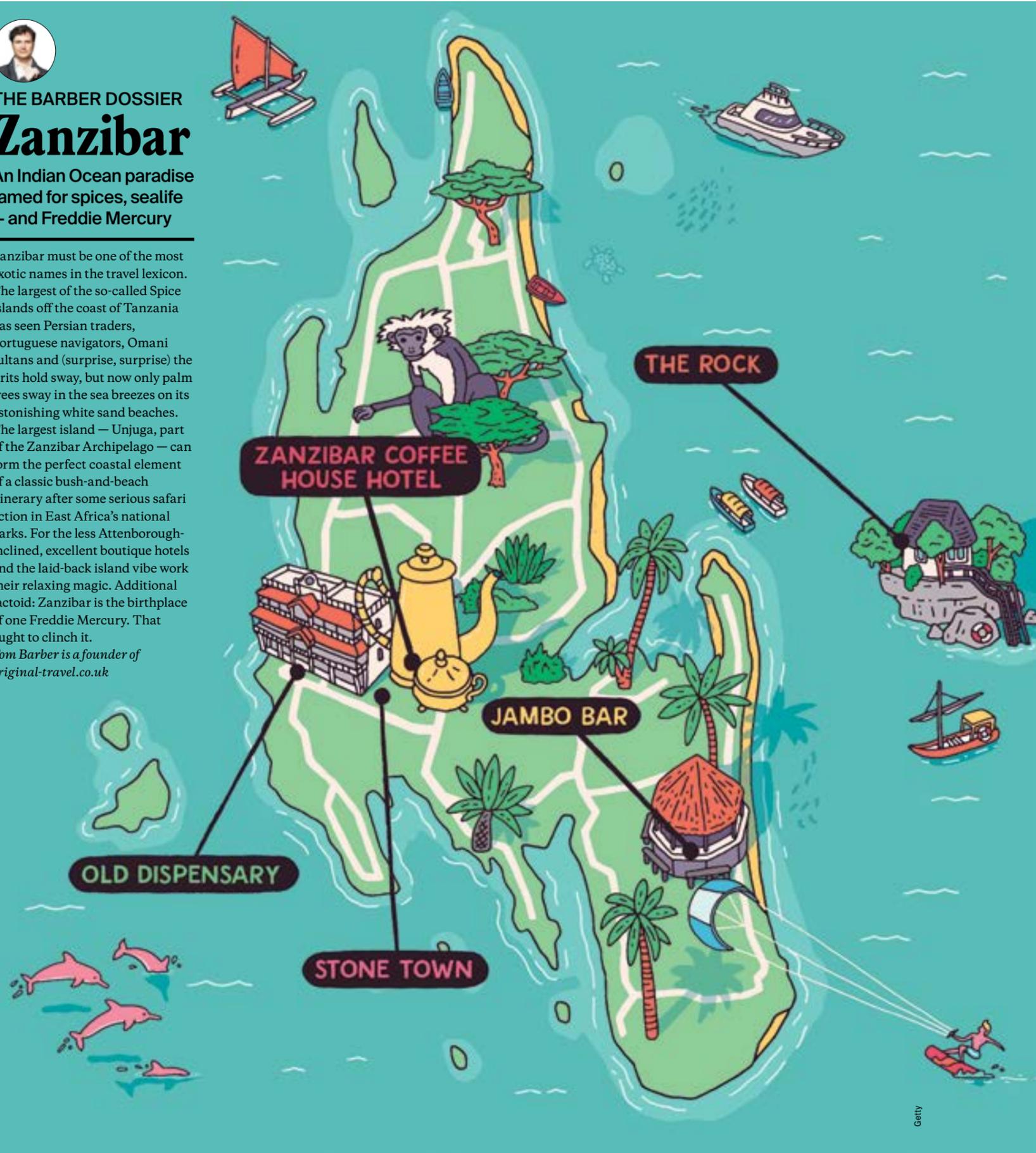




THE BARBER DOSSIER
Zanzibar
 An Indian Ocean paradise famed for spices, sealife – and Freddie Mercury

