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## INTRODUCTION TO MOZAMBIQUE

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## 1. Introduction

From the overgrown remnants of Portuguese outposts along the mighty Zambezi to the ancient, mysterious Mwenu Mutapa kingdom and the enchanting and unique Mozambique Island, Mozambique offers an enticing and fascinating blend of cultures.

Arab dhows and modern speedboats crisscross the translucent tropical waters of a coral-fringed coastline, where scuba-diving opportunities rival the world's best. One of the lasting legacies of Portuguese and Arab traders and colonists are the colourful settlements found along the coast. Maputo, Inhambane, Beira, Quelimane and Pemba display a variety of architectural styles – from Manueline (see p. 27) to gaudy 1930s-inspired Art Deco.

So far fortune-seekers have failed in their quest to find the legendary mines of King Solomon, said to contain hoards of gold, yet the stunning diversity of coastal, riverine, mountain, and forest environments are Mozambique's real treasure trove – home to a splendid array of fauna and flora – interspersed with traditional villages.

Although sadly neglected during the years of civil upheaval, the Gorongosa National Park, Maputo Elephant Reserve, Bazaruto National Park and the Niassa Reserve are being rehabilitated, while Tropical Island gems like Magaruque, Benguerra and Bazaruto offer seclusion, luxurious accommodation and excellent diving, fishing and bird-watching.

Whether your visit finds you on one of the endless deserted beaches or diving off the coral isles, you will discover a country filled with the enchanting sights and soothing sounds of Africa.

### ***Southern Mozambique***

The Mozambican Plain (Planície Moçambicana) with its endless sweeping savannas, meandering rivers, a string of coastal lakes and high sand dunes, dominates the landscape of the southern region. Although most of the land lies below 100 metres, the eastern border with Swaziland and South Africa is marked by the Lebombo Mountains which do reach over 500 metres occasionally. At its mouth the Limpopo River drains more than 60% of this sector, while the Incomati, Inharrime and Nhavarre rivers have drainage basins covering the rest of the area.

The low altitude and the fact that much of the southern region falls within the driest parts of Mozambique results in the characteristic swampy grasslands dotted with mopane and acacia trees. The coastal dune belt is covered by dense scrub and forest, which gives way to deciduous miombo woodland a little further inland. The flood plains of the rivers are populated by herbaceous meadows and savanna well suited to the saline alluvial soils. The higher margin in the south-west is characterized by distinctive Lebombo savannas. Though the once extensive mangrove swamps have been almost completely drained in the vicinity of Maputo city, those in the Maputo Elephant Reserve and around the edge of Inhambane Bay are still thriving.

From Piti and Chinguti in the south to Poelela and Manhali in the north, this region of Mozambique is dotted by 24 fair-sized freshwater lakes. This is a feature unique to this area of the country, as there are no natural coastal lakes anywhere else in Mozambique.

People of the Shangaan tribe make up 70% of the population of the southern region, with the Ronga nation comprising most of the balance. This is also the part of Mozambique where the influence of the Portuguese colonial period is most evident. Catholicism is the dominant religion, while 50% of the inhabitants of Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo provinces speak Portuguese, with the proportion rising to 70% in Maputo city itself.

South of the Sabi River (Rio Save) is Mozambique's southern region made up of the provinces of Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo. The northernmost point of this region is Nova Mambone at the mouth of the Rio Save and the southernmost location is Ponta do Ouro. Pafúri and Cabo Inhambane are the western and easternmost reaches respectively. The southern region's highest point is Mount M'Pondue (801 metres) in the Lebombo range on

the border with Swaziland. Otherwise the rest of the land rarely rises more than 100 metres above sea level.

All three provinces comprising the southern region have boundaries with the Indian Ocean's Mozambique Channel, with Inhambane's coastline, at over 600 kilometres, being the longest. The powerful Mozambique Channel, with its inshore counter-currents, has created significant coastal features such as spits, dunes, lagoons, sand bars and islands. The best known of these shoreline attractions are lagoa Uembje at Bilene, Pontas do Ouro and Pomene, and the Bazaruto Archipelago. Long, white, sandy beaches, protected in the main by offshore coral and rock reefs, border almost the entire length of this portion of Mozambique. Three main rivers drain southern Mozambique. In order of size these are the Komati (Incomati), Limpopo and Sabi (Save) rivers. The lack of elevation in this very flat area called the Mozambican Plain (Planície Moçambicana) prevents the formation of spectacular features such as waterfalls and rapids, with wide meanders, marshes and mangrove swamps being dominant fluvial features. Suitable dam sites are consequently few and far between. Inhambane Province has no major dams and Maputo and Gaza provinces only one each (Umbuluzi and Massingir, respectively). Much use is made of ground water and natural lakes to supply the southern region's towns and cities with water for domestic and industrial usage.

