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MAXIXE TO VILANKULO

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1. The Main Road (E.N.1):

NOTE THAT **SOME** AREAS ADJACENT TO THE MAIN ROAD WERE MINED (usually around strategic towns, bridges, power-lines, steep gradients, cuttings and wells), AND THAT ONLY A 20M STRIP ALONG THE ENTIRE ROADSIDE WAS INITIALLY DEMINED. WHILE **MOST** OTHER AREAS HAVE NOW BEEN CLEARED IT STILL WISE TO TAKE THAT PEE OR EAT THAT SANDWICH ON THE ROAD! MINES ARE STILL BEING FOUND AROUND A FEW TOWNS (clearly demarcated) ALONG THE E.N.1!

Over the years that I have travelled the Estrada Nacional 1 (E.N.1) - Mozambique's main (and only) north-south route - I have seen sections repaired, only to fall into disrepair once again, others washed away by tropical cyclones and even places where trucks have been abandoned for so long that the road has been diverted around them, or where a tree has taken root in a pothole. At present, going north, after Maxixe the road deteriorates quite severely, reducing average speeds to 60kph and even lower along the deviations where some damage could be caused if not in a high-clearance vehicle. Much of the E.N.1 from Maxixe to the turn-off to Vilankulo is presently being rebuilt by Chinese contractors and judging by the fact that I saw them doing almost all of the work, from waving flags, to heaving wheelbarrows, they have even imported their own manual labour - and this to a country with 80% unemployment and an official minimum wage of US\$40 – 50 per month! My reckoning is that by March 2006 the rehabilitation of the E.N.1 between Maxixe and Pambarra will be completed, improving average speeds to 80kph.

There is also another particularly nasty stretch further north from 20km after Muxúnguè, to about 90km before Inchope that is also being rebuilt (as an example, about half of Rio Búzi to Rio Revúè has temporary gravel repairs) and the long detours are presently very dusty (or muddy), but hopefully this will also be completed by mid 2006.

Fuel can be a problem:

NOTE THAT THERE IS UNLEADED PETROL (*GASOLINA SEM CHUMBO*) RELIABLY AVAILABLE IN MAPUTO, XAI-XAI, MAXIXE, VILANKULO AND (you may have to ask around) in BEIRA.

Motorists must take into account that, if going north, after Macovane (the turn-off to Inhassoro), where there is a reliable fuel supply (diesel and leaded petrol only), the next fuel stop is the recently re-opened BP Service Station at Muxúnguè which has diesel and leaded petrol, and which was derelict for 3 years due to the former manager stealing fuel and selling it on the black market. Muxúnguè is 128km north of the Save river and around 124km south of Inchope where fuel is presently sold at the roadside.

From Inchope to Chimoio or to Beira, there are various reliable fuel stations and unleaded petrol is available (somewhat sporadically) in Beira.

2. MAXIXE TOWN

Mozambique's main north south arterial runs right through Maxixe and this is the only point where this road actually meets Mozambique's 3000km long coastline (OK, so it's actually a bay, and not the sea-shore). For this reason Maxixe would seem to be an ideal spot to put up a lodge, or decent hotel or something (there is a good restaurant, service stations, shops, vehicle repair etc) but this has not yet happened. One Irwin Jakes, who was drafted into the Nazi Army at age 16 and served in Poland, took over the municipal campsite called 'Campismo Maxixe' in a completely ruined state years ago. I met Irwin when he was still opening the Campismo and 'enjoyed' his (harrowing) tales whenever I stopped over. Unfortunately, repeated bouts of malaria have driven him back to Nelspruit in South Africa. This has left the Campismo a little less well looked-after than before, but it is still a good place to get a bed or pitch a tent when needed.

In the age-old Arab way, dhows (and small motor boats) operate throughout the day from Maxixe to Inhambane. Dhow crossings are wind-dependent (taken me over an hour previously); the overloaded motor boats (how the hell do they float?) will take about 20 mins. Good to know that all of Mozambique's main banks have branches here and ATM machines (VISA with PIN please) are available. Take a look at the impressive local 'Mercado' (watch your stuff and pockets around here!), and enjoy a meal at Restaurant 'Stop' overlooking the jetty. Restock on fresh bread from one the kids selling or go directly to Padaria Gomes. For a taste that has been around since the "Poro" days, try Restaurant Dom Carlos one block up from the main road.

Maxixe also has a hospital, pharmacy (called Ussaca – antibiotics sold over the counter), public card phones, an Mcell and a TDM shop, and excellent mobile phone reception. At present there is only mobile phone reception up to Massinga, but in September 2005 we noted new towers all along the EN1 right up to Inchope and beyond, and so soon (perhaps already) there will be reception all the way from Ponta do Ouro to Inchope, and then possible up to Caia. I could not find an Internet Café in Maxixe, but there are two in Inhambane across the bay – one at Pensão Pachiça.

Should you be nearing the end of your 30 day visa, you can apply for another 30 days at the Migração (Immigration Office), but make sure that you apply with 5 days in hand, have 2 passport pics, photocopies of your passport info pages and be prepared for a wait of a day or three.

Make sure that you receive an official receipt with full details of your passport and the name of the official who served you, and this can be presented to the police should they ask to see identification (they are entitled by law to do this).

Remember that Moz charges US\$100 to \$200 per day if you overstay your visa, and you will not get your passport back until you have paid that fine!

Parque de Campismo

+ 258 (0) 293 30351.

Erwin Jakes who founded and ran Campismo for a decade, has left Mozambique and so standards could have dropped a bit. (Not too much though (thanks Lynn) and at R45 pp camping...). If the chef is cooking there are great evening meals.

Accommodation:

Basic huts and camping sites with views over the bay – fresh sea breezes but the beach here is a bit littered and dirty. 5 minute walk to the boat and dhow anchorage. There is a Capoeira (www.capoeirista.com) School that practices on the beach in front of the Campismo.

Rates:

Mt150 000 per person camping, Mt400 000 per person in a hut. Communal ablutions, sometimes hot water.

Stop Snack Bar and Residencial, Maxixe

Tel Maxixe: + 258 (0) (293) 30025 or Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 3127280.

Firmly aimed at local travellers so here is a chance to break away from the usual tourist spots. Overlooks the bay.

Accommodation:

En-suite rooms with air-con and TV.

