

VISITING MOZAMBIQUE: A SHORT LIST OF REQUIREMENTS AND THINGS TO REMEMBER (Travel Tips/Quick Check list)

Following a 7-day visit to the Paindane (near Inhambane), a list of important things to remember!

1. You need the following:
 - a) Passports are needed by all adults and children alike. Passports must not expire within 6 months of the visit and you need a blank page per country to visit. South Africans do not need formal visas in their passports (a local tourist "visa" (piece of paper) can be obtained at the border post for South Africans visiting less than 30 days—it costs about R20 per person)
 - b) A certified copy of your vehicle registration certificate (RC1) (also for trailers). Note: Many South African banks take in the vehicle RC1 registration documents when financing vehicles—just call them for a certified faxed copy of your registration certificate. Secondly, also a faxed letter from the bank authorising the cross border (also if the driver is not the owner of the vehicle). Same applies to rental cars. Remember to make a plain paper copy of any thermal fax paper versions
 - c) Your insurance company confirming by letter (fax) that your vehicle is insured and for which countries. This will typically cover all Southern African countries excluding Zambia, Tanzania and Angola (you will have to get special insurance for your vehicle when visiting those countries).
 - d) You will need special 3rd party vehicle insurance for Moz. This cost appr R150 for a vehicle + R80 for a trailer and can be obtained at the BP garage just after Komatipoort. You can also buy it at most AA and Outdoor Warehouse stores throughout South Africa (remember to take your passport and vehicle/trailer registration docs with). Border posts like Giryondo also sell 3rd party insurance.
 - e) All South African vehicles and trailers must have a "ZA" sticker at the back.
 - f) If you tow a trailer, a yellow triangle on square blue background sticker must be displayed at the front of your vehicle as well as the back of the trailer (you can use red warning triangles with reflectors tied to the front of the vehicle and back of trailer as a temporarily measure). These stickers must be displayed towards the right hand-side of the vehicle and trailer (ie. towards the centre of the road) and relatively close to the edge of the vehicle.
 - g) You must have two red warning triangles with reflectors inside your vehicle (although this doesn't seem to apply to locals that use tree branches in the road if their vehicles break down!)
 - h) A reflective over-jacket in your vehicle (buy it from Outdoor Warehouse or Midas for appr R60). All colours are acceptable: red/orange/lime green/yellow. Wear it when doing anything next to roads!
 - i) It is important that you declare all valuables on the SARS Customs form (ask for it) when leaving SA as this form is checked upon returning. Remember to declare all electronic equipment, GPS's, laptops, cameras, binoculars, fridges and especially diesel/petrol in Jerry cans, etc. It is recommended to use up all diesel/petrol in Jerry cans prior to returning to SA as these often create unnecessary explanations/problems at the border posts.
 - j) A "temporary import permit" must be obtained at the Moz-side border (about R40) again declaring all vehicles AND things like fridges, cameras, etc for Mozambique officials - remember to declare them otherwise you can be made to pay import duty on them. (They simply stamped the SARS document). Keep this document with you in case you are stopped at a road block. You also have to return it to customs when leaving Moz.
 - k) Keep ALL receipts/documents (i.e. the SARS form) in a single file as you are required to show them at Police checkpoints and even at Border posts when returning. Officials get irritated when you don't have them close by.
 - l) Just remember that any border post actually consists of TWO border posts, one each for the two countries and that you have to register and get documented at both sides! Don't just drive through!
2. Moz border posts all have different open times and also during summer/winter. In winter Komatipoort border post hours are 08:00 to 20:00 (Giryondo 08:00-15:00). Things go SLOWLY in Africa and you must in general plan for at least 1 hour to pass through any border post.
3. Check with your medical aid/insurance company that you have cover in Mozambique. Many do, but just make sure.

4. Petrol and diesel prices are about the same than in SA. Garages are mostly in poor condition. Look out for the newer ones with small convenience shops for better service. Diesel and petrol are readily available up to Inhambane. We could not pay for petrol with South African Petrol/Garage Cards. Some garages accept credit cards (+5% commission). Rands/US\$ were often acceptable, but check first. Rather have Meticans just in case. Avoid using very small garages (low pump rates=dirty fuel)

There are increasing reports of fuel being stolen during fill-ups at garages - so always get out of your vehicle and check that the pump is indeed zeroed and that all the fuel actually goes into your vehicle (and not some of it into the attendant's own jerry cans!)