The surface geology of this area is characterized by the sedimentary lavas of the Lebombo Mountains and the depositional sand flats of the Limpopo and Changane rivers. The limits of the continental shelf extend over 100 kilometres out to sea off Beira, accounting for the formation of the islands and sand bars in the mouth of the Rio Púnguè, as well as for the immense delta of the Rio Zambeze, which extends for 50 kilometres beyond the coast and is over 150 kilometres wide during flood season (April to July at the mouth).

### ***Northern Mozambique***

Northern Mozambique is naturally divided by Malawi into two distinct regions: the north-east and the north-west. The north-eastern region consists of the provinces of Zambezia, Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa. Extending from Chinde on the Zambezi delta in the south to Namoto village at the mouth of the Rovuma, and from Cóbue near Lake Malawi's Likoma Islands in the west to Mozambique Island in the east, this is a vast area of mysterious mountains (Namúli and Unango), historic settlements (Angoche, Mozambique and Ibo islands), idyllic islands (Ilhas das Quirimbas) and wildlife (Niassa Reserve).

The coastline is over 1 000 kilometres long. Tiny coral creatures that thrive in the warm tropical water have produced about one hundred coral isles and islets. The main island grouping off Zambezia is the Moebase Archipelago. The Angoche Archipelago lies adjacent to Nampula Province, while the remote Ilhas das Quirimbas lie between Pemba and the Rovuma. Deep, vast inland bays are also a notable feature of this seaboard, with Nacala harbour among the world's deepest and Pemba Bay one of the world's largest natural ports.

Mozambique's coastal flats, hundreds of kilometres wide in the south, are at their narrowest in this region, where the Mozambican Plateau replaces the Mozambican Plain as the dominant relief feature. This is the result of an underlying geological structure, composed of immense volcanic batholiths exposed by erosion throughout Nampula, Zambezia and Niassa provinces in the form of obelisk-shaped granite domes. Mounts Namúli (2 419 m) in Zambezia, Mitucué in Nampula and Jeci in Niassa are all examples of granite domes. Apart from these enormous basalts, metamorphic rocks occur widely and marble quarries operate at Montepuez in Cabo Delgado province. Minerals and semi-precious stones such as tourmaline, aquamarine and Morganite occur around Nampula town, Nacala and Morrua.

Major rivers in this region include the Zambezi; the Rovuma, forming the boundary between Mozambique and Tanzania; the Lugela, rising on the Malawi border near Mt. Mulanje; the Molócue, which has its source on Mt. Namúli; the Lúrio, which forms the boundary between Nampula and Cabo Delgado; and the Lugenda, draining lakes Chiuta in Malawi and Amaramba in Mozambique. Yet another major freshwater feature is Lake Malawi (Lago Niassa), with a 250-kilometre-long coast alongside Niassa Province.

The north-western region comprises the province of Tete. Resulting from the penetration by Portuguese explorers and traders up the Zambezi valley as far as Zambia's Luangwa River, this remote region is different and very distinctive from the rest of the country. The Cahora Bassa dam and hydro-electric scheme is located in the Zambezi River in the heart of Tete Province, and the resultant 270-kilometre-long lake is both a fishing mecca and a highway to wilderness areas otherwise inaccessible. Tete, the province's capital city, dates back 300 years and has long been a hub of trade in southern Africa. Today the suspension bridge spanning the Zambezi at Tete is still on the trans-African highway and is the only crossing point (apart from the Sena bridge) for vehicles downstream of Chirundu.

The western border is formed by the Luangwa River. Bin-Bin village on the Malawi frontier lies on the eastern extremity, while Missale is the northernmost town and Chindio on the junction of the Shire and Zambezi rivers is the southernmost point. Although the Zambezi drains the entire area, major tributaries such as the Luangwa, Lula, Luenha and Revúbué have carved deep valleys in Tete province before flowing into the Zambezi. From the bottom of the Zambezi valley, to the tip of the Angónia plateau's Mt. Dómuè (2 095 m) on the Malawi border, this area of Mozambique exhibits many landscape and climatic variations. Geologically, this region is a complex mix of volcanic, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks. Tete province is rich in minerals such as coal, gold, copper, iron and nickel, as evidenced by the coal mine at Moatize and the alluvial gold diggings around Chifumbazi. Lava flows surface as hills on the Zimbabwe border around Nyamapanda, and intrusive granite batholiths surface as domes around Muende on the Angónia Plateau. Large areas of erosion occur within the boundaries of the Zambezi drainage basin and depositional flats formed by the flooding Zambezi are present on its banks, where it joins the Shire River.

