Life sentence at Prison Island, 1893
Archipelago of Zanzibar
Welcome to Changuu Private Island Paradise (Prison Island), Zanzibar Archipelago

The Zanzibar archipelago is as mystic, beautiful and serene today as it has been for centuries. Once one of the world’s most important trading gateways, Zanzibar Island - known as the Spice Island - and its famous Stone Town are steeped in history. A cultural fusion of Africa and Arabia, immortalised throughout history as Dr. Livingstone’s expedition base, Vasco da Gama’s port of call having circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope in 1499, Freddy Mercury’s birthplace and even the subject of Noel Coward’s famous song in the 1930’s.

Zanzibar is the second largest island off the East African coast, roughly the size of Hertfordshire in the UK, approximately 53 miles long by 21 miles broad with an area of 640 sq miles. It is situated 6 degrees south of the Equator and is separated from the African mainland by a channel 22 ½ miles across at its narrowest part. Zanzibar Island is situated some 135 miles from Mombasa in Kenya, 45 miles from Dar es Salaam, 1,607 miles from Durban (South Africa) and 6,764 miles from London.

Stone Town, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is famous for its narrow, winding streets lined with unique, arabesque architecture - many buildings more than a century old.

Prison Island is simply Paradise on Earth. One of Zanzibar’s best known attractions, the island lies 3 ½ miles to the northwest of Zanzibar’s Stone Town, a short 20 minute dhow ride from Stone Town, and like Zanzibar has a fascinating history. The old prison buildings - which were later used as a quarantine station - have been meticulously restored by the present owners to create a modern boutique hotel whilst preserving the historical treasures. Things have changed a lot here since the time explorers such as Vasco da Gama, Stanley and Livingstone passed through this island.

Prison Island offers luxury and comfort with accommodation in 15 deluxe cottages and 12 sea-facing rooms, a private beach, excellent food and wine and all modern amenities. Prison Island even has fresh water pumped directly from Zanzibar! On Prison Island the pristine, white shoreline gives way to dense tropical forest - a haven for rare birds and also home to a colony of over 200 Giant Aldabran tortoises.

Most importantly, Prison Island is a place to relax. Here there are no watersports, no spa, just stunning sunsets and a place to roam around as you please. This prison-turned-hotel is a soft cell, a jailhouse that rocks, a place where you will want to serve a life sentence.
Relax by the freshwater pool and enjoy a spectacular view of Stone Town just 3 ½ miles away. The clear Indian Ocean waters are home to over 1,000 species of fish and sea turtles that swim within a few yards of Changuu Island’s shore.
Once upon a time in 1893...
Ever fancied a breakfast in prison?

Centuries ago, explorers wrote of the magnificent prison on this shore which, thank heaven, still stands restored and protected just for you.
Spice of Life
After a day exploring by dhow or wondering through the winding streets of Zanzibar’s Stone Town, let our chefs prepare lobster or a fresh catch from the sea - cooked to your taste in Zanzibari style with cinamon, cloves and turmeric.
Cut your ties with the rest of the world...

Looking over the ocean from the comfort of your private verandah, you will feel that you are the only inhabitant of this island paradise.

Our beach cottages are nestled among lush, tropical vegetation teeming with many species of birds and all enjoy direct access to the white, sandy beach. Only a few miles over the ocean you can see Zanzibar’s mythical Stone Town - a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Enjoy complete peace and seclusion...
Uninterrupted ocean views
Mathews’ Restaurant is named after Sir Lloyd William Mathews, the first Prime Minister of Zanzibar in 1891 who used this building for rest and recuperation. The building has been artfully restored in keeping with the spirit of the 19th century and is now the main restaurant on Prison Island.
Everywhere on this island is five minutes away on foot; a cool walk through dense, tropical forest - a well preserved ecosystem.

The place to come if you want to be close to nature.
Zanzibar’s vibrant culture

Prison Island is a stunning achievement - a perfect balance between nature and culture.

Restored ruins, nature trails, and a wide variety of endemic flora and fauna including the world famous Giant Aldabran Tortoises.

Lying on the beach, you can see Zanzibar’s famous Stone Town - a UNESCO World Heritage Site - and a day trip to Stone Town is a must. Enjoy the winding, narrow streets of Stone Town with ancient buildings, superb balconies, amazing sculptured doors, mosques, ancient palaces, Livingstone’s house and the House of Wonders - the first building with electricity and an elevator in the whole of East Africa.

Stone Town meets Prison Island - Zanzibar will never be the same again.
Fact File

Location

Prison Island lies in the Indian Ocean off the west coast of Zanzibar. It is 3 1/2 miles to the northwest of Zanzibar Town, a long, narrow island approximately 1/2 mile long by 250 yards wide at the widest point.

Getting there

You don’t need a pirate map to find Prison Island. Prison Island is accessed from Zanzibar Stone Town. From here you are transported to Prison Island on a comfortable 20 minute ride by wooden dhow (boat).

Accommodation

Changuu Private Island Paradise (Prison Island) offers two room categories both with uninterrupted ocean views.

On the south–west side of the island, the former Quarantine Area built in 1931 has been converted into 12 elegant standard rooms that afford splendid views of Stone Town and the Indian Ocean. All rooms are ensuite with shower fittings and mosquito nets.

Restaurants and Bars

On our own little Spice Island, our Chef prepares a delicious variety of cuisine incorporating traditional Zanzibari elements with the freshest fish and seafood. Here you will find a choice of settings and flavours to entice the most discerning palate.

During the day, guests have a choice of meals and snacks which can be enjoyed in several venues. Enjoy a delicious pizza al fresco overlooking the magnificently restored Prison ruins, or enjoy a healthy salad by the pool.

Dinner on Changuu is a cultural as well as a culinary feast. Mathews’ Restaurant is a unique and fascinating setting - the original building was completely restored and renovated maintaining the spirit of the 19th century. It has retained many of its original objects as well as its unique charm, and it offers the most delicious Swahili and international dishes.

Historically, Prison Island was famous for its lavish parties for society’s elite and the tradition is continued today. Enjoy the beautiful tropical sunset with a delicious cocktail, or enjoy drinks and music outside the old prison. This is one Jailhouse that rocks!

From the moment you are welcomed on to Prison Island with fresh coconuts and a warm smile until the time you leave, you can be as active or as idle as you wish. After all, that is what holidays are all about.

Activities

Day trips to Zanzibar Stone Town are the perfect chance to discover the Swahili culture - a happy mix of Africa and Arabia. Explore the winding narrow streets, ancient buildings, unique balconies, amazing sculptured doors, mosques, palaces and David Livingstone’s House. Stone Town is steeped in history and is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Contact details

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Swimming

Our large freeform pool seems to fall into the ocean below. From your sunbed, you can forget about your worries and lie back with a cool cocktail gazing over the ocean where you can see Zanzibar’s Stone Town. Time passes effortlessly here. Alternatively, if you would like to swim with sea turtles, you can take a dip in the natural sea water lagoon on the western side of the island.

Or just wade out from the pristine white beach and enjoy the warm tropical waters of the Indian Ocean.

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Tennis

Situated in a clearing in the dense tropical forest, Prison Island offers a fully equipped floodlit tennis court.
“karma, yoga and tranquility inside the prison, in confinement.”

www.privateislands-zanzibar.com