

MOZAMBIQUE

DIVING, SNORKELLING & ISLAND-HOPPING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

On the tiny, private island of Medjumbe, your choices are very simple. If you like the view from your hammock to include blue sky, sparkling sea, white sand and nothing else, you'll love it. And Medjumbe delivers.

This precious sliver of paradise lies in the Archipelago das Quirimbas, a string of perfect Indian Ocean hideaways, well over 1,200 miles north-east of the Mozambican capital Maputo.

This part of northern Mozambique is heaven for divers and snorkellers. Medjumbe's comfortable lodge has access to superb coral reefs, some of which have yet to be fully explored. "One of our dive sites is named after a couple who stayed here, and helped us discover it," says my scuba instructor, as I pull on a mask and fins.

Fifteen metres below the glossy ocean surface, I swim through clouds of goatfish and snappers, and admire intricate coral formations. Brightly striped clownfish hover above translucent anemones and a guineafowl moray pops its head out of a crevice. When a turtle joins the busy scene, I can hardly believe my luck.

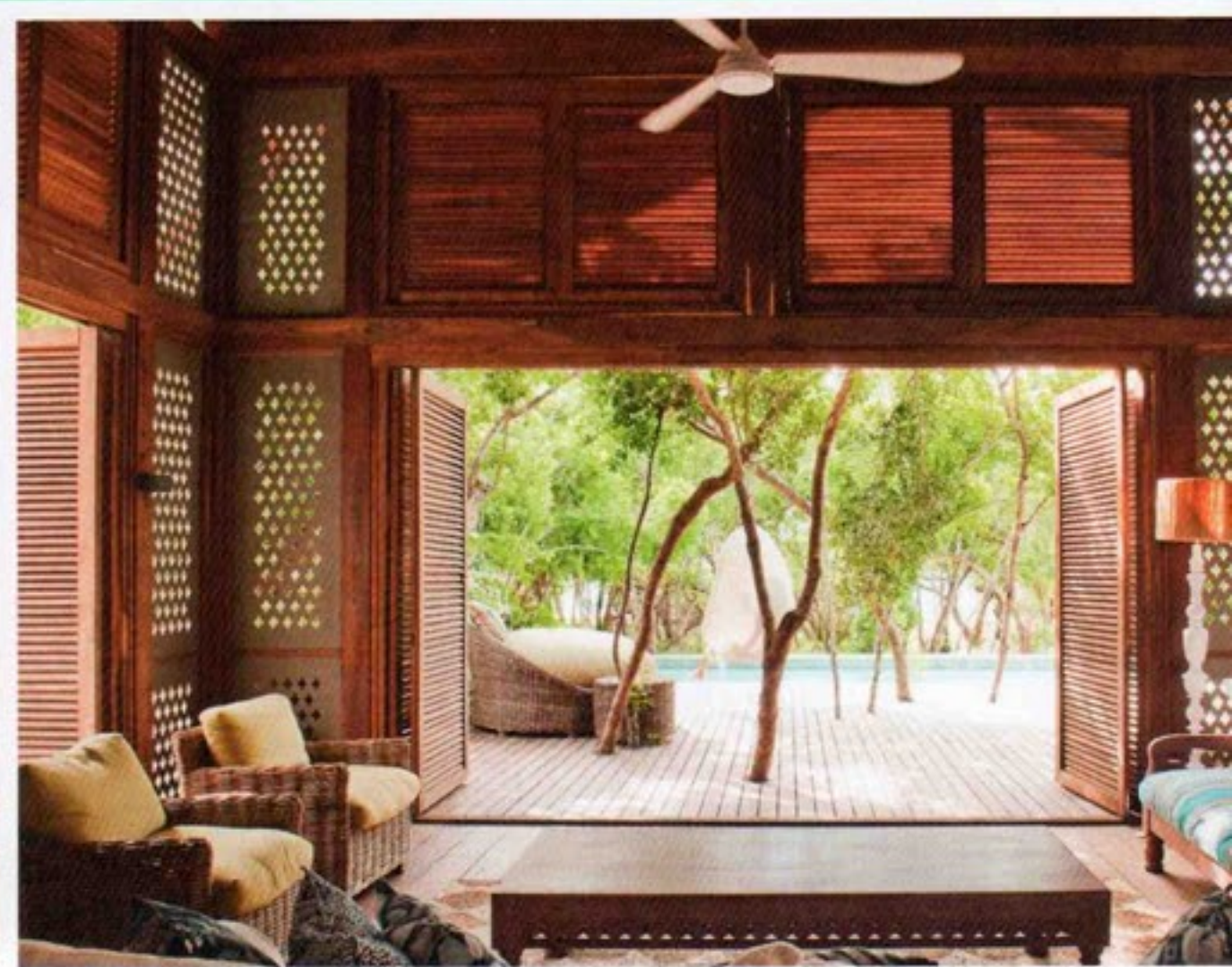
To explore the other Quirimbas islands, you can hop aboard a light plane or, romantically, sail away in a traditional dhow. Vamizi, to the north, is another divers' favourite, with an effortlessly stylish, castaway atmosphere and vast, luxurious rooms along a squeaky-clean beach.

Like Medjumbe, it's particularly popular with honeymooners. Over lunch I chat to couples overjoyed to be recharging their batteries in the sun after weeks of fretting over wedding flowers and favours.

My stay on Vamizi rewards me with sightings of manta rays, whales and more nudibranchs (mollusks) than I can count. But there's more to this idyll than sand, sea and scuba. The lodge, like many of the enterprises in the area, has strong responsible tourism credentials.

It was founded with conservation and community development in mind, and the 1,000 or so Mwani people who live on the island benefit directly from the presence of tourists through employment, trading opportunities and social welfare projects.

medjumbe.com vamizi.com



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