

The Fumba Times

FROM ZANZIBAR TO THE WORLD – THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

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KARIBU ZANZIBAR, SALIF KEITA!

XXL FESTIVAL : 4 DAYS,
26 BANDS, 1 SUPERSTAR

From the heart of Mali to the shores of Zanzibar: Salif Keita, the golden voice of Africa headlines the music event of the year. Get your tickets now! Sauti za Busara, 5-8 February, 2026.



PHOTOS (4): BUSARA

Salif Keita, a legend with a 50-year strong career. 76 years old, he has released 20 albums and fought his entire life for the acceptance of people with albinism



We'd like to wish all our readers, who celebrate it, a merry Christmas and everybody a happy and healthy New Year. With Ramadan, the highlight of the Muslim year - set to start mid-February -, also falling in the timespan of this edition we'd like to express a warm Ramadan Kareem to our Muslim readers as well.

THE FUMBA TIMES
From Zanzibar to the world

CAREERS THUMBS UP FOR THE GIRLS

Female science students are training in Fumba Town to become future engineers.

The highly successful STEM programme is running into its fourth year, with another group of four young women having graduated recently. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math. The new graduates are Doreen Kimario, Benes Benjamin Kalekezi, Faidha Amour and Debora Jailos Mwampamba. 17 women engineers have been trained so far in the urban development project, Nine of them have found permanent jobs in Fumba Town.

AN EAST AFRICAN IN NEW YORK



Outsider Zohran Mamdani conquers America

New mayor of America's most important city has become an absolute outsider, Zohran Mamdani, a charismatic 34-year old of Indian descent, raised in Kampala, Uganda. Describing the capital of finance as a melting pot of immigrants he won the election by promising to curb exorbitant costs of living. His mom Mira Nair is an acclaimed Indian-American filmmaker ("Monsoon wedding") and supported him during the campaign. Even his first meeting with US president Donald Trump is reported to have gone well. Now Zohran just has to deliver!

GREATER FUMBA'S MEGA MAKEOVER

35,500-seat stadium, "Gucci mall" and university reshape the peninsula

By Andrea Tapper

EXCLUSIVE Zanzibar's biggest public-private development is happening right now in Fumba. A soccer stadium, a high-end mall and other futuristic facilities are taking shape on the south-western peninsula. Mostly hidden from public view, the spectacular construction is bound to change the face of the island forever. THE FUMBA TIMES was granted an exclusive tour of the suburban mega project.

Explosions are heard day and night. Relentless drills penetrating coral rock land. But only the residents of nearby eco-city Fumba Town, a mixed development of residential and holiday houses, and Fumba's fishermen witness the mysterious construction going on. On the rest of the island, in tourist hot spots along the east and north coast and even in Zanzibar City, most people are still unaware of the huge changes occurring on the south-west coast.

On the Fumba peninsula, marked as one of five Free Economic Zones on the archipelago, Zanzibar's biggest public development ever is underway. 24/7 day-and-night construction has turned the formerly sleepy stretch

between Fumba Town and Fumba Uptown into a dusty raging battlefield of cranes, bulldozers and trucks. When visiting the enormous building projects within the 3,000-hectare zone destined to become a "mixed leisure-sport-education and residential area" it feels like landing on the moon. Most bush cover has been stripped away leaving a barren desert of enormous proportions. Giant machinery monsters are crushing coral rocks to sand.

THE FUMBA TIMES was granted an exclusive tour of the ongoing mega development. We are accompanied by Khamis Dunia, 36, Director of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) at the Zanzibar Investment Promotion Authority (ZIPA), and his deputy Abu Bakar Maulid. Any foreigner investing in Zanzibar needs a green light from ZIPA, whether opening a hotel, leasing land or starting a manufacturing business. "Our free economic zones act as land banks for new developments", Khamis Dunia explains to me while taking us around. Every few metres we stop to look at another new project; in about two hours we will have covered about a dozen of them.

At the heart of the development and in varying phases of construction are a 35,500-seat soccer stadium and two additional training facilities, each with a capacity of 15,000 seats; a government owned 400-bed hotel and a 40-bed "medical tourism" hospital are in planning nearby. A pier for a future ferry terminal to Dar - long discussed - is marked, but plans for the realisation "do not exist yet", ZIPA concedes. In contrast, a huge mall the

size of Fumba Town and a new campus for the renowned Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) are already taking shape, the latter visible with three-storey buildings along the Bakhresa Uptown highway entrance.

Deadline for everything: 2027

Two large blue signboards just after Fumba Town announce the "Continental Mall of Zanzibar" by "Wipi Group" which is surrounded by a several-kilometre-long corrugated-iron fence. The giant complex is developed by an unnamed US firm. Covering an enormous 59.5 hectares it will be "more Gucci than Michenzani", we are told,



ZIPA officials in front of billboards announcing a huge luxury mall for Fumba; the stadium on the rise (right)

with "the developer knowing best what brands and customers he wants to attract", Khamis Dunia adds.

Next on the tour we discover a small oasis amid all the construction, the neat headquarters and workers' village of Turkish construction company Orkun, the builders of new Fumba. The compound includes a water fountain and even a staff clinic. An informal shanty town with jua kali canteens and a double-storey shed in Rasta colours has sprung up nearby.

Football fever already! Hardly a kilometre away, an impressive circle of rebar cages pointing fiercely towards the sky becomes visible, marking the position of the new Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) stadium. The stadium, which will be by far the biggest in Zanzibar, has triggered all other activities here. It is built



PHOTOS (2): KEEGAN CHECKS



Impressive start of thousands at the new Maisara sports complex; a young runner

MARATHON FOR ALL

The annual Zanzibar International Marathon (ZIM) is a much-loved special race leading through the scenic streets of Stone Town and beyond.

The fifth event of its kind took place on 23 November with 4,758 runners of all ages participating in one of the three runs: 5 km for beginners and families in the non-competitive category, 10 km on a so-called challenge route and the 21-kilometre half-marathon to Kiembe Samaki and back. The winner (21 km) was Mao Hando Ako (M) with a time of 1:03.47

from Tanzania and Catherine Syokau (W) from Kenya with 1:12.29. The marathon, which has quickly won Zanzibar's hearts, was first launched in 2021 under the auspices of President Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi and has become the biggest island run in terms of participation. It is sponsored by communication firm Yas and others. An added incentive this year was the start and finish at the new Maisara sport complex. Cheating? No way! Participants receive their race results via accurate chip timing. All finishers get medals and personalised certificates. "Our marathon is liked by local sport enthusiasts as well as by international participants and runners from the mainland", said Hassan Ibrahim, chairman of the marathon board. The next run is planned for the end of 2026. Registration fees start at TZS 35,000.

Information and bookings:
zanzibarinternationalmarathon.co.tz/

ADVERTISEMENT

Sauti za Busara ZANZIBAR

2026 LINE-UP

5 - 8 FEB 2026

African Music Under African Skies

Stone Town, Zanzibar

SALIF KEITA

BEN POL **MAN FONGO**

PILANI BUBU **LINDIGO** **NARA COUTO**

SOUSOU & MAHER CISSOKO **HAMMER Q**

KARA SYLLA KA **ATANDA**

TARAJAZZ **MEHMET POLAT QUARTET**

ALAMOKHA **MAMA C** **MAN KIFIMBO**

LABDI **ANCESTORS** **MAGOMAMOTO THEATRE GROUP**

BILAL IRSHED TRIO **AHAMADA SMIS** **ABDEL GROOZ**

SEBY NTEGE **KAYA BYINSHI** **RAJAB SULEIMAN & KITHARA**

DCMA YOUNG STARS **SWAHILI ENCOUNTERS** **VARIOUS**

BUSARA
PROMOTING ORG

FUMBA TOWN
ZANZIBAR



PHOTOS (4): JORGEN TYCHO

Experimenting in Fumba: architect Jorgen Tycho is creating architectural role models for Southern countries in Zanzibar

The ancient Romans built with it and the Greek, too. Call it coral stone, limestone or marble – in combination with the husk of coconuts, natural stones could become a new affordable building material of the future. Zanzibar is conducting leading practical research into this – for good reasons: the entire island is made of coral, and blessed with hundreds of thousands of coconut trees.