5. Avoid driving alone in Mozambique as breakdowns can be tough to deal with (no infra structure/spares). Have basic spares and a good quality tow-rope with you (NOT a local hardware shop "nylon ski rope"!).
6. Speed limit on open roads is **100 km/h** but you will often come across speed limits varying between 60 km/h. to 80 km/h. when approaching the many villages and bus stops. If you tow a trailer then 60 becomes 50 in towns! We have come across a number of speed traps (radar/laser based) in these lower speed zones, so be careful!
7. Main roads are mostly tarred and in reasonable condition (you don't need a 4x4 to travel between major towns) but watch out for the many potholes! The toll road between Komatipoort and Maputo is excellent. The new road between Maputo to Xai-Xai and even up to the turn-off near Inhambane is in surprisingly good condition (thanks to the Chinese!) with wide roads and with virtually no potholes. North of Inhambane it varies a lot—from reasonable to poor (potholes/broken shoulders).
8. Lesser roads are virtually all 4x4 (lots of sand, mud) and don't risk it with a 4x2 vehicle (not even with a diff-lock). Also never risk driving them alone and definitely avoid unknown dirt roads or cross county (risk of landmines). There also lately terrorist activities in central Mozambique.
9. When driving remote and sandy roads, the *time* it takes to drive them is often much more important than the actual *kilometres*. Some GPS maps (such as Tracks4Africa) now include this information. Check this carefully as failing to do so can leave you stranded in the wilderness by nightfall, far from your destination.
10. Travelling at night is very dangerous. Apart from vehicles without lights and reflectors, there are so many pedestrians/cyclists next to and often in the road. If you have to drive after dark, drive slowly! We also came across someone doing the infamous "big injury act" by "fainting" next to the road just as you approach —watch-out as they are likely roadside robbers!
11. Road side toilet facilities (i.e. at garages) are in very poor condition and most of the time simply filthy. Remember your own toilet paper for the whole trip ("white gold")! Also some physical hygiene protection for toilet seats. We came across a few tolled garage toilets (10 Meticans) and these were clean (they were only at really well looked after garages, for instance appr 10km north of Xai-Xai.
12. There are a few South African convenience shops in bigger towns (although not nearly as many as in Botswana/Namibia). Local supermarket shops are also getting better. This is convenient to buy basic supplies from and also helps to reduce the amount of tinned food, bottled water, etc you have to take with you. Prices are 15 – 35% more expensive than in SA.
13. We haven't come across any veterinary check points (road blocks). Buying meat is not easy in Moz and we brought ours from SA (all vacuum packed). It is easy to buy prawns etc next to the coastal roads, but check the freshness of it! You may have to pay tax on fish/prawns/crayfish brought back into SA. Keep SA price tags on your meat – it is easier that way if you bring it back.
14. It is possible to drive from Johannesburg to Xai-Xai during day time (winter), but then you must leave the Komatipoort Border Post by not later than 10:00. If you want to drive to the north (Inhambane) you will need another 2.5 hours. I do not recommend driving from Johannesburg to Inhambane in one go—with the delays at the border post, the pedestrians in Maputo, the often busy single roads, 60km/h speed limits in the many small villages etc. will put lots of strain on the driver (fatigue) and you are also likely to end up driving at night, which is very dangerous.

