

WHEN THE SKY IS THE LIMIT

Testing Zanzibar's most popular rooftops - from modern lounges to oriental tea houses

PHOTOS (6): UPENDO, EMERSON, 6 DEGREES, SPICE PALACE, AFRICA HOUSE, MARU MARU

The newest rooftop in town, the spectacular sun-deck at Upendo House

Upendo House STYLISH NEW GEM IN TOWN

By Angelika Dubiel and staff writers

Literally, the coolest place to be in Zanzibar is high above the hustle and bustle of ancient Stone Town. Even the sultans knew that. The magic unfolds especially at sunset time, when a breeze comes up. THE FUMBA TIMES went rooftop hopping to test old and new establishments.

It takes a massive construction effort to place a pool on the roof of an old building. Zanzibar entrepreneur Trish Dhanak did just that. Upendo House, an off-shoot of her popular Upendo Beach Club on the east coast, occupies the building of former Clove Hotel in Stone Town. The avant-garde retro style, differing starkly from the usual ornamental Zanzibari look, will please lovers of contemporary design. Whether for guests of the eight-room-

boutique hotel or for walk-in visitors, the restaurant on the fourth floor and the roof terrace "The Fifth" are well worth a visit. The food stems from a cooperation with local farmers. Weekend brunch at \$15 is offered from 11am - 4pm, a sunset rooftop cocktail for two with nibbles will cost you \$38. The view of town & sea is most incredible, of course, from the sundeck with infinity pool, an architectural masterpiece (reserved mainly for house guests). A unique offer: If you want to relax from walking about in town, or have a late flight or ferry to catch, you can rent a day room for under \$100, get a massage and have a siesta. Sounds like worth testing!

Location: Hurumzi St.
Opening hours: 11am - 11pm (restaurant closes at 9.30pm); live music Thursday
Contact: +255 777 082 176

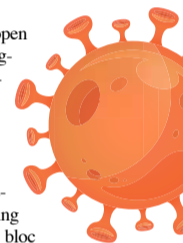


Emerson on Hurumzi & Emerson Spice THE SOUL OF ZANZIBAR

Johnny Depp found it incredible and so will you. Dining and wining on oriental cushions or *barazas* at "Emerson on Hurumzi" feels like having landed on cloud nine. The setting at sister hotel "Emerson Spice" is more formal, with tables and chairs. Both venues offer set menus at \$40 for a multi-course eclectic dinner, and à la carte for lunch. The legendary hotels and rooftop restaurants - the most authentic in town - give testimony to their founder, New York born Emerson Skeens who died in 2014. And both require serious stair climbing! The reward is an orchestrated dining experience like no other,

chilled Chardonnays, breathtaking views and - at Hurumzi - live Taarab music. Nothing is stiff, everything quirky in the palaces-gone-boutique where merchant Tharia Topan, when paper money came up in the late 1800s, laid out a whole court with rupee notes. On the way to the top you'll catch a glimpse of precious antique furniture and glamorous bedrooms, and may decide to stay here, next time!

Location: Hurumzi St, Tharia St.
Opening hours: dinner from 6pm; lunch noon - 4pm
Contact: www.emerson-zanzibar.com



Coronavirus situation

"MIXED MESSAGES"

Even with a vaccine in sight, the threat of the coronavirus and its economic effect are far from over. Where does that leave Zanzibar?

Grim global outlook: Corona figures hit 60 million cases and around 1.4 million deaths in November. With winter and indoor living driving infections, Europe and America - main tourism markets for East Africa - saw a grave rise in infections. The US passed 250,000 deaths, five times more than the whole continent of Africa observed since the start of the pandemic. Europe enforced new lockdowns. Germany, for example, recorded daily 200 deaths and more in November.

What does that mean for the African tourism industry? Africa will lose between \$53 billion and \$120 billion in contributions to its GDP in 2020 because of the crash in tourism, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates. Kenya expects at least a 60% drop in tourism revenue this year, South Africa a 75% drop, official statements say.

Zanzibar is doing better. A unique campaign "1001 nights" offering free holidays to front-line medics (THE FUMBA TIMES reported) got off the ground; 50 hotels are in with 1001 bed nights.

Meanwhile, the bureau of statistics predicts the island may reach half of last year's 500,000 visitors by the end of the year. The reason: In October arrivals went remarkably up with 12,000 tourists coming mainly from France and Russia. 15,000 more were expected for November, up to 20,000 for December. So far, in ten months the visitors' total has reached about 180,000.

With wide-open doors - no negative test required, only temperature checks upon arrival - Zanzibar was especially betting on the Eastern bloc market, currently drawing 3000 to 4000 all-inclusive tourists weekly mostly from Russia and Ukraine.

"There are only a few countries in the world accepting such flights", said an industry source. Russia has the fourth highest corona incidence in the world. Consequently, "mixed messages" shape the situation: AI-Hotels like the new RIU in Nungwi with 400 beds signal "100% fully booked." Others are more wary: "Mass tourism at low rates has been encouraged just to keep things moving, and no doubt it helps, but the rest of the industry is really struggling", the industry source said. "Cheap Russian travels will be over when normal European flights resume", a tourism insider calmed down the discourse.

Healthwise, Africa has so far withstood the pandemic better than initially feared. Less than 5% of global infections occur on the continent with 17% of the world's population. A young demographic is seen as one of the reasons. Tanzania and Zanzibar took swift action, closing borders mid-March. Two months later, Tanzania stopped testing and recording.