When Jorgen Tycho, 47, has a good day in Fumba, he and several employees of the timber company Volks.house manage to produce enough wall elements for a whole house. But these building blocks are anything but ordinary. They are lighter, cheaper and yet as solid as cement. Situated next to eco-city Fumba Town, the team around the Norwegian architect experiments with

50x50x12cm handmade blocks of lime (ground coral stone) mixed with coconut fibre. Like children creating castles with moulds in a sandbox, the men are working on a new building material charmingly named coco-crete. It is no wonder that - in the race to reinvent construction - an unlikely contender is emerging from the tropics: Zanzibar has plenty of coconut palms and coral rock; the whole island emerged from a coral reef millions of years ago. The handmade coco-crete looks a lot like traditional concrete, but behaves differently - lighter, more breathable and far friendlier to the planet. And unlike ordinary concrete, which leans heavily on carbon-intensive cement, coco-crete production has zero emissions and transforms an agricultural waste product into something strong and useful.

“Organic materials are the solution for construction in the future”, believes Tycho, who has worked in engineered timber construction in Norway for 20 years. On a research trip to Scandinavia, the developers of Fumba Town, met Tycho and encouraged him to come to Zanzibar for some worldwide unique research. “With a heavily growing population, Zanzibar has to build more than 10,000 new homes per year”, CPS director Tobias Dietzold explains: “We have to find ways to build more affordably and sustainably.”

Colosseum as a role model
Coco-crete, although a niche material, could be one of the answers. At first

glance, the idea sounds new, but the logic behind it isn't. Humans have always built with what nature provides. Take limestone, for example: for thousands of years it was one of the world's most trusted building materials. The Roman Colosseum was built largely from travertine limestone; the Acropolis in Athens was constructed from marble, which is essentially limestone reborn through heat and pressure. These monuments still stand today.

Benefits of coco-crete
Coconut trees drop millions of husks every year, and turning the fibre into building material prevents it from

THE ZANZIBAR EXPERIMENT

On the premises of engineered timber company Volks.house in Fumba, the search for a new building material is on.

■ “Coco-crete” is a world combination derived from coconut and concrete.

■ The coco-crete mixture can be locally formed to building blocks.

■ Lime slurry with a consistency of thin yoghurt is poured over and mixed with husks; the mixture is left to dry in frames, becoming ever harder over the years.

■ The blocks are cheaper but equally robust and lasting as cement.

going to waste. Lime, the main binder, absorbs carbon dioxide as it cures, whereas “conventional construction generates about one-third of global CO2 emissions”, as architect Tycho points out. Coco-crete material offers natural insulation and helps regulate indoor temperature and moisture. It could be produced to scale by local labour at decentralised hubs with strict standards. “This is a major advantage for African regions seeking affordable housing solutions”, says Tycho.

But just how robust would the emerging new material be? Tycho will return to Zanzibar shortly to conduct more trials. He already knows that coco-crete isn't ready to replace

structural concrete in skyscrapers, but it does work very well for medium-size buildings

It's no coincidence that the architect is doing his research in Fumba Town in Zanzibar. The 10-year-old eco city on the Fumba peninsula with about 1,400 houses and apartments built and under constructions on the way

to becoming a centre for unconventional, sustainable building in Africa. 410 timber houses and apartment units have been successfully constructed since 2018 or are underway. Two beautiful playgrounds were built with Adobe.

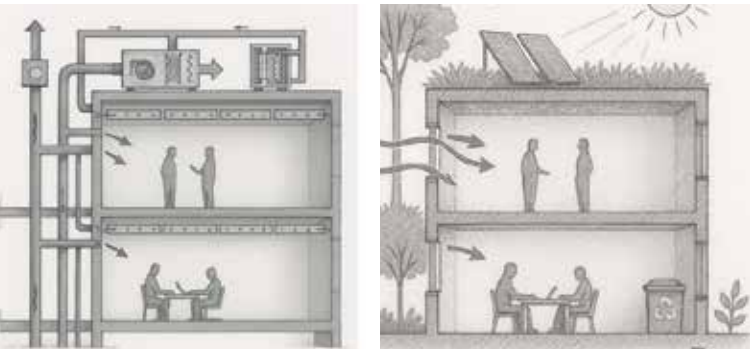
Communal kitchens wanted?
Architect Tycho's task goes beyond finding new building materials: “We need architecture fitting the climate

and the communities, things like communal kitchens create a new social architecture”, he says. Coco-crete could also be combined with engineered timber for stairs, roofs and shutters. “Who says a house in the tropics needs windows at all?”, the Norwegian asks provocatively.

Shutters instead of glass windows - feasible?

Hundred-year old houses in Stone Town just had shutters and no glass windows, securing a constant natural breeze inside. “In a highly technical society we are used to seeing buildings as machines, but in the future we should rather see them as organisms”, Tycho says (see illustrations above). And as he turns back to his open-air workshop in Zanzibar's first timber factory, he knows he has found the right spot for his experiments.

A. Tapper



HOW DO WE WANT TO LIVE?

Developing countries need not go through the same stages of development as rich countries – this includes house construction. Instead, “developing countries could choose future development on the principles of sustainability”, says architect Jorgen Tycho who is partly based in Zanzibar. Sustainable architecture in tropical climates is “still an unexplored field”, the researcher acknowledges: “It is challenge to integrate building physics, socio-cultural aspects and aesthetics favoured by the local environment.” But one thing is clear: architecture of the future sees houses less as machines (illustration above left) and more like organisms - fueled and cooled by nature (illustration above right).



The “coco-crete” ingredients (clockwise): By mixing coral rock - ground into powdered lime stone - with coconut shell fibre (husk) and water, a new building material is formed. Mixing ratio: 1 part lime to 2 ½ parts husk

NEW MASTER PLAN FOR FUMBA IN THE MAKING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Another enterprise in the pipeline is a residential high-rise directly opposite Fumba Town by the Zanzibar Housing Corporation (ZHC) on 20 hectares, the ZIPA officials revealed. Plans for a large, luxurious beach residency complex in Bweleo have also just surfaced. Ideas for a futuristic office park called ‘Nyamanzi City’, however,

appear to have been dropped, and there is presently no further talk about the Formula One dream (THE FUMBA TIMES reported in March 2024). Still reserved are spaces for a basketball training centre and a film studio. Free Economic Zones were identified in 1992 in Zanzibar to attract foreign investment. With tax incentives and other benefits, they are intended to create economic growth beyond tourism. A football stadium, however, rarely generates but rather costs money – how does this add up? “The stadium

may not generate significant revenue on its own”, says Khamis Dunia of ZIPA, an economist by profession, “but the broader economic impact will come from its surrounding services including hotels and housing developments.” While job creation and small-scale industrial development were early focal points of the ZIPA Special Economic Zone in Fumba, large-scale leisure and residential projects seem to have priority now.

Urban planners and private investors have repeatedly emphasised the

importance of detailed spatial planning “to ensure long-term predictability for investors”, as Sebastian Dietzold, CEO of CPS Africa, has pointed out. This helps to ensure that different forms of development can coexist harmoniously. In one recent case, a villa retreat close to the new Fumba port was offered compensation after plans for surrounding industrial use evolved.

At least one project, already feared dead, could rise from the ashes – the much talked about “Cyber City”. Everyone's hope here rests with

the newly formed Ministry for Communication and Innovation to resurrect the cyber dreams – and with them lots of job opportunities.

This article was updated on 10 December 2025.



