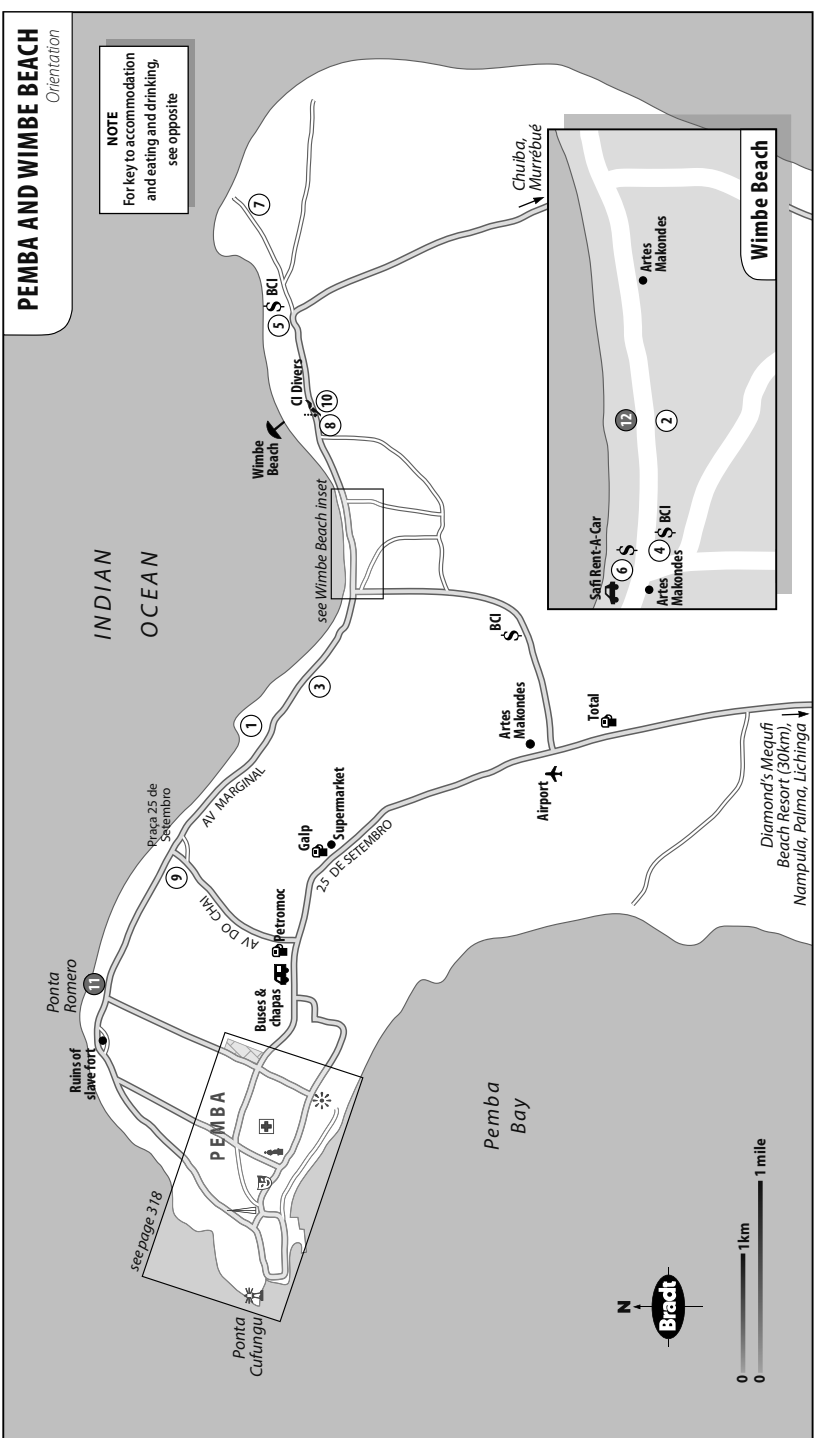


PEMBA AND WIMBE BEACH

Orientation

INDIAN OCEAN

NOTE
For key to accommodation and eating and drinking, see opposite



Diamond's Mesqui Beach Resort (30km), Nampula, Palma, Lichinga



Pemba and the Northeast

Pemba is the capital of Cabo Delgado ('Thin Cape'), Mozambique's most northeasterly province, bounded by Tanzania to the north, a long Indian Ocean coastline to the east, the Lúrio River to the south and Niassa Province to the west. The most important Mozambican port north of Nacala, Pemba is also the site of an international airport with good connections to East and southern Africa, and acts as the nerve centre for Mozambique's burgeoning gas industry. While Pemba is significant as a travel hub, however, and pleasant enough as Mozambican towns go, the greater attraction for most visitors is the surrounding Pemba Bay, where beaches such as Wimbe and Murrébué offer a good range of marine activities, including diving, snorkelling, kitesurfing and seasonal whale watching. Further afield, Pemba is also the usual springboard for fly-in safaris to the Niassa Reserve (pages 366–73) in the province of the same name, and the Quirimbas Archipelago (pages 333–50), site of the historic town of Ibo and some of the country's finest beach lodges.

Few people explore the Cabo Delgado mainland beyond Pemba unless they are in transit somewhere further afield. Montepuez, for instance, is of interest solely as the starting point of the tough road crossing west to Lichinga via Marrupa. The attractive small ports of Mocimboa da Praia and Palma lie along the coastal overland route north to Mtwara in southeast Tanzania. And Mueda, the unofficial capital of the Makonde Plateau, a relatively cool highland area inhabited by the Makonde people, is the last substantial Mozambican town along the bridged inland route to Newala in the same country.

The main ethnic groups in Cabo Delgado Province are the Makonde, the Macua and the Mwani, and the total population is now approaching the two million mark.

PEMBA

This attractive old port is situated on the northwest tip of the peninsula that forms the southern entrance to Pemba Bay. The town itself is of less interest than its location, a large, deep, semi-enclosed natural harbour on a stretch

PEMBA AND WIMBE BEACH

For listings, see pages 319–21

☞ Where to stay

- 1 Avani Pemba Beach Hotel & Spa
- 2 Complexo Turístico Caracol
- 3 Hotel Sarima
- 4 Hotel Wimbi Sun
- 5 Kauri Resort
- 6 The Nautilus
- 7 Pemba Magic Lodge
Pemba Magic Lodge
(Russell's Place) (see 7)
- 8 Pieter's Place
- 9 Raphael's
- 10 Residencial Reggio Emilia

Off map

Chuíba Bay Lodge
Diamonds Mequifi Beach Resort
Il Pirata
Nzuwa Lodge
Ulala Lodge

✕ Where to eat and drink

- 11 Clube Naval (see 1)
- 11 Esplanada Marginal
- 12 Pemba Dolphin
Restaurant Quirimbas (see 1)

MACUA FACE MASKS

In Pemba, Ibo and elsewhere in Cabo Delgado, you'll frequently see Macua women wandering around with what appear to be white masks, the result of plastering their faces with *musiro*, a paste created by grinding the bark of the *Olax dissitiflora* tree in water. Unlike adornments in many other parts of Africa, these masks have no ritual significance. The white paste is merely a skin softener, serving a similar purpose to the face masks used in private by many Western women, but also protecting the skin against the sun when working outdoors. It is conventional for a bride to apply *musiro* to her entire body before her wedding, and married women sometimes wear it to demonstrate their status, especially when their husband is away for a long period. Interestingly, there's a similar custom in the Comoros Islands, 200km away in the Indian Ocean.

of coast renowned for its wide, sandy and clean palm-lined beaches, protected by a coral reef that guarantees safe swimming as well as good snorkelling. The area's enormous potential as a tourist resort has been partially realised in recent years, but by most standards it remains somewhat off the beaten track for tourists, though it now hosts a sizeable contingent of foreigners involved in offshore gas field development.

Pemba is a town of several parts. The modern CBD, focused on the junction of Avenida 25 de Setembro and Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, is undeniably on the bland side, but well equipped with shops, banks and restaurants. About 500m west of this, adjacent to the port, the old colonial town centre comprises a small grid of pot-holed roads lined with some run-down but mostly still attractive colonial buildings. Altogether different in character, running northward from Avenida 25 de Setembro, the neat reed-hut village called Paquitequete sprawls across an area of sandy ground that sometimes floods at high tide.

Facing seaward from the entrance of Pemba Bay, about 5km east of the town centre, is Wimbe (or Wimbi) Beach. While it was once a separate entity, these days Wimbe is linked to Pemba by a near-continuous belt of suburbia. A tourist resort in the colonial era, it never entirely shut down even during the civil war, and in the past few years has enjoyed a genuine resurgence, so that the waterfront is now lined with small hotels, restaurants, dive shops and other tourist-oriented facilities. The beach itself is very pleasant and can be quite busy during the weekends – refreshingly it's not frequented just by expats, but is one of the few places in the country where Mozambican tourists can be seen in large numbers. For those seeking a quieter beach experience, Murrébué, about 12km out of town, is currently a hot spot of low-key tourist development.

The best time to visit Pemba is from April to October, when the cooling trade winds blow. In the rainy season, the monsoon blows from the northeast, which can make the beach very unpleasant. Pemba is the most easterly place using Central African Time (the same as South Africa) so daybreak is very early (04.15 in midsummer) and the sun sets before 18.00 most of the year.

HISTORY Little information is available about Pemba Bay prior to the 20th century. The ruins of an Arabic-style fortress on Ponta Romero, at the north end of the reed town, are said to be a relict of an early 19th-century slave-trade depot. This fort, presumably, was no longer operational by 1856, when Portugal granted land

CASHEW APPLES

Cashew nuts are widely available and cheap throughout Mozambique, but Pemba is a good place to look out for the same tree's fruit – sometimes known as the cashew apple (*maça do caju*) or by its South American name *marañón*. Shaped like a pear, sweet smelling, and with a yellow or red waxy casing, the fruit is slightly astringent and quite refreshing, though you probably won't want to eat more than one at a sitting. In the spirit of health and safety, it should be noted that the greenish shell of the nut contains a toxin that is a skin irritant, so it's best not to chew that (and if you're allergic to nuts it might be best not to try it at all). In northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania, sun-dried cashew apples reconstituted with water form the basis of a strong liquor known as *gongo* or *aguardente* (firewater).

concessions to 36 settlers in an unsuccessful attempt to establish an agricultural centre on the same site. The modern town was founded in 1904 as an administrative centre for the Niassa Company, and named Porto Amélia after Queen Maria Amélia, a British-born French princess who married the Portuguese king Don Carlos I in 1886 and served as Queen Consort of Portugal for two years between the assassination of her husband in 1908 and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1910.

By the late 1920s the old town centre had more or less taken its present shape, and supported a population of more than 1,500. After the dissolution of the Niassa Company in 1929, Porto Amélia continued to serve as the capital of Cabo Delgado, though it was renamed Pemba after independence in 1975. The town was largely untouched during the liberation war and civil war, despite its strategic location in one of the country's most unsettled provinces, and emerged from the wars looking less run-down than most other Mozambican towns (though it has arguably made up for this in the meantime). Today, it is ranked the tenth-largest town in Mozambique, with an estimated population of 208,000.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By air Most international visitors to Pemba arrive at the international airport about 3km from the town centre. **LAM** ([w lam.co.mz](http://w.lam.co.mz)) flies here from Maputo daily, twice weekly from Nampula, and several times a week from Beira. Internationally, LAM flies to Johannesburg daily, to Dar es Salaam twice a week, and to Nairobi several times a week. **Airlink** ([w flyairlink.com](http://w.flyairlink.com)) operates a direct 3-hour flight from Johannesburg to Pemba five days a week. The airport lies on the EN106 (EN1) and, while there aren't any direct chapas as such, any vehicle heading into Pemba town will stop if you flag it down. If you're staying at one of the more expensive hotels, see if they have a pick-up service. Alternatively, taxis to the town centre or Wimbe cost around US\$4. The LAM office is on Avenida 25 de Setembro ☎ 272 21251).

By car Coming from the south, Pemba is 440km from Nampula along the EN8 and EN106 (EN1) via Namialo and Metoro. It's good tarmac all the way, and you should get through in about 5 hours in a private vehicle.

By bus, chapa and taxi Leaving Pemba, all **buses** and **chapas** run along Avenida 25 de Setembro from the junction with Avenida Eduardo Mondlane so, if you wait outside the mCel office before 05.00, you should have your choice of buses and chapas heading in the direction you want. There will be direct transport to

PEMBA
Centre

For listings, see pages 320-2

Where to stay

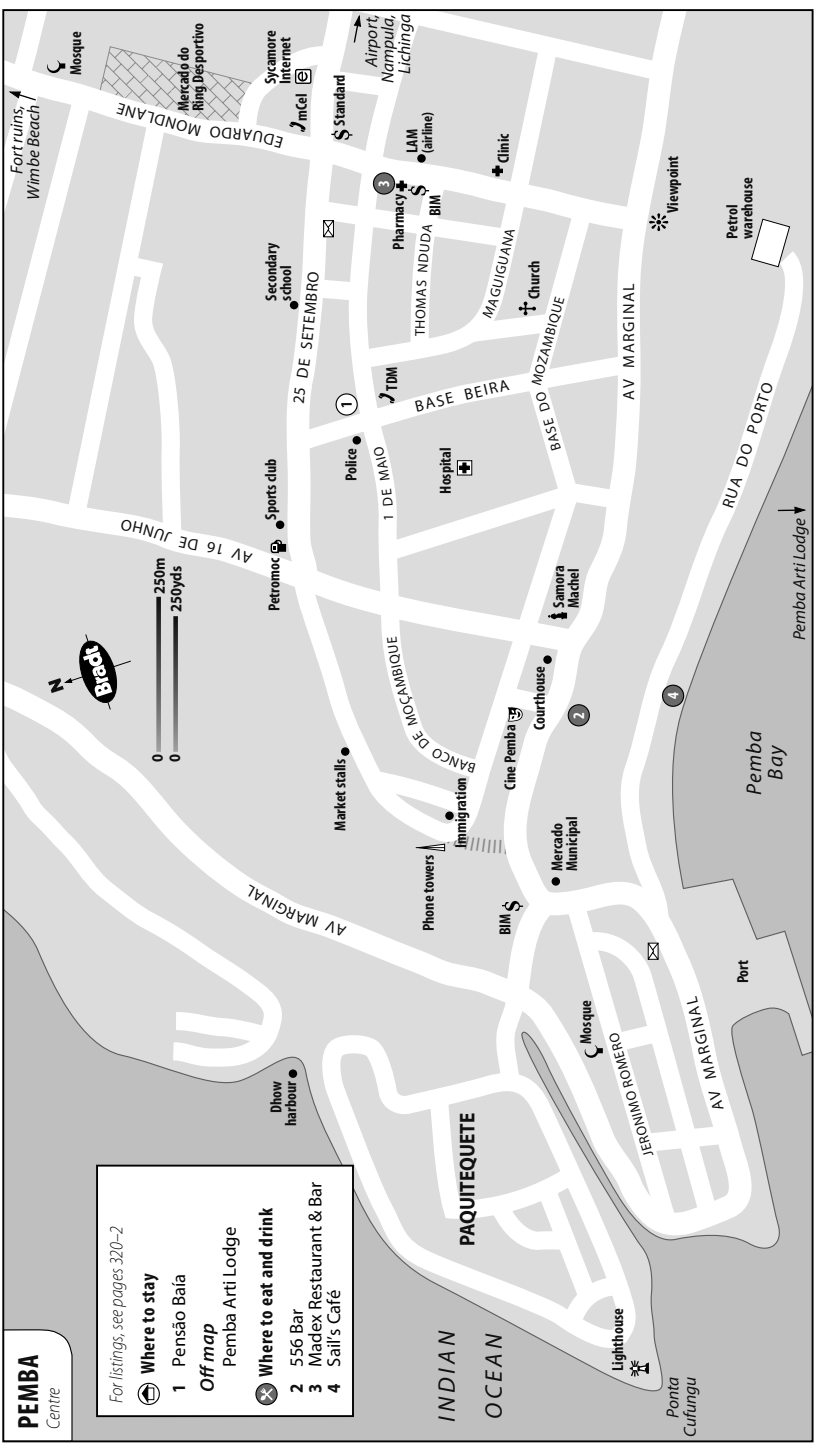
- 1 Pensão Baía

Off map

- Pemba Arti Lodge

Where to eat and drink

- 2 556 Bar
- 3 Madex Restaurant & Bar
- 4 Sail's Café



Mocimboa da Praia, Nampula and Montepuez, while travellers bound for, or coming from, Ilha de Moçambique will need to change vehicles at Namialo. **Nagi Investimentos** (m 86 400 0657/8) buses go directly between Nampula and Mocimboa da Praia without diverting to Pemba, so if you caught one of these you could be dropped off at the Sunate (also called Silva Macua) junction and get a chapa onwards to Pemba without too much trouble.

You could walk between the town centre and Wimbe, but it's a fair old hike and absolutely not recommended after dusk. **Taxis** can be found near the roundabout at the junction of avenidas Eduardo Mondlane and 25 de Setembro. Fares range from US\$3 to US\$10 depending on where exactly you are headed (Russell's Place is more than twice as far as Pemba Beach Hotel) and time of day (prices rise late at night or early in the morning).

For further details of transport to Montepuez, Mocimboa da Praia and Ibo, see pages 325, 326 and 335 respectively.



WHERE TO STAY *Map, page 314, unless otherwise stated*

Exclusive/luxury

Avani Pemba Beach Hotel & Spa

(179 rooms) Av Marginal; ☎ 272 21770; m 82 722 1770; e pemba@avanihotels.com; w minorhotels.com/en/avani/pemba. Set in a vast beachfront compound about halfway between the town centre & Wimbe Beach, this 5-star resort is the largest & smartest hotel on this side of Pemba Bay. The architecture displays Arabic & Mediterranean influences, with terracotta buildings laid out spaciouly in green palm-studded lawns that lead down to an idyllic beach. Facilities inc world-class spa, 2 swimming pools, 2 restaurants, gym, gift shop, a superb buffet b/fast & free Wi-Fi throughout. Spacious tiled rooms come with king-size bed, AC, DSTV, balcony & large bathroom with separate tub & shower. There's a complex of 82 long-term apartments as well. US\$264/310 sgl/dbl; US\$310/365 sgl/dbl garden room; US\$366/430 sgl/dbl ocean room; from US\$625 suites; all rates B&B. **\$\$\$\$\$**

Diamonds Mequfi Beach Resort

(50 units) Mecufi Road; m 84 848 4299/313 1314; e info.mequfi@diamonds-resorts.com; w mequfi.beach.diamondsresort.com/eng. This new luxury resort about 30km from Pemba offers de luxe beachfront rooms with dbl or twin beds, nets, AC, Wi-Fi, flat-screen TV, sofa, desk, minibar, kettle, private terrace & outdoor shower. There are also spacious suites with separate bedroom, living room, large terrace & 2 bathrooms with open-air showers. Amenities & activities inc spa & wellness centre, 3 restaurants, bar, swimming pool, horseback riding, kitesurfing, kayaking, snorkelling, sailing, bike tours & a range of local

excursions. US\$525/630 de luxe room/suite HB, FB rates available. **\$\$\$\$\$**

Upmarket

Chuiab Bay Lodge (6 units); Chuiaba;

m 82 305 0836/8; e reservations@chuibaylodge.com; w chuibaylodge.com. Set on an exquisite beach just 10mins from Pemba, this boutique lodge offers spacious & tastefully appointed en-suite bungalows with African décor, private patio, AC, minibar, satellite TV & sitting area. There's a gym, 2 swimming pools, lovely gardens & terraces with daybeds. Activities of all sorts can be arranged. US\$200/300 sgl/dbl; B&B. **\$\$\$\$**

Il Pirata (4 rooms) m 84 456 4450; e info@murrebue.com or info@kitesurfingmozambique.com; w murrebue.com. Also situated on peaceful Murré Beach, this highly praised Italian owner-managed boutique lodge offers the choice of en-suite beach bungalows built entirely from local materials, or a larger stone house set in a private garden above it. The Italian restaurant is one of the best in the vicinity of Pemba. Known as a prime kitesurfing location, lessons, from beginner to expert, are available with prior arrangement. US\$117/170 sgl/dbl beach bungalow; US\$128/191 sgl/dbl stone house; all rates FB. **\$\$\$\$**

Il Pirata (4 rooms) m 84 456 4450; e info@murrebue.com or info@kitesurfingmozambique.com; w murrebue.com. Also situated on peaceful Murré Beach, this highly praised Italian owner-managed boutique lodge offers the choice of en-suite beach bungalows built entirely from local materials, or a larger stone house set in a private garden above it. The Italian restaurant is one of the best in the vicinity of Pemba. Known as a prime kitesurfing location, lessons, from beginner to expert, are available with prior arrangement. US\$117/170 sgl/dbl beach bungalow; US\$128/191 sgl/dbl stone house; all rates FB. **\$\$\$\$**

Kauri Resort (42 units) ☎ 272 20936;

m 82 151 4222 or 84 023 9882; e reservas@kauriresort.com; w kauriresort.com. At the far end of Wimbe near the turn-off for Murré, this shockingly orange complex sits right on the beach, with long-stay apartments on the other side of the road. Rooms here are more business

than resort-like, but they are well appointed & all come with AC & Wi-Fi. There's a terrace restaurant attached with a long Asian menu & a fantastic view. *US\$100–250 dbl B&B. \$\$\$\$*

🏠 **The Nautilus** (21 rooms) Wimbe Beach; 📞 272 21407; 📞 m 86 922 5146; 📧 reservations@thenautiluspemba.com; 🌐 thenautiluspemba.com. This is the first resort you reach approaching Wimbe Beach from town or the airport &, like most such places in Pemba nowadays, it is aimed primarily at the oil & gas market. Most rooms were booked out long-term when we stopped in but, if you can get one, the newly renovated beach bungalows come with AC, DSTV, Wi-Fi, net, fridge, en-suite hot shower & complimentary laundry. There's a reasonably good on-site restaurant & a swimming pool. *US\$152/234 sgl/dbl; B&B. \$\$\$\$*

🏠 **Ulala Lodge** (6 rooms, 2 under construction) 📞 82 741 5104; 📧 contact@ulala-lodge.com; 🌐 ulala-lodge.com. Attractively located on sandy Murrébué Beach about 20mins' drive from town, this beachfront lodge offers earthy accommodation in en-suite bungalows with teak decks, macuti thatch roofs, king-size or twin beds with walk-in nets & a private terrace. The beach is ideal for swimming, snorkelling or long walks, & the restaurant serves seafood set menus. To get there follow the EN106 out of town for about 10km then turn left on to the Mecufi road, left again at the blue sign reading 'Distrito de Mecufi', then right at a crossroads with white stones & a street lamp, & left after about 200m at the large driftwood mask after crossing a riverbed. *US\$75/85 sgl/dbl bungalow; US\$138/149 sgl/dbl stilt bungalow; all rates B&B; HB & FB also available. \$\$\$\$*