## **2. The Land**

Mozambique borders on South Africa and Swaziland to the south, Zimbabwe to the west and Zambia and Malawi in the northwest. The Rovuma River forms the remote boundary with Tanzania. The Indian Ocean's Mozambique Channel flanks a splendid coastline which is over 2500km (1554 miles) long. The south of the country is characterized by the extensive, well-treed savanna of the Mozambican Plain, where altitudes rarely range above 200m (656ft). The Mozambican Plateau dominates the central and northern regions, where rugged highlands are deeply incised by river valleys, and peaks such as Binga and Gorongosa in Manica, Chiperone in Zambezia, Namuli in Nampula and Unango in Niassa are located. Most of Mozambique's tourist destinations are located along the southern coastline, or tucked away on islands such as Inhaca and the unique Bazaruto Archipelago, yet the interior, from the hot springs of Zambezia province and the granite domes of Nampula to the Gorongosa forests and Quissico lakes, is not without its attractions.

### ***Mountains and Rivers***

Mozambique is cleft by the wide valley of the languid Zambezi River, which has gathered runoff from five countries and coursed over 3000km (1864 miles) before entering Mozambique at Feira. Here it is temporarily tamed by the 270km (168-mile) Lake Cahora Bassa with its 160m (525ft) wall and the potential to generate 4000 megawatts of hydroelectricity. Below the dam wall the river passes under the bridges AT Tete and Sena before dispersing some 600km (373 miles) downstream into the myriad channels of its 100km-wide (62-mile) delta.

Other major rivers that flow through Mozambique are the crocodile-infested Incomáti, Limpopo and Save in the south and the Licungo, Ligonha, Lúrio, Lugenda and Rovuma in the north. The latter deserves more than a mention: not only does it form Mozambique's frontier with Tanzania, it also remains a formidable barrier. It isn't spanned by a single bridge and there is only one vehicle ferry (AT THE MOUTH) affording overland access to or from the north – when the ferry breaks down, crossings of the Rovuma are possible by dugout canoe only.

The 2436m (7993ft) Binga Peak in the Chimanimani sandstone range ranks as Mozambique's highest mountain, while the granite crags of Mount Unango in Niassa present a challenge even to the most accomplished of rock-climbers. Religious ceremonies take place in caves on the slopes of Mount Namuli in Zambezia.

In northern Tete province, which is notorious for its sticky tropical climate, the slopes of Mount Dómuè and the Moravian Plateau provide welcome relief from the oppressive heat.

### ***Seas and Shores***

Over 1200 species of fish have been identified in the coastal waters of Mozambique, most of which inhabit the extensive coral reefs that line the coast, particularly off Maputaland, around Inhaca Island, in the area of Inhambane and Pebane and along the Quirimba Archipelago in the far north. Kingfish, mackerel, and tuna, a vital link in the food chain of the ocean and a popular catch with the locals, are attracted to the nourishment provided by the corals and their associated sea life. In terms of the variety of marine organisms, Mozambique's reefs are on a par with Australia's magnificent Great Barrier Reef, except that they are far less crowded and commercialized. Mozambique's superb reefs are delicate and as yet unspoilt marine wildernesses, their beauty and commercial value increasing the urgent need for formal protection.

South of the Save River, the coast is characterized by a string of inland lakes not fed by rivers and cut off from the sea by high parabolic (bowl-shaped) dunes stabilized by vegetation. The largest expanses of water in this coastal lake zone are lakes Uembje (Bilene), Quissico and Inharrime. Travelers on the main road between Maputo and Inhambane will be treated to scenic views from convenient vantage points.

### ***Climate***

Two major factors influencing Mozambique's climate are the warm Indian Ocean current moving south from the equator, and the altitude of the Mozambican Plateau. Temperatures along the coast and in the lower-lying areas of the plain and the Zambezi valley increase as one moves further north. Mozambique experiences rain mainly during November–April, while August is the driest month in most areas. The wettest provinces are Niassa (Metangula has 300mm, or 12in, during March) and Cabo Delgado (Pemba has some 260mm, or 10in, between December–February). The driest part of the country is Pafúri in Gaza Province where average annual precipitation rarely reaches 300mm (12in).

### ***Tropical Cyclones (Hurricanes or Typhoons elsewhere in the world)***

The tropical cyclone is one of the most powerful and potentially destructive forms of atmospheric circulation. Falling just outside the region between 8°S–15°S, where the Indian Ocean temperatures are above 27°C (81°F), the Mozambique Channel experiences major cyclones every few years, few of which move further south than Nacala. Recent cyclones which have wreaked destruction on Mozambique were Eline and Hudah in 2000 which flooded much of southern Mozambique, particularly the Limpopo valley, and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

### ***Plant Life***

Much of Mozambique's temperate rainforests such as the ones around Dondo, Nova Vanduzi and Goigói have been devastated by logging and slash-and-burn agriculture. Yet magnificent Mopane woodlands still dominate the southern plains, where battered old baobab trees flourish around Funhalouro in Inhambane province and along the northern coastline. Both species are important food sources: protein-rich Mopane worms are widely eaten, while young baobabs are edible in their entirety. The woodland mahogany, or nkuhlu, is widely distributed throughout Mozambique. Its spread is often greater than its height and can sometimes be seen to shelter an entire African kraal (homestead).

