

## Zanzibar - A Magnet for Adventurers, Men-of God, Explorers and Conquerors

Zanzibar Island has long been associated with mystery and romance. Find out why Zanzibar has over the ages been such a magnet for adventurers, men-of God, explorers, traders and conquerors. And why Condé Nast Traveller has picked it as one of the three most romantic ocean destinations in the world...



Sunset At Zanzibar Beach

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## **1. Zanzibar - A Magnet for Adventurers, Men-of God, Explorers and Conquerors**

Those who have not been to Zanzibar will be surprised that despite its big name, it is only a small part of Tanzania. Zanzibar encompasses the main island of Ugunja and its twin Pemba and several small islets. A shallow channel 37km across at the nearest point separates it from the African mainland. As the crow flies, it is 73 km from Dar es Salaam and 219 km from Mombasa in Kenya.

Zanzibar is referred to as the Spice Islands with good reason. The fragrant scents of cloves, cardamom, nutmeg and vanilla hung in the warm tropical air. To this day sailors claim that they can recognise the aroma of the islands even when far out at sea. Surely, not even die-hard fans of the Spice Girls can claim anything similar. But the spice business is relatively recent, less than 200 years old. It is the fascinating history of the islands that evokes the image of magic and romance in the minds of visitors.

The charms of Zanzibar have at one time or another lured a vast array of adventurers, men-of God, explorers, traders and conquerors. The diligent time traveler will sight footprints of Bantu Africans, Phoenicians, Persians, Assyrians, Sumerians, Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, Malays, Portuguese, English, Dutch and Omani Arabs. That is why a visit to Zanzibar leaves a much more lasting impression than your usual island destination.

The first people to settle on the islands were Bantu Africans from the continental mainland. The assistance of the trade winds eventually brought in Shirazi Persians and Omani Arabs from about AD 700. Then commencing early sixteenth century, the Portuguese dominated the East African coast including Zanzibar for nearly 200 years. Sensing the decline of Portugal as a world power Omani Arabs invaded and subdued the Islands. The Omani Sultan was so excited about the prospects of riches from the Islands that he actually relocated here. The magnet was ivory and slaves.

The slave business was thoroughly unwholesome as you can well imagine. Zanzibar was the transit market of slaves coming over from raids in the interior. David Livingstone, the missionary and explorer had traveled extensively in the interior and was greatly offended by the practice and impact of the slave trade. This man-of-God managed to provoke liberal opinion in Britain, which led to action by the Royal Navy. For the sake of humanity, Zanzibar became a British

Protectorate in 1890. And for the sake of smooth administration, power was finally transferred to the gentle hands of the King of England in 1913.

As a modern day explorer, Zanzibar welcomes you to peek at the rich heritage whose testimony is in the architecture and culture of its people. The cultural heart of Zanzibar is Stone Town, which is little touched by the hand of time. It is here that the association with "a thousand and one nights" comes alive. You will find narrow winding streets, bazaars, mosques, fortresses and a Persian style public bathhouse.

There are also palaces and grand houses whose magnificent proportions and extravagant decor does justice to the term "oriental splendour". Remember to pay homage to Dr. Livingstone by visiting the house named after him where he stayed for 3 months in 1866. The Cathedral Church of Christ, on the site of the open slave market, is of historical interest and for the devout is the appropriate place to pray for the souls of those who perished in the slave trade.

For an all-in view of Zanzibar, a "Spice Tour" is recommended. This will include ruins of palaces and ancient mosques', a Sultans harem, the Mangapwani slave caves and of course the spice plantations after which Zanzibar takes its trade name. Nature lovers may also want to take in Jozani Forest located 35 km from the city. This area of thick forest is one of the few remaining sanctuaries of the red colobus monkey.

Zanzibar is after all an island and the usual delights of a beach destination are available. Break your sight seeing by relaxing at the brilliant white beaches and soak in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. The islands have a good number of well-developed hotels and resorts. There are also plenty of opportunities for fishing and watersports. Pemba Island has its own unique attractions and snorkeling and scuba diving are particularly good here. The Pemba channel across from the main island is reputed to have some of the best game fishing anywhere in the world.

Mnemba Island, off the north coast of the main island is very exclusive. Condé Nast Traveller has picked it as one of the three most romantic ocean destinations in the world. That super model Naomi Campbell and her beautiful friends have been here is proof enough for me. I also think the earlier Sultan's would be much pleased to know that the Sultan of Software, Bill Gates has been on holiday in this very island.

