
People of Ibo Island:

Ibo is a living, breathing vibrant island and one of the most unique aspects of staying with us is the opportunity to really understand Mozambique's culture and heritage - a real African culture that has not been dressed up for tourism. At Ibo Island Lodge you can be as much of a part of the rhythm and community as you feel comfortable with.

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The people of Ibo are Kimwani speaking. Kimwani is a language that is closely related to Swahili and means '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. The community of Ibo Island is approximately 3500 people strong, and traditionally they reside in three distinct regions of Ibo which support approximately a total of 600 dwellings. They are: **Bairro Cimento** - also known locally as the formal or Stone Town, **Bairro Cumuamba** and **Bairro Rituto** which are outlining streets and villages that go to make up the districts on the outskirts of the Stone town.

A typical day for the community on Ibo:

Most days start very early for the community as they take advantage of the cooler temperatures. Happy children are usually out to play or swim before school starts and lives revolve around the tides rather than the time.

They say a woman's work is never done and this is particularly applicable to Mozambique women. They rise early to sweep the areas around their houses and get going with the household chores of drawing water from the wells for washing and cooking. They also tend to their *maschamba's* (gardens) back breaking work in the heat of the sun, where they grow their staple traditional Mozambique foods: cassava, sweet potato, tomato, paw paw, pineapple and coconut. Cassava is called *mandioca* in Portuguese and the translation of its name, roughly means "the all-sufficient." Indeed on Ibo, this valuable food source can be baked, dried in the sun, and mashed with water or coconut milk to form a porridge. Cassava leaves are also often pounded with cashew or peanuts to make a delicious traditional Mozambique food and delicacy that has the consistency and taste of what we like to describe as an 'Ibo inspired pesto'. On Ibo this dish is called *Matapas* and its really popular with community and guests alike!

Many men on Ibo are subsistence fishermen or boat builders. They are famous for their beautiful physiques benefiting from a diet of fresh fish and rice and the physical strength it takes to sail out to sea in traditional dhows or canoes for days on end. It is not uncommon for these fishermen to fight and land game fish on hand held lines bigger than their own canoes! Fishermen come back to Ibo on the incoming tides and there are several informal fish markets at the old harbour point on Ibo where women purchase for the evening meals. Mozambique traditional food often consists of fresh fish or seafood, grilled or roasted over a fire and served with traditional coconut rice -

another Mozambique food tradition that entails rinsing the rice at least 3 times thoroughly, then steaming lightly in coconut milk, and then baking in a pot over the fire. Ibo Island Lodge guests enjoy a refined menu that combines the best of local and traditional foods with fresh seafood.

Mozambique Culture and religious practises:

The majority of the people on Ibo are of the Muani tribe but it is still possible to find some members of Macua and Makonde groups, which are two tribes that are prevalent in northern Mozambique. Mozambique's history has ensured that cultures have met and mingled and the people are a blend of European, Indian, Arabic and Chinese. During the Portuguese period, many Portuguese colonists intermarried with local people. These mixed race individuals were known as 'muzungos' and today there are still islanders on Ibo who are descendants of these muzungo people. Mozambique religion is varied, with the people of Ibo being 99% of Muslim faith, and this is because of the strong Arab influences in Mozambique history. In addition many of the islanders still respect and practice some of the old Mozambique tribal customs and tribal religions.

Mozambique Ceremonial occasions:

Traditional ceremonies in Mozambique are a core part of the culture and heritage. On Ibo island rites of initiation, weddings, and burials generally involve Mozambican traditional dancing, singing and drumming that often continues throughout the night. Traditional food in Mozambique is a big part of many celebrations. It is customary to serve a meal at ceremonies, rituals, and other social gatherings. Whilst ceremonial occasions often entail large feasts, the food served is usually the same as what is eaten everyday just in much larger quantities.

Traditional medicine and superstition

Traditional healers in northern Mozambique are known locally as **curandeiros** and they have high standing in the community and are an important part of the traditional culture on Ibo. It is believed that different curandeiros have different powers, so it is extremely important to choose the correct healer for the specific problem! It is also believed that curandeiros have the ability to communicate with the ancient spirits from Ibo who can then advise from the spirit world with regards to possible diseases or problems that the patients may be experiencing. Many times the medication that the curandeiro will prescribe is made from roots of trees, or collected from the mangroves which are believed to have many healing powers. Curandeiro use is widely used on Ibo Island and you may see people wearing little pouches around their necks which show that they have consulted a curandeiro who has made a secret and unique medication to ward off disease, or give good fortune.

Mozambique Traditional clothing

The brightly coloured **capulana** is the traditional cloth that Mozambican women wear as wrap around skirts. Traditionally on Ibo it is thought that women should not buy their own capulanas with men choosing and purchasing the cloths for their women. If a woman owns many capulanas it is a symbol of affluence and status.

Muciro Face painting

Women on Ibo have been painting their faces known as **Muciro painting** in a thick white cream for centuries.

The cream is extracted from an indigenous plant called **Kipalo** which is cut in the bush, and left to

dry in the sun for five days. It is then crushed on a stone with a little water and applied to the face with help of a traditional brush hand made from coconut fibre. The mask is usually applied in the morning at around 5am and removed only after the sun has set. Tradition goes that women about to wed should always use a muciro face mask to signal their purity and virginity, and to keep their skin soft and healthy. These days many women of all ages use the paste as a beauty routine.

Labolo traditions

Traditionally women in Mozambique got married at a very young age- sometimes as young as 14 years old. As education levels increase and as more women are now able to attend secondary school on Ibo the age of marriage is often later. A man is however still expected to pay lobolo! On Ibo it is known as 'Mari' and it is a process of negotiation with the parents of the girl, usually including money, and depending on affluence, goats, cattle and dwellings.

Night Life and social events

Sporting in Mozambique is dominated by football. Ibo Island enjoys its place in the Quirimbas Archipelago football league. Football matches are often played on Saturday or Sunday afternoons at the main Ibo pitch near the star fort and are highly passionate and important events. Teams visit by traditional dhow and Ibo has several teams in which the lodge staffing are well represented. If you would like to watch (or play!) ask one of the guides.

Ibo also comes alive at night. It tends to be cooler then and so people are often out and about then enjoying the night air, socialising, dancing, attending traditional ceremonies or traditional drumming sessions. On full moon nights it's not uncommon to find people working and visiting and tending to their fishing nets and small vegetable gardens. You may hear a full spectrum of different Ibo night sounds floating across on the breeze from the villages in the distance: laughing, drumming, singing, music, and fishermen calling from one dhow to another across the water.

On still nights you may also hear a strange rhythmic thumping noise, almost like a heart beat reverberating around the island. It took us quite a while to establish the true origin of this sound and its actually humpback dolphins slamming their tails on the waters surface as they hunt in pods for fish. Dolphins often come close into the bay at night when you can identify this sound if you listen carefully.

Ibo Island is special and has been described as one of the most atmospheric tropical islands in the world.

We look forward to welcoming you!