### ***Wildlife***

Although the devastation of Mozambique's wildlife is unprecedented in Africa in recent times, programmes to reintroduce those species which attract tourists are now gathering momentum. Elephant can be viewed in the extreme south (Fúti channel), and in the far north along the banks of the Rovuma River in the Reserva do Niassa. Buffalo, lion, leopard, Roan and Sable exist, albeit in very small and threatened numbers, in the Gorongosa, Niassa and Zambezi delta regions. Sea mammals were less severely affected by the war and whales, dolphins and dugongs may be spotted along the entire length of the coastline. Mozambique's birdlife is exceptionally varied. In excess of 900 species have been spotted south of the Zambezi. Favoured viewing spots are the Chimanimani Highlands around Goigoi, Dombe and Espungabera, Monte Gorongosa and Parque Nacional da Gorongosa region, Gurúè and Milange in Zambezia, Metangula and Cobúè in Niassa, Panda in Gaza and in the Maputo Elephant Reserve.

### ***Conserving Mozambique's Natural Heritage***

The exciting news is that Parque Nacional de Limpopo (PNL) which is adjacent to South Africa's famed Kruger National Park has now been proclaimed and some of the fences along the border between the two countries have already been removed. It is proposed that an area of upwards of 100 000 km<sup>2</sup> on the Mozambique side will be incorporated into the Greater Limpopo National Park.

The pitiful state of Gorongosa National Park, once rated among the best of Africa's wildlife sanctuaries, is indicative of the desperate position of Mozambique's fauna. Hope is on the horizon for Gorongosa as the Carr Foundation have signed a one-year memorandum of understanding with the Mozambique government and if this is agreeable, this will extend to a complete rehabilitation of the Park over a period of five years. Of seven proclaimed parks and reserves in Mozambique (Limpopo, Banhine, Zinave, Gorongosa, Bazaruto Archipelago, Gili

and Niassa) only Limpopo, Gorongosa, Niassa and the Archipelago are ready to receive visitors. The Elephant Reserve across Maputo Bay was the first of the mainland parks to be rehabilitated, and may be visited but, while camping is allowed at Ponta Milibangalala, there are no permanent facilities.

### **3. History in Brief**

About 2000 years ago, climatic shifts caused the Sahara Desert of North Africa to expand southward, triggering a wave of migration from northwest Africa through the equatorial regions to southeast Africa. Northern Bantu-speaking tribes clashed with the nomadic hunter-gatherers of the south and displaced them. By the time Arab traders first landed on Mozambique's offshore islands at around AD300, the aboriginal mainland inhabitants had been absorbed into Bantu society. Muslim traders, masters of the nuances of African trade and cultural practices, established alliances with tribes through intermarriage.

Vasco da Gama is generally honoured as the 'discoverer' of Mozambique. The span of coast which Da Gama's small fleet of four vessels passed on Christmas day 1497, was named Natal. Early in 1498 he anchored off an estuary near Inharrime in Inhambane province.

During AD300–1500, none of the Indian Ocean powers maintained a fleet and so they were helpless when Portuguese warships arrived at Sofala and Mozambique Island in the early 16th century. After erecting a fort here, Portuguese soldiers began demanding 'duties' on the cloth, ivory and gold leaving the area.

#### ***The Mwenu Mutapa***

Portuguese traders were largely ignorant of the interior, but desperately desired to eclipse Spanish successes in the Americas, and so fabricated the myth of a fabulously rich empire which they called Monomotapa, after its leader, the Mwenu Mutapa. During the 18th century it was not so much the promise of untold wealth that motivated the Portuguese Crown to pacify the tribes of the interior, but rather the murders of several missionaries and traders.

#### ***Portuguese Expansion and Local Resistance***

By 1550, the Portuguese had wrested the coastal trading monopoly from the Arabs. The coastal forts needed to guard their dominion, however, were disease-ridden, the pay was low, discipline oppressive and Portuguese women a rarity. Men frequently ventured inland to trade firearms, and married the daughters of chiefs just like their Islamic predecessors. These opportunists had no official sanction and were largely ignored by the Portuguese authorities, until the murder, in 1561, of Gonçalo da Silveira, a fanatical Castilian missionary bent on the conversion of the Monomotapa. His murder came at a time when Portugal was looking to place more people under its land tax umbrella. In 1571 the Portuguese king sent a consort with presents (never to be delivered) for the Karanga king. Four years later Francisco Barreto left for the Monomotapa gold mines, only to be thwarted by local tribes. In 1573, a second expedition wiped out Muslim traders at Sena and erected earth-walled forts at Tete and Sena. This extension of Portuguese control enabled them to subjugate most of the Karanga chieftaincies by the mid-18th century.

