



# Zavora

By Amilda Boshoff

For those who think  
they have seen it all

Photography: Lisa Boshoff

Whale



For many of the visitors to Mozambique who choose to drive up to the Inhambane province, Zavora has always been known as the best place for deep sea fishing. Yet come to think of it, if there is great fishing, then there must also be a great variety of marine life, which in turn leads to great diving... That was what Jon, Roy and Danny had also thought when they began to explore the bay of Zavora and found the most amazing reefs.

**J**on Wright, Roy Cogle and Danny Russell opened the first IANTD centre in Mozambique called Moz Divers – it is also the first permanent dive centre in Zavora, having opened its doors in December 2008. Like Tofo in the early days, Zavora has seen sporadic diving since the 1970s, but the area was better known for the fantastic fishing. But that is certainly going to change. Moz Divers are here to stay, and with its fully-equipped, brand new Scuba Pro kit, you can leave yours at home if you like to rent new equipment. Nitrox and other mixtures for technical dives are not a problem either, as Jon can help you out, being an avid trained technical diver himself (there is not usually much technical diving done by charters in Mozambique, and this is good news to all the techies out there who want to dive a different location). Moz Divers also have a native Mozambican skipper and technical diver named Manuel working side by side with them. Then there is the boat – an 8.9m ferret with twin Honda 130 four stroke engines – powerful enough? This combination will take you 11km out to sea to the furthest reef within 20 minutes! The boat has enough space for 12 divers, although a maximum of eight are taken at a time to make the journey comfortable and safe for everyone. It is a joy to kic up and still have enough space to turn around and look for your crotch strap without accidentally bumping your buddy overboard!



## Dive the South Side

Launching is done from a small bay that is protected by a reef – this creates a natural tidal pool, which is excellent for training open water students, for snorkelling and just relaxed swimming when it is hot outside. Launching is not really tide dependent but this must be kept in consideration, especially during spring high and spring low, but that is left in the capable hands of the skippers and dive masters – all you have to do is kit up, meet the boat on the beach and enjoy the magnificent dives that Zavora has to offer.

Dive sites are all within a 20km radius of the lodge and double tank dives are mostly done. Diving is great throughout the year with March and April and October and November usually the calmest months with the best visibility. February, however, is the best time to see numerous Manta rays and July to September is the best time for Humpback whale sightings.

There are two reef systems that are currently dived at Zavora, and both are a couple of kilometres long ranging from 6-45m deep. Up to date there are some parts of the reefs that haven't yet been explored. Interested in an exploration dive? Just ask...

The reef system the furthest out to sea is called Deep Reef – it is approximately 10km out and has multiple dive sites ranging from 24-45m deep. This reef is part of the open ocean with loads of Kingfish, Barracuda, sharks including Zambesi's, Tiger sharks, Dusky and Black-tips. There is also a Manta cleaning station along this reef which makes for spectacular Manta sightings.

The inshore reef system lies approximately one kilometre off shore to the north of Zavora and also runs parallel to the dunes known to locals as Red Sands and White Sands respectively.

Red Sands is suitable for all levels of divers and is covered with the most beautiful coloured sponges and soft coral. With a maximum depth of 18m and some sections coming up to 12m, a multilevel dive gives one a chance to view everything that this reef has to offer, from extra large crayfish to schools of Fusiliers, Kingfish and Barracuda. The reef also has an abundance of macro life, including Porcelain crabs and mantis shrimp that make for excellent macro photographs. Numerous species of sting rays, turtles and sharks are also commonly seen on this dive, but the highlight on this reef is the opportunity for Manta ray encounters as this system is home to numerous Manta cleaning stations.

White Sands is a long plateaned ledge with an outside wall sloping from 8m down to 20m and with numerous pinnacles coming up as high as 6m from the surface. It has a stunning topography, with an amazing array of macro life such as nudibranchs and Cleaning shrimps. A great number of fish species are encountered

here, and these include Scorpionfish, Lionfish, Surgeonfish, Travelly and Blue banded snapper to name just a few. Even the shy Trumpetfish made an appearance. There are resident White-tip reef sharks on this reef which can be found resting under the ledges or in some of the small caves. Remember to bring your torch along on the dive as it can be very dark in some of the caves. The ever popular Potato bass, Olive ridley turtles as well as Mantas are also frequently seen on this reef.

Zavora has an extremely healthy turtle population, including Loggerhead, Hawksbill and Leatherback turtles, as well as relatively common sightings of the Small-eyed ray. This, the world's largest known species of sting ray, has only been seen alive in its natural environment along the coast of southern Mozambique and was definitely a first for me. They are huge!

