

Mozambique: General Tourist Information

Size & Location

Approximately 800,000 km² with an Indian Ocean coastline of 2,500km along the eastern seaboard of Africa, nestled between Tanzania in the north, South Africa and Swaziland in the south, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi in the west. It is the 16th-largest country in Africa, roughly two thirds the size of the neighbouring Republic of South Africa, about three times the size of Great Britain and slightly larger than the state of Texas.

Geography

Eastern Mozambique is very flat, while on the western side you can find mountains, the highest being Mt Binga in the Chimanimani Mountains on the border with Zimbabwe. Two of southern Africa's largest rivers flow through the country, the Zambezi and the Limpopo Rivers.

Weather

Almost all the country is below 2,000m, and covered in a mixture of subtropical scrub. The south tends to be cooler and drier than the north. There are regional differences in climate throughout Mozambique, the highest temperatures are during the rainy season (November to April). During the Dry Season temperatures are more comfortable.

Tourist Attractions

Predominantly known for its amazing coral reefs, sandy beach archipelago island vacations and historical towns.

History

A brief history: The earliest inhabitants of Mozambique are believed to be related to the San people (Bushman) from around 1000 BC. In 1498, the Portuguese Vasco de Gama landed in Mozambique en route to India and the Portuguese quickly established control of the Swahili-Arab trading posts. Portugal pulled out almost overnight after the independent Peoples Republic of Mozambique was proclaimed on 25th June 1975 and many years of civil unrest followed. A formal peace agreement was signed in 1992.

People

In 2016 the estimated population was 28 million people with 80% living in the rural areas of the country. There are 19 main ethnic groups of which the Macua make up 25% of the population. Life expectancy is around 55 years.

Languages

The official language is Portuguese, spoken by 11% of the population. There are some 40 indigenous languages all classified into Bantu linguistic groups. English and Swahili are widely understood in some border areas.

Capital and other Cities

Maputo is the capital of Mozambique, with a population of around 2.2 million including Matola. The other main towns are Nampula (638,000); Beira (462,000); Chimoio (325,000); Nacala (244,000) and Quelimane (245,000).

Politics

Mozambique became independent in 1975. Shortly after, the country suffered a civil war that lasted 16 years until the Peace Agreement was signed in 1992. The country is a multi-party republic and the national anthem is *Pátria Amada* ('Beloved Fatherland').

Religion

About 52% of the population is Christian, with Catholicism dominating, and 18% is Muslim. The remainder hold traditional beliefs.

Economy

Predominantly subsistence agriculture, although this is changing as the exploitation of mineral resources increase and large tracts of land is being transformed into commercial agriculture entities. The country's GDP was US\$116 per capita PPP with an annual growth of 6.6% in 2015.

Currency

Metical (Mts, Meticais in plural, pronounced Meticash but often abbreviated to Mets); Most Businesses quote in South African Rand (ZAR) or US Dollars (US\$) and both are widely, but not exclusively, accepted around the country.

Banks and foreign exchange bureaus in Mozambique will change all major currencies into Metical the local currency, South African Rand and US dollar are also widely accepted, ATM's are spreading across the popular locations but travellers cheques are difficult and expensive to exchange. Private exchange bureaus in Maputo usually offer better exchange rates than banks. Changing money on the black market is strongly discouraged.

The unit of currency in Mozambique is the meticais (M) which is divided into 100 centavos. If you are travelling in the southern parts of the country, South African Rand, US dollars and pounds sterling are also accepted and can be used to pay for accommodation. North of Beira US dollars and sterling are widely accepted.

It is recommended that you carry small denomination notes for bartering and making purchases at markets as change is often a problem.

Banking Hours

Local banks have branches in most cities which are open from Monday to Friday from 07:45 to 11:00 or 12:00.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are usually accepted at the more upmarket hotels, but apart from this your credit card will be of little use.

Tipping

Tipping is not usually expected though in tourist areas locals are becoming used to this and a tip of 5-15% is often appreciated. Bargaining for local handicrafts is commonplace.

Electricity

The national grid, where available provides 220V (50Hz) power.

National Sports

Soccer and basketball.