

EAST AFRICA

Nine unforgettable moments in Zanzibar

JANICE MUCALOV
GEORGE MUCALOV
ZANZIBAR

You will not find brand-name hotels on Zanzibar. Tourism, beyond hostels and cottages, only started to sprout on this Tanzanian island in the past decade. But a handful of boutique beach resorts offer travellers willing to head off the beaten path a taste of luxury. Because of the long flights, North Americans typically tack Zanzibar onto the end of an African safari – a bush-and-beach vacation.

Try reef walking

At low tide, the waves of the Indian Ocean along Bwejuu Beach on the east coast recede more than a kilometre. Grab hiking poles and reef shoes and go splashing knee-deep in water along the reef out to the surf break, being careful to avoid spiny sea urchins. Stop to pick up shells and examine sea cucumbers. If you're lucky, you might even spot a small octopus.

Learn about the local economy

Off the eastern shore, village women in long, colourful dresses work on seaweed farms. At low

IF YOU GO

If adding Zanzibar to a Kenya safari, look at Kenya Airways, which flies to Zanzibar from Nairobi. From Tanzania, KLM flies from Kilimanjaro to Dar es Salaam, and from South Africa, South African Airways flies from Johannesburg to Dar es Salaam. From Dar, there are several 30-minute flights a day

to Zanzibar.

Foreign Affairs Canada advises travellers to Tanzania to exercise a high degree of caution because of the threat of terrorism. In September, police made 15 arrests related to three acid attacks – one of which involved two British tourists – in recent months.

tide, they waded into the water to gather the plants, which they drag to shore and sell to a factory to make soaps, creams and medicine. The men stalk fish with wooden spears.

Sleep like a star

Past guests at andBeyond Mnemba Island Lodge, located on a private island, include Bill Gates, Tom Cruise and Naomi Campbell (from \$1,550 a person a night; andbeyond.com). The gleaming white Baraza Resort & Spa made Condé Nast Traveler's 2012 hot list of best new hotels in the world (from \$1,100 a night for two, all inclusive; baraza-zanzibar.com). And its sister property, the Palms, is an adults-only escape with private villas over-

looking the beach (\$1,220 a night for two, all inclusive; palms-zanzibar.com).

Confront history

Stone Town, in Zanzibar city's historic quarter, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a storied past. Zanzibar was once the centre for the East African slave and ivory trade. At its height, in the 18th and 19th centuries, about 45,000 slaves, captured on mainland Africa, were shipped to Brazil, India and Arab countries. The old slave market and whipping post are a sobering reminder of man's cruelty. One dank underground chamber – smaller than a single-car garage – reputedly imprisoned 50 chained and shackled slaves for days at a time.

Get active

Ride a bicycle on the firm coral sand of Bwejuu Beach, past fishermen building dhows from mangrove wood. When the wind picks up, fly through the white-caps while windsurfing or kite boarding. There's good snorkelling and scuba diving off Mnemba Island, a boat ride away. Or swimming with wild dolphins on the south coast.

Take a spice tour

Known as the "spice island," Zanzibar's lush interior is full of farms growing cardamom, cinnamon, vanilla beans and other spices. For excellent guides – both knowledgeable and fun – try Indoma Tours (indoma-tours.com), run by two young brothers who hire and train locals.

Catch the sunset in Stone Town

It's worth spending a night in Stone Town, especially if you stay in one of the historic palaces that have been turned into atmospheric boutique hotels (try Zanzibar Palace, from \$210 night; zanzibarpalacehotel.com). Kick back with a sundowner on a roof-

top lounge, or join locals by the passenger dock and snap pics of returning dhows silhouetted against the pumpkin-orange sky.

Tour Jozani National Park

The mahogany forest, near the middle of the island, is home to red colobus monkeys found only on Zanzibar. About 2,000 live in the park and a large group, habituated to visitors, can be observed up close near the park entrance. With their crowns of white tufted hair, they're awfully cute.

Lounge on the beach

Ultimately, though, the beach and bathtub-warm water is where you want to spend most of your time (hey, it's the reason you go to Zanzibar). Bwejuu Beach is rated by Condé Nast Traveler as one of the world's 30 most beautiful island beaches. More gob-smackingly gorgeous beaches are on the north coast, with sand as fine as flour and calm all-day swimming.

The writers stayed as guests of the hotels, which did not review or approve this article.

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