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# Visiting Mozambique

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## Introduction

Situated along the southeastern coast of Africa, Mozambique welcomes visitors with open arms to a world full of contrasts and diversity. The country is characterized by a mesmerizing blend of history, nature, and culture, all of which beckon explorers from around the world. Mozambique has survived numerous trials throughout its history, from periods of colonization to civil unrest, and it has emerged as a beacon of resilience and beauty.

The country's landscape is a tapestry of pristine beaches, teeming wildlife, and vibrant cultures. The picturesque coastline stretches over 2,500 kilometers along the Indian Ocean, offering tourists an endless array of idyllic beaches and coral reefs to explore. Inland, the savannas and highlands present opportunities for thrilling safaris and encounters with some of Africa's most iconic wildlife.

Mozambique's cultural fabric is as diverse as its landscapes. Influences from African, Portuguese, Arab, and Indian heritages are evident in the country's music, dance, architecture, and cuisine. The delightful fusion of flavors—highlighted by Mozambique's spicy piri-piri dishes and succulent seafood—offers tourists a culinary adventure that is not to be missed.

Tourists considering Mozambique will find a unique travel experience that goes beyond the typical holiday destination. This guide is tailored to inform and inspire, highlighting the essentials needed for a rewarding journey through the country. It covers practical aspects like entry requirements and getting around, while also exploring cultural etiquette and responsible tourism practices to ensure your visit is respectful and enriching.

This book aims to bridge any knowledge gaps prospective visitors may have and to prepare them for what awaits. Whether it's navigating the bustling streets of Maputo or relaxing on the secluded beaches of the Quirimbas Archipelago, Mozambique promises an adventure that is both awe-inspiring and unforgettable. And as you plan your travels, let this guide serve as your companion in discovering the wonders that await in Mozambique.

## CHAPTER ONE: Getting to Mozambique

The anticipation builds long before you feel the warm Mozambican sun on your skin. Whether you're arriving by air, cruising over the shimmering Indian Ocean towards the coastline, or embarking on a cross-border adventure by land, your journey to Mozambique marks the true beginning of an unforgettable experience. Getting here requires a bit of planning, but the various routes offer glimpses into the country's geographical position and its connections to its neighbours and the wider world.

For most international travellers, the skyway is the most direct path. Mozambique's primary aerial gateway is Maputo International Airport (MPM), a modern facility serving the capital city in the far south. This is where the majority of larger international flights land, connecting Mozambique to major global hubs. Think Johannesburg in South Africa, a very common link, or Lisbon in Portugal, reflecting the historical ties between the two nations. You can also expect connections through places like Doha in Qatar, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, and Nairobi in Kenya, depending on your starting point.

Stepping out of the airport in Maputo is often the first full immersion into the Mozambican atmosphere. The air feels different, warmer, carrying the scent of the tropics and perhaps distant ocean breezes. Immigration and customs procedures here are generally straightforward, though they can sometimes test your patience – remember that "Africa time" principle we hinted at in the introduction? Take a deep breath, have your documents ready, and embrace the slower pace. Outside, you'll find the usual array of taxis and transport options to whisk you into the heart of the city, or further afield if you're connecting directly to a coastal destination.

While Maputo is the main hub, it's not the only airport in Mozambique handling international or regional arrivals. Further north, airports like Beira (BEW), Nampula (APL), Vilanculos (VNX), and Pemba (POL) also receive some flights from neighbouring countries or international charters, often seasonal or linked to specific resorts. Flying directly into one of these smaller airports, particularly Vilanculos for the Bazaruto Archipelago or Pemba for the Quirimbas, can be a convenient option if your itinerary is focused on the islands, saving you the need for a domestic flight from Maputo later.

These regional airports offer a different arrival experience compared to the capital. They are typically smaller, less busy, and might feel a little more laid-back. Arriving in Vilanculos, for example, often feels like landing right on the edge of paradise, with the azure waters of the Indian Ocean immediately visible. Keep in mind that flight schedules and international connections to these smaller airports can be less frequent or reliable than those into Maputo, so checking well in advance and having some

flexibility is always a good idea when planning your arrival.

Of course, arriving by air is only one way to enter Mozambique. The country shares extensive land borders with six different nations, offering numerous crossing points for those travelling overland. This mode of entry provides a much different perspective, allowing you to see the landscape change gradually as you approach the Mozambican border and experience the transition between countries firsthand. It's an option favoured by many regional tourists, particularly from South Africa and Eswatini, and by intrepid travellers exploring Southern Africa by road.

The primary border crossing from South Africa is Ressano Garcia, also known as Lebombo on the South African side, located just a couple of hours' drive from Maputo. This is the busiest land border and is generally well-equipped, though queues can be long, especially during peak holiday periods. It's the standard route for buses and private vehicles coming from Johannesburg or Pretoria. Two other options from South Africa include the Giriyondo crossing within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which often requires a 4x4 vehicle and is more scenic, and the Kosi Bay/Ponta do Ouro crossing near the coast, popular with those heading directly to Mozambique's southern beaches.

From Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), the main border posts are Namaacha, near Maputo, and Goba further south. Both are relatively straightforward crossings. Zimbabwe offers Machipanda, near the city of Manica and connecting to the main road towards Beira, and Chicualacuala/Sango further east. These are important corridors for freight and increasingly for tourism. Malawi has several crossings, including Zóbuè, Mandimba, and Milange, connecting the two countries across the central and northern regions.

