

Beach House Living

THANDA ISLAND, SHUNGI MBILI ISLAND MARINE RESERVE, TANZANIA

“Decadence” is the word that comes to mind when I think of hiring an island for private use. And while Thanda Island certainly ticks all the boxes in terms of catering to your every whim, there’s something very Robinson Crusoe-casual about it too.

It probably has much to do with the ethos around the island. Ten years ago Thanda Safari’s MD, Pierre Delvaux, was given a brief from Swedish entrepreneur and philanthropist couple Christin and Dan Olofsson: to find an island for the Thanda collection (Thanda Safari, a private game reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, SA, being the other property).

After much research and many travels, it was a trio of islands off Tanzania’s east coast

that caught Delvaux’s attention. Located within the Shungi Mbili Island Marine Reserve, their coral reef blew him away. The Tanzanian Marine Parks hadn’t proclaimed this archipelago as a protected area, but Delvaux heard there was an intention of expanding the Mafia Marine Park. “It was the perfect opportunity to put in a proposal and lobby to proclaim these islands and link up with private partnerships in terms of developing it,” he explains.

In an effort to mirror Thanda Safari’s conservation and community successes, Delvaux’s spent the better part of the past decade setting up a partnership with Marine Parks and the leading NGO, Sea Sense, on a range of marine education programmes, as

well as research and conservation projects on the sea turtles, dugongs, dolphins, whale sharks and coral reefs in the marine reserves, and social upliftment programmes on nearby Mafia Island.

This dedication to the environment is visible on the island too, which is off the grid and fully solar-powered. At 8ha in size, 1,1km in circumference and 350m wide, with its private coral reef and a 1km exclusive zone, it offers a unique package for East Africa.

The decor’s beautiful, yet relaxed, with every area inviting you to just drop onto a couch (or lounger or beanbag!) and soak up the slow life. In keeping with lazy beach living, the rim-flow pool allows for daybed dreaming with a cocktail. You can also snorkel straight from the beach or take

a stand-up paddleboard and enjoy the low tide. Bath-time can be in your outdoor shower, indoor tub or even the copper bath specially set up on the beach. Dining al fresco is the order of the day, with meals on the deck taking preference, or even pizza-making at the outdoor oven.

This isn’t a room at a resort – it’s your private island for hire.

Despite having visited the island pre-opening, when construction wasn’t quite done, the consensus of our small group was that Thanda Island has soul – and therein lies its true magic. *Visit: www.thandaisland.com*

GETTING THERE

SAA flies direct to Dar es Salaam from OR Tambo International Airport seven days a week. From there, take a charter flight to Mafia Island, from where a short boat trip will get you to Thanda. Alternatively, book a helicopter transfer from Dar es Salaam. *Visit: www.flysaa.com*

