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marie claire

YOUR 2006
ASTRO GUIDE
TO SEX AND
SUCCESS

the hot list

WHO WILL
BE MAKING
HEADLINES
NEXT YEAR?

Wow!

Party dresses
with X-factor

SOUTH AFRICA
REBORN

BLACK AND WHITE
FLASH THEIR CASH
AT THE RACES

US REPORT

THE TEACHER,
THE SCHOOLBOY
AND THEIR
TABOO AFFAIR

COVER STAR
*Reese is
the word*



AOL Keyword: Marie Claire

PLUS WIN OVER £8,000 OF FABULOUS HAIR PRODUCTS

So lovely SWAHILI

Dotted with magical sandy islands, the coast of East Africa is ideal for an exotic winter escape. Nigel Tisdall picks the best places to capture its intoxicatingly gorgeous mood

Stretching from Somalia to Mozambique, the Swahili Coast was once busy with slaves, spices and colonial rivalries; this string of sultry islands is a sleepy world of faded ports and white beaches. You can swim in waters so clear you hardly need a mask to see the brilliantly coloured fish and corals below. Temperatures hover around 26°C, the night sky is filled with a billion stars, and the local cocktail, the *dawa* (Swahili for medicine), is a delicious mix of vodka, limes, ice and honey. >





Breathtaking Matemwe beach on Zanzibar, right; a bungalow built on stilts at the Pole Pole eco-lodge on Mafia island, left



Whichever island you're on, super-fresh fish, left, is a given, because of the fleets of local fishing dhows, below; even the staff at Pole Pole are chically dressed, bottom



ZANZIBAR: THE BEACHES

The east coast of Zanzibar is fringed with white sand beaches and resort hotels that are a favourite spot to relax after some wild adventures on the mainland. The most indulgent place to stay is The Palms (00 255 747 437007; www.palms-zanzibar.com), an all-inclusive hotel and spa that has just six super-luxurious villas that come with whirlpool baths and a personal day-bed by the beach. Villas cost from £278 per person, including meals and transfers, while a larger companion hotel, Breezes (00 255 747 415049; www.breezes-zanzibar.com), has double rooms from £70 per person half-board.

For Crusoe-style abandonment with five-star trimmings, head north and take a short speedboat ride across to Mnemba Island Lodge (00 27 11 809 4300; www.cafrika.com). Set on a tiny, wooded ring of sand that takes 20 minutes to walk round,

it has fantastic snorkelling and diving – the perfect retreat for romance. There are ten spacious and secluded cottages built from wood and palm that cost from £329 per person, including meals and diving.

JOIN THE MAFIA

You'd expect to find Italians in a place called Mafia, but there's nothing sinister about this friendly and little-known island just a 35-minute flight southeast of Dar es Salaam. Run by the extremely hospitable Simonetta, who is from Milan, Pole Pole (00 255 22 2601530; www.polepole.com) is a spotless designer eco-lodge with ten rooms built on stilts set in tropical gardens – and there's an espresso machine. Luxury bungalows cost from £112 per person, including meals, transfers and snorkelling excursions in the largest marine park in the Indian Ocean. The sea is so turquoise and beautiful it looks like a magical potion, and there's barely a tourist in sight. ■

BOOK NOW

GETTING THERE

British Airways (0870-850 9850; www.ba.com) flies direct from Heathrow to Nairobi, from £617 return including taxes, and to Dar es Salaam, from £673. Okavango Tours & Safaris (020-8343 3283; www.okavango.com) does tailor-made packages.

A week in January at Pole Pole costs from £1,442, including flights, transfers, meals and activities.

TIPS

January and February are the hottest months, but ocean breezes keep temperatures bearable. March to May sees heavy rainfall, when many hotels

close. Visas and malaria precautions are required. Useful guides are Kenya (£14.95) and Zanzibar (£12.95, both Bradt). Kenya Tourist Board: 020-7202 6373; www.magicalkenya.com. Tanzania High Commission: 020-7569 1470; www.tanzania-online.gov.uk.