Mid range

🏠 **Complexo Turístico Caracol** (24 units) Wimbe Beach; 📞 272 20147; 📞 m 82 688 7430; 📧 suleman65@hotmail.com. This architecturally uninspired double-storey apartment block facing Wimbe Beach has a useful location for beach-lovers & offers a variety of good-value rooms, all clean & tiled with AC, fridge, kettle, TV & en-suite bathroom. *US\$50/56 sgl/dbl with veranda; US\$60 suite; US\$80 2-bedroom apt; all rates B&B. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Hotel Wimbi Sun** (56 rooms) 📞 272 21946; 📞 m 82 318 1300; 📧 bookings@wimbisun.co.mz. Situated diagonally opposite the Nautilus, this

well-run guesthouse-turned-hotel has large en-suite rooms that probably represent the best value on offer at this end of the beach road. *US\$80/90 sgl/dbl; B&B. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Nzuwa Lodge** (7 units) Murrébué Beach; 📞 82 730 6365/589 4692; 📧 nzuwalodge@gmail.com or reservations@nzuwa.com; 🌐 nzuwa.com. This new eco-friendly lodge sits on a pristine beach & offers en-suite bungalows, vista rooms with stunning views from the veranda, self-catering suites, safari tents & camping. A beach dorm, more bungalows & a pool are in the works. Rooms are fitted with king-size beds, nets & fans. Amenities inc kayaking, a children's playground & a restaurant famed for its burgers, fish & b/fast muffins. *US\$100/120 dbl bungalow, US\$150 dbl self-catering suite, US\$80 dbl vista room; US\$20 dbl safari tent; all rates B&B; US\$8 pp camping. Expect the dorms to be about US\$16. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Pemba Arti Lodge** [map, page 318] (11 units) 📞 84 638 1759/388 3147; 📧 pembaartilodge@gmail.com; 🌐 pembaartilodge.com. Situated on the northern shore of Pemba Bay, 15mins by boat from the Pemba Beach Hotel, this boutique lodge is among the most alluring options near Pemba. It is set in a patch of indigenous coastal scrub on a coral cliff overlooking a small private beach whose incline (unlike most in Mozambique) is so steep & well protected you can usually enjoy excellent snorkelling in crystal-clear water right from the shore. There's an open-air restaurant & bar, & the French owner-managers make sure that the food on offer is top notch. Accommodation is in individual villas with thatched roof & verandas overlooking the sea, as well as a block of rooms for backpackers using common showers. There's an on-site dive centre offering a full range of marine activities. *US\$100 bungalow dbl; US\$35 pp backpacker room; all rates B&B & inc transfers from Pemba. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Pieter's Place** (5 rooms, 2 under construction) Wimbe Beach; 📞 272 20102; 📞 m 82 682 2700; 📧 cidiversmozambique@gmail.com; 🌐 pietersdiversplace.co.za. Affiliated to CI Divers & situated next door to Residencial Reggio Emilia, this is basically an extension of the owner's private house, offering accommodation in earthily decorated en-suite rooms with fridge, AC, Wi-Fi & kettle centred on a massive centuries-old baobab tree complete with a tree-house – ideal for sundowners. *US\$60–100 dbl. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Raphael's Hotel** (84 units) Praça 25 de Setembro; 📞 272 25555; e info@raphaelshotel.com; w raphaelshotel.com. This new hotel offers business-style accommodation with African décor, & has a swimming pool, gym, spa & restaurant. As a whole, it feels unfinished, but the en-suite rooms are comfortable & have AC, Wi-Fi, DSTV, kettle & writing desk. Apts available. *US\$100 dbl or twin.*

\$\$\$

🏠 **Residencial Reggio Emilia** (12 rooms) Wimbe Beach; 📞 272 21297; m 82 888 0800/928 5660; e residencial.reggio.emilia@gmail.com; w akeelz.wix.com/residencial-reggio-emilia. Named after a town in northern Italy that supplied aid to the Frelimo during the civil war & run by an Italian agronomist, this agreeable place lies in green gardens just across the road from the beach about 1km past the main cluster of activity on Wimbe. The self-catering accommodation has AC, DSTV, Wi-Fi & en-suite hot shower. B/fast is offered by request at its new on-site restaurant. *US\$80 dbl.* \$\$\$

Budget

🏠 **Hotel Sarima** (24 rooms) 📞 210 82387; m 84 712 0066; e hotel.sarima@gmail.com. The simple clean en-suite rooms here are a bit on the small side but have AC, TV, Wi-Fi, fridge & hot water. *US\$50–60 dbl.* \$\$

✂️ WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK *Map, page 314, unless otherwise stated*

✂️ **556 Bar** [map, page 318] Rua Número 3; 📞 272 21487; m 82 301 2380 or 84 235 5475 ☺ kitchen 10.00–22.00 daily, bar until late. On a cliff overlooking the harbour just behind the Casa da Justiça, this South African sports bar serves very good steaks & seafood. Satellite TV makes it a popular venue for big rugby matches & other international fixtures. Comfortable accommodation is also available at an off-site location. *US\$10–20.* \$\$\$\$

✂️ **Clube Naval** 📞 272 21770; ☺ 11.00–midnight daily. Set in the grounds of the Avani Pemba Beach Hotel, this recently remodelled beachfront restaurant has a breezy open layout & serves good filling seafood & other meals. *From US\$8.* \$\$\$

✂️ **Esplanada Marginal** Av Marginal; m 82 397 2659; ☺ 11.00–late daily. This beachfront terrace bar-restaurant at the north end of the reed town is a great place for a sunowner & it also serves a no-nonsense menu of seafood & chicken grills. *Around US\$5.* \$

🏠 **Pemba Magic Lodge** (6 rooms) 📞 272 21429; m 82 686 2730; e pembamagic@gmail.com; w pembamagic.com. Also known as Russell's Place or *campismo* (see below), & the only accommodation on Wimbe Beach that really caters to the budget traveller, with a choice of chalets, dorm beds or camping at the far end of the beach about 3km past the Nautilus. The bar in the middle is one of the most popular w/end watering holes in town, which means that you'll meet a fair old number of people, but it can make for some late (potentially noisy) nights. *US\$7/104 sgl/dbl chalet B&B; US\$20 pp dorm bed or camping in their tent; US\$14 pp camping in your own tent.* \$\$\$

Shoestring

🏠 **Pensão Baía** [map, page 318] 289 Rua 1 Maio; m 82 407 4401 or 87 564 3902. This unignposted place opposite the TDM telecoms centre looks pretty grim, but it's actually relatively comfortable, & there's an outdoor restaurant in front serving all the Mozambican basics. *US\$18/24 dbl/trpl using common showers; US\$24 en-suite sgl/dbl with AC.* \$

Camping

▲ **Pemba Magic Lodge (Russell's Place)** (see above) The best option here for camping. *US\$14 pp.* \$

✂️ **Madex Restaurant & Bar** [map, page 318] Av Eduardo Mondlane; m 82 666 2370; ☺ 09.30–22.00 Mon–Sat. Bright & fashionably retro, this old-school restaurant-bar in the town centre is done up in wood & marble, with a full bar & good selection of snacks, sandwiches & typical Mozambican dishes. *Sandwiches US\$4, mains US\$5–8.* \$\$

✂️ **Pemba Dolphin Restaurant** Av Marginal; 📞 272 20937; m 82 315 4830; ☺ 07.00–22.30 daily. This popular stilted eatery on Wimbe Beach has a varied menu of food & cocktails, crunchy pizzas, & occasional live music. *Seafood, meat & pizzas for around US\$6–12.* \$\$\$

✂️ **Restaurant Quirimbas** 📞 272 21770; ☺ b/fast, lunch & dinner daily. The more formal of the restaurants housed in the Avani Pemba Beach Hotel, this is in the main building. *Serves set menus & light meals in the US\$7–12 range.* \$\$\$

✂️ **Sail's Café** [map, page 318] Rua do Porto; m 84 546 8631; ☺ 10.00–18.00 Mon–Fri, 08.00–13.00 Sat. A new favourite among expats, this

café has a lovely deck overlooking the port & an ever-expanding menu inc coffee, juices, smoothies, pastries, b/fasts, burgers, salads & wraps. Attached is a small but well-stocked supermarket selling

imported goods, meats, cheeses & other produce. Self-catering accommodation is available. US\$5–8. \$\$

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Banks and ATMs All the usual banks have branches with ATMs in the town centre, mostly along Avenida Eduardo Mondlane. The only ATMs on Wimbe are the BIM Millennium in the car park of The Nautilus, and BCI at Kauri Resort.

Car rental Kaskazini (page 43) has a fleet of 4x4s available for rental. Alternatively, try Safi Rent-A-Car (m 82 380 8630/684 7770; e safirentals@gmail.com; w pembarentacar.com) at Wimbe Beach, or the international agency Sixt (☎ 272 21821; w sixt.com), which has an office at the airport.

Hospital On Rua 1 de Maio opposite the police station (☎ 272 20348). The private Cabo Delgado clinic on Rua Modesta Neva is in the old Hotel VIP (☎ 272 21447/272/452).

Internet The best option is Sycamore Internet (☎ 272 20749; m 84 714 3834; ☎ 07.00–20.00 Mon–Sat, 07.00–noon Sun), which stands just east of Avenida Eduardo Mondlane on Avenida 25 de Setembro.

Police The police station is on Rua 1 de Maio on the corner with Rua Base Beira (☎ 272 21006). There is also one next door to the Wimbi Sun.

Post office On Avenida 25 de Setembro, just up from the junction with Avenida Eduardo Mondlane. There is also one just opposite the port entrance.

Shopping The best market for fruit and vegetables is the one just down from the roundabout (known as the **Mercado do Ring Desportivo**), although it is also worth checking out the **Mercado Municipal** in the old town. A well-stocked supermarket is at **Sail's Cafe** on Avenida 25 de Setembro, although there are a number of others dotted around town, notably along Rua Jerónimo Romero in the old town. For art and handicrafts, try **Ujamaa** (e ujamaa.mz@gmail.com) at the airport, which has an impressive array of jewellery, carvings and textiles, all made in Cabo Delgado.

Tour operators and travel information An excellent tour operator, booking agent and general travel outlet called **Kaskazini** (m 82 309 6990; e info@kaskazini.com; w kaskazini.com; ☎ 09.00–15.00 Mon–Fri) is based at the Avani Pemba Beach Hotel (page 319). The knowledgeable hands-on staff can organise most things in Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa provinces, including personalised programmes, accommodation and reliable, safe road transfers.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO The most popular excursion from Pemba is to Ibo and the other islands of the Quirimba Archipelago, which are covered in the next chapter. Other local sites of interest are as follows:

Around town There's not a huge amount to do in Pemba itself, but it is a pleasant town to explore haphazardly. The old quarter, down by the docks, has some

MAKONDE CARVERS

The Makonde of northeastern Mozambique and southeastern Tanzania are among Africa's best-known craftsmen, and their intricate carvings follow a tradition dating back several hundred years. Makonde society is strongly matrilineal, and the carvings in their purest form celebrate a cult of femininity. The carvers are always male and the carvings are mother figures carried for protection. Oral history links the origin of the carving tradition to the Makonde's original appearance on the plateau that bears their name. The progenitor of the first Makonde, so tradition goes, was a genderless being living alone in the bush who one day carved a statue in the shape of a woman, left it outside its hut overnight, and awoke to find it transformed into flesh and blood. The carver, apparently also transformed from his formerly genderless state, married the woman and they conceived a child, which died three days after its birth. They moved to higher ground, and again conceived, and again the child died after three days. When they finally moved to the top of the plateau, the woman gave birth to a child who survived and became the first Makonde.

In their purest form, the intricate, stylised carvings of the Makonde relate to this ancestral cult of womanhood, and are carried only by men, as a good luck charm. Traditional carvings almost always depict a female figure, sometimes surrounded by children. The large demonic masks that are also carved by the Makonde, more so perhaps in Mozambique than in Tanzania, are central to the traditional *sindimba* stilt dance, which is performed by men and women together. Makonde sculptures were practically unknown outside Tanzania and Mozambique until a carving workshop was established in suburban Dar es Salaam during the 1950s, but today there are also workshops in Nampula and Pemba in Mozambique. Subsequently, like any dynamic art form, Makonde sculpture has been responsive to external influences and subject to changes in fashion, with new styles of carvings becoming increasingly abstract and incorporating wider moral and social themes. Today, the finest examples of the genre fetch prices in excess of US\$5,000 from international collectors.

rather dilapidated colonial buildings. The reed huts of Paquitequete also make for interesting meandering, and the beach is lively with kids playing football, though you need to watch your step – hygiene here revolves around the sea. The fishing boats leave from around the lighthouse on Ponta Cufungu, and watching them return in the afternoons with the day's catch is interesting enough. Paquitequete served as an Arab slave-trade depot in the early 19th century, and you can still see the remains of a small fortified hexagonal building – said locally to be an old slave prison – within a traffic island on Avenida Marginal at Ponta Romero, about 250m northwest of the intersection with Avenida Eduardo Mondlane.

The sprawling **Mercado de Mbanguia** is an interesting place to wander around – keep an eye open for the string made by cutting old tyres into short strips – although it's probably best avoided after dark. There is a Makonde carving collective (**Artes Makondes**) along similar lines to that in Nampula, based here, but rather than just the one outlet they have four. The main collective is on Avenida do Chai, but there are other outlets on Avenida 25 de Setembro (next to the Catholic cathedral), at the airport and next to the Caracol on Wimbe Beach.

Marine activities Wimbe is pretty much an archetypal beach resort, where activities all revolve around the sea. The diving off Wimbe is among the best on the East African coast, particularly below about 20m. Snorkelling is also excellent, especially in the Londo area in the north of the bay. You can also hire boats for cruises or fishing trips through Kaskazini (page 43).

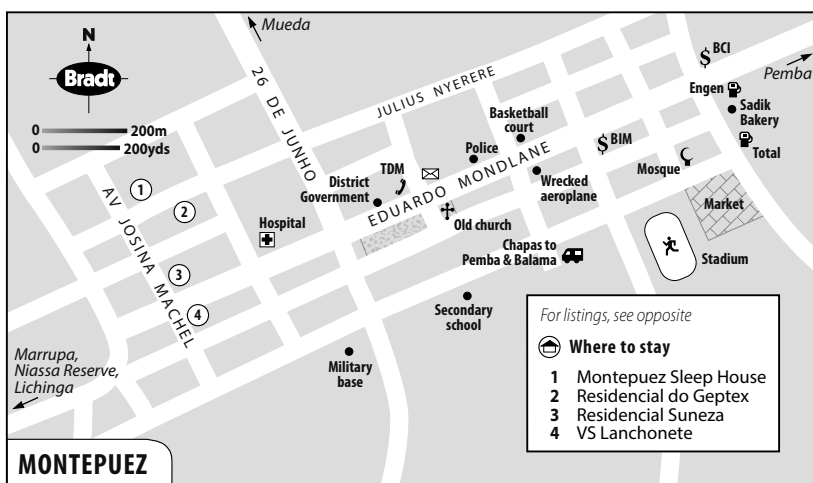
🏊 CI Divers 📞 272 20102; 📠 m 82 682
 2700; 📧 cidiversmozambique@gmail.com;
 🌐 pietersdiversplace.co.za. The oldest of the
 operators (based here for more than 20 years) &
 an established PADI training centre complete with

swimming pool. It's also active in environmental protection of the area. Single dives from US\$70 with PADI Open Water Courses, snorkelling & whale watching available.

Lake Nikwita Situated about 45km north of Pemba, this perennial lake has a scenic location in a patch of coastal bush studded with baobabs, and it supports a varied selection of resident and migratory waterbirds. It's best to get here early if birding is your main interest, and you can also arrange to be poled on to the water in a local dugout canoe. Self-drivers need to head north for about 40km along the Quissanga road to Metugé, from where it is another 5km to the lake along rough tracks (if in doubt, ask locals to point you towards 'lago').

MONTEPUEZ


Founded in 1904 as a regional administrative centre for the Niassa Company, Montepuez is the second-largest town in Cabo Delgado, with a population of 80,000. It shares its name with a river that rises in the mountains to the east and eventually joins the Indian Ocean just south of Ilha do Ibo, and it is also the name of a form of grey marble found in the region. The town was the setting of a terrible massacre in 2000, after 500 Renamo supporters, demonstrating against what they claimed were fraudulent results in the previous year's elections, occupied the district administration, police station and jail for 24 hours on 9 November. Seven police officers and 14 protesters died in the clash, and the surviving policemen retaliated by detaining all alleged demonstrators on 21 November, and cramming them into a tiny cell where at least 83 people died of asphyxiation. Despite this,




Montepuez today is a peaceful town, set attractively among granite inselbergs and with something of a dead-end feel about it, though the discovery of rich ruby deposits in the vicinity in 2009 has brought some business to the area.


GETTING THERE AND AWAY Montepuez lies 205km west of Pemba along the **EN106** (EN1) and **EN242** (EN14). It is a good surfaced road and self-drivers should get through within 3 hours. Chapas to and from Pemba leave from the large square next to the market. The journey takes around 3 hours and costs around US\$4. For details of travel west to Marrupa and the Niassa Reserve, see box, page 371, and be aware that the filling stations here are the last reliable fuelling points before Marrupa.

WHERE TO STAY, EAT AND DRINK *Map, opposite*

 **Montepuez Sleep House** (7 rooms) Av Julius Nyerere; ☎ 272 51149; 📠 84 457 5351; e sleephouse01@hotmail.com. The smartest option around, this was full when we were last in town, but the en-suite rooms with AC are reputedly very pleasant. The Libya-themed 'Tripoli Bar' & restaurant has indoor & outdoor seating, & can be recommended for its tasty Mozambican-style chicken & seafood grills in the US\$6–10 range. **US\$50 dbl. \$\$**

 **Residencial do Goptex** (15 rooms) Av Julius Nyerere; ☎ 272 51114; 📠 86 448 0332. Diagonally opposite Montepuez Sleep House, this place consists of a row of dingy but otherwise

adequate en-suite rooms. Difficult to take issue with at the price. **US\$20/30 twin/dbl. \$**

 **Residencial Suneza** Av Josina Machel; 📠 86 312 8482. Another clean, simple option with en-suite rooms, hot water & fan. **US\$40 dbl. \$\$**

 **VS Lanchonete** (12 rooms) Av Eduardo Mondlane; ☎ 272 51051; 📠 82 485 7280 or 84 362 2928. This sharp place is the only business-class hotel in town, & has en-suite rooms with the usual trimmings such as AC, flat-screen TV, fridge, kettle & secure parking. Out front is a modern fast-food joint serving up fried chicken, fried fish, burgers & other healthy fare. **US\$70 dbl B&B. \$\$\$**

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Banks and ATMs Both BCI and BIM Millennium are represented with ATMs along Avenida Eduardo Mondlane. Westbound travellers should be aware that this will be their last but one opportunity to draw cash before Lichinga, with one ATM in Marrupa.

Shopping A few decent supermarkets line Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, a good market lies two blocks south of this, and the excellent Sadik Bakery can be found on the road leading down to it.

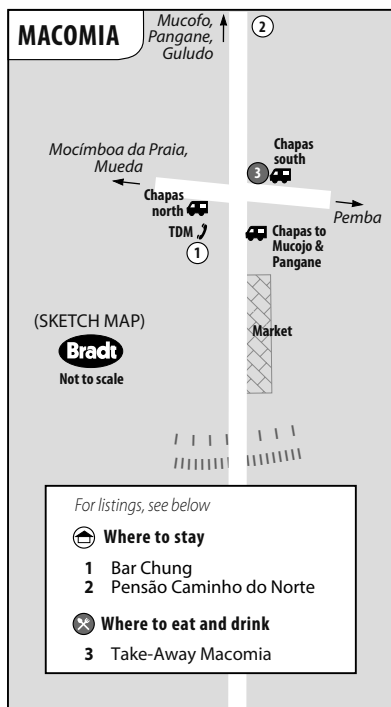
TOWARDS TANZANIA

The Tanzanian border at the Ruvuma mouth lies about 250km north of Pemba as the crow flies, and it is probably fair to say that most travellers who pass through to the far north of Cabo Delgado are *en route* to or from here. There are two through-routes to Tanzania in Cabo Delgado, both of which entail following the EN6 (EN1) inland of Pemba for about 80km to the small junction town of Sunate (also called Silva Macua), then turning north on to the EN243 (N380) and following it for 220km to the junction at Awasse (10km west of Diaca). From here, the more established coastal route passes through the substantial port of Mocímboa da Praia and the smaller town of Palma to Namuiranga, where a ferry service crosses the Ruvuma mouth to Mwambo, 30km south of Mtwara, the largest port in southern Tanzania. This ferry sank in 2008, leading to several years of improvised dugout crossings and reports of price-gouging, but the Tanzanian government pressed a brand-new ferry into service in 2013, making this

once again the preferred river crossing. The Unity Bridge, opened in 2010, is upstream and accessible via Mueda and Mocímboa da Ruvuma, connecting to the Tanzanian town of Newala, but getting to the bridge itself can be a challenge as transport links are poor.

MACOMIA This small junction town lies on the EN243 (N380) about 200km northwest of Pemba and 150km southwest of Mocímboa da Praia. In itself it's an unprepossessing place, bustling and non-sense, and of interest to travellers solely on account of its position. For northbound travellers coming from Pemba, it lies at the end of the good surfaced road to which you'll have become accustomed, and it is also where the EN528 (R766) to coastal Pangane branches off the main road. For that reason, you may end up getting stuck here in transit.

Getting there and away The EN106/243 (EN1/N380) coming from Pemba is surfaced and well maintained in its entirety, and private vehicles should get through in about 2½ hours. North of Macomia, the EN243 (N380) is more erratic and there are some rough patches, so bank on an average driving time of around 50km/h, certainly along the 100km stretch to Awasse (Dacia). The main buses between the north and the south all pass through Macomia, stopping at the market next to the junction for around 20 minutes to give the drivers a break and to drop off and pick up passengers. Most buses come past between 09.00 and 11.00. From here to Pemba will cost US\$4, and takes around 3 hours. To Mueda or Mocímboa da Praia costs about US\$6 and takes up to 5 hours.



Where to stay, eat and drink *Map, above*

Bar Chung On the corner of the square & run by an old Chinese chap, this seems to be the closest Macomia has to a nightspot, & can rustle up meals on request. Rooms are nice & clean & surprisingly cheap. \$

Pensão Caminho do Norte Also close to the junction, this pensão has basic but clean rooms & generator electricity that runs until 22.00. \$

Take-Away Macomia There's no signpost, but look out at the main junction for the deep-sea scene painted on the exterior. Dive inside, & you'll find Mozambican favourites & cold beers. \$

CHAI Lying about 40km north of Macomia and 60km south of Awasse (Dacia) along a stretch of road that is in dire need of upgrading, Chai is a town that you'll pass through almost without noticing, but if you mention it to Mozambicans you'll find that it holds a very special place in the nation's history. It was here, on 25 September 1964, that the first shot of the revolution was fired, when Frelimo, then still led by Eduardo Mondlane, attacked the town's administrative headquarters. The Frelimo battle plan for the raid can be seen in the Revolutionary Museum in Maputo (page 113). The only

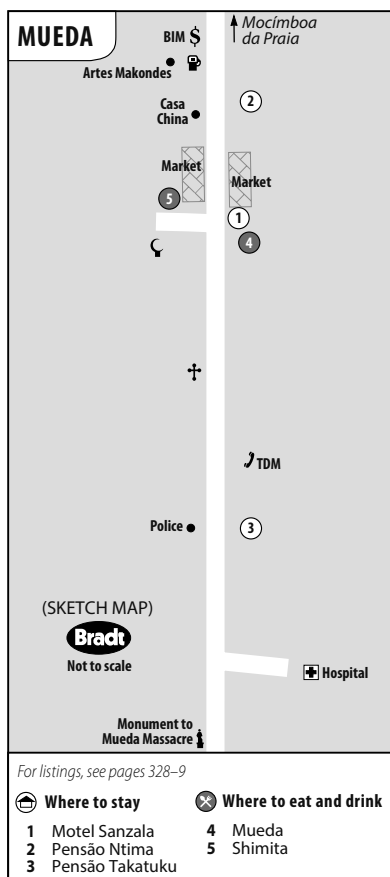
local memorial to this pivotal event is a small mural roughly in the centre of town by one of Mozambique's most celebrated artists, Malangatana Ngwenya, a Frelimo veteran arrested by the Portuguese security police a year after this raid took place, who served as a UNESCO goodwill ambassador until he passed away in 2011. Oddly, the mural doesn't depict the raid on Chai, but the Mueda Massacre.

MUEDA Mueda is the principal town on the Mozambican part of the Makonde Plateau, the only part of the country that still remained unconquered by Portugal at the start of World War I. Even after the plateau was quelled in 1919, the Makonde people after whom it is named retained a tradition of resistance. This was intensified after an infamous massacre on 16 June 1960, when Portuguese soldiers fired on an officially sanctioned meeting of peasant farmers in Mueda, killing an estimated 600 people. Partly in reaction to this massacre – though also because of their proximity to independent Tanzania – the Makonde gave Frelimo strong support during the war of liberation. Most of the plateau was under Frelimo control after 1964, though Mueda itself remained in Portuguese hands. After the operation known as Gordian Knot, in which 350,000 Portuguese soldiers drove Frelimo underground in Cabo Delgado, roughly 300,000 people in the Mueda area were resettled into *aldeamentos*, collective villages that were wired off to prevent contact with Frelimo. Needless to say, the fact that many of these were arbitrarily placed in arid areas did little to help Portugal win the hearts of Cabo Delgado's people.

