

Updated December 24

December 20 – Zanzibar

Zanzibar is an island off the coast of mainland Tanzania. It is part of Tanzania, specifically the “Zan” part. This is not a joke. Zanzibar was originally an independent country. So was Tanganyika. When African countries achieved their independences from Europe in the mid 1900’s, Tanganyika on the mainland and the Zanzibar archipelago merged to become Tanzania. So, Zanzibar really is the Zan in Tanzania.

Zanzibar is a spice island, as was made somewhat obvious walking through the open-air market. The front was divided into fish and meat sections, but there were many spice vendors in the back. Pictures of spices are not too exciting, but here is one from the seafood section.



Zanzibar obtained much of its wealth in the 1700 and 1800s from slave trade. This was the key embarkation point for slaves going east to India and the Seychelles. Not to the U.S. That was on the other side of the continent.

Zanzibar is a place (we were told) with religious freedom. While most people are Islamic, there are 50-some mosques, 4 Hindu temples, and 2 churches. Almost all are still practicing without the need for armed protection.

Another interesting fact about Zanzibar is that Dr. Livingstone was a loved and respected resident of Africa and lived nearby. When he died, the residents decided to place a cross in one of the churches in his memory. It's the one near the left edge of this picture below.



That, by itself, is not very interesting. The interesting part is that the cross is made from Livingstone's heart-wood. When he died, his body was sent to England for burial. But the Africans wanted some memory of him to stay, so they buried his heart here. The wood in the cross was obtained from a tree that grew at this burial site.

Interesting historical fact you should know but I did not. All tour guides in Africa talk about the Berlin conference of 1884-1885. I am almost embarrassed that I had never heard of it. Many African countries have weird shapes imposed by weird boundaries. I never thought anything about them, but they are all the result of this conference held in the 1880's with major European countries and the U.S. The purpose was to divide the African continent between the major powers. In doing so, country borders were created (except, I think, for Egypt). And many of the borders did not make sense for the African population. They were just what the Europeans negotiated.

December 21 and 22 – Dar Es Salaam

This is the capital of Tanzania and only about an hour ferry ride from Zanzibar. We're here two days. The first thing I found out is that everyone is an artist. When you walk the streets, locals come up to you to support them, a local artist, by buying their paintings. Funny how everyone has the same original art work. There must be one very popular art school in the country.

We were here for two days. The first was spent getting lost in the local market while learning the art of carrying products on your head.



We did finally figure out how to get back by asking some people from our cruise ship that we recognized on the street. How did we recognize them? In this city, anyone who is white is from the ship.

The second day we got a guide to take us through the national museum. It was one of those places where you knew everything in advance, but seeing it made it more real. I had learned that humanity originated in Africa near Tanzania. But seeing skulls from people over 2 million years old kind of brought that home. The skulls were from humanoid pre-homo sapiens.

Sorry I do not have any pictures.

One current history part of the museum documented close ties between Tanzania and the U.S. There were pictures of presidents Kennedy, Clinton, and Obama when they visited the country. There are also scholarship programs to help locals get an education in the U.S. And Kamala Harris also visited. Our museum tour guide met her and commented what a sincere and honest person she appeared to be. I hope our new president keeps the tradition alive by going for a visit.

December 23 – Day At Sea

It takes more than a day to get to our next stop in Madagascar, so we have a day to partake of onboard events. Those include a cooking demonstration, a singing class, and bridge competition. My activities did not overlap too much with those of Vicki.

One thing I did do was a half-hour on the treadmill. The machines face an open window where you can see the scenery go by while exercising. The scenery today was the Indian Ocean. Thirty minutes of water and waves. Not too much difference from spending a half hour looking at a computer screen saver.

December 24 – ~~Madagascar~~ Again

As is becoming too common on this trip, the authorities in Madagascar decided, the night before our arrival, to impose health testing requirements on all visitors to the country. We were not told what they were testing for, but the time to test 1,250 people would make visiting impossible, much less making the pre-arranged tours that started 30 minutes after arrival. Plus, there were some rumors that they were going to impose a several hundred US dollars fee per test. Another port skipped. We did get to see the waters around Madagascar.



To have something to write about anyway, we have been talking to many of our fellow passengers. Some of you reading this may think that our 32-day cruise is long. This is one segment of the ship we are on. The prior one started in Barcelona and sailed down the west coast of Africa to Cape Town. We started in Cape Town and will continue to Singapore. From there, the ship continues to Hong Kong. The other segments are about 20 days each. As far as I can tell, we are almost the only ones on the ship that did not also book the segment before this one, the segment after, or both. Seems like we are in a sailing-addicted group. Most people spend 25% to 35% of their retirement lives on ships, taking three 30-day trips per year, or more.

Summary to date:

- 1st port (South Africa) skipped due to swells
- 2nd port (South Africa) anchored OK, but tour was cancelled
- 3rd port (Mozambique) skipped due to social unrest
- 4th port (Madagascar) OK, but it was one we had not booked a tour
- 5th port (Comoros) skipped due to cyclone
- 5th port substitution (Zanzibar) OK
- 6th port (Tanzania) OK
- 7th port (Madagascar) skipped due to local authority regulations