

Southeastern Tanzania



Time seems to have stood still in Tanzania's remote and sparsely populated southeast. It lacks the development and bustle of the north, tourists numbers are a relative trickle and Arusha's crush of Land Cruisers and safari companies is so far removed that it might as well be in another country. During the Mozambican war the southeast was considered to be a sensitive border zone and many areas were off limits to tourists. As a result – although travel restrictions have long since been lifted and the welcome here is as warm as it is elsewhere in the country – the region remains in many ways traditional and reserved. It makes an ideal destination for getting to know local life that has been relatively insulated from outside influences.

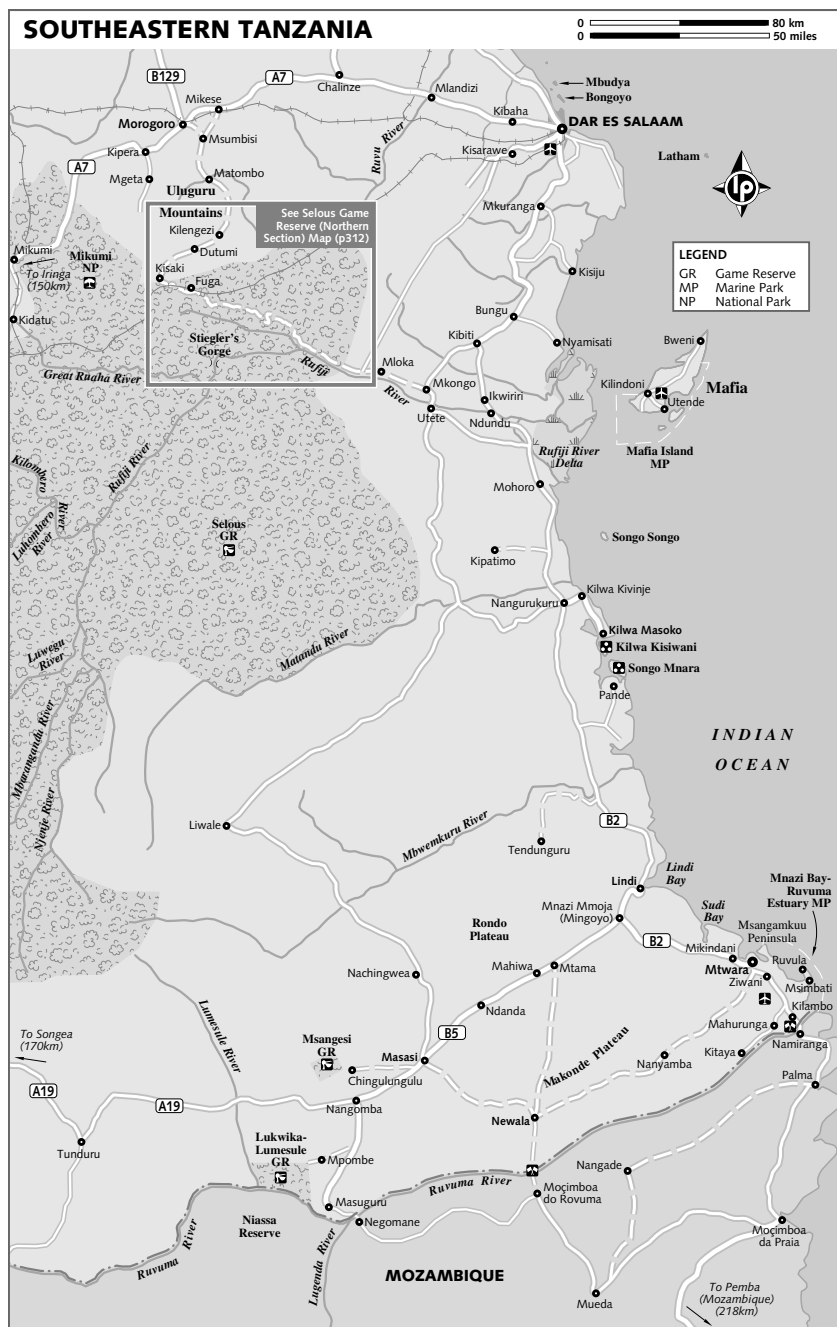
Among the southeast's major attractions are the untrammelled expanses of the Selous Game Reserve, with a clutch of intimate lodges, boat safaris and top-notch wildlife watching. Another draw is the long coastline. Here, deserted white-sand beaches shimmer under an unrelenting sun, shoals of colourful fish flit past amazing coral formations in Tanzania's two marine parks at Mafia island and Mnazi Bay, and the ruins on Kilwa Kisiwani and in other old Swahili towns testify to days when this part of the continent was the centre of trading networks stretching to the Far East.

Mafia and the Selous both offer a full range of accommodation and Western amenities. Elsewhere, while there are good air connections to major destinations, infrastructure is un-developed, and road journeys can be long and rugged.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Taking a boat safari along the Rufiji River in **Selous Game Reserve** (p311)
- Diving amidst colourful fish or relaxing on white sands in the **Mafia archipelago** (p306)
- Exploring traces of bygone days at the old Swahili trading towns of **Mikindani** (p326) and **Kilwa Kivinje** (p319)
- Visiting the ruins of the famed medieval city-state of **Kilwa Kisiwani** (p318)
- Relaxing on the beaches around **Mtwara** (p322) and the **Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park** (p327)





National Parks & Reserves

Selous Game Reserve (p311) covers much of southeastern Tanzania, although only the northern sector is open for tourism. Along the Ruvuma River are Lukwika-Lumesule and Msangesi Game Reserves (p330) – offbeat destinations outside of the hunting season for intrepid travellers with time – while along the coast are Mafia Island (p309) and Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary (p327) Marine Parks for diving and snorkelling.

Getting There & Around

Mafia, Selous Game Reserve, Kilwa Masoko, Lindi and Mtwara are easily reached by scheduled flights. Mafia and the Selous are also well-linked via air to Zanzibar, to the northern circuit parks, to other coastal destinations and to Ruaha National Park.

The road from Dar es Salaam south is tarmac to the Rufiji (where there's now a bridge), under rehabilitation from the Rufiji River to Lindi, and mostly tarmac from Lindi to Mtwara. Buses run year-round, and – barring breakdowns – it's possible to make the journey in a long day. Dhows ply the waters between other coastal towns; see p357. Inland, apart from the tarmac road between Mtwara and Masasi, there are only dirt roads, and minibuses and old Land Rovers are the only public transport.

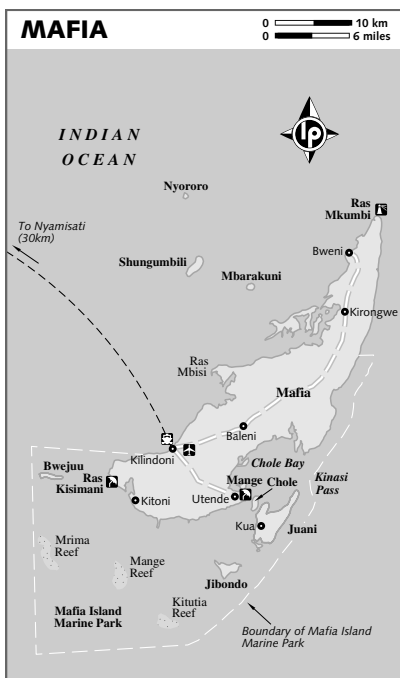
The Tazara train passes along the Selous' northern border, and is a good option, especially for the northernmost camps.

MAFIA

☎ 023

Secluded and seductive Mafia – a green wedge of land surrounded by turquoise waters, pristine islets and glinting white sandbanks – remained off the beaten track for years, undiscovered by all except deep-sea fishing aficionados and a trickle of visitors. That's changing fast – the island's tourist accommodation has grown from one hotel to over half a dozen in just a few years. For now, though, Mafia remains free of the mass tourism that threatens to overwhelm Zanzibar. It makes an amenable post-safari respite and is a rewarding destination in its own right.

Among Mafia's attractions are its tranquil pace, stunning underwater life, upmarket lodges, a strong traditional culture and a long and fascinating history. Green and hawksbill turtles have breeding sites along the island's



eastern shores and on the nearby islands of Juani and Jibondo. To protect these and other local ecosystems, the southeastern part of the island, together with offshore islets and waters, has been gazetted as a national marine park. Whale sharks (*potwe* in Swahili) visit Mafia between about November and February and are best seen offshore near Kilindoni.

History

In addition to Mafia island, the Mafia Archipelago includes Juani (southeast of Mafia), Chole (between Mafia and Juani), Jibondo (south of Juani) and at least a dozen other islets and sandbars. The archipelago first rose to prominence between the 11th and 13th centuries in the days when the Shirazis controlled much of the East African shoreline. Thanks to its central buffer position between the Rufiji River delta and the high seas of the Indian Ocean, it made an amenable trading base, and the local economy soon began to thrive. One of the first settlements was built during this era at Ras Kisimani, on Mafia's southwestern corner, followed by another at Kua on Juani.

By the time the Portuguese arrived in the early 16th century, Mafia had lost much of its significance and had come under the sway of the Sultan of Kilwa. In the early 18th century, the island's fortunes revived, and by the mid-19th century it had come within the domain of the powerful Omani sultanate, under which it flourished as a trade centre linking Kilwa to the south and Zanzibar to the north. It was during this era that the coconut palm and cashew plantations that now cover much of the island were established.

Following an attack by the Sakalava people from Madagascar, Mafia's capital was moved from Kua to the nearby tiny island of Chole. Chole's star ascended to the point where it became known as Chole Mjini (Chole City), while the now main island of Mafia was referred to as Chole Shamba (the Chole hinterlands). Mafia's administrative seat continued on Chole throughout the German colonial era until it was moved to Kilindoni on the main island by the British, who used Mafia as a naval and air base.

Today, farming and fishing are the main sources of livelihood for Mafia's approximately 45,000 residents, most of whom live on the main island. As a result, while shopping in the markets, you'll find cassavas, cashews and coconuts in abundance.

Orientation

Kilindoni – where all boats and planes arrive – is Mafia's hub, with the bank, port, market, small shops and several budget guesthouses. The only other settlement of any size is Utende, 15km southeast of Kilindoni on Chole Bay, where most of Mafia's upmarket lodges are located. The Utende-Chole Bay area is also the best divers' base. Mafia's western side is dotted with small villages, offshore islands and sandbanks, and stands of mangrove interspersed with patches of beach, including at Ras Mbisi, where there's a hotel.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café (Kilindoni; per hr Tsh2000) At New Lizu Hotel.

MEDICAL SERVICES & EMERGENCIES

For malaria tests, there's a village clinic on Chole Island. For treatment or for other serious ailments, go to Dar es Salaam.

MONEY

National Microfinance Bank Just off the airport road, and near the main junction in Kilindoni; changes cash only (dollars, euros and pounds). There are no ATMs.

TELEPHONE

Calls can be made at New Lizu Hotel in Kilindoni. Mobile networks now reach Mafia.

Sights

It doesn't take too much imagination to step back in time on Mafia's coconut plantations, with village life here going on much as it did during the island's Shirazi-era heyday. **Chole island** (day visitors per person US\$5) is a good place to start exploring, especially around its crumbling but atmospheric ruins, which date from the 19th century. Also on Chole, thanks to the efforts of a local women's group who bought the area where an important nesting tree is located, is what is probably East Africa's only **fruit bat sanctuary** (Comoros lesser fruit bat). Chole Mjini (see boxed text on p310) has recently opened a restaurant at the ruins for day visitors.

The much larger and heavily vegetated **Juani** island, just southeast of Chole, has overgrown but evocative ruins at Kua, including the remains of several mosques dating from a Shirazi settlement during the 18th and 19th centuries, and crumbling palace walls. Also note the main ablutions area just to the right of the main entrance to the settlement. Access to the ruins is only possible at high tide. South of here is a channel and nearby lagoon for birding and swimming.

Sparsely vegetated **Jibondo**, while less aesthetically appealing than the other islands, and with inhabitants who are traditionally somewhat unwelcoming towards visitors, is intriguing in that it supports a population of about 3000 people although it has no natural water sources. Except for during the peak rainy season (when rain water is collected on the island from run-off), boats ply daily between Jibondo and Mafia island transporting large yellow containers filled with water. The best time to watch all the activity is just after sunrise, at the beach near Kinasi Lodge. Jibondo is also renowned as a boat-building centre, with much of the wood coming from the forests around Kilwa. In Jibondo's village centre, look for the giant, non-functional dhow (now in the process of being disassembled) and for

the carved doorframe on the mosque, said to come from the old settlement at Kua.

