

Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi & Comoro Islands



Mozambique and
Malawi stood out from
these four countries

February 2020



...Quick stop-over in Lesotho

... The flights with a stop-over in Frankfurt and then Johannesburg before I finally arrived into Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, were all pretty much on time. I knew it would be tight with only 45 minutes between J-burg and Maseru, so I prepared for not getting the luggage all the way to my final destination. I purchased some extra shirts and stuff at the airport in J-burg, and sure enough upon arrival in Maseru, they had not managed to get my luggage onboard. No big deal. A quick lost-luggage-report and then on to my pre-booked hotel. The driver was there to pick me up. I was informed there would be another flight coming in later in the afternoon and there would be a good chance that my luggage would be on this one. **I checked in into Roma Trading Post a little bit outside Maseru** on the foothills of the mountain ridge. This by recommendation from Pyret.

I rested up a little bit and then set-out on a horse-back riding tour around the village and foothills. Not having ridden in a few years (Haiti last time back in 2017) it was easier than I thought. I did have a very well-behaved horse to be fair. Upon coming back later in the afternoon my driver had been back to pick up my luggage – all OK. I hadn't planned on staying long on this visit to Lesotho and left already the following day, as the main plan was to visit Mozambique and Malawi.

Lesotho has the second highest AIDS rate in the world, only second to Eswatini (former Swaziland). The total population some 2.1 million with a life expectancy rate of only around 50 years. Lesotho is very dependent on South Africa for import of various products and electricity. Many Lesothians also work in SAR.



Maputo, capitol of Mozambique

The country is with 800,000 km² almost double the size of Sweden and has a coast of some 2500 km with many lovely beaches. The country became independent only in 1975 and kept Portuguese as the main language. The country has recently been hit by severe typhons with flooding's as a result making many people homeless up north. Henning Mankel, the famous Swedish writer, lived many years in Maputo where he also died.

I arrived OK into Maputo in the late afternoon after a flight change in J-burg (the main hub for this trip). I had preparade myself for a messy and unorganized Visa-on-arrival set-up, and sure enough it was just as chaotic as I had expected. Totally organized. The woman processing my paperwork put the 50 USD into her bra ;-). Surely that must be in line with the guidelines given to the customs/visa officers – right.

A pre-arranged driver was there to pick-me-up and transfer med to my hotel in Maputo – **The Fatimas Guesthouse**. This is a famous meeting-point and hub for travelers also serving to exchange tips and ideas. If one has higher expectations as to the quality of the rooms and service provided by the staff, then look elsewhere. Not impressed. I had arranged for the driver to wait during check-in so that he could take me on a city tour and visit the sights I had planned for. We started off at the colonial and famous **Central Train Station** – really worth visiting. Next stop was **the old Portuguese fort – Fortalesa**. We stopped at **the City Hall, the Cathedral Metropolitana and the Mortos da I Grande Guerra**. Our last stop was **the main fish-market – Mercado do Peixe** a little bit outside of the center of Maputo. A traditional fish-market with quite a good variety of seafood. As my driver had been super nice, I bought some top-quality fish for him to bring back home to his wife to cook.

Dinner was taken at an Indian/Pakistani restaurant – Royal Sweet – quite near my Guesthouse. Maputo was only a short stop-over in getting up to the coast further north. I left the following morning by flight to Inhambane and Tofo Beach.





Beautiful Tofo Beach on the coast

From Maputo to Inhambane the flight flew with a stop-over via Vilankolo. Hence a 2,5-hour flight. A tiny airport in Inhambane, and was picked-up by a pre-booked driver who took me to **Fatimas Tofo Nest** on the other side of the small peninsula. The guesthouse is located right on the beach. I have my own Bungalow; however, none have been fitted with A/C. There is a fan but it does not really work. The light comes and goes here as well. They do have a back-up generator.

The beach is fantastic here and I have been taking long walks a couple of times every day during the three days stay. The small village has a couple of restaurants and few smaller hotels and guesthouses. There are mainly young surfers here and scuba divers as there is supposedly good spots for diving. I signed up for a trip **snorkeling/dive trip (Diversity Scuba) to see the Whale sharks, mantas and dolphins**. We only saw a few bottle nosed dolphins but no whale sharks unfortunately. We got to snorkel a reef, which I would not classify as a reef as it had no corals what so ever. The boat trip was nice, but the rest – nah.