Further north, the Unity Bridge over the Rovuma River provides a crossing point from Tanzania at Kilambo/Namoto. This is a less-used border for tourists but connects the northern parts of Mozambique to its East African neighbour. Finally, the Cassacatiza crossing connects Mozambique with Zambia. Entering Mozambique by road can be a fantastic adventure, but it requires preparation. Road conditions near border posts on the Mozambican side can vary, and having all your vehicle and personal documentation perfectly in order is crucial, as police and border officials will likely want to inspect them.

Whether driving your own vehicle or taking a bus, navigating the border formalities requires patience. Processes can sometimes feel slow, and interactions with officials, while usually professional, can occasionally involve requests for various documents or checks that might seem repetitive. Staying polite, keeping a clear head, and ensuring all your paperwork is easily accessible will help smooth the process. It's also wise to arrive during standard business hours if possible, as staffing might be reduced at smaller crossings or during off-peak times.

For those travelling by bus, long-distance coach services offer a relatively comfortable way to cross borders from South Africa or Eswatini. Companies like Intercape or Greyhound operate routes connecting major South African cities like Johannesburg and Durban with Maputo. There are also local operators. These buses handle the border formalities for you, stopping to allow passengers to clear immigration. While more expensive than local minibuses, they offer air conditioning, more space, and a generally more reliable schedule, making the cross-border journey less arduous.

Now, let's talk about perhaps the most critical aspect of getting into Mozambique: visas and entry requirements. This is an area where rules can change, so always, always double-check the absolute latest information from official sources before you travel. The official Mozambique immigration website, [www.evisa.gov.mz](http://www.evisa.gov.mz), and the Mozambican embassy or consulate in your country of residence should be your go-to resources. Relying on outdated information or anecdotal reports from fellow travellers can lead to unwelcome surprises at the border.

Historically, visa requirements depended heavily on your nationality. Many nationals from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries could enter Mozambique visa-free for tourism for up to 30 days, which facilitated travel within the region. Countries like South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe fall into this category. This ease of movement for SADC citizens reflects the close ties and regional integration efforts within Southern Africa.

However, a significant change occurred relatively recently, making it easier for citizens of many other countries to visit for short stays. As of May 1, 2023, citizens from 29 specific countries became exempt from needing a traditional visa for tourism or business purposes, provided their stay is 30 days or less. This list is quite extensive and includes major source markets for tourism such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, most European Union countries (like Portugal, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Ireland), as well as others like China, Japan, South Korea, Australia (though not explicitly listed in the reference, always verify), UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Russia, and several African nations like Ghana, Senegal, and Ivory Coast.

For citizens of these 29 visa-exempt countries, the requirement isn't a full visa application, but rather an online pre-registration via the government's e-Visa platform at [www.evisa.gov.mz](http://www.evisa.gov.mz). This online registration needs to be completed at least 48 hours before your planned arrival in Mozambique. There is a processing fee associated with this online registration, which was around 650 MZN (roughly 10 USD) at the time of the reference information. Paying this fee and receiving confirmation is necessary to ensure a smooth entry upon arrival.

Upon presenting their passport and the online registration confirmation at

immigration, these travellers are typically granted entry for up to 30 days. If you decide you'd like to extend your stay beyond the initial 30 days, it is possible to apply for an extension for another 30 days while you are already in Mozambique. This process needs to be done through the immigration authorities within the country before your initial entry stamp expires, and it will likely involve further paperwork and fees.

For nationalities *not* included in either the SADC visa exemption list or the newer list of 29 visa-exempt countries, the traditional visa process still applies. This means you will need to apply for a visa *before* travelling to Mozambique. The application should be made through the Mozambican embassy or consulate in your home country or the country where you are legally resident. It is crucial to do this well in advance of your planned departure date, as processing times can vary and unexpected delays can occur.

While the reference mentions that "Visa on Arrival" was previously common and *may* still be available at certain entry points for those not covered by exemptions, it strongly discourages relying on this. The new online system for eligible nationalities makes it less likely for other nationalities to easily obtain visas upon arrival without prior arrangement. Processes can be slow, unpredictable, and requirements might be subject to change without immediate notice at the border. It is far safer and more reliable to secure your entry permission before you begin your journey.

Whether you are pre-registering online or applying for a full visa, there are standard documents and requirements you will generally need to meet. Your passport must be valid for a significant period beyond your planned stay, typically at least six months from your date of entry. You will also usually need proof of onward travel, such as a return flight ticket or a bus ticket exiting the country. Immigration officials want to be sure you intend to leave before your allowed stay expires.

Proof of accommodation for at least the initial part of your trip might also be requested. This could be a hotel booking confirmation or a letter of invitation if you are staying with friends or family. Furthermore, you might be asked to demonstrate that you have sufficient funds to cover your expenses during your stay in Mozambique. While this is not always strictly enforced for tourists, it is a standard requirement and something to be prepared for. Having copies of bank statements or readily accessible funds could suffice if requested.

Finally, health requirements play a role in gaining entry. A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is mandatory if you are arriving from, or have transited through, a country where Yellow Fever is considered endemic. Even if it's just a long layover in an affected country, immigration might require proof of vaccination. It is essential to check the list of Yellow Fever risk countries well before your trip and get the vaccination if necessary. The certificate needs to be presented upon arrival. Checking

current COVID-19 related requirements, such as vaccination proof or testing, is also prudent, as these rules can still be subject to change.

Navigating the entry requirements might seem like a hurdle, but with careful planning and checking the official sources, it's a smooth process for most visitors. The investment of time in understanding the current visa regulations and gathering the necessary documents pays off greatly when you arrive, ensuring your introduction to Mozambique is as stress-free as possible, leaving you free to anticipate the adventures that lie ahead, rather than worrying about paperwork at the border.

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