

## ZANZIBAR COUNTRY INFORMATION



In preparation for your Zanzibar Sojourn please find below some interesting facts about Zanzibar. For further information you can visit the official Zanzibar Tourism Authority's website : <http://zanzibartourism.go.tz> and <http://www.zanzibar.net>



### **The country:**

Zanzibar (/ˈzænzibar/; Zangibār "Coast of Blacks"; zangi (black-skinned) + bār (coast) is a semi-autonomous part of Tanzania, in East Africa. It is composed of the Zanzibar Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, 25–50 kilometers (16–31 mi) off the coast of the mainland, and consists of numerous small islands and two large ones: Unguja (the main island, referred to informally as Zanzibar), and Pemba. The capital of Zanzibar, located on the island of Unguja, is Zanzibar City. Its historic center, known as Stone Town, is a World Heritage Site and is claimed to be the only functioning ancient town in East Africa.

Zanzibar's main industries are spices, raffia, and tourism. In particular, the islands produce cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, and black pepper. For this reason, the islands, together with Tanzania's Mafia Island, are sometimes called the Spice Islands (a term also associated with the Maluku Islands in Indonesia). Zanzibar is the home of the endemic Zanzibar Red Colobus Monkey, the Zanzibar Servaline Genet, and the (possibly extinct) Zanzibar Leopard.

### **Currency**

US\$ are the preferred currency. If you plan on taking cash, make sure you take large bills (e.g. \$50 or \$100) as these for some unknown reason always get a better rate, however, you will need the smaller denominations for tips, shopping and other payments. If you are planning on taking a taxi into town, rather pay the fare in US\$ and go to a bureau in town. There are many all over town. Traveller's cheques and cash are accepted at hotels and Bureau de Changes

Try to pay for as much as possible in the local currency (Tanzanian Shillings), always bearing in mind the exchange rate. If the locals see you have foreign currency, they will try to relieve you of it. ALWAYS haggle or bargain and try to pretend you know what you are doing. You can use credit cards at larger establishments – Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted, but American Express and Diners Club cards can also come in handy.

### **Passport and visa:**

You must have a valid passport that does not expire for at least **six months** after your return home date. Please ensure your passport has at least 2 blank pages for any visas required and for entry/departure stamps. When returning to South Africa you must have at least **2 blank visa pages** (not endorsement pages) to enable the entry visa to be issued.

Visas are required by most visitors and cost from \$50. Visas are obtainable at the airport when you arrive but make sure you have the exact money on hand in small denominations. Visas are also obtainable from the Tanzanian Embassy. South African passport holders do not require a visa.

### **Health:**

Medical facilities are limited and medicines are sometimes unavailable, even in Dar es Salaam. There are hospitals on Zanzibar that can treat minor ailments. For any major medical problems, including dental work, travellers should consider obtaining medical treatment in Nairobi or South Africa where more advanced medical care is available.

Tap water in Zanzibar is unsafe to drink. Travellers are strongly urged to use bottled water for drinking and food preparation.

*Much of East Africa is at altitude and the sun is hot. Particularly if you are fair skinned, you may burn easily. It is therefore necessary to take precautions by applying high factor sunscreen and to stay out of the direct sunlight. We would advise you to wear a hat whilst you are out in the mid day sun.*

*Malaria is endemic but is preventable; use insect repellent, cover up at sundown, sleep under a mosquito net and take anti-malaria prophylactics as advised by your doctor. Yellow fever vaccination is only required if you are travelling from a yellow fever endemic country.*

*Vaccines recommended for your visit to Zanzibar include those against Hepatitis A and B and cholera – these are not compulsory.*

**Power:**

*This is the same as the UK and in South Africa, being 220/230 V. Most plugs are the English standard square pin and some are the round pins. Do not leave appliances plugged in all day, as there are many power fluctuations, which might destroy them. US Citizens will have to get an adapter and a transformer for Zanzibar power. If your plug does not match, then enquire at a local shop; they should be able to assist.*

