

# Opportunities and attractions

## INTERVIEW WITH HE FERNANDO SUMBANA

MINISTER OF TOURISM, REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE



**FERNANDO SUMBANA** has held the tourism portfolio since 2000. He graduated in Economics with an Honours Degree from Eduardo Mondlane University in 1981, and in 1989 earned a Masters Degree in International Business Administration. Throughout his career he has held several senior positions in government and state institutions, negotiating trade and investment agreements, and has been awarded a Diploma of Honour for his services to the Government of Mozambique.

### **What does the international community have to offer Mozambique, in terms of tourism?**

From a tourism perspective, we are looking for two things: investment in our growing tourism industry; and of course more visitors. Our tourism sector is growing fast and there are many opportunities at all levels. But what we are particularly keen to discuss with investors is prime infrastructure, by that I mean investment in roads, water and electricity. We are taking a public-private-partnership approach to this, whereby companies that build this kind of infrastructure can transfer it very quickly once built. In terms of hotels, there is demand for all kinds of hotels, from high end, five star resorts, boutique hotels, and right through to eco and sustainable projects. Tourism has the potential to create many jobs, directly and indirectly. As regards visitors, we invite British people to come to Mozambique. Ours is a country with a long tradition of welcoming visitors, particularly from Europe.

### **What are the main challenges to the further development of your tourism industry?**

There are two main issues that we must address: branding and access. In terms of branding, we have launched a strategy to attract more visitors from Europe. Over the last decade we have successfully

attracted high-end visitors from South Africa: in 2000 we had around 250,000 visitors a year; that figure is now 2.4 million. So we have been able to develop the basis for an industry. Now our goal is to raise Mozambique's profile internationally, and we are doing this by attending tourism fairs in Europe. We are talking to the main package suppliers in Italy, for example. We have also put into place the legal framework to allow tour companies to come here.

This leads us to the question of access. Getting to the islands, say, for visitors from Europe, means either flying into Maputo, or maybe from South Africa or Tanzania. But we understand that we have to increase the number of flights, and make it easier and quicker for people to get to the areas that we are developing for tourism. As said, we want to attract more British people, particularly the kind of visitors who currently go to Botswana or Kenya, or South Africa to look at big game, for example.

### **You mentioned the question of branding. What would you like people to associate Mozambique with? What should come to mind when travellers think about Mozambique?**

Branding is something that takes time, and requires careful marketing. We have everything here. We have some of the best beaches in the world,



Mozambique has 2,500km of coastline - a significant asset for tourism

unspoiled beaches. We have great weather. We have fantastic diving here, with all the main species people want to see: sharks, whales, rays. Inland we have wild animals, and they are not behind fences, in parks. They are in their natural habitat. So those are two aspects that other countries in the region have been able to successfully market. I would also point to what we might call the feelgood factor. Mozambicans are happy people, welcoming, open, friendly. This is a peaceful country where there are no racial, ethnic, or social tensions, where different cultures live in peace. I would like people to think of Mozambique as somewhere that is in harmony.

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**Something else that should appeal to Europeans is Mozambique's historical and cultural heritage. There is some wonderful architecture here from the colonial period.**

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You are right, and this is something that we have probably been slow to capitalise on. We now understand that our colonial heritage is an asset, in terms of architecture at least. Mozambique Island is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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**Please explain about ongoing developments in infrastructure in the tourism sector.**

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Aside from developing hotel infrastructure for holiday visitors, with the discovery of gas, and the expansion of the coal industry, there is also growing demand for business-oriented hotels in some areas of the country. We have attracted some of the big players, such as Radisson, and are talking to other large chains, such as Hilton. But there are plenty of opportunities for smaller companies as well. In the holiday sector, as I said, there is demand for a wide

range of accommodation, but I think that from the perspective of smaller investors, getting involved in an eco or sustainable project is very attractive. We are also building new resorts along the coast.

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**You are also improving the airport network...**

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Yes, over the next three years, we are investing in the rehabilitation and modernisation of the airports of Maputo, Pemba, Nacala and Tete. This is a central part of our tourism strategy. We know that the demand is there: for example, the Portuguese carrier TAP could double the number of flights here but they lack planes. And flights to South Africa are full. We believe that with these new airports we will be able to attract international companies to come here direct from Europe.

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**And the cruise ship sector?**


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This is a sector that has huge potential. We are already attracting cruise ships from South Africa. We are talking to the main players in the sector to increase the number of stopovers. They are also interested in getting involved directly to build resorts here so that they can bring passengers in for a week, say. This will require us to improve skills and training for people in our tourism sector, and will create new jobs.

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**What do you hope to get out of your visit to London?**

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This visit is a fantastic opportunity to meet the key people in the travel and infrastructure markets that we need to attract to come to Mozambique. I hope to encourage them to come to Mozambique so that they can see first hand the opportunities that we have here, and also so that they can see that both the demand and the potential for a thriving tourism industry exists. 

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Mozambique is home to over 20,000 elephants (National Census of Wildlife 2008)