Site visit: editor Andrea Tapper with ZIPA directors; the planned stadium

PHOTOS (2) KEGAN CHECKS



The new glitzy Africa House Garden opened recently after more than a year of rehabilitation (left). All eyes are on Mariam Mohamed (photo below), who is expected to restart her fresh food and juice cafe in the new surroundings



PHOTOS (2) ASH GALLERY

An eyesore for nearly two decades - with a collapsed sea wall and little remaining grass - the Africa House Garden has finally been thoroughly modernised. Too thoroughly?

Why the premier sundowner spot in town, right by the sea along the promenade of Shangani, would need a padel court, is anybody's guess. The garden was re-designed and overhauled by Dubai investor Samuel Saba recently. On his

quest to restore major historic sites in Zanzibar, from the High Court to the Old Fort (THE FUMBA TIMES reported), the garden represented yet another forgotten area in UNESCO-protected Stone Town. The radical facelift of the leftovers of the historic Africa House Garden includes a Japanese restaurant “Maru” (still to open), a nice little coffee shop (soon to be run by the owner of former Baboo Beach Café, Mariam Mohamed), as well as some pizza, popcorn and ice stands. Mariam Mohamed will certainly add a more fresh touch to the culinary offering. She is famed for her fresh juices and Swahili

dishes which she served for 12 years in the old garden. “I am counting on the new developer to re-open Baboo Café in the new surroundings”, she said.

Padel or sundowner?
But what is the padel court (TZS 100,000 per hour) doing here? “Young tourists staying in town want some fitness areas”, said Saba when presenting his garden overhaul to THE FUMBA TIMES. Padel has become a trend sport worldwide.

Swimming is another option at the garden with new stairs leading to the city beach; changing rooms are not

provided. Water taxis for sea excursions to Nakupenda Sandbank and Prison Island (TZS 750,000 p.p.) can be booked at the garden, too; a 25 m jetty is being planned.

A better sea access would fit into the historical picture. It was from the sea and by road that members of the English club, established 1988 in the Africa House next to the garden, arrived for sunset drinks. Best known for its balcony bar, it was the oldest expat club in East Africa and remained open until the end of the colonial era. In 2015, Africa House came under Indian management, and became popular with

busloads of tourists for a “happy hour”; later a pizzeria opened here.

At the moment, the four-storey building with two roof terraces and 15 hotel rooms has been stripped empty, awaiting new ownership and major restoration. Significant antique furniture is said to have been stored away - among it an old set of scales reportedly used by Princess Margaret on her last royal visit to Zanzibar before independence in 1956. Historians fear that the scale, like many other antiques in Zanzibar, might be lost. Never mind, some may argue, today you lose overweight on the padel court. (AT)

NEWS: TECH TIPS ENTERTAINMENT STARTS HERE

Living in paradise comes with its own learning curve. In this new column, Alex Keller, Fumba Town resident since 2024, shares tech tips for newcomers.



Alex Keller

Let me entertain you... sang Robbie Williams. Nowadays, a little tech device does the same – practical for residents as well as travelers. If you enjoy watching shows and movies, the Amazon Fire TV Stick is a great travel companion. You can install apps like Netflix, national and international media libraries, and much more. Only slightly bigger than a lighter, it works with almost any TV that has an HDMI port. You just plug it in, connect to WiFi, and you're ready to go. No need to learn new menus or struggle with someone else's smart TV system. It fits in your hand luggage. You can bring it from abroad, or buy it in local electronic shops, at around \$45.

UPS for your router: Power cuts are part of daily life in Zanzibar. Even when backed up by generators, it can take a few seconds or minutes until the power is fully back affecting your internet connection, your TV streaming and so on. A UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) helps. It's a shoebox-size battery that kicks in when the power goes out. If you plug in your modem and router, your internet stays stable, unless the whole network goes down. Available at local IT or office supply shops. Prices start around \$100.

HEALTH FESTIVAL WELLNESS IN KILIFI

What started as a gathering of a few yoga friends in 2020, has become an East African wellness gem with more than 150 participants.



Wellness tourism: everybody can be an acrobat in Kilifi

Staged in Kilifi, a lush coastal creek area in Kenya, from 5-8 March 2026, the Kilifi Wellness Festival is becoming a place to go in the region, especially for wellness fans. Now approaching its seventh edition, the event has grown to feature art, dance, yoga, music and more, its organisers say. It offers four days of relaxation on one of Kilifi's stunning beaches combined with lots of curated activities. The eclectic program includes SUP, meditations, open mics, circus arts, cacao ceremonies, ice baths, tarot readings, dhows cruises and beach parties. Therapists are available for private treatments, a festival market is filled with ecofriendly goods. Kids' activities on Saturday.

Information and bookings:
www.kilifiwellness.com;
info@kilifiwellness.com
+254 712 298203

VINTAGE DELUXE

Page is becoming urban. The former fishing villa turned kitesurfer's paradise is adding not only more and more multi-storey buildings to its roadsides but a little shopping centre with Zanzibar's most successful souvenir shops is also in the making. Memories is supposed to open its first branch here soon, as is Inaya, the leading local green cosmetic firm. More a niche project is the first vintage brand shop in Zanzibar. “Shoelace” sells Nike sneakers, Birkenstock sandals and jeans jackets by Louis Vuitton - all pre-used but original, promises the owner, local DJ Sam Dikier.



“Shoelace” - the island's first mitumba de luxe in Paje

COUNTDOWN TO 2026

Zanzibar Serena Hotel
Nobody has a wider festive offer this year than classic Serena Hotel: time to check them out again!

24th Dec – Christmas Eve
Poolside Dinner | 7 PM | TZS 140,000 | Kids 70,000
25th Dec – Christmas Day
Bubbly Breakfast | 7 AM | TZS 60,000
Kids Activities | From 10 AM
Curry Lunch | 12:30 PM | TZS 140,000 | Kids 70,000
BBQ Dinner | 7 PM | TZS 140,000 | Kids 70,000
31st Dec – New Year's Eve
Food Festival Gala | 7 PM | TZS 160,000 | Kids 80,000
1st Jan – New Year's Day
Mongolian Lunch | 12–3 PM | TZS 140,000 | Kids 70,000
Bookings: reservations.zanzibar@serenahotels.com
+255 786 999 009

Secret Garden by Emerson Spice Christmas Bazaar
Don't miss on the chance to stock up on presents for your loved ones
16 – 23 Dec 10 AM – 8 PM

Special Events:
17th Dec: Culture Musical Club – 8 PM
19th Dec: Chris Nova – 8 PM
20th Dec: Kaftan Fashion Show – 4:30 PM

Kwetu Kwenu Chill, Fumba Town
25th Dec - Christmas Lunch & Dinner with Live Band
2 PM - midnight
31st Dec – New Year's Eve Gala with guest DJ
5 PM - midnight
Contact: +255 786 554 848/+255 675 495 077

Upendo Beach: Boho Social
24th Dec – Candlelight Christmas Eve Dinner | \$100 pp (5-course + entertainment)
25th Dec – Christmas Day Signature Brunch
31st Dec – New Year's Eve Gala Dinner | \$100 pp (5-course + entertainment)
1st Jan – New Year's Brunch Indulgence
Start 2026 on the right foot!

