

INDIAN OCEAN *escape*

THE ANANTARA BAZARUTO ISLAND RESORT & SPA ON BAZARUTO ISLAND

It's mid-winter in Johannesburg. It's cold, the media is full of bad news and I can think of nothing better than a quick escape to the beautiful island of Bazaruto in Mozambique.

And it really was quick – just over two hours. Airlink's direct flight from OR Tambo International Airport to Vilanculos was much easier than I thought.

After arriving at the airport, along with a party of other guests, I was taken to a jetty nearby. June is considered low season, but temperatures are still fairly warm. Today, at 24 degrees, I had to start stripping off the layers of city clothing.

The Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort & Spa on Bazaruto Island is one of the most idyllic island spa destinations. Surrounded by lush palm trees, white sandy beaches and the deep-blue Indian Ocean, it offers the perfect quick getaway for travellers wishing to rejuvenate their minds, bodies and health.

This leading hotel offers a wide variety of activities, including watersports, golf, tennis, horseriding and cycling, but the main purpose of my trip was to indulge in the exceptional Anantara Spa. It boasts five treatment rooms, an ice pool, a wet room, a hydrotherapy pool, a Rasul chamber, a health bar and relaxation areas.

1

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT

Just get there and enjoy every moment. Put your mobile and laptop away and chill. This hotel is truly an oasis in the ocean.

2

WHEN TO GO

I visited the spa in late June, which is during the South African winter. Of course, you can plan your trip at other times. What's great about this hotel and spa is that it has so much to offer. Whether you are traveling alone, with friends or your family, there is something for everyone, of any age.

3

WHO TO ASK FOR

Natasha Kennedy is the area manager of the Anantara Hotel & Spa. She is a gracious host with many years of experience globally, and is passionate and knowledgeable about health. I enjoyed having discussions with her on a range of health topics. My designated therapist, Pauline, was a joy.

4

DON'T FORGET TO PACK

Bring your swimsuit; sun protection; loose, comfortable beach clothing; beach sandals (flip flops are standard wear); and sporting clothes and shoes if you want to combine activities. I played tennis and rode horses during my stay. The evenings can be a little cool, so a light jumper is a good idea.

5

WHAT YOU GET

Anantara has built its beautiful spa on the highest point of the property, overlooking the ocean, so the view as you enter the spa is stupendous.

I began my own island spa experience with a treatment called the Rasul, also known as a Turkish hamam. The Rasul is a traditional Arabian cleansing ritual, more often than not enjoyed communally – a time to share news and chatter. This time it was just three of us together, and we were each provided with a set of three bowls. The first bowl contained salt crystals to exfoliate our skin. This was followed by massaging with smooth clay, which is great for drawing out toxins from your skin. The third bowl contained a beautifully scented, jasmine-infused hair treatment. All of these products have been created specifically for Anantara.

The darkened Rasul soon filled up with wafts of steam. The mosaic-clad room has a high ceiling peppered with little lights that change colour throughout the session. It's like staring up at a darkened, starry sky, as they did in the traditional Rasul temple experience. Forty minutes later, after a gentle steaming, the twinkling heavens literally opened and a warm stream of water rained down gently and washed my body clean of any remnants of city energy.

Feeling very relaxed, I retired to

the patio and a cup of lemongrass tea. In that moment, looking out into the dark, tranquil expanse of the Indian Ocean, I was reminded just how fortunate I am to be a healthy hedonist.

The next day I was treated to the African Beach Spa Experience. The treatment took place on the beach, under the shade of a thatched umbrella. Pauline, my super-attentive therapist, worked wonders on my body. She literally coaxed out the lumps of stress using a mixture of coconut oil, sea salt and her deft hands.

After a quick swim to rinse off, I was back on the lounge and being pampered with a cool aloe vera gel squeezed from a wad of newly picked aloe leaves. Aloe vera is grown on the island. This indigenous plant has amazing antiviral and antibacterial properties – and the ability to help treat everything from constipation to diabetes. No surprise, these benefits have been exploited globally by the health industry, and it's also used in anti-aging cosmetics.

I love the fact that the resort makes full use of nature's own medicine chest, using ingredients in treatments that are picked off a local tree or plant, or come from the sea.

And finally, I had a signature massage in one of the luxurious spa rooms. I was then served a healthy lunch on the lookout deck, to a breathtaking view of the ocean.



WHY THIS SPA?

It's an exceptional experience. Not even an experienced health hedonist like me is exempt from the trials and tribulations of an overstressed urban lifestyle. I knew as soon as my bare feet touched the sandy shore that my decision to take a mid-winter break was one of the best I had made all year.

The villas boast a beautiful en-suite bathroom, air conditioning, whimsically draped mosquito netting, personal bar, satellite television and a choice of separate, interleading or shared verandas.

HOW TO GET THERE

Airlink is the regional feeder airline, offering a wide network of regional and domestic flights within southern Africa. It operates as a franchisee to SAA.

Route-specific information: There are direct scheduled flights between Johannesburg and Vilanculos, as well as daily flights from Nelspruit to Vilanculos, offering a same-day bush and beach experience.

Connectivity: Through the Airlink alliance with SAA, travellers connect conveniently with SAA, its partner airlines and other carriers throughout southern Africa and the world.

Frequent flyer programme: Airlink is a member of the South African Airways Voyager programme.

Website: www.flyairlink.com

HOW TO BOOK

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