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CHONGOENE (13KM NORTH OF XAI-XAI) TO INHAMBANE, TOFO AND BARRA

Published: November 2005

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1. PRAIA DO CHONGOENE

(As opposed to Zongoene which is somewhere else at the mouth of the Limpopo). The first town you get to after Xai-Xai is Chongoene just 13km to the north - could also be the first laser speed trap after Xai-Xai too, so drive at less than 60kph around here.

Chongoene Resort (formerly Hotel Chongoene)

When I last looked this place was still a derelict (art-deco, yes, but derelict) reminder that civil wars and tourists simply do not mix, and also that building on shifting dunes is seriously not a good idea. Built during the 1960's and '70's (Mozambique tourism's hay-days), the Hotel Chongoene must have been quite something for a decade or two. I found cracks big enough to walk through and the entire building seemed to be somewhat structurally unsound. Over the years I have repeatedly been told that someone intends to do something there, but nothing happened until very recently when I found a website that (with the pretty partner picture) makes Chongoene look strangely like some evangelical church or other.

But cast aside my cynicism and take a look at: www.chongoeneresorts.co.za/ I see too that the "Corridor Sands" project envisages building a jetty at Chongoene to export the Heavy Sands – the plot thickens: www.southern-mining.co.za/AnnualReport/CorridorSands.htm

Breaking news: just got this email from Chongoene Resort: "Hi Mike. Thanks for the email. The situation is that we will only start with refurb next month and will have some of the accommodation available July 2006 and main launch this time next year. I'm not sure if you are Moz resident but if you are in Xai-Xai some time over the next weeks, I will gladly walk you though the developments and plans. Regards Neil".

Nascer do Sol

Tel Mozambique: + 258 (0) 22 64500, mobile: + 258 82 474 610. Email: nascer@teledata.mz
Website: www.nascer.co.za

Drive through the little town of Chisavane 44km north of Xai-Xai, 1km after which (if going north) you turn right and then it's another 10km to the beach. Unless you have brought two spare clutches with you, this last 10km is 4x4 only kind of stuff. Nicely nestled amongst the dunes, almost everywhere (and certainly all the bedrooms) has a sea-view so you can watch the sun 'being born' every morning if that is what rotates your axis. Good restaurant and I am told that the spinach quiche is vegetarian heaven.

Accommodation:

The chalets are fully equipped, including fridges/freezers, warm water, electricity and own barbecue (braai) facilities. The campsite has its own ablution facilities and thatched barracas (shelters) with beds and mattresses only. Own lapa (outdoor enclosure) and kitchen area where families and groups can gather and cook together.

Rates:

Have emailed to ask. No reply after a week... Suggest that you try phoning.

2. CHIDENGUELE

The little village of Chidenguele is 271,5km north of Maputo, and 37km east of Mandlakaze (the route I used when last I visited this area). Look out for the huge cathedral (very interesting inside) on the RHS as you approach the town, and signposted the turn-off is just down the hill. Turn right into the town, and right onto the sand track along which after a few kilometres (simply follow the various direction boards) you will arrive at the various lodges. A few years ago this lake was one of Moz's best-kept secrets, but now there are around half a dozen resorts to tempt the traveler. Find some of these covered below, not in any particular order, but reflective, naturally, of my own mysterious and particular prejudices:

Paraiso de Chidenguele

Tel South Africa, Johannesburg: + 27 (0) 11 782 1026, mobile: + 27 (0) 82 342 4786 or Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 729 5870. Email: info@chidbeachresort.com Website: www.chidbeachresort.com

This little lodge is cleverly tucked away amongst the dune forests, and the chalets have great views over the wide blue yonder. I have got there in a VW 'Kombi' bus, but a 4x4 could be essential for those not well initiated into the vagaries of sand driving. The chef at the restaurant knows his stuff when it comes to seafood, and if the '4x4 yahoos' are kept off the beach, you have really found a tranquil spot. Frequented during the school holidays by the South African Fishing fraternity who can be really friendly and loud, so long as the 'Klippiers' and coke don't dry up. Management is efficient and standards here are high.

Accommodation:

The thatched chalets (self-catering) with timber decks each sleep 4, 6 or 8 people. Each is serviced daily, has hot and cold running water, an equipped kitchenette and bathroom with shower, toilet and basin. All chalets are equipped with gas cooker, fridge, geyser, linen, towels, crockery, and cutlery, cooking utensils, mosquito nets. Weber braai's (barbeques) supplied on request, and much more... The overnight huts (9 in total) are equipped with 2 single beds, linen, towels, shower, toilet, basin and hot & cold running water.

Rates:

Low season: R850 to R1300 per day for the 4-6 sleeper chalets. High season: R995 to R1650. Overnight huts are R200 per person low - and R230 per person high. NOTE: Bookings of not less than 5 nights in duration are applicable during high season.

Nhampavale Lodge

Tel: Mozambique mobile (Derrick): + 258 828 8284, Email: holwill@iafrica.com Website: www.nhambavale.co.za/

Wonderful resort, close to the beach (10 minute drive) but with the lake right there, who needs the (sometimes windy) beach? Nice boats to use, good restaurant, excellent chalets with nice surroundings.