Upendo House: The 5th
24th Dec – Starlit Christmas Eve Dinner | \$100 pp (4-course + entertainment)
25th Dec – Christmas Day Signature Brunch
31st Dec – New Year's Eve Gala Dinner | \$100 pp (4-course + entertainment)
1st Jan – New Year's Day Elevated Brunch
Contact: fohnmanager@upendozanzibar.com
+255 777 770 667 | www.upendozanzibar.com

Blue Oyster Hotel, Jambiani
24th Dec – Candle light dinner in outdoor restaurant with qanun music
26th Dec – Beach bbq in beach bar with taraab music
31th Dec – Beach bbq on the beach with African live music;
annual ngalawa boat race, beautiful spectacle with a big crowd!
Information and bookings:
+255 783 045 796

#1 MEATLESS LOAF WITH CARROTS & COCONUT MASHED POTATOES (4 PERSONS)

Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked black eyed peas
- ½ onion diced
- 1 large carrot diced
- 2 stalks celery diced
- half a red pepper + 2 cloves garlic diced
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- 1/2 cup boiled potato, 1/2 cup oats
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste; soy sauce, maple syrup, salt and pepper to taste

For Fried veggies & mashed potatoes:

- 3-4 carrots of other veggies
- 6-8 potatoes
- 1/2 cup fresh coconut cream

How to cook it:
The trick with meatless loaf is, to recreate the idea of a popular meat loaf, with veggies only. Experiment with the right consistency of the loaf. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Sauté the minced garlic, onions, celery and diced carrots. Blend all other ingredients in a food processor. Add the sauteed vegetables and stir. Oil a loaf tin or line it with baking paper. Press your loaf mixture - ideally slightly crunchy but sticky - in the prepared pan, pushing down evenly with your hand. Cover with foil, bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil. In a small bowl, stir the tomato paste with soy sauce and maple syrup, spread it on top of the loaf and bake for another 15 minutes, uncovered, until firm. For the fried veggies, slice carrots or other veggies lengthwise, sprinkle with oil, chilli flakes and salt, roast in the oven for 20 min. Prepare mashed potatoes as usual; instead of milk and butter simply add coconut cream to mash.

#2 TRADITIONAL SWAHILI BIRYANI WITH YOGHURT AND CHICKEN (4-6 PERSONS)

Ingredients:

- 1 chicken cut into 8-10 pieces
- 4 tomatoes chopped
- 3 onions deep fried until golden and crispy
- 3 potatoes peeled, halved & deep fried
- 2 grated carrots
- a little tomato paste
- 1-2 teaspoons ground cumin, cinnamon, cloves
- crushed ginger, garlic
- a bit of sugar
- 1 coriander roughly chopped
- 1/2 – 1 cup natural yoghurt

How to cook it:
To make Swahili-style chicken biryani, you prepare the chicken-potato stew (rojo) and then layer it with basmati rice before steaming them together. You can find a gazillion recipes for biryani - here comes a simplified, flavour-packed version. Main trick: use caramelised onions and yoghurt! In a big pot with little oil fry one onion and spices, add chopped tomatoes; when all is a nice mixture, add the chicken pieces and a bit of water, boil for about 15 min until soft; add the yoghurt. Deep-fry the potatoes and caramelise two onions cut into thin rings. Add the deep-fried potatoes, crusty onions, grated carrots, two large cups of basmati rice and sufficient water to the chicken mix. Let it all simmer until soft but not too soft, until the rice has come up and formed a perfect stew. Decorate with some coriander and serve.

WELCOME NOTE
ONE STEP AT A TIME



Andrea Tapper
International Journalist &
editor-in-chief
THE FUMBA TIMES

Today I took an early-morning stroll in the greens of Fumba, the place which has so surprisingly become my home away from home, shared with neighbours of almost 60 nationalities. The *kaskazi* rains had woken-up colourful tropical flowers everywhere, I saw purple orchids, orange birds of paradise flowers, inhaled the sweet fragrance of white ylang-ylang just within minutes from my home. Beauty was all around me, but I felt sadness inside.

Tanzania, the country so warmly welcoming guests, is experiencing hard times. As a community we are deeply saddened and concerned by the violence, the tragic loss of lives and the destruction that took place during the recent election. We stand in solidarity with those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected. The president has announced an internal investigation; international voices are demanding an independent probe into the tragic developments as ordinary citizens are grappling to pick up the pieces. One step at the time.

As a journalist, I was shocked to experience how the loss of the internet – suddenly shut down – affected our lives. “This is not

the Tanzania we know”, many friends and colleagues have told me in the last couple of weeks. Zanzibar - which has witnessed its own share of unrest and violence in the past - remained calm and peaceful this time. The Ministry of Tourism assured visitors of a “seamless experience.”

Yet, deep inside everybody knows, that more changes have to occur to proceed on a path of progress. I am therefore pleased that the new issue of the FUMBA TIMES once again places a focus on improvements and achievements that make life better. For everybody. Read how AI can help to eradicate malaria on the island. How Fumba Town is testing new ways to invent cheaper building material (on page 2); how urban planners find inspiration for the entire continent in our small town. Our cover story lifts the veil off the biggest public construction ever in Zanzibar, happening on our peninsula. And then there is the Busara music festival to look forward too, an icon of diversity for over two decades (see page 3).

Embracing technology, allowing transparency and celebrating unity is the only way forward. One step at a time.



NOW & THEN

He captured the Dalai Lama on camera, visiting heads of state and everything Zanzibar: Ramish Rohit T. Oza, here photographed between two elephants in 1975. A few weeks ago, his Capital Art photo studio was evicted from Stone Town, making way for yet another boutique hotel. The photographer wasn’t there to protect his longtime home and place of work, founded by his father Ranchhod Trikam Oza 95 years ago. Rohit, as his friends called him, passed away in 2024 at the age of 74. But his widow Usha endured in the studio, occasionally selling photos to tourists passing by on Kenyatta Road, until the very last day in November 2025 (small photo), when she had to close up and move to another apartment. In support of her and the invaluable work of the Oza family, THE FUMBA TIMES will continue to publish some of the extraordinary black-and-white photography documenting Zanzibar’s past and present. What brought the elephants to Zanzibar 50 years ago, however, remains a mystery. Widow Usha just remembers vaguely: “Somebody wanted to start a zoo.”

THE FINAL
MOSQUITO HUNT

How AI is helping Zanzibar achieve malaria elimination

By Innocent Nyalala

Zanzibar has the digital backbone to become Africa’s first AI-powered malaria elimination success story. Dr. Innocent Nyalala, an Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) in Zanzibar, explains how this huge progress was possible.

Zanzibar is on the verge of eradicating malaria, with its prevalence now below one per cent. Artificial intelligence (AI) is contributing to the positive development. It has emerged here as a transformative technology that could deliver a final blow to the age-old disease. From AI-driven mosquito traps that identify species with 95 per cent accuracy to smartphone applications capable of detecting malaria parasites in blood samples, the innovative technology is revolutionising vector control in East Africa. Let me go into some more details to explain just how AI has an impact against mosquitoes in Zanzibar.

AI acts like a robot killer of the nasty malaria host in several ways:

- Smart mosquito traps can photograph and identify mosquitoes and send alerts when dangerous species are detected.
- AI apps could scan blood in seconds
- Algorithms can warn: “High transmission risk expected in Shelia X next Tuesday due to rainfall patterns.”

The technology already exists: apps diagnose malaria in one second, and AI models can predict outbreaks using rainfall, temperature, and movement data. “AI-powered mosquito detection networks could transform surveillance,” says Mwinyi Khamis, a Community Health Officer at Zanzibar’s Malaria Elimination Programme.

Zanzibar leading the pack

“Zanzibar is well positioned to deploy AI against malaria”, sums up David Malone, Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle in the USA. The Gates foundation supports the AI-initiatives in Zanzibar. It has funded malaria control in Zanzibar since the early 2000s and has been very successful with that – contrary to what unfounded criticism may have claimed. Among other things, the Innovative Vector Control Consortium (IVCC) in Zanzibar was established with an initial \$50 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2005. Zanzibar reported 5,300 malaria cases in 2024 (5,020 in Unguja and 280 in Pemba); with that it still maintained a test positivity rate below one per cent. Significantly, 68 per cent (or two thirds) of these cases were imported from mainland Tanzania, indicating the low local transmission. Worldwide, there were 263 million malaria cases and 597,000 deaths worldwide in 2023, according to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) 2024 Malaria Report.