**Crime:**

*Visitors should always be alert and cautious especially in the cities. Street crime in Zanzibar is common. Visitors should limit the amount of cash they carry and leave valuables, such as passports, jewellery and airline tickets, in a hotel safe or other secure place. Cameras are highly coveted by thieves, and should be guarded carefully. Because of the potential for fraud, credit cards should only be used in reputable tourist hotels. Travellers are warned to avoid walking alone after dark.*

**People, Religion and Language:**

*Zanzibar's local people are an incredible mixture of ethnic backgrounds, indicative of her colourful history. Islam is the dominant religion, and practiced by most Zanzibaris, although there are also followers of Christianity and Hinduism. Population is estimated at 800,000, with the largest concentration being Zanzibar City, which has approximately 100,000 inhabitants. Zanzibaris speak Swahili (known locally as Kiswahili), a language that is spoken extensively in East Africa. Many believe that the purest form is spoken in Zanzibar, as it is the birthplace of the language. If you are non-Muslim, then please do not enter any of Zanzibar's many mosques.*

**Useful KiSwahili greetings:**

<i>Greeting (to locals)</i>	<i>Habari gani</i>
<i>Greeting (to foreigner)</i>	<i>Jambo, shikamuu</i>
<i>Thank you (correct reply to greeting)</i>	<i>Marahaba</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Asante</i>
<i>Goodbye / We'll see you</i>	<i>Kwaheri / Tutaonana</i>
<i>You are welcome, come in</i>	<i>Karibu</i>

**Dress code and Etiquette:**

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*It never gets really cold in Zanzibar and light clothes are advisable. It is located very close to the Equator, so you should bring a sunhat/cap, suntan lotion and good sunglasses.*

*At the coast and Zanzibar where Muslims are predominant women need to dress modestly, so as not to offend local sensibilities. They should not expose too much leg and chest, and topless sunbathing is also strongly discouraged. Mini-skirts are a definite no. Try to wear shorts (not hot pants) or a long skirt, and try to keep the shoulders covered. Swimwear is perfectly acceptable at beaches and hotel premises. Nudity is totally unacceptable in the whole country.*

*Men should not wear shorts on the main island, and women should wear dresses that cover their shoulders and knees.*

*Zanzibarians are friendly to foreigners and amongst themselves. Politeness, respect and modesty are also highly valued, so it would be very helpful to learn some Swahili greetings before visiting. Take the time to greet people before you ask them for directions.*

*Handshakes are very important in social etiquette. Zanzibans frequently continue holding hands throughout a conversation. Note that the right hand is usually used for eating, while the left is traditionally used for toilet duties - you should try not to pass items to others with your left hand. When receiving items from others, do so with both hands, or with the right hand while touching the left hand to your right elbow.*

## **Time:**

*Zanzibar is 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.*

## **Climate:**

*Zanzibar experiences ideal holiday weather for most of the year, with the exception of April and May, which are seasonally subject to the long rains. Short rains can occur in November but are characterised by short showers, which do not last long. The heat of summer is seasonally often cooled by windy conditions, resulting in pleasant sea breezes, particularly on the North and East coasts. Being near to the equator, the islands are warm all year round, but officially, summer and winter peak in December and June respectively. This is illustrated statistical weather information shown below. Zanzibar is blessed with an average of 7-8 hours of sunshine daily.*

*Climate data provided by Weather2Travel.com*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Precipitation (mm)</b>	75	75	140	390	250	60	50	45	50	90	210	160
<b>Temperature High (°C)</b>	32	32	32	30	28	28	27	28	28	30	31	31
<b>Temperature Low (°C)</b>	24	24	25	25	23	23	22	22	22	22	23	24

## **Shopping:**

*You will find woodcarving, batik, leather goods, woven baskets, masks and beadwork in shops and markets throughout East Africa. In most of the local markets prices are not fixed and bargaining is expected, while in the safari camps and hotels, prices are generally fixed, are*