Rates:

From Mt400 000 per person.

Complexo Sani

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 7431360 (Dona Nana)

Motorist's stopover with swimming pool and bar. Perhaps a little noisy if you need a good night's sleep?

Accommodation:

Air-conditioned, en-suite rooms.

Pousada de Maxixe

Tel Maxixe: + 258 (0) 293 30199

As you get into Maxixe central, look above the Petromoç Service Station on your left (if going north). Only stay here if you really want to know what Moz was like twenty years ago.

Accommodation:

Threadbare double rooms. Toilets may not flush and the lights may not work, but hey, no tourists!

Manhala Rex

Tel Moz landline: +258 (0) 293 30592.

About 15km or so north of Maxixe on the RHS if going north. Upmarket version of a truckers' stop, but very friendly, real Mozambican, and great food.

3. MASSINGA.

76km north of Maxixe is this very busy and prosperous trading centre (though quite why it should be so, I am not sure – perhaps they have discovered alluvial gold or grow marijuana or something?). Think that I will spend a week or two here sometime – it looks fascinating. Massinga is a good place to breakdown as there are excellent mechanics (unless you are driving one of those late model...), welders, rim and tyre-repair roadside shops, great restaurants and surprisingly comfortable places to stay. Take the enterprising Dalilo who I first met when I needed my exhaust to welded back on in 1993 and now literally runs the town and has a good restaurant and Hotel.

Accommodation in (and on the beach near) Massinga:

Dalilo's Hotel

Tel Moz mobile + 258 (0) 82 8168950, or landline: + 258 (0) 23 71025.

On the northern end of the town, next to the E.N.1. Nice clean en-suite rooms with TV, some with fans, others with air-con. Have a few drinks and an excellent meal (perhaps an hour's wait) at Dalilo's restaurant and, who knows, you just may never get to Vilankulo, after all.

Morrungulo Lodge (Nelson's Bay) and Dive Centre

No cell-phone signal here – nearest shadow is at Massinga. Tel South Africa Mobile: + 27 (0) 82 3881442. Email: (via HF Radio so short messages and text only – no attachments please): mg10@bushmail.net Website: www.morrungulo.co.za

About 5km north of Massinga, and just before the turn-off to Pomene (both well signposted), you will see the Morrungulo turn-off down a 13km newly upgraded sand road, OK for all vehicles. Rhodesian (yes, I know, I know...) Dave Nelson who started camping with his family at Morrungulo in the 1960's, liked it so much he stayed and soon it became called Nelson's Bay and the (then) Rhodesians following in their thousands until 'Independence' in 1976 caused chaos and everyone left. Morrungulo Lodge re-opened in 1993 and is still as beautiful, family-friendly (self-catering only) and popular and reasonably priced as ever. Dave Nelson died last year, but Morrungulo remains in the capable hands of his son Andy and improvements are constantly being made. Highly recommended outside of the school holiday periods (no offence to my compatriots). Only cash Meticaï, Rands or US\$ accepted. Small shop with curios and basics, great pub, but no restaurant – yet. Eat at La Rosa's next to Morrungulo entrance. No driving on the beach - (now what sort of twit would want to anyway...?).

Accommodation.

Very spacious beachfront family units (two double rooms) sleep 8, chalets or casitas sleep 4 and bungalows sleep 2. Some of the well-shaded and grassed camping sites have 'barracas' that are large thatched shelters with cement floors. Taps everywhere for drinking water and electric points for hire. Very nice ablution blocks.

Rates:

(In - Season/Out): Camping is R70 and R50 pp. 8-sleeper Beachfront (has two double rooms and then mattresses can be laid in the eating area/veranda): R925 and R700. 4-sleeper casita: R850 and R600. 2- Sleeper bungalow R500 and R300. 8-sleeper at the Dive Centre: R1500 and R1000. Domestic help: R35 per day. Electrical point: R35 per day.

Baobab Lodge

Tel Mozambique mobile: + 258 (0) 82 8656980, Email: cjhill@zebra.uem.mz

A very unusual (in the Moz context) place this. Chris and Rosa Hill have here a an 'eco-lodge' - i.e. it really tries to benefit the local community beyond simply providing some employment. Positioned on the dunes overlooking the bay, there is a Cultural Centre supporting local artists and promoting their cultural history. Local music and dance performances arranged at the lodge or in nearby Massinga. Guided tours into the local villages and surrounding bush. Huge seafood and local produce banquets available by order at the bar. Busy expanding and improving.

Accommodation:

There are 3 self-contained cottages, two by the beach, and one on the cliff top. The cottages have three bedrooms, a living room with kitchenette and a bathroom. There are 13 bedrooms. A large bedroom with one double and two single beds, 9 bedrooms with either a double bed or two single beds, and 3 small dormitories accommodating up to 4 persons. All rooms come complete with towels, bed linen and mosquito nets. There is hot and cold water. The kitchens in the cottages are fully equipped. There are self-catering facilities for other guests.

Rates:

Text them and ask. THEY REPLIED AND ASKED FOR MY EMAIL.

Sylvia Shoal (La Rosa) Lodge

Tel/fax Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 (0) 11 884 6055.

Email: stephanie.teale@iafrica.com Website: www.mozambique.za.com

Just before you arrive at Morrungulo Lodge's reception, turn left and almost immediately you will see Dona Rosa's excellent restaurant where I usually eat the Matapa (a wonderful veggie dish) as I like to save my money for 'maningue' Laurentina Pretas. Originally (as is only proper) named after the owner's wife, but then renamed Sylvia Shoal (as is only good business sense), capitalizing on the famous Sylvia Shoal reefs which lie just a few kilometres offshore.

Accommodation:

Twin bedded en-suite bungalows (moozie nets, kitchenette with freezer), traditional barracas or pitches your tent at the camping site. Linen provided but bring own towels.

Under 5 years of age get in for free and those under 12 half price.

Rates: (In/out of season).

Bungalows: R550/R480 per bungalow. Barracas: R190/R145 per bungalow. Camping: R90/R60 per person.

4. POMENE

10km to the north of Massinga turn onto a well-signposted dirt road follow this through a small village, Rio das Pedras for 55km, the last 8km of which is thick soft sand where you will need to deflate your tyres (and trailer tyres) to 1bar and engage 4x4 low-range.