New nets for everybody

Another AI tool is used for Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN). The campaign was renewed in Zanzibar as “Usingizi Bul Bul” (Comfortable Sleep) in July 2023 by replacing old, already-treated nets with 782,000 new ones across Unguja and Pemba. A digital system tracked the distribution with a so-called “coconut surveillance app”, helping malaria officers investigate cases. Smartphone applications can also detect malaria parasites in blood samples – allowing faster diagnosis in clinics and remote areas. How does that function? The Android app “Malaria Screener” uses cameras to analyse blood smears for P. falciparum parasites (99% of Zanzibar’s mosquitoes are from this dangerous malaria strain). An AI-powered diagnostic system called AIDMAN achieves 98.44% diagnostic accuracy, matching that of trained microscopists. These tools process results in less than one second.



A monster mosquito, and researcher Dr. Innocent Nyalala

Hunting down every parasite

To eliminate the final one per cent of malaria prevalence in Zanzibar, Dr. Manoj Kumar’s team from IIT Madras, Zanzibar, has set out to develop dynamic assessment models. “AI can learn patterns humans miss,” explains the mathematician who is working on a model for malaria control in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. “By analysing malaria cases, weather data, travel patterns, and social media posts about illness, we can predict where the next case will appear.” Scientists here have recognised that eliminating the last malaria cases on the isles requires precision tools: “We’re not just fighting malaria anymore, we’re hunting down every parasite,” noted Dr. Kumar.

With Zanzibar’s existing digital health infrastructure, the island is uniquely positioned to become one of the first regions to achieve complete malaria elimination through intelligent technology. This shows that AI can have a real positive impact on a community.

Contact:
Innocent Nyalala
e-mail: innocent@iitmz.ac.in



Straight from South Africa: Pilani Babu (photo) is set to perform twice, in town and Fumba Town. In two decades, more than 6600 musicians have played at the annual Busara festival. Get updates for 2026 on social media.

By Andrea Tapper

Sauti za Busara in XXL format: the 23th edition of Zanzibar’s acclaimed music festival is planned for four full days in February, crowned by African superstar Salif Keita. Surprisingly, the legendary singer from Mali applied for the gig just like any other musician...



“Heritage is in our DNA”, Busara directors Lorenz Hermann (left) and Journey Ramadhan (right)

Journey Ramadhan. The end of registration was approaching when all of a sudden a surprise email popped up. “Salif Keita would be interested in playing at your festival”, it read, “kindly find the application form

attached”, communicated the manager of the Mali legend. It was application No. 467. From there on, preparations for the renowned annual festival became a little bit more hectic. “Every edition of Busara comes with its own identity and challenges”, says Ramadhan, “but a famous man like Keita requires more close monitoring.” The artist, accompanied by a band of 12, has already indicated that he wants to extend his stay for a holiday. “Zanzibar could not find a better ambassador”, says Lorenz Hermann, the Sauti za Busara Promotions director, “a musician of his stature will attract more big names.” The French speaking singer is coming to the island for the second time; music fans may remember his appearance at a Jazz Festival in the Old Fort about ten years ago. Born in August 1949, Keita continues touring – still active after five decades

on the road. He has been on the move for much of his life and has lived in Mali, Ivory Coast and Guinea, before settling in France in the 1980s when he released his first album Soro. He has worked with many other music celebrities. He played at the Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute at Wembley stadium in 1988. Later he performed with the likes of Youssou N’dour and Carlos Santana.

Besides music, non-discrimination of people with albinism has always been an important mission in Keita’s life. In a recent interview he said, “In my youth people did not understand how I could be white with black parents. I could not become a teacher in the 70s, because they said I would scare youngsters.”

Albinism is a congenital lack of melanin pigment in the skin. People with albinism are vulnerable to medical complications and face social discrimination in many societies in Africa, including Tanzania. Keita’s answer to that is constant engagement: “As an African artist you have to speak about what is going on.”

With traditional African instruments such as the *djembe*, *kora* and *balafon* and his distinct high-pitched voice, he has created a sound that transcends borders, blending Mali’s *mandinka* tradition with global rhythms. Even young music fans who might not know his name, are familiar with anthems like “Yamore,” “Africa,” and “Tomorrow.”

Looking forward to a very diverse festival with 26 strong acts from 15 African countries, and Tanzania’s own stars Ben Pol and Man Fongo, the Busara team is “extremely happy to have Keita on board” – the applicant No 467. “It’s not only great for the audience”, remarked director Hermann, 37, “the island can sharpen its reputation as a cultural destination.”

Sauti za Busara 23th edition,
5-8 February, 2026
Tickets and information:
www.busaramusic.org

FREE GIG IN FUMBA TOWN

Busara+ is on again on Saturday, 7 February 2026 in Fumba Town.

- 11am-3pm, 3 acts on stage
- Magomamoto Theatre Group, Tanzania traditional, 11am
- Pilani Babu, jazz sensation from South Africa, 12:30 am
- Kara Sylla Ka & Baye Fall Band, hot stuff, Afrobeat from Switzerland, 2pm
- Free bus shuttle and back from town
- EXTRA FUN: market time! Kwetu Kwenu community market all day in Fumba Town
- Updates here: busaramusic.org, and IG [sautizaibusara](https://www.instagram.com/sautizaibusara)



Expected with a 12-people-band: Salif Keita is the most famous African musician so far performing in Zanzibar

GUEST COMMENT
PLAN MORE, LIVE BETTER



Kurtis Lockhart, 36, is director of the African Urban Lab, a forerunner of the African School of Economics (ASE) in Zanzibar. Born in Canada, the resident of Fumba Town warns: Africa must plan its cities better.

900 million new residents for African cities

Over the next 25 years, Africa’s cities will welcome 900 million new residents – more than the urban population of Europe and the US combined. If we plan badly, that means bigger slums, more traffic jams, and wasted opportunities. If we plan well, it could launch a new era of African prosperity.

Even here, in small Zanzibar and even smaller Fumba Town, urban planners are working on solving the urbanisation dilemma. We have just started a second diploma program with 52 students from 15 African countries who daily face development challenges as mayors, district officials and in other capacities.

What is the problem? Today, African countries are undergoing rapid urban transition at significantly lower incomes than it has historically been the case in other regions – Africa is “urbanising while poor.” People move to town, but productivity and wages don’t keep up. People don’t prosper in cities. Outdated regulations and a lack of planning keep them in miserable living conditions. In Dar es Salaam, for example, until recently people legally needed a 400-square-metre plot to build a formal house. Most families can’t afford that, so they either crowd into informal settlements or move far out on the urban fringe. The result: frag-

mented labour markets, long commutes. That kills the promise of cities where people and ideas mix and incomes rise.

We suggest to urban planners three practical, simple, and inexpensive first steps to restore the link between urbanisation and income gains.

First, plan simple road grids on the urban edge before people settle instead of retroactively installing infrastructure after urban settlement – retrofitting is three to five times more expensive. Second, create income for your municipality by taxing rising land values. Cities like Freetown, Sierra Leone are using cheap satellite imagery and streamlined mobile payments to digitally map urban properties and collect desperately needed revenues.

Third, invest in people who can run 21st-century African cities. Across the continent there are fewer than one trained urban planner per 100,000 residents, and many schools still teach planning curriculum based on 1970s ideas. Updating curricula and scaling training – including here in East Africa – is as important as pouring concrete.

Africa’s next billion city dwellers will arrive soon. The choice is simple: either sprawl and informality wins by default – or say “yes” to building cities that work.