Zanzibar must be one of the most exotic names in the travel lexicon. The largest of the so-called Spice Islands off the coast of Tanzania has seen Persian traders, Portuguese navigators, Omani sultans and (surprise, surprise) the Brits hold sway, but now only palm trees sway in the sea breezes on its astonishing white sand beaches. The largest island – Unjuga, part of the Zanzibar Archipelago – can form the perfect coastal element of a classic bush-and-beach itinerary after some serious safari action in East Africa's national parks. For the less Attenborough-inclined, excellent boutique hotels and the laid-back island vibe work their relaxing magic. Additional factoid: Zanzibar is the birthplace of one Freddie Mercury. That ought to clinch it.
Tom Barber is a founder of original-travel.co.uk



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Illustrations by Damien Weighill

Stay →

White Sand Luxury Villas does what is says on the rather elegant tin with a range of, well, luxurious villas for couples (or families, if you must) that lead directly onto the, yep, white sand of Paje Beach. For the sake of catchiness, what's not in the name is that each villa has its own plunge pool, the excellent restaurant serves top-notch Zanzibari cuisine, and the roof bar is an idyllic spot for a sundowner. whitesandvillas.com

Lunch ↓

It might be ever so slightly gimmicky to have to take a boat, or swim, out to a tiny island restaurant, but The Rock – off Michanwi Pingwe beach – is well worth the journey. Just make sure you go when the tide's in or the whole experience is a bit of a (not) damp (enough) squib. The lobsters and octopii, caught each day by the resident "crustacean hunters", are grilled to perfection and best accompanied with an ice-cold local Kilimanjaro lager. therockrestaurantzanzibar.com



Dine

The Jambiani Tourism Training Institute doesn't sound the coolest place to eat, granted. A Canadian couple set it up to train locals in the hospitality trade, and on Friday nights the trainees put their skills into practice in its Alibi's Well Restaurant. Great atmosphere, great project, great food. jtti.org

Drink

The Livingstone Beach Restaurant, in the former British Consulate, feels untouched since the end of the British Protectorate in 1963, but that's part of the charm. Set in all its former colonial splendour right on the water in Stone Town (on the west side of the island), this is the place to enjoy a sunset drink and even occasional live music.

Avoid

Normal rules apply: ie, don't walk down an alleyway at midnight flashing your Rolex.

Get there

Kenya Airways flies to Zanzibar via Nairobi.

Party

Jambo Bar is a very laid-back place on Paje Beach for a relaxed evening session with locals and tourists, but for a rowdier time head just up the beach to Paje by Night for themed evenings such as "shudders" foam parties. pajebynight.net

Shop

Emerging Theseus-like from the labyrinthine lanes in Stone Town one street behind the waterfront, you'll find Fahari, a shop opened by Julie Lawrence, once accessories designer for Sir Paul Smith. The majority of clobber will appeal more to the missus, but there are some quality bags for the discerning gent, made by Zanzibari ladies. fahari-zanzibar.com



Do

Appreciate the extraordinary carved doors and architectural legacies of Zanzibar's varied settlers in Unesco Heritage Stone Town. At the bizarre manifestation of multiculturalism that is the Old Dispensary, head to Three Bees café for a quintessential Zanzibari experience: just choose a flavoured shisha tobacco for your hookah and settle back. whc.unesco.org

Why now?

Late July sees the Zanzibar International Film Festival; and July/August is kitesurfing season. Paje Beach is one of the best kitesurfing beaches in the world thanks to its reliable, cross-shore winds and shallow, sandy-bottomed waters. Happily, White Sand Luxury Villas owns Zanzibar Kite Paradise, the finest set-up on the beach. ziff.or.tz; zanzibarkiteparadise.com

When in...

Enjoy a cup of delicious East African coffee. The best in Zanzibar is found at the café beneath the imaginatively named Zanzibar Coffee House Hotel where the owner of both serves brews made from beans grown on his coffee estates in Zanzibar and the Southern Highlands on the mainland. riftvalley-zanzibar.com

See ↓

Life beneath the waves. Ras Nungwi Hotel arranges guided snorkelling and/or trips to the nearby marine conservation area of Mnemba Atoll where you can spot everything from turtles to – here's hoping – resident pods of dolphins. rasnungwi.com