Near Pomene there is an 850m long grass airstrip and your lodge can collect you by prior arrangement. No cell-phone contact in this area. I have felt the sand between my toes on most of Mozambique's hundreds of beaches, and Pomene, with its mangrove estuary, amazing rock pools and blow-hoes and classic curved beach, is certainly one of the prettiest. Watch out for the stinging (biting?) sand flees during summer months and on particularly hot days.

Buried Treasure at Pomene?

About five years ago I walked into the Mangroves at Pomene where I found a nice little village and was introduced to a man who was apparently in former (better?) days the derelict hotel's chef. He showed me where he had buried the crockery and cutlery of the hotel and kept it all these years hoping that the 'padrão' (boss) would return some day and reward him for his loyalty. I do hope that when (or if) the hotel is renovated, the new owners do the right thing and employ this man. The fortune is not underneath, he is on top, walking around.

Diving in Pomene Bay:

The Main Dive-Sites:

Rappies Playstation 10m – 20m

This is an underwater fairy tale land, with deep gullies, coral caverns and awesome swim-throughs. Sheltered by a 10m high amphitheatre, this stunning site is home to Rappie, a 50kg Potato Bass, and his family. Rappie got his name due to a large Rapala hooked in his mouth. He is resident and is quite friendly. Kingfish are commonly seen here as well as sharks, mantas and morays.

Minimum certificate: O.W. 1. Must have a minimum of 30 dives.

Manta Reef 12m – 21m

As its name implies, one stands a good chance of seeing Manta Rays on this reef. The reef is also home to an abundance of fish species including Potato and Brindle Bass. Caves and deep gullies riddle the reef, which is quite extensive with some good drop offs. Game fish and sharks are frequently seen here.

Rob's Ridge 8m – 15m

This site consists of a ridge running parallel to the coast and is home to an amazing amount and variety of 'Tropicals'. The outside edge has numerous crevices and caves that are home to Moray's and Skates. Kingfish and Couta are also seen here as well as the occasional shark. Coral, especially dishes, are abundant and diverse. This is a lovely drift dive, which covers over 1km in length.

Minimum certificate: O.W.1

Zambia Shoal 5m – 26m

This shoal lies +/- 15km from the base and runs parallel to the coast +/- 4km off shore. The shoal is approximately 6km long x 400m wide and is a game fish paradise. Regularly seen are species like Couta, Kingies, Wahoo, Sailies and Marlin. The shoal is also home to a huge variety of corals and monster coral dishes. Sharks, Mantas, Whale Sharks and Rays are common here and always make for a good dive.

Viz. Averages: +/- 20m

Minimum Certificate: O.W.1

Accommodation in Pomene

Pomene Lodge and Dive Centre

Tel: Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 (11) 314 3227, Fax: 3143355. Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 7118161, Email: bookings@pomene.co.za Website: www.pomene.co.za

This is a fairly rustic but well-run lodge at a great location on the sandbar between the sea and the lagoon. Restaurant and Bar. Recently taken over by the folk from Barra Lodge and some improvements have already been made.

Accommodation:

From 1 roomed (3-bed) chalets to 4-roomed (8-bed) fully equipped en-suite self-catering chalets, bedding included. 'The Den' is a cluster of 4 one-roomed en-suite chalets with communal kitchen for groups of up to 8. Beach cabins or twin-bedded huts with communal kitchen and ablution block. Campsites are spacious and barracas can be booked. The electrical point at each site provides only 5amps (enough for 1 freezer).

Rates: (Out of/In season)

4-8 sleeper Beach Chalets from R660/R990 to R1320/R1980 per night. Beach Cabins: R265/R375, camping R80/R90 per person. Kids 6-12 half price, under-6 free.

Pomene View Lodge

Tel South Africa mobile: + 27 (0) 83 962 9818. Fax: + 27 (39) 976 0783.

Email: garry@lantic.net Website: www.pomeneview.com

Pomene View is one of those places one finds when not even looking and turns out to be Pomene's "secret" (every place has a secret, if you don't really look). During our 'Best of Moz' trip of June/July 2005, we turned down the Pomene track just for the heck of it as it goes nowhere else and so amounts to at least a four-hour detour from the main road, and little hand-made signs with 'Pomene View' written on them. Now I'm always game for a view, and so on our way back from the beach, we swung a right and drove up onto a ridge and there it was, and what a view! Most resorts in Moz have a story attached as to how they came into (and have managed to stay in) existence, so when you get here ask Clint or Dave tell you their tale, and have a Laurentina Preta on the viewing deck for me. Better still buy one for me and ask Dave to keep it cold to be presented on my arrival. Did I tell you that Pomene View is actually not on the beach? I thought that was a major example of a severe lack of good planning, but when I got there I changed my mind... Light meals are served at the bar and a cliff-edge pool (2nd pool) and bar are nearing completion. Clint is an expert fly fisherman, and outings can be arranged with him. Also mangrove trails, and trips on the houseboat along the estuary. A light aircraft landing strip is alongside the lodge.

Accommodation:

Eight 5-sleeper chalets, and one 6-sleeper chalet. All are fully equipped, including bedding and mosquito nets, towels excluded. Each chalet has it's own braai/barbeque area, and hot & cold fresh running water.

Rates: (In/Out of Season).

Chalets: 5-sleeper: R900/R600 per night. 6-sleeper: R1000/R700.

Less than 5 people: R 175/R120 per person per night. Single occupancy: R300 per night either season.

5. MAPINHANE AND THE 'ZIMBABWE DO MANYIKENI'.

The small town of Mapinhane, on the E.N.1. 190km north of Maxixe and 32km south of the turn-off to Vilankulo, has reliable petrol (leaded only) and diesel, 'Pousada da Motorista' (Drivers' Inn) and is also at the turn-off to Parque Nacional de Zinave, Mabote, Pafuri (entry point into South Africa's Kruger Park) and the ruins of a small citadel along the lines of the famous Great Zimbabwe in Zimbabwe. Just 10km from Mapinhane, the turn-off to the ruins is signposted (very difficult to see) on the RHS and a further 5km or so takes you to a pile of stones that represent the outer limits of the once great Karonga Chieftaincy.

