing the marine flora with a blend of traditional knowledge and a touch of modern-day sustainability practices and then transforming it into unique organic soaps, scrubs and essential oils.

- The cooperative not only contributes to the local economy but also stands as a beacon of empowerment, demonstrating the significant strides women can make in fostering community-based sustainable ventures. Visitors to Paje have the unique opportunity to witness this eco-friendly endeavor through guided tours of the seaweed farms. These tours offer an immersive experience into the daily lives of the seaweed farmers. The calm rhythm of the tides, coupled with the meticulous care showcased in the farming practices, makes for a truly enlightening experience.
- The Mwani Center is more than just a cooperative; it's a testament to the harmonious blend of community, sustainability, and the bountiful nature of Zanzibar. We highly recommend a visit!

- **Kuza Cave**

- Kuza Cave is one of Zanzibar's best-kept secrets, offering an immersive experience into the heart of Tanzanian culture and history. This ancient limestone jungle cave, filled with crystal clear turquoise fresh water, is not just a natural wonder but also a hub for cultural activities. Visitors can enjoy cave swimming, African dancing and drumming, Swahili cooking lessons, and learn about Swahili archaeology. The surrounding area is a peaceful nature preserve, home to Red Colobus Monkeys, colorful butterflies, a variety of birds, chindi, and bush babies. The site also features a restaurant and a large shaded area for relaxation. Kuza Cave is a social enterprise supporting local education projects, making your visit a contribution to the local community. Whether you're interested in history, culture, nature, or cuisine, Kuza Cave offers a unique and enriching experience.

- **Pingwe**

- **The Rock**

- The Rock, situated on the southeast coast of Zanzibar at Michamvi Pingwe beach, stands out as a unique dining destination, affectionately dubbed the "floating restaurant" due to its appearance at high tide.
- This once simple fishing outpost has been transformed into a picturesque eatery that blends seamlessly with its natural surroundings, offering guests the rare opportunity to dine amidst panoramic seascapes. Accessible by foot at low tide or by a complimentary boat service at high tide, The Rock provides an unforgettable experience, emphasizing its commitment to minimal environmental impact while

celebrating the beauty of its location with an open-air terrace for enjoying drinks under the Tanzanian sky.

○ **The Best Time to Visit Zanzibar**

The best time to visit Zanzibar is from June to October during the cool, dry season with minimal rainfall and warm weather and sea temperatures. This period is also the high season for safaris on the mainland and the island is busy with all facilities in full operation.

January and February when it's hot and dry are also popular months to visit Zanzibar. Temperatures are slightly higher, and rainfall is still minimal. While still busy, there is a slightly more laid-back atmosphere than the peak summer months.

There are two rainy seasons in Zanzibar. The main season, called the "long rains" is during mid-April and May. The second rainy season, "the short rains" that last only for a few minutes, usually in the mornings, is from November to December. Visitor numbers during the rainy seasons are lower and some businesses may be closed but visiting the island during these months offers a unique experience that many enjoy.

Daytime temperatures remain fairly constant on Zanzibar throughout the year. Maximum temperatures rarely exceed the mid 30s in Celsius (approximately 90 Fahrenheit) during the hot season with the rainy seasons being 3-4 degrees lower. During the night the temperature doesn't usually go below a mild 21 degrees Celsius anytime of the year. The sea is warm enough for swimming all year around, from 25 degrees Celsius in August to 29 degrees Celsius from December to April.

Understanding essential travel information such as visa requirements, safety measures, and health precautions is crucial for a hassle-free and safe Zanzibar trip:

Visas, Safety Measures, and Health Precautions

What is the local language?

The official local language is Swahili. English is often spoken in the tourist areas, as well as Italian, French and Arabic.

Zanzibaris are a rich mixture of backgrounds and religions from right across the Indian Ocean, originating from Africa, to Persia, Oman, and Asia, all merged into one cosmopolitan culture. The population is around 1 million.

How do I pay in Zanzibar?

The local currency in Zanzibar is the Tanzanian Shilling (TSh). US dollar notes are also widely accepted as payment throughout the island. Traveller's Cheques can be exchanged at banks, bureau de change and some hotels, although exchange rates are poor, and cash is preferable. Credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are accepted at larger establishments. There are ATM cash machines in Zanzibar Town and at the airport.

Do the internet and mobile phones work in Zanzibar?

International telephone calls can be made from the post office in Zanzibar Town, larger hotels and the numerous international communications centres, which range from internet cafes to shops with a phone. Internet cafes have sprung up all over Zanzibar Town and, despite being a little slow at times, provide a cheap and easy method of communication. Mobile network coverage is good in both Zanzibar and Pemba, and GSM mobile phones with roaming will generally be able to pick up reception in all but the most remote areas.

What is the electricity like?

Electricity is 230 V. Usually English-style sockets are used, with the possibility of borrowing convertors at the hotels' receptions, although it may be better to bring your own.

What is the local time?

Local time is GMT + 3 during the winter season and GMT + 2 during the summer season.

What should I know about medical services and vaccination?

