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Mozambique

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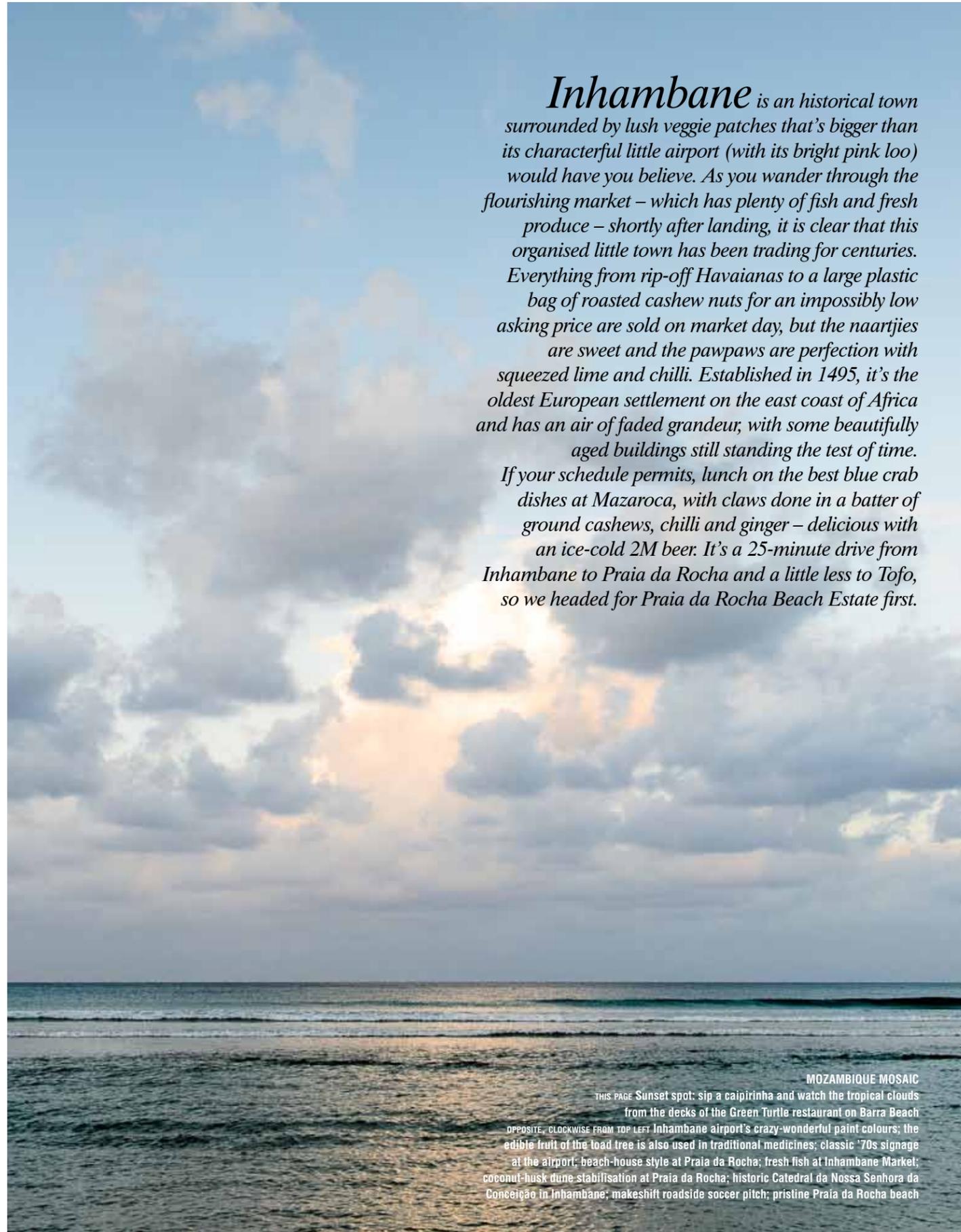
**SOUTH
AFRICAN
EDITION**

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PLUS
7 DAREDEVIL ADVENTURES AT VICTORIA FALLS IN ZIM

***Inhambane** is an historical town surrounded by lush veggie patches that's bigger than its characterful little airport (with its bright pink loo) would have you believe. As you wander through the flourishing market – which has plenty of fish and fresh produce – shortly after landing, it is clear that this organised little town has been trading for centuries. Everything from rip-off Havaianas to a large plastic bag of roasted cashew nuts for an impossibly low asking price are sold on market day, but the naartjies are sweet and the pawpaws are perfection with squeezed lime and chilli. Established in 1495, it's the oldest European settlement on the east coast of Africa and has an air of faded grandeur, with some beautifully aged buildings still standing the test of time. If your schedule permits, lunch on the best blue crab dishes at Mazaroca, with claws done in a batter of ground cashews, chilli and ginger – delicious with an ice-cold 2M beer. It's a 25-minute drive from Inhambane to Praia da Rocha and a little less to Tofo, so we headed for Praia da Rocha Beach Estate first.*