On Mafia itself, there are good beaches at the three main Chole Bay lodges (the beach at Mafia Island Lodge is the best), and some idyllic nearby sandbanks; all the lodges arrange excursions. One of the closest is **Mange**, with beautiful white sand populated only by sand crabs and sea birds and surrounded by crystal-clear aqua waters. With more time, you can make your way through the coconut groves to the beach at **Ras Kisimani** in the southwestern corner of the island.

At **Ras Mkumbi**, Mafia's windswept northernmost point, there's a **lighthouse** dating to 1892, as well as **Kanga beach** and a forest that's home to monkeys, blue duikers and many birds.

Activities

DIVING & SNORKELLING

Mafia offers divers excellent corals, an impressive variety of fish, including numerous pelagics, and relaxing, uncrowded diving, often done from motorised dhows. There are various sites in Chole Bay, which is diveable year-round, plus seasonal diving outside the bay. The best month is generally October, and the least favourable are April, May and sometimes into June, when everything shuts down. The main dive operators (all of whom also arrange dive certification courses and snorkelling) include:

Big Blu (☎ 0784-918069; www.bigblumafia.org; Chole Bay; Single/double dives US\$35/60 including equipment, snorkelling US\$10 per person) A flexible, reasonably priced operator catering to budget and midrange travellers, and the only one on the island with a RIB (rubber inflatable boat) for accessing all dive sites fast. Also organises other water-based activities, including fishing and island excursions. It's on the beach just north of Mafia Island Lodge.

Mafia Island Lodge Watersports Centre (☎ 022-260 1530; www.mafialodge.com; Mafia Island Lodge, Chole Bay; Single/double dives US\$40/70 including equipment, snorkelling US\$19 per person) A well-equipped place under the direction of Moez, a veteran diver with long experience on Mafia. Also offers a full range of watersports and excursions, and has a refurbished dhow for island sails.

Prices are similar to those in the Zanzibar Archipelago (see p118). Kinasi Lodge also offers diving and instruction for its guests, and Chole Mjini has a well-equipped dive centre for its guests where you can also arrange coral reef ecology courses (US\$400, advance bookings only).

FISHING

Long popular in deep-sea fishing circles, Mafia is known especially for its marlin, sailfish, tuna and other big-game fish. Conditions are best between September and March, with June and July the least appealing months due to strong winds. Contact the dive operators listed above, or Kinasi Lodge, which offers light sport fishing, and big game fishing from Mafia's northern tip.

Within the marine park, fishing is prohibited in much of Chole Bay, in Kinasi Pass, along the eastern edge of the island to the north of Chole Bay, along the eastern and southern edges of Juani, along the eastern edge of Jibondo, and around the Mange and Kitutia reefs. Sport fishing is permitted elsewhere, although there's a maximum weight limit for most species. Spear-gun and harpoon fishing are prohibited. Licences are organised by the hotels for those booking through them. Otherwise, they can be arranged through marine park headquarters, next to Pole Pole Bungalow Resort.

Sleeping & Eating

For all Chole Bay accommodation, you'll need to pay marine park entry fees, whether you go diving or not. It is generally not included in accommodation rates. In addition to the places listed here, there are also several new budget and midrange places being built at Chole Bay, that should open within the lifetime of this book, including Shamba Kilolo near the park gate just before reaching Utende, and away from the water.

BUDGET

Whale Shark Lodge (Sunset Camp; ☎ /fax 023-201 0201, 0755-696067; carpho2003@yahoo.co.uk; Kilindoni; camping per person US\$7, bandas per person without bathroom & with breakfast US\$14) This backpacker-friendly place, in a quiet, cliff-top setting overlooking a prime whale-shark viewing area, is a good all-around budget choice, with pleasant camping, plus simple but clean *bandas* (thatched-roof hut or shelter) with mosquito nets, screens and fans, and spotless communal ablutions. There's also a gazebo for watching the sunset, and local-style meals on order. Just a short walk down the cliffside is a beach with high-tide swimming, and the owner is helpful with arranging excursions to outlying islands and elsewhere. It's about 1.5km from the town centre, behind the hospital (Tsh2000 in a taxi).

MAFIA ISLAND MARINE PARK

Mafia Island Marine Park – at c. 822 sq km the largest marine protected area in the Indian Ocean – shelters a unique complex of estuarine, mangrove, coral reef and marine channel ecosystems. These include the only natural forest on the island and almost 400 fish species. There are also about 10 villages within the park's boundaries with an estimated 15,000 to 17,000 inhabitants – all of whom depend on its natural resources for their livelihoods. Accordingly, the park has been classified as a multi-use area to assist local communities in developing sustainable practices that allow conservation and resource use to coexist. The main way to visit is on a diving excursion with one of the Chole Bay dive operators.

Entry fees (payable by everyone, whether you dive or not) are US\$10/5 per adult/child per day. They are collected at a barrier gate across the main road about 1km before Utende, and can be paid in any major currency. Save your receipt, as it will be checked again when you leave. The **park office** (☎ 023-240 2690; wwfmafia@bushlink.co.tz; www.marineparktz.com) is in Utende, just north of Pole Pole Bungalow Resort.

New Lizu Hotel (☎ 023-201 0180, 240 2683, 0754-273722; Kilindoni; s/d Tsh6000/10,000; 📺) The long-standing and reliable 'Mama Lizu's' has clean, spartan rooms with basic bathrooms, nets and fan, good cheap food and a central location at Kilindoni's main junction, less than a 10-minute walk from both the airfield and the harbour.

Harbour View Resort (Kilindoni; d with fan/air-con Tsh15,000/20,000, s without bathroom & with fan Tsh10,000) No-frills rooms in a small house in the harbour area, with several less appealing box-like rooms out back. Most rooms have mosquito nets; food can be arranged with advance notice. It's about a 10 minute walk from town. Head down the hill in Kilindoni and go into the port area; turn left, and follow the water-side road for about 500m to the unsignposted house to your left.

Big Blu Diving College (☎ 0784-918069; www.bigblumafia.org; Chole Bay; d US\$40; 📅 Jul–mid-April; 📺) This dive outfitter on the beach next to Mafia Island Lodge has soon-to-open en suite rooms with mosquito nets, open to divers and those organising other excursions with Big Blu. Breakfast is included, and evening barbecues can be arranged with advance notice. Otherwise, there's no food.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

All of the following are closed in April and May.

Mafia Island Lodge (☎ 022-260 1530; www.mafia-lodge.com; Chole Bay; s/d US\$52/75, s/d club US\$70/95; 📺 📺) The former government hotel, this lodge is set on a long lawn sloping down to a palm-studded beach, and is a recommended choice if your budget or tastes don't stretch

to a stay at one of its more upmarket neighbours. There's a mix of renovated ('club') and standard rooms, all lined up at the top of the lawn about 300m from the water, and all pleasant and relaxing despite the 1970s architectural backdrop. The main restaurant overlooks Chole Bay and serves up tasty meals featuring seafood and Italian cuisine. There's a beachside bar and a well-equipped diving and watersports centre, where you can also arrange excursions.

Ras Mbisi Lodge (☎ 0754-663739; www.mafiaislandtz.com; per person full board US\$140; 📺) This new place, in a stunning setting on Mafia's western coast, was just getting its finishing touches as this book went to print. Accommodation is in nine lovely tented *bandas*, which overlook the beach. There's also a beachside restaurant and a rooftop sundowner bar. Emphasis is put on the cuisine, with homemade jams and preserves at breakfast, salads and fresh pastries, and meals featuring home-grown vegetables and fruits. It's a fine, good value and off-the-beaten track alternative. Excursions include dhow trips to Ras Kisimani and nearby islands, dugout canoe trips, village walks and whale shark outings. Accommodation prices include transfers from Kilindoni.

Kinasi Lodge (☎ 022-284 2525; www.mafiaisland.com; Chole Bay; s/d garden view with full board US\$165/300, s/d sea view with full board US\$205/360; 📺 📺) This is another fine choice, with 14 stone-and-thatch cottages set around a long, manicured hillside sloping down to Chole Bay, Moroccan-influenced décor – at its most attractive in the evening, when the grounds are lit by small lanterns – a genteel ambience, and an imposing spa with masseuses from Thailand. There's

COMMUNITY TOURISM SPOTLIGHT: CHOLE MJINI

If your idea of the ultimate getaway is sleeping in the treetops in a rustic but comfortable ambience, while at the same time supporting local community development initiatives, **Chole Mjini** (☎ 0787-712427; 2chole@bushmail.net; Chole Island; s/d full board US\$282/420; 📅 Jul-Easter; 📍), on Chole Island, is the place to stay. Accommodation is in six beautifully designed tree houses (a couple of which are actually lower stilt houses), each nestled away amidst the surrounding vegetation, and with views over the bay, the mangroves or the Chole ruins, and each accommodating up to three people. Although there's no electricity, the tree houses have a range of amenities. Dining focuses around simple seafood-based meals, and diving can be arranged (both owners are certified instructors and the lodge has two new boats) as can excursions to view the whale sharks (in season). Chole Mjini also has its own dhow, which can be chartered for day, overnight or multi-night safaris – a superb opportunity if you want to experience local coastal culture. Destinations range from nearby deserted islands to Kilwa Kisiwani and the Rufiji River delta.

The concept of Chole Mjini grew out of the owners' commitment to the local community, and community development is still at the heart of the undertaking. A portion of earnings are channelled back into health and education projects, and over the decade or so of the project's life, a reputable health clinic, a kindergarten and a primary school have been established, as well as vocational training and small lending schemes. In contrast to the all-too-common scenario where tourism destroys an island paradise, Chole Mjini is an example of the huge positive benefits that can result when there is genuine integration of tourism with community development and environmental and cultural conservation initiatives.

Children under two cannot be accommodated. Accommodation rates include some shared excursions, plus marine park fees and a daily per person community fee that goes directly to the local villagers.

an open lounge area with satellite TV, a small beach and windsurfing rentals, plus a dive centre. Kinasi offers a full range of excursions, including an upscale camping trip to Mafia's northern tip (where the lodge is building a bush camp), as well as packages combining visits to Mafia with Zanzibar, the Selous and boating along the Rufiji.

Pole Pole Bungalow Resort (☎ 022-260 1530; www.polepole.com; Chole Bay; s/d full board US\$260/400; 📍) This understated, classy place is set amidst the palm trees and tropical vegetation on a long hillside overlooking Chole Bay. Except for the excellent restaurant and the beautiful, open-sided *duara* (gazebo), which has stunning views over the water, it can be visually underwhelming at first glance. But its quiet style, impeccable service, cuisine, the premium placed on privacy, the lack of TVs and other distractions and the simple elegance of its bungalows – all made completely out of natural materials and with large private verandas – make it a fantastic getaway. The overall ambience is an ideal balance between luxury and lack of pretension. A full range of excursions is offered, including to the Rufiji River delta, and there's a resident masseuse.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Coastal Aviation flies daily between Dar es Salaam and Mafia (US\$100), and between Mafia and Kilwa Masoko (US\$100, minimum two passengers), both routes with connections on to Zanzibar, Selous Game Reserve and Arusha. The other option is Kinasi Lodge, which has its own charter aircraft for its guests, with seats open on a space-available basis to other passengers.

All the Chole Bay hotels arrange airfield transfers for their guests (included in the room price at some, otherwise US\$10 to US\$30 per person – inquire when booking).

BOAT

The best (albeit adventurous) boat connection to/from the mainland is at Nyamisati, along the coast south of Dar es Salaam. Get a south-bound *dalla-dalla* (minibus) from Mbagala or Rangi Tatu (both along the Kilwa road, and reached via *dalla-dalla* from Dar es Salaam's Posta) no later than about 11am to Nyamisati (Tsh3000), from where the motorised MV *Potwe* departs daily at 4pm (Tsh5000; three hours) to Kilindoni. You'll arrive after dusk on Mafia and, unless you've made arrangements with the Chole Bay

lodges, will need to sleep in Kilindoni. To get to the centre of town, head straight up the hill for about 300m. Departures from Kilindoni are daily at 6am. Once at Nyamisati, it's easy to find *dalla-dallas* north to Mbagala and central Dar es Salaam. On Mafia, purchase boat tickets the afternoon before at the MV *Potwe* office at the Yamaha shop along the main road, on the right side around 20m downhill as you head towards the harbour.