Accommodation:

There are two and four-person well-built stone and thatch chalets that are fully serviced with all meals being served at the lakeside restaurant. The 2 person chalets have one king-sized or two single beds, and can have an additional bed to accommodate a child. The 'Casa Grande' Chalet is 4- bed roomed and can sleep from 8 to 10 people. The nearby leveled and well-grassed camping site (has a view of the lake) can accommodate a maximum of 10 persons per site. There is a communal thatched shelter and the ablutions are rather nice (if you can get the gas geysers to work, that would be marvelous).

Rates:

Chalets - Bed and Breakfast R410 High Season (see South African School Holidays), R380 Low Season, per chalet per day (Maximum of 2 adults and additional 1 child sharing add R30 per day). Casa Grande (Accommodation only for 8 to 10 people costs R 1600 High Season and R1400 Low Season per day. Camping: R90 High Season (eish that hurts!) and R50 Low Season, per person per day.

Sunset Beach Resort

Tel: Moz mobile + 258 (0) 84 286338, South Africa mobile: + 27 (0) 82 853 1831. Email: mocita@teledata.mz or sunset-resort@hotmail.com Website: www.sunsetbeache.com (yes beache, not beach!).

Portuguese (and English) spoken here, which makes for a change from the lodges that appear to be aimed firmly at the South African market (camping is not an option which speaks volumes?). Chalets and rondawels built in the Portuguese way (plenty of cool and spacious concrete) with wide balconies overlooking the sea. Nice restaurant too.

Accommodation and Rates:

Note that prices depend upon season: Chalets: 4-bed: (R840 to R970), 5-bed: (R970 to R1140), 6-bed: R1080 to R1308. Rondawels: 2-person; (R340-R385), 3-person (R480 to R535).

Mar e Sol

Tel Moz mobile (no signal at the camp so best to send an SMS): Leonard: + 258 (0) 82 27 2753, Helena: + 258 (0) 82 27 2754. Email: enquiries@reviteresort.com Website: www.reviteresort.com

Turn off to the right a few hundred metres past the Quissico town viewpoint over the lakes. In the heart of Mozambique's Lagoon Coast tucked up against the dunes near an isolated beach between an azure lake and the wide blue ocean. Nicely spread out campsite, good ablutions and a couple of large chalets under construction. My chats with the owner left me a little worried as to whether we have a going concern here, or not. In the meantime, get here soon as you may just have the place to yourself.

Accommodation and rates:

Presently camping only @ R70 per person.

Zavora Lodge

Tel Mozambique mobile: + 258 (0) 82 3019330 or + 258 (0) 82 8135810 or South Africa + 27 (0) 13 750 0431. Email: britton@teledata.mz Website: zavora@mweb.co.za

Zavora was one of the first lodges to reopen at the cessation of hostilities in 1992, and I first visited it at the end of 1993 when the manager was a retired Russian submarine commander and the barmaid was an escaped mass-murderer from Texas. Ah! home from home (sure beats the quad-bike brigade) so I tarried a little then. More lately it has a pub and restaurant, professes to be aimed at the South African fishing and camping lot (quad bikes on hire), but get to Zavora out of season and with the great snorkeling and deserted beaches, it's really rather nice. The turn-off from the E.N.1 is 10km to the north of Inharrime.

Accommodation and Rates:

Four camping areas to choose from. General rule is the closer you are to the beach, the less the mosquitoes bother you and the higher is the charge:

Albatros Camp: Shady sites (only – no shelters) with hot- and cold showers on the beach side of the dunes. Bookings are for a maximum of 6 persons per campsite at R80.00 per person per day. A barraca (roofed shelter) and one plug point is included in the cost.

Seagull Camp: This camp has two barracas and two plug points and it's own ablution block. This makes it ideal for groups. Bookings is for a minimum of 12 persons at R80.00 per person per day.

Kingfisher Camp: Bookings are for a minimum of 6 persons per campsite at R70.00 per person per day. A roofed shelter and one plug point is included in the cost.

Heron Camp: Bookings are R65.00 per person per day for campsites with barracas (no plug points are provided). Campsites without barracas and plug points are R55.00 per person per day.

Self-catering Bungalows: No view of the sea and furnished to a basic standard with hot water supplied via gas geysers. Bedding is supplied as well as mosquito nets, deep freezers, cutlery and crockery in each unit.

Note: All these rates are for the high season, other periods negotiable. Bookings are for a minimum of four persons in the 4 sleeper bungalows, six persons in the 6-sleeper bungalow and eight persons in the 8-sleeper bungalow. 4 Sleeper is R600 per day,

6 Sleeper is R900 per day, 8 Sleeper is R1200 per day.

Self-catering Beach Front Houses:

Sailly & Marlin Houses: Accommodates 8 people. Bookings are for 8 or less persons at R1360 per day for the house.

