



Go: Mozambique

FOUR nights at Casa Rex and six on Bazaruto island costs from £2,565 per adult. Price includes Virgin Atlantic flights, accommodation, most meals and some activities. See imagineafrica.co.uk/mozambique.

Mozambique chic

FLYING over the deserted golden palm-lined beaches and shimmering sea, it's incredibly hard to imagine that Mozambique was a country once ravaged by civil war.

But its past is a million miles away from its present – the country has been transformed from hell to paradise.

Before war broke out in 1977, Mozambique was Africa's top tourist destination – it can't be long before it reclaims the crown. And it must be near the top of the list of glamorous spots off the beaten track – especially for honeymoon couples.

As our plane came in to land at the coastal resort of Vilanculos everyone had their faces pressed to the windows to get a glimpse of the

IT'S HONEYMOON HEAVEN

spectacular scenery. The gasps told it all – turquoise sea and coral reefs as far as the eye could see.

My partner Michelle and I spent three days at the five-star Casa Rex Lodge. Overlooking the beach, our room was stylish and comfortable. But the real highlight was waking – the breathtaking view was the first thing we saw.

We spent our days walking along the beach, reading and eating our body weight in seafood.

Prawns were pulled from the ocean just hours before being served on our plates.

We could hardly bring ourselves to leave – but then neither of us could have imagined what was to come.

We took an eight-seater plane to Bazaruto, one of five islands making up the National Marine Park Bazaruto Archipelago.

After being picked up from the air-

strip in a TRACTOR – the sand is so soft it is the only vehicle that will not get stuck – we were driven along the beach to Bazaruto Lodge.

The resort has a stunning pool, Jacuzzis and beachside bar. Our hut was on the beach and had a massive double bedroom and bathroom complete with stone bath and door that led to a walled outside shower.

Bazaruto has something for everyone – while I eyed big game fishing trips and water-skiing, Michelle checked out the spa treatments.

Lobster

A half-hour stroll along the coast takes you to where the waves crash against the coral reefs. We took a dip in the sea and felt like the only people left on the planet.

A day later we went on a morning snorkelling trip to the reef, known locally as Coral Gardens. There were thousands of colourful fish, the kind I'd only ever seen in books.

It's fairly common to spot giant turtles, morays and reef sharks.

The food at Bazaruto, and Casa Rex, is exceptional. Even the bar snacks are first class. On our first

day we feasted on lobster claws as we enjoyed a glass of Shiraz – a world away from pints and peanuts.

Just a half-hour boat ride from Bazaruto is the aptly named Paradise Island. We joined two other couples for a day trip.

We'd been on the boat for less than 15 minutes when one of the party spotted dolphins. Within minutes a pod of the graceful creatures were circling our boat so we all jumped in.

We stopped at another reef to go snorkelling. This made our experiences earlier in the week seem average. This time there were huge shoals of fish so dense you could barely see five yards ahead.

By the time we'd eaten our picnic lunch and taken a walk around the island it was time to leave. To think I might never be fortunate enough to return was heart-breaking.

But we all snapped out of our reflective moods when the dolphins reappeared by the boat to remind us just how lucky we had been.

● SUN readers can get two nights free in beautiful Mozambique, along with a free transfer, worth £250 per adult. Call Imagine Africa on 0207 622 5114 and quote reference JEN2703. Subject to availability. Special offer prices only valid for bookings before April 16, 2010.

ALEX PEAKE