But there is more – there is also a wreck

to spice up the trip! The only problem that it is 53m deep and more suitable for the tech divers amongst us. The wreck is the Klipfontein, a Dutch passenger and cargo ship built in 1939 and sank in January 1953. No lives were lost when she sank.



Round ribbonfall ray



Whale shark



Manta ray



## Dive the South Side



Potato bass



### Accommodation

Zavora Lodge is situated on one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline in the Inhambane province. The lodge has a beachfront bar and restaurant with a deck where you can sip on something cool while relaxing with the breathtaking view of the Zavora Bay – it is just the way to start a much deserved holiday. Occasionally Eagle and Manta rays burst from the surface in brief flights, and you could also see the streamlined and graceful Sailfish along with dolphins feeding and playing in the bay.

The restaurant serves breakfast as well as an à-la-carte menu for lunch and supper. The food is tasty and well prepared with seafood being a speciality (not forgetting the Portuguese chicken). Fresh bread (Pao), together with the locally prepared peri peri sauce (while waiting for the main course) was definitely a winner with us. One also

has to keep in mind that most of the ingredients for the food have to come a long way and some are even imported from South Africa. Pao is baked daily and ice is also for sale on those hot days when you really need something cool.

The lodge has rustic beachfront houses, bungalows, a backpacker bunkhouse and numerous campsites – there are also some campsites on the sea side of the dune which are very popular and there are bungalows and more campsites situated behind the dune on well-grassed shady areas – All of them have electricity points. The lodge is considered a rustic resort, but two upmarket houses are being built on the dunes with splendid views, their own kitchen, a bar and a comfortable deck for optimal relaxation. The rooms are mostly en suite, all with a sea view and will be serviced daily. Electricity is

being supplied by the means of gener running from 7am-10am in the morning and from 3pm-10pm at night. This leaves ample time to prepare meals and charge batteries if needed. The houses all have a fridge, freezer, gas stove and the necessary utensils for self-catering and every unit has its own mosquito net. Just remember your own towels (including beach towels) and mosquito repellent. The units are serviced daily for your comfort.

For young and old alike, there is a table and DSTV situated behind reception and next to the restaurant if you just want to do something different. Cell phone reception is usually good but can be spotty at times. Luckily there is a bill at the lighthouse where we found reception could touch base with all our loved ones back home. The hill also has a tremendous view of the lighthouse and bay which makes for memorable photographs.

Zavora is a new destination with numerous possibilities yet to be explored but in my mind it certainly has something for everyone, from kayaking and quad bikes to deep sea angling and excellent diving. Yet if you like, just relaxing on a long, sandy beach in the Mozambique is also a good way to spend your day.



## Dive the South Side



Proglan

### How to get there

Zavora is situated approximately 420km north of Maputo and 87km south of Inhambane.

From South Africa, the easiest way to get to Zavora is by car.

Enter Mozambique at the border post Komatipoort called

Bezaao Garcia, and then take the

EN1 once past Maputo. Travel

approximately 10km north of

Inharrime on the EN1 main

road, and then turn right at the

Zavora Lodge sign. After 17km

along a reasonable dirt road, you

will arrive at Zavora Lodge. The

GPS is quite accurate but do not

attempt to drive this way at night

as there are some huge potholes near Xai Xai and on other parts of the road as well. Remember to exchange money at the border because you will need Meticals to use bathrooms at numerous fuel stations.

If you want to, you can either fly to Maputo from JHB or direct to Inhambane with LAM. A pick-up from Maputo is possible but has to be arranged well in advance. Transfers between Zavora and Inhambane are available on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and also need to be arranged in advance. **■**



Round ribbontail ray

### More information

- Distance between Komatipoort and Maputo – 91km.
- Distance between Maputo and Xai Xai – 236km.
- Distance between Xai Xai and Inharrime – 177km.
- Distance between Inharrime and Zavora turnoff – 10km.
- Gravel road distance to Zavora Lodge – 17km.

#### Contact details for Moz Divers IANTD Dive Centre

• Roy Cougle: +258827030750 or 076-814-5729 (South Africa)

• Jon Wright: +258827766417 or 073-384-3292 (South Africa)

• Danny Russell: +258823559520 or 078-649-3739 (South Africa)

• Email: info@mozdivers.com

#### Contact details for Zavora Lodge

• Anita Pieterse on 083-514-6846 or 013-750-0431.

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