MPOPO ISLAND TRAILS CAMP

A conservation partnership between Niassa Carnivore Project and Mbamba Village in Niassa Special Reserve, Mozambique
Niassa Special Reserve is Mozambique’s largest protected area and one of the most important wilderness areas left in the world today because of its size (42,200km²; 16,000 mi²) and the important miombo habitat and wildlife it protects including lion, buffalo African wild dog, sable, elephant, hippo and leopard.

Eight times each year during the dry season (June to November) this unique island camp on the Lugenda river is opened for guests to experience the heart of the Niassa Special Reserve, in northern Mozambique. This eco-camp is set on a forest island at a magnificent hippo pool. Mpopo offers guests an exclusive and bespoke experience led by selected private guides passionate about Niassa’s wilderness and its people.

Finding ways for people and wildlife to live together.

This is the first community-based tourism camp inside the vast Niassa Special Reserve. The camp was designed, built and is managed through an innovative community conservation agreement between the Niassa Carnivore Project / Mariri Investimentos and the Mbamba village, a community of some 2000 people who live inside the 58,000 hectare eco-tourism concession inside the protected area.
Inspired by the centuries old “Sanja” tradition of sleeping out on raised decks, this locally designed and hand-crafted camp is expertly refurbished with bamboo, palm and thatch by village artisans each year. The soft furnishings are made by the “Kushirika” craft group. The camp has an extremely low human footprint, running on solar with no cement anywhere!

Our menu is derived from local ingredients with a Mozambican flavour with the majority of the ingredients sourced locally. Our goal is for 75% of the income generated to stay within 100km of the camp to generate a local economy.

Let this wilderness and its people have a conversation with you and know that by staying here you are making a direct and significant contribution to conservation and community development.

The camp forms part of our mission to promote coexistence between Niassa’s people and wildlife through sustainable revenue sharing, skills development and employment for the Mbamba community as an alternative livelihood.

Our goal is conservation through community development and protected area management.

Explore Niassa on your own terms and in your own time. This is a slow safari. Take a walking or canoeing trail, sleep out on an “inselberg” (one of Niassa’s distinctive island mountains) or head out on a game drive into the back country to find a lion pride.

Visitors are most welcome to visit our community and conservation programs in Mbamba village, tour the Mariri Environmental Centre, or just stay in and watch the hippos, crocodiles and birds in front of camp.
For birders the breeding pair of Taita falcons hunting in front of Mariri mountain are a big attraction along with 375 other species recorded in the reserve. In early December the Angola Pitta’s display in the thickets opposite the trails camp while the Bohm’s bee-eater is resident at the Environmental Centre.

The camp has four private decks and can host a maximum of 8 people. You will also need to hire a pre-selected guide. Through your bed night conservation levy, employment, annual refurbishment of the camp, and various conservation performance payments this camp is generating an ongoing sustainable source of revenue for Mbamba village. The funds have so far enabled the community to buy their own electric fence to reduce elephants raiding their crops, support a school lunch program and many other local initiatives. At every level we look for ways to make sure revenue stays local.

Sleeping under the stars with no light pollution is an unforgettable experience and you will really appreciate being the only guests in this special wilderness.

While you are looking for the small things there is always a chance the Africa wild dogs, lions, leopards, elephant, hyaena and buffalo will show themselves and when they do your sighting means that money goes to the village as a performance payment for their good conservation work.
This camp was built with the full participation and support of Mbamba. We strive to provide an ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable wilderness experience that is tightly linked to field conservation and community development. This is conservation tourism at its most authentic.

Find out more about our work at www.niassalion.org

Get in touch by email: mpopo@niassalion.org

Niassa Lion Project