MOZAMBIQUE MOSAIC
 THIS PAGE Sunset spot: sip a caipirinha and watch the tropical clouds from the decks of the Green Turtle restaurant on Barra Beach
 OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Inhambane airport's crazy-wonderful paint colours; the edible fruit of the toad tree is also used in traditional medicines; classic '70s signage at the airport; beach-house style at Praia da Rocha; fresh fish at Inhambane Market; coconut-husk dune stabilisation at Praia da Rocha; historic Catedral da Nossa Senhora da Conceição in Inhambane; makeshift roadside soccer pitch; pristine Praia da Rocha beach





THE LOOK OUT

The Look Out is ideal for multigenerational family holidays – there's oodles of space and everyone has some privacy. Surrounded by generous decks with a latte-covered alfresco cooking area, it never seems to feel crowded. The views are truly breathtaking over the stretch of southern coastline towards Guinjata Bay, yet looking back towards Tofo is also beautiful because of the rocky peninsula jutting out from the main beach (there's a cave worth visiting down there and the hidden bay beyond it will be the site of the new boutique lodge). Anyone who loves cooking while chatting to family and friends will enjoy this open-plan kitchen with its stunning views. Fold-back doors literally open up the entire front and side of the living area, which leads to the pool. The position of this house makes it more private than most.

Closest town? Inhambane is 17 kilometres away.

Sleeps? Eleven comfortably (but can sleep 13). The main house has three bedrooms (one king, one double, one three-sleeper with bunk beds and captain's bed – plus two more kids can sleep on the mezzanine level, if necessary). The cottage adjoining the house has two bedrooms (one queen en suite, one king en suite), with outdoor shower and private sun deck. Staff quarters have a bunk bed and shower room.

Child-friendly? Yes.

Activities? Swimming, whale watching, horse riding, sea kayaking, surfing, ocean safaris, windsurfing. TV but bring DSTV decoder and card.

Negatives? It needs some loungers around the pool.

Cost? From R3 800 for the villa in low season, R4 300 mid season, R4 800 peak season (from about R345 to R436 pppn).

Contact Ella Greathead 082 466 9636, ella@pdrbeachestate.com; www.thelookoutatpdr.com

Praia da Rocha is a beach estate about 25 minutes' drive down the coast and the last seven kilometres are 4x4 territory (or 4x2 with high clearance) – sandy tracks that weave between coconut palms and around village huts. The familiar smell of wood smoke gives way suddenly to the salty onshore breeze that's Praia da Rocha's blessing: it keeps everyone cool and any mosquitoes at bay. Currently, seven of its beach houses are available for rent, but more are being built plus a diving centre and restaurant. Once that's established, a boutique lodge will nestle itself discreetly on the other side of the promontory. What's so special about this spot is its pristine beach, good diving spots and seclusion. It's blissfully tranquil, ideal for anyone wanting to escape to a well-equipped and professionally managed beach house.

GREAT ESCAPE

THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT Count the whales from this idyllic spot on the deck at The Look Out; fresh coconuts

