

A hammock is suspended between two weathered wooden posts over clear, turquoise water. The hammock is made of a yellowish mesh and contains a small wooden log. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and tropical.

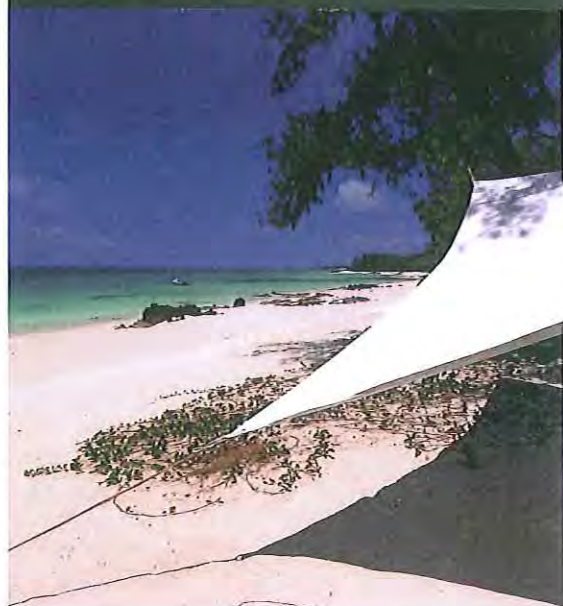
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DIVE IN STYLE

CHILL | SNORKEL | DIVE

NEW EDITION

James & Hudson



Let's get the bad news out front: led by the website and the brochure we, and indeed fellow guests, were expecting a sophisticated five-star resort. The reality is different, but none the worse for being so. This is an incredibly comfortable, but otherwise incredibly simple Robinson Crusoe lifestyle, palm-covered huts on a remote and beautiful beach. But to appreciate it fully you need to look at a map and understand just where you are.

vamizi island



To get here, whether you go via Dar where you will probably have to stay overnight (get a transit visa before you go to avoid the scrum on arrival and stay at Oyster Bay if you want a veritable oasis), or via Pemba, you will 'transit' through the war-torn wreckage of an airport that is Mocimboa da Praia. Fifteen minutes later you touch down on the island and after a 30-minute safari-style Land Rover ride, you finally arrive at the hotel.

Vamizi is simple, very simple and feels like a luxury eco resort. There is no swimming pool, no room service, no telephones, no spa, no television, no sop to the modern world. A stunning strip of the softest white powder with lapping turquoise seas, broken by islets of volcanic rock, and set along this strand are two principal open-sided palm-thatched structures, the dining room and the bar. Spread like wings either side of this are just ten rooms, two of which would suit families or two couples, all slightly set back from the beach but giving directly onto it. Each is totally private and sits well apart from its neighbour: to escape completely ask for the remote room number 1, but accept the only downside is a good beach walk to dinner, albeit little hardship, guided by either the moon or the supplied 'shake' torch.

The generous rooms follow the theme and are effectively an open-sided structure with intricately detailed soaring roofs; walls of

vamizi

at a glance

Airport	Dar es Salaam, or via Pemba (Mozambique)
Airlines	Emirates, British Airways, Qatar Airways, South African Airways, KLM, LAM
Transfer time	2 hrs, 20 mins flight from London, 1 hr from Pemba, 25 mins
Rooms	13 (including 5 x 2-bed fan villas)
Staff ratio	7
Activities	Guided snorkel, fishing, turtle hatching, dhow cruise, kayaking
Services	Wi-fi in bar
Other	Mobile phones (intermittent)
Children	Any age
Power type	3-pin UK
Currency	US dollar
GMT	+3
Booking	www.diveinstyle.com





screening peel back to afford views of the ocean, or close to provide privacy, while still allowing the dappled sunlight and wind to enter. The vast bed dominates the room and is set within a muslin-screened canopy, effectively a room within the room, where you can lie and sleep, lulled by the wind and shushing sea eating at the beach feet away, knowing what amazingly few bugs there are will not disturb you. A vast single slab of marble dominates the bathroom, with contrasting hewn marble basins, desk area and masses of cupboards. An expansive and partially covered deck with loungers, sofa and free mini bar completes your home.

This is simple luxury, not in the sophisticated and cossetting Six Senses style, just simple. It's really just you and nature, with luxurious and incredibly comfortable rooms, a fabulous beach, utter peace and tranquillity with nothing to disturb you but a few birds and monkeys. The major activities are limited to lunch and dinner served overlooking the sea either at the restaurant or the new south beach bar on the opposite side of the island. The food is simple, fresh and delicious, the local chef taking incredible pride in his work – needless to say, local fish forms a major part of his repertoire, sashimi and sushi being a constant. It would be easy to be picky about the food, but just look at the sheer logistics of getting the produce and you will appreciate what is on offer.

The cleverly decorated bar has the feel of a colonial home with local antiques, wicker sofas, generous banquettes and has been artfully divided into a series of informal intimate nests with wide, comfortable sofas begging you to sprawl on them for evening drinks. To one end is the small bar and quite often in season, while waiting here for dinner, you will be interrupted by the arrival of a rattan box of baby turtles appearing not unlike a plate of canapés; guests are invited to release them close to the sea. Guided by the moon, they swim amazingly strongly to their fate – before you become too sentimental, less than one in a thousand grow to maturity.

It would be going too far to say this is a diving hotel, as there are other activities, but they are limited. A picnic on a remote beach, a dhow cruise, deep-sea fishing, kayaking, but you come here just to chill, perhaps after a safari, with only the rustle of the sea and the endless busy chatter of the weaver birds to disturb you; or you come to dive, and the latter is worth the trip alone.



