



# topuito isles

mozambique

## **The Topuito Isles** **Northern Mozambique** **Fact sheet: Location**

*“The Topuito Isles stand majestic in a sea of clean, warm blue waters of the Primeras and Segundas Archipelago, their waves lapping over untouched, unparalleled coral reefs to land on the soft sands that form a continuous private beach paradise.”*

### **Where are the Topuito Isles?**

The Topuito Isles are two islands in the Primeras and Segundas Archipelago in the Indian Ocean in Northern Mozambique. They lie in the seas, 15 kilometres off the shores of Larde, which is in Moma District in Nampula Province. Larde is 250 kilometres from Nampula City, 720 kilometres from Pemba City and 2400 kilometres from Maputo. The islands are around 350 kilometres from the west coast of Madagascar.

### **About Mozambique**

With the warm Indian Ocean and over 2400 km's of coastline, everyone is rushing to experience what is said to be the new Maldives, the next Seychelles, but with the kind of peace and exclusivity that cannot be matched anywhere in the world.

### **Geography**

Mozambique is an East African country that forms part of the Southern African region. On its east coast is the magnificent Indian Ocean, and its neighbours are Tanzania to the north, Malawi and Zambia to the west, Zimbabwe to the southwest, and South Africa and Swaziland to the southeast.

The capital, Maputo, is in the south, near the coast. The area of the country is 308,642 square miles (799,509 square kilometers). The terrain ranges from rain forests and swamps to mountains, grasslands, sand dunes, and beaches. The Zambezi River is an important natural resource, supplying power through the Cahora Bassa dam, one of Africa's largest hydroelectric projects. The Zambezi flows west to east and cuts the country into northern and southern regions that diverge, to some extent, in terms of culture and history as well as climate.

## History

From about 1500 Mozambique became a central trading post for the Portuguese on the new route to the East. But Arab commercial and slave trading settlements had existed here for centuries before their arrival. Much of both the Arab and Portuguese influence can be seen in Northern Mozambique, and especially on Ilha de Mocambique.

The earliest inhabitants were small groups of hunters and gatherers such as the Khoi and the San. In the eighth century, Arab traders began establishing trading posts along the coast. By the fourteenth century, those settlements had developed into independent city-states and were the main political and commercial centers in the area.

The Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama was the first European to reach current-day Mozambique. When he arrived in 1498, the Maravi kingdom of the Mwene Matapa was in control of the central Zambezi Basin. Da Gama first landed in the Muslim island town of Moçambique, and by 1510 the Portuguese controlled trading from Sofala in present-day Mozambique north to Mogadishu in what is now Somalia. The Mwene Matapa recognized Portuguese rule in 1629. The Portuguese called the area Terra da Boa Gente ("Country of the Good People").

In 1951, Portugal declared the colony an overseas province. In the 1960s, Mozambique was swept up in the pan-African movement toward independence. Fighting between Frelimo, the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (the Mozambican Liberation Front) led by Eduardo Mondlane and Portuguese troops broke out in 1964. Mozambique finally gained independence on 25 June 1975 after the colonial government collapsed.

Frelimo later faced external opposition for their Marxist policies. Most notable was the rebel group called Renamo the (Mozambican National Resistance). The ongoing civil war that resulted disrupted Mozambique's economy, caused tens of thousands of deaths, and forced large numbers of people out of their homes and villages.

In the late 1980s, Frelimo, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, renounced its Marxist stance in order to receive foreign aid. In 1990, a new constitution was introduced that allowed for a multiparty democracy. On 4 October 1992, the civil war officially ended when a peace accord was signed by Frelimo and Renamo leaders.

## Country Facts

The estimated population in 1998 was 18,641,469.

The official language is Portuguese. No other language is spoken by a majority. In the north, the Bantu languages of Yao and Makua predominate; in the Zambezi Valley, it is Nyanja is the dominant languages; and in the south, Tsonga is spoken. Along the northern coast, many people speak Swahili. Portuguese is the language of education and government but is rarely spoken outside the cities. English is used in business and is becoming more common in the larger cities.

While Mozambique is officially a multiparty democracy, the government is still dominated by the two main parties, Frelimo and Renamo. The current president of Mozambique is Armando Emilio Guebuza.

There are two main seasons in Mozambique, the wet season from November through March and the dry season from April through October. The climate is subtropical to tropical.

Tourist visas can be obtained prior to arrival in Mozambique at the Mozambican consulate in the country you are travelling from or can be bought on arrival in the Mozambique.

## Culture

Mozambique can be divided along both ethnic and linguistic lines. Most Mozambicans will identify primarily with either a tribe or a linguistic group. The main ethnic group in Northern Mozambique is the Makua-Lomwe and Makua is widely spoken in Nampula Province although the official language is Portuguese. Around Topuito, Ekoti can be heard, a language similar to Swahili.

Mozambicans are very friendly and greetings can be long and include asking after the family. Conversations can get quite animated and Mozambicans are quick to laugh and share their joy. It is common for people to stand close to each other when in conversation. The Islamic influence in the north means that some of the women may be more reserved than their southern counterparts.

## About Nampula Province

Nampula Province is north of the Zambezi River and south of Cabo Delgado Province in the far north of the country. Nampula is rich in the history of Mozambique. It is here that the original capital of country was, Ilha de Mocambique, now a Unesco World Heritage Site, just 200 kilometres from Nampula City. Here, Arab merchants were using this little island as a maritime trading centre from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the late 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1498 Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed on the island and claimed it for Portugal, a strategic base for the Portuguese explorations and trade ambitions in India and the East Indies. It was only 4 years later that the first Portuguese settlers made the island as their home, building the first fort, St. Gabriel and later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, St. Sebastian that withstood later attacks by the Dutch.

Nacal Port, which is Africa's deepest port, is also only just over 200 kilometres from the city of Nampula. Residential houses dot the hillside and look down into the sparkling bay, a renowned diving area with its deep seas and almost untouched sea life. The port serves the northern reaches of Mozambique with goods being transported from here along what is known as the Nacala corridor to Nampula and Pemba and Malawi.

To the south east on Nampula is Angoche, a small, once thriving, fishing town which suffered much damage during the civil war. Today it is the base for many prawn trawling businesses and some of the old disused cashew processing factories are being restored.

The Gile Reserve, south of Nampula, is one of the only reserves in Mozambique not inhabited by people and is deeply forested. It is said to be home to the African Wild Dog which is an endangered species.

The city of Nampula itself is the capital of the province and the third largest city in Mozambique. It sits inland nestled amongst a range of imposing inselbergs, famous of the region. The city has enjoyed a period of rapid growth and increasing prosperity, with the banking sector fast becoming one of its top businesses.

### **About the Primeras and Segundas Archipelago**

The archipelago consists of two groups of six islands spread out from Angoche to Pebane near Quelimane in Zambezia Province. The islands and their surrounds have been flagged by the World Wildlife Fund to become a marine national park. The archipelago is important for its diversity of sea life, breeding grounds for turtles and its amazingly pristine coral. The coral around the Topuito Isles alone is said to account for 20% of all Mozambique's coral.