



# Spice Island

## FACT FILE

A two week trip to Zanzibar costs from £1,500 per person staying in a variety of hotels and guesthouses. Visits to Zanzibar can easily be combined with Tanzanian safaris, particularly to the Selous. For further details please call our East Africa specialists on 01869 276 250.



1 Fishermen on the beach.

2 Spice stall, Stone Town.

The best place to be at eight o'clock on a clear Stone Town morning is the rambling, exotic, noisy spice market. The trading starts with the first rays of the sun and, although it continues for much of the day, it is the first few hours that are by far the most interesting. Here, the real trading happens. Traders scoop into large barrels of black pepper, weigh turmeric and cardamom on small scales and balance precarious piles of ginger, chillis, lemongrass, nutmegs, cinnamon curls and vanilla pods on rickety wooden tables. If you want to buy spices on Zanzibar, it is here that you should come, not the tourist shops or general traders.

The spice trade in Zanzibar was started by the Omani Arabs in the early 19th Century. The first Omani Sultan, Sultan Seyyid Said, quickly realised Zanzibar's potential as a spice growing island with its hot humid climate and regular rainfall. Huge spice plantations grew up and by the late 19th Century spices were Zanzibar's main source of income. However, spices are not simply the domain of the large estates. You find spices in every garden - vanilla plants winding up pillars of houses, chilli plants outside doors and great swathes of cloves drying in the sun. Spices are woven into every aspect of Zanzibar life.

As a visitor, a good way to experience the spice trade is on a visit to a spice farm. A spice farm is not regimented ranks of trees and production

lines, rather more rambling gardens with shrubs and bushes growing in the shade of mango and jackfruit trees. You can wander beneath the pepper trees, smell the cinnamon bark that is freshly cut for you and pick a vanilla pod or a nutmeg. At the end of the tour you can buy spices straight from the farm, or you may wish to return to Stone Town to haggle in the market. And of course, each evening you can sit down to a fabulous seafood curry or spicy Swahili meal, knowing that all the spices have travelled no more than a few miles to get to your plate.

Ariane Grammaticas  
East Africa Specialist

## USEFUL TIP

When buying spices make sure you always buy them fresh from the farms or market traders. Never buy spices in the pre-packaged baskets as the baskets can contain insect eggs.