OPPOSITE The view from The Look Out pool back towards the main beach

To do... PRAIA DA ROCHA

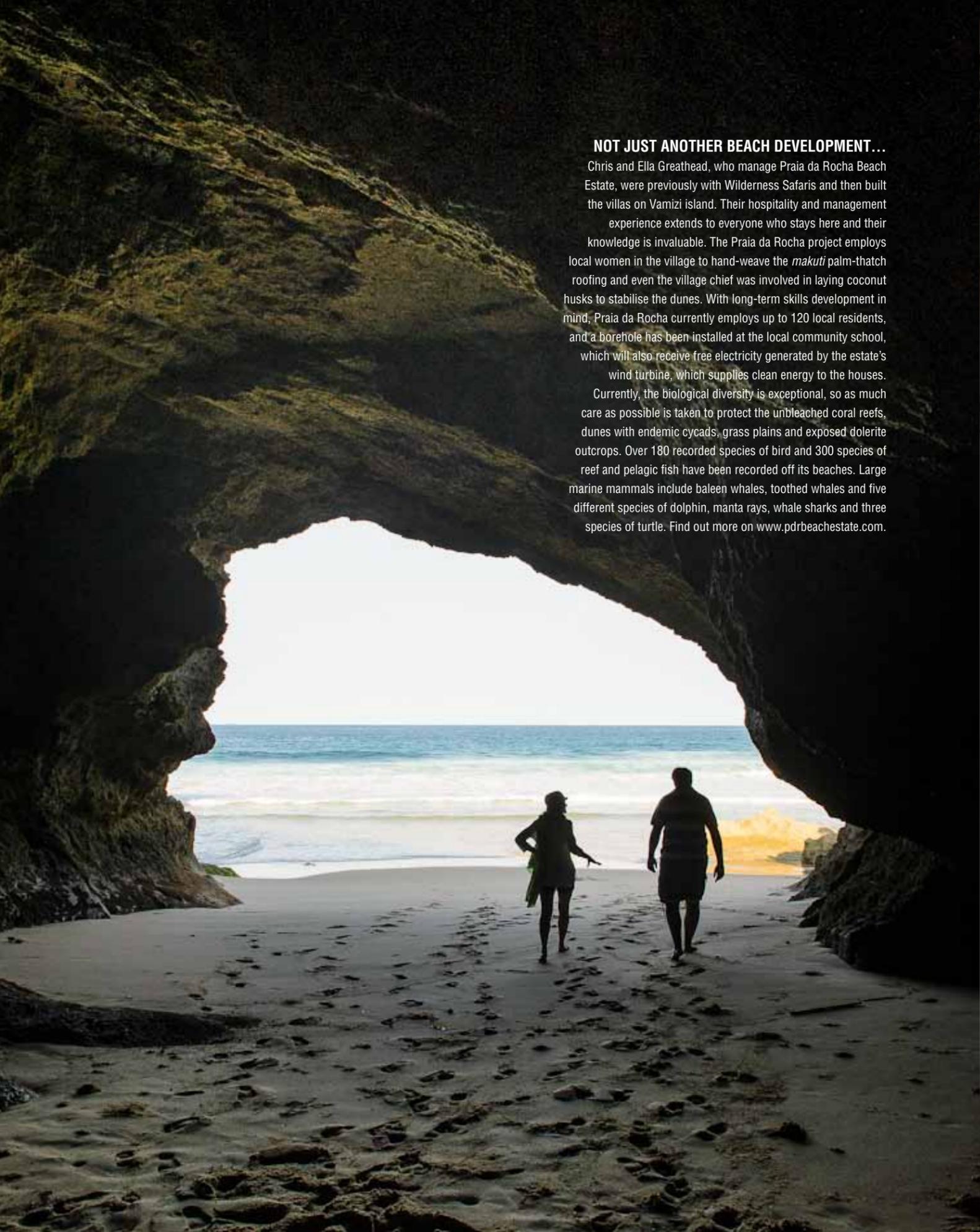
Snorkel or sail the breezes

Watching whales and dolphins from the deck of your beach house is par for the course in season (June to October for humpbacks, July to October for orcas, November to March for whale sharks), but there are nine dive sites close by (including Manta Reef, only 10 minutes away by boat and deemed to be one of the world's top five) and the bay offers safe swimming, sea kayaking, snorkelling, surfing, deep-sea fishing and magnificent walks – either along the endless beach or through coconut plantations. A new, world-class dive centre will be built at the estate shortly, but the protected bay in front of the beach houses has a shallow reef that's perfect for snorkelling, with wonderful hard and soft corals plus reef fish and good visibility for most of the year. Manta rays are often seen basking here.

But for a unique experience, put aside a day for a dhow trip to Pansy Island in the Inhambane Bay. Ask Chris Greathead at the estate to book Enrique 'Rick' Mbata (+258 84 879 0479) to take you across to the sandy spit (pack umbrella, snorkels and fins, sunscreen, a picnic and lots to drink) where you'll spot pansy shells in abundance. Enrique sets sail from White Sands at the end of Barra Beach. He speaks only Portuguese and his dhow is as authentic as they come – patchworked sail, punt, one or two oars and no outboard engine or life jackets. That said, the trip is across mostly shallow waters where outsized mangrove crabs dance a jig beneath you. It's idyllic out there, but on a hot day plan to go early and leave by around 3pm. From R400 to R500 for the day.

End the day with a heavenly meal on the beach at the Green Turtle (at Bayview Lodge along Barra Beach), owned by French couple Joëlle and François Chapuis. Their crab and fish dishes are by far the best here. Call +258 82 026 0580.





NOT JUST ANOTHER BEACH DEVELOPMENT...