Advice should be sought from a doctor at home prior to your Zanzibar holiday, but vaccinations for typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio, meningitis and hepatitis A are usually recommended. The Tanzanian government requires proof of yellow fever vaccination upon arrival if you are traveling from a country with a risk of yellow fever (this does not include the US – see the complete list: countries with a risk of the yellow fever virus (YFV) transmission.) Malaria is not common in Zanzibar, however it is possible. For this reason it is best to cover up after sunset, and use mosquito repellent on exposed all skin. Drinking water should be boiled and filtered or bought in sealed bottles. Please note the medical facilities in Zanzibar are limited.

What to pack for Zanzibar?

Clothes are recommended to be light and loose and ideally from natural fabrics. The best shoes are flip-flops or sandals, however a firm pair of walking shoes is recommended for trips to the forest. To protect yourself from the tropical sun, sunscreen and a hat are essential. Most hotels and resorts provide mosquito nets, however if you decide to choose budget accommodation, it might be best to bring your own.

Important information for all travellers:

As of 1st June, 2019, travellers heading for Tanzania are banned from bringing any plastic carrier bags on board or in their luggage. However, plastic packaging for medical services, industrial

products, the construction industry, foodstuff, and sanitary and ziploc bags that are specifically used to carry toiletries, are not prohibited. Please keep this rule in mind and pack accordingly in order to avoid penalties on arrival.

When is Ramadan?

Ramadan is determined by the lunar Islamic calendar. This means that it's on a different date every year. It normally begins after the astronomical new moon, and the end is on the Eid al-Fitr holiday. If you are travelling to Zanzibar during the Ramadan celebration, you should know some do's and don't. Do not eat, drink or smoke in public during Ramadan. It is not against the law to eat in public, but it is considered impolite when so many people are fasting. Some Muslim-owned restaurants are closed during Ramadan, some only during daytime.

How to dress in Zanzibar?

Please bear in mind that Zanzibar is a highly religious country and almost 95% of its inhabitants are Muslims. Women, in particular, should dress modestly, with shoulders and knees covered. Bikinis and minis are fine at hotels' and resorts' premises, but Zanzibaris appreciate modest dressing in the villages and towns. Likewise, men should not go shirtless and should dress conservatively. Nudity on the beach is not acceptable.

How to travel to Zanzibar?

Amongst the airlines flying to Zanzibar are Emirates (Fly Dubai), Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Oman Air, Ethiopian Airlines, Kenyan Airways, Alitalia, South African Airways. International airlines offer flights via Istanbul, Nairobi, Dubai or Doha. Those via Dar es Salaam require an additional 20 minute local flight. Qatar Airways also fly to Kilimanjaro or Dar es Salaam, whilst Kenya Airways fly via Nairobi. It is also possible to fly from other Tanzanian places such as Arusha, Ruaha, Selous, Manyara, Pemba or Serengeti.

Zanzibari transportation

Zanzibar has a relatively good network of roads. The safest way to travel is to arrange a transfer via your hotel or tour operator.

Local taxis are available upon landing at the airport.

Renting a car is not expensive, around USD 50 per day. Drivers need to hold an international driving licence and must pay for daily police permit those costs USD 3. Driving is on the left. There are a number of police checkpoints, but these are usually just a formality, although they may want to see your licence.

Can I take photographs in Zanzibar?

You are more than welcome to take photographs of the beauty of the Zanzibari Islands, however taking photographs of residents and their children without asking their permission is considered offensive. The same applies for religious sites, sacred places or special events. Please bear in mind military and security sensitive areas cannot be photographed.

What are the main rules for behaviour in public?

Due to the religion, there are certain rules visitors should follow during their visit in order to respect the local norms. It is not recommended to consume alcohol in public areas. Kissing or display of affection is also not customary to Zanzibar. If there is an opportunity to participate in religious or cultural ceremony, tourists should ask for the corresponding permission to be able to participate or observed it and show the required respect.

How can I support the locals?

The local communities are not wealthy and the living conditions of many of them are very basic. Income levels are low and many families lack many basic essentials. Instead of giving money to individuals, or food and sweets to children, visitors are encouraged to bring specific in-kind donations to support the people in a positive way, without promoting begging or skipping school in the hope of receiving gifts from tourists. Visitors should be sensible of the use of limited resources such as water, electrical energy and fuel.

Visa Information

You can now apply for an Online Visa to visit the United Republic of Tanzania (both Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar). You are required to fill in the online form, make payment, and submit your application online. Your form will be internally reviewed and processed.

Applicants will be notified through their e-mails whether their applications have been accepted or rejected. They may also TRACK their application statuses through the online system. Applicants may as well be required to visit the nearest Tanzanian Embassies or Consular Offices for interviews.

<https://visa.immigration.go.tz/>

Recommended Hotel Brands

Options from Luxury to Budget-Friendly

- **Luxury Escapes**
- **Boutique Hotels and Villas**

Boutique accommodations combine charm and comfort, often reflecting Zanzibar's cultural essence.

Mid-Range Comfort

Budget-friendly yet comfortable options are plentiful across Zanzibar.

When choosing accommodation in Zanzibar, consider factors such as location, facilities, and your preferred atmosphere. Whether you seek luxury, cultural immersion, or budget-friendly comfort, Zanzibar caters to diverse tastes, promising a memorable stay amidst its tropical beauty.

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Riu Hotels

Melia Hotels

Doubletree Hotels

Sandies

Azao Hotel

Uroa Bay Beach Resort

And MANY MORE...!