Not nearly as impressive as those called 'Great Zimbabwe' so well known near Masvingo in Zimbabwe, but I walked around and tried to absorb a time when a different sort of 'colonist' ruled these parts, one legendary Mwenu Mutapa (Monomotapa) who spawned many legends of rich gold mines that could just have been those of the great King Solomon. Read more on the ruins and their significance in Malynn Newitt's excellent "A History of Mozambique" published by Witwatersrand University Press in 1994.

Ponta São Sebastião and the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary.

A few years ago I visited Pontamingo Lodge at Ponta São Sebastião (or Saint Sebastian's Point), which was then a basic sport fishing camp, but at a very special location. More recently South African-based Jordan Properties obtained a land concession for this area (yes, I know there was and still is some controversy related to the treatment of the local people, and the suitability of the vegetation to the numbers of animals it was proposed to reintroduce...). Jordan now calls the place the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary and has sold off sub-concessions to other folk who have started up lodges.

That's the boring bit, what I found more worthy of note is just who this Saint Sebastian was: Well by the time he died in Rome around AD288, St Seb was considered a Christian Martyr and his tomb at Ad Catacumas on the Via Appia has been venerated ever since. According to a legend Sebastian joined the military in order to be able to secretly comfort the martyrs who were being arrested and persecuted by the Romans at the time. Ironically Emperor Diocletian was so impressed with him that he promoted him to the rank of Captain before he was exposed. Diocletian then secretly ordered Sebastian to be assassinated by archers, but he survived this and then confronted Diocletian who showed characteristic Roman compassion by having Sebastain beaten to death.

Sebastian is considered patron saint of archers (!) and soldiers (?) based on this legend.

Dugong Beach Lodge

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 463 3551, fax: 463 2037.

Email: reservations@dugonglodge.co.za Website: www.dugonglodge.co.za

Perched on a really pretty little beach in the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary, surrounded by mangroves and with a long jetty extended out over the water. Small, exclusive with little personal touches that are quite special. If I built a house on the coast, it would look something like this. But I digress. About 17km ESE of Vilankulo. Chartered flights can be arranged directly into Dugong Beach Lodge Co-ordinates - S22 10.88 and E 035 24.41 Runway - 03/21, Flat, 780 metres (hardened calcrete) Elevation - 25ft below sea level (?).

Accommodation:

Luxury framed en-suite tents (the best I've slept in). Lots of really nice little touches.

Rates:

US\$250 pp sharing includes all meals and coffee/tea.

Nyati Beach Lodge

Tel: Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 463 3551, fax: 463 2037

www.nyativillas.com Email: nyativillas@gametrackersmanagement.com

A new lodge (also called Nyati Villas?) that appears to be closed and/or up for lease at present. Apparently Pescada Dive Centre www.pescada.net operate from Nyati but their hyperlink to Nyati opens an unrelated site. Also contact Dugong Lodge for updates.

Linene Island Lodge

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 469 1044.

Email: info@linene.co.za Website: www.linene.co.za

Unashamedly aimed at serious sport-fishermen (STRICTLY tag-and-release), Linene is built on a remote and remarkable location at the southern end of the long sand spit that has broken up to form the 5 islands of the Bazaruto Archipelago. Usually booked by groups of up to 16 adults, but individual and tailor-made rates are available on request.

Accommodation:

Basic 3-sleeper en-suite chalets high up on stilts linked by boardwalks to the main reception/restaurant area.

Rates:

Fully inclusive 7-night packages from R5995 per person sharing, transfers from Vilankulo included.

6. VILANKULO AND THE BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO.

Got to be honest here, as much as I would like to live there, I think that Vilankulo (or Vilanculos, or Vila'nculo or..?) is suffering just a spot at present from development-overheat syndrome (DOS). This (highly subjective assertion) would not be a much of a problem if the town's infrastructure had kept pace with tourism, but the electricity supply is unreliable, many roads are still rutted (part of the beachfront has crumbled) and sand-strewn, while unpainted and crumbling buildings remain a feature.

Ten years ago Gabriel Garcia Marquez could have written his classic "*Love in The Time of Cholera*" right here in Vilankulo (and no, the town does not have a cholera problem), but now I think that "*Love-Hate in the Time of the South African Rand*" might be a little more apt.

Go to Vilankulo during the Easter and Christmas holiday periods, and see why...

At other times, you will love the place, and I will buy you a beer at Quisque Tropical.

And, whatever the case, it will always be 'the springboard to the Bazaruto Archipelago'.

Vilankulo is still nevertheless more of an authentic coastal Mozambican village than a tourist trap and most of the places to stay at are actually very good.

And you can actually use your credit card (or even Travellers' Cheques) at some lodges here, or log on to the Internet at TDM, and get local cash (up to Mt3 000 000 or around US\$100 per withdrawal) on your Visa card (with PIN) at BIM (Banco Internacional de Moçambique) ATM'S.

Cut Through My Biased Opinions and ask someone 'On The Ground' in Vilankulo:

Margie Toens has been living in Vilankulo long enough to know that you should ignore my preconceived notions and allow her to arrange you the best (or most suitable) holiday possible and to give you honest advice. She runs '*Paraiso Serviços*' and you can email her: margie@teledata.mz or find her house down on the beachfront – follow the signposts.

Dhow Safaris

Vilankulo is a major dhow (*lancha*) anchorage and small-boat fishing harbour and there are opportunities to arrange you own dhow trip either by approaching one of the captains (cheaper but less safe), or by booking through your lodge (recommended). Coming to Vilankulo and not getting onto a dhow would be something like going to Mars and not climbing *Olympus Mons*.

The easiest and probably safest (but not cheapest) option is to join an organized dhow safari run by **SAILAWAY DHOW SAFARIS** that have been operating for a decade and offer all inclusive voyages amongst the islands, or simply to go out for a meal on a secluded beach and sundowners on the swells. Look at www.sailaway.co.za

Accommodation In Vilankulo
In Order From Farthest North Then Moving South Down The Coastline:

Vilanculos Beach Lodge

Tel: Cape Town, South Africa: + 27 (0) 21 691 1763, fax: 691 1764.

Email: beachlodge@vilanculos.co.za Website: www.vilanculos.co.za

One of the first Lodges to open in post-war Moz, 'Beach Lodge' is just 3km north of the town, has consistently good service, accommodation and food, and views all the way to Benguerra Island. All water sports available, or just read that book on a pool lounger. Business travellers favour this lodge and a top-class conference centre has just been completed. Credit Cards (Visa, Master & American Express) and Thomas Cook & American Express Traveller's cheques accepted.