*much more expensive but with better quality. In the markets you will generally only be able to pay by cash while in the camp and hotel gift shops credit cards are welcome.*

**Food:**

*Lobsters, kingfish, prawns, octopus, crabs and squid are just a few of the many types of seafood on offer. It is not surprising that Zanzibar's specialities are centered around what is available locally, so take full advantage of the variety of spicy seafood dishes on offer. Coconut also features in many dishes.*

**Public Holidays:**

*The dates of certain public holidays change from year to year. If a public holiday falls on a Sunday, then the Monday is also declared a public holiday.*

*01 January, 12 January, 05 February, 26 April, 01 May, 07 July, 09 December and 25 December.*

*Muslim festivals, including Ramadan, and the Prophet's Birthday, account for four days of public holiday, and their precise dates depend on the lunar calendar. Good Friday and Easter Monday are also observed.*

**The Zanzibar flag:**

*Zanzibar was a part of the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, which flew a plain red flag, beginning in 1698. Majid bin Said declared an independent Sultanate of Zanzibar on 2 November 1856 but did not adopt a new flag. The red flag remained in use during the British protectorate period. When Zanzibar gained independence from the United Kingdom on 10 December 1963, a green disk with two yellow cloves was added to the flag. On 12 January 1964, John Okello overthrew the Sultan of Zanzibar and adopted a black-yellow-blue tricolour as the flag of the People's Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba. On 29 January, the flag was changed to a blue-black-green tricolour with a thin white stripe at the hoist. This design, which was based on the flag of the Afro-Shirazi Party, was the longest-lived of the post-independence flags and eventually formed the basis for the current flag. On 26 April 1964, Zanzibar united with Tanganyika to form the new country of Tanzania and Zanzibar's old flag fell out of use.*

**Economy:**

*Fishing and agriculture are the main economic activities of the local people. Zanzibar was once the world's largest producer of cloves, and her economy was based on large incomes thus derived. Although cloves are still a major export along with coconut products and spices, tourism has been earmarked as the primary foreign exchange earner, with more visitors coming to Zanzibar each year. At this stage, the numbers are still low (less than 100,000 annually) and the potential for tourism is relatively untapped.*

**Other:**

*If you are diving or snorkelling, you may be tempted to collect some pretty shells from Zanzibar's many coral reefs. Please do not, as this kills entire reefs, the devastating effects of which can be seen in the well-trodden areas of East African coast. Although there are shell sellers, you are asked not to buy shells from them, as it simply encourages this harmful industry. Zanzibar is an amazingly photogenic place, but if you want to take photographs of people, please ask their permission first out of courtesy.*

**Recommended reading (in no particular order):**

- *The Poisonwood Bible* - Barbara Kingsolver
- *Mukiwa, A white boy in Africa* – Peter Godwin
- *Wangari Maathai - her autobiography Chinua Achebe: Anthills of the Savannah*
- *John Ngugi - Grain of Wheat*
- *The Zanzibar Chest Abdulrazak Gurnah*
- *Paradise Abdulrazak Gurnah*
- *By the Sea M.G. Vassanji*
- *The Book of Secrets Peter Mathiessen*
- *African Trilogy Thomas Pakenham –*
- *Scramble for Africa David Read – Waters of the Sanjan*
- *Biography of a Continent Michaela Wong*
- *Jane Goodall books on chimpanzee behavior for visitors to Mahale*
- *Richard D. Estes – The Safari Companion Richard D. Estes – The Behavioural Guide to African Mammals*
- *Terry Stevenson, John Fanshawe – Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*
- *Collins Field Guide – Mammals of Africa*
- *Jonathan Scott's – Photographic Field guide to the Mammals of Africa*
- *Johnathan Kingdon – The Kingdom Field Guide to African Mammals*
- *Michael Blundell – Wild Flowers of East Africa (currently out of print)*
- *Sasol – Birds of Prey of Africa*

***African Sojourns wishes you a wonderful and exciting holiday!***