Chris and Ella Greathead, who manage Praia da Rocha Beach Estate, were previously with Wilderness Safaris and then built the villas on Vamizi island. Their hospitality and management experience extends to everyone who stays here and their knowledge is invaluable. The Praia da Rocha project employs local women in the village to hand-weave the *makuti* palm-thatch roofing and even the village chief was involved in laying coconut husks to stabilise the dunes. With long-term skills development in mind, Praia da Rocha currently employs up to 120 local residents, and a borehole has been installed at the local community school, which will also receive free electricity generated by the estate's wind turbine, which supplies clean energy to the houses. Currently, the biological diversity is exceptional, so as much care as possible is taken to protect the unbleached coral reefs, dunes with endemic cycads, grass plains and exposed dolerite outcrops. Over 180 recorded species of bird and 300 species of reef and pelagic fish have been recorded off its beaches. Large marine mammals include baleen whales, toothed whales and five different species of dolphin, manta rays, whale sharks and three species of turtle. Find out more on www.pdrbeachestate.com.



CASA DE COCA

Set on the beach and decorated in white-washed beach-house style, this relaxed villa is ideal for a family that values privacy. It's the smallest house on the beachfront, but it feels spacious. There's a protected area on the side of the house with pub-style table for alfresco eating. On a lower deck, the swimming pool has a shaded area for sweltering hot days and there's a shower on the path up from the beach. Note that smoking is not permitted.

Closest town? Inhambane.

Sleeps? Six in three bedrooms (two queens and one twin).

Child-friendly? Yes, but no children under 12.

Activities? Swimming, horse riding, sea kayaking, surfing, ocean safaris. DSTV provided (compact).

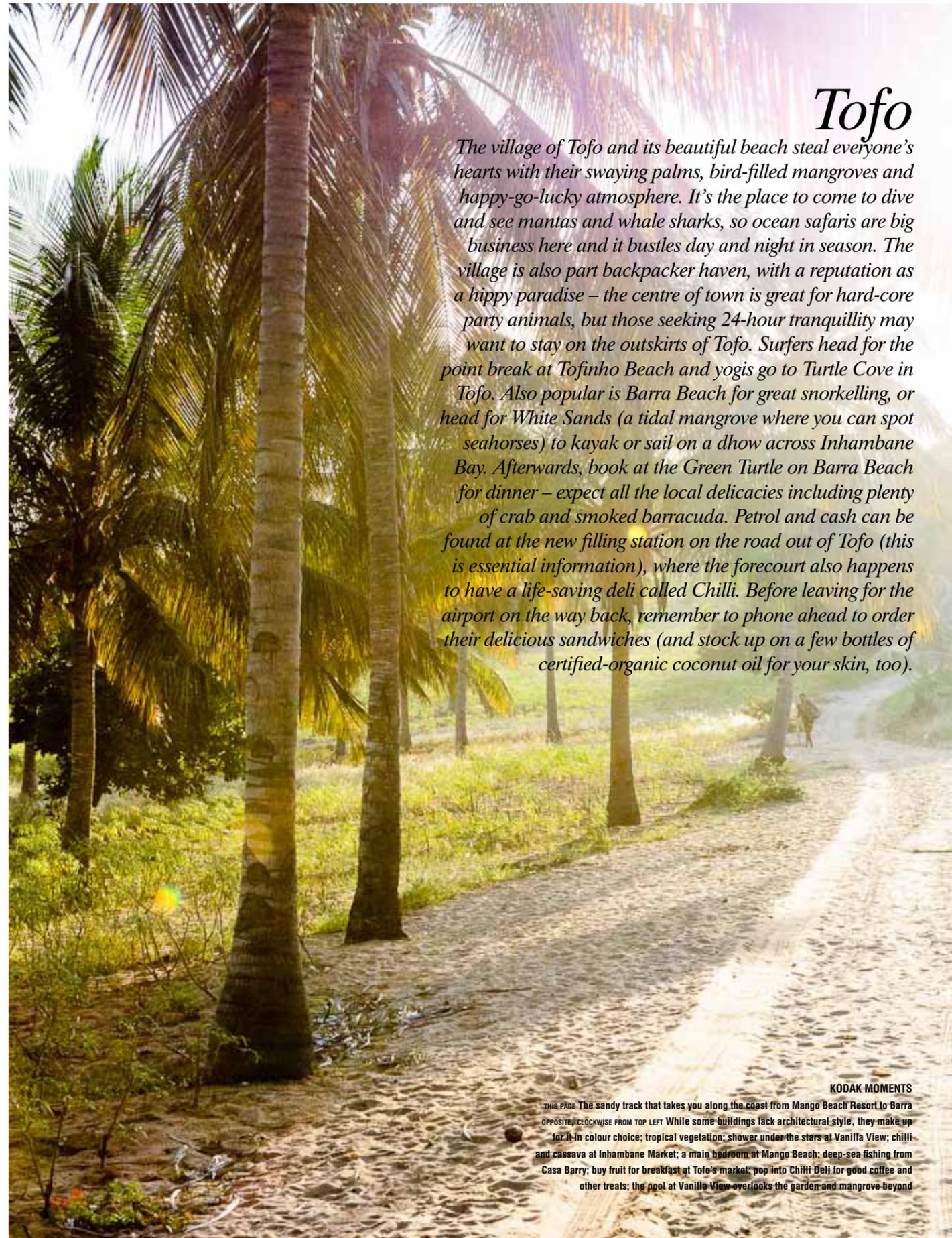
Negatives? You can't take young children so not suitable for all families.