Manta Ray: Accommodates 10 people. Bookings are for 10 or less persons at R1700 per day for the house. All houses have a stove, fridge, deep-freeze and are equipped with crockery, cutlery, utensils as well as mosquito nets and bedding.

3. JANGAMO (The Praia or Beach, not the town).

Note that all the following places are reached by turning off the E.N.1 at Lindela and then right again at various junctions (usually well signposted) several kilometres before reaching Inhambane Town. Access roads are 4x4 only, but some high-clearance vehicles such as VW 'Kombi' buses and 'bakkies' (pick-ups/utes) can make the trip. Reduce tyre pressure to 1 bar.

Jangamo Beach Resort

Tel/fax White River, South Africa: + 27 13 750 2439. Email: allan.whitehouse@worldonline.co.za Website: www.jangamo.co.za 22,6km from the Inhambane road, a trip that will take around an hour and perhaps forever if you do not have a 4x4. Good views over the ocean and the pub/restaurant is a good place to watch the whales, or even to have that beer. A bit of a walk down to the beach (10 minutes).

Accommodation:

Double bedrooms in Main Lodge with ablution block. and own "lapa" with seating, tables, and all facilities, self-catering. 2 Bedroom Cabanas, 3 bedroom Casa, 3 bedroom de Luxe Villa with 2 bathrooms (main en-suite), 4 bedroom " Fisherman's Lodge" with 2 bathrooms, 4 bedroom de Luxe Villas with 2 bathrooms. All units fully equipped for self-catering.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Jeff's Resort

Tel Nelspruit, South Africa: + 27 (0) 13 9321263, Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 7140220. Email: jeffsmoz@mweb.co.za

A pleasant, well-organized, small resort protected from the winds behind sand dunes with easy access to the beach.

Accommodation:

Casas: Family self-catering houses sleeping 8 to 10 people; The Cabanas are small family units sleeping 4 to 6 people. Camping also available. Restaurant and bar.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Paindane Beach Resort

Tel South Africa mobile: + 27 (0) 82 569 3436 or landline Tel/Fax: + 27 (13) 750 3202. Email: paindane.sa@mweb.co.za Website: www.paindane.com

Got kids and want to snorkel from the beach? Then Paindane is one of Mozambique's best places to do this. VERY popular during the South African School holiday periods – usually completely booked out (can take hundreds) over the Christmas season. Almost everywhere you go here has nice views of the sea and inshore reef (Lighthouse Reef). I have a soft spot for Paindane as I really enjoy the freedom of snorkeling and I camped here before it existed and swapped tales of landmines, lost loves and lobsters with a chap who ended up starting the place. Resident dive-centre. The restaurant and bar looks out to the sea. So should you.

Accommodation:

A wide variety of types and styles of accommodation from rondawels and simple 'barracas' to large villas and chalets. Camping too.

Rates: (Peak season - other periods from R75 pp self-catering):

Rondawel (4-bed - 2 x single beds + double bunk bed in lounge). Fully equipped but towels not supplied: R585 per day. Rondawel (6-bed): Same as 4 bed but two bedrooms: R755 per day. Chalet 7-bed: (larger than the rondawels and has verandah: R1010 per day. Villa 6-bed: 3 bedrooms, very spacious: R1500 per day. Villa 8-bed: 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms plus gazebo: R1465 per day. Camping fees per adult R65.00/day and note that during peak periods minimum charges per sit apply. Plug points (for household electric freezer only) R65 per day.

Pleasure Bay

Tel Pretoria, South Africa: +27 12 565 5555, Fax: 546 5204 or mobile: + 27 (0) 83 653 2101. Email: pleasurebay@webmail.co.za Website: www.pleasurebay.com
Run by a pleasant and helpful husband and wife team called Ria and Dick Devilliers. Great views over Paindane Beach (I really mean it!). Restaurant and bar.

Accommodation:

Houses and chalets which include 3 and 4-bedroomed suites, full self-catering facilities and braai (barbeque) area. Bring own bedding and towels.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Coconut Bay (Baia dos Cocos)

Tel Maputo, Mozambique: + 258 (0) 21 415603, Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 311725 (Sr. Armando Hamene), Email: coconutbay@teledata.mz

Not quite as exposed as some of the other lodges in this area so mosquitoes can be a little troublesome at times. Nevertheless a very pleasant place, lacking in that sometimes-impersonal South African attitude, being small, intimate and run by a local, you understand. Restaurant, bar and games room. No high season premium, which I think makes this my kind of operation.

Accommodation:

Camping, fully furnished self-catering rondawels, casitas and chalets.

Rates (Low and High Season same price - per day):

Camping R80 per person (includes power point). 4-bed rondawels: R800. 6-bed chalets: R1200. 2-bed casitas: R480.