15. There are a few camping sites along major routes and one doesn't have to make reservations ahead of time (unless in high season). We can recommend the following camp site: Casa Lisa (40 km North of Maputo) with small bungalows, a restaurant and grass camping site. No electrical points for camping however (pity, but ask owner to use the restaurant's electrical connection for your fridge). Good rates. (Tel +258 82 30-4199. GPS waypoint/coordinates S25°35.0610; E32°39.3190).
 16. There are a two new toll bridges over the Limpopo near Xai-Xai and Chibuto (Giryondo road). Both are 30 Meticans cash only (no Rands/USD). You MUST try to buy at least a few Meticans before driving these toll roads.
 17. Take your own bottled water or sterilising tablets for the whole trip as Moz has cholera. Camping sites seem to use borehole water—check with owners whether it is safe to drink.
 18. There are a few pharmacies in Moz and but most seem to be averagely stocked—rather buy your medicines in South Africa.
 19. Make sure you have a well thought through medical emergency kit to suit your family's particular requirements (adults and kids alike).
 20. Malaria is a BIG problem in Moz and on the increase. It is strongly recommended to consult a doctor before leaving South Africa. We did have mosquitoes in mid-winter—so be careful! Prevention against being bitten by mosquitoes is important and you are also urged to use anti-mosquito spray (or cream lotion) generously in the morning but especially in the afternoon and evening. Also wear long trousers, closed shoes and long-sleeved shirts after dusk. We also burnt mosquito coils/candles every evening.
 21. Credit cards don't seem to be much in use throughout Mozambique (except perhaps in bigger hotels/resorts, etc.). I have seen only MasterCard/Visa signs.
 22. Although it is difficult to give guidelines on how much cash (Meticans) you need, I would recommend at least 3,000—5,000 rands worth per week for a family of 4 (excluding fuel, accommodation). Border crossings must be paid in Meticans/Rands/US\$ (cash only) and varies between R50 and R100 per person plus R250 vehicle permit tax.
 23. Meticans cannot be obtained from South African Banks although you may find Bureau de Change outlets at Nelspruit and Komatipoort that do. We bought money at a Bureau de Change at the BP garage just before the Komatipoort border (be careful of road side money traders—they will rip you off if you don't know the exchange rates!). South African Rands are widely accepted in Moz, although you must always check the exchange rate offered. (Exchange Rate July 2011: Four Meticans for one Rand)
- We could draw cash at ATMs with Maestro, Visa and MasterCard, but many of these ATMs are unreliable in smaller towns. I recommend that you only draw money at bank-based ATM's during office hours in case something goes wrong with the transaction. Check with your local bank if you are required to register your card for international cash withdrawals. Also watch out for "scanning" and other defrauding devices fitted to ATM's.
- In order to buy money at South African Bureau de Change outlets, South Africans must remember to bring a certified copy of an official document that shows your RESIDENTIAL address as per the FICA Act requirements (a utility bill, TV license, insurance document, etc will suffice but not your ID-book's address). If you forget, you may have to buy money from road-side traders..
24. Although the sea temperature is great (even in winter), we found the winter night temperatures cool (although not cold)—remember warm clothes/jackets and light blankets to put on top of sleeping bags. Also protection against rain/wind (it did rain mid-winter with wind)!
 25. A map-based GPS is strongly recommended. I have found Tracks4Africa on Garmin to be the best although Garmin's maps are also getting better. I also prefer a good paper map and again Tracks4Africa's new paper map is excellent, although Shell and InfoMap paper maps are also reasonable. See: <http://www.tracks4africa.com/>, <http://www.infomap.co.za>, etc. Ask Kevin Bolton's Warehouse, Safari 4x4, Outdoor Warehouse, etc for advice if you are not sure.
 26. Cell phone reception (same GSM type as South Africa) is limited to towns and larger villages only - no

road side reception. 3G data access limited to larger towns only. Watch out for very expensive data roaming costs. Use a local Sim card rather.

27. Google Mobile Maps are of little use and not accurate (watch out for expensive data roaming costs if it attempts to download maps there - rather rely on dedicated GPS's such as Garmin, etc.
28. We stayed at Paindane (30km south of Inhambane) —a beautiful camp site with excellent swimming and safe snorkelling (especially for kids). Nice sea facing chalets and “casitas” (a large type of thatched shelter with a private toilet, hot shower, dish wash basin, braai and 220v electrical points (10 amps max). You can even put two 3m tents underneath it). GSM cell phone reception as well.

Update after our second visit in 2011: Paindane has become hugely expensive and camping for 6 people cost us effectively R1,100 per day (after many hidden charges such as “Camp fees”, etc.). You now also share a ridiculously small 100 litre electrical geyser with up to 16 people showering on both sides of the Casita. Poor maintenance is evident all over – inside the Casitas as well as the hedging/bushes around it. Also very sandy – you need a strong 4x4 for the thick sand, especially with trailers. So, wonderful place but in my view expensive camping and shabby infrastructure maintenance (looks like the owners are just milking the place!

Visit nearby Guinjata camp (very nice restaurant!).

Plse let me know if you have found this info useful! Any omissions/updates?

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