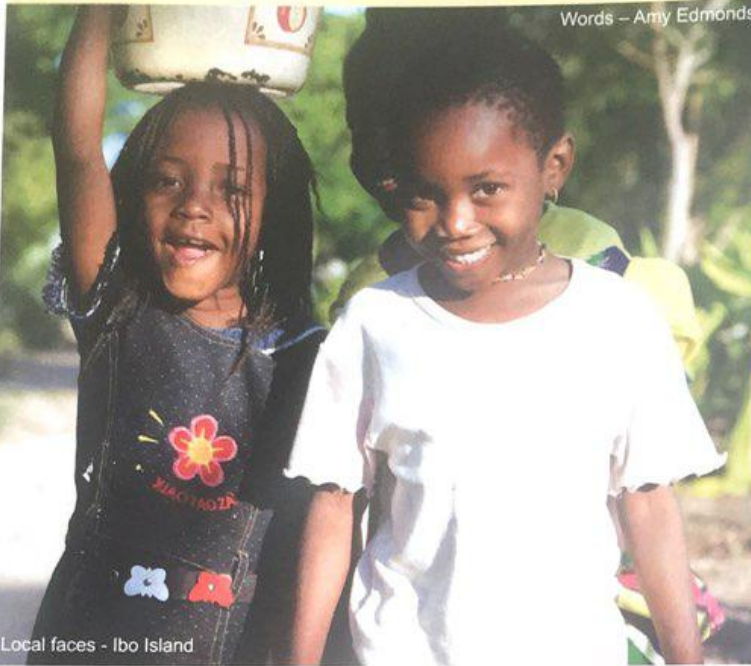


The Quirimbas Archipelago

Words – Amy Edmonds



Local faces - Ibo Island

*Dream the
Responsible
Dream*

Off Moçambique's most northern stretch of coast lies a strand of emerald islands known as the Quirimbas Archipelago. For centuries, the arresting quality of these islands has enslaved the imagination of many a traveller. Ancient cartographers charted this string of idyllic coral islands as *Ilhas do Cabo Delgado*. Diogo do Couto, a chronicler of the Portuguese colony listed nine islands in the group. Today, there are twenty-seven islands in the archipelago which was added to UNESCO's World Heritage tentative List in 2008.



Ibo Island town scene

The archipelago's turbulent past served as a catalyst in creating some great examples of responsible tourism on our planet today. The colourful history of the area can be likened to a rich tapestry; woven from many threads such as trader's ambition, explorer's curiosity, politician's power struggles and clergymen's zeal. The silver thread of Neptune's bountiful spirit is a constant one and shines brightly against this rich background that is Moçambique's social fabric.

This eye-catching quality of the archipelago has caught the attention of many over time. In the fifteenth century, it was frequented by pirates, politicians and priests. The archipelago became famous for its ivory, turtle and cowrie shell stocks (cowrie shells were used as a currency in India) and infamous for its roaring slave trade, these extended ellipses of landmasses soon became a favoured stop for contraband traders in mid-to late 18th century.

Fort Saa Joao Batista - Ibo Island Lodge



Sources of food for trade were mana, a form of edible gum from the Tamarisk tree, palm groves, coconut, rice, millet and fresh water which has all but dried up on many of the islands today. No fresh water meant the demise of the Anopheles mosquito, responsible for spreading the scourge that is malaria. Cattle and goats could also be farmed on the islands, providing a good source of fresh meat to residents and passing traders.

An area steeped in beauty of a rare and resilient sort, the islands have weathered their share of storms, both natural and man-made. One such political storm culminated in the capture of Mombasa's World Heritage site, Fort Jesus in 1698. The brutal raids from Madagascan pirates hampered the prosperity of the Cabo Delgado archipelago in early 19th Century. In 1773, Ibo island was made the capital city of the region and all traders were required by law to pass through this port prior to engaging in any trade transactions with the other islands. This saw the trade route flourish. To this day, the Kuelo Siriwaia festival marks this occasion each year on 25 June on Ibo Island.

Due to diminishing fresh water supplies, the islands slowly became depopulated and the eager traders began giving these Maluane Islands a wider berth. As the trading ships were blown away by the prevailing monsoon trade winds, they cut new trading routes. Word on the water spread like wild fire. Before long, the Quirimbas archipelago became a deserted series of ports, haunted by the memories of their heyday. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise. The area remained largely untouched by mainstream fishing and industry and an island paradise was born. Like a band of bereft sirens abandoned by their cherished sailors bound for fairer seas, the Quirimbas Archipelago's

lonely call travelled across the deep blue Indian Ocean, hoping that someday their cry for companionship would be answered.