Getting Around

Dalla-dallas connect Kilindoni with Utende (Tsh1000, 45 minutes) and Bweni (Tsh1000, four to five hours), with at least one vehicle daily in each direction. On the Kilindoni-Utende route, vehicles depart Kilindoni at about 1pm and Utende at about 7am, with sporadic vehicles later in the day – the last departure from Utende is about 4.30pm. Departures from Kilindoni to Bweni are at about 1pm, and from Bweni at about 7am. In Kilindoni, the *dalla-dalla* stop is along the road leading down to the port.

It's also possible to hire pick-ups in Kilindoni to take you around the island. Bargain hard, and expect to pay at least Tsh15,000 return between Kilindoni and Utende.

The other option is bicycle – either your own (bring a mountain bike) or a rental (about Tsh500 per hour for a heavy single-speed – ask around at the Kilindoni market).

Between Utende and Chole Island, most of the Chole Bay hotels provide boat transport for their guests. Otherwise, local boats sail throughout the day from the beach in front of Mafia Island Lodge (Tsh100). Boats also leave from here to Juani, and from Chole it's possible to walk to Juani at low tide. To Jibondo, you can usually catch a free lift on one of the water transport boats leaving from the beach near Pole Pole Resort.

SELOUS GAME RESERVE

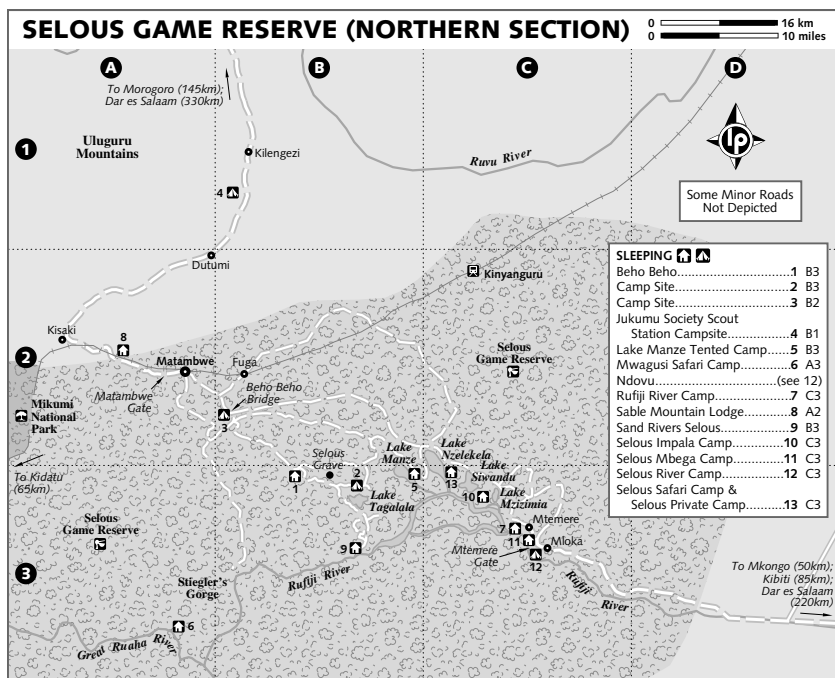
At the heart of southern Tanzania is the Selous – a vast 48,000 sq km wilderness area stretching over more than 5% of the mainland. It is Africa's largest wildlife reserve, and Tanzania's most extensive protected area, although the extended ecosystems of Ruaha National Park and the Serengeti come close. It's also home to large herds of elephants, plus buffaloes, crocodiles, hippos, wild dogs, an impressive diversity of birds and some of Tanzania's last remaining black rhinos. Bisecting it is

the Rufiji River, which winds its way more than 250km from its source in the highlands through the Selous to the sea, and boasts one of the largest water-catchment areas in East Africa. En route, it cuts a path past woodlands and grasslands and stands of borassus palm, and provides the chance for some unparalleled water-based wildlife watching. In the river's delta area, which lies outside the reserve opposite Mafia island, the reddish-brown freshwater of the river mixes with the blue salt water of the sea, forming striking patterns and providing habitats for many dozens of bird species, passing dolphins and more.

In the northwestern part of the reserve is **Stiegler's Gorge**, which averages 100m in depth, and is named after a Swiss explorer who was killed here by an elephant in 1907.

Although the number of tourists visiting the Selous has increased markedly over the past decade, it remains low in comparison with Tanzania's northern parks, and the congestion of the north is refreshingly absent. While wildlife concentration and diversity are also generally considered to be lower in the Selous than in some of the northern parks, there is still plenty to be seen. Other advantages of the Selous include its wonderful and still very intact wilderness backdrop, its fine collection of small, atmospheric safari camps and an absence of the mass tourism that threatens to overwhelm parts of the north. From the moment you arrive – whether by plane, flying low over the hippo-filled Rufiji, by train, watching giraffes, zebras and more silhouetted against the setting sun, or by vehicle over bumpy roads lined by small villages – to your introduction to camp (most are notably scenic) and to boat and foot safaris, the Selous' wealth of wildlife and its stunning riverine scenery rarely fails to impress. Boat safaris down the Rufiji or on the reserve's lakes are offered by most of the camps and lodges. Most also organise walking safaris, usually three-hour hikes near the camps, or further afield, with the night spent at a fly camp. Both the boat and foot safaris, as well as the chance to explore in open safari vehicles come as a welcome change of pace if you've been cooped up in minivans or closed 4WDs on dusty roads during other parts of your travels.

Only the section of the reserve north from the Rufiji River is open for tourism; large areas of the south have been zoned as hunting concessions.



History

Parts of the reserve were set aside as early as 1896, although it was not until 1922 that it was expanded and given its present name (after Frederick Courteney Selous, the British explorer who was killed in the reserve during WWI). The area continued to be extended over the next several decades until 1975 when it assumed its current boundaries. In more recent years, there has been ongoing work to link Selous Game Reserve with the Niassa Reserve in Mozambique, with the first stages of the project – including establishment of a wildlife corridor – already underway.

Information

The best times to visit the reserve are during the cool, dry season from June to October, with August peak for both boat and land safaris, and in January and February when the rains break and the landscape is green and in flower. Much of the reserve is inaccessible between March and May as a result of the heavy rains, and some of the tourist camps close for at least part of this time,

usually during April and May. If you do visit in the wet season, the main challenge will be getting yourself to the reserve, as roads are sometimes impassable and airstrips too soft for landing. You'll also need to keep your itinerary and expectations flexible, and be prepared for mud.

Both the Mtemere and Matambwe Gates are open from 6am to 6pm daily. The booklet *Selous Game Reserve: The Travel Guide* by Drs Rolf Baldus & Ludwig Siegel is an excellent source of background information, including information and tips on wildlife viewing. It's available at bookshops, and at the Selous' Mtemere Gate. An earlier edition, *Selous: Africa's Largest & Wildest Game Reserve*, is similar.

Reserve headquarters are at Matambwe on the Selous' northwestern edge.

Serengeti Balloon Safaris (☎ 027-250 8578, 254 8967; www.balloonsafaris.com; US\$499; ☎ 6.30am) offers daily balloon safaris, as the name implies; with easy pick ups from all Selous lodges. The safaris are similar to those in the Serengeti – see p218 for a description of what to expect.

Sleeping

All of the reserve's upmarket lodges and camps offer boat safaris (some on the Rufiji River, others on Lake Tagalala), wildlife drives and guided walks. Several new lodges are planned for the near future, especially near the reserve's northern border around Kinyanguru, so watch for changes here.

BUDGET

There are two **ordinary camp sites**, one at Beho Beho bridge, about 12km southeast of Matambwe, and one at Lake Tagalala, roughly midway between Mtemere and Matambwe. Each has a pit toilet, but otherwise there are no facilities. For both, you will need to be self-sufficient, including with drinking water. **Special camp sites** can be arranged in the area between Mtemere Gate and Lake Manze (northeast of Lake Tagalala). Contact the Wildlife Division (p77) in advance for bookings and information on permitted locations. You'll need to be self-sufficient at these camps as well. See the boxed text, below for camping fees.

About 60km north of Matambwe between Kilegezi and Dutumi is the **Jukumu Society Scout Station Campsite** (camping per person Tsh7000). It's run by an association of game scouts from villages surrounding the reserve and the money earned is used to support local development projects, anti-poaching efforts and similar work. There is a pit toilet and bathing area, and water is available from a small nearby waterfall.

In Mloka village, just east of Mtemere Gate, there's the basic **Mloka Best** (s/d Tsh3000/4500) local guesthouse, which is a potential shoestring option if you have

your own transport to get around inside the reserve. Also in the area near Mtemere Gate and away from the river are several budget tented camps, although for these, too, you'll need to have your own transport to explore the reserve, and be self-sufficient with food. Two to try are **Selous River Camp** (www.selousrivercamp.com; camping per person US\$10, mud hut per person US\$35), which has a few tents for rent plus a 'mud hut' bungalow with bathroom, boat safaris and a vehicle available for wildlife drives, and **Ndovu** (☎ 0754-782378; camping/tent per person US\$10/35), just behind, with camping, plus several no-frills permanent tents sharing bath and boat safaris. Bring all your own food.

Selous Mbega Camp (☎ 022-265 0250; www.selous-mbega-camp.com; camping per person US\$10, s/d full board US\$135/190, s/d 'backpackers' special US\$85/120 for those arriving by public bus at Mloka, excursions extra) This laid-back, family-friendly camp, located about 500m outside the eastern boundary of the Selous near Mtemere Gate and about 3km from Mloka village, provides good value for money. It has eight no-frills tents set in the foliage somewhat back from the riverbank, each with three beds, a bathroom and veranda, and a small camping ground (for which you'll need to be self-sufficient with food). Excursions – including boat safaris, wildlife drives and walks – can be arranged (US\$35 per person, plus reserve fees where applicable). The camp is open year-round. Pick-ups and drop-offs to and from Mloka are free. Payments are cash only. Road transfers to/from Dar es Salaam, and Kilwa Masoko (where the same management has another hotel) cost US\$250 per vehicle, one-way.

SELOUS GAME RESERVE FEES

All fees are per 24-hour period.

- **Admission** US\$50/30/free per adult/child six to 16 years/child five and under
- **Conservation fee** US\$25 per person (payable only by those staying at camps within the Selous' boundaries)
- **Vehicle fee** US\$30
- **Camping at ordinary camp site** US\$20/5/free per adult/child six to 15 years/child five and under
- **Camping at special camp site** US\$40/10/free per adult/child six to 15 years/child five and under
- **Wildlife guard (mandatory in camping areas)** US\$20
- **Guide** US\$10 (US\$15 outside normal working hours and US\$20 on walking safaris)

MIDRANGE

The Selous' wonderful lodges come at a high price, with the Midrange listings here equivalent to Top End in many other parts of the country, and many of the Top End listings at the upper-most end of the spectrum.

Sable Mountain Lodge (☎ 022-211 0507; www.saadani.com; s/d full board US\$200/290, all-inclusive US\$310/510; 🏠) Friendly, relaxed and good value, Sable Mountain is about halfway between Matambwe Gate and Kisaki village on the northwestern boundary of the reserve, in an area known for its elephants. The cosy and comfortable en suite stone cottages all have views. There are also five tented *bandas*, including two luxurious honeymoon *bandas*, plus a tree house overlooking a water hole, a spring-water swimming pool and a snug for stargazing. In addition to walking safaris and wildlife drives, the lodge offers a combined wildlife drive and boat safari on Lake Tagalala, and night drives outside the reserve. Free pick-ups and drop-offs are provided to the Kisaki train station (watch for fly-rail specials) and staff are very helpful if you're travelling independently. It's open year-round, and recommended.

Rufiji River Camp (☎ 022-212 8663; www.rufijirivercamp.com; per person all-inclusive US\$310; 🏠) This long-standing and unpretentious camp is larger than most of its neighbours, but with a fine location on a wide bend in the Rufiji River about 1km inside Mtemere Gate. The 20 en suite tents all have river views, there's a sunset terrace and a small library. Activities include boat safaris, and half-day walking safaris with the possibility of staying overnight at a fly camp. Open year-round (advance notice required during the rainy season).

