



Southern Africa's lion, wildebeest, cheetah and springbok, are four of the seven fastest mammals on earth.



Without end...

Island Resort

As a 'Hospede' or guest of Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort in Mocambique, you want for absolutely nothing

Words and photographs by **Kathy Malherbe**

From Vilanculous International in Mozambique to Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort, it's a short flip in a little red and white Cessna. You can be excused for wanting to give the plane a hug. Not only because of its nobby-like cuteness but because it will transport you both physically and spiritually from the hamster wheel of mainland life.

The air is humid and heavy with tropical heat - as the plane taxis, the pilot holds his door open for a welcome natural aircon. His adroitness and the sophistication of the petite Cessna make the 30 minute flight an integral part of what is to be a restorative journey. As he touches down, there is almost immediately a mellowness in you, as if your DNA has recognised and acclimatised to paradise.



The Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort is just that. A place where you become the cosseted guests of Mother Nature, slipping into a cocoon of pampered hospitality and the gentle and discreet service, signature to Anantara properties.

Bazaruto is only 30km from the mainland. Seven thousand years ago it was a peninsula, and is grateful for the tectonic forces and tidal movements of nature which created this 36km and 7km wide dot in the Indian Ocean.

You feel like a very privileged castaway – chocolate box cyan ocean, white sandy beaches, warm water, an eternal supply of freshly caught seafood, gentle and unobtrusive service and tranquillity.

Four hundred years of Portuguese control, an even longer trading relationship with the Arabian, Indian and Malay world, and interactions with surrounding formerly British and German-controlled countries, may have influenced the country but now it embodies a very distinctive Mozambique culture or ‘Moçambicanidade’.

The recently refurbished beach villas are home for the next few days. They are luxurious and spacious. It’s a fusion of indoor-outdoor living and built to maximise the view. The reed thatch has been ingeniously draped so that you have uninterrupted views of the Indian Ocean and complete privacy. As a ‘Hospede’ or guest of Anantara, you want for nothing.

Which means you can enjoy an outdoor shower, open your sliding doors behind the large free-standing bath tub and wallow in the sensation of being on your own private island. The beach pool villas open onto a shoreline deck, sun loungers and a spacious outdoor living area.



Generally, European wines are named after their geographic locations, while non-European on the other hand, wines are mostly named after different grape varieties.



It is tempting to park here, dipping in the warm ocean in front of you, relaxing in the infinity pool and watching the perpetual tidal movement, the dhows gently cruising past and the fisherman hauling the catch of the day. But there are horses to be ridden, massive sand dunes to climb and sandboard down, Pansy Island to visit, not to mention the gourmet food prepared by Executive Chef Donaldson, a purveyor of fine food, a raconteur and a magician when it comes to conjuring up delicacies. The ambrosia is ubiquitous.

A 45-minute boat ride to Pansy Island for a private picnic lunch is a signature excursion. The dolphins are playful marshals as the boat heads out to sea and a loggerhead turtle surfaces briefly alongside us for a breath of oxygen. The crystal-clear waters in this part of the Indian Ocean are home to five kinds of dolphin, humpback whales, hammerheads, whale and Zambezi sharks and hawksbill. The boat anchors at the reef and it’s a small slip off the platform to snorkel. Bazaruto has a submerged oasis of protected reefs and as you focus they come alive as tropical fish play tag in amongst the underwater coral sculptures created by the currents.

It’s good to know that Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort is ensuring this paradise is preserved for future generations, together with the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park they proudly care for its precious marine environment through a sustainable coral gardening initiative that is the first project of its kind.

Snorkelled out, temporarily, Pansy Island is the next stop and, considering the rarity of this sought-after shell, it’s a little like being overwhelmed by a well-stocked candy store. The shells lie half exposed and then are gently covered by the incoming tide. Even though there are hundreds of them, it’s a case of ‘admire and leave’ in this marine national park (and tread very carefully).





The term 'bouquet' generally refers to the total scent of a wine. 'Aroma' is generally the scent of the grapes. When wine tasters describe the 'bouquet' and the 'aroma' together, they use the term 'nose'.



Chef Donaldson doesn't disappoint and the lunch is a spread of magnificent seafood, fruits, freshly caught fish and what became his 'famous brownies.'

Replete and relaxed, the trip back is gentle and soporific. A trilogy of water experiences. A quick freshen with a dip in the infinity pool then the outdoor shower is an appetiser for a gratifying dinner on the beach.

A highlight is the cooking lesson by Chef Donaldson. He conjures up Mozambiquan prawn curry, barbequed crayfish - he is a food magician, using the essential ingredients of Mozambiquan cuisine. He generously shares his recipes with the star-struck, wannabe chefs. Signature dishes included the iconic Piri-Piri Chicken, Wagyu steak, 'Sesame Crusted Norwegian Salmon' and 'Crayfish Thermidor' cooked on Himalayan salt bricks, adding a vibrant flavour to your meal.

Thankfully there are plenty of opportunities to generate an appetite. A sunset excursion up the massive sand dunes – means you earn your craft gin tasting. There is a gentle caressing breeze, cascading wisps of sand tumble down the face of the dune. The 360 degree panorama is worth the climb. As the sun is swallowed by the distant horizon, it's a lurch down to the vehicle and back to the villa.

A ride along the beach on one of the five South African boereperde (renowned for their kind temperament and hardiness). Their gentleness is evident in the ducks nesting in corner of three stables. Despite the horse's size, the duck is unfazed and focused on hatching her ducklings.

The beach ride is an unforgettable experience as the horses canter gently along the sand. Unlike their riders, the horses are keen to get home when we reluctantly turn round. It's a case of 'hold your horses' as they canter towards the stables. My steed's name, Myaarst, is recalled, painfully in the next two days.

Which is why a visit to Anantara Spa is a godsend. It is built at the top of the cliff and the spaciousness and design mean it is a serene and healing sanctuary.

A restorative massage is followed by sundowners on the deck. You can enjoy invigorating experiences in the ice pool, wet room, hydrotherapy pool and rhassoul chamber. From this 'eyrie' you have an expansive view of the ocean and islands for kilometres out to sea. It is unsurprising that the Anantara Spa was named Mozambique's Best Resort Spa in 2019.

The name 'Anantara' is taken from an ancient Sanskrit word meaning 'without end'. And you do wish the island experience would be eternal – to stay forever immersed in the tranquil rhythm of the island. ✨

HOW TO GET THERE

Airlink: Airlink is a privately owned and funded entity. It operates as a Regional Feeder Airline, connecting travellers to more than 55 routes within Southern Africa and St Helena Island. Route Specific Information: Direct scheduled flights from Johannesburg and Nelspruit to Vilanculos, Mozambique.

Frequent Flyer Programme: Airlink is a member of South African Airways Loyalty programme - Voyager.

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