#### ***The Prazo Problem***

Until they were outlawed in the 1930s, the prazos de coroa (leased crown estates) were one of Mozambique's most fascinating features. They were not introduced to deprive the indigenous people of their land, but evolved when white renegades established niches for themselves within African society, often through marriage. The prazo communities produced new cultural and social practices which reflected their Afro–Asian–European mix.

The Portuguese crown granted land to religious orders, noblemen and discharged soldiers who often recruited private armies to extract further concessions from local chiefs. By 1670, muzungu (Afro-Portuguese) warlords had extorted most of northern Karangaland for themselves. Predictably, this lawlessness prevented the development and taxation of the region, thus becoming a major headache for the Portuguese administration. The government offered to recognize land claims on condition that prazo holders kept order, maintained roads, provided soldiers and paid for the upkeep of government buildings. In an attempt to increase the number of European women in Mozambique, prazo concessions were granted to orphaned girls and widows. Since women were often left widowed several times, some (the famed Donas) managed to accumulate vast tracts of land by way of a succession of marriages.

### ***Slaves, Pirates and the Scramble for Africa***

In 1808 a fleet of war canoes appeared along the northern Mozambique coast, the biggest of several assembled by Betsimisaraka chiefs from Madagascar between 1800 and 1820, in search of slaves. The ferocity of the invaders partially depopulated the coast from Kilwa (Tanzania) to Ilha de Moçambique (Mozambique Island). In 1816 the Afro-Portuguese on Ibo retreated to the protection of the fort and successfully repelled the pirates. These attacks decimated communities which had themselves lived off slave trade for centuries.

The east African barter in slaves accelerated when France, expanding sugar plantations on its Indian Ocean possessions, needed extra labour. Despite having banned other European powers from trading on the Mozambican coast, the Portuguese quickly instituted large-scale slaving, receiving foodstuffs and silver in return. By 1775 the French were exporting about 1500 slaves a year from the islands Ibo and Mozambique. When the Napoleonic Wars disrupted the slave trade between West Africa and America, buyers looked to Mozambique, which exported 30,000 souls in 1828. In 1875 the Portuguese abolished slavery and prazos, attempting to replace them with citizenship, legal rights and the duty to pay taxes and do military service. During the 1884 Berlin Congress, Britain contested Portugal's presence in Mozambique, insisting that effective occupation was the only acceptable basis for territorial claims. When Cecil J Rhodes' British South Africa Company officially claimed free navigation of the Zambezi, Portugal countered by sending two steam gunships upriver to protect their interests. The British demanded their retreat and issued orders to mobilize their own fleet. The Portuguese capitulated in January 1890, and although some wrangling followed, Mozambique's borders have changed little since then.

### ***Greater Autonomy and World War I***

Ilha da Moçambique lost its capital status to the southern port of Lourenço Marques in 1902 due to the increased economic links with South Africa. Despite Lisbon giving increased autonomy to Mozambique in the 1920s, Portugal-oriented administrators continued to rule the colony, excluding the settlers and Afro-Portuguese from power. During the closing stages of World War I Portugal joined the winning side to secure its colonial possessions. In 1926 a military coup overthrew the government of Portugal and by 1930 a professor of finance, Antonio Salazar, began to take control of the country's affairs, creating a closed economic system with the colonies. The Colonial Act of 1933 made Mozambique a province of the Portuguese state with a common law and centrally planned economy.

### ***From Liberation Struggle to Democracy***

After World War II, awakening African nationalism began to challenge the colonial powers in Africa. Portuguese attempts to isolate Mozambique from this trend were thwarted by returning migrant labourers who had been exposed to liberation politics in South Africa. Manu, an early Mozambican independence movement, gathered in 1960 to petition the Portuguese administrator in Mueda, but troops ended the demonstration by shooting dozens of civilians. Atrocities like this helped to politicize Mozambicans and Frelimo (Mozambican Liberation Front) was formed in Dar es Salaam in 1962. Frelimo's armed wing, the FPLM (Popular Mozambique Liberation Forces), launched its armed struggle with an attack on Chai in northern Mozambique on 25 September 1964. Initially, Frelimo's campaign was unsuccessful, but after the assassination of leader Eduardo Mondlane in 1969, new commandant, Samora Machel, mounted attacks as far south as Tete and Manica. Meanwhile the Portuguese had been diverting investment from Mozambique to the EEC (European Economic Community). When the April 1974 revolution brought a new anti-colonial regime to power in Portugal, Mozambican soldiers defected, political prisoners were released and the governor general recalled to Lisbon. Chaos ensued and white settlers fled to South Africa in their thousands. On 25 June 1975 Mozambique gained independence, Portugal recognizing the Frelimo government without insisting on elections. Shortly afterwards almost all skilled administrators and workers had departed, leaving behind Frelimo personnel who adopted (often disastrous) policies rooted in Marxist theory, rather than on any knowledge of the job at hand.