Dathonga restaurant serves excellent pizzas, fruit-drinks and coffee. Do not eat dinner at Fatimas (poor). The days in Tofo Beach was spent reading and doing long walks – really nice and relaxing.

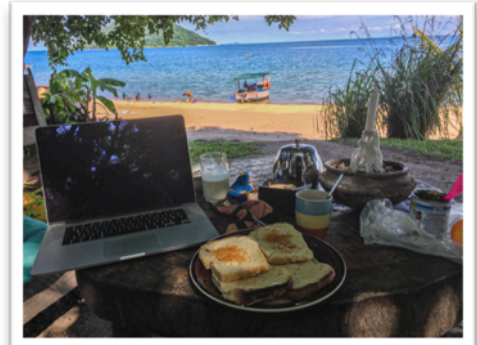




Arriving into Lilongwe, Malawi

Left the hotel at 05:45 as I had a flight already at 07:30 this morning. My driver, Savala, took me and we took our goodbyes after having driven me for a couple of day around Maputo. Checking in went very smooth and I should have suspected that the day would not end as nicely as it had started. This as first of all had been upgraded to Business class on both flights (1) Maputo – J-burg and then (2) J-burg-Lilongwe. I was well feed on both these flights and arrived even ahead time into Lilongwe. The VOA process also went super smooth, getting me through in less than 10 minutes only. The luggage was on the belt waiting for me. So, when I got out into the arrival hall it should not have come as a surprise to me that my pre-booked Guide – Grant Storey – whom I arranged through contacts to take me all the 350 km down to Mac Lear – was not waiting for me.

It took me some 30 minutes to be able to reach him. His car had broken down so he was trying to find a replacement. When he eventually showed up, it was like 1 ½ hour late. I was a little concerned as we had a long way to travel, and also had arranged for a few stops on the way down, as it would get dark in only 3 hours-time. He came in a small Japanese car (not 4-wheel) as should have been the case as we planned for some back-road driving (read dirt-roads) in order to see what was planned for. The first 2 hours' drive went well on tarmac roads down to just before Denza. There we turned off to see some old Pygmy (Batwa) dwellings in the middle of the country-side. It was very difficult to maneuver in the car which had brought along.





...the beautiful Lake Malawi

We stopped to visit also a congregation practicing choir. Amazing. Once we reached the dwellings with a help of a local farmer, it turned out that there were no **Batwa Pygmies** living here anymore. There were caves and some carvings into the rocks left from these earlier groups having lived here. My driver, Grant, he failed to inform me that they had moved some 100 years ago! We were supposed to visit also a local pottery factory, but as time passed 6 PM, it had closed of course. It was now getting dark and we were still on dirt-roads with potholes the size which could swallow a car. Not the best conditions to travel in. We eventually made it back out to the tarmac road and after an hours' drive, pitch-black by now, we had a flat tire. So, we had to fix this by using the spare (emergency wheel). This meant we now could only drive the remain 150 km at 50 km/hour. This meant we got to my Lodge – **Mgoza Lodge** – by 10 PM instead of 5 PM which was the plan originally.

After check-in and a good sleep, I started off the following day after breakfast by taking a boat trip to the fishing village to have a walk-about. Very interesting to see how the boiled and dried all the small fish which the fishermen had caught and brought back in the early morning. We then continued to one of the islands out in lake Malawi to stop and have a look at the birds. Plentiful of Sea eagles, kingfisher and Hamacock (?). By throwing small fish into the water, the sea eagles would come diving for the catch giving us a good photo opportunity. Had also a nice long walk along the beach and finished off the evening by eating a grilled Campango which as a very tasty fish.

Malawi is actually quite small at 118 000 km² only. Only one quarter of Sweden. Population is around 17 million. The currency is Kwacha. 85% of the export is based on agricultural products. More than half of the population live in poverty with an income under 1,25\$ / day only.