Lake Manze Tented Camp (☎ 022-245 2005; www.adventurecamps.co.tz; s/d all-inclusive US\$345/580; 🏠 Jun-Mar) Run by the same management that oversees the Selous Impala Camp, this place is more rustic than its sister camp but quite comfortable and favourably situated, with 12 well-outfitted tents in a good location along an arm of Lake Manze.

Selous Impala Camp (☎ 022-245 2005; www.adventurecamps.co.tz; s/d all-inclusive US\$515/890; 🏠 Jun-Mar; 🏠) The intimate and well-located Impala is one of the smallest of the Selous camps, and excellent value if you take advantage of some of Coastal Travel's flight-accommodation deals. It has eight well-spaced, comfortable tents, each nestled away on its

own directly on the river near the beautiful Lake Mzizimia, with its stands of borassus palms and surrounding panorama of green vistas. Each tent has its own terrace and river views, and all are beautifully appointed, with polished-wood floors and 270-degree open screening for optimal views and ventilation. The restaurant overlooks the river and has an adjoining bar area on a deck jutting out towards the water. The surrounding area is rich in wildlife, although Maasai guards ensure peace of mind while you're at the camp. Favourably priced packages including flights and accommodation are offered in combination with Ruaha National Park. Fly camping can be arranged.

TOP END

Selous Safari Camp (www.selous.com; per person full board plus airstrip transfers & activities US\$625; 🏠 Jun-mid Mar; 🏠) This luxurious camp is set on a side arm of the Rufiji in a particularly beautiful and lush setting overlooking Lake Nzelelele, with 12 spacious, widely spaced tents, a lofty, raised dining and lounge area, impeccable service and the chance for fly-camping and walking safaris (minimum two nights), as well as wildlife drives and walks and boat safaris. The same management also runs the exclusive **Selous Private Camp** (per full four-tent camp US\$3800; 🏠), which consists of just four tented suites and a private pool, and is generally rented only in its entirety. No children under six years of age.

The Retreat (www.retreatsafaris.co.tz; per person all-inclusive from US\$770; 🏠) The newest camp in the Selous (at the moment), this 12-tent retreat is set well southwest of the other lodges along the Great Ruaha River. It's the only lodge in the Selous with a spa, and emphasis throughout the camp is very much on a holistic experience of the surrounding nature. It also offers the possibility of a night's fly camping and walking safari at no additional cost if you've made a four-night booking.

Sand Rivers Selous (www.sand-rivers-selous.com; s/d all-inclusive US\$870/1450; 🏠) Beautiful Sand Rivers Selous, set splendidly on its own on the Rufiji River south of Lake Tagalala, is arguably the Selous' most exclusive option, in ambience, if not in price, and boasts some of Tanzania's most renowned wildlife guides. Its eight luxurious stone cottages are all open in front with full river views. Bookings can only be made through upmarket travel agents. Nomad, who

run the camp, also offer superlative walking safaris of up to six days based out of mobile fly camps.

Beho Beho (www.behobeho.com; per person all-inclusive US\$900; 📍) Beho Beho, set on a rise northwest of Lake Tagalala and well away from the river, is one of the most upmarket camps in the Selous, with spacious stone and thatch *bandas* with large verandas and commanding views over the plains. Boat safaris are done on Lake Tagalala, which is notable for its birdlife, as well as its populations of hippos and crocodiles.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Coastal Aviation and ZanAir have daily flights linking Selous Game Reserve with Dar es Salaam (US\$140 one-way), Zanzibar (US\$160) and (via Dar) Arusha, with connections to other northern circuit airstrips. Coastal also flies between the Selous and Mafia, and the Selous and Ruaha National Park (US\$270). Flights into the Selous are generally suspended during the March to May wet season. All lodges provide airfield transfers.

BUS

Akida (the better option) and Mwera/Mloka bus lines have daily buses between Dar es Salaam's Temeke bus stand (departing from the Sudan Market area) and Mloka village, about 10km east of Mtemere Gate (Tsh4500, seven to nine hours). Departures in both directions are at 5am. From Mloka, you'll need to arrange a pick-up in advance with one of the camps. Note that hitching within the Selous isn't permitted, and there are no vehicles to rent in Mloka.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

You'll need 4WD in the Selous. There's no vehicle rental at the reserve and motorcycles aren't permitted.

To get here via road, there are two options. The first: take the Dar es Salaam to Mkongo road, via Kibiti, and then on to Mtemere (250km). The road is in reasonable to good shape as far as Mkongo. From Mkongo to Mtemere (75km) is sometimes impassable during heavy rains. Allow about eight hours from Dar es Salaam.

Alternatively, you can go from Dar es Salaam to Kisaki via Morogoro and then on to Matambwe via a scenic, but longer, 350km route through the Uluguru Mountains. Allow

at least nine hours for the journey. This route has improved in recent times, but is still sometimes impassable during heavy rains and a 4WD is required at any time of the year. From Dar es Salaam, the road is good tarmac as far as Morogoro. Once in Morogoro, take the Old Dar es Salaam road east towards Bigwa. About 3km or 4km from the centre of town, past the Teachers' College Morogoro and before reaching Bigwa, you will come to a fork in the road, where you bear right. From here, the road becomes steep and rough as it winds its way through the Uluguru Mountains onto a flat plain, which is usually the most difficult section to pass during the rains due to poor drainage. Shortly before Kisaki there is – except for at the height of the dry season – a small river to cross, which isn't usually too much of a problem, apart from the steep bank on the far side. Allow between five to eight hours for the stretch from Morogoro to Matambwe, depending on the season. If you are coming from Dar es Salaam and want to bypass Morogoro, take the an unsignposted left-hand turn-off via Mikese, about 25km east of town on the main Dar es Salaam road that meets up with the Kisaki road at Msumbisi.

Coming from Dar es Salaam, the last petrol station is at Kibiti (about 100km northeast of Mtemere Gate), although supplies aren't reliable (otherwise try Ikwiriri). Coming from the other direction, the last reliable petrol station is at Morogoro (about 160km from the Matambwe ranger post). Occasionally you may find diesel sold on the roadside at Matombo, 50km south of Morogoro. If you plan to drive around the Selous, bring sufficient petrol supplies with you as there is none available at any of the lodges, nor anywhere close to the reserve.

TRAIN

The train is a good option for the adventurous, especially if you're staying on the northwestern side of the reserve, and with luck, you may even get a sneak preview of some of the wildlife from the train window. All Tazara trains stop at Kisaki, which is about five to six hours from Dar es Salaam and the first stop for the express train, and ordinary trains stop at Kinyanguru and Fuga stations (both of which are closer to the central camps) and at Matambwe (near Matambwe Gate). All the lodges do pick-ups (usually combined with a wildlife drive) at varying prices. For schedules, see p361.

It works best to take the train from Dar es Salaam to Selous Game Reserve. If you decide to do it the other way around, be prepared for delays of up to 20 hours going back to Dar es Salaam. The lodges can help you monitor its progress with their radios.

KILWA MASOKO

☎ 023

Kilwa Masoko (Kilwa of the Market) is a sleepy coastal town nestled amidst dense coastal vegetation and several fine stretches of beach about halfway between Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. It's the springboard for visiting the impressive ruins of the 15th-century Arab settlements at Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, and as such, is the gateway into one of the most significant eras in East African coastal history, although the town itself is a relatively modern creation, with minimal historical appeal.

Thanks to an archaeological/tourism initiative by the French and Japanese governments, plus the rehabilitation of the coastal road from Dar es Salaam and the arrival of several new hotels, visitor numbers to Kilwa are slowly starting to increase.

The **National Microfinance Bank** (Main Rd) changes cash. There's no internet connection or ATM.

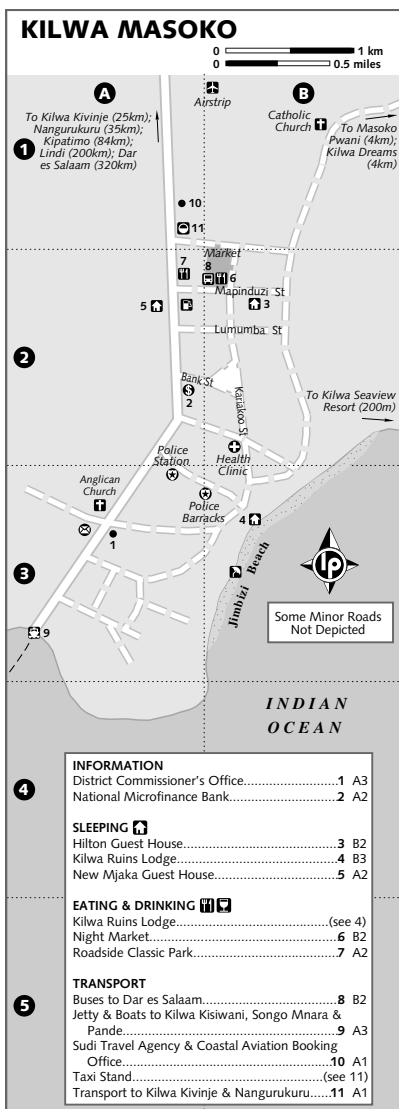
Sights & Activities

On the eastern edge of town is **Jimbizi Beach**, an attractive stretch of sand dotted with the occasional baobab tree; it's reached via a path that heads downhill by the Masoko Urban Health Centre. Much better is the long, idyllic palm-fringed beach at **Masoko Pwani**, about 5km northeast of town, and best reached by bicycle or taxi (Tsh5000 one-way). This is also where Kilwa Masoko gets its fish, and the colourful harbour area is worth a look, especially in the late afternoon. Dhow excursions through some of the mangrove swamps on the outskirts of Kilwa – interesting for their birdlife and resident hippos – can be arranged with Kilwa Seaview Resort. About 85km northwest of Kilwa at Kipatimo are extensive limestone **caves**.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Hilton Guest House (r Tsh4000, without bathroom Tsh3000) Strictly shoestring, with basic rooms, fans, nets and squat toilets. It's 300m east of the main road, near the market.



New Mjaka Guest House (☎ 023-201 3071; Main Rd; s without bathroom Tsh3000, s/d banda Tsh10,000/20,000) This otherwise undistinguished place holds the honour of being the best of Kilwa's clutch of local guesthouses, with a few basic rooms in the main building sharing facilities and somewhat nicer *bandas* next door. Some *bandas* have two rooms sharing a bathroom and com-

mon area while others are standard doubles. All have fan and nets. There's no food.

MIDRANGE

Kilwa Dreams (☎ 0784-585330; www.kilwadreams.com; Masoko Pwani; camping per person US\$10, d/f bungalow US\$50/75) A handful of bright blue, spartan bungalows with nets, cold water and no electricity in an idyllic setting on the beach at Masoko Pwani, and a beachside bar-restaurant.

Kilwa Seaview Resort (☎ 022-265 0250; www.kilwa.net; Jimbizi Beach; camping per person US\$5; s/d/tr/q US\$60/70/80/90, full board per person US\$15 extra; airport transfers per vehicle Tsh5000; 🚗) Straightforward, pleasant and good-value A-frame cottages perched along a small escarpment at the eastern end of Jimbizi beach, including six breezy waterfront cottages and a row of double-story bungalows, just behind, with balconies on the upper level. There's a restaurant built around a huge baobab tree with local-style fixed menus, and the beach is just a short walk away. Staff are helpful with arranging excursions, including to Kilwa Kisiwani, and to see the hippos in the nearby mangroves. Driving, the access turnoff is signposted from the main road. By foot, the quickest way to get here from the bus stand is to head south along the main road (towards the port), then turn left near the police station, making your way past the police barracks and health clinic down the hill by Kilwa Ruins to Jimbizi Beach. At the northeastern end of the beach is a small path leading up to the cottages. Pick-ups can be arranged from the bus stand in town. Transfers to/from Dar es Salaam or to Selous Mbege Camp (under the same management, see p313) cost US\$250 per vehicle one-way.