Note: Out of Season is from 06 January 2005 to 24 March 2005 and from 29 March 2005 to 19 December 2005.

Accommodation:

Beautiful hardwood thatch standard and luxury chalets with sea-views spread out amongst the dune forest.

Rates: Out of / In Season

Standard Chalets: Sharing - Bed & Breakfast R550 / R650 pp. Single: R650 / R750.

Luxury Chalets: Sharing - Bed & Breakfast R 650.00 / R750. Single: R750 / R850.

Children up to and including 4 years stay free (sharing with parents), 5 - 12 years sharing with parents pay 50%. **Included:** Bed & Breakfast, Airport Transfers, Non - Motorised sports and taxes.

Vila La Mar

Tel Mozambique: + 258 (293) 82302. Mobile: + 258 (82) 2618000 or (82) 9298130.

Email - vilamar@teledata.mz

Just like having your very own beach house – prepare your own food, get up and go to bed when you want to, but with the added plus of not having to do the dishes or make the beds, or repaint the darned place every year. Take a stroll down the path to the beach, or just lie next to the pool.

Accommodation:

A choice of 6 'Casas' (Houses): Casa 1 is the largest house in the complex accommodating up to 10 people. Three bedrooms: the main bedroom has a comfy double bed, private lounge, dressing room and en-suite bathroom (with bath). Two other bedrooms each with two single beds that share a bathroom (shower), Upstairs in the loft, are three more single beds, loungers and writing desk, sleeping ten people in total. Fully equipped kitchen, dining room area and lounge with a hi-fi and satellite television. All furniture and fittings are hand crafted from Simbiri and other local hardwoods. A huge wooden decked veranda provides a superb view of the Bazaruto Islands. Casa 2 sleeps six people and comprises of the main en-suite bedroom overlooking the ocean and two additional bedrooms sharing a bathroom with shower. Casa 4 sleeps six people very comfortably with a double bed in the main en-suite bedroom and two other bedrooms, each with two single beds. Single bedrooms share a bathroom with shower. Casa 5 is the smallest with sea-views, sleeping only five people. Fitted out with all the mod – cons one could possibly need. A large private deck. Casa 6 has no sea view and is aimed at the budget traveller - sleeps 6 in single beds in three separate rooms, all rooms share one toilet and shower. A simple kitchen kitted out with all the basic you would need. What about Casa 3? Beats me.

Rates: (High/Low Season).

Note high season is 20 Dec to 6 Jan and 13 April to 18 April.

Casa 1: US\$280/\$250. Casa 2: \$250/\$210. Casa 4: \$250/\$210. Casa 5: \$250/\$210. Casa 5: \$250/\$225. Casa 6: \$180/\$150.

Aguia Negra

Tel Cape Town, South Africa: + 27 (0) 21 8471160. Vilankulo: + 258 (0) 23 82387.

Email: hotel@erinvale.co.za or aguianegra@teledata.mz Website: www.aguianegra.co.za

Also a long established lodge with a great pool, restaurant, nice gardens and fresh breezes.

Resident dive operator and many other activities arranged.

Accommodation:

Huge A-framed en-suite chalets sleeping four and luxury air-conditioned double rooms.

Rates:

(High/Low Season): Chalets, 2 adults sharing: R325/R275 pp, 4 adults sharing

R285/R235pp. Luxury rooms (air-conditioned): 2 adults sharing R455 pp (high and low

season). All rates are Bed & Breakfast.

Casa Rex

Tel Moz: + 258 23 82048, fax: + 258 23 82425.

Email: casarex@teledata.mz

Many folk would categorize Casa Rex as a "Boutique Hotel in the Iberian-Moorish style", but, having met up with Rex while he was building the place over ten years ago, and watched it become one of the nicest places to stay in Mozambique, I think that it is beyond categorization. If location is all to 'Estate Agents' then Casa Rex, with its views of the dhow anchorage, the Hotel Dona Anna and the Bazaruto Islands, gets eleven out of ten with regard to its choice of site. It's all devotedly hand-built with not a hint of any melamine or other commercial finishes anywhere, and managers Melanie and Ray will make you feel as if you can walk around the place in your pyjamas, and burp loudly during meals around the pool, its so much like home (but you don't have to wash the dishes or make your bed!). A jungle wild-island garden, steps straight down onto the beach and there is a very highly rated restaurant. A challenging full South African breakfast is included in the charge.

Accommodation:

Garden, family and courtyard rooms and a luxury (honeymoon) suite.

Rates:

Bed & Breakfast: From US\$65 to US\$85 per person per night, sharing. Single supplement \$20.

The Anchor and New York Pizza

Tel Maputo: + 258 21 313333, mobile: + 258 82 41710

Email: Godah2000@yahoo.com

Completed in 2005, and looking quite incongruous in quaint little Vilankulo, New York Pizza at least does not pretend to be anything but a good place for pizza and halaal dishes (no booze!).

Accommodation:

The adjacent rooms are comfortable but face onto the restaurant's car park.

Rates:

Seem to vary from Mt300 000 to Mt 500 000 per person per day.

Na Sombra

Tel Vilankulo + 258 23 82090

Email: nasombra@hotmail.com

An unusual structure of reeds and thatch covers a shady, cool and highly rated restaurant.

Basic rooms with fans available.

Smugglers

Tel: Vilankulo + 258 (0) 23 82253.

Email: smugglers@teledata.mz Website: www.smugglers.co.za

Every large African town has a place where the 'expats' (in Vilankulo read South Africans and Zimbabweans) like to hang out with their own kind and discuss rugby, politics and how bad (or much better) things are getting back home. Not much Portuguese spoken here during the high tourist seasons but the (expensive) beers are always cold, the food usually good and the sea breezes refreshing and constant. Some legendary parties that go on till dawn and sometimes live music. New Poolside bar.

Accommodation:

A row of clean and comfortable en-suite rooms adjacent to an adult and a children's swimming pool in a pleasant garden.

Rates:

(All DBB): Standard Rooms (shared ablutions), R295 Sharing, R365 single. En-suite rooms: R330 sharing, R400 single.

Palmeiras Lodge

A part of the Vilanculos Beach Lodge group so see contacts above.