I booked myself on a boat trip to go further up the lake shore (1 hour) to be able to see the hippos who were supposed to be there. No sign of them however. The locals informed us they had in fact not seen them for four days, and when they do come down to the water it is usually during the late afternoon. So, we had to go back all the way without any success this morning. Spend more time around the Cape Maclear fishing village walking the small streets. We had a couple of power cuts during my stay, and one night it was off for the better part of the night. It then got quite hot as the fan I had did not work.

After 3 nights and 4 days, I noticed we'd have some heavy rain coming through so I decided to cut it short by one day and go back up to Lilongwe. Grant, my earlier driver, come down to pick me up and take me the ca: 4 hour drive back up again.

Spent the last evening at a Guest house called **Annie's Executive Lodge**. Very affordable at the price of 50 \$ / night including breakfast. Took my leave of Malawi, quite a pleasant surprise, and left Lilongwe via Nairobi for Maroni on the 5th day in Malawi.





Moroni on Grande Comoro Island

Left Lilongwe at around 3 PM with flight which made stopover in northern Mozambique before arriving in Nairobi. Second leg Nairobi to Moroni with arrival actually slightly before time t 00:25 AM. VOA worked OK, even if very disorganized. Driver was there to pick-me-up and transfer med to my Hotel Le Jardain du Paix and I was in bed just before 2 AM. Had caught something on the way with an upset stomach. Had a decent breakfast at the hotel and then decided to just chill for the morning up to lunch as I was not feeling well. Caught a taxi to the airport (this time half price when I pushed it and not had it arranged by the hotel = 10€). Domestic airport is very run-down and even more disorganized.

The Islands have around 800,000 inhabitants, living on only 1862 km² land. The economy is very poor where the total export is only around 20 m\$ / year – whereas the imports are around 200 m\$ / year. The country has a history of coup-attempts with some 15 in total since their independence back in 1975.

Comoro Islands update: For those of you who still are planning to visit the Islands, I could give you two recommendations: 1) Hotel Jardin de la Paix in Moroni. 30-40€ including breakfast (good one as well). They can help also organize transport to/from airport and around the island. Don't pay more than 10€ for airport transport 2) Visit the Island of Moheli and stay at Laka Lodge www.lakalodge.com This island is the nicest of the islands with protected national parks and superb reefs and diving opportunities. Laka lodge can help organize inter island flights to/from the island. Don't book Inter Air though (unreliable) go with R Komoro instead (better). Laka lodge is an eco-lodge and includes three meals per day (great food) and transport to/from island airport at 90€ / day.





...the beautiful island of Moheli

The following day was a resting up day to recover a bit. Then left for the domestic airport in the afternoon for my flight out to **Moheli Island**. Due to weather conditions – rain and wind – we were 1 hour late leaving and then only for a 20-minute flight only. I was met by **the Laka Lodge** driver who took me to the Lodge. It turned out we had to drive all around the Island to get to the remote place of the lodge on the opposite side of the Island. The drive was almost 2 hours on terrible roads. Had a nice welcome though by the French manager – Ann. The set-up was all-inclusive of all meals and transport etc. Very nice and affordable at 90 \$ / night. The lodge was located beautifully right on the sandy beach. Exhausted I went to bed quite early. Had a shorth trek booked the following day up in the National Park to view the waterfall. I was quite weak coming back from this and vomited not having recovered from whatever it was I had caught on the way from Malawi to the Comoro Islands. After this I did feel a little bit better however. Ann took me around to show me some really nice spots viewing the bay from above. She is a diving master and takes a lot of divers out into the reef. Apparently, the marine biologist and divers from all over the world comes here for the marine life. Not far out from the beach it drops down 900 meters.

Ann also showed me a Mongoose couple leaving in some trees nearby which usually comes down when been feed bananas. This worked also this time. Had two nights in total and then had to leave for an early flight back to Moroni (the main island) and stay there one more night before heading back home. The hotel Jardain de la Paix serves quite good food. I can recommend this place as a base when visiting Moroni, as it is cheap 30-40 \$ / night including a large breakfast at your choice. Make sure to arrange and negotiate your own taxi to/from airport as the hotels will charge you 20€ instead of the 8-10€ which is should cost.