To further enhance your experience in this part of the world consider making Zanzibar your base to partake of the other two of Tanzania's main attractions: a wildlife safari and mighty Kilimanjaro. You will be following in the footsteps of

David Livingstone and the earlier explorers who used Zanzibar as their base for expeditions to the African mainland.

Zanzibar has two main festivals of interest to visitors: the Zanzibar Cultural Festival and The Zanzibar International Film Festival. The cultural festival is held in the July-August period and is marked with taarab traditional music and dance and display of arts and crafts. It also includes street carnivals, canoe races, bull fighting and fairs. Participants come from as far away as Germany and China though most are from Zanzibar itself and nearby countries.

The film festival celebrates the culture of the "Dhow Countries" and is staged in the first week of July. I can inform the curious that the countries enjoined here include those on the eastern seaboard of the African continent, India, Pakistan, the Gulf states, Iran and the Indian Ocean. Participants come from the world over. The heart of the event is the screening of competition and non-competition events. Other activities associated with the festival are dance and music performance, workshops and exhibitions on the culture of the Dhow countries.

Zanzibar is a hot and humid place, tempered only by sea breezes. The wettest period is April and May with a shorter and lighter wet season in November. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are between 30 and 33 degrees centigrade. December to March is hot and dry while June to October is the period when it is coolest and driest.

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## **2. Destination Facts: Tanzania**

**Full Country Name:** United Republic of Tanzania

**Area:** 945,045 sq km

**Population:** 35 million (2000 UN estimate)

**Capital City:** Dodoma (Administrative), Dar es Salaam (Commercial)

**Other Major Towns:** Arusha, Mwanza, Zanzibar

**Peoples:** Native African (over 100 tribes), Asian, European and Arabic

**Language:** Swahili, English & indigenous languages

**Religion:** Christian, Muslim and traditional religions

**Government:** Republic

**Time:** GMT + 3 hours

**Currency:** Tanzania Shilling (TSH)

**Electricity:** 230/240 V, 50 Hz

**Weights & Measures:** Metric

**Economy:** Mining, agriculture, tourism

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### **3. Travel Basics: Tanzania**

#### **Health**

Visitors entering Tanzania from yellow fever infected areas require yellow fever international certificate of vaccination. Exemptions are made for visitors arriving from non-endemic areas such as Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The northwestern forest region is considered a high-risk area for yellow fever. Malaria is common in Tanzania. Visitors are strongly advised to take anti-malaria medication commencing two weeks before travel.

It is recommended to take vaccinations against hepatitis A, polio and typhoid. HIV-AIDS is prevalent in the country and I cannot emphasize enough the need for protection measures. Some fresh water lakes and rivers carry the risk of Bilharzia and you are advised not to swim in such areas. Though proof of vaccination is not required, cholera is a risk throughout the country and precautions are necessary. Modern hospitals and chemists are available in Dar es Salaam, Arusha and other major urban centres.

#### **Visas**

All visitors require a visa except citizens of some African and commonwealth countries. It is advisable to obtain visa's in advance from Tanzania Embassies and High Commissions as some airlines may require it before allowing you to board. But you can also be issued with a visa on arrival at Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Kilimanjaro international airports and at the Namanga Gate on the Kenya /Tanzania border. Passports must be valid for at least six months.

Nationals of countries exempt from visa requirements will be issued with a free visitors pass at the same entry points. Those traveling to Zanzibar should be aware that the Islands are nominally independent and passports and Tanzania visas are required even for a days visit. Visa requirements however vary from time to time and you are advised to check on prevailing status well ahead of travel.

#### **Peoples & Culture**

Tanzania is made up of 100 or so tribal groups of mainly Bantu origin. None of these groups comprise more than 10% of the population and this perhaps contributes to the tranquility the country has experienced. The most numerous groups are the Sukuma of Lake Victoria, Chaaga of Mount Kilimanjaro, Nyamwenzi of Tabora, Hehe of Iringa and the Gogo of Dodoma.

Arab and Persian influence is strong in Zanzibar. The interaction of Arabs and Bantu Africans has resulted in the Swahili language now widely spoken in Eastern and Central Africa. Those in the know say that the purest Swahili dialect is spoken in Zanzibar. Swahili is now the Lingua Franca of Tanzania although English is widely understood in urban centers.