Mueda today is about as close as it gets to a one-street town, with little to see aside from a small memorial to the massacre, and the mass grave in which its victims were buried. Set at an altitude of around 800m, the town has an unexpectedly bracing climate – a refreshing contrast to the sticky coast – and the surrounding area is very scenic. There's also a small Artes Makondes hut, though this really doesn't bear comparison with the larger co-operatives in Pemba and Nampula. If you explore a little, then you may find some Makonde carvers sitting outside their houses, but this is one of those occasions when the journey is its own reward, with the views as you approach the escarpment ringing the plateau possessing a real 'Lost World' atmosphere.

You'll be able to change US dollars (or Tanzanian shillings) at the small Barclays Bank, and there are three ATMs in Mueda: a BCI, a Barclays and a BIM Millennium.

Getting there and away Mueda lies about 350km from Pemba and the road is tarred for most of the way, but with sporadic rough patches, so self-drivers should



expect it to take at least 5 hours. **Chapas** to and from Pemba leave daily from the market, and **Nagi Investimentos** (m 86 400 0661) also runs a **bus** which departs in either direction at 05.00. The trip to Mocímboa da Praia costs about US\$2 and takes around 4 hours, while Pemba is about US\$10 and will take 8 hours.

Where to stay, eat and drink *Map, page 327*

There are a few basic guesthouses along Rua 1 de Maio, all offering basic accommodation with shared bathrooms for around US\$15 (**\$**). These are the good-value **Pensão Ntima** and slightly lesser **Pensão Takatuku** and **Motel Sanzala**. If you don't eat at your hotel,

CROSSING INTO TANZANIA

The biggest travel news in this part of Mozambique was the long-awaited opening of the Unity Bridge, the first road bridge across the Ruvuma to southern Tanzania, which finally occurred in May 2010. The bridge crosses the river at Negomane, linking Mueda to the Tanzanian town of Newala.

The road distance between Mueda and the Unity Bridge is about 170km, and from there it is another 60km to Newala, passing through some spectacular scenery as you descend into the Ruvuma Valley then climb back on to the plateau on the Tanzanian side. This stretch of road doesn't come close to matching the bridge in the modernity stakes and parts can be quite tricky in the rainy season, even with high clearance, though this is likely to change when planned upgrades are complete, whenever that may be. For the time being, however, expect the drive from Mueda to Newala to take around 5–6 hours, allowing for border formalities.

It's all very low-key, but there is full immigration and customs on both sides of the bridge. If you need accommodation in Newala, two places stand out: the **Country Lodge** (*en-suite rooms with net, fan & TV; \$*) and the cheaper **Plateau Lodge** (*en-suite rooms; \$*). There is also plenty of accommodation in Masasi.

The second-biggest travel news in this part of Mozambique was the return of the vehicle ferry at the mouth of the Ruvuma in 2013. The ferry (m +255 78 772 4928 (*Tanzania*)), owned by the Tanzanian government, can only run at high tide and holds up to six vehicles at a time. It charges US\$50–75 per vehicle and US\$5 for foot passengers, and the crossing takes about 20 minutes.

There is still no public transport between Mueda and Newala via the Unity Bridge, though this will surely come as soon as the road has been upgraded. Until it does, however, backpackers must cross between Mozambique and Tanzania along the coastal route from Palma to Mtwara. Coming from Palma, the 40km to the Namoto border post takes 2 hours by chapa, along a road that is as bad as the surrounding scenery is beautiful. The immigration office here is easy-going, and there's a little shop selling water, sweets and such. Once formalities are complete, the same chapa will continue to the banks of the Ruvuma River, where you can expect a bit of a feeding frenzy among the motorboat pilots and money changers! If you've missed the ferry for the day, you shouldn't have too much trouble arranging a motorboat launch, and if you have leftover Mozambican money, this is your last chance to get rid of it, though do be aware that the rate on offer is rather poor. Otherwise, just ignore these folks and wait for the ferry. Pick-up trucks wait on the Tanzanian side to take you to Mtwara, stopping first at the border post at Singa.

For information on the Unity II Bridge in Niassa Province, see page 48.

the **Shimita Restaurante (\$\$)** and **Mueda Restaurante (\$\$)** face each other across the same road, and serve whatever they happen to have that day.

MOCÍMBOA DA PRAIA Mocímboa da Praia was once the last established overnight stop for travellers on the coastal route to Tanzania, before the recent growth of Palma in anticipation of the offshore natural gas development. It has a rather lawless frontier feel about it (the 2005 elections were marred by violence), but is otherwise quite appealing, in many ways reminiscent of a warmer Lichinga, and its location along the main trade route between Pemba and southern Tanzania ensures it bustles with commercial activity. There is also a fishing harbour, unique in Mozambique, from where hundreds of boats leave at around 05.00 in the extraordinary colours of sunrise.

On a more practical note, you'll find that there is a bit more English spoken in Mocímboa da Praia, thanks to the number of Tanzanians and Somalians living there, and a whole lot more Swahili. It's also the site of Mozambique's northernmost post office, though it seems to be out of service for the time being. Barclays Bank, BIM Millennium and BCI are all represented here with ATMs, and there's an internet café in the town centre. As the closest (relatively) urban centre to the offshore Rovuma gas field, there are already a number of Brazilian, American and other energy firms based in town (which can sometimes make it challenging to find

MAPIKO DANCES

The area between Mueda and Mocímboa da Praia is a good base for exploring Makonde culture, the highlight of which is the traditional *mapiko* dances that are held at practically every village in the region as part of the *likumbi* (male initiation/circumcision) season of December to January. This is one of the most elaborate masked-dance traditions in East or southern Africa, not only associated with initiation rituals but also reflecting broader aspects of Makonde social life and human nature, as well as tackling more contemporary concerns. Indeed, during the liberation war, the Makonde – whose homeland was a staunch Frelimo stronghold – invented several new masquerades dealing directly with the hardships they faced under the last oppressive decade of Portuguese rule.

The term *mapiko* is the plural of *lipiko*, the central figure in the dance, representing a malicious spirit that the community must protect itself against. Every person involved in a dance performance will drape his body in cloths until it is completely disguised, before donning an outsized wooden *lipiko* mask distinguished by its wild hair and grotesquely distorted facial features. Only men are allowed to perform the dance, and the masks cannot be viewed by women or by uncircumcised boys except when the dance is under way. These *lipiko* masks are also among the most collectible of traditional African artworks, which means that many fine examples have been exported to foreign collections, though an interesting selection can be seen in the ethnological museum in Nampula.


If you want to see the dancers in action, it shouldn't be too difficult to locate an event in the countryside between Mueda and Mocímboa da Praia during the *likumbi* season – just listen out for the drums, especially on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. At other times of year, bespoke dances can be arranged with advance notice through Kaskazini in Pemba (page 43).


accommodation), and you should expect rapid changes here as the offshore gas fields are developed further.

Getting there and away Mocímboa da Praia lies about 360km from Pemba and the road is tarred until Macomia but highly variable thereafter, so self-drivers should expect it to take at least 5 hours. **Chapas** between Mocímboa da Praia and Mueda (US\$2) leave throughout the day from opposite the Exito filling station and take about 2½ hours. For Pemba (US\$6) and Nampula (US\$10), a handful of **buses** including **Maning Nice** (m 82 706 2820/456 5760) and **Nagi Investimentos** (m 86 400 0659) leave at 03.30 daily from in front of the Movitel store.

If you're heading to the border from here, plan for an even earlier start – chapas leave for Palma (US\$2) and the border from between 02.00 and 04.00 in the morning. While you will be able to get something after this, you may not be able to get a connection on from the border. Chapas to the border cost US\$7 and the journey takes up to 4 hours.

There is an airport in Mocímboa da Praia as well. It only serves charter flights as of 2016, though, given the town's growing importance, this is likely to change.


 **Where to stay, eat and drink** Vumba has the highest-calibre restaurant in town, but the Tanzanian-owned places on the road between the beach and the hospital are known for serving up goat curry, rice dishes, chapatis and, according to at least one Mocímboa resident, a selection of 'mind-blastingly delicious' fresh juices. It might be a good idea to pop in and order in advance, agreeing on a time when you can come and eat.

 **Complexo Vumba** (28 rooms) m 86 315 0901; e ilhavumba.mocimboa@yahoo.com.br. On the beach road to the right of the main route into town, this established place comes with a swimming pool & a view, & the restaurant-bar has become the go-to spot for Mocímboa's movers & shakers. It's often fully booked by the gas companies or government folks, but worth checking regardless. An extension of the hotel is also to be built on Vumba Island, though at the

time of writing its opening date is uncertain.

Rooms US\$70 dbl, B&B. \$\$\$


 **Sunset Guest House (7 rooms)** Located in the centre of town, this new guesthouse has simple en-suite rooms with hot water, DSTV, AC, Wi-Fi, nets & a restaurant that serves local mains & pizza. *Rooms US\$20. \$*

 **Kharibu** In the centre of town, this is first on the (admittedly short) list of nightspots in Mocímboa, & pumps the music until late at w/ends.

PALMA The small but beautiful town of Palma, situated about 60km north of Mocímboa da Praia, lies on an attractive natural harbour that is thought once to have been a mouth of the Ruvuma River. The government buildings and hospital are up on the hill with a staggeringly beautiful view overlooking a coconut-palm-fringed lagoon and private residences by the sea. The very definition of a backwater for many years, Palma today is in the process of dramatic change, as this is the epicentre of Mozambique's nascent gas industry – the Rovuma Basin gas field, home to a possible 175 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, lies just offshore. Given the recent changes, Palma has become the last established overnight stop for travellers on the coastal route to Tanzania. An ATM is located at the petrol station and there are plans to open a supermarket. Palma itself is worth exploring, if only to see this once-bucolic fishing village before industry renders it entirely unrecognisable.

If you are looking for transport to either Quionga and the Tanzanian border at Namoto or Mocímboa da Praia, you'll need to wait in the upper part of town. Chapas to the border cost US\$5 whereas a private taxi fare will be about US\$50.

The ferry costs US\$2 per foot passenger and US\$20 per vehicle. As per the tides, if the ferry is not operating, local boats take foot passengers most of the way for US\$5, but the trip involves a bit of walking with the lack of water. The manager at Palma Residence is a useful source of information regarding border crossings and happenings in Palma.


 **Where to stay, eat and drink** For a place to stay, there are an increasing number of options as investors gear up for the impending gas industry boom. A pleasant range of accommodation is now available, most with on-site restaurants. The more established are listed below and a few more are in the works, notably **Amarula Lodge** at the north end of town. Alternatively, the reed town is down below between the hill and the beach, and you might be able to arrange a stay with some locals here, either in a home or by pitching a tent in someone's compound.


 **Karibu Palma Hotel** (12 rooms)
m 87 274 5982; e info@karibupalmahotel.com;
w karibupalmahotel.com. Located in the centre of town, this quaint hotel offers comfortable & tastefully appointed business-style en-suite rooms & self-catering apartments with balcony/terrace, AC, Wi-Fi, satellite TV, writing desk & kettle. *Rooms start at US\$107 dbl, B&B. \$\$\$*

 **Sunset Guest House** (7 rooms) m 84 279 8101. Owned by the same woman as the Sunset in Mocimboa da Praia, this central guesthouse offers simple accommodation with AC, TV & fridge. The associated Tipyku's restaurant stands a bit down the road. *Rooms US\$39 sgl with shared facilities; US\$59/86 sgl/dbl en suite; all rates B&B. \$\$\$*

 **Palma Inn** (30 rooms) 272 88001; m 84 765 0211; e afonseca@patamar.co.mz. On the north side of town & catering primarily to the oil & gas market, this comfortable place has en-suite rooms with AC, TV, Wi-Fi, kettle & writing desk, as well as private parking, restaurant, bar & pool. **\$\$\$**

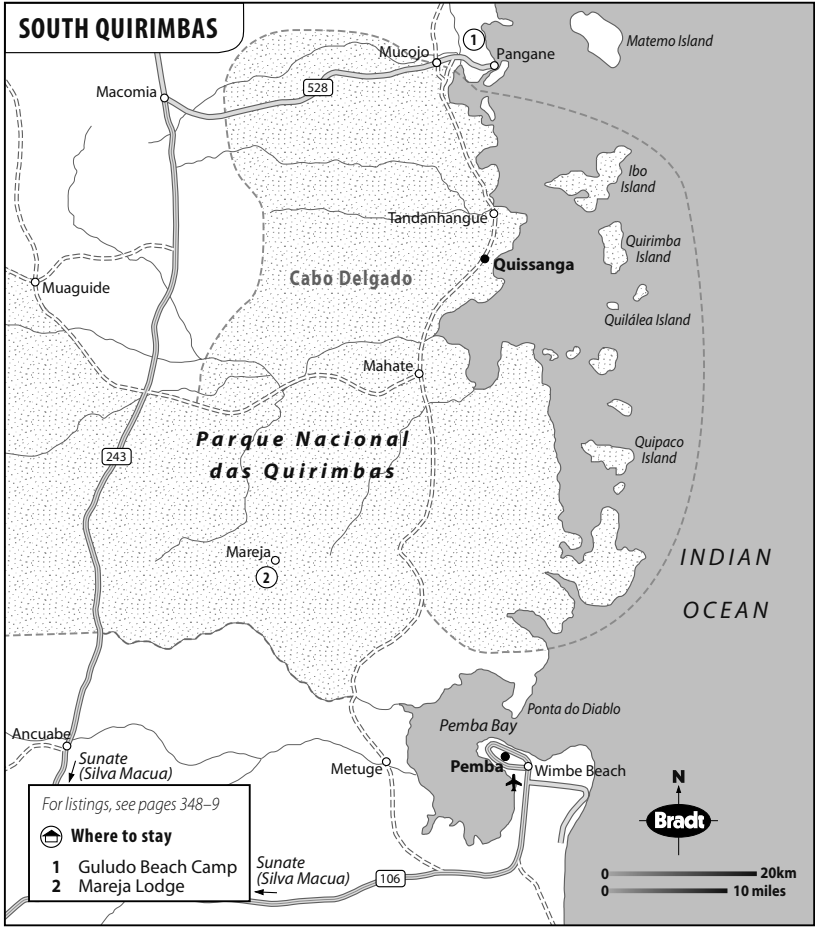
 **Palma Residences** (57 rooms)
m 84 321 2817/8; e palma@africancentury.co.mz; w palmalodge.com. Marketing itself as an apartment-style hotel, Palma's largest complex has a restaurant, swimming pool & secure fenced parking. En-suite rooms adorned with locally manufactured *umbila* furniture & African art come with veranda, kitchenette, writing desk, AC, DSTV, Wi-Fi & free laundry. *Rooms US\$145/165 sgl/dbl standard suite, US\$195/295 1-bedroom/2-bedroom villa. \$\$\$\$*

 **Pensão Mustafa** (6 rooms) m 84 363 5303 or 86 624 7146. Centrally located & cheap, this otherwise unremarkable establishment uses shared facilities – a long drop toilet & bucket shower stall. *US\$10 dbl. \$*

 **Pensão Wivo** (28 rooms) m 82 070 2700 or 86 679 3598. Located near the roundabout at the southern entrance to town, this established pensão offers en-suite accommodation with hot water & AC. No frills with a friendly staff. *US\$30/50 sgl/dbl. \$\$*

SEND US YOUR SNAPS!

We'd love to follow your adventures using our *Mozambique* guide – why not send us your photos and stories via Twitter (@BradtGuides) and Instagram (@bradtguides) using the hashtag #Mozambique. Alternatively, you can upload your photos directly to the gallery on the Mozambique destination page via our website (w bradtguides.com/mozambique).



The Quirimbas



The most important tourist attraction in the far north of Mozambique is the Quirimba Archipelago, which consists of 32 small offshore islands strung out along the 250km of Indian Ocean coastline that stretches northward from Pemba to the small town of Palma. It is an area of great scenic beauty, boasting high levels of marine and terrestrial biodiversity, some of the most significant unspoilt reef ecosystems anywhere in the Indian Ocean, and a rich history and culture whose blend of indigenous African and exotic Arabic and Portuguese influences is epitomised by the historic town of Ibo on the island of the same name. In 2002, the most southerly 11 islands, together with the surrounding waters and a large tract of the facing mainland, were gazetted as the 7,506km² Quirimbas National Park (*entrance US\$12*), of which some 20% comprises marine habitats while the remainder is terrestrial. In 2008, the entire archipelago was nominated as a tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The closest thing to a tourist hub in the Quirimbas, and the only island that is reasonably accessible to travellers on a budget, is Ibo, which lies within the national park and is best known for the tiny but fascinating old town that shares its name. Elsewhere in the archipelago, honeymoon-friendly idylls such as Matemo, Medjumbe and Quilálea host some of Mozambique's finest and most exclusive beach resorts, all of them connected to Pemba by daily light aircraft flights. Ibo aside, the island retreats of the Quirimbas are aimed squarely at the fly-in 'barefoot luxury' market, so for practical purposes this chapter also includes a smattering of comparably upmarket beach lodges that technically lie outside the Quirimbas, as well as the handful of tourist developments that exist within (or close to) the vast mainland sector of the national park.

The archipelago itself is a classic fringing reef, but one that runs along the Mozambican coast for hundreds of kilometres. The individual islands are essentially those points where the reef protrudes above sea level, and the waters that separate them from the mainland are very shallow. Indeed, as seen from the air – as most visitors first see it – this entire coastline forms a beguiling network of dark green mangroves and narrow channels, bright azure shallows whose sandy floor is clearly visible through the translucent waters, and small wooded islets fringed by white beaches and rows of coconut palms. The substrate of these islands is composed of coral rag – coral and sand that has been bonded into a pockmarked black rock that is razor-sharp (don't try to walk over it in bare feet) and yet brittle enough to break off with ease.

The islands are mostly lushly vegetated, and the surrounding shallows support extensive mangrove swamps and a wide range of wading birds, including an important breeding colony of sooty terns. Wandering across the intertidal areas is highly recommended (though be sure to wear a stout pair of sandals), as the pools host the likes of octopus, sea cucumber, lobster and mantis shrimp. The sandy

beaches on seven of the 11 islands within the national park are used as breeding sites by hawksbill, green and olive ridley turtles, and loggerhead and leatherback turtles are also present in these waters. Several other species listed as threatened by the IUCN are resident or regular migratory visitors, among them the dugong, bottlenose dolphin, humpback whale, and grey-nurse, great white and whale shark. The offshore reefs support an incredible wealth of marine wildlife, including 52 coral and 375 fish species, making for some of the country's finest diving and snorkelling.

Most of the islands are inhabited and, while there is some industrial-scale agriculture on Quirimba Island, the predominant occupation is subsistence fishing, not only by Mozambicans but also by itinerant semi-nomadic Tanzanian fishermen, who move from island to island every month or so, drying their catch and sending it in big sacks to market in Mtwara or Pemba.

HISTORY

Little is known about the history of the Quirimbas prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, but they were certainly occupied by Arabic traders by the 13th century, and possibly even as early as the 7th century. They are assumed to have formed an important link in the medieval coastal trade network between Kilwa and Sofala. The Quirimbas were originally known to the Portuguese as the Maluane Islands, after a type of cloth manufactured in the vicinity from pre-Portuguese times until well into the 17th century.

When the Portuguese first landed in the archipelago, the main trading centre was on Quirimba Island, immediately south of Ibo. In 1507, when the more northerly island city of Kilwa was occupied by Portugal, many of its Muslim merchants fled to Quirimba and continued operating from there, refusing to enter into trade with the Christian Portuguese. As a result, Portugal attacked Quirimba in 1522, killing about 60 of its Muslim residents and looting large amounts of ivory and other merchandise before they burned the town down. This massacre had little long-term effect in subduing the Muslim trade, however, so Portugal switched tactics and attempted to gain control over the islands by leasing them to Portuguese citizens.

By the end of the 16th century, seven of the nine largest islands in the archipelago were ruled by Portuguese traders and the other two by Muslims. Islanders were forced to pay a tribute of 5% of their produce to the island's ruler, as well as a tithe to the Church. By this time, the most important island in the archipelago was Ibo, said locally to be an acronym of the Portuguese *Ilha Bem Organizado* ('Well-Organised Island'), a claim we've been unable to verify elsewhere. A description dating from 1609 reveals that Ibo was substantially fortified, and that the islands were reasonably prosperous and a major source of food supplies for *Ilha de Moçambique*. By the 18th century, *prazos* had been established on all the main islands, and the archipelago was lorded over by two *mazungo* (white-skinned) families: the *Meneses* and *Morues*.

Ibo came into its own in the second half of the 18th century as the major supplier of slaves to the sugar-plantation owners of France's Indian Ocean islands. Portugal resented the prosperity of the islands' independent traders and, fearing that the archipelago might fall into Omani or French hands, granted Ibo municipal status in 1763. By the end of the 18th century, Ibo is thought to have been the second most important Portuguese trading centre after *Ilha de Moçambique*. It was still a major trading and administrative centre when it was leased to the Niassa Company in 1897 but, as it transpired, the shallow, narrow approach to the island wasn't suitable for modern ships. In 1904, the Niassa Company relocated its base to Porto

Amélia (Pemba), three-quarters of Ibo's population followed, the islands faded into economic insignificance and its old towns fell into gradual decline.

IBO

Situated on the island of the same name, the small town of Ibo ranks among Mozambique's most ancient settlements. Founded prior to the Portuguese era, it was the most important coastal port after Ilha de Moçambique up until the turn of the 20th century. By mainstream tourism standards, Ibo today is also one of southern Africa's best-kept travel secrets. Tourist facilities are limited, though steadily improving, and access is not exactly straightforward (unless, of course, you fly from Pemba, which takes all of 20 minutes). Yet for the select few visitors who do make it, wandering around the timeworn alleys of Ibo's old town and interacting with its fewer than 4,000 inhabitants invariably forms a highlight of their time in Mozambique.

The old town of Ibo, though run-down, is utterly compelling: a strangely haunting backwater that vaguely recalls Kilwa Kivinje on the south coast of Tanzania. As the UNESCO World Heritage Site tentative list notes: "The architectural character of the stone-built town, created through several hundreds of years, is remarkable for its homogeneity... the town, the fortifications and many fine buildings are an outstanding example of architecture in which local Swahili traditions, Portuguese influences and Indian and Arab influences are all intertwined."

Today, many of the palaces and villas built in Ibo's 19th-century heyday have been abandoned and lapsed into disrepair, with clay tiles falling from the roofs, walls layered in moss and foundations undermined by the vast sprawling tendrils of strangler figs. The exposed rag coral walls and fading whitewash of the crumbling buildings give the town a washed-out pastel air that is strangely at odds with the deep blue tropical sky and the bright red flame trees, and the lush greenery that lines the streets in which mangrove kingfishers sing at dawn.

If there is an obvious point of comparison, it is Ilha de Moçambique, but Ibo is far from being a miniature of Ilha – which may have been the Portuguese capital for four centuries, but is more evocative of the Muslim world than of anything European. Paradoxically Ibo, which was frequently a base for clandestine Muslim trade during the Portuguese era, has an uncluttered and overwhelmingly Mediterranean character, its wide roads lined with opulent high-roofed buildings boasting classical facades and expansive balconies supported by thick pillars. And while Ibo is also in a more advanced state of decay than Ilha de Moçambique, this is steadily changing. An idea of Ibo's past grandeur can be seen at the Ibo Island Lodge, where three previously ruined mansions have been lovingly and sensitively restored to their former glory, and several other buildings are also in various stages of rehabilitation.

A number of organisations and investors have identified the importance of Ibo's history, culture and biodiversity, and community and conservation projects are already under way. A community tourism programme, a Montessori English School, a silversmiths' programme and several other community-based alternative-enterprise projects are operated and managed by Ibo Island Lodge (page 339), and can be visited by the lodge's guests as well as by other visitors.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By air The easy way to get to Ibo is by air. **CR Aviation** runs at least one daily flight connecting Pemba to Ibo and all other islands with lodges, though times and schedules are flexible depending on the bookings for that day. Bookings can be

CONSERVATION ON THE QUIRIMBAS

The first survey work of the Quirimbas was carried out between 1996 and 1998 by Frontier-Mozambique, a project based on Ilha Quirimba and run by the Society for Environmental Exploration in conjunction with the Tropical Marine Department of the University of York in the UK, the Mozambican Department of the Environment (MICOA), the Mozambican Department of Fisheries (IDPPE) and the University of Eduardo Mondlane.

