

MailOnline

Dreamy Vamizi, the chic island off the coast of Mozambique where romance can blossom

By [Chris Caldicott](#)

Last updated at 7:57 PM on 21st November 2010

The last thing I expected the macho captain of our Ernest Hemingway- style deep- sea fishing rig to come up with was a statement such as this: 'Woman are naturally much better than men at fishing.'

A devilishly handsome, tanned and tattooed Zimbabwean, Stewart is just one of many bringing much-needed skills and experience from a country where the tourist industry has collapsed to one where it is growing with gusto.

The islands that make up offshore archipelagos in the Indian Ocean are leading the way. They have all the right ingredients: miles of white sand beaches, lagoons of translucent turquoise sea, pristine coral reefs, vast shoals of exotic fish and interiors of virgin forest.



Dreamy: Vamizi is totally unspoilt and only boasts one luxury hotel

I've visited several and find they all serve up a refreshingly raw African alternative to the more manicured and often-crowded offerings elsewhere.

On Vamizi, an island in the Quirimbas archipelago off northern Mozambique, I found the best yet. It really is a desert island. It has no fresh water at all, so its forests, monkeys, birds, turtles, reefs and fish have been spared the damaging consequences of human settlement - and there are no mosquitoes.

The group of British investors who have taken out a lease on Vamizi have built an airstrip, a desalination plant and, wisely, just one barefoot luxury lodge, aiming to combine limited tourism with

wildlife conservation.

It's a winning recipe. the lodge and its 13 villas are a perfect blend of designer chic and nature. the lack of mosquitoes and the abundance of sea breezes negate the need for air conditioning. the huge, elegant, open-plan villas have been built for maximum air circulation with foldaway walls and glass-free, hand-carved filigree windows.



Heavenly: The enchanting dining tent on the beach makes a truly romantic setting



Utter luxury: The accommodation is beautifully styled inside as well as out

They have a colonial feel with polished wooden floors, woven rattan screens, thatched roofs and ceiling fans. Each has an outdoor sitting room and its own private garden with sun loungers and the ocean just a few steps away. The sea is so seductively clear, blue and warm it demands you immerse yourself in it as often as possible.

Happily, the only dress code here is a shirt in the restaurant - the rest of the time you need little more than swimming gear and the complimentary sun hat and sarong from your room. The villas are so far apart and well hidden that you can go all day without seeing another soul.

On walks along the miles of idyllic white sandy beach you will see no one, just surreal sculptures of bleached driftwood and occasionally a troupe of samango monkeys or a flight of sea birds. Some people come just to unwind after a safari somewhere else in Africa.

Some come to see the acrobatic displays of humpback whales that migrate through the deep channel just beyond the island's reef from June to September. Others head straight to Vamizi for its worldclass deep-sea fishing and diving.

Just off the island, a monolithic peak known as Neptune's arm rises from the deep blue to just a few yards below the surface, offering steep walls of pristine coral and a huge variety of tropical fish such as giant kingfish, batfish, grouper and reef sharks.

Some, like snapper, can be seen in shoals of 1,000 strong. Other dive sites offer regular encounters with turtles, barracudas, parrotfish and eagle rays.



Making fiends: Ana and Alexis land an enormous kingfish

I had never been deep-sea fishing before either, so when Ana and Alexis, a honeymoon couple, invited me to join them on their half-day charter, I decided to give it a go. Soon after we left the reef and started bobbing about in the ocean, Ana got nervous and kept asking Stewart for guarantees that we were not in danger of capsizing and becoming shark food.

But as soon as she caught her first fish she was, well, hooked, and just wanted to catch something bigger and bigger. She soon did. She seemed to confirm Stewart's observation about women and fishing.

When Ana almost exploded with joy after landing a giant wahoo almost as big as she was, Alexis turned to me and said: 'Now the honeymoon is perfect.'

After catching a fine 34lb kingfish, Alexis insisted I should try. I spent the next hour-and-a-half duelling with some unseen monster of the deep at the other end of my line. At one point, it fought so hard it took back all the line. I tried to give up, but Stewart would have none of it: 'This is what fishing is all about - you have to win.'

I returned to the fight until I'd nothing left to give. Ana eagerly took my rod and the glory of eventually landing a massive 110lb giant kingfish. It was not far off the Indian Ocean record of 63 kilos (around 130lb). Stewart managed to hold it up long enough for us to pose for photos, then we returned it to the ocean.

Vamizi has a dhow that can be booked by guests for a romantic sunset cruise. These are complimentary, as are snorkelling trips, picnics, sea-kayaking and windsurfing.



Sail away: Traditional dhows dot the historic harbour at Dar

Deep-sea fishing, diving and whale-watching trips all have a price, as do the spa treatments and champagne. Other drinks, including anything from your mini bar, wine with meals and cocktails are part of the full-board package.

Most of the staff speak Portuguese. Their relaxed manner and easy smiles bring an element of Brazilian cool to the island, as do the sensational caipirinhas served in the bar.

I sandwiched my time on Vamizi between overnight stays in Dar es Salaam.

These slices of urban Africa were the perfect complement to the isolation and quiet of island life. Far from being an inconvenient stopover, Dar offers a chance to experience one of the most captivating cities in Africa.

The historic harbour is busy with dhows that supply the frenetic fish market, and Lutheran churches and Hansel and Gretel-style cottages are quirky remnants of the city's Germanic colonial past.

There are art galleries, stylish cafes, and lively music venues. And best of all there's the Oyster Bay Hotel, a boutique hotel that is arguably the best in all of Africa.

Travel Facts

The Ultimate Travel Company (020 7386 4646, www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk) offers four nights all inclusive at Vamizi Lodge, two nights' full board at the Oyster Bay, return flights to Dar es Salaam on Kenya Airways and charter flight connections to Vamizi Island from £3,549 per person. A flat bed service is available for an extra £1,650.

Places:

[Mozambique](#),
[Africa](#),
[Indian Ocean](#)

Book your travel **CALL 0808 230 1002**

[Holidays](#)
[Hotels](#)
[Flights](#)
[City Breaks](#)

Comments (0)

Top Travel Promotions



[TravelMail has teamed up with Cunard to offer one lucky winner and a guest a wonderful £4,000 voyage on the new Queen Elizabeth. Enter Now](#)



[Introducing the Thomas Cook Style Collection, a unique selection of luxury hotels and villas. Enter Now](#)



[Discover this extraordinary corner of Asia, where East meets West with a luxury four-night city break... Enter Now](#)

LATEST TRAVEL NEWS

- [Amsterdam images show city in two lights](#)
- [New York offers UK tourists bargain deals](#)
- [Isle of Man ferry union threatens protests](#)
- [US passenger tells security 'don't touch my junk'](#)
- [London more attractive than Paris...say French!](#)
- [Body scanners 'just as likely to kill as bombs'](#)
- [Stonehenge project to get £10m Lottery boost](#)