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STAIRWAY TO FAME
Great start-up chances for Zanzibar artists



“Extremely useful”: eight filmmakers and other Zanzibari artists discussed the benefits of the Emerson Foundation in Stone Town

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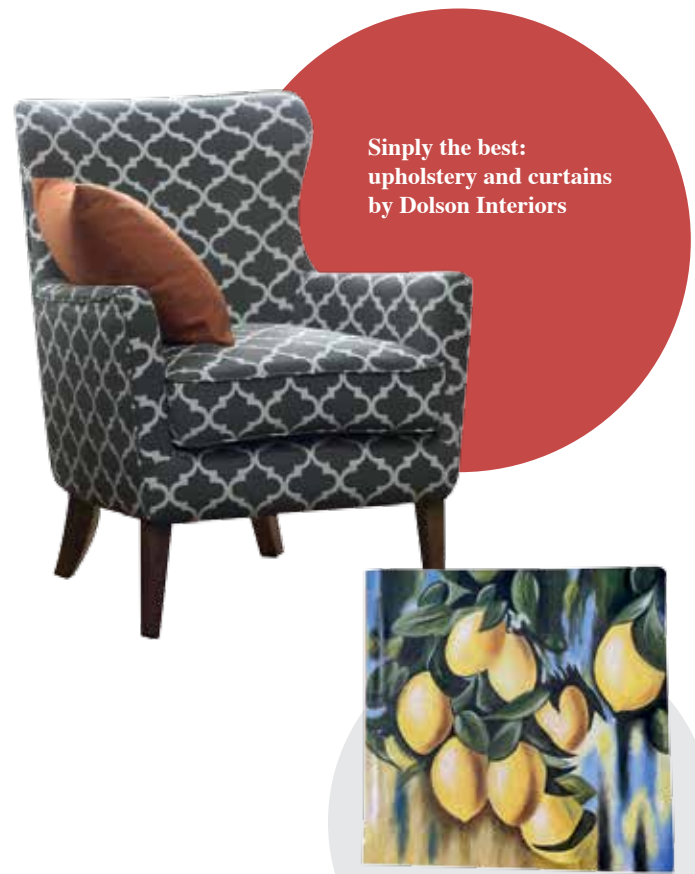
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Anybody interested in supporting arts and culture in Zanzibar can, for a small fee, join the Emerson’s Zanzibar Foundation, a membership organisation. Benefits include vernissage invitations and discounts. But most importantly: let your voice count among art insiders here.

Information:
foundation@emersonzanzibar.com



Teaching with experience: painter Hamsa assists newcomers



Simply the best: upholstery and curtains by Dolson Interiors



Kitchen art in Zanzibar at Imara on Airport Rd



Chic, green and modern: Green Room furniture

ZANZIBAR'S TOP SHOPS

- 1001 Organic** – organic spices from Pemba, several shops in Stone town
- Abeld Curio Shop** – Cathedral St, Stone Town
- Biggie Electronics** – Michenzani Mall, 1st Floor
- Chako (recycled glass)** – Malawi Rd (factory) + Changa Bazaar area, Stone Town
- Dolson Interiors** – Zanzibar office, 14 Mbwani Road
- Doreen Mashika** – opp. Hyatt, Stone Town
- Forster Gallery** – Mbwani
- Imara (decor)** – Kiembe Samaki, Airport Rd
- Inaya Zanzibar** – Kenyatta Street, Stone Town
- Jad Africa Ltd** (hotel supplies) – Migombani / Nyerere Rd, opposite ZWMI
- Kumi Gifts & treats** – Kenyatta Rd, Stone Town
- Lithos Africa** – Livingstone House + Park Hyatt,
- Memories of Zanzibar** – Kenyatta Road, opposite Post Office, Stone Town
- Muzammil (electronics)** – edge of Darajani market
- Ndevu Furniture** – Pavilion Mall, Fumba Town
- Rocky Furniture** – Mpendae Mall, Mombasa
- Sasik (women's cooperative cushions)** – Gienga St, Stone Town
- Surti & Sons (shoemakers)** – House No. 133, Gienga St, Stone Town
- The Zanzibar Curio Shop** – Hurumzi St, near Old Fort, Stone Town
- Tronics** – Mlandege / Mlandege Road
- Wasani Art Gallery** – Gienga Street, near Maru Maru Hotel, Stone Town
- Wonders Boutique (Frasi Africa)** – Gienga St, Stone Town + airport departure lounge
- Zivansh (concept store)** – Kelele Square, near Serena
- Zuri Rituals** – 153 Gienga St, Stone Town + airport

THE A-Z OF SHOPPING

Insider tips from Zanzibar's notorious shopping queens: What to buy where - and what to avoid

Compiled by staff writers

Where can I buy a nice pair of shoes? Reasonable antiques? Fluffy towels? Even just a decent bread knife? Shopping in Zanzibar - for essentials or that extra-bit of shopping bliss – comes with its challenges. Whether you are a newcomer to the island, or have been here a while: our A-Z guide is a helpful retail therapy and your compass for basics.

A

Antiques Some relics of Zanzibar's plundered rich history still exist. Chests, Swahili beds, cupboards and tables; even the famous Zanzibari doors, which you cannot legally export but purchase for your Zanzibar property. Most antiques are (at best) 100-150 years old, hailing from Zanzibar's golden era around 1880.



Among antique treasures: Frank Sinatra records at Abeld Curio

Many antique dealers also reproduce traditional Swahili furniture – nothing had about it, it's keeping the craft alive. Among our favourites: the smallest antique shop in Stone Town, owned by Mohammed (Ph. 255 777 417658) on Changa Bazaar St in Hurumzi. In the tiny one-room store, he sells wall clocks, frames, furniture, all still at fair prices. As almost all antique dealers, Mo has an extra workshop outside town where customers can explore. Abeld Curio Shop opposite the catholic St. Joseph's Cathedral convinces with a great furniture collection, even old Frank Sinatra records; near him, visit Tamin for chests. Zanzibar Curio Shop on Gienga Street is a must-see magic warehouse with thousands of masks, furniture pieces, lamps and antique deco – but be aware: in the hodgepodes of Zanzibar's grandmasters of antiques, prices have gone through the roof over the years.

Art of a certain quality - beyond copy-and-paste lions - is rare. Out of town, Forster Gallery in Mbwani, offers the most impressive and sizeable collection of African contemporary art stunningly displayed in a modern villa. Book an appointment (Ph. 0628 785 198). Good finds are also possible at Wasani Art Gallery next to Maru Maru Hotel, with a wide collection lovingly curated by Anita Sita, including original Tinga Tinga paintings and sculptures. Artist Bajnu has his own art gallery on Gienga Street; well-known Dullah Wise exhibits at various places including the gallery at Emerson on Hurumzi hotel, always worth a visit.

B

Beauty products Forget about L'Oréal, Lancome and Chanel - or shop duty-free before arrival! - and

turn local. There are many beautiful, hand-made natural cosmetics and herbal products to be discovered (see markets). Trusted brand No 1 is without doubt Inaya by Cheherazade Cheikh who has her own shop on Kenyatta Rd in Stone Town. Her organic line is found in practically every good hotel in Zanzibar, and one of our favourite souvenirs, too. Zuri Rituals on Kenyatta Road and at the airport departure lounge is another quality local brand for natural beauty.

Bedding & bathroom essentials

Where do you usually discover the comfiest mattresses, whitest linen and best bathrobes? In top hotels! So, go no further than to one of Zanzibar's leading hotel supply shops, Jad on Airport Road, for all of these and more (see household basics). Find cute bedding sets, soap dispensers and more home accessories also at the tiny but always tempting I-Care, also on Airport Road opposite Mama Rahma hospital. For bathroom hardware, sinks and tiles head to ABC Ceramics in Mombasa – air-conditioned and spacy, they even understand the word warranty!

E

Electronics & entertainment The best shops are Tronics in Mlandege and Biggie at Michenzani mall, both customer-friendly with Tronics specialised on lamps, lanterns, plugs and bulbs; Biggie offering a wide electronic array from laptops and TV's to I-phones, as does Muzammil in Darajani (see Household Appliances).

C

Cushions & Curtains Buying the typical patchwork-design cushions from Sasik, near Maru Maru hotel, you not only acquire beautiful home deco but support one of the oldest women co-operatives in Zanzibar. For curtains and upholstery, the unrivalled quality shop is Dolson Interiors with branches in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. With faultless made-to-measure products, inviting showrooms and reliable delivery, Dolson may well be one of the most satisfactory shopping experiences you'll ever have in Zanzibar!