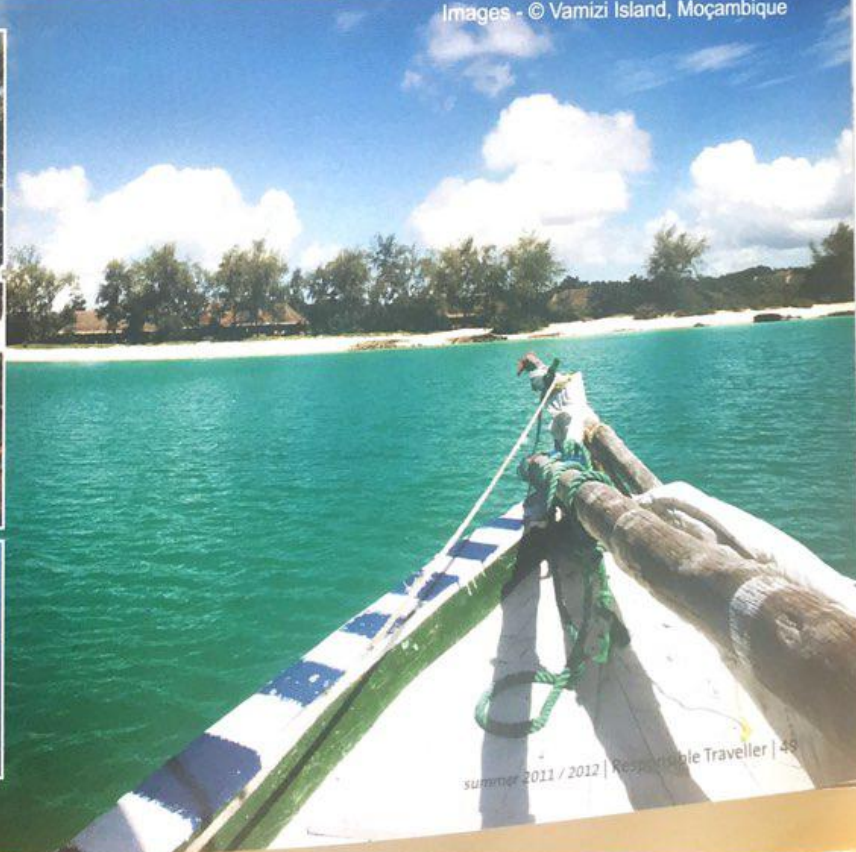
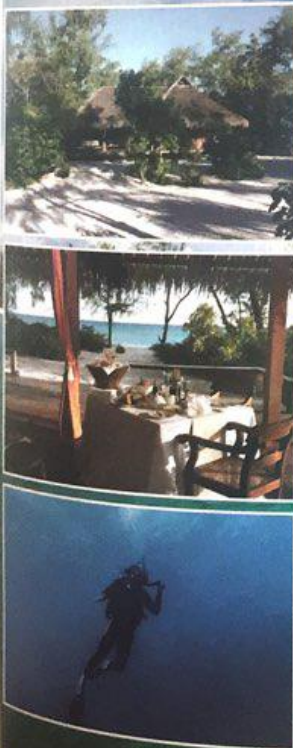
Quilalea, Vamizi, Ibo and Matemo- the exotic names roll off the tongue in a sweet, unhurried way. Saying them allows you a taste of one of the ancient local languages, Ki-Mane, a close relative of Ki-Swahili. Today, these islands are home to high yield, low impact responsible tourism, bearing reference to their exotic island namesakes. All these islands are accessed via the seaside town of Pemba which is the modern day capital of Cabo Delgado and also the gateway to the Quirimbas Archipelago.

Vamizi

Vamizi Island Lodge is accessed via a scenic light charter flight which, 50 minutes later, deposits you on the shores of a deserted coral island surrounded by a watery wonderland. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Vamizi Island Lodge and the local fishermen of the area launched the Vamizi Project in April 2011. The aim of the project is to try to remedy the factors which are impacting negatively on the Maluane Islands' (Vamizi, Rongui, Tecomaji and Metundu) fragile ecosystems namely, the decimation of fish stocks due to irresponsible fishing practices by transient trawlers, erosion of Vamizi's dunes which threaten to destroy the breeding grounds of the endangered green turtle, pollution from the mainland, the possible effects of oil and gas exploitation and climate change.