The project of a national park in the Quirimbas had – because of the region's very high biodiversity, great scenic beauty and important history – been under intermittent discussion since the 1970s. However, it was only in 2000 that the first protected marine area was established in the Quirimbas in the form of the Quilála Marine Sanctuary, which was set up around the islands of Quilála and Sencar (55km and 75km north of Pemba respectively) by a private company and endorsed by the government. In June 2002, at the request of 40 local community leaders, the 7,506km² Quirimbas National Park was created to encompass both the southern half of the archipelago and a 5,984km² tract of the facing mainland. The park's marine sector extends over 1,522km² and stretches 100km along the coast, from just north of Pemba to just south of Medjumbe Island. The park's headquarters are on Ibo Island.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature or WWF ([w wwf.org](http://www.wwf.org)) is heavily involved in the Quirimbas Park, and its website is a good source of information. The overall goal of the park, in this beautiful but ecologically fragile area, is 'to conserve the diversity, abundance and ecological integrity of all physical and biological resources in the park area, so that they may be enjoyed and used productively by present and future generations'. Nor is nature the only beneficiary. One of the park's six associated aims

made through the airline direct ([m 84 490 9734](tel); [e reservations@craviation.co.mz](mailto:reservations@craviation.co.mz); [w craviation.co.mz](http://www.craviation.co.mz)) or through Kaskazini (page 43). Depending on your exact route, fares are mostly between US\$208 and US\$283 one-way, plus a US\$13 departure tax. The flights take up to 20 minutes and are a delight in clear weather.

By boat A cheaper direct possibility between Pemba and Ibo is the cargo boat operated by Rainer Gessner ([m 86 144 3964](tel)) on Ilha Quirimba (page 348), which typically does a weekly supply run in either direction. It is rare that he takes passengers but, given a bit of potential extra space, it would be worth asking if you are willing to pitch in for fuel. The trip takes about 12 hours. Cinco Portas on Ibo (page 339) can also arrange combined car and boat transfers from Pemba via Tandanhague for US\$250 one-way and US\$400 round-trip per trip (not per person).

By car and dhow In the dry season, the most direct route to Quissanga and Tandanhague, the departure point for dhows to Ibo, involves following the **EN106** (EN1) east out of Pemba for a few kilometres then turning right on to the coastal **EN247** (R762) running north through Metugé and Mahate. This route covers a distance of 125km and takes 3–4 hours in a private vehicle. The better but longer (250km) inland route, which you'd be forced to use in the rainy season, involves following the surfaced **EN106** (EN1) and **EN243** (N380) via Sunate (also known as Silva Macua) to Muaguide, then turning right on to the all-weather dirt **EN245** (R767) through Bilibiza to connect with the coastal road at Mahate, where you need to turn left for Quissanga. Like so many coastal towns in Mozambique, Quissanga

involves contributing to 'the economic and social well-being of the park's ancestral inhabitants by promoting sustainable resource use strategies, by developing ecologically sensitive livelihood options and by prioritising their interests in the economic opportunities deriving from the establishment of the park'.

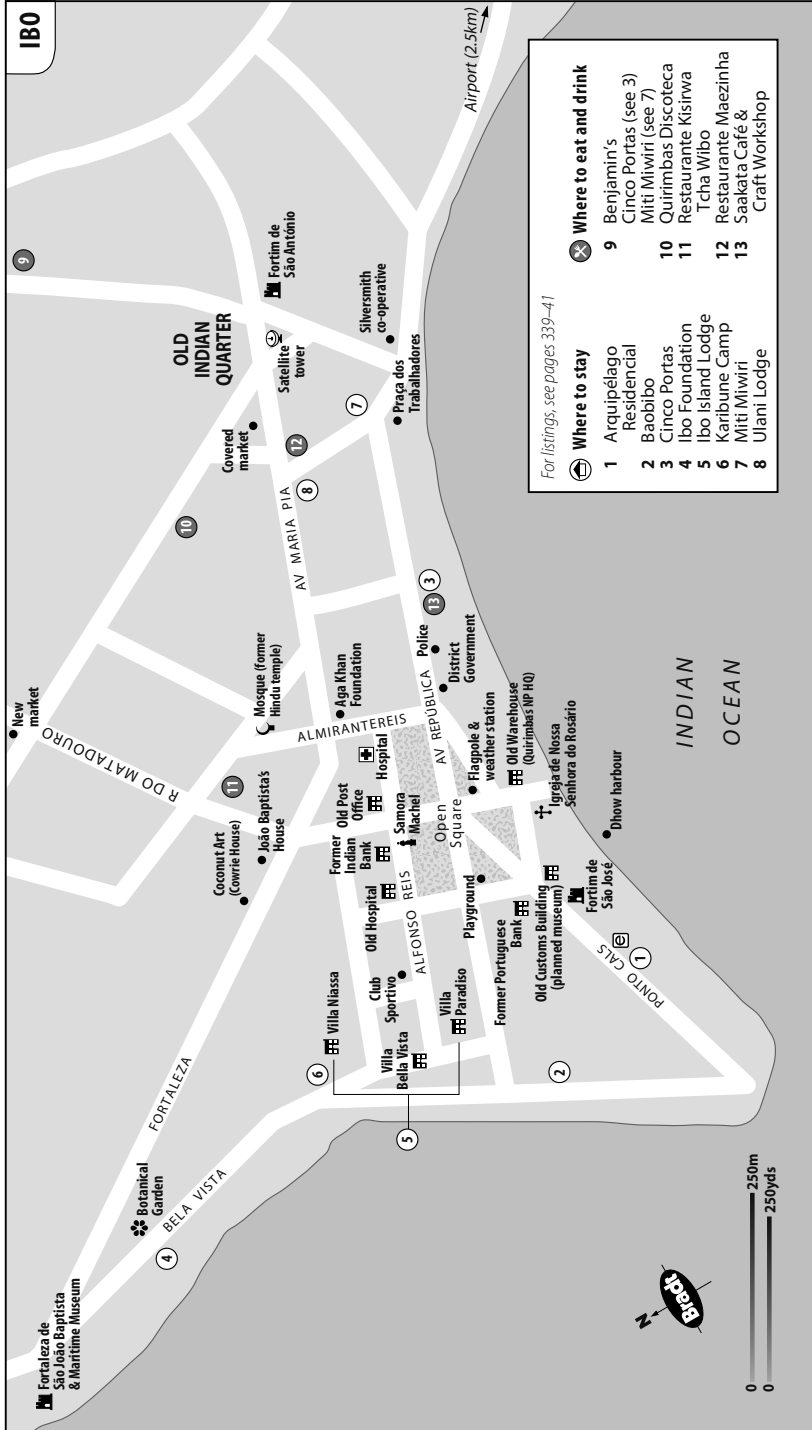
Park management currently runs largely on NGO funding, but the long-term goal is for park fees and other tourist revenue – of which 70% goes towards park management, another 20% to local communities and only 10% to state coffers – to make it financially self-sufficient. This goal, it has to be said, is a long way from being realised, as annual tourist arrivals stand at around 3,500 people, most of them staying on Ibo or Matemo. However, ambitious plans for further development of community-based tourism on the oft-neglected mainland sector of the park have led to projections of 20,000 visitors annually by 2017.

Another player in the conservation of the island's natural and cultural assets is Ibo Island Lodge, which has aimed to provide clear community benefits since its inception. To this end it has established a series of projects run from the Ibo Island Conservation Centre. These include a long-term programme teaching English language to the communities on Ibo, and the creation of alternative-enterprise projects such as a market garden scheme, whereby locals can produce sellable crops in their own gardens, the development of Ibo Island Coffee as a premium brand, and the development of the island's ancient silversmithing industry. It has also helped to form a network of island guides to lead culture and heritage experiences. Another project is to record from oral and other sources the fascinating history of the island. More can be found out about these projects by checking Ibo Island Lodge's website (www.iboisland.com).

splits into two halves – the administrative block up on the hill and the main fishing village down in the mangroves. If you are heading to Tandanhangue, you need to take the turning north at the administrative block. Either way, a 4x4 is a must, and there is safe parking at Tandanhangue (expect to pay around US\$4/20 per day/week to the guard). Dhows for Ibo can only leave at high tide so, depending on arrival time, you could be in for a wait.

By chapa and dhow The more convoluted but cheaper option entails a combination of road transport and dhow, and you'd best resign yourself to a long bumpy ride. **Dhows** to Ibo leave from the fishing village of Tandanhangue, which lies on the coast north of Pemba a short distance past Quissanga. **Chapas** run from Pemba to Quissanga and Tandanhangue and, while there will be at least one a day, it is possible that there will only be the one on the day you are travelling, so be at the chapa point in Pemba before 05.00. Be prepared for a long, hot, dusty and rough journey. The trip costs US\$8 and takes a good 5–6 hours, longer in the rains.

Once at Tandanhangue, there should be a dhow waiting on the shore where the chapa drops you though, if the tides work against you, you may be in for a wait of a few hours. All the dhows making the crossing are now motorised, and the journey is breathtakingly beautiful, even if the thrum of an outboard motor is considerably less charming an aural backdrop than the wind in the sails once was. It costs about US\$2 and takes just over an hour. If you missed the public boat, it's possible to hire a private dhow for around US\$30–40 one-way through one of the captains, whose numbers are posted on the baobab tree at the harbour. Note, however, that



For listings, see pages 339-41

Where to stay

- 1 Arquipélago Residencial
- 2 Baobibo
- 3 Cinco Portas
- 4 Ibo Foundation
- 5 Ibo Island Lodge
- 6 Karibune Camp
- 7 Miti Miwiri
- 8 Ulami Lodge

Where to eat and drink

- 9 Benjamin's
- 10 Cincos Portas (see 3)
- 11 Miti Miwiri (see 7)
- 12 Quirimbás Discoteca
- 13 Restaurante Kisirwa Tcha Wilbo
- 14 Restaurante Maezinha
- 15 Saakata Café & Craft Workshop

attempting to cross after dark isn't the safest option, and departure is still subject to the tide. The dhow will drop you on the beach in front of the Fortim de São José. Note that Miti Miwiri (page 340) also offers boat transfers from Tandanhangue by prior arrangement, costing US\$60 for up to six people.

Coming from Mocimboa da Praia and points north, you'll need to catch a Pemba-bound chapa along the **EN243** (N380) and be dropped off about halfway through, at the junction with the dirt **EN245** (R767), where there is occasional transport towards Bilibiza and Mahate. You'll meet the coastal road at Mahate, where you can find onward transport for the remaining 20km to Tandanhangue.

It is possible to walk from Tandanhangue to Ibo at certain times of tide. It should only be attempted on low spring tides and you *must* take a local guide – if you stray off the path then you will very quickly find yourself trapped in knee-deep mud, with a very real risk of being stuck there until either someone comes along who can help you out or the tide comes in.



WHERE TO STAY *Map, opposite*

Exclusive/luxury


 **Ibo Island Lodge** (14 rooms)  +27 21 785 5498/2657 (South Africa), 269 60549 (lodge); **m** 82 605 7866; **e** enquiries@iboisland.com; **w** iboisland.com. The western waterfront was the most exclusive address in town during Ibo's glory days, dominated by a trio of 19th-century mansions that fell into ruin & decay as the town faded. 2 of these mansions, Villa Niassa & Villa Bella Vista, both of which served as governors' palaces at some point in their history, have been sensitively rehabilitated & restored as Ibo Island Lodge, & the 3rd mansion, Villa Paradiso, has also been restored to become a private, 12-sleeper villa with its own pool & garden. The rooms have lofty ceilings & are spacious, cool & filled with restored colonial-era or locally made hardwood furniture. The rooftop restaurant-bar has Wi-Fi & is a perfect place to watch the sun go down over the bay & the mangrove forest beyond. There is a lovely large garden, planted with frangipani, bougainvillea & palms, with 2 swimming pools & a garden restaurant-bar. Activities inc beach visits, snorkelling, fishing, massage, traditional safaris on a 14m custom-built dhow, kayaking, diving & experiences enabling interaction with islanders. The lodge also offers specials for residents & longer stays. The lodge can also arrange tailored mobile island-hopping dhow or kayak safaris through the entire archipelago (see **w** mozambiquedhowsafaris.com). Ibo Island Lodge is a highly commendable lodge with a well-thought-out programme that provides a measurable benefit to the local islanders. It should, however, be stressed that, while it will

appeal to those seeking accommodation with a firm sense of place & historic character, & it offers daily excursions to a lovely sandbank beach, those looking for a conventional beach holiday might prefer some of the places listed later in the chapter. *US\$555/810 sea-view sgl/dbl; US\$525/750 historical or garden sgl/dbl. Rooms inc all meals & non-motorised activities, inc a daily transfer to a private beach with snorkelling, & informative guided historical & cultural tours. Rates increase by about 10% in the short high season.*

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Mid range

 **Baobibo** (3 rooms) **m** 82 815 2892 or 86 175 8205; **e** baobibo.ibo@gmail.com; **w** baobibo.com. Opened in 2012 & set in a sandy compound on the western waterfront, this French-run lodge is a charming addition to Ibo's accommodation scene. The whitewashed bungalows are made from all local materials, & have individual verandas facing the water. Inside, rooms are bright & airy with wooden features, tea/coffee facilities, reading lamps, & traditional stone basin showers in recognition of the paucity of fresh water on Ibo. They've got a covered outdoor lounge area with book exchange, bikes & kayaks, & they also do excursions on their own dhow. *US\$65 dbl; US\$96 family room (sleeps 5); all rooms B&B. Rates increase by about 15% in the short high season.* **\$\$\$**

 **Cinco Portas** (7 rooms) **m** 86 926 2399 or 82 326 6771; **e** info@cincoportas.com; **w** cincoportas.com. Situated on the southern waterfront, this attractive pensão consists of a restored warehouse set in a small garden with an agreeable bar-

restaurant, swimming pool, & lovely views over the old harbour. Accommodation is in a variety of en-suite rooms, most with AC, but ranging from a spacious apartment with 2 dbl beds & locally made furnishings to a small traditional Swahili-style room in a separate building. Activities on offer inc snorkelling & dhow trips to nearby beaches. *US\$50–160 dbl; rates go up US\$30–40 during high season. All rooms inc generous b/fast. \$\$\$\$*

🏠 **Ibo Foundation Hotel** (9 rooms) Set to open during the lifespan of this edition, this new establishment will have 8 dbl bungalows & at least 1 family room lining the mangrove shore on Av Bela Vista. An activity centre, swimming pool & restaurant are also planned.

🏠 **Miti Miwiri** (8 rooms) **m** 86 623 7785 or 82 543 8564; **e** mail@mitimiwiri.com; **w** mitimiwiri.com/n. Situated at the east end of the old town centre, this is another beautifully restored homestead, spanning 2 storeys & set in a large shady garden with a popular bar & restaurant with satellite TV. The restored rooms have an uncluttered appearance in keeping with the high-ceilinged ambience, attractive furnishings & a fan. Facilities inc swimming pool, free kayak use for guests, & internet access at around US\$1/30mins. The management can arrange boat transfers to/from Tandanhangue or the other islands, as well as snorkelling trips (*all at around US\$100 for up to 6 people*). *US\$65/80/90/110 sgl/dbl/trpl/quad; all rooms B&B. \$\$\$*

🏠 **Ulani Lodge** (8 rooms) **m** 82 343 8428 or 86 048 6485; **e** booking@ulanilodge.com;

w ulanilodge.com. The island's newest boutique hotel comprises a converted historical villa set in a lush garden complete with swimming pool & terrace offering fantastic views of Ibo & the sea. The individually decorated en-suite rooms have queen-size bed, hot water & fan. A restaurant is planned. *US\$80–120 dbl depending on season; all rooms B&B. \$\$\$*

Budget

🏠 **Arquipélago Residencial** (6 rooms) **m** 82 461 9830/802 0612; **e** arquipelagoresidencial@yahoo.com.br. This block of rooms near the Fortim de São José is by no means unpleasant, but it does suffer from a distinct lack of character. Rooms are all tiled & en suite, pricier ones come with AC, & Rooms 1–3 overlook the sea. There's an on-site restaurant & bar & a small army of concrete chaises longues one could attempt to relax in. More importantly, Ibo's only internet café is attached. *US\$30/50 dbl/exec. \$\$*

Shoestring and camping

🏠 **Karibune Camp** (4 rooms) **m** 82 703 2200 or 86 910 6597. Situated between Ibo Island Lodge & the Fortaleza de São João Baptista, this locally run lodge offers the choice of sleeping in a simple thatched hut or camping in a green compound literally a stone's throw from the sea. Simple meals can be prepared by advance order, & they organise dhow trips as well. *US\$8–14 dbl/twin; US\$3 pp camping. \$*

🍴 WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK *Map, page 338*

The best options are generally the exclusive and moderate lodges, all of which accept walk-in diners, but there are a few inexpensive bespoke restaurants dotted around town – it definitely pays to order ahead.

🍴 **Benjamin's** **m** 86 175 8007; ☺ b/fast, lunch & dinner daily. This new eatery serves hearty portions of local food for US\$5–6 per plate. **\$**

🍴 **Cinco Portas** (page 339) A new chef now manages the lodge & restaurant & has subsequently enhanced the already quality dining experience, particularly the seafood. The bar-restaurant here can be a fun place to hang out in the evenings. *US\$8–16. \$\$\$\$*

🍴 **Miti Miwiri** (above) This lodge has a long-standing reputation for its popular bar & restaurant with satellite TV in the garden.

Sandwiches are around US\$6 & the 3-course meal of the day is usually around US\$13–16.

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🍴 **Restaurante Kisirwa Tcha Wibo** **m** 82 546 5818. In a reed building painted bright red, they've got a chalkboard out front with local meals of the day, although it seems like their business is winding down & not always open. *US\$4–7. \$*

🍴 **Restaurante Maezinha** **m** 86 267 8354; ☺ 06.30–22.00 daily. Located across from Ulani Lodge, this establishment serves up local food for around US\$6 per plate. **\$**

✂ **Saakata Café & Craft Workshop** m 86 144 6408; f saakataibo. Serving up coffee, snacks, cake & ice cream along with a colourful selection of locally made crafts & kapulana clothing. US\$1–2 \$

☆ **Quirimbas Discoteca** m 82 859 4281. Behind the old Indian Quarter, this is what passes as Ibo's nightclub, & it's well attended at w/ends.

BANKS AND ATMS Ibo is scheduled to get its first ATM, through BCI, during the lifespan of this edition, but don't count on it unless you've called your accommodation ahead to check that it is functioning.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO Ibo's magic lies in the feeling of history that radiates from the walls of the old town, particularly around dusk, when you can almost feel the ghosts brushing past you as you walk the streets and alleys. Laid out in a rough triangle with the Fortaleza de São João Baptista forming the northwestern apex and the Fortim de São José and Fortim de São António at the base, the old town is so small that there is little need to follow a prescribed route around it but, for convenience's sake, the information below is organised along a circuit that starts at the western waterfront, near Ibo Island Lodge, then runs east along Avenida República to Fortim de São António, before returning west along Avenida Maria Pia to the Fortaleza de São João Baptista. If you prefer a guided tour, these are offered free to people staying at Ibo Island Lodge, and can also be arranged for a small fee through the island's other lodges and camps.

As is the case in several other old Mozambican towns, it is hard to establish the age of many of Ibo's buildings. While the dates on tiles and a few buildings seem to place much of the town centre in the early 19th century, a few buildings are older still, and it seems unlikely that many post-date the relocation of the Niassa Company's headquarters to Porto Amélia (Pemba) in 1904. Relics of pre-Portuguese times reputedly exist, including two ancient mosques and an Arab fortress, but if so they are difficult to locate, though excavations at the Fortaleza de São João Baptista have revealed the ruins of a Swahili house that pre-dates the fort's construction. A more surprising relict of pre-Portuguese times is the wild coffee shrubs, descended from plants brought by Arab traders, which have been growing on both Ibo and Quirimba for centuries. (The coffee is available for purchase at **Coconut Art (Cownie House)** or you can buy it directly from the staff at Ibo Island Lodge, who will even roast an individual batch for you.)

A trio of striking mansions, now incorporated into Ibo Island Lodge, line the western waterfront. All three date to the late 19th century or earlier: **Villa Niassa** was originally the governor's palace but later became the headquarters of the Niassa Company, **Villa Bella Vista** served as a governor's palace sometime after that, while **Villa Paradiso** was built as the home of a rich merchant and later became an Indian restaurant.

A block east of the waterfront, Avenida República opens out to become **Praça dos Heróis Moçambicanos**, a central square surrounded by several of the island's oldest buildings. These include the former **Portuguese Bank** on the southwest side, the former **Indian Bank**, **old hospital** and **old post office** on the north, and a **former warehouse** (now housing the Quirimbas National Park headquarters and a carpentry co-operative) on the southeast side – all dating from the 19th century.

On the south side of the praça, the large, whitewashed **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário** (also sometimes known as Igreja de São João) still holds monthly services for the few dozen Christians who remain on the island. The pedigree of this church is somewhat uncertain. According to one source, it was built in 1580, a date lent some credibility by Dominican missionary records claiming some 16,000 converts in the Quirimbas by 1593. Other sources suggest a construction date of 1760, while inscriptions recording the church's wealthy benefactors place it c1800. The

architectural style recalls the 18th-century cathedrals at Inhambane and Quelimane, and it is very possible that the present church was built at around that time on the site of an older predecessor. Beside the church are about 15 children's graves.

Next to the church, the **old customs building**, constructed in 1879, retains the ornate filigree railings typical of Indian buildings of that period. After closing as a customs house, it served as the town archive for several decades, and many papers dating from the late 19th century through to World War II are reputedly still stored inside. There was talk about reopening the building as a museum, but this doesn't seem likely any time soon. Alongside the old customs building, overlooking the semi-fortified southern waterfront, the moderately proportioned and architecturally mundane **Fortim de São José** was the first Portuguese-built fort on Ibo, dating to 1760, three years before the town was granted municipal status. It was used as a slave prison following the construction of the Fortaleza de São João Baptista, and eventually fell into disuse. It was renovated, but the money seems to have run out before the job did, and today it stands slightly more than half-restored.

Following Avenida República east, you pass several interesting buildings to your right, many of them old waterfront administrative buildings and warehouses, while to the left are a few rather dilapidated old mansions. About 500m past the main praça, the undistinguished **Praça dos Trabalhadores** offers a view over the dhow harbour, and another 200m or so brings you to an excellent **silversmith cooperative**, where you can watch the artisans at work and, if you like, buy some of their products. Turn left here and after another 200m you'll reach the **Fortim de São António**, which lies at the back of the town near the market. Built in 1847, this neat little fort offers a good view over the town from the tower, and the site was reputedly chosen because it has access to a natural tunnel that runs underground for about 1.5km to emerge near the airstrip. It was fully renovated in 2011.

From here, Avenida Maria Pia runs west through the **old Indian Quarter**, site of a covered market and a small handful of shops, eateries and bars that generate the closest thing on Ibo to a feeling of commercial buzz. About 500m west of this, a short diversion north along Avenida Almirante Reis leads to the most interesting of the town's **mosques**, whose hybridised appearance is explained by the fact that it was converted from a Hindu temple in 1975. This building, like the almost disused church, serves to remind us that while much of the architecture on Ibo is Portuguese or Indian, the town today is inhabited almost entirely by indigenous Africans, 99% of whom are Muslim.

Following Avenida da Fortaleza, you will pass the home of **João Baptista**, Ibo's semi-official historian, a genial octogenarian and veritable trove of information. He's got stories for days, but you'll need a little Portuguese. **Coconut Art (Cowrie House)** is just a couple of doors further along. They've got a reasonable selection of crafts and it's a good place to try Ibo coffee, but the house, completely covered in cowrie shells, is the real attraction. Continuing about 750m northwest from here, you will emerge in front of Ibo's most interesting and best-preserved building, the restored and whitewashed **Fortaleza de São João Baptista**, a large, star-shaped fort, complete with a dozen or so cannons and ringed by a grove of tall palms. Built in 1791 to protect the island from a French invasion from the island of Réunion, this fort was used as a prison into the 1970s, which explains the broken soft-drink bottles that line the tops of the walls. During the liberation war of 1965–75, it seems that Ibo and its fort became the Mozambican equivalent to South Africa's Robben Island (where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were detained at the height of apartheid). Some deeply disturbing stories relate to this period: locals say that the ramparts are haunted by the ghosts of political prisoners who drowned or

died of disease after being locked into crowded waterlogged cells where they had no choice but to drink the same water in which all the cell's occupants were forced to defecate and urinate. Today, the fort is busier than it has been in years and an intriguing place to do some shopping – the ground floor is home to a handful of artisans' studios and community projects, including a sewing co-operative, carving workshop and a small but worthwhile **Maritime Museum**. There are also some traditional silversmiths at the entrance who will happily allow you to watch them at work without expecting you to buy anything.