D

Décor. Places to buy modern home accessories like candles and vases were practically non-existent in Zanzibar until recently. Luckily things are changing. Working with disabled employees, Neema Craft in Iringa produces cute lampshades and cushions that can be ordered online. Imara on Airport Road in Zanzibar is a new, tiny home décor heaven offering an inspiring choice from lemon-themed kitchen wall art to macrame cushions. Another favourite stop on Airport road is I-Care (see bedding) with many useful items that owner Fahud and his wife import from Ikea in Dubai – hence the word play I-Care.

F

Fashion The most Zanzibari fashion item you can get is a simple *kanga*, a paréo-like fabric. The best selection, at original prices, can be found at Chavda on Thuria St in Darajani near Coffee House (have a coffee break at this delightful place while you are there).

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE



Zanzibar's new look: modern souvenirs at Zivansh on Kelele Square near Serena Hotel

Doreen Mashika is fashion royalty, an internationally acclaimed, local designer with sophisticated dresses, unique t-shirts, jewellery and lots more, the DM boutique is located opposite Park Hyatt. - Farouk is an internationally known designer with a unique take on traditional pieces based at Emerson Hurumzi Hotel. - Wonders Boutique of Italian fashion entrepreneur Francesca Scalfari offers local designers and the bohemian collection of Topsy Gypsy, a brand from Dubai. And: never miss a market to discover local fashion and start-ups (see markets).



Hunting for designer fashion

Furniture Hard to come by until a few years ago, the choice of modern, locally-made beds, sofas, dining sets and outdoor furniture has expanded considerably. The unmatched queue of hand-made, stylish, top-notch furniture, even catalogued as a collection, remains Green Room at Slipway in Dar es Salaam – everything from queen-size rattan beds to sleek dhow-wood side-boards can get shipped by ferry to Zanzibar. Owner Elmarie van Heerden has single-handedly built up the beautiful business with local craftsmen since 2010. - Hot on her heels is Rocky Furniture, a new company with a slightly more rustic touch and showrooms in Mpendae Mall in Zanzibar. Ndevu Furniture in Fumba is a good new addition with a production on demand and imports. Zanzibar company Scenza has a solid reputation for fine handmade furniture from coconut and other wood, especially built-in-kitchens. - If velvet sofas and glass tables are more your style, turn

to Orca Design in Dar es Salaam with a warehouse-size selection of furniture and home accessories.

G

Glasses (drinking). Quality wine and other glasses are as rare as a night without mosquitoes in Zanzibar; there's a reason why Karen Blixen shipped her crystal to Africa! You might get lucky in second-hand *mitumba* shops and at Darajani and Mlandege street vendors. Apply shopping rule No 1 (see sidebar "Shopping wisdom") and buy immediately once you spot something nice. Chako in Stone Town offers a neat, original recycled glass collection; six-pack glasses for daily use you'll find at Jad or in supermarkets.

Glasses (reading): Try the Aga Kahn dispensary.

H

Hardware Browsing through the jungle of hardware stores in Mlandege has become a real hobby for some expats. From hammers to paints, from plumbing supplies to toilet seats – they've got it all, but not always in good quality. Lots of it comes from China, bought today, broken tomorrow. Apply shopping rule No 5: once you have found a trader you can trust, stick to him.

Household appliances & TV's Muzammil, a Zanzibar classic in the midst of Darajani, has a decent selection of fridges, cookers, washing machines, TV's and smaller electrical appliances. There then's the Mlandege lot: The smaller of two Hiseise is a sympathetic enterprise with washing machines and fridges, and friendly service. Electronic Hub, next door offers a rich selection but poor service (like extra charge for credit cards).

Household basics This is the fun part, your license for serious, city-wide browsing. Begin with the street kiosks on Mlandege Rd corner Malindi Rd for everything from tableware, kitchen utensils to drying racks, ironing boards

and storage boxes. Continue to Little More in Michenzani Mall for mugs and plates, lastly to Mpendae Mall. If you still have not found your mug, you can't be helped! Looking for a quality bread knife or top cooking pots, visit hotel supply shops such as Jad and Hotel Solutions on Malawi Rd.

I

Incense Nag Champa has been the most popular with Indians residents for years (and they know what they are doing); get it at the nameless cigarette kiosk on the far left opposite Maru Maru hotel.

K

Kila kitu (Swahili for everything): The little hardware shop of successful Vietnamese entrepreneur Kim Nguyen in the centre of the Page strip next to her Hanoi House Cafe is indeed a treasure trove for almost everything. From blue ceramics to soya sauce, tableware to strainers, to semi-crystal whiskey glasses - our editor has never left the shop without buying something.

L

Lighting & Lamps. Tronics in Mlandege is your one-stop choice (see electronics). For decorative big bulbs try Rocky Furniture. For sisal lampshades check Katani and other craft makers at markets (see below); for fabric lampshades Neema Craft; for recycled plastic lampshades (and more) Orzi in Mtoni.

M

Markets The most entertaining option for most of your shopping needs are Zanzibar's markets. The mother of all is the Kwetu Kweni community market which was started in 2020 and draws a lovely crowd to Fumba Town every first Saturday of the month. Discover

SHOPPING WISDOM

- **BUY AT ONCE!** For various reasons, from import regulations to port problems, there is no steady, reliable flow of goods in Zanzibar. Thus, do buy things at once when you spot them. The next day the product or even the entire shop may have disappeared.
- **BARGAIN!** Always! There are hardly any shops where you can't get a certain discount, anything between 10 and 99 per cent actually. Develop a feeling for prices.
- **BUY REGARDLESS!** Checking prices will drive you nuts as you realise that just about everything is double if not triple as expensive as, say, in Europe. The remedy: buy it anyway! You will enjoy that camembert and that rare silk blouse, don't worry.
- **GO LOCAL/ GO ONLINE/ DELEGATE:** Who says you have to shop yourself? Traditionally, Zanzibari men do the grocery shopping for their wives (allegedly to keep their wives indoors...). Follow that trend.

- Send your husband/dada/or even a tuk-tuk driver shopping. Sure, they'll have better sources anyway. Or order in - from trusted deliveries such as Pakacha in Zanzibar or online suppliers like fumba.store.
- **BE LOYAL TO YOUR FAVOURITES!** Once you have discovered that rare gem of quality AND smooth service or that particular fishmonger in the midst of sweaty Darajani who has never let you down - stick to them. However, don't hesitate to omit them from your list when service gets sluggish, or god-forbids, presumptuous!
- **SELF-MADE IS BEST!** Bernadette Kirsch, permaculture expert and founder of the iconic monthly Kwetu Kweni community market in Zanzibar, knows hundreds of reasons to support local start-ups: they help developing a local industry, self-made products have more quality than imported mass ware, home-made cosmetics are healthier and more sustainable.



Makes a nice souvenir: Zalt from Pemba

S

Shoes Unless you fancy plastic high heels, go to Zanzibar's last shoemaker Sirtu & Sons. You'll find pure leather creations, from standard brown men and women sandals, to colourful designs in Hermes style, at the retailshop on Gienga Street.

Souvenirs Our six totally subjective never-fail favourites: Lithos Africa at Livingstone House for Maasai leather belts, elegant baskets and fashionable Ndoto elastic bracelets with local gemstones. Doreen Mashika for distinctive Zanzibari fashion and jewellery (also see fashion). New, colourful Out of



Leather shoes by Surti & Sons

T

Tanzanite There are more jewellers than bakeries in Zanzibar and all have one bestseller: Tanzanite, a gem rarer than diamonds, mined only in Tanzania. But only two family businesses in Stone Town have a long tradition of handcrafting Tanzanite jewellery of quality: Elias (on Kenyatta Rd. and opp. Tembo Hotel) and Lithos Africa (at Hyatt and Livingstone House). Buy your individual Tanzanite here.