British Conservation Manager, Oliver Nelson and Portuguese Conservation Science Officer, Isabel da Silva is WWF's dedicated conservation team based on the island. They aim to establish this area as a Protected Landscape incorporating sanctuaries and recreational areas with cooperative community management. By combining modern day science with the locals' shared knowledge of the age-old sustainable fishing customs, they are making great progress. With the help of WWF's Pemba based Technical Advisor, Mark Hoekstra, their ultimate goal is to get the buy-in of local government to have this area gazetted as a Marine Sanctuary. This would protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area's marine and terrestrial natural resources. www.vamizi.com

Images - © Vamizi Island, Moçambique





Guludo

Guludo Beach Lodge is 25 kilometers from Ibo Island and access is either by light aircraft from Pemba or by speedboat which is a 40 minute journey depending on sea conditions. If arriving by boat, a soft landing on the beach means wading ankle deep through clear, tropical water to meet your smiling hosts on the beach. This is Robinson Crusoe style at its responsible best! Neal & Amy Carter-James founded Guludo Beach Lodge in 2003. They chose Guludo due to the amazing tourism potential. They also established the NEMA Foundation, an NGO trust, in 2006 as a vessel to carry out their dream of empowering the 12 local communities with a combined population of 16,500. Nema is the word for joy in Ki-Mwani. They wanted to partner with the villages to alleviate the abject poverty of the area. Projects are designed and implemented through a network of village leaders and volunteers and only start once the community is 100% committed. They work in six main areas; health, water, education, enterprise, agriculture and conservation. Examples of some of NEMA's activities and achievements include feeding 800 children one nutritious school meal every day, providing clean water for over 12,000 people from 30 water points, providing over 7,000 mosquito nets to mothers of young children, supporting over 160 students with secondary school scholarships, providing nutrition training to nearly 9,000 people and the construction of two primary schools.

The lodge currently employs 46 local members of staff from Guludo, Naunde, Ningaia, and Lumwama Villages. Over the years, the lodge has won many well respected international travel awards such as the 2011 Tourism for Tomorrow award in the Community Benefit category. A minimum of 5% of all accommodation revenue generated by the lodge is donated directly to the NEMA Foundation. Similarly, since all NEMA's overheads are guaranteed to be covered,

Guludo - Rolias Island



Sablina Sablina



Guludo Island family

the NEMA Foundation can promise that 100% of every donation will go directly to projects.

Calvin Sturridge, General Manager of NEMA Foundation has been based at Guludo since August 2010 after two years at UNICEF and undertaking her Masters at SOAS in London. She shares a 'real-life' story of how NEMA Foundation has reached a member of the local community, Sablina Sablina (his first and last names are the same). Sablina lives in Naunde village with seven other siblings and an elderly aunt. The children's parents died from HIV some years ago and the family had been living in real hardship ever since. In 2010, Nema launched its Orphaned and Vulnerable Children project in Naunde village. Run by Rema Salimo (one of our community outreach workers) this project provides health, educational, financial and legal support to nearly 150 orphaned and vulnerable children in Naunde. For example, during her daily visits to the children, Rema ensures that the children are in good health and that they are going to school regularly. Rema also provides enterprise opportunities to the children; they make colourful balls out of material, which we then purchase and use to make bright door hangings and cushion decorations at Guludo Beach Lodge.

NEMA has also recruited Sablina as an after-school administrative assistant. After training him up in Excel and Word, Sablina now inputs all NEMA's project surveys and data collection. 'Sablina now earns a hearty lunch and a monthly salary, which he is using to buy a bicycle for himself and clothes and food for his family.' www.guludo.com

Ibo Island

A 25 minute light charter hop from Pemba gets you to historic Ibo Island. Owners of Ibo Island Lodge, Kevin and Fiona Record stumbled upon this diamond in the rough per chance in 1993 whilst leading a charity trans-Africa expedition filmed by the BBC. Kevin recalls how a much needed break from the expedition changed the course of their lives forever. The dream of restoring the ancient Bela Vista villa to its former glory and creating a sustainable, upmarket eco-retreat has been a labour of love. The project has been welcomed by the locals who have blossomed under the mentorship of Kevin, Fiona and James Ashton, Fiona's brother.



Guludo Banda



Bedroom interior - Ibo Island Lodge

The dedicated team at Ibo Island Lodge go to great lengths to ensure a minimal carbon footprint of the lodge, which is a vital part of the design and water and energy conservation measures are in place. The vegetable garden supplies half of guest's fresh produce requirements and they have started a tree planting program of around eighty trees annually. Coconut husks are used to heat hot water for staff ablutions.