OTHER ACTIVITIES As with the rest of the Quirimbas, Ibo is a useful base for marine activities, though the island itself lacks a real swimming beach on account of the high density of mangroves. Ibo Island Lodge is the island's only dive centre, with single dives starting at around US\$90 for certified divers. They can also arrange custom dive safaris to sites around the Quirimbas. Snorkelling and kayak excursions can be arranged through any of the moderate or upmarket lodges in Ibo, as can dhow trips to beaches on other islands. The fishing is also very good. In addition, Ibo Island Lodge operates fully guided and catered adventure and luxury tailor-made dhow and kayak safaris, hopping between the very best of the islands south and north of Ibo – see page 339 for contact details.

Out of town, Ibo Island also has some good walking possibilities, and bicycles can be rented through the local expert tour guide Raul (m 86 208 6046) for around US\$15 per day. It is also possible to hire Raul for a guided walking tour of Ibo town and/or the island. If you prefer to walk on your own, a short distance out of town is the cemetery, along the airport road, where you'll find graves with inscriptions in several languages. Further afield, the dilapidated Majuca Lighthouse was established in 1873 on a separate seaward islet called Majuca, which lies about 5km east of Ibo town and can be reached on foot at low tide. This walk takes up to 2 hours in either direction, leading out past the Fortaleza de São João Baptista, then following the mangrove- and palm-lined northern shore past tidal flats that often support large flocks of waders and marine birds.

The dominant cultural group on Ibo, as in the rest of the Quirimbas, is the Mwani ('People of the Sea'), whose Kimwani (or Kimuane) tongue shares about 60% of its vocabulary with KiSwahili and, like that language, shows many unambiguous Arabic influences. Mwani culture combines Islamic beliefs with a strong core of typically ebullient African traditions, and the night air is often filled with the sound of drumming associated with initiation, funereal, wedding and other ceremonies. Sometimes the drumming might signal the start of a traditional procession through the streets, but more often you will need to ask around to see traditional Mwani dances. For those interested in traditional and contemporary Mozambican arts and culture, a good time to visit is over 24–5 June, when the Festa do Ibo, known as Kueto Siriwala – 'to not forget your roots' in Kimwani – is held to coincide with Independence Day. Another big event locally is New Year's Day, when the entire village jumps into the sea in a ritual cleansing ceremony known as Tomar de Banho (literally 'Bath-taking').

OTHER ISLANDS OF THE QUIRIMBAS

Although Ibo is the most important of the Quirimbas historically, and the only one that caters to travellers of all budgets, the chain comprises another 31 islands, of which about half a dozen host idyllic upmarket resorts that cater both for sun-worshippers and for those pursuing more active marine adventures. The southernmost 11 islands in the chain, including Quipaco, Mefunvo, Quirimba,

Ibo, Quilálea, Situ and Matemo, are now protected within Quirimbas National Park, while more northerly islands such as Medjumbe, Tambuze, Metundo, Vamizi, Rongui and Tecomaji are not formally protected, though several function as something close to a private sanctuary. The market for these resorts is almost entirely fly-in, which makes the area quite difficult to explore independently or on a budget, with the exception being Matemo Island, where there is a community camp aimed at backpackers, and transport from Ibo can be arranged through Miti Miwiri (page 340), or Quirimba Island, where the Gessner family offers mid-range accommodation by arrangement. Running from south to north, the islands that are of greatest interest to visitors are as follows:

ILHA QUIPACO The most southerly of the archipelago's major islands, Quipaco lies about 40km north of Pemba as the crow flies. It has never boasted much in the way of a settlement due to the scarcity of fresh water. The shallow ocean between here and Ponta do Diabolo is known for its good game fishing and a private camp is reputedly under construction, although development seems to have halted (Kaskazini in Pemba will know as and when it opens).

ILHA QUISIVA This 3km² island was settled by the Portuguese in the late 16th century, and later became the main outpost of the Moraes family, who owned five of the Quirimba islands and dominated local trade in the early 18th century. The significant fortified Portuguese ruins on the island are said locally to date to the time of Vasco da Gama, but it seems unlikely they are quite that old, and there are also the remains of some old plantation houses. The sandy spit that protrudes westward from the main island is great for swimming. Quisiva is slated for development by Seasons in Africa ([w quisiva.com](http://www.quisiva.com)) as an ultra-exclusive beach retreat.

ILHAS QUILÁLEA AND SENCAR These two islands comprise the terrestrial portion of the Quilálea Marine Sanctuary, a pioneering private reserve that was established in 2000 as the archipelago's first protected marine area but now officially forms part of the national park. Since the sanctuary's inception, local fishing has been banned within it, leading to a great increase in marine life. Turtles nest on the beaches, dugongs are sometimes sighted, and humpback whales shelter in the channel from July to January before journeying south. More than 375 different species of fish have been identified in the sanctuary area, giving snorkellers a rare and colourful treat. The shores of Quilálea are particularly rich in seashells. You can stroll round the whole of tiny (35ha) uninhabited Quilálea in well under an hour. Since 2011 it has been home to the exclusive and recently redesigned Azura at Quilálea.

ILHA QUIRIMBA Situated immediately south of Ibo, Quirimba is one of the larger islands in the chain, and is mostly covered by coconut plantations. It was the site of the archipelago's most important trade outpost in the pre-Portuguese era, and it remains one of the more densely settled islands, with a population estimated at 4,000. Farmed by the same German family since the 1920s, they have private chalets for rent with prior arrangement.

ILHA MATEMO The second-largest island in the chain at 24km², Matemo lies to the north of Ibo just within the boundaries of the national park. It was almost certainly settled when the Portuguese first sailed into the Indian Ocean, and its population was boosted when the infamous Zimba raids of the late 16th century encouraged the mainland Muslim community associated with the making of

Maluane cloth to take refuge on the island. Today there are two large villages on the island, along with Portuguese ruins dating to the time when Matemo's plantations were major suppliers of food to Ilha de Moçambique. Characterised by sweeping sandy beaches, lush vegetation and palm groves, it was home to the upmarket Matemo Island Lodge until this closed indefinitely in 2013, leaving the community-run Dade's Place as Matemo's only official lodging.

ILHA DAS ROLAS Only 10 minutes' boat trip from Matemo in calm weather, this tiny island has no fresh water whatsoever, and the small encampment there is used only by itinerant fishermen and their families, who cross to the mainland for water when they're in residence. It has an almost bipolar feel – the southern end is a spit of sand, bereft of any form of vegetation, while the northern end has low, rough scrub. There is a fairly large intertidal area that makes for good beachcombing. It has been recolonised as a breeding site by hawksbill turtles, who are resident in the surrounding reefs. Rolas is regarded as perhaps the best snorkelling site in the Quirimbas, and it is also good for diving.

ILHA MEDJUMBE Site of the exclusive **Medjumbe Island Lodge** this tiny islet (1km by 350m) north of Matemo hosts bird species including the black heron, while the offshore waters contain marlin, sailfish, dogtooth tuna, mackerel, bonefish and various species of kingfish. The diving is spectacular.

ILHAS VAMIZI, MACALOE AND RONGUI Outside the Quirimbas National Park, the Maluane Project was initiated in 1998 to protect an ecologically diverse area of coast that comprises this trio of islands, the surrounding coastal waters, and a 330km² wildlife reserve on the facing mainland. The project is supported by the Zoological Society of London and the Mozambican government, and has strong environmental and community links. The objective is to conserve and develop a stretch of coast whose marine wildlife includes turtles, humpback whales, whale sharks, dugongs, dolphins, manta rays and giant clams. It is of particular significance for its pristine reefs, which comprise 30 different genera of coral and support 350 species of reef fish.


The mainland section of the reserve is essentially an extension of the terrestrial sector of the Quirimbas National Park, and it supports a similar selection of species, including elephant, lion, buffalo, hippo, leopard, African wild dog, various antelope and monkey species, and a huge variety of birds. The long-term goal is that the reserve will be sustained by tourist revenue, part of which will be dedicated to associated communities, and to which end the exclusive lodge at Vamizi has been constructed. It is likely that lodges will eventually be built on the other two islands, as well as on the mainland part of the reserve.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By air As with Ibo, the easiest way to visit those islands that have tourist facilities is by air. **CR Aviation** operates a daily service connecting all the islands' airstrips to each other and to Pemba, though times and schedules are very flexible depending on the bookings for that day. See page 232 for contact details.

By boat For charter boats between the islands, speak to Miti Miwiri in Ibo, which regularly takes travellers to Dade's Place on Matemo and could presumably head out to islands further afield if you are prepared to pay for it. The Gessner family on Quirimba also runs a supply boat from Ibo and Pemba that accepts passengers (page 348).

Bydhow Quirimba Island can be reached with relative ease by dhow, since regular boats run there from Quissanga (again, see the *Ibo* section for details of getting there). As with everything in the archipelago, the boat's timetable will be dictated by the tides and winds, but the crossing usually takes up to 2 hours and it will cost around US\$2 per person. There may also be boats travelling between Ibo and Quirimba, but you'll have to ask around on Ibo to find out. Somewhat incredibly, it's also possible to walk from Ibo to Quirimba. If you're mad enough to try this then you need to do it at low spring tides, you *must* take a guide, and you should be prepared for a 3–4-hour walk that starts in the mangroves and ends in a wade across the small channel that separates the bottom of Ibo and the top of Quirimba. Miti Miwiri is the place to go for full details.

 **WHERE TO STAY** As with the island descriptions on pages 343–5, the listings below follow the chain of islands from south to north. It is worth noting that the status of several island lodges is unclear at the time of writing: Matemo Island Resort is closed indefinitely, the lodges on Quipaco and Quisiva are both under development, and there is also talk of new lodges opening on Macaloe and Rongui as part of the Maluane Project. If you want to keep tabs on developments, visit our update website ([w bratudupdates.com/mozambique](http://w.bratudupdates.com/mozambique)) or get in touch with Kaskazini ([w kaskazini.com](http://w.kaskazini.com)).

The choice of budget accommodation other than on Ibo is extremely limited. The only formal possibility is Dade's Place (page 348), but travellers could quite easily find a place to stay in a local house on any of the inhabited islands, especially were they to carry a tent as a fall-back.

Exclusive/luxury

 **Quisiva Island Sanctuary** (14 units)
Ilha Quisiva; ☎ +27 31 764 0600 (South Africa);
e info@seasonsinafrica.com; w quisiva.com.
Under development at the time of writing, this new luxury lodge with accommodation in 14 large villas set above a low coral cliff overlooking the sea will offer the full range of marine activities. Rates are likely to be at the very top end of the scale.

\$\$\$\$\$

 **Azura at Quilálea** (9 units) ☎ +27 11 467 0907 (South Africa); e reservations@azura-retreats.com; w azura-retreats.com/quilalea.
Reopened in Nov 2011 as part of Azura Retreats, this fully redesigned lodge on Ilha Quilálea has been highly rated by both tour operators & guests, who called it 'a jewel in Africa' & 'an instant classic'. The house reef is just a few flipper-strokes from the beach & activities inc big-game fishing, PADI dive courses, kayaking, birding, stargazing & excursions to other islands. The beachfront villas have all the expected luxuries, & guests can enjoy the cliffside swimming pool, fully stocked wine cellar & world-class spa treatments as well. Access is via helicopter from Pemba. From US\$750–1,050 pp sharing depending on villa, inc all meals, house wines & non-motorised activities. **\$\$\$\$\$**

 **Medjumbe Private Island** (13 units)
Ilha Medjumbe; ☎ +27 10 003 8979 (South Africa) or 213 01618; e medjumbe@anatar.com; w medjumbe.anatar.com. Lying on a stretch of sand almost chimeric in its beauty, Ilha Medjumbe is hardly 1km long & 500m wide, tapering into an impossibly fine spit of sand at its western edge. There's an oceanside swimming pool, lounge & wandering opportunities aplenty around the island, while the spa treatments are world-class. Medjumbe is rightfully popular with honeymooners, as accommodation consists of a widely spaced row of beachfront chalets, each with a private jacuzzi/plunge pool set in an open-air deck, as well as a private outdoor shower. The seafood-dominated meals are superb & a full range of marine activities is offered, with plentiful sites for diving & snorkelling. US\$595/1,190 sgl/dbl, inc all meals, house wines & non-motorised activities. Rates slightly higher in peak season. **\$\$\$\$\$**

 **&Beyond Vamizi Island Lodge** (10 rooms) Ilha Vamizi; ☎ +27 11 809 4300 (South Africa); e contactus@andbeyond.com; w andbeyond.com/vamizi-island. This ultra-exclusive lodge, the only one currently operating in the community-based sanctuary

Maluane Project, now owned & managed by &Beyond, has more of a bush aesthetic. The spacious chalets, strung out along a wide sandy beach, have a floor plan of 170m², king-size 4-poster beds with walk-in nets & paddle fans, a safe, complimentary minibar, & stylish marble bathrooms built with local materials. The beach here is one of the most important turtle-breeding sites in Mozambique, & the island is also home

to an endemic dwarf python & the bizarre giant coconut crab. Snorkelling & diving on the pristine offshore reefs are spectacular, & other activities inc fishing, kayaking, dhow trips & forest walks. The food has been praised as among the best anywhere in Mozambique. *Rates vary throughout the year from US\$1,970 to US\$2,840 per dbl occupancy villa, all-inclusive.* **\$\$\$\$\$**

GIANT COCONUT CRAB

Looking for all the world like a refugee from an improbable science fiction B-movie, the giant coconut crab is the world's largest terrestrial crustacean, attaining a mass of 5kg, a length of up to 50cm and a leg span of 1m. The foremost of its five leg-pairs terminates in deadly pincers capable of scything straight through a wooden broomstick, or of lifting an object six times its body weight. Pairs two to four, meanwhile, are tipped by smaller pincers that enable the crab to clasp tightly on to the trunks of the vertical palm trees it habitually ascends.

The first recorded description of this massive decapod was penned by the 17th-century Dutch naturalist Georgius Rumphius, who noted that it was 'always on land, without ever getting into the water' and that 'it climbs Coconut Trees, and pinches off the nuts, and then searches under the tree for the ones that were thrown down'. More than a century later, the 'monstrous' terrestrial crab and 'wonderful strength' of its pincers so captured the imagination of Charles Darwin that he devoted a full page of his landmark *Voyage of the Beagle* to describing how an associate 'confined one in a strong tin box... the lid being secured with wire; but the crab turned down the edges and escaped [and] actually punched many small holes through the tin!'

Darwin was the first to document the crab's ability to break open a coconut using its mighty pincers: 'The crab begins by tearing the husk, fibre by fibre, always from that end under which the three eye-holes are situated; when this is completed, the crab commences hammering with its heavy claws on one of the eye-holes till an opening is made. Then turning round its body, by the aid of its posterior and narrow pair of pincers it extracts the white albuminous substance.'

Unusually for a crustacean, the coconut crab only reaches sexual maturity at the venerable age of five years, and some individuals live to be at least 30. The young are amphibious but the adult is a confirmed landlubber that would drown were it to be submerged for any time. Several idiosyncrasies are associated with this terrestrial lifestyle. It has an acute sense of smell thanks to a 'nose' that most closely resembles those of terrestrial insects, a textbook example of convergent evolution.

Its remarkable capacity to climb smooth palm trunks to a height of 6m is encapsulated by Dr Karen Burns' evocative recollection of a 'big adult coconut crab dining on a dead rat that he had hauled high up onto a tree limb leopard-style'. Then there is its magpie-like propensity for wandering back to its daytime lair with a booty of shiny household objects, as alluded to in its German name *palmendieb* (palm thief) as well as in the Latin binomial *Birgus latro* (robber crab).

Mid range


 **Situ Island Lodge** (8 rooms) Situ Island; ☎ +27 43 704 4900 (South Africa); e bookings@situ island.com; w situ island.com. Opened in

2011, this lodge aims to offer guests a peaceful island experience with a 'Robinson Crusoe' feel. Accommodation is in reed & thatch en-suite chalets with king-size or ¾ bed with net. Activities inc fishing, scuba diving, kayaking, hiking, birding & boating. Most guests arrive by boat transfer from Pemba. *US\$400 dbl, FB. \$\$\$\$*

 **Quirimba Lodge** m 86 144 3964; e quirimba.island@gmail.com. Owned by the Gessner family (Rainer), the stand-alone chalets here have a lovely site amid the coconut palms – peaceful & shaded with a stunning view of the sunrises over the Indian Ocean. Lodges on Ibo can

arrange transfers here, or you can co-ordinate with Rainer to hop on board the supply boat (page 336). It's likely you'll be the only visitors. *US\$50 dbl. \$\$*


Budget and camping


 **Dade's Place** (4 units) Matemo Island; m 82 662 1704, 86 276 9426 or 87 250 0870, or contact through Miti Miwiri on Ibo. Set in the village of Palusansa (aka First Village), this community-run lodge comes highly recommended, offering accommodation in basic A-frames, camping & simple meals. You can also hire a bicycle or moto to explore the island with. Miti Miwiri can arrange transfers. *Rooms US\$20 dbl B&B. \$*

THE QUIRIMBAS MAINLAND

The mainland sector of the Quirimbas National Park, though often neglected in tourist literature, is a truly vast entity, protecting some 5,984km² of predominantly miombo woodland stretching 150km inland from the Indian Ocean to the east bank of the Messala River. Our ecological knowledge of the park is still limited, but it is known to support significant numbers of lion, leopard, spotted hyena, buffalo, plains zebra, sable antelope, eland, greater kudu, waterbuck, bushbuck, reedbuck, red duiker, suni, bushpig, warthog, samango monkey, vervet monkey and yellow baboon. The elephant population, estimated at 2,000, is thought to be partially migratory, with some seasonal movement to the more westerly Niassa Reserve, but a WWF study of eight collared individuals undertaken in 2009 was unable to establish this for certain. The park is also home to a substantial population of the endangered African wild dog, with a minimum of six packs and 60 individuals thought to be present, though once again it is unclear whether this should be considered as an eastern extension of the Niassa-Selous population.

An estimated 90,000 people live within the park, mostly along the road corridors and coastline, and another 30,000 inhabit the 10km-wide buffer zone that surrounds it. Although there is some conflict between the Quirimbas's human and animal inhabitants (elephants in particular often raid local subsistence farms), the park was established largely at the request of these local communities. And while tourist development of the park's mainland is still in its infancy, the few options that exist are all to some extent community-driven, a trend that will almost certainly continue as further lodges and camps are added.

 **WHERE TO STAY** *Map, page 332, unless otherwise stated*

 **Guludo Beach Camp** (9 units) ☎ 269 60536; m 87 595 0590; e enquiries@guludo.com; w guludo.com. Founded on 'fair trade tourism' principles & operated in conjunction with a UK-registered charity, this small honeymoon-friendly lodge overlooks what was voted the world's 14th-best deserted beach by UK newspaper the *Observer*

& the 13th-best location in the world by *Sábado* magazine in Lisbon – a long unspoilt stretch of white sand fringed with palm trees. Accommodation is in spacious beachfront tented or adobe bandas with macuti roofs & a barefoot luxury ambience. The restaurant serves food bought daily from local fishermen, & activities inc diving, snorkelling, village

visits, seasonal whale watching, sunset cruises & visits to Ibo. An important & impressive aspect of the lodge is its support of local community projects, & it is also actively involved in marine research. The lodge is situated at the northern end of the park more or less opposite Matemo Island & about 15km south of Mucojo. Most people fly here from Pemba (landing at Matemo's airstrip for a boat transfer) but the road here is in good condition & a land transfer from Pemba is a lot cheaper than flying. *US\$370–750 dbl depending on season & type of room, inc meals & most non-motorised activities. \$\$\$\$*

🏠 Mareja Lodge (5 rooms) 📞 272 20684; 📞 84 808 9522 or 87 569 2298; e mareja@live.co.uk or sofa.scott@outlook.com; w mareja.com. This lodge is set on the eponymous community-based Mareja Reserve, which protects a varied habitat of riverine, palm & upland forests, as well as coastal savannah & inselbergs, set within the mainland portion of Quirimbas National Park. Elephant, kudu, bushbuck, sable antelope, lion & leopard are resident, & African wild dog pass through from time to time. The project aims to train locals as rangers & has had success in limiting illegal hunting & logging in the area, thus providing a safe zone for local wildlife to thrive. Accommodation is in a restored colonial farmhouse abandoned after independence & sleeps up to 10, & camping is permitted. Meals can be provided if ordered in advance, while activities inc guided walks, game drives, birdwatching & community dances. The drive from Pemba to Mareja Lodge takes up to 3hrs, using 1 of 2 routes. The shorter (70km) coastal route along the Quissanga road via Metugé requires a 4x4

throughout & can be impassable during the rainy season. The longer route through the interior entails following the surfaced EN243 (N380) towards Mocimboa da Praia as far as Nanduli (about 100km from Pemba), then turning right on to a dirt road & following it for another 40km to the lodge. Transfers can be arranged through Kaskazini in Pemba.

US\$20 pp bed, US\$10 pp camping. \$

🏠 Taratibu Bush Camp [not mapped] (3 units) Contact Koos von Lansberg 📞 86 388 9959/509 3227 or 82 663 3570 for details. The only other place to stay in the mainland part of Quirimbas National Park, this fantastically remote camp comprises 3 self-catering chalets alongside a river & below a trio of dramatic inselbergs, 1 of which has an impressive baobab forest on its crown. Unfortunately, the chalets are currently in a state of disrepair & the camp is catering only to researchers, as severe poaching has drastically affected the elephant population. It is likely the camp will see a facelift during the lifespan of this edition, so don't completely count it out if you're not affiliated with a university. When the camp is back in full swing, guided walks are the main activity, with elephant & greater kudu common in the dry season, & the surrounding woodland & rivers host an immense variety of birds. Access is by 4x4 only & bookings are essential. It lies about 3hrs' drive from Pemba, following the EN242 (N14) west to within about 30km of Montepuez, then heading north along a dirt track (full directions can be obtained upon booking), so could be visited *en route* to the Niassa Reserve (page 366), though a stopover of at least 2 nights is recommended.

NUARRO LODGE

Set on Membra Bay about 100km south of Pemba and 50km north of Nacala, this isolated upmarket lodge is not actually situated within the Quirimbas, but it is similarly geared towards honeymooners, divers & marine enthusiasts seeking an exclusive beachfront retreat. Accommodation is in 12 vast beachfront chalets with king-size bed, walk-in nets, indoor and outdoor showers, a lounge area, and a large wooden veranda and sun deck. The lodge has a private dive centre that also offers snorkelling, sea kayaking, dhow trips to Ilha de Moçambique and Lúrio Falls, walking and cycling eco-trails, birdwatching and cultural village tours. Rates are US\$525/700 single/double inclusive of meals and non-motorised activities (\$\$\$\$\$).

For further details, contact 📞 +27 21 813 6594 (South Africa); 📞 82 305 3027/8; e reservations@nuarro.com; w nuarro.com.

PANGANE

Situated about 50km east of the EN243 (N380), this remote Mwani fishing village – sans electricity, internet and, until recently, mobile-phone reception – boasts an extremely pleasant white beach, set on a spit of land that points out towards Ilha Macaloe, and a long-standing reputation as a good place to get away from it all. It lies less than 10km north of the Quirimbas National Park boundary, and the area still supports significant (but elusive) populations of large mammals such as buffalo, elephant and lion. But the focus of attention here is the beach, which offers a range of seaside activities – it's easy to hire a boat to explore the surrounding reefs or to any of the Quirimba islands – and offers stunning sunsets over the fishing boats moored off the sprawling village. Pangane is one of the few places in this part of the country that caters to backpackers, and it is relatively accessible on public transport, particularly for people who are already heading north from Pemba towards the Tanzanian border.


GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By car Coming from Pemba, you first need to follow the surfaced EN106/243 (EN1/N380) towards Mueda as far as Macomia. Here, you must turn right on to the EN528 (R766), the first 40km of which, as far as Mucojo, is hard dirt, variable in quality but overall quite easy to drive. The shorter 12km section between Mucojo and Pangane is more challenging, veering from rutted dirt road to sand track, and trying to do it in anything other than a 4x4 is foolish.