Towels In fluffy-white hotel quality at Jad on Airport Rd. In cotton, in many size, and also bathmats at Royal Cotton in Mlandege (+255 776 815 526); also try supermarkets.



Good selection: lamps from Tronic



Ceramics from the wonderworld of Hanoi House Cafe in Page

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PHYSIO AGAINST STRESS & TENSION

Dr. Jenny Bouraima answers:

Dear Paul,

I'm thrilled to share that physiotherapy is back at Urban Care, now in collaboration with Comfort Physiotherapy Clinic, led by the talented Swalihun Khamis Haji, a trained physiotherapist from Zanzibar. Swalihun has been concentrating for several years on two areas – stress-relief physiotherapy and rehabilitation measures after an injury. The latter applies of course to you. Physiotherapy is essential for rehabilitation after accidents. Recovering safely requires guidance, personalised exercises, and support, and that's exactly what Swalihun and the team provide. He says that seeing patients regain strength, mobility, and confidence is one of the most rewarding parts of his work.

The same goes for stress-induced pain or tension in your body. Many of us carry tension in our bodies without realizing it. Back pain, neck stiffness, and other "stress pains" are more common than we think. I've seen how even small, consistent interventions can make a huge difference, helping you move more freely and feel more comfortable in your day-to-day life.

Physio for prevention

Whether you're dealing with everyday aches or recovering from an accident, I encourage everybody to take the step toward healing and prevention. Our physiotherapy service combines expertise, care, and a tailored approach to help you feel your best. I'd love for you to experience it; book a session and let's get you moving comfortably again. The team from Comfort Physiotherapy Clinic is available on Saturdays at Urban Care or throughout the week for house visits.

Swalihun Khamis Haji

PHOTOS (2) URBAN CARE

URBAN CARE CLINIC: PHYSIO & AND MUCH MORE

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Physio appointments

Our new physiotherapist is working in the clinic on Saturdays; house visits are possible throughout the week.

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THE (NOT-SO) SECRET BEACH

Where Zanzibar resembles infamous Maya Bay in Thailand

Accessible only at low tide: the Secret Beach in Zanzibar's south; an Instagram heart is already there



PHOTOS (6): ASH GALLERY, GOOGLE

By Sine Heitmann

Tucked away at the southern tip of Zanzibar lies Mtende Beach, a once unknown beach which has become one of the island's most photographed coastal spots. It has stirred up an interesting discussion about who benefits from tourism.

Reaching the beach still feels like a small adventure. Visitors pass through sleepy Mtende village where children play underneath the island's biggest Baobab tree. After that, we follow a rough road down towards the coral cliffs, pay a small parking/entry fee and descend on a set of stone steps carved years ago by local fishermen. The unique geography, especially the narrow cove, flanked by five to ten-metre-high cliffs and ocean-carved boulders, gives Mtende its distinctive appeal.

Everything changed during Covid

Many visitors compare the setting to Maya Bay, made famous by Leonardo DiCaprio's 2000 film, The Beach: remote, cinematic, and seemingly untouched. And like its Thai counterpart, Mtende is no longer a secret. Until just a few years ago, the area was used almost exclusively by local men for fishing and by women working with coconut ropes. There were no signs, no online mentions, and no official road leading to the site. That changed dramatically in 2021 during the COVID pandemic. One day, a local guide from nearby Makunduchi brought a group of Russian tourists to Mtende. Within 24 hours, the foreign guests had shared their secret in Telegram groups and on other social media profiles. Soon after, the first sign appeared in the village pointing the way to the now-famous "Hidden Beach." From one day to the next, Zanzibar's secret beach was no longer a secret.

As word spread, tourism followed and shortly after the first hotel, Usumba Rock Restaurant opened, launched by locals, and built spectacularly into the coral cliffs with views across the Indian Ocean at both low and high tide. The wooden structure showcases Zanzibari creativity, the restaurant is meanwhile managed by Europeans; more restaurants followed.

For visits, timing is key. At high tide, the beach disappears under water. Stepping down the steps becomes impossible. Visitors are advised to plan their visit wisely (see box "How to enjoy Mtende"). Low tides offer a different picture every time. Women harvesting seaweed from their farms, fishermen carrying in their boats to protect them from the next high tide, tourists exploring naturally formed pools between rocks. "There's something special about Secret Beach", a visiting lady from Spain recently remarked., "no loud music, no rush, just nature. Lying on my own towel, listening to the waves, I felt very connected to the place."

Damage done already?

Has the sudden discovery of Zanzibar's secret beach harmed its natural beauty? Is the area becoming invaded by "Instagrammers"? "On some days it looks already pretty crowded", one tour driver frankly remarked. Among the challenges: parking gets expanded for more and more taxis and buses, the littering caused by picnics has to be managed by local gatekeepers, souvenir shops and instagrammable heart decorations have popped up, protected starfish are collected in a pool to be touched by tourists. While some see this as economic opportunity or entrepreneurial savviness, others worry about unregulated development and the loss of the area's original charm.

Filming disaster at Thai beach

But while the Zanzibar beach's popularity has side-effects, it is still nowhere near the disastrous aftermath of The Beach film production in Thailand where the filmmakers had significantly altered the natural environment and subsequent mass tourism caused severe degradation. The entire area was closed off in 2018 to regenerate. Visitor numbers had reached up to 3,500 per day at one point. In 2006, Thailand's Supreme Court upheld a ruling that the filming had harmed the environment and mandated

The local community cleans the beach daily



Where? Drive to the southern tip of Zanzibar. Turn off at Makunduchi petrol station and follow the road until Mtende villas. At the end of the tarmac road, turn left and follow the track road for about two kilometres to the parking areas.

When: Best time to visit is at low tide. The beach becomes impassable from about two hours before high tide. Check your local tide calendar or at the hotel reception, as this changes every day.

How? Plan a quick visit of an hour or a whole day, tide-permitting - both are worth it. If the tide is high during lunchtime, it's a perfect slot to eat at Usumba Rock, Eden Rock or Africa Baobab Lodge.

JUST DISCOVERED

NURU SPA AT NEW LOCATION IN BWEJUU

Face masks promise natural rejuvenation

PHOTOS (4): NURU SPA, AT

ZANZIBAR'S MOST CASUAL SPA

✓ **LOCATION**

Bwejuu

✓ **THE BOTTOM LINE**

A spa like no other

work, waxing, laser and hair treatment. Keratin and Collagen hair products from Dubai are much in demand to tackle even the worst Zanzibar frizzy-hair syndrome! "Our clients love Keratin straightening treatments", the spa owner says: "They last about three to four months."

Relaxing Hamam treatment

I have opted to try out the hamam today, located in a catacomb-like side room of the wellness villa. We are starting with a singo scrub with rice and cloves, followed by a hair mask, and a seaweed body mask. African charcoal burners heat up the room, a real detox chamber. Feeling rejuvenated and at least a kilo lighter I emerge after more than an hour, ready for a deep-tissue massage.

A.Tapper

PHOTO (4): SAFIRA BLU, AT

Beauty queens by choice: a ladies outing at Nuru Spa

COFFEE CENTRAL

It's one of the magic secrets of Stone Town, that every so often valuable unused living space is rediscovered and repurposed – even amidst the demolish-and-rebuild wave presently hitting Zanzibar's historic quarter. The long-time unused top floor of a historic bank building on Kenyatta Avenue, right at the seafont centre of UN-

ESCO-protected Stone Town, was taken over a few months ago by coffee shop Karafuu. The popular coffee place belonging to Dubai and Zanzibari owners found a new home in the outstanding location with its beautiful arched balcony, relocating here from premises near Old Fort where it first opened in 2022.

Now the trendy spot popular with global nomads is no longer a walk-in but a climb-up. Karafuu means cloves in Swahili and spice tea is served in traditional teapots with cakes and sandwiches. The coffee shop also hosts local artists' exhibitions.

Karafuu

140 Kenyatta Rd, IG@karafuucafe

PHOTOS (2): ASH GALLERY



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