Kilwa Ruins Lodge (☎ 023-240 2397, 0784-637026; www.kilwaruinslodge.com; Jimbizi Beach; per person full board US\$80-120; 🚗 🍷) This upmarket angling camp is well-located in the centre of Jimbizi beach, with a popular waterside bar-restaurant area. Accommodation is in a choice of rustic 'chalets', nicer, more modern 'beach *bandas*' and a few spiffy 'fisherman *bandas*'. All are on the bland side, but spotless and well-equipped (although the chalets don't have hot water). There's a full array of fishing equipment – big game fishing costs from US\$350 to US\$800 per boat per day, depending on boat and location – and the resident manager is a renowned angler. The camp also has its own plane for charters, a vehicle for hire and sea kayaks, and can organise overnight diving/fishing 'island

cruises' for US\$1600 per boat (4-person) per day, all-inclusive, plus local excursions in the Kilwa area. The big game fishing season runs from late July to early April. Book well in advance if you plan on visiting during the late October peak season.

Eating & Drinking

Kilwa Seaview Resort (Jimbizi Beach; breakfast Tsh3000, lunch/dinner Tsh8000) and **Kilwa Ruins Lodge** (☎ 023-240 2397, 0784-637026; Jimbizi Beach; meals from Tsh9000; advance bookings required) have good restaurants. For inexpensive fish/chicken and chips, try **Roadside Classic Park** (Main Rd; meals from Tsh1000), diagonally opposite New Mjaka Guest House, with local food and a bar, or the lively **night market**, between the main street and the market, with inexpensive fish and other street snacks from dusk onwards.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Coastal Aviation has daily flights between Dar es Salaam and Kilwa (US\$120 one-way) and between Kilwa and Mafia (US\$100, minimum two passengers). Book through their Dar es Salaam office (p88), or in Kilwa through **Sudi Travel Agency** (☎ 023-201 3004; Main Rd), north of the petrol station. The airstrip is about 2km north of town along the main road.

BUS

To Nangurukuru (the junction with the Dar-Mtwara road, Tsh2000, one hour) and Kilwa Kivinje (Tsh1800, 45 minutes), pick-ups depart several times daily from the transport stand on the main road just north of the market. This is also the place to hire taxis for local excursions.

To Dar es Salaam, there is at least one bus daily (stopping also in Kilwa Kivinje), departing in each direction at about 5am (Tsh7000, six hours). Buses from Kilwa depart from the market, and should be booked the day before. Departures in Dar es Salaam are from the Temeke bus stand (Sudan Market area), with smaller buses also departing from Mbagala (take a *dalla-dalla* to 'Mbagala Mwisho'), along the Kilwa road. Coming from Dar es Salaam it's also possible to get a bus heading to Lindi or Mtwara and get out at Nangurukuru junction, from where you can get local transport to Kilwa Kivinje (Tsh500, 11km) or Kilwa Masoko (35km), although you'll often need to pay the full Lindi

or Mtwara fare. This doesn't work as well leaving Kilwa, as buses are often full when they pass Nangurukuru (from about 11am).

To Lindi, there's at least one direct bus daily (Tsh7000, four hours), departing from the market and continuing on to Mtwara; book a day in advance.

BOAT

There are no scheduled passenger-boat services to/from Kilwa. Dhows are best arranged in Kilwa Kivinje. Boats to Kilwa Kisiwani, Songo Mnara and Pande leave from the jetty at the southern end of town.

AROUND KILWA MASOKO

Kilwa Kisiwani

Today, Kilwa Kisiwani (Kilwa on the Island) is a quiet fishing village baking in the sun just off-shore from Kilwa Masoko, but in its heyday it was the seat of sultans and centre of a vast trading network linking the old Shona kingdoms and the gold fields of Zimbabwe with Persia, India and China. Ibn Battuta, the famed traveller and chronicler of the ancient world, visited Kilwa in the early 14th century and described the town as being exceptionally beautiful and well constructed. At its height, Kilwa's influence extended north past the Zanzibar Archipelago and south as far as Sofala on the central Mozambican coast.

While these glory days are now well in the past, the ruins of the settlement – together with the ruins on nearby Songo Mnara – are among the most significant groups of Swahili buildings on the East African coast and a Unesco World Heritage site. Thanks to funding from the French and Japanese governments, significant sections of the ruins have been restored, and are now easily accessible, with informative signboards in English and Swahili.

HISTORY

The coast near Kilwa Kisiwani has been inhabited for several thousand years, and artefacts from the late and middle Stone Age have been found on the island. Although the first settlements in the area date to around AD 800, Kilwa remained a relatively undistinguished place until the early 13th century. At this time, trade links developed with Sofala, 1500km to the south in present-day Mozambique. Kilwa came to control Sofala and to dominate its

lucrative gold trade, and before long it had become the most powerful trade centre along the Swahili coast.

In the late 15th century, Kilwa's fortunes began to turn. Sofala freed itself from the island's dominance, and in the early 16th century Kilwa came under the control of the Portuguese. It wasn't until more than 200 years later that Kilwa regained its independence and once again became a significant trading centre, this time as an entrepôt for slaves being shipped from the mainland to the islands of Mauritius, Réunion and Comoros. In the 1780s, Kilwa came under the control of the Sultan of Oman. By the mid-19th century, the local ruler had succumbed to the sultan of Zanzibar, the focus of regional trade shifted to Kilwa Kivinje on the mainland, and the island town entered a decline from which it never recovered.

INFORMATION

To visit the ruins, you will need to get a permit (per person Tsh1500) from the **District Commissioner's office** (Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Kilwa; ☎ 7.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri) in Kilwa Masoko, diagonally opposite the post office. Ask for the Ofisi ya Utamaduni (Antiquities Office); the permit is issued without fuss while you wait. To maximise your chances of finding the Antiquities Officer in, it's best to go in the morning. On weekends, Kilwa Seaview Hotel can help you track down the permit officer, who is usually quite gracious about issuing permits outside of working hours. You'll also need to be accompanied by a guide to visit the island, arranged through the Antiquities Office or Kilwa Seaview Hotel.

For detailed information in English about the ruins, look on the web or in libraries at home for a copy of HN Chittick's informative manuscript. The National Museum in Dar es Salaam has a small but worthwhile display on the ruins at Kilwa Kisiwani.

There are no tourist facilities on the island.

THE RUINS

The ruins at Kilwa Kisiwani are in two groups. When approaching Kilwa Kisiwani, the first building you'll find is the Arabic **fort** (*gereza*). It was built in the early 19th century by the Omani Arabs, on the site of a Portuguese fort dating from the early 16th century. To the southwest of the fort are the ruins of the

beautiful **Great Mosque**, with its columns and graceful vaulted roofing, much of which has been impressively restored. Some sections of the mosque date to the late 13th century, although most are from additions made to the building in the 15th century. In its day, this was the largest mosque on the East African coast. Further southwest and behind the Great Mosque is a smaller **mosque** dating from the early 15th century. This is considered to be the best preserved of the buildings at Kilwa and has also been impressively restored. To the west of the small mosque, with large, green lawns and placid views over the water, are the crumbling remains of the **Makutani**, a large, walled enclosure in the centre of which lived some of the sultans of Kilwa. It is estimated to date from the mid-18th century.

Almost 1.5km from the fort along the coast is **Husuni Kubwa**, once a massive complex of buildings covering almost a hectare and, together with nearby **Husuni Ndogo**, the oldest of Kilwa's ruins. The complex, which is estimated to date from the 12th century or earlier, is set on a hill and must have once commanded great views over the bay. Watch in particular for the octagonal bathing pool. Husuni Ndogo is smaller than Husuni Kubwa and is thought to date from about the same time, although archaeologists are not yet sure of its original function. To reach these ruins, you can walk along the beach at low tide or follow the slightly longer inland route.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Local boats go from the port at Kilwa Masoko to Kilwa Kisiwani (Tsh200) whenever there are enough passengers – usually only in the early morning, about 7am, which means you'll need to arrange your permit the day before. To charter your own boat costs Tsh1000 one way (Tsh10,000 return for a boat with a motor). There is a Tsh300 port fee for tourists, payable in the small office just right of the entry gate. With a good wind, the trip takes about 20 minutes. Kilwa Seaview Hotel arranges excursions for US\$20 per person (minimum two people), including guide, permit and boat costs.

Songo Mnara

Tiny Songo Mnara, about 8km south of Kilwa Kisiwani, contains ruins at its northern end – including of a palace, several mosques and numerous houses – that are believed to date from the 14th and 15th centuries. They are

considered in some respects to be more significant architecturally than those at Kilwa Kisiwani – with one of the most complete town layouts along the coast, although they're less visually impressive. Just off the island's western side is **Sanje Majoma**, with additional ruins dating from the same period. The small island of **Sanje ya Kati**, between Songo Mnara and Kilwa Masoko, has some lesser ruins of a third settlement in the area, also believed to date from the same era.

The Kilwa Kisiwani permit includes Songo Mnara. There's no accommodation on the island.

The best way to get to Songo Mnara is via motorboat from Kilwa Masoko, arranged through the District Commissioner's office or with Kilwa Seaview Hotel (US\$80 per dhow, maximum five people). Alternatively, there's a much cheaper motorised local dhow that departs Kilwa Masoko between about 6am and 8am most mornings to Pande, and will stop on request at Songo Mnara. With luck, the boat returns to Kilwa Masoko the same day, departing Pande about 1pm. Dhows between Kilwa Masoko and Songo Mnara take about two to three hours with a decent wind.

After landing at Songo Mnara, be prepared to wade through mangrove swamps before reaching the island proper.

Kilwa Kivinje

Kilwa Kivinje (Kilwa of the Casuarina Trees) owes its existence to Omani Arabs from Kilwa Kisiwani who set up a base here in the early 19th century following the fall of the Kilwa sultanate. By the mid-19th century the settlement had become the hub of the regional slave trading network, and by the late 19th century, a German administrative centre. With the abolishment of the slave trade, and German wartime defeats, Kilwa Kivinje's brief period in the spotlight came to an end. Today, it's a crumbling, moss-covered and atmospheric relic of the past with a Swahili small-town feel and an intriguing mixture of German colonial and Omani Arab architecture.

The most interesting section of town is around the old German **Boma**. The boma itself is completely dilapidated, but it's worth picking your way through the rubble and climbing the stairs to the first floor for the view towards the water. The street behind the boma is lined with small houses, many with carved Zanzibar-style doorways. Nearby

is a **mosque**, which locals claim has been in continuous use since the 14th century, and a warren of back streets where you can get an excellent slice of coastal life, with children playing on the streets and women sorting huge trays of *dagga* (tiny sardines) for drying in the sun. Just in from here on the water is the bustling **dhow port**, where brightly painted vessels set off for Songo Songo, Mafia and other coastal ports.

The best way to visit Kilwa Kivinje is as an easy half-day or day trip from Kilwa Masoko. Overnight options are limited to a clutch of non-descript guesthouses near the market, all with rooms for about Tsh3500, and each rivalling the others in grubbiness.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Kilwa Kivinje is reached by heading about 25km north of Kilwa Masoko along a sealed road and then turning in at Nangurukuru for about 5km further. Pick-ups travel several times daily to/from Kilwa Masoko, and the bus between Dar es Salaam and Kilwa Masoko also stops at Kilwa Kivinje.

Dhows sail regularly from Kilwa Kivinje to both Dar es Salaam and Mtwara, although the journey to both destinations is long and not recommended; every year several boats capsize. Expect to pay about Tsh6000 for trips in either direction. There are also dhows to Songo Songo (about Tsh1000) and to Mafia (about Tsh5000), although for Mafia, it's much better to take a bus up the coast towards Dar es Salaam and get a boat at Nyamisati. See p310 for more details.

Songo Songo

Coconut palms, low shrub vegetation, about 3500 locals, lots of birds, a good beach and a major natural-gas field that is being exploited as part of the Songo Songo Gas to Electricity Project (see www.tpdc-tz.com/songo_songo.htm for more) are the main attractions on this 4 sq km island. Together with several surrounding islets, it forms the Songo Songo Archipelago, an ecologically important area for nesting sea turtles and marine birds. The surrounding waters also host an impressive collection of hard and soft corals. The archipelago, together with the nearby Rufiji River delta, the Mafia Archipelago and the coastline around Kilwa Masoko have been declared a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The best beach is in

Songo Songo's southeastern corner, reached through a coconut plantation. There are no tourist facilities on the island.

Songo Songo lies about 30km northeast of Kilwa Kivinje, from where it can be reached by dhow in about 3½ hours with favourable winds. There are also frequent charter flights in connection with the gas project; check with Dar es Salaam-based air charter operators, or Coastal Aviation, which occasionally stops here on its Kilwa-Mafia run.