Make sure to experience the traditional food at the coast and Zanzibar. This is quite good and is based on seafood and rice dishes. Food in the mainland is generally a little bit stodgy and less exciting. The most popular drink is a very decent brew known as Safari Lager. Tanzania music and dance is popular throughout Eastern Africa and this attests to its quality. The lyrics are usually in Swahili. Get to listen to some of it and this may even help improve on your Swahili.

### **Communications**

Telephone, fax, telegram, post and Internet services are available in urban centers and locations popular with tourists. Direct dialing to many countries is available at most hotels in urban areas. In rural areas international calling is through the operator. The country code for Tanzania is 255.

Mobile phones are based on GSM 900/1800 network. Coverage is however limited and you are advised to check beforehand whether your GSM phone has access if you are traveling outside the main urban centres. Mobile telephony operators include Celtel, Mobitel, Tritel, Vodacom and Zanzibar Telecom. You can obtain a GSM card that will allow you to make international calls to any country. E-mail is accessible at Internet cafes to be found in urban centres around the country.

### **Accommodation**

You will find good quality accommodation within the main routes popular with business travelers and tourists. This includes Dar es Salaam, Moshi, Arusha and the northern game parks such as Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Tarangire and Manyara. In the parks, accommodation varies from 5 star lodges and tented camps at the upper end, to basic camping at the lower end.

In Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar at the coast, there is a wide range of accommodation to meet the needs of most travelers. Camping is however scarce outside the parks. Outside the main urban centres and tourist routes finding rated accommodation is a doubtful proposition. See our [Tanzania Hotels & Lodges](#) page to book accommodation for your business or leisure travel needs.

### **Money**

The local currency is the Tanzanian Shilling (Tsh). Visitors can take in any amount of foreign currency, subject to declaration. Taking out of foreign

currency is limited to the amount declared upon arrival. Import and export of Tanzanian currency is however prohibited. Major currencies such as US dollars and now the Euro and travelers cheques can be converted at major hotels, banks and forex bureaus in the main towns and tourist areas.

In Tanzania plastic is not highly rated and credit cards are not widely accepted. And when accepted the exchange rate is unfavorable. But it is still a good idea to carry your credit cards, as the conversion rate will not matter in case of urgent need. If staying at one of the bigger hotels, however, your card will very likely be honored. Do not be tempted to change money in the streets however favourable the exchange rate may appear.

### **Climate**

Zanzibar and the coastal areas are hot and humid and average daily temperatures hover in the 30°C range. October to March is the hottest period. Sea breezes however temper the regions' climate and June to September is coolest with temperatures falling to 25°C. In the Kilimanjaro area, temperatures vary from 15°C in May-August period to 22°C over December – March. As you head to the peaks of Kilimanjaro, temperatures can drop to below freezing, especially at night.

The climate is temperate in the northern national parks. The central plateau suffers a dry and arid climate with hot days and cool nights. The highlands in the south and northeast are cool and temperate. For the country as a whole the hottest months are October to February. The long rains fall between March and May and the shorter wet season falls in November.

### **International Travel**

Tanzania's international air gateways are at Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Kilimanjaro (50 Km from Arusha). British Airways flies direct to Dar es Salaam from London, taking about 11 hours. A few European carriers fly to Dar es Salaam or Kilimanjaro via European hubs. Gulf Air and Emirates fly to Dar es Salaam using mid eastern connections. Other airlines flying to Tanzania include Air Tanzania - the national carrier, Air India, Ethiopian Airlines, KLM, South African Airways and Swiss.

Tanzania can also be reached through regional hubs at Nairobi and Johannesburg and to a lesser extent Addis Ababa. There are more flights into Nairobi than Kilimanjaro and a popular route for those heading for the northern parks is to fly into Nairobi and then connect to Arusha by shuttle bus service. There is a ferry service between Mombasa in Kenya and Dar es Salaam. On Lake Tanganyika, a passenger service runs from Kigoma to Bujumbura in Burundi, Congo (DRC) and Mpulunga in Zambia.

The Tanzania – Zambia Railway Authority runs a passenger train service from Dar es Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. But note that you will need to change trains at the border. Tanzania has good road links to Kenya and Zambia. Road connections to Rwanda and Mozambique are poor and are adequate only for those traveling for adventure.

