

WE ARE GOING ON A ZANZIBAR SAFARI...



Travelling solo is so very different from travelling with your partner and travelling with kids is a totally different ball game, says **Veathika Jain** who took a family vacation to Zanzibar where nature is in abundance, complete with exotic animals and great marine life



Whenever we travel with our children, we make sure we decide on a base somewhere, then book a decent hotel that caters to children's needs and most importantly, has a swimming pool! This time we zeroed in on a beach destination, as that would definitely have plenty of sand, sun and sea for the kids to be occupied. We chose Zanzibar in Tanzania as our five-day holiday destination where the visa is on arrival for Indian nationals (another box ticked!). Though the Yellow Fever vaccination is required, they didn't check ours at the airport. But it's always a good idea to get the kids vaccinated, anyway.

We had booked our stay at the Breezes Beach Club & Spa, about an hour's drive from the airport. The hotel is set in beautiful, tropical-landscaped gardens, on a pristine and peaceful beach on the East Coast of the island. We went in April, which was the start of the monsoon season. The weather was a bit humid but we only got rain on the last two days of our trip.

We had access to a variety of activities from the resort itself. Kayaking turned out to be a fun family activity for us to race each other. The Reef Walk during low tide was a unique experience to witness life underwater and was absolutely fascinating for my sons. In the beginning they were a little skeptical and we had to carry them through the water. But the coral reefs and the marine life that can be seen at low tide - star fish, sea urchins and a variety of shells made them forget their fear.

There are a number of snorkeling trips and scuba diving activities to follow through in Zanzibar with the Blue Safari being a day's trip to other islands, with highlights like Dolphin spotting and snorkeling.

Another day trip is to Stone Town, also known as Mji Mkongwe in Swahili for 'old town', and this one is a must. The town's architecture is from the 19th century - a mix of Arab, Indian, European and Swahili influence, which is why Stone Town was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000.



Famous singer Freddy Mercury of the band ‘Queen’ was born in Zanzibar. Born as Farrokh Bulsara of Parsi descent in the Sultanate of Zanzibar, he grew up here and his house is a major tourist attraction. A walk in the narrow alleys of Stone Town for some shopping beckons, where you can buy some local handicrafts, jewellery and a product unique to Zanzibar – doors! Special wooden doors that were used earlier in the city are now available in miniature replicas.

The beach in Stone Town is not as vast compared to the other beaches on the island. With the kids in tow, a day trip is more than enough unless otherwise you want to spend a night in Stone Town and go directly to the airport from there, since it is closer to Stone Town. It lacks any amenities though, so the later you reach the better it is.

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most of them know English and are ever-ready to answer any question you may have about their country or culture. Tanzania is also known for its wildlife safaris, but Zanzibar being tropical doesn't have many National Parks. There are one or two parks that you can visit however, to



look up some unique monkeys and deer.

Zanzibar is famous for its spices and if you have the time and inclination, then going on a spice tour can be a great outing. The island mainly produces cloves, nutmeg, black pepper and cinnamon.

As for the food, it is varied and has many vegetarian options as well. Zanzibari cuisine is multi-cultural having incorporated elements of Bantu, Arab, Portuguese, Indian, British Swahili cuisines. The kids alternated between chappatis and daal and then some pasta and pizza, while we tasted Swahili cuisine which is very similar to the Indian pakoras, daal, rotis etc.

The children enjoyed being on the beach, while we had an extremely relaxing holiday. Except a day-trip to Stone Town, we consciously limited

ourselves to the in-resort activities. It was a wise decision, for we returned fresh and rejuvenated. Just like it ought to be after a vacation! ■

Zenith

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