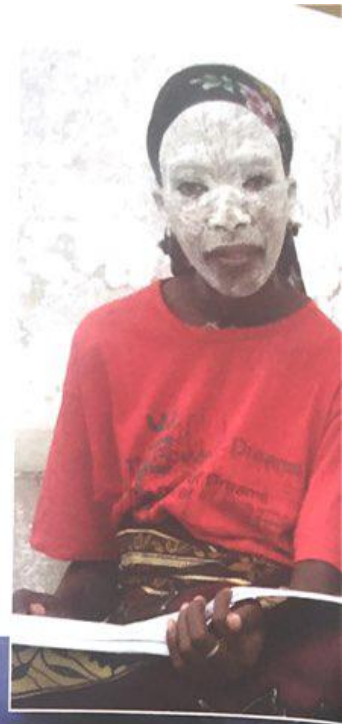
Ibo Island Lodge has been open since December 2006 and enjoys great occupancies. Rabia Cadre (36) is one of the housekeepers at Ibo Island Lodge who formed part of the original building team and has worked here for six years. She is married with four children and is from Ritutu village on Ibo Island. We asked Rabia about why she loves her job, what her take on tourism on Ibo Island is and what her dreams are. She replied, 'Tourism is very important because it allows people to earn money. Without tourism there would be no jobs and no-one to buy the Ibo coffee and the silver. It is important for me to earn money so that my family can study and have a better future. I have three children at school. I must also support my mother. My dream of travelling on an airplane came true. It was my first time on a plane but I wasn't scared – it was very beautiful. Now I hope to travel outside Moçambique on an airplane!'

The culture of the somewhat 4000 inhabitants of Ibo Island is almost entirely Muslim due to the strong Arab influences in Moçambique's history. The people of Ibo are Ki-Mwani speaking, meaning 'the language spoken by four peoples - namely Swahili, Jawa, Nyanga, and Macua. Up to 20 percent of the population of Ibo are also able to speak Portuguese, Moçambique's official language. Tribal customs are still respected and practiced daily. Conservation of their marine resources is also of paramount importance. Only 10% of the island's current population enjoyed formal employment before Ibo Island Lodge was built.

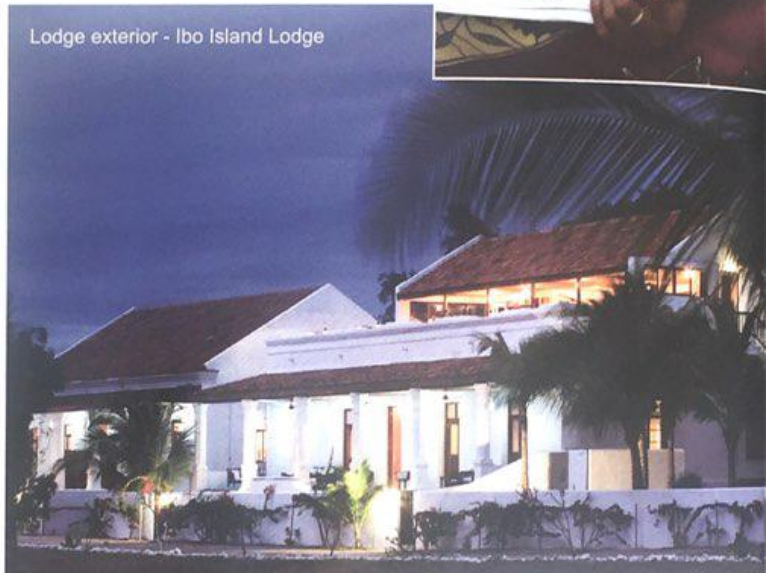
The guided tours of the old and new villages offer valuable insight into local island living. You may have the privilege of meeting 81-year old Joao Baptista, one of the most inspiring Ibo islanders. A trip to the meet the famous silversmiths of Ibo should feature near the top of your bucket list. Some of the jewellers work from the antique star-shaped Sao Joao Fort or from the premises at Ibo Island Lodge. They produce beautiful, intricately designed jewellery by hand. Purchasing these distinctive trinkets boosts the local economy and will become one of your most greatly admired souvenirs. Ibo Island Lodge is as unique as its island namesake and has much to offer the responsible traveller.

www.iboisland.com

Tourism has breathed new life into the Quirimbas Archipelago. The people of Moçambique are known for their friendly, peaceful and hospitable nature. The country has been described by the Moçambican writer Mia Couto as 'a veranda that overlooks the Indian Ocean', truly an apt description of this beautiful coastline which is also home to the breath-taking archipelago. The forgiving sirens of the Quirimbas Archipelago are delighted to welcome travellers with open arms once more. Here is where worn out urban dwellers can rest their weary souls on sun drenched beaches, dine at Neptune's banquet and let all their cares be washed away by the crystal clear waters, thereby investing in a firm future of responsible tourism in the Quirimbas.



Lodge exterior - Ibo Island Lodge



Ibo Lodge swimming pool