### **Local Travel**

All the major towns in Tanzania are connected by tarmac all weather roads. But outside this network, quality deteriorates. You can enjoy speedy connections by bus or car to Arusha, Morogoro, Moshi, Lushoto, Tanga and Dar es Salaam. It is useful to find out first the quality of the roads and estimated travel time when traveling overland. Between Air Tanzania and Precision Air you will access the main internal routes. Charter flights are available mainly from Arusha, Mwanza, Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar to other parts of the country.

Rental cars are reliably available from Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. See our [Tanzania Car Rental](#) page to do your reservation for a self-drive or chauffeur driven vehicle. Rail service is available to the main towns except Arusha. Long haul bus service can connect you to the main towns in the country. It is advisable to find out beforehand if the quality of rail and long haul bus service is acceptable to you. For short haul travel, the popular way to get around is by means of dalla dalla (shared taxi).

### **Travel Insurance**

Health and the usual travel insurance are recommended. Ensure your travel insurance includes emergency evacuation.

### **What to Wear**

Tanzania never really gets cold and light clothing is recommended. Warmer clothing such as sweaters is however necessary to get you through the evenings and early mornings if you are heading for the highlands. Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro of course requires special clothing and shoes.

On safari, bright coloured clothing may get you in trouble with wild animals. If you are wise you will pack brown, beige and khaki clothing. Short sleeve shirts, shorts and trouser for men are sufficient. For ladies, short sleeve blouses, slacks and skirts are ideal though in the national parks and touristy places such as Arusha and Dar es Salaam you may get along with shorts (not too short) and trousers.

At the coast and Zanzibar where Muslims are predominant, women need to dress modestly so as not to offend local sensibilities. But swimwear is perfectly acceptable at beaches and hotel premises. Nudity is totally unacceptable in the

whole country. It is advisable to travel light and some safari and air charters have a baggage limit of 10-15 kilograms maximum.

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## **4. About Africa Point**

**Africapoint.com** is an Africa specialist travel agent, offering travel services through the company website -Africapoint.com and also offline. This pioneering Africa travel website has been assisting travelers make bookings online since early 1999.

The company was started in 1997 has its central reservations office strategically located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The company is supported by a network of partner offices in the leading destinations in Africa. This includes Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo (Egypt), Kampala (Uganda), Victoria (Seychelles), Harare (Zimbabwe). We are members of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

### **What services do we offer?**

We provide reservation services for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars, tours and safaris to the top destinations in Africa. Among the countries we are currently covering are Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mauritius.

We have special discounts for most of the services we offer and some of our prices are upto 50% off standard rates. Please visit our website to view the links of all the services we offer.

### **How do we make your Africa travel planning easier?**

Ours is one of very few websites offering one-stop travel booking and information service to a number of different African countries. In addition:

- We know our destinations and our products **very well**. We are in a position to give you good advice on the best hotel, rental car, tour or safari to suit your particular requirements.
- We are committed to working to the highest industry standards. We have many our past clients who are happy to share their experiences with you.

Please visit the [Client Profile & Testimonials](#) page and see what some of our clients have to say.

- Our patience is the stuff of legend! We will patiently seek to answer all your queries until you are ready to pick what is most suitable for your needs. For high value items such as safaris we have communicated with our clients for 6 months and even longer before they are ready to buy.

Others have come back to and said: "Do you remember that tour we discussed 2 years ago? I am now ready to travel." And of course we remember. We always remember!

- Together with our partners, we are based in the African destination whose travel services we are selling. For this reason we are usually able to get you very good prices. For some products our prices are **40-50%** below standard rates.
- As members of **ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents)** we are committed to upholding **ASTA's** motto of "Integrity in Travel" and operate to those same standards you would expect from an ASTA member anywhere in the world.

One of our North American clients for whose 36 person missionary group we provided an air charter, hotel booking, safari and road transport to 2 African countries had this to say.

*"My experience with Africapoint.com was good as any service that I've received any where in the USA. Not only were they helpful before and during, but they went out of their way to also be helpful afterwards.*

*I'm using them again for an upcoming trip in November and will look forward to using them for years to come."*

In addition our membership of ASTA assures you of a **neutral and trusted** arbitrator in the event that a disagreement occurs between us.

### **What is the experience of other travelers with us?**

We continue to serve the many needs of travelers who seek our services. From straight forward single night hotel bookings to short and long term **car rental, tours and safaris** for individuals and groups, international conferences.

## **5. Forward This Report**

If you've found this report to be informative and useful please forward it to your family and friends. We're sure they will like it as much as you did!