### ***Civil War and the New Mozambique***

In 1977 the government of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) secretly formed the rebel Renamo (Mozambique National Resistance) movement to destroy transport and communication links. From 1977 until 1992 Mozambique was devastated by banditry and civil war which destroyed the social and economic fabric of the entire nation. During this period Frelimo experienced many difficulties in trying to govern Mozambique. After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 and its withdrawal of support, South Africa backed Renamo which sought external credibility as an anti-communist movement. In 1984, presidents Botha of South Africa and Machel of Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord, agreeing not to support armed insurrection in each other's countries. Machel traveled abroad, shunning his Marxist backers by visiting Britain and Portugal, a campaign cut short by the 1986 air-crash which tragically ended his life. It was left to Joaquim Chissano to bring Renamo to heel.

At its third congress (1990), in keeping with world trends, Frelimo formally departed from its disastrous Marxist–Leninist ideology, while the collapse of the Soviet Union hastened the Russian departure. Renamo rebels continued to sabotage the infrastructure until a cease-fire agreement was signed on 15 October 1992. UN-supervised democratic multi-party elections were held in 1994. Mozambique's reconstruction progressed quickly. Truce paved the way for the deployment of a UN peace-keeping force (Onumoz) which immediately set about facilitating the disarmament of all armed groups. In the face of a skeptical world, Frelimo and Renamo laid down arms and began campaigning in the political arena. Finally, in 1997, the reopening of Chitengo camp in Gorongosa National Park, once the main rebel Renamo headquarters, as well as subsequent rounds of peaceful elections in 1999 and 2004, and the resignation of Joaquim Chissano to allow in a new president, Armando Guebuza, have epitomized a peaceful and prosperous new era for the country.

## **4. Government and Economy**

### ***The New Mozambique***

The new Mozambique must certainly count as one of the shining success stories of the worldwide UN peace-keeping operations. South Africa's political transformation, combined with the determination of a people tired of violence as well as the efforts of aid groups, laid the foundation for Mozambique's highly successful and peaceful November 1994 elections. Today, after the 1999 and 2004 elections, Frelimo may still be the ruling party, but Mozambique is unrecognizable from the days when running water was a luxury, and travelers risked their lives simply by leaving the relative safety of the cities. The government is encouraging development through tourism. Former state-owned enterprises have been privatized, placing them on a sound commercial footing. Freedom of the press is being respected and local daily newspapers present lively, critical debate on issues of the day, although the 2001 murder of prominent investigative journalist Carlos Cardozo provides serious cause for concern.

The combination of a friendly people determined to progress, sound FISCAL governance and an exciting natural environment being opened up to visitors, certainly demonstrate that Mozambique has a very positive future indeed.

### ***Economic Reconstruction***

For hundreds of years Mozambique was administered from Portugal and therefore its economical infrastructure was aimed primarily at facilitating the export of agricultural, marine, forestry and mineral resources to the mother country (Portugal). Although Mozambique was still reasonably prosperous in 1975, 95% of the indigenous population was illiterate and only a small handful possessed any formal qualifications or skills.

After the Portuguese withdrew, a transitional government was formed by Frelimo in 1974, and Joaquim Chissano took control. The following year Samora Machel became leader of Frelimo, and thus the first president of an independent Mozambique, which he declared a one-party Marxist state. The country's economy slipped into almost total chaos as essential services literally ceased to exist. Soviet and East German troops and advisers, who were invited by Samora Machel to fill the void, despite some good intentions and interventions in the health and veterinary arenas, managed to contribute very little and the economy continued to decline rapidly. In addition, support for Rhodesian and South African liberation movements cost Mozambique dearly and destroyed its last hope for progress.

When President Machel died in a mysterious plane crash in 1986, the country had descended into profound chaos, and it was up to his successor, Joaquim Chissano (and now Armando Guebuza), to rescue the situation and transform the economy into a free market system.

#### **Rebuilding Mozambique's Roads**

Reduced to perilous strips of pot-holed tarmac by years of neglect and sabotage, Mozambique's roads and bridges have been one of the first of the essential services to receive the government's much-needed attention. Roads north of the Zambezi remain in a largely poor state and stretches such as Mocuba to Alto Molocue and Alto Molocue to Nampula are yet to be upgraded and are negotiable only in 4x4 vehicles.