Cost? R2 000 low season, R2 500 mid season, R3 500 peak season (from about R333 to R583 pppn).

Contact Ella Greathead 082 466 9636, ella@pdrbeachestate.com, www.pdrbeachestate.com

DREAM ON

THIS PAGE Casa de Coca's main bedroom. All the houses have high-quality mosquito nets, but because of its sea breezes Praia da Rocha doesn't get many mozzies
OPPOSITE Anyone for a candlelit dinner in a cave? This one is just around the corner from the site where there are plans to build an unobtrusive boutique lodge



Tofo

The village of Tofo and its beautiful beach steal everyone's hearts with their swaying palms, bird-filled mangroves and happy-go-lucky atmosphere. It's the place to come to dive and see mantas and whale sharks, so ocean safaris are big business here and it bustles day and night in season. The village is also part backpacker haven, with a reputation as a hippy paradise – the centre of town is great for hard-core party animals, but those seeking 24-hour tranquillity may want to stay on the outskirts of Tofo. Surfers head for the point break at Tofinho Beach and yogis go to Turtle Cove in Tofo. Also popular is Barra Beach for great snorkelling, or head for White Sands (a tidal mangrove where you can spot seahorses) to kayak or sail on a dhow across Inhambane Bay. Afterwards, book at the Green Turtle on Barra Beach for dinner – expect all the local delicacies including plenty of crab and smoked barracuda. Petrol and cash can be found at the new filling station on the road out of Tofo (this is essential information), where the forecourt also happens to have a life-saving deli called Chilli. Before leaving for the airport on the way back, remember to phone ahead to order their delicious sandwiches (and stock up on a few bottles of certified-organic coconut oil for your skin, too).

KODAK MOMENTS

THIS PAGE The sandy track that takes you along the coast from Mango Beach Resort to Barra
OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT While some buildings lack architectural style, they make up for it in colour choice; tropical vegetation; shower under the stars at Vanilla View; chilli and cassava at Inhambane Market; a main bedroom at Mango Beach; deep-sea fishing from Casa Barry; buy fruit for breakfast at Tofo's market; pop into Chilli Deli for good coffee and other treats; the pool at Vanilla View overlooks the garden and mangrove beyond





To do... TOFO
Dive with whale sharks

In season, Tofo is packed with travellers from all over the world that come to dive its teeming waters or to do an ocean safari and snorkel with its gentle giants, the whale sharks. Diversity Scuba has been around the longest and its experienced PADI professionals offer a full range of PADI training courses. Diversity Scuba ocean safaris cost R365. To book, contact +258 293 29002, info@diversityscuba.com, www.diversityscuba.com.

Tofo is also a valued centre of research and Dr Andrea Marshall and Dr Simon Pierce of the Foundation for the Protection of Marine Megafauna (FPMM, www.marinemegafauna.org) are leading the way in manta and whale shark research. They're based behind Casa Barry and near Peri-Peri Divers, where you can hear them speak each week. Andrea is known as the 'Queen of Mantas' and does eco dives every Wednesday with a maximum of six people, and Simon, the 'Whale Shark Whisperer', does a two-to three-hour eco safari with a maximum of eight people every Friday. Peri Peri specialises in smaller, more personalised dive groups. To book or for more info, +258 882 596 4717, info@peri-peridivers.com or visit www.peri-peridivers.com. Other activities inTofo include yoga classes at Turtle Cove Studio (+258 82 719 4848, www.turtlecove.tofo.com). Turtle Cove will also organise everything from spa massages to surf lessons.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL
Vanilla View is the ultimate romantic retreat – think sensual luxury, architectural design and dream hosts