Guinjata Bay

Tel: South Africa: + 27 (0) 13 741 2795. Fax: + 27 (0) 13 74 13149. Mobile: + 27 (0) 83 2836918. Email: reservations@guinjata.com Website: www.guinjata.com

Mozambique as (South African) Theme Park, perhaps, but Guinjata have been around long enough to cater to their market efficiently, reliably and consistently. Everything and more that you might expect to be on offer at a beachside playground anywhere in the world, plus that indefinable Mozambican locale. Currently can accommodate upwards of 200 people, and there are plans to expand. Usually absolutely booked out during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Full board, fly-in and self-drive options and conference facilities are available. Guided self-drive safaris can be arranged.

Accommodation:

A wide range of accommodation is available, from simple yet comfortable 2-8 bed roomed self-contained chalets, which are fully serviced daily, to sheltered camping (barracas).

Rates (Low/High Season):

DBB: R485 and R560. Full board: R555 and R610. Self-catering: R200 and R250. Chalets (self-catering) from 1-bedroom (sleeps 4): R525 and R640 to 8-bedroom (sleeps 17): R2200 and R2950.

Sea Blue Diving Safaris

Tel: South Africa landline: + 27 (0) 13 7440357. Mobile: + 27(0) 82 4624916 or + 27 (0) 83 447 3668. Email: seablue@soft.co.za and Website: www.seablue.co.za

Sea Blue was previously based at the Paindane Beach Resort but they are busy opening an independent Dive Centre offering accommodation, north of Paindane.

Accommodation:

This new lodge will soon offer 2 bed, 4 bed, 7 bed and 9 bed chalets, all with bathroom en-suite.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

4. INHAMBANE AND THE BARRA AND TOFO (including Tofinho) PENINSULAS

Inhambane, capital of the province with the same name, is the oldest existing settlement in Mozambique south of Beira. Although Inhambane was perhaps settled by Muslims before 1500, and is thought to have been the most southerly stop on an ancient trade network that stretched north to the then Persia, Mesopotamia and China, it was only recognized as a Portuguese town in 1763. The Portuguese reputation for being excellent town-planners is pleasingly evident in Inhambane which is crossed by tree-lined avenues lined with well-maintained colonial era buildings. Inhambane has managed to retain a decidedly Mediterranean character and is surely the cleanest, best-managed and most pleasant port along the entire coast of Africa (thanks Phil Briggs).

Although there are no bathing beaches (closest is Tofo 25km away), the small boat jetty and dhow anchorage where these graceful craft sweep in and away, gathering and discharging their passengers, make the seafront charming and rather fascinating -especially at sunset. In acknowledgement that this is one of Mozambique's best places to sip a cold sundowner, a large double-storey house, owned by the Catholic Church Sisters (Irmas) and just 5 minutes walk away from the jetty past the governor's 'palace', has been turned into a wonderful guesthouse and backpackers called Pensão Pachiça (after the bags of coal once carried on the heads of slaves) where clean facilities, doubles and dorms, and traditional "Porto-biquan" food as well as comprehensive advice and information are on offer. The neck of land (let's cut the poetry and call it the 'Tofo and Barra Peninsulas') on which Inhambane lies and where the stands of palms stretch to the horizon, do indeed cradle very good beaches, of which both Praia do Tofo and Ponta da Barra are readily accessible either via public transport or in an ordinary sedan car (Barra roads are very sandy so get the village to push you if necessary).

I certainly recommend an early morning (to watch the town wake up) or evening stroll around Inhambane. Perhaps because few tourists actually stay over here, or due to an indefinable sense of pride possessed by its inhabitants, this town has an ancient, timeless charm that is best experienced on foot. Go out on your own and you may discover the old statue of Vasco da Gama, Portuguese Explorer and some say the founder of Mozambique, hidden away behind the Xiphemo Cultural Centre, peer into the many small Mosques, and browse around the Mercado Central and buy colourful capulanas, woven grass mats and reed bags that are strong enough to be used as tool-boxes.

Most of the government buildings are at least a century old, but remember to always ask permission to take photos of these as sometimes the police on duty can become quite agitated. The leaves that hang across the doors of Indian owned shops help to lure clients and too keep out evil influences and criminals. This town takes the siesta time very seriously, but if you need something out of trading hours, simply knock at the door, and someone will come to help you with your order.

Starting in the town of Inhambane, the list below runs according to the distance from town moving to Tofo, Tofinho and Barra.

Note that, as Inhambane has an International Airport, many lodges offer fly-in packages. Note too that, as there are now close to fifty lodges within a 50km radius of Inhambane, flights (and some lodges) are likely to be fully booked so it is advisable to make your reservations at least 6 months in advance, particularly for the Easter and Christmas school holiday periods.

