

## 48 Hours in Maputo



Ravaged by decades of civil war, with little more than dilapidated buildings and petty criminals on offer, Maputo has long been regarded as little more than an overnight stop on the way to the tropical beaches in the north of Mozambique.

However, the city is fast coming into its own and is now considered an ideal destination for an exotic weekend adventure. Old buildings have been

restored, new buildings are going up at an alarming rate and business is booming, and still retains a distinctly Mozambican charm. In a single weekend you can explore the cultural heritage of the city, relax on beautiful Inhaca Island, gorge yourself on the famous Mozambican prawns and – if you’re brave enough – venture into the legendary Mercado Xipamanine. Here’s our guide to getting the most out of 48 hours in Maputo...

### *For the culturally inclined...*

#### **Cathedral of Nossa Senhora da Conceicao**

Maputo’s famous cathedral, built in 1944 in dedication to ‘Our Lady of Conception’, is situated in Independence Square at the top of Av Samora Machel. Keep an eye out for the strong Portuguese Catholic influence in the awe-inspiring stained-glass windows and elaborate interior.

#### **Train Station on Praca Trabalhadores**

While train stations are usually a means to an end rather than a sightseeing destination, this particular train station is definitely worth a visit. The beautifully domed station was built in 1910 by Gustav Eiffel (he of the tower fame) and is considered to be one of the most beautiful train stations in the world.

Keep an eye out at the entrance to the station for the curious monument to the soldiers killed in the Great War (1914-1918). The stone statue, which depicts a woman killing a cobra in a pot of boiling porridge, is the work of the Portuguese sculptor Rui Gameiro and simultaneously honours the fallen soldiers and a local woman who rid her village of a deadly cobra. Better than another cenotaph I guess!

#### **Casa de Ferro**

Ever heard the saying ‘people who live in the tropics shouldn’t build iron houses’?

Nope? Neither had old Gustav when he came up with the highly impractical Casa de Ferro (Iron House), which he designed as a residence for the governor of the Portuguese colony. Unfortunately the prefabricated iron building became (unsurprisingly!) unbearably hot under the African sun and the governor couldn't live there.

### **Jardim Tunduru**

Behind the Casa de Ferro lie the Jardim Tunduru (botanical gardens). At times a little overgrown, these beautiful gardens, which were designed in 1885 by the English gardener Thomas Honney, provide welcome shade on a hot steamy afternoon. Honney also designed similar gardens for the Sultan of Turkey and the King of Greece. At the entrance to the gardens you will find a statue of Mozambique's first president — Samora Machel.

### *Potter around a museum...*

#### **Museum of the Revolution**

Situated on Av 24 Julho, this museum recounts the violent struggle against Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique. The history is fascinating, but be warned that all of the captions and texts are in Portuguese.

#### **The National Museum of Art**

Tucked away at 1233 Av Ho Chi Minh, the National Museum of Art houses an extensive collection of paintings and sculptures by famous Mozambican artists. The exhibitions include works by Chissano, Malangatana, and Naguib, along with a variety of temporary exhibitions.

#### **The Natural History Museum**

The Natural History Museum, which is housed in a beautifully restored colonial building, is situated near the Hotel Cardoso. While the building is definitely worth going to see, the museum displays will appeal to a rather specific audience — its main attractions are a large shark collection and a collection of elephant fetuses, showing the stages of development during gestation. Interesting...

### *Do some shopping*

#### **Mercado Xipamanine (Rua dos Imaos Roby)**

Don't visit the Mercado Xipamanine — the largest market in Mozambique — expecting to find the usual selection of counterfeit trainers and plastic junk. Xipamanine is known far and wide as the place to stock up on capulanas (traditional multi-purpose cloth worn by women) and for its traditional medicine (curandeiros) section, where you can take your pick from animal parts, herbs and lucky potions.



### **Saturday Craft Market (Praça 25 do Junho)**

Taking dried herbs and animals back through customs could be interesting, so for a few souvenirs make sure you drop by the Saturday Craft Market. Here you'll find a wide-selection of handcrafts from carvings and jewellery to paintings and batiks. As the name suggests, it's only open on Saturdays, so make sure to work this into your itinerary.

### **Central Market (Av 25 de Setembro)**

Almost anything can be found at the Central Market: fresh fruit, veggies, curios, a steady supply of pickpockets... make sure your belongings are safely stashed on your person and don't flash too much money around.

### *Take a trip...*



### **Inhaca Island**

Get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and relax on one of Mozambique's many unspoilt beaches. The coral reefs around the island are easily accessed from the shore and abound with a variety of tropical fish. The island is also home over two hundred bird species as well as a biological museum and research centre.

If you can't tear yourself away from the beach, just check yourself into the comfortable Inhaca Lodge. A luxury

ferry runs daily from Maputo to Inhaca Island, which is about 35 kilometres offshore. You can catch the ferry at the bottom of Av Samora Machel (from the Porto de Pesca).

### **Catembe**

If you wish to take a shorter trip or are on a bit of a budget, Catembe is just across Maputo Bay. Ferries leave fairly often (about every two hours), the trip is short (no longer than fifteen minutes) and very cheap. Once you reach the island, you can pop into

one of the many little restaurants, munch on some prawns and drink a couple of icy Dos M beers.

*Enjoy the local flavour...*

**Av Julius Nyerere**

This street (just south of the well-known Polana Hotel) is the best in town for restaurants and cafes. You'll find anything from peri-peri chicken, seafood and spicy Indian food to coffee shops and delicatessens selling pastries.

**Feira Popular**

This quaint and festive fairground can be found on Av 25 de Setembro. The restaurants here tend to offer very good value for money and if you really aren't stomaching the tastes that are Maputo, you could always cross the road and go to one of the many South African fast food joints that have sprung up in the capital.

For a more local flavour, try out either Restuarante Escoriao or O Coqueiro, which both have great Mozambican and Portuguese dishes. Escoria has a huge menu, a good wine list and although upmarket is not too pricey.

So, there you have it — 48 hours jam-packed full of culture, history, nature, fun and surprises...

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