The resurfacing of a strategic 1700km (1056-mile) stretch of the EN1, the national road between Maputo and Inchope and then east to Beira, is an ongoing programme and much has already been completed. Despite the devastating floods of 2000 and 2001, most other main routes south of the Zambezi are in satisfactory condition and the strategic link between Beira and Quelimane, via Inchope, Gorongosa and Caia was completed in 2003. A four-lane toll road on a more direct route between Ressano Garcia (Komatipoort in South Africa) and Maputo is now in use. The recommended road to Maputo from South Africa is the abovementioned Komatipoort/ Ressano Garcia route as it is in excellent condition.

### ***Agriculture***

Prior to 1975 copra (dried coconut flesh) formed one of Mozambique's most important exports. In 1979, copra formed 10% of the country's agricultural production. The extracted oils were extensively used by the international cosmetic industry. The main coconut-producing areas are along the coastal plains of the Inhambane, Zambezia and Nampula provinces.

Since coconut plantations are located in coastal areas, copra production is affected by the periodic cyclones that uproot trees and rip unripe fruit from the branches. On the Island of Quirimba north of Pemba, the Gessner family has cultivated coconuts for three generations and although cyclone Demoina damaged thousands of trees, their gigantic estate of some 40,000 trees was the only one able to function throughout the civil war. Those of us with no use for either copra or coconut husks will be pleased to know that there are other ways to enjoy this delectable fruit. Young green coconuts, known to the locals as lanhos, which are full of refreshing pure coconut water, are sold on the roadside wherever the palms grow. For a handful of currency, the lanho of your choice will have its top lopped off and you will be able to slake the most urgent of thirsts on up to a litre of the delicately sweet fluid – also distilled into lethal liquor called sura.

In 1973, Mozambique exported 125,000 tonnes of cashew nuts, the country's largest food export at the time. Although by 1983 this had been reduced to a few rotting sack loads, it is still the best (and cheapest) country for properly dried and processed cashew nuts.

The occurrence of prawns along the Mozambique coast generally coincides with the location of mangrove (mangue) swamps. The decline of the prawn population, particularly in Maputo Bay, can be ascribed to the destruction of the mangroves at the Maputo and Incomati river mouths. In 1983, the combined catch of commercial and subsistence prawn fishermen was in the region of 10,000 tonnes, the majority of the prawns originating from the nutrient-rich waters off Maputo, Sofala and Nampula provinces.

### ***Marine Resources***

Pelagic fish such as anchovy, barracuda and sardine are found throughout the shallow coastal waters at the fringe of the broad Mozambique Channel. In deeper waters tuna, marlin and sailfish occur, the St Lazarus Bank east of Moçimboa da Praia being one of the few places in the world where marlin are known to breed. Rising long before dawn, subsistence fishermen still enact an ancient ritual unifying man and sea as they sail their bamboo platforms towards the horizon. By mid-morning they return laden with fish – if the gods have been kind.

Commercial trawlers come from afar to exploit these riches and this area of the ocean is not exempt from the worldwide problem of ruthless over fishing.

### ***The End of the Work***

The name Cahora Bassa (Cabora Bassa in colonial times) is probably a corruption of the Chewa term kebrabassa, their name for the once magnificent stretch of rapids in the gorge across which the dam was constructed. Kebrabassa means 'the end of the work', an appropriate name for the point where traders and travelers, DELETED using the Zambezi as a route into the interior, were forced to turn back by the rocks and waterfalls. Boats paddled by locally 'recruited' slaves found their progress blocked at Kebrabassa (now Songo), and explorers like David Livingstone, who was searching for a navigable route into central Africa, could only drift back downstream to Tete, probably to the considerable relief of the pitifully treated serfs.

Although Cahora Bassa was a joint venture between South Africa, Portugal and the province of Mozambique, energy transmission along the direct current lines to South Africa was cut in 1986 when Renamo rebels sabotaged pylons in response to the termination of their South African support in terms of the Nkomati Accord.

Due to sabotage, between 1986 and 1998 no power from Cahora Bassa reached South Africa but a US\$150 million program has re-routed the lines, and a link now provides power direct to the MOZAL aluminium smelter near Maputo. Soon, southern Mozambique will no longer rely exclusively on South Africa's Electrical Supply Commission (ESCOM) for electricity.

## **5. The People**

Of the eight major tribal groups resident in Mozambique, the Tsonga (Ronga) dominate the south, the Shona and Zambezi Valley tribes (Chuabo, Sena, Nyungwe) the central region, and the Yao and Makua–Lómwè are dominant in the north.

The 1820 Mfecane was unleashed by Shaka, Zululand's (South Africa) warrior king, generated violent waves of unrest which uprooted hundreds of thousands of people, and reached as far north as Kenya. Small groups of Nguni fled into Mozambique, but scattered on coming into contact with resident tribes to avoid being viewed as a threat. Remnants of the Nguni still cling to the fringes of the Lebombo Mountains near Namaacha, at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shangani rivers, at Espungabera at the headwaters of the Buzi River and on the Angónia Plateau in northern Tete province. Due to its unsuitability for cattle (tsetse fly is rife), Mozambique was, for the most part, spared the destruction by Shaka.