Inhambane Town (Cidade)

Pensão Pachiça and Barra Lighthouse Campsites

Moz mobile (Dennis): + 258 (0) 82 355959. South Africa mobile: + 27 (0) 73 313 2456 Email: pontadabarra@absamail.co.za Website: www.barralighthouse.com

I have to recuse myself from any objectivity here as around a decade ago Pachiça was opened by a friend of mine who shared my romance with Mozambique during those halcyon days before you lot arrive. It started in a gloomy house near the Mercado, and then Richard managed to talk the Catholic Sisters into letting him rent one of the nicest houses in town. Richard, Luzette and then Isobella had the place for a few years, but had to give it up to the very keen and capable hands of Dennis who is now making it the 'best guesthouse' in Moz that it should be. It is also surely the best place in Moz to sip a sundowner and watch the dhows slip by (why if you close you're eyes and drink enough bad Moz rum, you will surely hear the rattles and moans of the slaves with their 'Pachiça' packages on their heads that gave the place its name). Across the road from the bay, no beach so no quad bikes or jet-skis (heaven!). A full bar in the large garden is often host to local musicians and artists. A restaurant (one of the best around) on the premises serves a variety of local cuisine and has the only pizza takeaway in town. And did I tell you that Inhambane is the nicest town in East Africa? (thanks Phillip Briggs).

Accommodation:

Pachiça is a double-story colonial villa with suites and doubles as well as annexes at the back for backpackers.

Rates:

R60 to R80 (seasonal) per person camping at Barra Lighthouse, Pachiça rates on request.

Tofo and Tofinho ('little Tofo' that is now bigger than Tofo!)

There is a 25km long tarmac (all weather) road to Tofo (not Tofu you understand - that's something made of bean curd that folk I know even eat), and that is why many people have started lodges here. So beware, when the South Africans are on holiday (many folk from Maputo as well), this place really rocks, if that is what toots your horn... Out of season it's pleasant and the waves are probably the best for surfing and swimming anywhere in Moz (find Nic Tass, the wild Greek – at quirky Turtle Creek near Tofo - he should know). Listings for Tofo are not comprehensive, some places just have to be left out as some time or other they were not nice to me or the cousin of someone I once knew who was at different schools at the same time as I.) Plenty of chapas (public transport) from Inhambane to Tofo and back – depart around 0600 to 2200 when full.

Tofo Central then going south to Tofinho

From Tofo, where there is an Internet Café called "Tofo On-line", take a 20 minute walk south to Tofinho Beach, which Nic Tass of Turtle Creek calls "Surfers Paradise" because here a shallow reef ledge skirts the sandstone headland and at low tide advanced surfers who can handle the steep take-off have the chance of getting a ride of a lifetime. Just after Casa Barry wait a while and watch the fishermen with their colourful, small boats, or walk with the women catching oysters in the rocks at the point. The Monument of the Fallen Heroes is about 2km from Tofo and this was where the feared Portuguese interior police would chain up dissidents in a sea cave and leave them to be dashed to pieces or drowned by the incoming waves. A small, vandalized, triangular monument on a hillock nearby inland still holds human bones that were recovered from this cave. A spectacular blowhole near the tip of the point is something to see as the incoming tide forces waves into a powerful spray reaching high into the air.

Diving from Tofo

Bamboozi and Casa Barry have reputable dive operations, but for the most professional and (reputedly) safest operator, I can recommend

Diversity Scuba: www.diversityscuba.com based right in the middle of Tofo.

Accommodation from Tofo going south:

Hotel Marinhos.

Tel Inhambane: + 258 (23) 29 015 or fax: 29043. Email: hoteltotofo@yahoo.com.br NOTE RUMOUR HAS IT THAT MARINHOS HAS RECENTLY CLOSED.

The old Hotel Tofo that has been spruced up a bit. Situated right on the beach - unobstructed views of the bay. Excellent at a Carte restaurant serving Portuguese and continental cuisine, fully licensed bar.

Accommodation:

The rooms are smart, clean and comfortable with ceiling fans and en-suite bathroom (hot and cold water), some with bath (and a view of the bay), others with a shower.

Rates:

Non sea-facing rooms: Single: Mt 940 000 bed and breakfast or Mt 1 260 000 bed and breakfast, plus either lunch or dinner. Sharing: Mt1 762 000 or Mt 2 080 000.

Sea-facing rooms: Single: Mt 1 060 000 bed and breakfast or Mt 1 140 000 bed and breakfast, plus either lunch or dinner. Sharing: Mt 1 880 000 or Mt 1 962 000.

Suites (air-conditioned): Single: Mt 1 410 000 bed and breakfast or Mt 1 610 000 bed and breakfast, plus either lunch or dinner. Sharing: Mt 2 585 000 or Mt 2 785 000.

Clube CFM (The Railway Club)

just 50m from the beach and right in the heart of the village. Tel Inhambane: + 258 (0) 29 32 9020/20099.

Good restaurant, regular live music. Basic rooms, phone for rates.

Casa Barry

Tel South Africa mobile: + 27 82 808 5523, fax: + 27 31 762 3469.

Fully equipped dive centre: www.tofoscuba.com specializing in dive training and full dive charters. All dive equipment is provided. Big game fishing charters are available with billfish being caught all year round. Great for families and has had very nice reviews. Restaurant and bar with endless views over Tofo bay.

Accommodation:

12 self-catering chalets (4 bed and 6 bed) built from local hardwoods and thatch, right on the beach. Also Casitas and beach bungalows.