By chapa A few chapas run along the EN528 (R766), leaving from the same junction as buses north and south; some only go as far as Mucojo, while others continue to Pangane. The cost is the same, around US\$5, and the journey time to Mucojo is around 4 hours. Pangane itself is another hour or so's drive. While you could walk it, it entails around 10km over rough road that turns into a sand track around halfway.

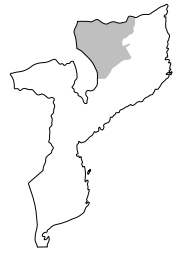


WHERE TO STAY

 **Casa Suki** In the centre of the village, with small but pleasant enough rooms, though they can get very hot during the summer nights. *Rooms US\$10.* \$

UPDATES WEBSITE

You can post your comments and recommendations, and read the latest feedback and updates from other readers online at [w bradtupdates.com/mozambique](http://w.bradtupdates.com/mozambique).



Niassa Province

Niassa is Mozambique's driest, most remote, poorest and least densely populated province. It's also one of the most beautiful, with scenery ranging from the mountains of the Rift Valley to the shores of Lago Niassa (Lake Malawi). Samora Machel used to treat the province as a dumping ground for people who weren't entirely behind Frelimo after independence, and it is still known as 'Ponte Final' among officials, for whom a posting here is regarded as a career dead end. This partly explains why Niassa was the birthplace of Renamo (albeit with Rhodesian midwifery) and why the opposition party still enjoys strong support here.

Niassa has the smallest population (1,722,100) in the largest area (129,056km²) of any Mozambican province, and the villages tend to be based along the roads and around the lake. Most travellers only see a small part of the province, skirting through Cuamba *en route* between Nampula and Malawi, but its real highlights lie further north. The shores of Lago Niassa provide a peaceful counterpoint to the busier Malawian side of the same lake, and the provincial capital Lichinga is a breezy montane town where you might finally find a use for the sweater that your mum made you bring along 'just in case it gets cold at night'. For wildlife enthusiasts, there is also the vast and remote Niassa Reserve, which extends over 42,000km² along the border with Tanzania.

CUAMBA

The most important route focus in northwest Mozambique, Cuamba was historically the western terminus of the railway line (and road) to Nampula (for Pemba and Ilha de Moçambique), the main roads north to Lichinga and Lago Niassa, a quieter route southeast via Gurué to Quelimane, and several crossing points west into Malawi. As of late 2016, the completion of the restoration of the Cuamba–Lichinga railway means that the seaport of Nacala is once again connected to Entre Lagos on the Malawi border, creating an important trade and passenger corridor for the movement of reasonably priced goods throughout Niassa. Formerly called Nova Freixo ('New Ash'), it has a population of around 108,000, making it one of the largest towns in the Mozambican interior. Set along the Muanda River at an altitude of 575m below a horseshoe of attractive mountains, it is not the most inspiring of places, being relatively dry, dusty and chilly, and rather quiet despite its status as a university town (the Catholic University's Department of Agriculture is based here).

Situated about 10km northeast of the town centre, Serra Mitucué rises to 1,803m above the surrounding plains and is the source of several streams, including a tributary of the Muanda that has been dammed at Chefe Namacôma to form a kilometre-long serpentine lake that provides hydro-electric power to the town. The dam is quite high up on the eastern side of the massif, and the hike from the base takes 2 hours. Guides and directions can be obtained from the Hotel Castel or Pensão São Miguel.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By car Roads to and from Cuamba are mostly unsurfaced and in quite poor condition, though this is rapidly changing with the resurfacing of 200km of the staggeringly beautiful 350km EN8 to Nampula, and the scheduled resurfacing of the 300km route to Lichinga. At Mutuali, about 65km east of Cuamba, a 100km unsurfaced road runs south to Gurué. Northwest of Cuamba, a 140km stretch of the EN8 runs to the Malawian border town of Mandimba, from where the **EN249** runs for about 145km north to the provincial capital Lichinga. Though it was unsurfaced at the time of writing, this road is in pretty good nick and can be covered in about 5 hours in a private vehicle.

By chapa and train Most **chapas** leave from around the railway station at the southern end of town. Chapas to Mandimba cost US\$8 and take about 3 hours, while chapas to Lichinga cost US\$12 and take about 6 hours. Direct pick-ups to Gurué leave at 05.00 and cost US\$6, but it is also possible to take the **train** as far as Mutuali and catch road transport from there. There is a daily **Maning Nice** bus from Nampula to Cuamba for US\$8 along with local, daily chapas in both directions. Coming from Nampula by train, you can be sure there will be chapas to the border towns of Mandimba and Entrélagos waiting for your arrival.

For details of the passenger train, operated by Corredor de Desenvolvimento do Norte or CDN, between Cuamba and Nampula, see page 280. The train from Cuamba to Lichinga takes 6–8 hours and costs around US\$3, departing on Saturday at 06.00. The return train, from Lichinga to Cuamba, departs on Sunday, also leaving at 06.00. For updates on the train schedule visit w.cdn.co.mz/en/passengers-transport or call the Nampula office (☎ 213 44800) for the latest on train transport in the north.



WHERE TO STAY *Map, opposite*

Mid range

Hotel Castel (20 rooms) Av 3 de Fevereiro; **m** 86 128 4706; [e hotelcastel@yahoo.com](mailto:hotelcastel@yahoo.com).

The closest thing to an international hotel in Cuamba, this long-serving, recently renovated central institution has clean, comfortable en-suite rooms with AC, hot water & TV. The terrace bar & restaurant (closed when we popped in, but planning to reopen) serves a predictable selection of chicken, fish & curry dishes. Wi-Fi available.

US\$56 dbl B&B. \$\$\$

Pensão São Miguel Av 3 de Fevereiro; **m** 86 128 4706/353 5345. A couple of doors down from Hotel Castel, the São Miguel has quiet but slightly frayed rooms, some with en-suite bathroom, TV & fridge. It also has secure parking & an adequate restaurant. Overpriced. *US\$36 en-suite dbl. \$\$*

Quinto Timbwa (25 rooms) 2km out of town off the Mandimba Rd; **m** 82 305 4938 or 86 605 5932. This unexpected gem, set in a patch of indigenous bush overlooking a small artificial lake, is the best

place to stay for those with private transport & a possibility for those without, as it is only a 25min walk from the railway/chapa station, & well signposted. Accommodation ranges from small twin rooms with fan & shared bathroom to cottages with sitting room, TV, AC, fridge & en-suite bathroom with hot shower & tub. The restaurant, reached via a wooden bridge over the lake, serves very acceptable meals for around US\$5–8, & an unusually hearty b/fast is included in all room rates. *US\$24–50 en-suite dbl. \$\$*

Budget

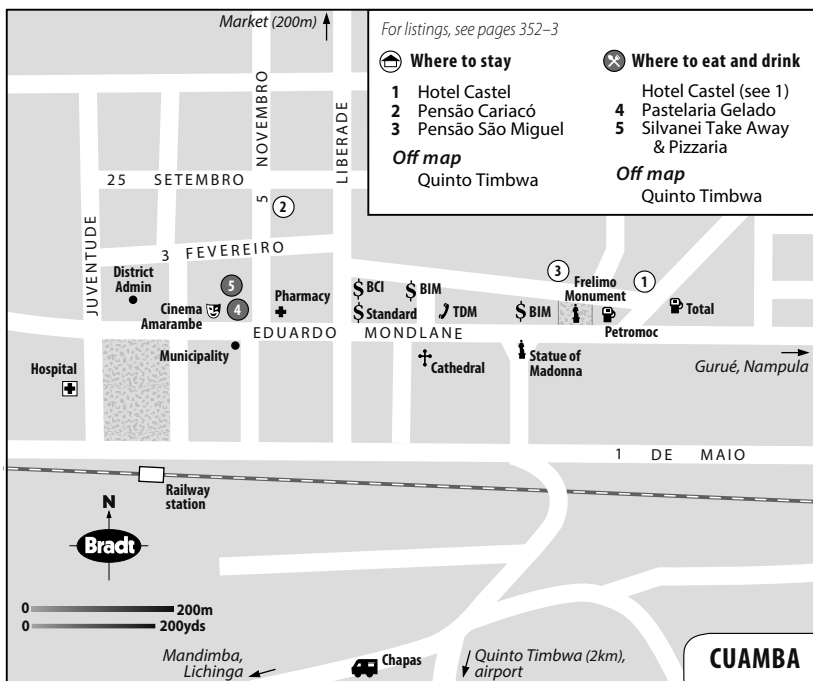
Pensão Cariacó (22 rooms) Av 5 Novembro; ☎ 271 62595/685; **m** 86 135 1365/725 7807.

An acceptable budget hotel set around a green courtyard about 5mins' walk from the railway station. The rooms are nothing to shout about but seem good value (at least unless you have just crossed from Malawi) & the pricier rooms come with private bathrooms &/or TV. Secure parking. *US\$10/14 sgl/dbl; US\$15–40 en-suite dbl. \$\$*



WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK *Map, opposite*

There isn't a huge range of places aside from the hotels, of which the **Hotel Castel** (☎ 06.00–22.00 daily, but temporarily closed) and the superior but less central



Quinto Timbwa stand out. Alternatively the **Silvanei Take Away & Pizzeria** (☎ 06.00–late daily) is a local favourite among Peace Corps volunteers. Next door to the cinema, the **Pastelaria Gelado** serves a good range of pastries, drinks and sandwiches, and has a small supermarket. You'll also find snack kiosks in the parks and the Total gas station has a small café with a limited menu. The market is very small and has a limited range of fresh fruit and vegetables.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Banks and ATMs BIM Millennium has two branches, while BCI and Standard Bank each have one.

Hospital To the left-hand side of the square, in front of the railway station, and there's a pharmacy on Avenue Eduardo Mondlane.

Internet TDM used to have one PC with an internet connection in the same building as the post office, but it appeared to be closed on last inspection.

Post office In the centre of town, just over from the statue of the Madonna.

Security The disused airstrip south of the town centre is an army barracks, and best avoided or you risk a protracted run-in with the police.

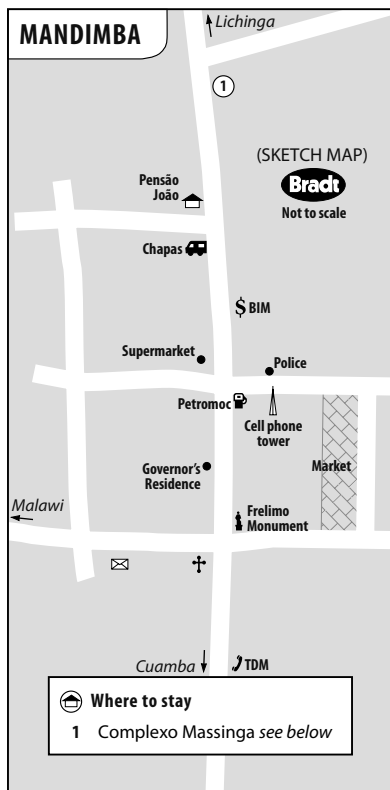
MANDIMBA AND MASSANGULO

Situated at the west of the EN8 about 140km from Cuamba, Mandimba is the most popular and probably the best road crossing between northern Mozambique and


Malawi. There's not much to the town itself; just a block or two of slightly run-down buildings and the usual set of official buildings associated with a border town. If you are heading to or from Malawi, the Mozambican border post is 4km from Mandimba itself, and there's no shortage of motos and bicycle taxis to shuttle you across. The fee for the full 6km between Mandimba and the Malawian border at Chiponde is highly negotiable, but expect to pay US\$1–3. Alternatively you can walk, or just hang around at the junction in town and try to hitch.

On the Malawian side of the border, a hugely attractive 35km road winds downhill to Mangochi, a substantial town with plenty of accommodation set on the west bank of the Shire River, and there is plenty of transport from there on to the evergreen resorts of Monkey Bay and Cape Maclear in Lake Malawi National Park.

Roughly 65km north of Mandimba, Massangulo is a characterful small town about 2km east of the main Cuamba–Lichinga road. It is situated at the base of a pretty mountain, and centred on the oldest Catholic mission in the region, whose extraordinary church was evidently built without cement. Massangulo could be an attractive place to spend a couple of nights, particularly if you like walking, though there is no formal accommodation as far as we can ascertain. Most vehicles heading between Cuamba and Lichinga don't divert to Massangulo, but you can ask to be dropped at the signposted turn-off and walk from there.



WHERE TO STAY, EAT AND DRINK *Map, above*

 **Complexo Massinga** (11 rooms)
 m 82 300 0778. The largest & nicest of a few adequate lodgings in Mandimba, a block or 2 north of the border junction along the road to Lichinga. Accommodation is a series of clean,

well-appointed rondavels. There's also a restaurant serving meals for around US\$7–9, an open-air disco & secure parking. US\$24 en-suite dbl; US\$30 with TV & AC. \$

LICHINGA

Founded in 1931 with the name of Vila Cabral, Lichinga is the capital of Niassa Province, the main domestic gateway to the Mozambican shore of Lago Niassa, and the country's eighth-largest city, with a rapidly growing population currently estimated at 224,000. It is the main population centre for the Yao people, who also live in bordering parts of Malawi, and whose long Muslim tradition dates back to their involvement in the 19th-century slave trade.

Set on a plateau that forms part of the eastern Rift Valley escarpment above Lago Niassa, Lichinga lies at an altitude of around 1,350m and has a refreshingly breezy climate. The well-watered and fertile soils around town support the unusual combination of exotic pine plantations and more characteristic tropical vegetation such as mango trees and leafy plantains.

Lichinga has a markedly different atmosphere from any other large town in Mozambique and, without being in any way spectacular, has a relaxed, temperate mood that might end up enticing you to stay slightly longer than you had planned.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By air There is an **airport** about 7km north of the city centre, off the road to Metangula, and **LAM** (Av *FPLM*; ✈ 271 20434) flies here from Nampula, Beira, Quelimane, Tete and Maputo several times a week.

By road The main routes in and out of Lichinga are the 145km intermittently surfaced and pot-holed **EN249** south to Mandimba, the adequately surfaced 110km **EN249** north to the lakeshore port of Metangula, and the magnificently nippy **EN242**, which is surfaced for 310km east to Marrupa. There are plenty of **chapas** in both directions along the **EN249**, leaving from the station next to the market, and it's not uncommon for **lorries** looking for passengers to swing by there as well. Chapas to Metangula or Mandimba cost around US\$4 each, but getting to Marrupa will cost you about US\$12. Several buses make the trek from Lichinga to Pemba for around US\$25. For northbound travellers with a taste for roughing it, there's supposed to be a daily truck that heads to the Unity II Bridge over the Rovuma at Matchedje (also known as Segundo Congresso). Recent travellers report Tanzanian visas are now being issued here as well. There's another chapa station south of town, **Chiuaula**, which has buses to Cuamba, Marrupa and Pemba.

By train Train service has recently begun once again from Cuamba (page 352); the station is about 3km south of the town centre.

WHERE TO STAY *Map, page 356* **Upmarket**

Montebelo Lichinga Hotel (72 rooms)

Av Filipe Samuel Magaia; ✈ 271 21280; **m** 82 300 3676; **e** girassollichingahotel@visabeira.co.mz; **w** montebelohotels.com. This 4-star hotel in the centre of the city caters mainly to business travellers, but is also the most comfortable option for tourists. The tiled en-suite rooms are very spacious if perhaps a little under-furnished, but they all come with DSTV, combination hot tub/shower & Wi-Fi. There is a good ground-floor restaurant. *US\$97/109 sgl/dbl; from US\$141 suites; all rates B&B. \$\$\$*

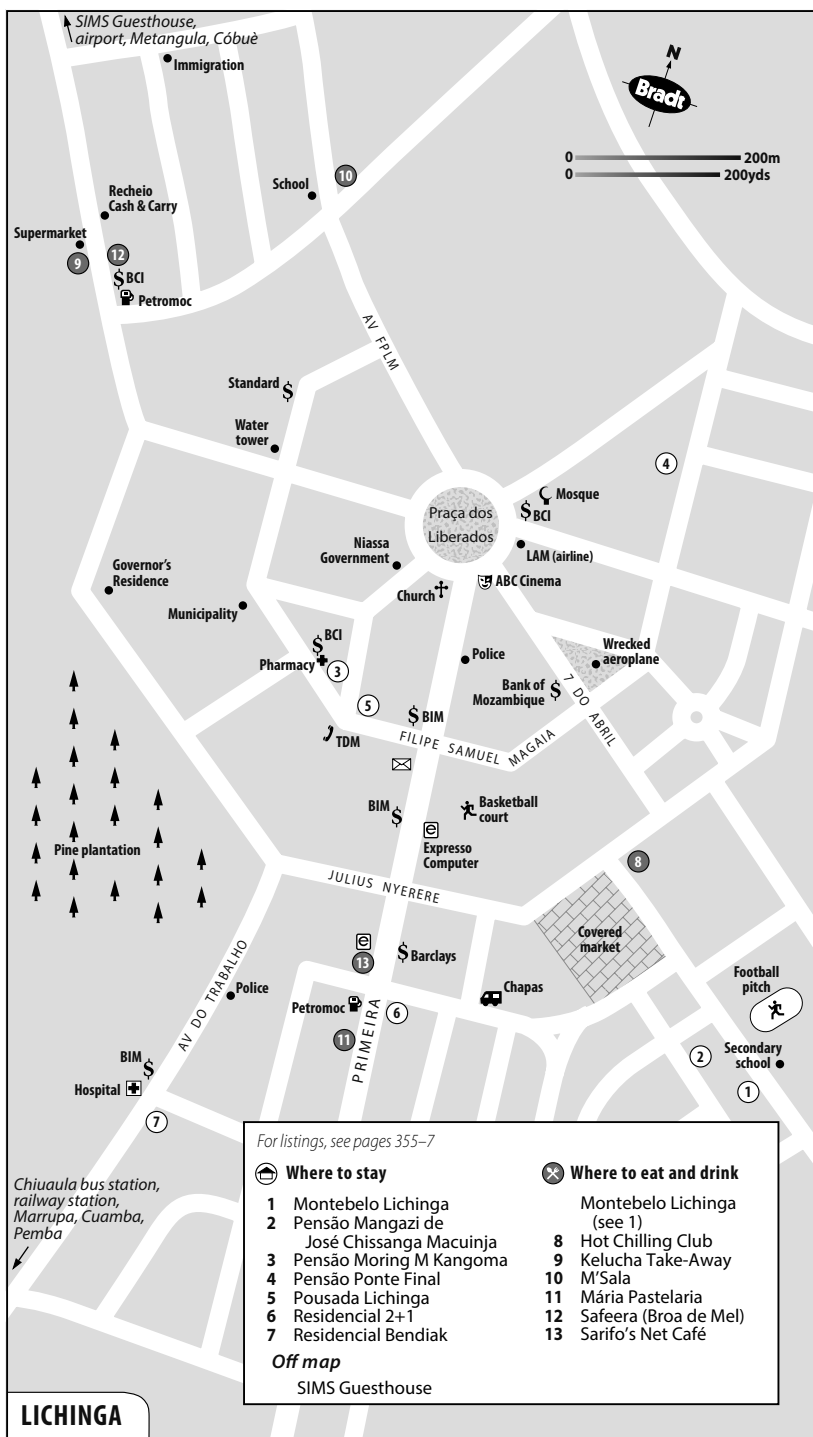
Mid range

 **Pousada Lichinga** (12 rooms) Av Filipe Samuel Magaia; **m** 87 817 0522. Clean & simple rooms with fan & TV in a central location. There's an on-site bar, lounge & restaurant with the local

fare for US\$4–10. *US\$40/60 twin using shared facilities/en-suite dbl. \$\$*

 **Residencial 2+1** (25 rooms) Av Primeira; ✈ 271 21632; **m** 82 713 1210; **e** residencial.rest.catering.2.1@gmail.com. Recognisable from afar thanks to the bright orange exterior, this pleasant & popular hotel has clean en-suite rooms with TV, fan, AC & hot shower. There's a restaurant as well serving mains for US\$12–18. *US\$36/40 sgl/dbl. \$\$*

 **Residencial Bendiak** (13 rooms) Av do Trabalho; ✈ 271 20797; **m** 82 706 4790/857 6540; **e** residencialbendiak@hotmail.com. Set in an orderly green compound directly opposite the hospital, the tiled rooms here are all en suite with TV, fridge, kettle, nets & fan, & some with AC. Executive rooms have kitchen facilities. There's secure parking & a prim little garden with outdoor seating as well. Excellent value. *US\$36/40 dbl/exec; all rooms B&B. \$\$*



🏠 SIMS Guesthouse (10 rooms) Av Julius Nyerere; **m** 86 870 0869; **e** tim.george@sim.org. Operated by American Christian missionaries working for SIM (*ww sim.org*), this guesthouse is primarily set up for local missionaries, who are given priority when booking. Non-missionary guests are welcome to claim a bed in the communal house with bed nets, hot water, kitchen & Wi-Fi. No smoking or alcohol. Excellent value. *US\$20pp.* \$

Budget

🏠 Pensão Mangazi de José Chissanga Macuinja (16 rooms) **m** 82 707 9480 or 84 271 5632. Magnificently named & tucked away on a street off the market, this place is only a 1min walk from the chapas, & pretty good value, the

higher-priced rooms having firm beds & en-suite bathrooms. *US\$12 sgl using shared ablutions; US\$20 en-suite sgl.* \$

🏠 Pensão Ponte Final (14 rooms) Av Filipe Samuel Magaia; **t** 271 20912; **m** 82 304 3632/567 6689. This comfortable lodge on the verge of the city centre has clean en-suite motel-style rooms with TV, hot water & fridge. Facilities inc restaurant & secure parking. *US\$26/40 sgl/dbl inc cursory b/fast.* \$\$

Shoestring

🏠 Pensão Moring M Kangoma (25 rooms) **m** 82 551 2659. Also just around the corner from the chapa station, this rabbit warren of a place is as basic as it gets, but the dingy cell-like rooms seem clean & have nets. *US\$6/8 sgl/dbl.* \$

✂️ WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK *Map, opposite*

✂️ Kelucha Take-Away Av Julius Nyerere; **m** 86 654 5744; ☎ 08.00–22.00 daily. Looking every bit the hole in the wall, this Lichinga stalwart has a rotating daily menu of the usual chicken, fish & curry dishes, with some welcome additions such as chouriço & South African boerewors sausage. It's all done with a touch of class, & the laid-back bar stays open late. *Mains US\$3–5.* \$

✂️ Mária Pastelara Av Primeira; **m** 84 819 1366; ☎ 07.00–21.00 daily. A favourite among local Peace Corps volunteers, this café offers a range of snacks & meals, inc sandwiches & pizza alongside baked goods & espresso. *US\$2–8.* \$\$

✂️ Montebelo Lichinga (page 355) ☎ 07.00–19.00 daily. This hotel restaurant is the smartest in town, & arguably the best. The food is a bit overpriced, but servings are generous & few other central options stay open in the evening. *Mains US\$10–16.* \$\$\$\$

✂️ M'Sala Av FPLM; **m** 86 689 5295 or 84 487 4712; ☎ 10.00–22.00 Tue–Sun. In an unmissable yellow building just northwest of the central plaza, this casual eatery serves up Portuguese & Mozambican favourites with something of an Italian twist. There's a full bar, espresso, a choice of wine, & big family-style picnic tables to eat at. *Mains US\$8–14.* \$\$\$\$

✂️ Safeera Restaurant (Broa de Mel)

Av Julius Nyerere; ☎ 07.00–21.00 daily; **m** 86 777 8677. Prior to new management, this place normally boasts a lengthy menu, inc pizzas, pastries, sandwiches & shawarma. It is rumoured the owner will head back to town, in which event the full menu will return. If not, expect a limited menu with pizza, sandwiches & coffee. A new restaurant may open during the lifespan of this edition a bit more central in town, next to the ABC Cinema. *Pastries & sandwiches go for about US\$3, while pizzas & mains start at US\$5.* \$

✂️ Sarifo's Net Café Av Primeira; ☎ 06.30–21.30 daily; **m** 82 739 8408. Situated diagonally opposite the Residencial 2+1, this place could reasonably bill itself as the 3-in-1: internet café, bakery serving fresh pastries & sandwiches, and restaurant serving a standard range of Mozambican fish, meat & chicken dishes. It's a friendly set-up, but the buffet starts to look a bit tired by the afternoon. *US\$5–9.* \$\$

🍷 Hot Chilling Club Av Julius Nyerere; **m** 82 598 5513. One of a cluster of bars in the Feira Popular next to the market, this distinguishes itself from the pack by having satellite TV & pool tables.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Banks and ATMs All the main banks are represented in Lichinga, including Barclays, Standard, BIM Millennium and BCI, and most branches have ATMs within a block of the central Praça dos Liberados.

