

About Mafia



IN BRIEF

- Located 35 minutes by air from Dar es Salaam, 45 minutes from Zanzibar and Selous Game Reserve
- The name Mafia probably derives from Arabic or Swahili
- Mafia was a major trading post for centuries
- 400 species of fish found
- The rare dugong, the most threatened mammal in Africa is thought to survive in Mafia
- Home to the rare Comoros Flying Fox or fruit bat

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Mafia Island is the largest of a small archipelago of islands and atolls and is truly a paradise in the Indian Ocean. It is the southern most of three islands (Pemba & Zanzibar) located off the coast of Tanzania, 25kms from the mainland and 130kms from Dar es Salaam, it is reachable by light aircraft in 35 minutes or 45 minutes from Zanzibar and the Selous Game Reserve.

The resident population of 40,000 are mainly fishermen or smallholder farmers that grow coconut, paw-paw, rice and cassava. The islanders are friendly and welcoming and the atmosphere relaxed and laid-back. The dominant religion is moderate Islam and both Christians and Muslims live in peace and harmony.

As the island is located close to the equator, the air and sea temperatures remain warm all year round. The hottest months are from October to March, followed by a rainy season from April to June. The coolest months are from July to September. The name Mafia probably derives from the Arabic morfiyeh, meaning "group" or "archipelago", or from the Swahili mahali pa afya, meaning "a healthy dwelling-place". Mafia has a rich history, going back over 2,000 years. It was the most important trading post of Shirazi influence between the 12th and 15th centuries AD. It has occupied a key position in the East African trading routes between Kilwa and Zanzibar for centuries and ruins from these times can be visited on Chole and Juani islands. In more modern times, Mafia was the base used by British forces in World War I, when in 1915, they assembled their aerial forces to scout for the German battleship, Königsberg, which was wrecking havoc with British shipping, and was hiding out under thick foliage in the nearby Rufiji Delta.

Today Mafia is known as a beautiful Indian Ocean tropical resort that is famous for deep sea fishing and scuba diving. Aquatic life is abundant and the coral gardens are pristine due to the protection of the Mafia Island Marine Park. The park is located between the Rufiji River delta to the west and the open Indian Ocean to the east. The dual influences of the river and the sea have combined to create a rich and exceptional biodiversity with unique landscapes under the sea and on dry land. The underwater life is diverse and spectacular with over 400 species of fish and 48 genera of hard coral - a scuba divers paradise! The wealth of flora and fauna is not only found undersea, there are over 160 species of bird, amphibian, reptiles and the rare Comoros Flying Fox, or fruit bat found only on Mafia and the Comoro Islands. The vegetation ranges from bush and baobabs to palms, fruit trees and mangrove.

It is a unique and perfect destination as part of a safari package or simply a place to unwind and get away from the daily, modern and busy world.