LINDI

☎ 023 / pop 42,000

In its early days, Lindi was part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's domain, a terminus of the slave caravan route from Lake Nyasa, regional colonial capital, and the main town in southeastern Tanzania. The abolishment of the slave trade and the rise of Mtwara as a local hub sent Lindi into a slow decline, from which it has yet to recover, although it again moved briefly into the limelight in the early 20th century when dinosaur bones were discovered nearby (see boxed text, p322).

Today, Lindi is a lively, pleasant place and worth wandering around for a day or so to get a taste of life on the coast. Although it's not nearly as atmospheric as Kilwa Kivinje, further north, its small dhow port still bustles with local coastal traffic, a smattering of carved doorways and crumbling ruins line the dusty streets, and a Hindu temple and Indian merchants serve as a reminder of once-prosperous trade routes to the east.

Salt production is the main local industry, announced by the salt flats lining the road into town. There's also a sisal plantation in Kikwetu, near the airfield. The coral reef running from south of Lindi to Sudi Bay hosts abundant marine life, and the site has been proposed as a possible protected marine area.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

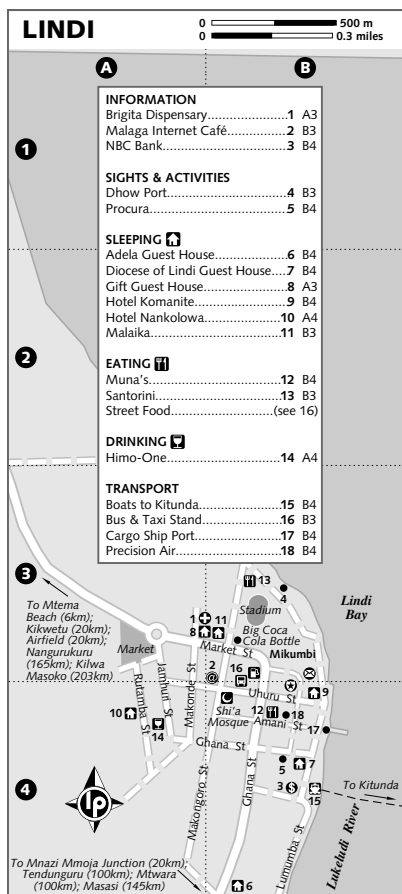
Malaga Internet Café (Uhuru St; per hr Tsh2000;

☎ 9am-6pm) Near the Shi'a mosque and Precision Air, and a few blocks up from the harbour.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Brigita Dispensary (☎ 023-220 2679; Makonde St)

An efficient, Western-run clinic, and the best place for medical emergencies; it's just around the corner from Gift Guest House.



MONEY

NBC (Lumumba St) On the waterfront; changes cash and has an ATM.

Sights & Activities

The old, historical part of town is the section along the waterfront, though you'll have to really hunt for the few still-standing remnants of the town's more glorious past. Watch for the remains of the old German boma, ruins of an Arab tower and the occasional carved doorway. The small **dhow port** on palm-fringed Lindi Bay is lively and colourful and worth a stroll. From some of the hills on the edge of town there are good views over large stands of palm trees and Lindi Bay, and across the Lukuledi River to **Kitunda peninsula** – ask locals

to point you in the direction of Mtanda, Wailes ('Wire-less') or Mtuleni neighbourhoods. On Kitunda itself, which was formerly a sisal estate, there's nothing much now other than a sleepy village, but it's a pleasant destination for walking and offers a glimpse of traditional local life. At the end of the peninsula behind the hill is a good beach (hire a local boat to get there).

About 6km north of town off the airfield road is **Mtema beach**, which is usually empty except for weekends and holidays. Take care with your valuables.

Sleeping

Gift Guest House (☎ 023-220 2462; cnr Market & Makonde Sts; s/d without bathroom Tsh3000/4000) Just down Market St from Malaika, and a decent, albeit considerably more basic, alternative. Rooms have mosquito nets and fans; there's no food.

Hotel Nankolowa (☎ 023-220 2727; Rutamba St; s/d Tsh5000/10,000, r without bathroom Tsh3500) Basic, tiny rooms with fan, net and continental breakfast. It's about 400m southwest of the market.

Adela Guest House (☎ 023-220 2310; Ghana St; r Tsh10,000) Not to be confused with the eponymous but grubbier Adela Guest House I several blocks closer to the town centre, this place – sometimes referred to as 'Adela II' – has arguably the best rooms in town (at least until Hotel Komanite opens, see later in this section). All have net, fan, TV and private bathroom, and there's a restaurant and a small plant-filled terrace. It's inside a walled compound – look for the large, unmarked grey metal gate.

Malaika (☎ 023-220 2880; Market St; s/d Tsh10,000/12,000, ste Tsh15,000) Malaika, one block east of the market, is another good budget bet. Rooms are clean, no-frills and fine, with net and fan, and meals can be arranged.

Diocese of Lindi Guest House (☎ 023-220 2288; Ghana St; r Tsh12,000) This place has two spacious, breezy rooms near the waterfront, but church and aid workers have priority. It's best booked in advance (at the main diocesan offices ('Procura'), just inland from the guesthouse compound).

The new three-star **Hotel Komanite** (Waterfront road) was being built on the waterfront just down from the harbour and should be open, with Lindi's best rooms, by the time this book is published.

Eating & Drinking

Lindi isn't distinguished for its dining options, but you can get some delicious grilled fish. Otherwise, the menu is usually chicken with rice or *ugali* (a staple made from maize or cassava flour, or both). Places to try include **Himo-One** (Jamhuri St; meals Tsh3000), with a good menu selection, reasonably fast service and no alcohol; **Muna's** (Amani St; meals Tsh2000), a few blocks up from the harbour; and **Santorini** (Waterfront road; meals from Tsh1500), which is behind the stadium in the Mikumbi area near the water, and a good place for a drink. The cheapest and best street food is at the bus stand, where there's a row of stalls dishing up grilled chicken and chips each evening, plus a few stools to sit and watch the passing scene.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Precision Air (☎ 023-220 2366; Amani St) flies twice weekly between Dar es Salaam, Lindi and Mtwara, with a connection twice weekly on to Pemba (Mozambique). The airfield is about 20km north of town.

BUS

All transport departs from the main bus and taxi stand on Uhuru St. Minibuses to Mtwara depart daily between about 5.30am and 11am. Otherwise, there are minibuses throughout the day to Mingoyo junction (Mnazi Mmoja; Tsh1000), where you can wait for the Masasi-Mtwara bus.

To Masasi, there are two or three direct buses daily, departing between about 5am and noon. Alternatively, go to Mingoyo and wait for onward transport there. The last Mtwara-Masasi bus passes Mingoyo about 2pm.

To Dar es Salaam, there are direct buses daily, departing Lindi at about 5am (Tsh17,000, eight to 10 hours).

To Kilwa Masoko, there's a direct bus leaving Lindi daily around 5am (Tsh7000, four hours).

BOAT

Cargo boats along the coast, including to Dar es Salaam, call at the port near the NBC bank, although they generally don't take passengers. The dhow port is about 800m further up the coast.

Boats across the Lukeludi River to Kitunda sail throughout day from in front of NBC.

BRACHIOSAURUS BRANCAI

Tendunguru, about 100km northwest of Lindi, is the site of one of the most significant palaeontological finds in history. From 1909 to 1912, a team of German palaeontologists unearthed the remains of more than a dozen different dinosaur species, including the skeleton of *Brachiosaurus brancai*, the largest known dinosaur in the world. The *Brachiosaurus* skeleton is now on display at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin. Scientists are unsure why so many dinosaur fossils were discovered in the region, although it is thought that flooding or some other natural catastrophe was the cause of their demise.

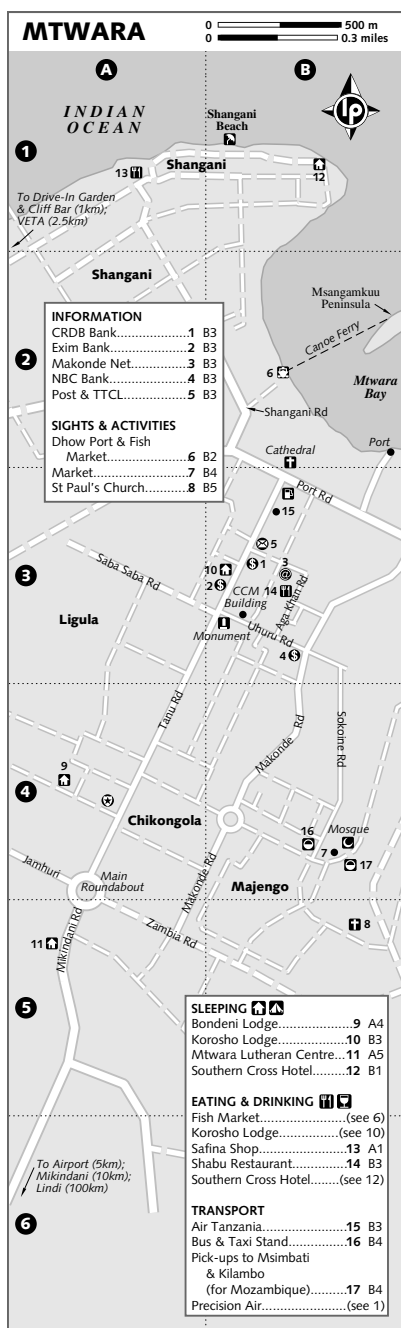
Today, Tendunguru is of interest mainly to hardcore palaeontologists. For visitors, there is little to see and access to the site is difficult, even with your own vehicle.

MTWARA

☎ 023 / pop 93,000

Sprawling Mtwara is southeastern Tanzania's major town. It was first developed after WWII by the British as part of the failed East African Groundnut Scheme to alleviate a postwar shortage of plant oils. Grand plans were made to expand Mtwara, then an obscure fishing village, into an urban centre of about 200,000 inhabitants. An international airport and Tanzania's first deep-water harbour were built and the regional colonial administration was relocated here from Lindi. Yet, no sooner had this been done than the groundnut scheme – plagued by conceptual difficulties and an uncooperative local climate – collapsed and everything came to an abrupt halt. While Mtwara's port continued to play a significant role in the region over the next few decades as an export channel for cashews, sisal and other products, development of the town came to a standstill and for years it resembled little more than an oversized shell.

In recent times Mtwara has got something of a second wind, with a revival of interest in the tourism potential of the southeast. While it lacks the historical appeal of nearby Mikindani and other places along the coast, it has decent infrastructure, easy access and a relaxed pace, and is a convenient entry/exit point for travelling between Tanzania and Mozambique.



Orientation

Mtwara is loosely located between a business and banking area to the northwest, near Uhuru and Aga Khan Rds, and the market and bus stand about 1.5km away to the southeast. The main north-south street is Tanu Rd. In the far northwest on the sea, and 30 to 40 minutes on foot from the bus stand, is the Shangani quarter, with a small beach. In Mtwara's far southeastern corner, just past the market, are the lively areas of Majengo and Chikongola.

Information

Tide tables are available at the port: after entering the port area, but before reaching the gate, turn right and go behind the buildings to the harbour master's office.

INTERNET ACCESS

Makonde Net (per hr Tsh1000; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun) Just off Aga Khan Rd in the town centre.

MONEY

CRDB (Tanu Rd) ATM (Visa).

Exim Bank (Tanu Rd) ATM (MasterCard; Cirrus).

NBC (Uhuru Rd) Changes cash and travellers cheques; ATM (Visa).

POST

Main Post Office (Tanu Rd)

TELEPHONE

TTCL (Tanu Rd; ☎ 8am-12.45pm & 1.30pm-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) Operator-assisted domestic and international calls, and a card phone.