Hospital On Avenida Trabalho (☎ 271 20065).

Internet Your best option is the air-conditioned **TDM** office (☎ 07.00–19.00 *Mon–Fri, 06.00–13.00 Sat*), which has several computers and a good connection. Barring that, both **Expresso Computer** and **Sarifo's Net Café** on Avenida Primeira have some machines and are slightly cheaper than TDM, at 40Mt/hour (as opposed to 1Mt/min).

Police There is a police station on Avenida Trabalho opposite the hospital and another one on Avenida Primeira just down from Praça dos Liberados (☎ 271 20751).

Post office Opposite the BIM Millennium on the corner of avenidas Filipe Samuel Magaia and Primeira.

CICHLIDS OF LAGO NIASA

The staggering diversity of Africa's terrestrial fauna is old news, but few people are aware that it also harbours the greatest freshwater fish diversity of any continent. And nowhere does this diversity reach such heights as in Lago Niassa, whose 850 described fish species – with more awaiting formal discovery – exceed the number of known freshwater species in Europe and North America combined.

Lago Niassa's fish diversity is the product of the most dramatic incidence of explosive speciation known to evolutionists. The majority of these fish species are cichlids – pronounced 'sicklids' – a perch-like family of freshwater fishes called Cichlidae that ranges through the Middle East, Madagascar, Asia and South and Central America. It is in Africa's three largest lakes, however, that this widespread family has undergone an unprecedented explosion of evolutionarily recent speciation that has resulted in it constituting an estimated 5% of the world's vertebrate species.

The cichlids of Africa's great lakes are generally divided into a few major groupings, often referred to by scientists by names used locally in Malawi and/or Mozambique. These include the small plankton-eating *utaka*, the large, pike-like and generally predatory *ncheni*, the bottom-feeding *chisawasawa* and the algae-eating *mbuna*. People who have travelled in any part of Africa close to a lake will almost certainly have dined on one or other of the tilapia (or closely related *oreochromis*) cichlids, large *ncheni* that make excellent eating and are known locally as *chambo*. To aquarium keepers, snorkellers and scuba divers, however, the most noteworthy African cichlids are the *mbuna*, a spectacularly colourful group of small fish of which some 300 species are known from Lake Malawi alone.

The *mbuna* of Lago Niassa first attracted scientific interest in the 1950s, when they formed the subject of Dr Geoffrey Fryer's classic study of adaptive radiation. This term is used to describe the explosion of a single stock species into a variety of closely related forms, each of which evolves specialised modifications that allow it to exploit an ecological niche quite different from that occupied by the common ancestral stock. This phenomenon is most likely to occur when an adaptable species colonises an environment where several food sources are going unused, for instance on a newly formed volcanic island or lake. The most celebrated incidence of adaptive radiation – the one that led Charles Darwin to propose the theory of evolution through natural selection – occurred on the Galapagos Islands, where a variety of finch species evolved from one common seed-eating ancestor to fill several very different ecological niches.

Shopping If you are self-catering, there are several supermarkets to choose from. The best is probably the Recheio Cash & Carry on Julius Nyerere, but there are a few others along avenidas Primeira and Filipe Samuel Magaia. The central market has a better than average selection of vegetables, fruit and meat on offer.

LAGO NIASSA (LAKE MALAWI)

Better known to outsiders as Lake Malawi, Lago Niassa is the third-largest lake in Africa (and ninth largest in the world), running for 585km from north to south, and up to 75km wide from east to west. By any name, it is a remarkable body of water, lying at the southern end of the Rift Valley system, the immense geological scar that cuts through Africa all the way from the Red Sea to the Zambezi Valley. Up to 700m deep, it is hemmed in by the dramatic mountains of the Rift Valley escarpment, which

The explosive speciation that has occurred among Africa's cichlids is like Darwin's finches amplified a hundredfold. The many hundreds of cichlid species in Lake Tanganyika and Lago Niassa evolved from a handful of river cichlids that entered the lakes when they formed about two to three million years ago. (No less remarkable is the probability that the 200 or so cichlids in Lake Victoria all evolved from a few common ancestors over the 10,000–15,000 years since the lake last dried up.) In all three lakes, specialised cichlid species have evolved to exploit practically every conceivable food source: algae, plankton, insects, fish, molluscs and other fishes. Somewhat macabrely, the so-called kiss-of-death cichlids feed by sucking eggs and hatchlings from the mouths of mouth-brooding cichlids. No less striking is the diverse array in size, coloration and mating behaviour displayed across different species. In addition to being a case study in adaptive radiation, the cichlids of the great lakes are routinely cited as a classic example of parallel evolution – in other words, many similar adaptations appear to have occurred independently in all three lakes.

Why this should have occurred with the cichlids rather than any of several other fish families is a question that is likely to keep ichthyologists occupied for decades. One factor is that cichlids are exceptionally quick to mature, and thus have a rapid turnover of generations. Their anatomy also appears to be unusually genetically malleable, with skull, body, tooth and gut structures readily modifying over relatively few generations.

This capacity to colonise new freshwater habitats is boosted by a degree of parental care rare in other fish – the mouth-brooders, which include all but one of the cichlid species of Lago Niassa, hold their eggs and fry in their mouth until they are large enough to fend for themselves. Bearing in mind that the separation of breeding populations lies at the core of speciation, there is also mounting evidence to suggest that cichlids have a unique capacity to erect non-physical barriers between emergent species – possibly linked to a correlation between colour morphs and food preferences in diverging populations.

Africa's lake cichlids are never likely to rival its terrestrial wildlife as a tourist attraction. All the same, snorkelling and diving in Lago Niassa is both thrilling in itself, and a humbling introduction to what has justifiably been described as a 'unique evolutionary showcase'.

tower more than a kilometre above its surface in places. Known for its thrillingly clear water and relatively low pollution levels, it probably harbours a greater variety of fish than any other lake in the world, including hundreds of endemic cichlid species.

The bulk of Lago Niassa lies within Malawi, but the northeastern waters are territorially part of Tanzania, while some 200km of the eastern shore falls within the Mozambican province that shares its name. The Mozambican part of the lake is poorly developed for tourism compared with Malawian resorts such as Nkhata Bay and Cape Maclear, but it is no less beautiful, and its westward orientation is ideal for catching the sunsets for which the region is famed. Furthermore, there is a genuine sense of adventure attached to exploring this off-the-beaten-track corner of Mozambique, though the lakeshore does now host a couple of superb eco-friendly upmarket destinations in the form of the award-winning Manda Wilderness Community Conservation Area and the newer and less well-known Mbuna Bay Lodge (page 363). The Mozambican portion of the lake was officially gazetted as a reserve and designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2011.

There are three main points of access to the Mozambican shore of Lago Niassa. Starting in the south, Meponda lies almost directly east of Lichinga along a good 65km road, so is the easiest place to reach from the provincial capital. Metangula has better facilities than Meponda but is roughly 110km from Lichinga, albeit along a road that is now surfaced in its entirety. The more remote village of Cóbue lies another 100km north of Metangula, along a road that can be tricky in parts, but its proximity to Malawi's popular Likoma Island makes it a good point to cross between Malawi and Mozambique.

The more adventurous traveller might be interested to know that there are walking paths between Meponda, Metangula and Cóbue (though the sandy paths are not particularly suitable for cycling). The stretch from Meponda to Metangula, for instance, will take about three days for a good walker, who should carry

NIASSA OR MALAWI?

The original local name for Lago Niassa is something of a mystery. The name Niassa (or Nyasa) probably dates to 1859, when the explorer David Livingstone reached the lakeshore and mistakenly applied the generic local term for lake (Nyasa or Nyanza) to his discovery. Throughout the colonial era, the lake was officially known as Nyasa or Niassa, and the country we now know as Malawi was called Nyasaland. In 1964, however, Nyasaland gained independence from Britain under the leadership of Dr Hastings Banda, who retitled both the country and the lake Malawi.

Several explanations have been put forward for this. Banda himself once claimed that Malawi is an adaptation of 'Maravi', the name of a (possibly unrelated) lake depicted on J B B d'Anville's famous 18th-century map of southern Africa. Maravi is also the name of an iron-smelting empire that flourished in the region in the 15th century, and is widely seen as the precursor to the modern-day Chewa people of south-central Malawi. Another story is that Maravi is a local word meaning 'flaming water', a reference to the dazzling sunrises and sunsets that frequently illuminate the lake's surface.

Whatever the truth, while Malawians and most outsiders now know the lake as Malawi, this name has never been favoured in the other two countries that share its waters, so it is still officially and colloquially known as Lake Nyasa in Tanzania and Lago Niassa in Mozambique.

enough food and water to last the whole trip. If you're looking for inspiration, the admirable English doctor Peg Cumberland has walked the entire length of the coast innumerable times since 2004, with nothing but a backpack of medicine to treat locals who have no access to proper medical facilities. Known locally as Dr Peg, she has also trained about 400 locals as volunteer health carers, and was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List for 2010.

MEPONDA The closest lakeshore settlement to Lichinga, Meponda is little more than a glorified village whose few concrete buildings are mostly derelict. It lies on an attractive sandy beach that arcs for a kilometre or more below low wooded hills, and is host to the new **N'tendele Lodge** (m 87 407 4732; e info@ntendele.com; w ntendele.com), complete with bar and restaurant. The lodge is eco-friendly and has private rooms, small cottages, a dorm and camping facilities (US\$40/80 small cottage/private dbl room, US\$20 dorm, US\$4 pp camping; \$\$\$). Chapas from Lichinga to Meponda cost around US\$1.50 and take up to 2 hours. Meponda is also the southernmost port of call for the MV *Chambo* (page 365).

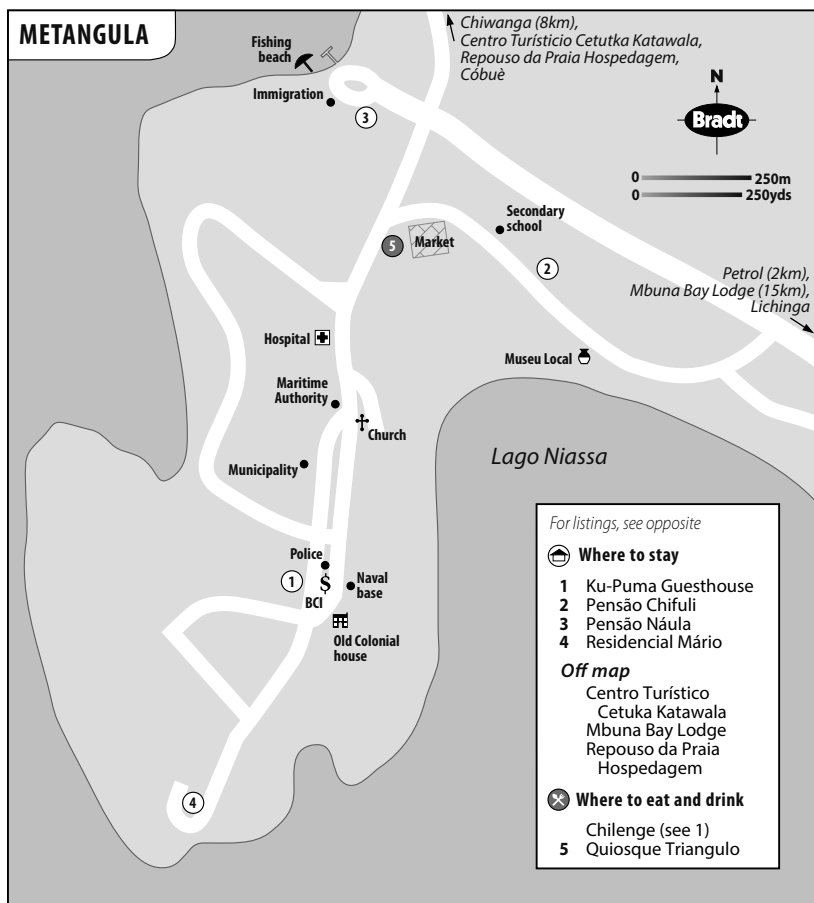
METANGULA The largest settlement on the Mozambican shore of Lago Niassa (which truly isn't saying a great deal), Metangula is of ignominious historical significance as the most important port on the eastern lakeshore when the slave trade was at its height in the mid 19th century. Back then, it effectively served as the eastern counterpart to Nkhosakota (Malawi), the base of the notorious Jumbo dynasty, founded in 1845 by coastal Arabs who shipped many thousands of coast-bound slaves across the lake to Metangula annually over the next five decades. So far as can be ascertained, few relics of those times survive in Metangula today, though the area remains predominantly Muslim while the more northerly part of the Mozambican lakeshore is mainly Christian.

Although it's the administrative centre for Lago district and the site of the country's only inland naval base, Metangula has a very out-of-the-way feel about it, and it comes across more like an amorphous sprawling village than a proper town. In the main administrative area, centred on a long oval of roads atop a hilly peninsula, a few ambitious but rather run-down government buildings rub shoulders with boarded-up shops and open green patches that could by no stretch of the imagination be called gardens. Between this and the main Lichinga-Cóbuè road is the low-rise commercial and residential centre, where a good market, a couple of pensões and a museum are set amid mud-and-thatch houses. On the plus side, this small peninsula town is enclosed by the lake on three sides and seems very relaxed and friendly, and plenty of English is spoken here.

Rumours that an upmarket lodge would be built at the tip of the village have yet to translate into reality. However, motorised visitors seeking good quality accommodation near Metangula are now catered for by the superb Mbuna Bay Lodge, which lies on an isolated bay about 15km out of town. For more budget-conscious travellers, the place to head for is the smaller village of Chiwanga (also spelt Chuanga), which has a lovely lakeshore location about 8km along the road to Cóbuè, and a couple of decent accommodation options. Note that Metangula now has a BCI ATM, but travellers coming from Malawi will have no problem changing excess kwacha here.

Getting there and away

By car Lichinga is connected to Metangula by a good surfaced 110km road, about 2 hours' drive and very doable in a saloon car, though there are a couple of moderately pot-holed stretches.



By chapa Regular chapas between Lichinga and Metangula cost around US\$4 and take up to 3 hours. Heading for Cóbue, there's a daily chapa that leaves mid morning and charges around US\$5.

By boat Metangula used to be on the route for the MV *Ilala*, a comfortable and affordable Malawian boat that has been plying the lake waters between Monkey Bay and Chilumba since 1952 – but that is no longer the case. The MV *Chambo* (page 365) also calls at Metangula, and provides a scenic way of getting to Cóbue if you're lucky enough to catch it – the schedule is rather undefined, but the MV *Chambo* usually makes the trip about twice a week. Ask at the Maritime Authority (m 82 791 5520) or the MV *Chambo* captain (m 82 432 2222 or 86 610 3319) for details.

If you are entering Mozambique this way, note that the immigration office at Metangula does not currently issue Mozambican visas and, if you arrive without one, expect to be given a rough time before being planted on the next chapa to Lichinga to get one there. Unless this changes, or you have bought a visa in advance, better to disembark the MV *Ilala* or *Chambo* at Likoma and cross from there to Cóbue, where visas can be issued.


Where to stay *Map, opposite* **Upmarket**


 **Mbuna Bay Lodge** (13 rooms) **m** 82 536 7781 or 86 614 1986; **e** info@mbunabay.ch; **w** mbunabay.ch. Situated at Nkholongue village 15km south of Metangula, this Swiss-built lodge stands on a long sandy beach lined with baobabs & mango trees below the brachystegia-covered slopes of the Rift Valley wall. A very eco-friendly set-up, it operates on solar electricity only, employs almost all its staff from the nearby village, serves imaginative vegetarian meals made mainly with organic ingredients grown on-site, & allocates a significant portion of proceeds to community development projects inc construction of a clinic & primary school. In addition to a swimming beach, the rocky area offshore is good for snorkelling (plenty of colourful mbuna fish & the occasional otter); other activities inc kayaking, canoeing in modern or local boats, windsurfing, community visits to the local chief & a traditional doctor, yoga, a 2hr hike to the top of Mount Chifuli, or a guided lakeshore ramble to Metangula. The en-suite bamboo-&-thatch beach houses are spacious, characterful & very comfortable, with king-size beds under a walk-in net, as well as verandas with hammocks. There are also some more functional brick houses & private cob-built bungalows using outdoor hot showers. Coming from Lichinga, the turn-off is signposted to the left about 2km before you arrive in Metangula; from there it is another 12km on rocky sloping roads to the lodge itself (if in doubt, ask anybody to point you towards Nkholongue). *US\$210/340 sgl/dbl cob house; US\$190/300 sgl/dbl beach chalet; US\$150/240 sgl/dbl brick bush bungalow; all rates FB inc some activities.* **\$\$\$\$**


Budget

 **Centro Turístico Cetuka Katawala** (8 rooms) **m** 86 867 1981. Situated on the beach in Chiwanga, 8km north of Metangula, this good-value, slightly tired complex has adequate en-suite rooms, camping space & a decent restaurant serving fish-based meals for around


US\$9. It is poorly signposted: coming along the Cóbue road from the direction of Metangula, turn left about 10m past the first sign for 'Praia do Chuanga', follow this road for about 600m, turn left immediately after crossing a small concrete bridge, from where it is another 50m or so to the entrance. If you don't have a vehicle, you could walk here from Metangula – but it's a feat of endurance in the lakeshore heat, so you might prefer to try for a rare chapa or ask around town for a moto. The A-frame is the brightest & cleanest option. *US\$20/30 sgl/dbl; US\$5 per tent.* **\$**


 **Ku-Puma Guesthouse** (3 rooms) **m** 82 757 5740. Situated near the police station, this local favourite has a good restaurant & 3 clean rooms with AC using shared ablutions. May be noisy at night with the restaurant & bar next door. *US\$24/30 twin/dbl.* **\$**

 **Repouso da Praia Hospedagem** (12 rooms) **t** 271 20431; **m** 82 629 9780. Situated in Chiwanga directly behind Cetuka Katawala, this is not quite so nice as its neighbour & lacks a beachfront location, but the basic rooms are clean & en suite. A bar & restaurant are attached. *US\$6/12 shared ablutions/en-suite dbl.* **\$**

 **Residencial Mário** **m** 82 388 2616. Offering a row of clean, good-value rooms & a local restaurant. *US\$10/20 sgl/dbl twin room with shared ablutions; US\$20 en-suite dbl; US\$30 en-suite dbl with AC & sitting room.* **\$**

Shoestring

 **Pensão Chifuli** (10 rooms) Set in a quiet compound near the market, this has rather stuffy rooms with shared ablutions, dbl or ¾ bed, net & standing fan. *Rooms US\$6–8 depending on size of room.* **\$**

 **Pensão Náula** (26 rooms) **m** 86 686 6692. Situated next to the beachfront immigration office at the northern end of Metangula town, this place has very basic rooms with ¾ beds. Ask for a room away from the bar if you are looking for shut-eye. *Rooms US\$5/10 old/newer room with TV, dbl.* **\$**

Where to eat and drink *Map, opposite*

If you stay at Mbuna Bay or Chiwanga, you'll most likely want to eat at your hotel. Unsurprisingly, there are no tourist-orientated restaurants in Metangula itself, but you will find some local restaurants in the market. For a cold beer, try the **Quiosque Triangulo** near the market. You could also try to track down the

Chilenge Restaurant (m 82 757 5740), which has been recommended by a local, serving meals between US\$6–12 (\$\$\$) and is part of Ku-Puma Guesthouse in the administrative area near the police station.

What to see and do Metangula and Chiwanga are agreeable enough places to while away a day or two but, aside from the museum described below and the beach at Chiwanga, neither boasts much in the way of formal attractions. If you're looking for a guide to take you on hikes to Mount Chifuli or to a nearby waterfall, or want to go fishing in a local dugout canoe, ask near the market for a guide called Lourenço Thawe.

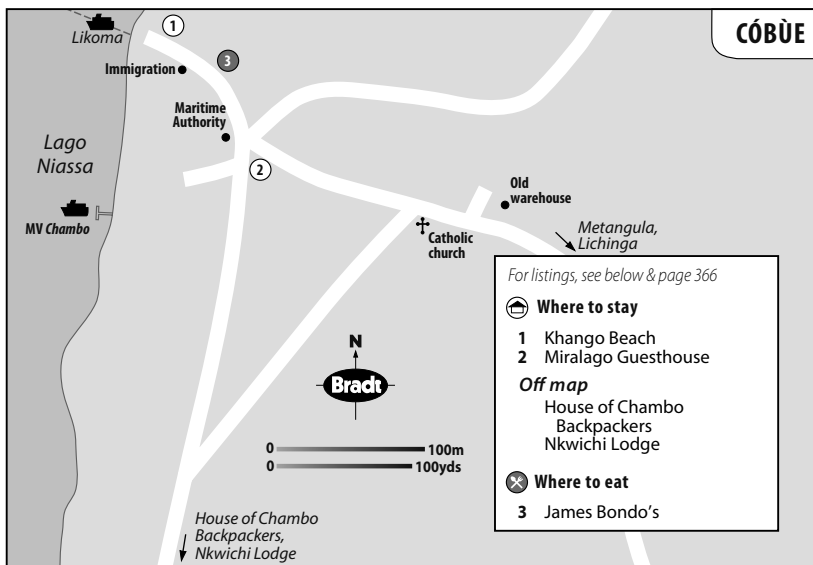
Museu Local (☎ 07.00–noon Tue–Sun, 13.30–17.00 Tue–Sat; entrance free) Opened in 2008, this small but well-organised local history museum is housed in the former Escola Primaria João de Deus, a historic red-and-white building in the heart of Metangula. Exhibitions cover the history and cultures of Lago district from the Stone Age to the present. Archaeological artefacts from recent excavations include stone tools from Micuio, 5km south of Metangula, Iron Age pots found on nearby Mount Chifuli, and material containing the oldest evidence of sorghum cultivation in Africa. Other displays explore the region's role in the 19th-century slave trade and the associated arrival of Islam, as well as the spread of Christianity from the UMCA mission on Likoma Island, established in 1886 as part of a drive to end the slave trade. A separate exhibition looks at the exotic origins of crops such as maize, cassava, sweet potato and tomato, and at indigenous edible plants. There's also an oral history archive, where you can read or listen to 95 recordings of individual biographies, folk tales and songs, and a photo wall of locals who contributed to this collection. When we visited, it was closed – but ask around and someone will send for the caretaker to open it up.

CÓBUÈ The village of Cóbue lies on the mainland opposite Likoma Island, and is heavily influenced by its proximity to this Malawian territory. Kwacha are more useful here than meticals, English is quite widely spoken, many mobile phones are on the Malawian network as the Mozambican network is limited to a patchy Mcel and Movitel service, and until a few years ago it was one of the ports serviced by the MV *Ilala*. Cóbue is a lovely part of the world – very remote and quiet, but the main reason you'd visit is *en route* between Malawi and Mozambique (the crossing is very straightforward, and this is the one place on the lake where Mozambican visas are issued).

Besides the scenery, which is gorgeous, the only thing to see in Cóbue is the surprisingly big Catholic church, which is looking as attractive as ever these days with a new roof and coat of paint, after standing derelict for many years after the war. About 9km south of the village is the small fishing village of Mala, site of House of Chambo Backpackers and a great place to experience traditional lakeshore living. Cóbue is also the springboard for visits to Nkwichi Lodge in the Manda Wilderness Area (page 366).

Getting there and away

By car The 100km dirt road from Metangula clings to the lakeshore north for about 10km, just past Chiwanga, before it ascends the brachystegia-strewn slopes of the Rift Valley escarpment inland, then descends back to the lakeshore as it enters Cóbue. It's an overall tougher drive than the preceding section of road to Metangula. Although parts have been graded, the road to Cóbue has several tougher sections that are alternately rutted and sandy in parts, and there are some steep slopes to




contend with, but a 4x4 or strong pick-up should get through in 2–3 hours. The wild scenery serves as compensation for the bumpy ride, and you can expect to see some wildlife – most likely baboons and a variety of birds – along the roadside.