Rates: (First price in season, second, out of season):

Self-catering chalets: 4 person chalets: R880 and R1100 per night. 6 person chalets:

R1100 and R1320 per night. Brick Casitas: 2 person: R550 and R605 per night. Casitas: 2 or 4 person: R440 and R495 per night.

Beach Bungalows: 2 to 4 person: R330 and R385 per night.

Albatroz

Tel: Inhambane, Mozambique: + 25 8 (293) 29005, mobile: + 258 82255845. Email: restalbatroz@teledata.mz Website: www.wetlands.co.za/albatroz

As you arrive in Tofo, look up into the dunes to your right and you will see Albatroz amongst the trees. The proprietor is a ski-boat fisherman with a decade of experience in these waters, so if you fish, then look no further as deep-sea fishing charters are on offer from R1800 to R2500 per day that includes tackle, bait and fuel.

Accommodation:

Four to eight sleeper self-catering chalets.

Rates:

Dinner, Bed and breakfast: Low Season from R400 per person, high Season R450. Chalets (bed only): Low season: R575 to R950 per night, high season: R450 to R1300.

Aquatico Ocean Lodge

Tel Mozambique mobile: + 258 82 8572850, fax: 293 29035,
Email: info@aquaticolodge.com, Website: www.aquaticolodge.com

A newly built lodge with A-frame chalets overlooking the beach. Aimed at families, divers and fishermen, activities such as horse riding, surfing and quad biking are on offer.

Accommodation:

Thatched A-frame self-catering cottages that sleep four people on two levels. The kitchens are fully equipped and the lodge's restaurant offers a wholesome variety of dishes.

Rates:

I emailed to enquire, but still no reply, so use the phone.

Casa John

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 827 5745, fax: 827 9838, Email:
john@casajohn.co.za, website: www.casajohn.co.za

The last place in Tofinho going south so enjoy a bit of solitude. Designed and built by John and Jessica Youens, the solidly built houses are well furnished with all you need for a relaxed stay. I could just sit on the verandah and watch the waves, whales and water all day. The trusty manager, Domingo is on call to care for your needs - and will oversee daily cleaning, and do it all with that trademark wide Mozambican smile.

Accommodation:

Family and friends can spread out with ease between the three bedrooms and two bathrooms that accommodate 6 people. An enclosed courtyard in the centre of each house provides sheltered space should the wind pick up (very exposed spot, this!).

Rates (Low/High Season):

3 Bed roomed House: R1100 and R1430. 2 bed roomed house: R770 and R990.

Turtle Cove Surf Camp

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 0944340. Email: bookings@mozcon.com Website:
www.mozcon.com and www.feralsurf.com

Turn right about 1km before you get to Tofo, 20 minute walk to the beach. This is where you may find one of the characters of Mozambique, one Nic Tass, surfer and convivial rogue extraordinaire. At last a place that is not a poor clone of the rest and not aimed at anyone definable. Relaxed, welcoming and simply a fine place to chill and to chat at the bar. I'd eat here too.

Read the following press release (Must have been written by Nic, I have corrected the pitiful spelling and Greek grammar):

Surf perfection in the wild & exotic paradise of Tofo, Mozambique:

Surfer's Village Global Surf News, 11 November, 2005 : "Turtle Cove Surf Camp is situated 20kms from the charming town of Inhambane on the sub-tropical coastline of Mozambique, approximately 500kms North of the capital, Maputo. A rustic and chilled out lodge, built with an exotic blend of Mozambican, Ethiopian and Moroccan architecture, the surf camp offers outstanding surfing and a host of other activities alongside comfortable accommodation options, a restaurant and a bar all with a distinctly African flavour.

The short drive East from Inhambane with its street cafes and colourful markets brings one to the ocean side of the peninsula and the lovely village of Tofo Beach and Tofinho. Set amongst hundreds of palm trees, this village is home to excellent waves for beginners while the next point, Tofinho, provides a high performance right hand break for more experienced surfers.

The vibe at Turtle Cove Surf Camp is geared around surfing with videos, camera, surfboard rental and a fully qualified resident surf instructor and lifeguard.

Tofo and Tofinho in Mozambique are the perfect spot for a surf school. The Indian Ocean waters are clean and warm, averaging around 24 degrees C. The main wave, Tofinho Point, is definitely not for beginners. It's a rock ledge set up that wraps around a headland. The

wave breaks just off the ledge, on sand, and follows the shape off the ledge making it a very hollow wave, especially on low tide (it loves the spring tides).

The next break is Gull's Point, another quality right-hander that actually links up to Tofinho Point on a big swell, creating an amazingly long ride. Heading about a kilometre north to the next bay brings one to the main beach of Tofo. A wide bay protected from the southerly wind and swell makes this a perfect venue for learning to surf. The swells are clean and gentle with sandbanks that gradually produce bigger waves at the Northern end of the bay - an ideal spot for beginners. And there are other surf spots in the area that work better in different winds, ensuring that there is nearly always good surf to be had. The surf is seasonal, the peak being over winter (May-August), but there is a steady flow of waves all year round. The water is marvelously warm and dolphins often frequent the break.

