T he snow’s creamy lattes still sizzle proudly against sapphire skies and the sleepy 8km stretch of Indian Ocean between northern Mozambique’s mainland and Medjumbe, the private island on which I’m standing. From here, the distant cactus resembles a toy moving lazily with the wind; however, traditional Arabian wooden boats such as these have navigated these waters with ease for more than 1,200 years. In addition to the unhurried beauty of the vessel lingers to the scene. I’m reminded how far I am from home.

One of 52 islands in the more than 200-km-long Quirimbas archipelago, Medjumbe hosts a single-luxury property, the 12-villa, adults-only Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort, accessible via a 45-minute helicopter transfer from Pemba airport. Its route, we whizzed over humpback whales facing the cove that slapping chorography of the new; some of the mangroves, reef, and sandbars that link this archipelago to the mainland; and eight other low-lying islands, including Buzi, an ancient settlement with traditional culture and historic buildings that Medjumbe guests can explore on an optional excursion.

The only dated architecture on Medjumbe is a lighthouse, now the lonely haunt of egrets and other seabirds as well as the best place to catch the sunrise. The resort itself - a casually star, thatched main building housing the restaurant and lounge bar, spa villa, dive/water sports hut, 10m swimming pool, and the guest villas - was built in 2005 and most recently refurbished in 2018. While some guests prefer the archipelago's history via an excursion or two, Medjumbe is more of a place to relax, commune with the ocean and feast on the fresh seafood—lobster, crab, squid, fish, and prawns—that allow fishermen deliver daily.

**Daydream from your Villa**

The 304m2 villas face the northern beach - five west of the main building and seven to the east. All have thatched roofs, exposed beams, white-washed floors, king, queen, or twin beds, and wall adorned with cheerful handmade baskets and textiles. A complimentary mini bar with beer, wine and sodas along with plunger coffee and chocolate shortbread ensures regular refreshment, and a private outdoor shower complements the indoor bath and shower. The villa’s most relaxing element, though, is the private outdoor deck which, with its lounge chairs, table, plunge pool, and beach and ocean views, inspires bouts of laziness, reading and contemplation.

**Partake of a movable feast**

Rates include all meals (as well as local house wines, beers, and spirits), and it's possible to dine in your villa for no extra charge - some guests take all their meals there, says resort co-owner Michelle Pretorius. But as inviting as the villas are, it's worth stepping away occasionally.

Restaurant seating options include the beach, terrace, and indoors. A more intimate option is Dining by Design, where staff members create a table and seating in the sand, further down the beach. You have to be cautious (you don’t want the sand “furniture” to collapse before you finish dessert), but the canopy of stars and the romance of the setting make any gustations worthwhile.

The most exclusive meal location, though, is another island, Smaller Quirimbas Island - deserted except for a matador and security staff - is just a 5-minute boat ride west. Some couples elect for the Star Bed Experience, where they arrive for sunset, tuck into a gourmet picnic hamper, and spend a night on the beach, stargazing from a comfy four-poster bed. If you can’t tear yourself away from your villa’s ensuite, though, visit Quirimbas for a sumptuous lunchtime picnic of fresh grilled seafood, salads and South African wine, also taking the opportunity to explore Medjumbe’s numerous rich house reef on route. Even if you overnight on Quirimbas you’ll return to Medjumbe for breakfast, where a menu suggests the island Benedict (served with lobster and curried hollandaise sauce) to accompany the papaya, topped with fresh mango, and freshly baked Portuguese custard tarts, croissants and pastries. This, however, is in the menu only you're likely to see. Instead, executive chef Carlos Azarias will pop by your table to chat about options for lunch and dinner which, depending on the catch, might include seafood dishes such as Mozambique prawns curry and red snapper sashimi, along with non-seafood choices such as beef espetadas and vegetarian pasta.

**Explore an exotic seascape**

Hollandaise sauce and battery baked goods aside, the fare is mostly healthy. Still, your mind and body will thank you for some gentle exercise. A walk around the island - locals can take you - here the tide is falling and you’ll feel you’re floating on a surreal work of art. Paddle boarding towards passing shoals is another way to draw yourself into this exotic seascape, as is the slow sunset cruise.

**Whale watching**

Between August and October, migrating humpback whales frequent these waters.

**Scuba diving**

Ten dive sites of varying difficulty are within a short cruise of the island for vibrant coral and tropical fish.

**The Writer’s Day at Anantara, Medjumbe Island Resort**

**Escape route**

**Mozambique**

**Staying there**

Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort has 12 thatched beach pool villas, each with ocean views, direct beach access, Wi-Fi and a private outdoor deck with plunge pool.

**Getting there**

South African Airways flies daily from Port Elizabeth to Durban, and from Durban to Pemba. Bookings can be made through the Anantara reservations office.

**When to go**

April, May, August, and September.