By chapa Chapas along this road amount mostly to pick-up trucks that cram as many people in the back as possible, then a few more. There's one daily truck for Metangula that leaves around 07.00 and charges US\$5.


By boat The *Ilala* no longer stops at Còbùè, but you can disembark at Likoma and catch a local boat across from there. These usually leave Còbùè once daily, at around 07.00, and the fare is nominal, but they may not leave if there are insufficient passengers and you are unwilling to pay enough to make it worth the captain's while to make a special crossing.


The *MV Chambo* is a local boat service that runs between Meponda in the south and Aldeia Chiwindi at the Tanzanian border, stopping by request at all villages in-between, including Chiwanga, Mbueca and Còbùè. The schedule is something of a work in progress, but it typically makes the trip twice weekly. You can get details at the Maritime Authority in Còbùè, call the office in Metangula (m 82 791 5520) or speak with the captain directly (m 82 432 2222 or 86 610 3319).


Where to stay, eat and drink *Map, above*

 **House of Chambo Backpackers**
(3 rooms) m +265 88 524 5836/871 3745
(Malawi); e reservations@houseofchambo.com or houseofchambo@gmail.com; w houseofchambo.com. Proudly set up & run by two employees of Nkwichi Lodge, House of Chambo is a very relaxed lakeshore lodge set in the tiny fishing village of Mala about 9km south of Còbùè market. Just getting off the ground when we popped in, the

lodge now has 3 rustic dbl beach bungalows crafted from bamboo with thatch roofing & beach sand floors, as well as a bar & basic restaurant. There's solar electricity, so a cold beverage won't be a problem, but otherwise limited facilities with a communal kitchen, & showers are taken under fig trees. It's a 3–4hr walk from Còbùè or a boat can be hired for US\$25 each way from Còbùè. US\$25 pp, B&B. \$


 **Khangho Beach** (30 rooms) **m** +265 88 856 7885 (Malawi); **m** 82 997 3321 or 86 614 5121. Situated on the beach facing Likoma, in front of where the boats drop passengers, this friendly place offers basic accommodation in twin reed huts using common ablutions or en-suite brick chalets. It's a simple but very welcoming set-up, & they're fully clued-up on local transport options. Meals are available on request, & the attached bar-cum-TV hall is probably the liveliest hangout in Còbuè. *US\$6/10 reed hut/en-suite brick chalet dbl; US\$2 pp camping. \$*

 **Miralago Guesthouse** (6 rooms) **m** 87 429 0997. Just up the hill from immigration, this has rooms with ¾ bed, electricity & mosquito nets. *Rooms US\$10. \$*

 **James Bondo's** **m** 86 741 7807; ☎ 07.00–late daily. Also known as Gloria's (depending on whether the husband or the wife is running it that day), this is down on the beach. The food is basic but good, & there's the usual range of soft drinks & beers available. He's willing to change meticaïls for kwacha should you need them, & he also has very cheap rooms for US\$2. *Mains US\$2–5. \$*

MANDA WILDERNESS AREA Established in 1999 on a mountainous peninsula between Metangula and Còbuè, the multiple-award-winning Manda Wilderness Project ([w mandawilderness.org](http://www.mandawilderness.org)) is a 1,200km² game reserve managed in trust for local communities comprising some 20,000 Nyanja people. It protects a patchwork of habitats, including brachystegia woodland and riverine forest, savannah, swamps, streams and mountains, all running down to the lovely beaches and crystal-clear waters of Lago Niassa. Game viewing is done on foot or from a canoe, and the most frequently seen large mammals are zebra, monkeys and otters, though others present include lions and wild dogs. Though it falls within Mozambique, Manda operates mostly as an extension to the safari circuits in Malawi and Zambia, and can be reached by boat from Likoma or Còbuè, or by charter flight from anywhere in the region.

Where to stay *Map, pages 254–5*

 **Nkwichi Lodge** (6 chalets) **m** 82 709 7920; [e info@nkwichi.com](mailto:info@nkwichi.com); [w nkwichi.com](http://www.nkwichi.com); see ad, page 373. Sited about 10km south of Còbuè, this is the only lodge in the reserve itself, & can cater for only 14 guests in 6 individual chalets. The site itself is stunning – the chalets are widely spread on a rocky peninsula flanked by a lovely white beach & dense brachystegia woodland, & are built from locally available materials & designed to blend into their surroundings, incorporating granite outcrops as part of the structure. Each has its own private bathroom with outdoor shower & bath, & there is

a central double-floored restaurant, bar & library. There's plenty to keep you busy, from tracking animals to activities on the lake such as canoeing, snorkelling or sailing, & you also have the option of visiting some of the local communities to see how the project has benefited them. Then again, you can just sit in a hammock. The whole set-up is hugely impressive, & serves as a perfect example of how a lodge could & should be developed. *US\$487/750 sgl/dbl, US\$535/820 premiere sgl/dbl; rates inc all meals & non-motorised activities, with discounts for residents. \$\$\$\$\$*

NIASSA RESERVE

Situated in the remote north of Mozambique bordering Tanzania, Niassa Reserve is Africa's third-largest wildlife sanctuary, extending over 42,000km² – that's twice as large as the Kruger Park, almost three times the size of the Serengeti, or (to place it in a non-African context) comparable in area to Denmark or the state of Massachusetts. Niassa is also one of Africa's most under-publicised and unvisited safari destinations, as well as one of the most important protected areas in Mozambique, and is considered a critical wildlife area for Africa. While the reserve's isolation has held back development, it has also allowed it to retain an untrammelled feel that is increasingly rare in modern Africa. Scenically, Niassa is

hugely impressive, dominated by the Lugenda River, whose shallow perennial flow is hemmed in by wide sandbanks and a ribbon of lush riparian forest. Away from the river, there are vast tracts of miombo woodland studded with bulbous fleshy grey baobabs, and immense granite inselbergs that rise majestically into the deep blue African sky, hundreds of metres above the surrounding plains.

It should be stated clearly that Niassa is not a suitable safari destination for those seeking a quick 'Big Five' fix. True, all but one of this much-hyped quintet is present here in significant numbers (the exception being rhinos, who were poached to extinction in the 1980s) but the only near-certainty in the course of a standard three-to-four-day visit would be elephant. What Niassa offers is an altogether more holistic wilderness experience, one in which the reserve's mesmerising scenic qualities and wonderfully rich birdlife figure as prominently as its mammalian wildlife. This is also one of those rare reserves where activities need not be dominated by motorised game drives: guided game walks offer the opportunity to experience the African bush as its inhabitants do, on foot, without the constant roar of an engine providing an unwanted aural backdrop; while canoeing on the river – past spluttering hippos, drinking elephants and a splendid array of birds – is utterly entrancing. In short, Niassa offers as untrammelled an African bush experience as still exists in the 21st century.

HISTORY AND CONSERVATION The Niassa Reserve was established in 1954 to protect the dry and thinly inhabited territory that lies between the Ruvuma and Lugenda rivers, but it was effectively abandoned between 1975 and 1988 as a result of the civil war. The reserve's modern boundaries were established in 1998 and include the original 22,000km² core zone between the rivers, along with some 20,000km² of buffer zones. It was also in 1998 that the Mozambican government entered into an innovative partnership with the Sociedade para a Gestão e Desenvolvimento da Reserva do Niassa (SRN), a private organisation that retained exclusive rights to manage and develop the reserve until handing control back to the state in 2012. The SRN divided the reserve into 17 management zones, of which nine currently operate as hunting and/or photographic safari concessions (the most important being Block L7, aka Luwire Concession, which is the site of the former Lugenda Wilderness Camp), while another four are currently leased for ecotourism developments. The reserve is presently co-managed by the Ministry of Tourism and the Wildlife Conservation Society (www.wcs.org).

The Niassa Reserve is one of two core components in the Selous-Niassa Transfrontier Conservation Area (SNTCA), the other being the Selous Game Reserve, which extends over 47,000km² of southern Tanzania. The SNTCA also incorporates Tanzania's Mikumi National Park, Udzungwa National Park and Kilombero Game Protected Area, all of which border the Selous, and its ecological integrity was greatly boosted in 1999 with the creation of the 17,030km² Selous-Niassa Corridor Reserve, which extends southward from the Selous border to share 175km of international Ruvuma frontage with the Niassa Reserve. All told, the SNTCA can now lay claim to being Africa's largest contiguously protected chunk of untrammelled bush, extending over a total area exceeding 150,000km², larger than Malawi. And it harbours some of Africa's most prodigious wildlife, including at least 5% of the global population of African elephant, around 20% of the world's free-ranging African wild dogs, and what are quite probably the largest existing populations of lion, buffalo, hippo and sable antelope.

Some 40,000 people living in 42 villages inhabit the Niassa Reserve and its immediate boundaries, a third of them in the district capital Mecula, which lies

MANDA WILDERNESS COMMUNITY TRUST

The Manda Wilderness Trust (*w mandawilderness.org*) is a UK-registered charity that raises funds towards a mixture of conservation and community projects in the area surrounding Cóbue. The fundraising activities are based around Nkwichi Lodge, a proportion of the revenue from the lodge going straight into the trust. The development of the lodge was dovetailed in with the development of the trust and many of the facets of the trust's work started before the lodge was open.

The trust is very much driven from the ground up. There are 15 local communities involved in the various projects, and each community has its own committee (known as an 'Umoji Association') to decide which facets of the trust's work they wish to be involved with.

The conservation projects are all focused on the reserve, which is made up of land donated by each of the communities. The nearly 48,000ha reserve was both officially gazetted and designated as Mozambique's second Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2011. In addition to this, there are plans to set up a similarly sized aquatic reserve in association with US Aid. An educational programme has been established to help the local communities develop methods of exploiting the reserve in a sustainable manner.

The trust runs a series of community projects aimed at improving facilities in each village, with each Umoji Association deciding what is most needed in its village. Thus far the trust has contributed to the construction of six schools with a further four or five planned, a maize mill to enable villagers to grind their own produce, and a clinic based in Cóbue with equipment supplied from the UK and training carried out by a local NGO. To help bring the communities together, the trust organises regular events including canoe races, a local choir festival and a football league, supplying kit, goalposts, fees for referees and the possibility of arranging training schemes in the future.

A third strand, slightly smaller at the moment, is the agricultural project. The aim of this is to introduce local farmers to permaculture and find methods by which the local diet can be improved. Each Umoji Association selects up to five villagers who attend a training course at the lodge's farm. The training courses cover the importance of proper nutrition, soil conservation, planting and care of seeds and plants, pest control and the importance of healthy soil to the potential for selling excess produce in local markets.

The success of the trust can be gauged by the interest being shown by the Mozambican national government – in August 2005, 11 directors of the provincial governments visited the reserve and the trust, and in June 2006 President Guebuza visited Cóbue, the first time in Mozambique's history that its president had visited Niassa Province.

within the eastern section of the core reserve below Serra Mecula. Despite this low density, the interests of the reserve's human and wildlife populations are often at odds. The greatest problem exists along the rivers, which are heavily fished, not only by local Mozambicans but also by people hopping over the border from Tanzania. A certain amount of snaring occurs along and away from the river, and occasional instances of commercial poaching have been reported, but the good news is that this appears to occur at sustainable levels and estimated numbers of most key species have remained stable or risen over the tenure of the SRN. While the reserve

has created several hundred jobs in an area where they are otherwise scarce, the risks faced by people living in and around the reserve should also not be ignored: at least one to two people per year are killed in lion attacks, while elephants frequently raid smallholdings for crops, and crocodiles lurk in the rivers. In the long term, it is to be hoped that tourist revenue will alleviate these risks by generating further work opportunities and income for local communities.

GEOGRAPHY AND VEGETATION The Niassa Reserve accounts for about a third of Niassa Province's surface area, and also extends eastward into Cabo Delgado. It lies within the drainage basin of the Ruvuma River, which flows east for more than 300km along the reserve's northern border with Tanzania. The most important of several tributaries, and in many respects the lifeblood of Niassa, is the Lugenda River, which flows along the southeastern boundary between the core area and buffer reserve to its confluence with the Ruvuma. The Ruvuma and Lugenda are both large sand-bed rivers with a strong perennial flow, and their mutual watershed feeds numerous other seasonal rivers that flow only during the rainy season of late October to May. Although the eastern border of Niassa is a full 200km from the coast, the terrain is essentially low-lying, with a base altitude of 100m at the Lugenda-Ruvuma confluence, rising to around 600m in parts of the west. These flattish dry plains are interrupted – to a thrillingly dramatic effect – by a liberal scattering of black granitic inselbergs that rise hundreds of metres above the canopy to give the reserve its unique scenic quality. The tallest mountain in the reserve is Serra Mecula, which rises to a prominent 1,441m peak above the town of the same name.

Some 95% of the Niassa Reserve consists of miombo woodland, which can be divided into two broad types. Dominant in the southwest is tall closed brachystegia-dominated woodland, while elsewhere there tends to be a more open cover of mixed broadleaved woodland including various brachystegia, julbernadia, combretum and terminalia species. The two main rivers support a ribbon of evergreen riparian woodland and riverine thickets, and patches of acacia woodland are often associated with the clayey soils close to the rivers. Niche habitats include roughly 1km² of montane forest in half a dozen scattered patches on the upper slopes of the Serra Mecula, the rocky cliffs and slopes associated with the reserve's trademark granite outcrops, and seasonally flooded grassy depressions called dambos, whose boundaries are often demarcated by a ring of waterberry trees.

WILDLIFE Wildlife in Niassa tends to be less visible than in some other more iconic African reserves, but there is plenty of it around. The most recent published figures, based on 2004 estimates, are 7,000 buffalo, 2,500 bushbuck, 3,500 Lichtenstein's hartebeest, 5,000 warthog, 3,500 plains zebra and around 1,000–1,500 of each of impala, greater kudu, waterbuck, wildebeest and reedbuck. Three of these animals are represented by subspecies endemic to this part of Africa: Niassa wildebeest (slightly larger than other subspecies), Crawshay's zebra (lacks the shadow stripes of other southern zebra subspecies) and Johnston's impala (slightly smaller than most subspecies). More recent estimates (2011) place the elephant population at around 11,000 (significant poaching has brought the number down from 20,000 with at least 2,500 elephants killed between 2010 and 2011), while yellow baboon, vervet monkey and blue monkey are all quite common, with the last mostly restricted to riverine woodland. The reserve evidently supports one of the world's largest populations of sable antelope, estimated at 13,500 in 2004.

In practical terms, impala, waterbuck and greater kudu are common around the former Lugenda Wilderness Camp (page 373) throughout the year, as are warthog

WILD DOGS IN SELOUS-NIASSA

The second most endangered of Africa's large carnivores (after the ultra-localised Ethiopian wolf) is the African wild dog *Lycaon pictus*, a fascinating pack animal that was once so abundant it was listed as vermin in many of the 40 countries through which it ranged. Today, this beleaguered creature is IUCN red-listed as Endangered, largely as a result of human persecution and susceptibility to canid diseases spread by domestic dogs, and the non-captive global population is estimated to stand at 4,000–6,000 individuals. The importance of Selous-Niassa to the survival of African wild dogs would be difficult to overstate. It has long been known that the Selous harbours the world's largest African wild dog population: surveys undertaken in the 1990s indicated that every part of the reserve fell within the home range of at least one pack, from which a total population of between 800 and 1,300 was extrapolated. Until recently, little was known about wild dog numbers in Niassa, but a survey undertaken by Colleen and Keith Begg over 2004–06 documented 336 individual wild dogs in 39 packs, and the reserve's population is now estimated at around 350. On a continental level, this means that Niassa ranks immediately below Selous in terms of wild dog numbers, and the total population of the SNTCA probably stands at 1,200–1,500.

and elephant. Hippos belch and wallow in the river near camp, while pairs of dainty klipspringer antelope bound around the boulder-strewn slopes. As the dry season takes its grip, larger concentrations of ungulates gather along the river, and sightings of zebra, wildebeest, buffalo, Lichtenstein's hartebeest and sable antelope become more frequent. Unusually, predators are most visible in the early part of the dry season, when the lush vegetation encourages them to follow game-viewing tracks as they patrol their territories or search for prey. Lion sightings are not quite an everyday occurrence, but the reserve harbours a healthy population of 1,000–1,200, one-third of Mozambique's lion population. It's one of the better places to look for African wild dog (box, above), and 20 other carnivore species have been recorded, of which leopard, genet and civet are all quite commonly observed on night drives.

BIRDLIFE The birding in Niassa is excellent. Some of the more interesting everyday species that enjoy high visibility are purple-crested turaco, green woodhoopoe, lilac-breasted roller, brown-hooded kingfisher, brown-headed parrot, African grey hornbill, black-collared barbet (the unusual streaky-breasted *zombae* race), white-fronted bee-eater, collared palm thrush, black-headed oriole and African paradise-flycatcher. It is a good place to see several miombo specials, including racquet-tailed roller, pale-billed hornbill, miombo pied barbet, Stierling's wren-warbler, Arnot's chat and Shelley's sunbird, while riverine forest and thicket support the likes of Pel's fishing owl, trumpeter hornbill, brown-throated barbet, Böhm's bee-eater, broad-billed roller, Livingstone's flycatcher and black-throated wattle-eye. Niassa is probably the best site in Mozambique for birds of prey: bateleur and African fish eagle are among the more conspicuous large raptors, while the inselbergs support cliff-nesting species such as Verreaux's (black) eagle, augur buzzard, lanner falcon and the very localised Taita falcon, and the massive crowned eagle and handsome Dickinson's kestrel are frequently seen in the riparian forest.

One disappointment is that the river supports so few waterbirds, possibly as a result of overfishing – you might well see saddle-billed and woolly-necked storks,

PEMBA TO LICHINGA ON THE EN242 (N14)

One of the longest and most remote roads in Mozambique, the EN242 (N14) is of interest to self-drive visitors, first as the most direct route between the coastal port of Pemba (page 355) in Cabo Delgado and the highland town of Lichinga in Niassa, and secondly as the main access road to the Niassa Reserve. The 725km journey from Pemba to Lichinga breaks up into three distinct phases, and while it could be covered in one long day with a very early start and a modicum of luck, it is probably more realistic to bank on overnighting somewhere *en route*, ideally the small town of Montepuez.

The first stretch is the 200km run from Pemba to Montepuez, which involves following the EN106 (N1) west for about 95km to the junction town of Metoro, which is where the westbound road becomes the EN242 (N14). This is a good tar road the whole way, passing through rather unmemorable scenery and a few equally undistinguished small towns, and you should easily get through within 3 hours. Montepuez, the largest town along this road, has a fair selection of places to sleep and eat, covered in greater detail on page 325.

The shortest stretch on paper – around 190–210km, depending on which map you believe, and how many unintended diversions you take – is the unsurfaced road between Montepuez and Marrupa. It is also the longest and most difficult stretch in practice, carrying perhaps half a dozen vehicles along a road that frequently amounts to little more than a pair of sandy tyre tracks running through the dense brachystegia woodland typical of this region (an experience reminiscent of how travel was in most of Mozambique shortly after the civil war). This area is fantastically remote, with only a few tiny villages as urban punctuation, and you might well see some wildlife on the way. You shouldn't require a 4x4 in the dry season, but it could come in handy, and you will definitely need good clearance and a powerful engine, and may want to deflate tyres in places. In the rainy season, a 4x4 will be absolutely essential.

After about 140km of laborious trundling west from Montepuez, you'll enter Niassa Province and find yourself, apropos of absolutely nothing, on what is arguably the finest road anywhere in Mozambique, a nippy 390km stretch of pristine surfaced bliss that can easily have you arrive in Marrupa within an hour and Lichinga within five – assuming you're not too distracted by the memorable mountain scenery.

Marrupa itself is a district capital and the junction town for the Niassa Reserve (Kiboko Gate lies 100km to the north along a fair dirt road (R731)). It's a more substantial place than you might expect, with a large market, a few adequate restaurants, and a handful of basic pensões – try **Restaurante Marrupa, Residencial Triangulo** or **Centro Social** if you wind up overnighting here.

With a bit of determination, this route is also doable on public transport, except for the stretch between Balama and Marrupa, where you'll have to hitch. Sleep in Montepuez and get the first chapa for Balama (US\$3; 90 mins). Once in Balama you'll find others waiting for a lift westward as well. Most traffic this way consists of heavy trucks – make sure they're going all the way to Marrupa, as they will sometimes terminate at logging camps in the bush. From Marrupa, chapas go to both Lichinga and Cuamba, but they leave first thing in the morning, so arriving in the afternoon you'll either have to spend the night in town or try to hitch once again; the Petromoc 2km down the Lichinga road is a good place to wait. Chapas to Lichinga cost US\$10 and can take up to 7 hours.

SERRA JECI (NJESI PLATEAU)

With Keith Barnes & Josh Engel (w tropicalbirding.com)

Like Mount Namuli (page 274), this remote area of northwest Niassa offers some incredible birding. The same warnings for Mount Namuli apply here – bring plenty of provisions, 4x4 vehicles, and learn some Portuguese to maximise your experience. The most enticing species of this area are long-billed forest warbler (formerly called long-tailed or Moreau's tailorbird) and red-capped forest warbler (formerly called African tailorbird), otherwise only spotted in very small areas of Tanzania. There are many other species that could turn up here, such as Chapin's apalis or Winifred's warbler... or perhaps something completely unknown.

The long-billed forest warbler is perhaps one of the rarest birds in all of Africa, once thought extinct until surveys in the 1980s rediscovered the species in the Amani area of the East Usambaras in Tanzania. Birds from the population on the Serra Jeci were only seen again in 2001, when a team from the University of Cape Town rediscovered them here. Continued surveys suggest the entire world population comprises a few hundred birds, and given the massive geographical distances between the two populations one may question whether they are best treated as the same species, and both may be extremely rare and critically endangered.

Besides the forest warblers, there is a long list of tempting birds found in and around Serra Jeci, including Stierling's and speckle-throated woodpeckers, cinnamon-breasted tit, spotted creeper, and olive-headed and Bertram's weavers. The Serra Jeci area remains extremely little known, and given the correct provisions it is worth spending several days exploring the region.

possibly African skimmer, but there are very few waterfowl, waders or lapwings. Get your timing right, however, and the most alluring avian attraction of Niassa has to be the Angola pitta, a spectacularly coloured but very seldom observed species that usually renders itself conspicuous by call during its brief mating season over two to three weeks in November.


GETTING THERE AND AWAY

By air Niassa is a very long way from anywhere by road, and it is possible to fly there on a charter from Pemba or the Quirimbas, although it must be noted that at the time of writing only camping facilities for self-sufficient tourists existed.

By car It is perfectly possible to drive to Niassa from Pemba or Lichinga, assuming that you have a 4x4 and some time at your disposal. The main urban springboard for self-drive visits is Marrupa, which lies about 100km south of the Kiboko entrance gate along a well-maintained unsurfaced road (R731) that can be covered in 2 hours. This road continues north to Mecula across what is the only bridge across the Lugenda into the core area of Niassa Reserve. The Kiboko entrance gate closes at 17.00 and you may be refused entry if you arrive later, so try to set off from Marrupa before 14.30.

There are three main approaches to Marrupa. The best is the surfaced EN242 (N14) running 310km east from Lichinga, but travellers coming from the coast will more likely use the EN242 (N14) west, a somewhat more challenging dirt road that may require a 4x4 and leads to Pemba after 400km. Both roads are covered in

the boxed text on page 371. Another option, coming from the south, is the **EN248** (N360), an adequate but unsurfaced 250km road running northeast from Cuamba. If you use this route, the mission at Maúa and the even more remote mission at Nipepe both have beautiful churches decorated in traditional style.

 **WHERE TO STAY** Tourism development in Niassa is still very much in its infancy. There are several hunting camps in some concessions, but at present there is no formal option for less bloodthirsty visitors, though hopefully a new tourist concession will eventually replace the former Lugenda Wilderness Camp following its recent closure. For the time being, self-sufficient self-drivers could head to the **Mussomo Community Campsite**, which is located on the Lugenda River and open during the dry season only. It is also possible to camp at the staff headquarters at **Maputo Camp**, which has a reasonable toilet block but few other facilities.



NKWICHI
LAKE MALAWI
AFRICA'S BEST KEPT SECRET

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