The Makonde tribe of northern Cabo Delgado and southern Tanzania had their own reputation for territorial aggression. They had always been staunchly independent, resisting incursions first from the Arabs, and later from the Portuguese. The liberation struggle in Mozambique started with Makonde herders being forcefully evicted from their land by Portuguese farmers, a move bound to end in bloodshed.

### ***Language***

Of the 17 more important ethnic languages spoken in Mozambique, the most common are, in the south: Shangaan, Tswa and Ronga; in the central region: Shona, Sena and Nyanja; while to the north the main vernaculars are: Makua, Lómwè, Chuabo, Yao, Makonde AND SWAHILI.

Portuguese was and still is the everyday language of commerce and technology – even the Frelimo government declared Portuguese to be the country's official language. A survey undertaken in 1980 revealed that only about 25% of the total urban population could speak Portuguese, with about half this number applicable in the rural areas. Only 10% of Maputo's citizens spoke Portuguese at home, while the proportion of Mozambican citizens who grew up speaking Portuguese was less than 2%. English may not easily be understood away from up market hotels, lodges and restaurants, but if a street urchin in Beira or Maputo suddenly berates you in perfect English for not giving him or her money, don't be surprised. Many of Mozambique's children who are under the age of 16 grew up in refugee camps in one of the English-speaking countries surrounding Mozambique. Funakalo, the discredited language once spoken mainly by South Africa's black miners, remains a valuable communication medium. However, a few phrases of Shangaan will elicit more smiles.

### ***Religion***

During Mozambique's Marxist period, organized religion was suppressed by the Frelimo government, thus no accurate statistics have been kept for this period. Presently, the urbanized population has adopted Catholicism, most common in the south, while further north Islam becomes more dominant. Traditional practices such as ancestor worship and animism are still widespread. This was used to profound effect by the protagonists who influenced the Mozambicans both during the period of conflict as well as prior to the first democratic elections in 1994.

### ***Traditional Cultures***

With a coastline settled by adventurers from Arabia, India, China and southern Europe as well as diverse wandering African tribes, Mozambique is a unique mix of cultural practices and beliefs. Although geographically part of southern Africa, this former Portuguese colony has a historical and cultural heritage more closely related to Muslim northeast Africa, while its population also exhibits a lively, Latin outlook on life. Whether you enter the country from Malawi, Tanzania (note Rovuma crossing by unreliable vehicle ferry or by dugout if on foot), Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa or Swaziland, by boat via one of the many harbours or by air into Maputo International Airport, you will be faced with the challenge of communicating with people whose command of the English language is weak.

Most popular tourist destinations lie along the coast where people live in small fishing villages, and dhows are the main means of transport. From basic meeting places under trees in mud-and-straw 'suburbs' to chic nightclubs in the cities, the music that is belted out everywhere ranges from sensuous samba, salsa and rumba to rowdy marimba/Timbila (xylophone) and awesome Afro-Caribbean.

### ***Mozambique's Art World***

In the 1950s some of the European painters belonging to Lourenço Marque's art nucleus began to feel the challenging burden of living on a continent rich in unrecognized indigenous art forms. Moving away from Eurocentrism, they started addressing local social themes, using visual motifs observed in popular tradition to create works more identifiably 'Mozambican'. Today, big beaming round faces and large white eyes are evidently the way Mozambicans see themselves when turning their hands to painting murals.

By independence in 1975, the liberation movements began to promote local culture. A cultural centre was formed to nurture local art. Most new artists initially imitated the predominant personalities in Mozambique's plastic arts. During the 1975–85 period, due to civil turmoil, their imagery dealt mainly with the immediacy of political militancy.

The Mozambican artists' geographical isolation, lack of training and the absence of a formal art trade had an unexpected consequence: a large number of painters were able to make a living by personally marketing and selling their own work. Without the discipline and attention to style demanded by classical art academies, a freshness of style and lack of inhibition was preserved in Mozambique, characteristic of what may be termed the 'Mozambican school'.

### ***Theatre***

Maputo's Teatro Avenida on Avenida 25 de Setembro sometimes hosts stage productions. Mozambique's Companhia de Art, Canto e Dans, based in the Rua de Bagamoio (opposite Luso), also occasionally puts on shows depicting various traditional dance styles. See the daily newspaper, Notícias, and weekly Savana and bi-annual Time-Out for details.

### ***Sport and Recreation***

Mozambique's most popular sports are basketball, soccer (football) and athletics. Maputo's Maria Mutola has held the world record and won the gold medal at Sydney 2000 for the women's 800m track race. Basketball, particularly, has thrived and the national team has been African champion for many years and indoor basketball courts are located in most of the main cities and towns.