Sights & Activities

In town there's a lively **market** with a small traditional-medicine section next to the main building. North of here, and just east of the NBC bank, watch for used clothing auctions most afternoons. Aga Khan St is lined with old Indian trading houses dating from the late 1950s and 1960s. Much of Mtwara's fish comes from Msangamkuu on the other side of Mtwara Bay, and the small **dhow port** and adjoining **fish market** are particularly colourful in the early morning and late afternoon. The **beach** in Shangani is popular for swimming (high tide only); its gentle currents and general absence of sea urchins and other hazards make it ideal for children. For views over the bay and the white sands of Msangamkuu peninsula, look for the tiny footpath leading to

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

If you happen to be in the Majengo area of Mtwara, it's worth stopping in at St Paul's church to view its remarkable artwork. The entire front and side walls are covered with richly coloured biblical scenes painted by a German Benedictine priest, Polycarp Uehlein. The paintings, which took about two years to complete, are part of a series by the same artist decorating churches throughout southern Tanzania and in a few other areas of the country, including churches in Nyangao, Lindi, Malolo, Ngapa and Dar es Salaam. In addition to their style and distinctive use of colour, the paintings are notable for their universalised portrayal of common biblical themes. The themes were chosen to assist churchgoers to understand the sermons and to relate the biblical lessons to their everyday lives.

During the years he has worked in Tanzania, Father Polycarp has taught several African students. The best known of these is Henry Likonde from Mtwara, who has taken biblical scenes and 'Africanised' them. You can see examples of Likonde's work in the small church at the top of the hill in Mahurunga, south of Mtwara near the Mozambican border, and in the cathedral in Songea.

a viewpoint near the Southern Cross Hotel. Mikindani (p326) is an easy half-day excursion from Mtwara.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Drive-In Garden & Cliff Bar (☎ 023-233 3911/3146, 0784-503007; Shangani; camping per person Tsh5000, r per person Tsh10,000) This is a shady, secure spot for camping, with clean bucket baths and a small bar-restaurant serving tasty grilled chicken, fish and other meals with advance notice, plus cold drinks. Also available are several simple, spotless rooms in a six-bed house that has a refrigerator and small cooker. The room price includes breakfast, and this place is overall good value. Go left at the main Shangani junction and follow the road paralleling the beach for about 1.2km to the small signpost on your left. If you have trouble finding it, ask at the Safina (Container shop) at the main Shangani junction, just after the Shangani Dispensary.

Mtwara Lutheran Centre (☎ 023-233 3294; Mikindani Rd; dm Tsh3000, s/d Tsh12,000/15,000, d without bathroom Tsh6000) Another good budget choice, with reasonable no-frills rooms with nets and meals with advance notice. The rooms vary, so check a few, and try to book in advance, as it's often full. It's on the southern edge of town, just off the main roundabout along the road heading to Mikindani. Arriving by bus, ask the driver to drop you at the roundabout.

Korosho Lodge (☎ 023-233 4093; Tanu Rd; r with fan/air-con Tsh25,000/30,000, ste Tsh35,000) Spartan and rather soulless but spiffy rooms with cold water and clean bathrooms, and a restaurant.

It's in a walled compound diagonally opposite the taxi stand. Breakfast is included.

If none of these suit, there's a clutch of low-budget local guesthouses on the back roads just west of Tanu Rd, including **Bondeni Lodge** (☎ 023-233 3669; s/d Tsh9000/14,000), with no-frills block-style rooms, all with fan and net, lined up next to a tiny courtyard, and a pub next door.

MIDRANGE

VETA (☎ 023-233 4094; Shangani; s Tsh15,000, ste Tsh35,000; 🍷) Clean rooms, all with a large bed, TV and views over the water, plus a restaurant. It's in Shangani, about 200m back from the water (though there's no swimming beach here). From the T-junction in Shangani, go left and continue for about 3km. There's no public transport; taxis charge Tsh3000- to Tsh000 from town.

Southern Cross Hotel (Msemu; ☎ 023-233 3206; www.msemu.com; Shangani; s/d US\$35/55) A recommended place with spotless, good-value rooms, all with fan, TV, nice tiled bathrooms, a sea-facing window and a Scandinavian touch to the furnishings. There's also a relaxing seaside restaurant that's a popular spot for sunbrowsers. It's on a small outcrop directly overlooking the water in Shangani, with Shangani beach just a few minutes walk away. Staff can help arrange excursions in the area. Profits from the hotel are channelled into primary health-care services in the Mtwara region.

Eating & Drinking

The **fish market** at the Msangamkuu boat dock is good for street food, selling grilled *pweza* (octopus), *vitambua* (rice cakes) and other delicacies.

For sundowners and tasty meals, try the restaurant at the **Southern Cross Hotel** (Msemu; Shangani; meals from Tsh5000). Drive-In Garden & Cliff Bar is another amenable spot for a drink or meal. Other options include **Shabu Restaurant** (Aga Khan Rd; meals Tsh2000; ☎ 8am–10pm Mon–Sat, Sun 8am–1pm) in the town centre, serving local dishes, Indian snacks and sometimes fresh yogurt, and the restaurant at **Korosh Lodge** (Tanu Rd; meals Tsh5000–6000; ☎ lunch & dinner) near the bus stand, with a selection of Indian and standard fare.

For self-caterers: there are several reasonably useful shops along Uhuru Rd, including the first one on the left after passing the taxi stand. **Safina** (‘Container Shop’; Shangani; ☎ 8am–7pm), at the main junction in Shangani, has a good selection of basic supermarket items, frozen meat and sausages and cold drinks.

Shopping

Mtwara and around are good places to buy Makonde carvings, although many carvers only work on commission. A good place to start is the family of carvers on the Mikindani road under the second tree after the airport turn-off. For high-quality, commissioned carvings, contact **Paulo Hekororo** (☎ 0784-260727), or through the Safina (see above).

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are daily flights between Mtwara and Dar es Salaam (Tsh150,000 one-way) on **Air Tanzania** (☎ 023-233 3147; Bodi ya Korosh Bldg, Tanu Rd; ☎ closed during flight arrivals & departures), and **Precision Air** (☎ 023-233 4116; Tanu Rd), which also sometimes stops in Lindi. Twice weekly, the Precision Air flight continues on to Pemba (Mozambique).

BUS

All long-distance buses depart between about 5am and 8am from the main bus stand just off Sokoine Rd near the market.

To Masasi, there are roughly hourly departures between about 6am and 2pm (Tsh4500, five hours); once in Masasi you’ll need to change vehicles for Tundururu and Songea.

To Lindi (three hours), there are several direct minibuses daily, departing in both directions in the morning. Otherwise, take any Masasi bus to Mingoyo junction and wait for onward transport from there.

There’s at least one direct bus daily to Kilwa Masoko (Tsh7000, five hours), departing between 5am and 6am in each direction.

Direct buses to Newala (Tsh4500, six to eight hours) use the southern route via Nanyamba. Departures from Mtwara are between 6am and 8am daily, except during the wet season when services are more sporadic. It’s also possible to reach Newala via Masasi, although this may entail an overnight stay in Masasi.

To Dar es Salaam, there are daily buses (Tsh18,000 to Tsh20,000, 10 to 12 hours), departing in each direction by about 6am. Lines to watch for include Wifi and Sollo’s. Book in advance. In Dar es Salaam, departures are from Ubungu, or – better – from Temeke’s Sudan Market area, where all the southbound bus lines also have booking offices.

To Mozambique, there are several pickups daily to Mahurunga and the Tanzanian immigration post at Kilambo (Tsh2500), departing Mtwara between about 8am and 11am. Departures are from the eastern side of the market near the mosque. For information on crossing the Ruvuma River, see p351. The best places for updated information on the vehicle ferry are The Old Boma and Ten Degrees South, both in Mikindani (p326). Note that Mozambican visas are *not* issued at this border and there is no Mozambique consulate in Mtwara (the closest one is in Dar es Salaam).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you’re driving to/from Dar es Salaam, there are petrol stations in Kibiti, Ikwiriri, Nangurukuru, Kilwa Masoko, Lindi and Mtwara.



Getting Around

Taxis to and from the airport (6km south-east of the main roundabout) cost Tsh6000. There are taxi ranks at the bus stand and near the CCM building; the cost for a town trip is Tsh2000 (Tsh2500 from the centre to Shangani). Tuk-tuks (*majaji*) are slightly cheaper.

There are a few *dalla-dallas* running along Tanu Rd to and from the bus stand, although none to Shangani. To arrange bicycle rental, ask at the market or at one of the nearby bicycle shops.

MIKINDANI

☎ 023

Mikindani – set on a picturesque bay surrounded by coconut groves – is a quiet, charming Swahili town with a long history. Although easily visited as a day trip from Mtwara, many travellers prefer it to its larger neighbour as a base for exploring the surrounding area.

History

Mikindani gained prominence early on as a major dhow port and terminus for trade caravans from Lake Nyasa. By the late 15th century, these networks extended across southern Tanzania as far as Zambia and present-day Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). Following a brief downturn in fortunes, trade – primarily in slaves, ivory and copper – again increased in the mid-16th century as Mikindani came under the domain of the Sultan of Zanzibar. In the 19th century, following the ban on the slave trade, Mikindani fell into decline until the late 1880s when the German colonial government made the town its regional headquarters and began large-scale sisal, coconut, rubber and oilseed production in the area. However, the boom was not to last. With the arrival of the British and the advent of larger ocean-going vessels, Mikindani was abandoned in favour of Mtwara's superior harbour, and now, almost a century later, seems not to have advanced much beyond this era. Much of the town has been designated as a conservation zone, and life today centres on the small dhow port, which is still a hub for local coastal traffic.

For David Livingstone fans, the famous explorer spent a few weeks in the area in 1866 before setting out on his last journey.

Information

The closest banking facilities are in Mtwara.

The Old Boma has a tourist information office and an internet connection. Walking tours of towns and local excursions can be organised here and at Ten Degrees South.

Sights & Activities

The imposing German **boma**, built in 1895 as a fort and administrative centre, has been beautifully renovated as a hotel (see below). Even if you're not staying here, it's worth taking a look, and climbing the tower for **views** over the town.

Downhill from the boma is the old **slave market**, which now houses several craft shops. Unfortunately, it was much less accurately restored than the boma and lost much of its architectural interest when its open arches were filled in. The original design is now preserved only on one of Tanzania's postage stamps, and in a photo in an earlier edition of this guidebook.

The **prison ruins** are opposite the jetty, and nearby is a large, hollow baobab tree that was once used to keep unruly prisoners in solitary confinement.

Apart from the various historical buildings, it's well worth just strolling through town to soak up the atmosphere and see the numerous carved Zanzibar-style doors. With more time, make your way up Bismarck Hill, rising up behind the Old Boma, for some views.

Sleeping & Eating

Ten Degrees South Lodge (ECO2; ☎ 0784-855833; www.eco2.com; r without bathroom Tsh20,000) A good budget travellers' base, with refurbished rooms – all with large beds and nets, plus bay views and deck chairs up on the roof. Self-contained chalets are planned (about US\$50 per double), and there's a restaurant-bar (meals from Tsh5000) under a shady, thatched *banda* with a TV and a good vibe in season. **ECO2** (www.eco2.com) is based here, and is the best contact for arranging diving in Mnazi Bay-Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park. They also have a dhow that can be chartered for excursions. Check their website for information on volunteer marine research opportunities.

The Old Boma at Mikindani (☎ 023-233 3875, 0756-455978; www.mikindani.com; r without/with balcony from US\$90/120, triple ste US\$200; 🍷) This beautifully restored building, on a breezy hilltop overlooking town and Mikindani Bay, offers

spacious, atmospheric, high-ceilinged doubles and the closest to top-end standards that you'll find in these parts. There's a sunset terrace overlooking the bay, a pool surrounded by bougainvillea bushes and lush gardens, and a restaurant. Rooms vary, so check out a few before choosing. It's run by Trade Aid (www.tradeaiduk.org), a non-profit group committed to improving employment and educational opportunities for the local community. A stay at the Old Boma supports their work; check out their website if you want to get more involved.

Mikindani Yacht Club (contact through ECO2; admission Tsh2500, snacks from Tsh1500) Temporarily closed when we passed through, but when open, this waterside place is a good spot for snacks and light meals. Boat hire is also sometimes possible.

Ismaili's Corner Bar (snacks & light meals from Tsh2000; buffet per person Tsh3500, minimum four persons) At the old Slave Market, and just below the Old Boma, with snacks and light meals, and a Friday seafood buffet with advance notice.

Getting There & Away

Mikindani is 10km from Mtwara along a sealed road. Minibuses (Tsh200) run between the two towns throughout the day. Taxis from Mtwara charge Tsh5000 to Tsh10,000, depending on your bargaining abilities.

