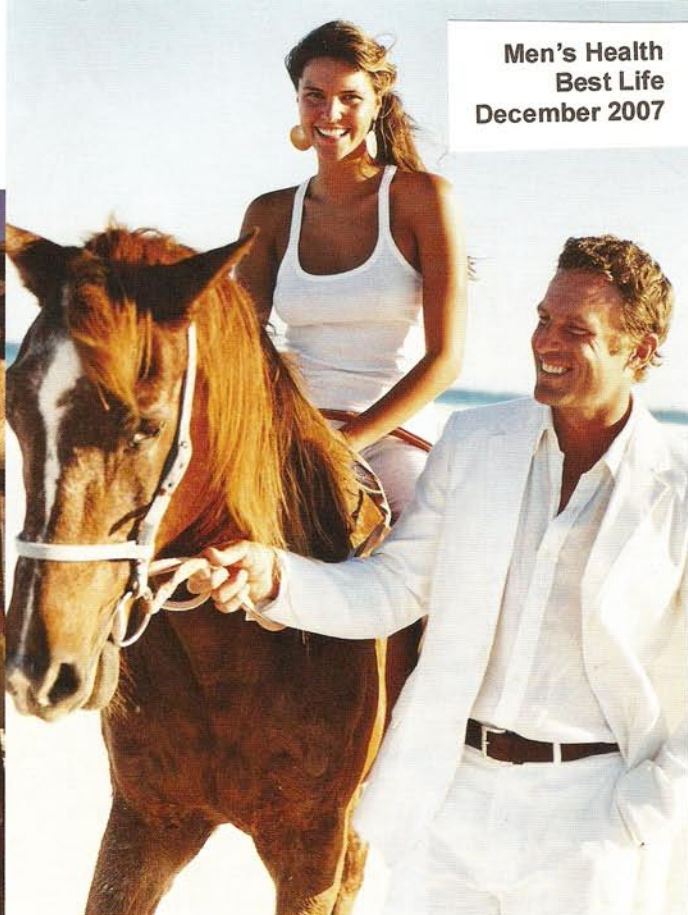




**MNEMBA ISLAND LODGE**  
Zanzibar.



## Rocktail Bay, Northern KwaZulu-Natal

A castaway fantasy come true: a 40km private beach and only 11 thatched en-suite chalets, all privately situated on raised stilts in the forest canopy. There are no telephones, TVs or radios to disturb, and – with the exception of guests and rare sea turtles, nesting here until March – no one to bump into when strolling along the shore. There's superb snorkelling and diving, private picnics, four-wheel-drive treks and guided nature walks to be had. **Rates:** R1 750 per person; R300 for children under 14, including all meals and most activities. **Nearest airport:** Richard's Bay or Durban. **Flight time:** under 1.5 hours. 011 807 1800, [rocktailbay.com](http://rocktailbay.com)

## Thonga Beach Lodge, Northern KwaZulu-Natal

Vying with neighbour Rocktail Bay as the most romantic destination on SA's coast, Thonga offers a little more luxury and better beach access. Book one of the five suites with sea views. Thonga's beach overlaps that of Rocktail, overlooked by nothing other than the undulating milkwood forest of the Maputaland Coastal Forest Reserve. Managerial couple Kevin and Bev are very knowledgeable about the area and amenities include sundowner trips on Lake Sibaya, dolphin-encounter boat trips, diving and Sea Spa treatments. **Rates:** R1 950 to R2 245 per person, depending on the room and season, and this rate is pretty much all inclusive.

**Nearest airport:** Richard's Bay or Durban.  
**Flight time:** under 1.5 hours. 035 474 7100, [isibindiafrica.co.za](http://isibindiafrica.co.za)

## Umngazi River Bungalows, Eastern Cape

If you want to sample the unblemished pleasures of the Wild Coast without roughing it, this is the place to do so. Located just south of Port St Johns, Umngazi overlooks a large estuary across which lies a deserted beach (accessible only from Umngazi). With babysitters on tap and a separate toddlers' dining room, this is the perfect family holiday, but honeymoon bungalows are private enough for lovers to remain blissfully unaware of the pitter-patter of little feet (incidentally, it's in one of these that the newly wedded Nelson and Graça chose to spend their first Christmas). **Rates:** R1 000 to R1 400, depending on the bungalow and season, including all meals. **Nearest airport:** Umtata or East London. **Flight time:** under 1.5 hours. 047 564 1115, [umngazi.co.za](http://umngazi.co.za)

## De Hoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape

This is the best value-for-money private beach experience in Africa, with only a handful of people to explore the 36 000-hectare reserve once the entrance gates close at 6pm. It's pretty basic though, with no shop or restaurant, a handful of campsites and only 10 self-catering cottages (only three of which are equipped with

bedding and towels; make sure you book these slightly more "luxurious" units as they also enjoy a better location). Experience desert-like beach dunes, some of the best whale watching in the world and picture-perfect coves to disappear in. **Rates:** R520 to R640 for a "luxury" cottage sleeping four people; R160 per extra person. **Nearest airport:** George or Cape Town. **Flight time:** 1.5 to two hours. 028 425 5020, [capenature.co.za](http://capenature.co.za)

## Medjumbe Private Island, Mozambique

One island, 26 people, two kilometres of beach. And, with a staff complement of 32, not a finger to lift. Each beach chalet comes with its own private plunge pool overlooking the equally inviting Indian Ocean. Best of all, the diving is as exclusive as the beach. Spend your days with the fish, exploring the coral banks and reef walls surrounding the island. (Tip: if you have kids, Matemo Beach Resort, another island in the Quirimbas Archipelago, is the one to book.) **Rates:** From R2 400 (\$350) per person, fully inclusive (Matemo from R2 000/\$300). **Nearest airport:** Pemba, Northern Mozambique. **Flight time:** three hours. 011 467 1277, [raniresorts.com](http://raniresorts.com)

## Mnemba Island Lodge, Zanzibar

Set within a marine reserve and surrounded by an atoll of coral reefs, this private island – with just 10 secluded beachside *bandas* – is generally