A small, more intimate lodge with a pool located on the town's beach road.

Parque de Campismo (Camping Site)

Tel South Africa: + 27 15 516 1427, fax: 516 1160.

Email: vilanculos@mweb.co.za Website: www.vilanculoscamping.co.za

Originally (and probably still) the town's Municipal Campsite, now under new South African ownership. Literally just over the road from the beach so most sites will have sea-views and that cool breeze. Ablutions are very good, and the restaurant is open during the busy periods (see South African School Holidays). Out of season you will almost certainly have this place to yourself. If I was camping or was in a camper vehicle, this is where I would go.

Accommodation:

1 chalet (6-sleeper equipped for self-catering), rooms (2-bed, communal facilities), permanent tents and grassed, level camping sites.

Rates:

(High/low season per person): Chalet: R200/R160, rooms: R160/R130, fixed tents: R150/R110. Camping: R90/R70.

Zombie Cucumber Backpackers

Tel: Mozambique + 258 (0) 80494100,

Email: steph@zombiecucumber.com Website: www.zombiecucumber.com

I am on record as saying that this is "the nicest coastal backpackers in Mozambique", and I stick by that comment. Owned and run by a charming British couple who treat (most) visitors like members of the family (i.e. tell you to sod off if you arrive too late for one of the brilliant dinners). The bar is a great place to meet interesting folk and to find out what's really going on around town and country. Give Steph a couple of hours warning and she'll do one of her dishes that folk leave the fancy lodges for. Note, in order to keep space for lost and lonely backpackers, no advance bookings are taken.

Accommodation:

3-bed chalets, communal dorm all sharing basic but well-maintained ablutions.

Rates:

Dorm: Mt165 000 per person, Chalets: Mt480 000 (1 to 3 persons).

Baobab Beach

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 82 865021.

Email: baobabmoz@yahoo.com Website: www.baobabbeach.com

Prior to the opening of Zombie Cucumber, this was the place for backpackers to be. A few kilometres south of the centre of town in the fishing village, Baobab has a restaurant and bar as its main focus, and still offers basic rooms and camping.

Accommodation:

Basic rooms and camping.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

Blue Waters Beach Resort

Tel Mozambique: + 258 293 84030, mobile: +258 82 8075750.

Email: bluewater@tdm.co.mz

Situated around 6km south of Vilankulo (look for signs on RHS as you approach the town) in a quiet, green and lush setting right on the beach. Lots of space between chalets and the size of the camping area is very generous with excellent ablutions. Tastefully constructed restaurant and bar with views worth drinking to.

Accommodation:

2-sleeper en-suite bungalows (bedding provided but no cooking facilities), 4-sleeper self-catering en-suite chalets. All campsites have 24hr electricity and some have open thatched shelters.

Rates:

(High/Low Season per unit): 4-bed self-catering chalets: US\$130/\$100. 2-bed bungalows: US\$50/\$30. Camping Cabanas: US\$10/\$8. Camping (per person): US\$10/\$7.50.

Casa Guci

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 8686540.

Email: info@casaguci.com Website: www.casaguci.com

A cosy, neat and welcoming place with a huge pool and cool and spacious chalets

Accommodation:

Furnished chalets with 2 or 4 beds each and an option to sleep another two persons in the day rooms. Fully equipped kitchen with fridge and stove. Wooden sun decks and small private garden

Rates:

(High/Low Season).

Per person, Self-catering R480/R400. Bed & Breakfast: R550/R460. Full Board: R680/R600.

MAGARUQUE ISLAND.

Magaruque is the closest island to Vilankulo, has a paved 1000m landing strip, but the hotel has been lying derelict for many years now. Reason for this strange state of affairs is that, apparently anyway, the original owner of the Magaruque, Dona Anna (Vilankulo) and Paradise Island (Santa Carolina Island) Hotels, one Joaquim Alves, on independence from Portugal in 1975, forfeited his properties to the Banco Commercial do Mozambique, and then by default to the Mozambique government. More recently a fellow called Macon thought he had acquired the concession, but he disappeared after re-opening the Dona Anna and Paradise Island hotels. Now another mysterious character has had his name linked to Magaruque and the Dona Anna, but on the ground nothing appears to be moving. You can walk around the island in 3-4 hours and there are nice snorkeling reefs just in front of the hotel on Magaruque.

No Lodges are presently operational on Magaruque.

BENGUERRA ISLAND.

The second largest island in the Bazaruto Archipelago, Ilha de Benguerra is approximately 11km long and 5.5km wide and lies 14km offshore from the mainland and the town of Vilankulo. The island has a hard grass airstrip. The islands of Benguerra and Bazaruto make up the *Parque Nacional do Bazaruto* (Bazaruto National Park). Larger than Magaruque, but smaller than Bazaruto, this island is a few kilometres due north of Benguerra and has two formal lodges (Marlin and Benguerra) and one informal (illegal?) and far cheaper option (but still overpriced?), namely Gabriel's Lodge. Note that nowhere on Benguerra, or any of the other islands, is camping allowed and even Gabriel's no longer offers camping.

Benguerra Lodge.

Tel Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 452 0641, fax: 452 1496.

Email: benguerra@icon.co.za Website: www.benguerra.co.za

Certainly not for the faint of wallet or the night-clubber, but a truly special place that just fits in so seamlessly under that forest, next to the beach and alongside the sea. Very up-market, but not pretentious - same could be said of the guests that it seems to attract. A big refurbishment has just been completed (including really nice honeymoon chalets and a great restaurant/bar/socializing area) and believe me, if Robinson Crusoe had found the treasure, he would have built like this, and kept it all to himself. I'm not amused by fancy food, but not a crumb was ever left on my plate. Just feels like it should be there.

Accommodation:

Spacious and comfortably furnished thatched chalets raised on stilts with pure views over the sea, the bush and not another person or chalet in site.

Rates:

Chalets: US\$376 pp sharing. Honeymoon suites: \$410 pp. Includes all meals, teas and coffee and laundry service. Transfers from Vilankulo by boat or by Pelican Air.

Marlin Lodge

Tel Pretoria, South Africa: + 27 12 543 2134, fax: 543 2135.