Surf instructor - Dominic King: Dom's father was an avid surfer and taught him to surf in the shore breaks of Seal Point, Cape St. Francis, from the age of 8 years old. Living on the Natal South Coast surfing became a way of life and Dom's passion became traveling and discovery; the search and the soul of surfing. 'I went in search of quality, uncrowded peace and perfection. My travels took me to the South Pacific, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, New Zealand, Indo, Morocco, Europe and Madagascar'. Now a qualified surf instructor, lively and energetic, Dom is passionate about sharing the stoke of surfing with beginners.

Activities for non-surfers and spouses: Turtle Cove Surf Camp also offers a broad range of activities for non-surfers. These include power yoga classes for passionate yogis, Capoeira lessons, sushi nights and occasional live music around the fire. Spend your days scuba diving or snorkeling on the many exquisite reefs or swimming with the whale sharks. There are also horse rides on the beach, quad bike trails, sunset Dhow sailing and much, much more! Relaxed and intimate, Turtle Cove is a place for making friends. It has a unique and friendly atmosphere and continues to be popular with travelers and those looking for a touch of adventure and untamed Mozambican magic at affordable prices".

Accommodation:

Rustic semi-traditional 'casas' with two beds and communal ablutions. Camping sites.

Rates:

R70 to R150 per person.

Annastasea

A Swahili styled very spacious and cool compound which consists of a main building (fully-equipped kitchen, dining room, lounge) for 12 people, and 4 en-suite rooms which all have 1 double bed with moszi net and bedding, 2 more single beds added if needs be. Water is from a borehole and is drinkable, hot water by boiler. 20 minute walk to the beach.

Rates:

Out of season R150 per person, in season the place must be booked in its entirety at R2500 per night.

Tofo Central and then going north

Nordine's Lodge

Another place to stay, right at the beachfront.

Accommodation: Bungalows at Mt600 000 (Private shower/toilet). Dorms for Mt120 000.00 per person/night.

Fatima's Nest

Tel Maputo: + 258 (0) 21 302994, mobile: + 258 (0) 82 307087, Email:

fatima@virconn.com, Website: www.mozambiquebackpackers.com

Owned by the same Fatima of 'Fatima's Maputo Backpackers' fame. Indeed perched like an albatross nest on top of the dunes and so usually the wind keeps the mosquitoes away. Note that September to November can be particularly windy and somewhat uncomfortable if in exposed spots like this. 10 minutes walking north of Tofo bus stop at the market. Bar & Restaurant, pool table, tennis and other games. Kitchen facilities, and a bonfire every night. Wake up with the sun and the sea view in your face. Read and enjoyed James Michener's 'Drifters'? Then this is a good place to try and recapture those days. Surf Boards, Body Boards and Snorkeling equipment for rent.

Accommodation and Rates:

Bungalows overlooking the sea Mt250 000 double.

Dorms, that sleep 3 to 4 people Mt100 000 per person/night.

Fixed tent, for 2 people, for Mt200 000 per night.

Camping is Mt50 000 per person/night.

Bamboози Beach Lodge and Backpackers

Tel and fax Inhambane: + 258 (0) 293 29040. Mobile: + 258 (0) 82 459056 Email:

bookings@bamboози.com Website: www.bamboози.com

Reached after a 40 minute walk (5km drive in soft sand so deflate tyres to 1 bar) north from Tofo, but don't do this alone as there have been one or two muggings and rapes in this area. Same applies to the beach up to the Barra Lighthouse. Bamboози's has attained a sort of cult status and I think that Des has worked hard enough to deserve this. The chalets, huge rondawel thatched backpacker dorm, and campsites do not have sea views, but the setting against high dunes under the palms is just about right. Excellent pub and restaurant (truly memorable meals!) about half hour walking on the beach. Be warned that the pub pumps out the music until sparrow's fart, and if in a chalet you better be prepared to party as you will not sleep much. Resident dive operator with practice pool on-site.

Accommodation:

Large round thatched dorm for backpackers, huts, chalets and honeymoon suites.

Rates: (Low/High Season, per person):

Dorm: R75 – R90, Huts: R120 – R150, Chalets: R350 – R500 and Honeymooners: R350 – R600.

The Barra Lighthouse and Peninsula

From Inhambane Town take the Tofo road and carry on straight at Bar Babalaza onto a sandy road that can be a challenge if you are not in a 4x4. This 20km stretch of beach is one of Mozambique's best but the proliferation of lodges (over twenty at my last count) has detracted a bit from the isolation and peace that Barra once offered. Nevertheless here you will find some of the best lodges in Mozambique with consistently high service, food and accommodation standards.

Lodges at Barra going north from the Lighthouse. Note, probably not quite in the correct order, and if I have left any out, it's nothing personal, believe me.