MNAZI BAY-RUVUMA ESTUARY MARINE PARK

Tanzania's newest marine park encompasses a narrow sliver of coastline extending from Msangamkuu peninsula (just north and east of Mtwara) in the north to the Mozambique border in the south. In addition to about 5000 people, it provides home to over 400 marine species and an impressive array of delicate coastal ecosystems. Although still very much in its initial stages, it's ultimately hoped that the park will be the core of a conservation area extending as far south as Pemba in Mozambique.

The heart of the conservation area is **Msimbati Peninsula**, together with the bordering Mnazi Bay. Among its attractions: a lovely palm-lined beach, a string of offshore reefs and a lack of crowds. Most visitors head straight to the tiny village of **Ruvula**, which is about 7km beyond Msimbati village along a sandy track (or along the beach at low tide), and which boasts a fine stretch of sand, although

the views have been marred in recent times by the rigs set up at one end in connection with exploitation of offshore gas fields found in Mnazi Bay. In addition to its beach – one of the few on the mainland offering sunset views – Ruvula is notable as the spot where British eccentric Latham Leslie-Moore built his house and lived until 1967 when he was deported after agitating for independence for the Msimbati Peninsula. Deportation seemed a better option to Leslie-Moore than being subjected to the government of the newly independent Tanzania. His story is chronicled in John Heminway's *No Man's Land*, and in *Africa Passion*, a documentary film. Today, Leslie-Moore's house stands in ruins; the property is privately owned.

Msangamkuu Peninsula, at the northern edge of the marine park and best visited from Mtwara, boasts a fishing village, an attractive beach and snorkelling (bring your own equipment).

Marine park entry fees are US\$10 (US\$5/free for children from five to 16 years/under five) per day for adults, and are collected at the marine park gate at the entrance to Msimbati village. To arrange diving, contact **ECO2** (www.eco2.com), based at Ten Degrees South Lodge in Mikindani, which is also the best source of updated information on the park.

Ruvula Sea Safari (☎ 0784-367439, 0784-484184; camping per person Tsh10,000, s/d bandas with full board Tsh85,000/150,000) The only place to stay, with rustic *bandas* sharing facilities (prices are currently set disproportionately high in comparison with what's on offer so as to tap into the coffers of the gas company staff based nearby), delicious grilled fish meals (Tsh10,000 per person) and the beach at your doorstep. A few basic supplies are available in Msimbati village, but if you're camping, stock up in Mtwara and bring a torch. Staff can help you sort out excursions to Bird Island, directly opposite, and boating through nearby mangrove channels. Watch for the tiny sign marking the turnoff from the Msimbati–Ruvula road. Day visitors are charged Tsh5000 per person for beach use (the fee is waived if you eat a meal).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There is at least one pick-up daily in each direction between Mtwara and Msimbati (Tsh1800, two hours), departing Mtwara about 11am from the eastern side of the market near

the mosque. Departures from Msimbati are around 5.30am from the police post near the park gate. On weekends, many of Mtwara's foreign residents head towards Msimbati and it's usually easy to find a lift.

Driving from Mtwara, take the main road from the roundabout south for 4km to the village of Mangamba, branch left at the signpost onto the Mahurunga road and continue about 18km to Madimba. At Madimba, turn left again and continue for 20km to Msimbati; the road is unpaved, but in good condition. If you are cycling, the major village en route is Ziwani, which has a decent market.

There is no public transport between Msimbati and Ruvula. On weekends, it's sometimes possible to hitch a lift. Otherwise, arrange a lift on a motorbike (about Tsh5000) with one of the locals or walk along the beach at low tide (one-hour-plus). Although sandy, the road is in reasonably good condition thanks to maintenance work by the gas company and Ruvula Sea Safari can generally be reached in a regular 2WD taxi from Mtwara (Tsh45,000 to Tsh60,000 round-trip).

Dhows and canoes travel between the Shangani dhow port dock in Mtwara and Msangamkuu peninsula throughout the day (Tsh100; about 15 minutes with favourable winds).

MAKONDE PLATEAU & AROUND

This cool and scenic plateau, much of which lies between 700m and 900m above sea level, is home to the Makonde people, famed throughout East Africa for their exotic wood carvings (see opposite). With its comparative isolation, scattered settlements and seeming oblivion to developments elsewhere in the country, it in many ways epitomises inland areas of southeastern Tanzania, and is worth a detour if you're in the area.

Newala

☎ 023

Dusty, bustling Newala is the major settlement on the plateau. Thanks to its perch at 780m altitude, it offers a pleasantly brisk climate, and views over the Ruvuma River valley and into Mozambique. At the edge of the escarpment on the southwestern side of town is the old German boma (now the police station) and, nearby, the Shimo la Mungu (Hole of God) viewpoint. There are numerous paths from the edge of town leading down to the river. If

you plan to do this it's not a bad idea to carry your passport (which you should carry around anyway in Newala, given its proximity to the border) and arrange a local guide. Bicycles can be rented near the market.

SLEEPING & EATING

Country Lodge Bed & Breakfast ('Sollo's'; ☎ 023-241 0355; Masasi road; s/d Tsh22,000/30,000; 📍) This long-standing place is the best choice in town. Rooms have nets and a bathroom, the doubles have two large beds, and there's a small pool. There's also a decent restaurant, with the usual array of standard dishes, plus better fare with an advance order. It's about 600m from the bus stand, on the road to Masasi.

For something cheaper, there are several less-expensive guesthouses in the area around the market and bus stand, with no-frills rooms sharing a bathroom from about Tsh4000, and cheap eateries nearby.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Daily buses run from Newala to Mtwara and to Masasi (Tsh3000, three hours). There is usually also at least one vehicle daily between Newala and Mtama, east of Masasi on the road to Mtwara. All roads from Newala are unpaved. The journeys to Masasi and Mtama offer beautiful views as you wind down the side of the plateau.

Masasi

☎ 023

Masasi, a bustling district centre and birthplace of former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, stretches out along the main road off the edge of the Makonde Plateau against a backdrop of granite hills. The history of the modern settlement dates to the late 19th century, when the Anglican Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) came from Zanzibar to establish a settlement of former slaves here. Today, it's notable primarily as a transport hub for onward travel along the wild road west towards Tunduru, or north to Nachingwea and Liwale. About 70km east of Masasi along the Mtwara road is **Mahiwa**, the site of one of WWI's bloodiest battles in Africa, in which more than 2000 people lost their lives.

Many Makonde woodcarvers are based in the area. The group of carvers along the Nachingwea road, on the left side and about 500m from the bus stand, generally have reasonable prices.

THE MAKONDE

The Makonde, known throughout East Africa for their woodcarvings, are one of Tanzania's largest ethnic groups. They originated in northern Mozambique, where many still live, and began to make their way northwards during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Mozambican war sparked another large influx into Tanzania, with up to 15,000 Makonde crossing the border during the 1970s and 1980s in search of a safe haven and employment. Today, although the Makonde on both sides of the Ruvuma River are considered to be a single ethnic entity, there are numerous cultural and linguistic differences between the two groups.

Like many tribes in this part of Tanzania, the Makonde are matrilineal. Children and inheritances normally belong to the woman, and it's common for husbands to move to the village of their wives after marriage. Settlements are widely scattered – possibly a remnant of the days when the Makonde sought to evade slave raids – and there is no tradition of a unified political system. Each village is governed by a hereditary chief and a council of elders.

Due to their isolated location, the Makonde have remained insulated from colonial and post-colonial influences, and are considered to be one of Tanzania's most traditional groups. Even today, most Makonde still adhere to traditional religions, with the complex spirit world given its fullest expression in their carvings.

Traditionally, the Makonde practised body scarring and while it's seldom done today, you may see older people with markings on their face and bodies. It's also fairly common to see elderly Makonde women wearing a wooden plug in their upper lip, or to see this depicted in Makonde artwork.

Most Makonde are subsistence farmers, and there is speculation as to why they chose to establish themselves on a waterless plateau. Possible factors include the relative safety that the area offered from outside intervention (especially during slave trading days), and the absence of the tsetse fly.

If you're planning to visit Lukwika-Lumesule and Msangesi Game Reserves (see p330), it's essential to first stop in Masasi at the **reserve warden's office** (☎ 023-251 0364, 0784-634972, 0713-311129). It's on the Newala road, a few hundred metres southeast of the Mtwara road on the right, near the immigration office. Ask for *Mali Asili* (Natural Resources).

SLEEPING & EATING

In town, there's a clutch of inexpensive and noisy guesthouses, including **Holiday Guest House** (d Tsh7000) at the western end of town near the petrol station, and **Sayari Hotel** (☎ 023-251 0095; r Tsh11,000), at the eastern end of town near the post office.

Kilema Kyaro (d Tsh15,000) About 2km out of town on the Newala road, with quieter rooms than you'll find in town, and a restaurant. It's signposted on your left when leaving Masasi.

For meals – the offerings are limited to chicken, chips and ugali – try the restaurant at **Sayari Hotel** (meals Tsh2500), or **Mummy's** (meals Tsh2000), behind the bus stand, and near the district council building. Street food is available near the market.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The bus stand is at the far western end of Masasi on the Tunduru road. If you're arriving from Mtwara, ask the driver to drop you off at your hotel or at the petrol station to avoid having to walk back into town.

The road between Masasi and Mtwara is mostly paved and in generally good condition. Buses travel between the two towns approximately hourly between 6am and 2pm daily (Tsh4500, five hours).

To Tunduru, the road is in rough but reasonable shape – allow up to five hours to cover the 200km stretch. Land Rovers and the occasional bus travel this stretch daily during the dry season. During the wet season, departures are more sporadic and prices higher.

Ndanda

Ndanda is a small town about 40km north-east of Masasi off the edge of the Makonde plateau. It's dominated by a large Benedictine monastery, which was founded by German missionaries in 1906. Adjoining the monastery is a hospital, which serves as the major health clinic for the entire surrounding region. About a 45-minute walk south (uphill) from

the monastery is a small dam with clean water for swimming, although you'll need permission from the abbey before taking a dip.

Apart from the monastery guesthouse (reserved for monastery guests only), the only accommodation is in a few unappealing budget guesthouses along the main road at the bus stand, and diagonally opposite the hospital.

Buses run daily between Masasi and Ndanda, and any vehicle along the main road will drop you.

LUKWIKA-LUMESULE & MSANGESI GAME RESERVES

These tiny game reserves are hidden away in the remote hinterlands southwest and west of Masasi. They're officially off-limits during the July to December hunting season (thanks to local hunting concessions), and unofficially off-limits during much of the rest of the year due to the rains. If you're keen on heading down this way, late June is the best time to come.

Lukwika-Lumesule is the more interesting of the two. It's separated from Mozambique's Niassa Reserve by the Ruvuma River, and animals frequently wade across the border. With luck you may see elephants, sable antelopes, elands, greater kudus, crocodiles and hippos. The main challenge, apart from getting around the reserve, is spotting the animals through the often dense vegetation.

Because Msangesi Game Reserve has no permanent water source, wildlife concentrations are often low. It's rumoured to have buffaloes, elands, zebras, sable antelopes and duikers, though it's unlikely you'll spot many of these.

Before visiting, it's essential to stop by the **reserve warden's office** (☎ 023-251 0364, 0784-634972, 0713-311129) in Masasi to get a letter of permission, and to confirm that the reserves are open for tourism during the time you wish to visit. In Mtwara you can sometimes get information on the reserve from the Office of Natural Resources in the Regional Block complex (go to the small white building at the back). There's a US\$30 per person per day entry fee for each reserve.

SLEEPING & EATING

Camping is permitted with your own tent; there's currently no charge. Bring everything with you, including food and drinking water. Water for bathing is normally available at Lukwika-Lumesule, but not at Msangesi.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The entry point into Lukwika-Lumesule is about 2.5km southwest of Mpombe village on the northeastern edge of the reserve, and reached via Nangomba village, 40km west of Masasi.

To reach Msangesi from Masasi, follow the Tunduru road west to the Masasi airfield. Turn right, and continue to Chingulungulu, the last village before the reserve.

There is no regular public transport to either reserve, although you may occasionally be able to get a lift with a vehicle from the reserve warden's office in Masasi. Otherwise, you'll need your own 4WD transport. During the dry season, it's possible to drive around Lukwika-Lumesule, following a road running along its periphery. Getting around in Msangesi is more difficult. The road is not maintained and is sometimes impassable.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'