Email: reservations@marlinlodge.co.za Website: www.marlinlodge.co.za

As indicated by its name, Marlin Lodge is unashamedly aimed at the serious big-game fisherman, while a full SCUBA service operates in-house. The setting is secluded and all chalets face west to take full advantage of the daily show of the spectacular sunset colours in the sea and on the clouds.

Accommodation:

19 sea-facing chalets with private patio and walkway down to the beach.

Rates:

Classic Chalets: US\$213 pp sharing. Luxury Chalets: \$281 pp sharing. Luxury Suite: \$352 pp sharing and Executive Suite: \$455 per person sharing. Rates include all meals, teas and coffees and non-motorized water sports.

Gabriel's Lodge

Tel Mozambique mobile: + 258 (0) 82 3894250.

Senhor Gabriel, a local from Vilankulo, started off his lodge a few years ago as a simple campsite catering to those who can not (or will not) pay the premiums charged by the other island lodges. Despite efforts to close him down (strictly speaking his operation does not quite fulfil all the requirements of a lodge in a National Park), Gabriel has improved his place and now no longer offers camping, but 15 basic two-bed chalets. Bare in mind that the logistics of keeping an island resort well supplied are quite daunting, and that this is quite a shoestring operation (at a price!), and so you may well expect that, at times, Gabriel does run short on supplies. So bring in a few drinks and non-perishable foods. Good basic Mozambican dishes served at the restaurant/bar.

Accommodation:

The chalets are small and certainly have no sea-views, but I suspect that you will not spend too much time in them the beach is so enticing. Ablutions are simple and shared.

Rates:

US\$40 - \$60 per person breakfast included.

BAZARUTO ISLAND

The name Bazaruto has long been (and still is?) associated with a tales of fugitives:

“It is said that the Portuguese Navy Captain Lourenço Marques while sailing on one of the vessels in which King D. João de Castro was travelling to India discovered the Bazaruto Bay. He became excited by this discovery. Lourenço Marques continued his trip to Melinde where he kidnapped a beautiful Muslim girl named Mariami Rabstra, born in Baghdad, capital of the then Abacidas. Fearing the justice from the ViceRoy of the Raja of Calcutta, he fled in an Arab ship and disembarked on Bazaruto Island”

(Gomes de Sousa 1936: 42).

At approximately 37km long and 7km at its widest point, Bazaruto is the largest island in the archipelago. A local word, “*Ushurutswa*”, which either means “*sand-dunes that look like mountains*” or “*island of the mist*”, and has been changed by the Portuguese settlers to “Bazaruto”. Legend has it that the Queen of Shebas’s pearls were collected in these waters. The eastern, or open-ocean side of the island is fringed by truly enormous sand dunes, while the remainder of the island is thicket, grassland, scrub, brackish lakes and mangrove flats. Marine species include dolphins, dugongs, humpback whales and marine turtles. The Farol (lighthouse) do Bazaruto, near Ponta Dom Carlos, the northern-most point of the island, was built over 100 years ago, the view from the top is truly spectacular. Legend has it the German U-Boats were refuelled off Bazaruto during WWII. The island has two airstrips, one near each of the resorts with Indigo Bay’s airstrip being all-weather asphalt.

Tourism developments are accelerating on the island: Indigo Bay, in particular has grandiose plans in the pipeline: According to Phase 3 of their development plan, the following additions to Indigo Bay are envisaged: 50 additional timeshare units, a new restaurant/bar, a Marina which will include a clubhouse, a staff village, 35 self-catering chalets, a nine-hole golf course and houses at Zenguelema.

Who does Bazaruto Belong to?

I have been visiting these islands since 1992, and have always enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of the environment and particularly the friendliness and ingenuity of the inhabitants.

It is with some concern therefore that I read a thesis entitled “*Sustainable Tourism Development: A case study of the Bazaruto Island in Inhambane, Mozambique.*”

By Gilberto Ricardo MPhil mini-thesis, Institute for Social Development (ISD), Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape.

The full text of his excellent and thought-provoking study is available at:

http://www.uwc.ac.za/library/theses/theses_online_r.htm

Here is an extract from Gilberto’s concluding chapter:

“The native community members have recognised that the Bazaruto Lodge is deliberately excluding them from benefits (employment and tax entry fees). This exacerbates dissatisfaction of the natives about tourism development on the island. While the managers of that resort do nothing to correct the situation, this conflict is going to endure for an unpredictable time.

In contrast, the Indigo Bay Resort has devoted efforts to helping in the social uplifting of indigenous community members and in defeating conflicts. This is tangible evidence that successful sustainability of tourism and park management not only depends on law enforcement and dialogue, but also on joint operational strategies.

The chapter reveals that there is neither compensation proposed for removing native Islanders from their land nor alternative livelihoods offered in the proposed new places to which the native islanders will be relocated. The proposed land extension for a new tourist development plan for the Indigo Bay Resort is indeed an eviction, because it fails to recognise the land-use rights of the native islanders while excluding a mutual use of land or a shareholding of the new expansion investment.

The golf course and marina tourist developments of the Indigo Bay Resort are a threat to both the environment and the associated ecosystems. Furthermore, the introduction of golf courses and marinas without presenting an appropriate environmental impact assessment is a contravention of Mozambican law for protection of the environment.”

Accommodation on the Island

Bazaruto Lodge

Tel: Johannesburg, South Africa: + 27 11 462 1714. Fax: 462 1807.

Email: res.southafrica@pestana.com

Tel: Mozambique, Maputo: + 258 21 305 000. Fax: 305 305.

reservas.africa@pestana.com Website: www.pestana.com

This lodge, being the first to be built on the island, has utilized probably the nicest location and best stretches of beach on Bazaruto. The long, sleek curving sand-spit to the north of the lodge changes constantly with the currents, tides and breezes and I spent a lot of time just swimming gently in this bay, allowing the currents to tug me along gently. Directly behind the lodge steep dunes rise up and should you need to keep in shape, I suggest an early morning daily scramble up to the lighthouse is in order. There is a Water Sports centre offering a wide range of activities including SCUBA diving (resort courses), game-fishing, sailing and water-skiing.

Accommodation:

The lodge offers 26 A-shaped, thatched roof bungalows, set amongst lush tropical gardens and all with magnificent views, the superior rooms are set on the beach front. All bungalows are air-conditioned and feature new stone bathrooms with an outside shower.