Lighthouse Camping

Tel: Moz mobile: + 258 82 355 9590 (Dennis), Email: pontadabarra@absamail.co.za Website: www.barralighthouse.com

In the shadow of the lighthouse, right on Barra point with an endless view down Barra's beaches. Pretty rough and ready (clean ablutions with hot water), but this has the advantage of attracting a laid-back and friendly crowd. Pub and good restaurant on site, and (music to my ears), **QUAD BIKES ARE NOT WELCOME.**

Accommodation and Rates:

Presently camping only. High Season: R80 per adult per night, low season R60 per adult (lower rates for kids).

Sunset Lodge

Tel: South Africa: + 27 (0) 39 3112100, Email: g-island@venturenet.co.za

Could also be called 'Sunrise Lodge' as from here you can watch the sun rising from the Indian Ocean, and then set over the mangroves. Jimmy and Desire Evans who built, own and run Sunset are great hosts. Deep sea fishing with Big Blue Charter, as well as snorkeling, scuba diving and ocean safaris. I hope that the pub is complete for my next visit.

Accommodation:

6 Fully equipped, en-suite family units sleeping 10 to 12 people.

Rates: Enquire when booking.

Anda Cá

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 358713.

An intimate lodge ideal for families and small groups. Usually only open during the high season or when reservations have been made. Homemade meals served at your request and there is a bar with DSTV for you sports nutters.

Accommodation:

En-suite chalets overlooking the beach.

Rates:

Phone and enquire.

Palm Grove Lodge and Dive Charter

Tel and fax, South Africa: + 27 (0) 13 741 5287. Mozambique mobile: + 258 82 265 848.

Email: palm-grove@mweb.co.za Website: www.palmgrove.co.za

Rustic but long-established place with facilities and services able to handle large numbers of guests. Bar and restaurant (sea food a speciality).

Accommodation:

Luxury rooms on a DBB basis. Self-catering 8-bed Casas (chalets) and 4-bed casitas (huts) with bedding, cutlery, crockery, refrigerator, hot water, 24hr electricity and servant.

Rates:

(In and Out of Season): Casas R720 to R1200 per day. Casitas: R500 to R700 per day. DBB: R500 – R600 per day per person.

Barra Lodge

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 (0) 11 314 3355. Email:

reservations@barralodge.co.za Website: www.barralodge.co.za

Old Mozambique hands, Dave and Jill Law, opened this very popular (very family friendly) well-managed and comfortable lodge over a decade ago. All the ambience and facilities of a traditional hotel, in a truly Mozambican setting with local bands performing every Wednesday and Saturday during busy periods. Great pool and one of best beach bars (and restaurant) in Mozambique – don't miss the special buffets. On-site Scuba operator, full beach activities including overnight Catamaran trip, horse riding - regular fly-in package specials on offer.

Accommodation:

Large, fully equipped self-catering, en suite family chalets or up to 10 people, with large balcony overlooking the sea. The Casitas are the double en-suite units with balcony and sea views. Budget accommodation in the bunkhouse with communal kitchen area and ablution block with hot running water.

Rates: (Low/High Season)

Casitas (DBB): R595 and R744 per person sharing. Self-catering cottages: R996 and R1115 per day. Bunkhouse: R70 and R80 per person, per day.

Fair Winds Cottages

Tel: South Africa: + 27 (0) 39 311 2100. Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 393231. Email: g-island@venturenet.co.za

Nice cottages built at a point where the sand spit narrows so there is very easy access both to the sea and to the mangrove estuary.

Accommodation:

Fully furnished, large self-catering cottages with 3 or 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, lounge and kitchen.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Makolo Bay

Tel: South Africa mobile: + 27 (0) 84 5609125. Johannesburg landline:

+ 27 (0) 11 471 3865. Email: info@makolobay.co.za Website: www.makolobay.co.za

I am tempted to say 'more of the same', but that would be unfair as Makolo has its own type of charm.

Accommodation:

Fully furnished, en suite, self-catering chalets sleeping 8 people, with large sea facing verandahs.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Flamingo Bay Water Lodge

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 314 3355, fax: 314 3239. Email:

reservations@flamingobay.co.za Website: www.flamingobay.co.za Lodge contact numbers:

Tel Inhambane: + 258 23 56001/56005, fax: + 258 23 56001/56005. Email:

flamingobay@teledata.mz

Built on stilts in the Mangrove estuary so when the tide goes out, it's high and dry (which is actually a plus!). The main building housing the pool deck, restaurant, lounge and pub etc was being re-built (burned down just after opening in January 2005) when I visited, but I managed to sneak a peak into one of the very luxurious chalets. Maldives style, yes, but are the chalets perhaps a tad close to one another? Nevertheless, nothing like this level of style and service anywhere else in the country. Scuba diving, snorkeling, ocean safaris, yacht trips, quad bike tours, horse riding; canoeing and fishing can be arranged.

Accommodation:

Luxurious air-conditioned, en-suite individual chalets with stunning sunset views over the estuary. Private verandahs with steps leading down to the crystal clear estuary waters.

Rates: Note: Low season: 01 January - 14 December. High: 15 December - 15 January.

DBB per person: Low Season: R950. High Season: R1150 sharing. Fly-in packages on offer.