Medical progress: Worldwide, a vaccine is the big hope. Politicians and scientists have pledged to distribute vaccines globally. "People want to travel", assures Anja Braun, a spokesperson of travel giant TUI, "when a successful vaccination is available, things will get back to normal."

Last updated: 20 November



6 Degrees South Grill & Wine Bar POSH & POPULAR

The entrance is easy to find - a striking water wall installation where we instinctively always look for the fish behind it. Zanzibar's geographical position six degrees south of the equator has given the chic grill & wine bar its name. The rooftop bar and lounge, furnished in casual beach club style, offers superb views of the sea and the sunset, of ferries coming in from the mainland, and traditional dhows sailing by. It has a proper bar - all in white. Another inviting bar is at the very entrance, in case you don't want to climb the 43 stairs up to the rooftop. The interior feels airy and bright, with lots of glass. The popular place, with a touch of poshness and formal outdoor dining downstairs, is cherished for its tasty

grill cuisine and a wide range of happy hour drinks and fresh juices. (The owners run a major spirit supplier on the island.) Delicious, tapas style dishes on the terrace may well add-up to a whole meal. No problem, whether it's just for a sundowner or for a long evening you can remain seated comfortably - or start dancing - with a romantic view of the ocean. The rooftop has become a fixture of the party scene, especially Fridays and Saturdays with live music from 9pm until late into the night. Advance booking, especially for groups, is advisable.

Location: Shangani St.
Opening hours: 10am - late
Contact: +255 620 644 611



Spice Palace Hotel CASUAL ELEGANCE

Being on a roof terrace with small children is often not relaxing. But at Spice Palace Hotel (30 rooms) - the sister hotel of Antonio Garden - children can have fun with bobby cars and other toys in a play corner just a floor below; for grown-ups there's a karaoke bar. The terrace restaurant itself - accessible by lift - is a lovely, airy affair of casual elegance in the midst of crumbling Stone Town, at Jaws Corner. A coffee shop in the ultra-spacious lobby opens early and closes late. On the roof, we just love the cosy rattan sofas and neatly decorated dining tables. The kitchen convinces with tasty seafood, Chinese, continental and Indian food. There's a happy hour every day at 6pm.

Location: Soko Muhogo St.
Opening hours: 7am - midnight



Africa House SUNSET CLASSIC

We are seated between a busload of vacationers on the terrace of the Africa House which prides itself on "the best sunset in town". Opened as a colonial club in 1888, it was reserved for "English residents and officers of the Royal Navy". The grand sunset terrace came into being when the British built garages for their first motor cars and yachts. Unfortunately, where the latter once anchored, only the miserable remains of a sea promenade remain. Things have changed in and around the Africa House, the present management introduced red linoleum on marble stairs and a pizza oven. Still, the popular watering hole, the only one with draught beer, offers indeed a great sunset over the Indian Ocean.

Location: Shangani St.
Opening hours: 8am - around midnight



Maru Maru Hotel TOP SIGHTSEEING

Take a walk on Stone Town's shopping mile Gizenga Street and you will pass Maru Maru hotel. The restored white building within the UNESCO-protected area features a mix of Zanzibari and modern décor, a coffee shop, elevator and a rooftop with bar and restaurant where Indian, African and continental cuisine is feasted upon until late into the night. A photo in the staircase tells us that Chelsea Clinton, the former US president's daughter, was once here. Eye-catcher on the terrace is a pool - sadly for houseguests only. But the superior 360-degree view will please all visitors as they gaze towards St. Joseph cathedral, the ocean and Old Fort at their feet.

Location: Gizenga St
Opening hours: 7am - 11pm

MIND MY BUSINESS LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

HORSERIDING BY THE SEA

Suitable activities for children - that's what a reader asked for in one of our past issues. Here we found one: horseback riding in Zanzibar.

Horses are rarely seen on Zanzibar's streets and meadows, for good reason. The climatic conditions are simply not optimal, and it takes a lot of experience to keep horses in a species-appropriate way. One of those people to achieve this is Ms Rosa, an experienced horse lover and riding

instructor for 30 years, who "air-lifted" her horses from South Africa to the island almost ten years ago. Her stables are on the grounds of the Seacliff Resort, north of Zanzibar town. I met Rosa to redeem a birthday present for one of my daughters. "It is necessary to register beforehand", she explains. But then the hotel watchman lets us through, and we end up in a little paradise. Neat, green lawns. A flock of guinea fowls runs past us clucking loudly. Rosa introduces her horses to us, three gentlemen of character: Mr. Charlie Brown, 13, Mr. Nottingham, 12 and Mr. Prophet, who is 15 years old. "Be gentle with them", she instructs my daughter. After a short safety briefing, she hands us

the riding helmets. In the meantime the horses have been saddled-up. "Oops", exclaims my daughter when approaching them, "quite high". No sweat: Anyone needing it will be lifted onto the horse. We start out on a leash, accompanied by Rosa on her own horse. "We welcome beginners as well advanced riders", she assures us in her friendly and calm way. When we arrive at the beach, Stone Town can be seen in the haze. "Let's take the horses into the water", Rosa suggests. Slowly we ride into the tide. Wet feet, wet legs, wet belly. At first cautiously, but then with increasing enthusiasm we get involved in the experiment.

A. Dubiel

Nobody is so small to try horseback riding - especially with the good guidance of Ms Rosa



PHOTOS (2): ROSA STANDER

Horsriding with Rosa Stander
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Please inquire for prices