Rates:

(Full-board): Bungalow: SAR1 1550 pp sharing. Superior Bungalow: SAR1 670 pp sharing. During high season periods (20 Dec to 8 Jan and 15 Mar to 17 Apr) add SAR250 pp per night.

Indigo Bay Island Resort

Tel: Johannesburg, South Africa + 27 (0)11 467 1277, fax: 465 9623.

Email: reservations@raniresorts.com Website: www.indigobayresort.com

Part of the RANI group: www.raniresorts.com that now have resorts in Pemba, the Quirimbas, adjacent to the Reserva do Niassa, as well as here on Bazaruto. Certainly the largest hotel outside of Maputo, Indigo is well suited to folk who want to be pampered, entertained and kept busy while on holiday. A wide range of services and activities are on offer, including some of the world's best diving, deep sea and bill fishing, as well as a range of water sports, horse riding, island drives and ocean cruises. A Spa, tennis courts, second restaurant, pool and custom-designed mini golf facility were additions during 2005. I particularly enjoyed sand boarding and a meal in a Bedouin tent on the mountainous and really quite dramatic dunes. Note that major renovations and additions are scheduled for 2006, but these should not affect the functioning of the resort.

Accommodation:

24 Beach chalets (12 Queen free standing; 2 Twin free standing; 4 Twin interleading access suitable for family rooms; 6 Twin with shared verandas ideal for groups and 1 honeymoon chalet). 24 Bay View Rooms (6 units of 4 rooms; 1 unit of two rooms interleading). 1 Matemo Suite (Separate lounge, bathroom and shower en suite and plunge pool). 1 Presidential Suite (Deluxe with king bed, private entertainment area and swimming pool). All air-conditioned with 24 hr room-service.

Rates:

(Low/High/Peak Season, Full-Board): Bay View Rooms and Beach Chalets: \$225/\$321/\$405 to \$434/\$547 per person. Matemo Suite: \$740/\$851/\$1161 (max 2 persons). Presidential Suite: \$1807/\$2079/\$2783 (max 2 persons).

SANTA CAROLINA (PARADISE) ISLAND.

Once part of the Joaquim Alves property portfolio that in the '60's and '70's included Magaruque and the Hotel Dona Anna, the status of this, the only coral rock island in the archipelago, remains uncertain. The once famous hotel is literally cracking in half and much of it is crumbling slowly in the sea, but an annex with en-suite rooms and electricity has been maintained and is open to visitors who must bring in all their provisions including drinking water if planning a visit. The shallow reefs around the island offer excellent snorkelling and despite the island's diminutive size, there are half a dozen little beaches, a mangrove swamp and a 700m long calcrete airstrip. Could go on but then I wouldn't have the place to myself anymore.

7. INHASSORO.

Just 85km north of Vilankulo, Inhassoro is a small, quiet village of about 3000 inhabitants. The one and only road runs south parallel to the beach for about 2km and there is a 700m bush airstrip almost in the middle of town that is usually dotted with people, goats and refuse so I would do a ground check before considering it as a landing point. There are fuel pumps at Complexo Salema, but these are sometimes dry. There is a fuel station (diesel and leaded petrol) on the LHS on the E.N.1, just after the turn-off to Inhassoro, if heading north towards Rio Save. Inhassoro is the closest town to Bazaruto and Santa Carolina Islands. Note that Inhassoro (and B.D Lodge 30km to the north) is the last practical access to the sea before Beira. The reason for this lack of lodges over such a great distance (about 300km) of coastline is that, apart from Nova Mambone, which is actually 7km from the beach, no other beach locations are readily accessible by road - even in a 4x4 you are likely to be stuck in thick sand or a swamp long before you reach that beach.

Hotel Seta

Mozambique Tel/fax: + 258 (0) 293 91000/1/2. Mobile: + 258 (0) 82 849400.

Apparently Seta is the nickname of the owner - one Senhor Cabrita - who has lived in these parts all of his life and knows a thing or two about the area. Seta is a simple, breezy and well-shaded place, and the front veranda where tables are placed under the Mahogany trees, is one of the best places in Mozambique to down a few drinks and plot the conquest of the steps down to the beach. The restaurant serves great seafood, but order at least 30 minutes in advance.

Accommodation.

A large, level and shady camping site. New spacious and well-built 'casas' (no sea view) and basic rooms with sea view.

Rates.

Basic beachfront en-suite rooms Mt700 000 double. Casas (air-conditioned, en-suite) that sleep 6 go for around Mt1 500 000 per day.

Complexo Salema

Caters mainly to truckers and the local travelling community. Rows of small en-suite rooms overlooking the trucker's and bus yard. Speak Portuguese? Then have a beer with one of the drivers here and find out about another side of Mozambique. Next to the fuel station which is often dry.

Dugong Lodge

Tel Moz mobile: + 258 (0) 82 4567170 or Zimbabwe: + 263 (0) 9 882617, + 263 (0) 11 406527.

When you get to Inhasorro you will see Seta on your LHS - turn right onto the main road and follow it to where the tar ends then it's left onto the dirt track. Not to be confused with the 'other' Dugong Lodge that is near Ponta São Sebastião in the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary.

Accommodation:

Self-catering "A" frame chalets and double-storey houses, all air-conditioned.

Rates:

Enquire when booking.

B. D. Lodge

Ponta Bartolomeu Dias. Mozambique fax: + 258 293 91012. Moz mobile: + 258 84 390 5700. South Africa: + 27 42 243 3552.

Email: bdlodge@mozadventures.com Website: www.mozadventures.com

B.D Lodge, which opened in December 2005, lies 30km north of Inhassoro and is the last lodge on the coast between Inhassoro and Beira. Beautiful remote setting between the estuary and the beach. Can be quite an adventure to get there if you try to get through the mangroves when the tide is not low enough so consult your tide-table. Coming into Inhasorro turn left before Hotel Seta Hotel and follow the 4x4 sand road for 33km. Each cluster of chalets has their own fully equipped central kitchen, dining area and bar for self-catering. The restaurant specializes in seafood dishes. For honey-mooners there is a private hideaway in a romantic setting, with a Jacuzzi open to the wide African sky.

Accommodation:

Luxury self-catering chalets on stilts, some with sea-views, some with lagoon views.

Rates:

(High Season): R600 per chalet (sleep 2), self-catering.