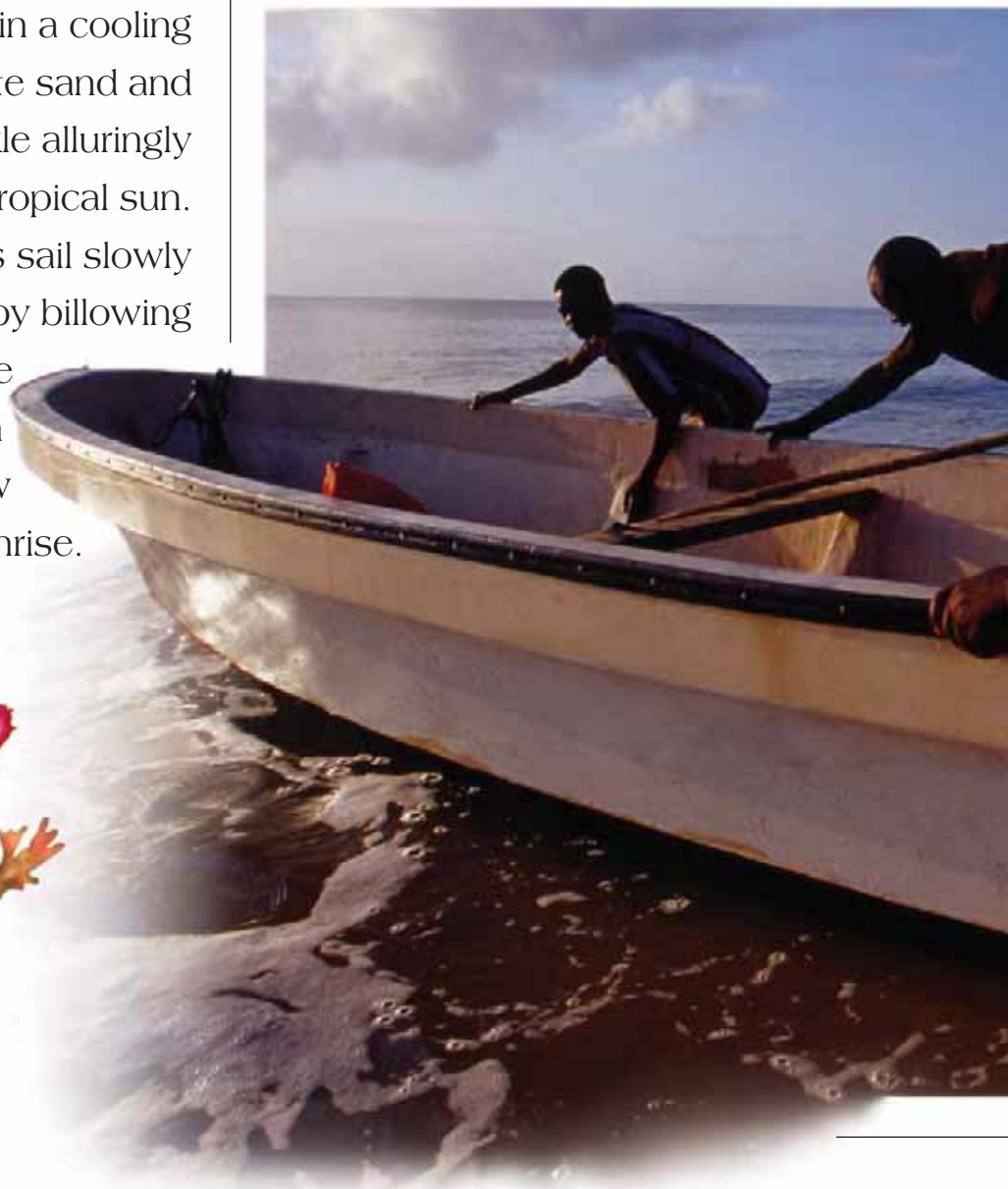


Saadani

SAADANI



Palm trees sway in a cooling oceanic breeze. White sand and blue water sparkle alluringly beneath the tropical sun. Traditional dhows sail slowly past, propelled by billowing white sails, while Swahili fishermen cast their nets below a brilliant red sunrise.





Saadani is where the beach meets the bush. The only wildlife sanctuary in East Africa to boast an Indian Ocean beachfront, it possesses all the attributes that make Tanzania's tropical coastline and islands so popular with European sun-worshippers. Yet it is also the one place where those idle hours of sunbathing might be interrupted by an elephant strolling past, or a lion coming to drink at the nearby waterhole!

Protected as a game reserve since the 1960s, Saadani was gazetted as a national park in 2002, when it was expanded to cover twice its former area. The reserve suffered greatly from poaching prior to the late 1990s, but recent years have seen a marked turnaround, due to a concerted clampdown on poachers, based on integrating adjacent villages into the conservation drive.

Today, a surprisingly wide range of grazers and primates is seen on game drives and walks, among them giraffe, buffalo, warthog, common waterbuck, reedbuck, hartebeest, wildebeest, red duiker, greater kudu, eland, sable antelope, yellow baboon and vervet monkey. Herds of up to 30 elephants are encountered with increasing frequency, and several lion prides are resident, together with leopard, spotted hyena and black-backed jackal. Boat trips on the mangrove-lined Wami River come with a high chance of sighting hippos, crocodiles and a selection of marine and riverine birds, including the mangrove kingfisher and lesser flamingo, while the beaches form one of the last major green turtle breeding sites on mainland Tanzania.

Saadani National Park

Size

1,062 sq km (415 sq miles)

Location

On the north coast, roughly 100km (60 miles) northwest of Dar es Salaam as the crow flies, and a similar distance southwest of the port of Tanga.

How to get there

Charter flight from Zanzibar or Dar with possibility of scheduled flights in the future. Thrice-weekly road shuttle from Dar, taking four hours in either direction. No road access from Dar along the coast – follow the surfaced Moshi road for 160km (100 miles), then 60km (36 miles) on dirt. Road access from Tanga and Pangani except after heavy rain. 4x4 required.

To do

Game drives and guided walks. Boat trips. Swimming. Visit Saadani fishing village, which lies within the reserve, where a collection of ruins pays testament to its 19th century heyday as a major trading port.

Best time

Generally accessible all-year round, but the access roads are sometimes impassable during April and May. The best game-viewing is in January and February and from June to August.

Accommodation

One luxury tented camp. Campsites planned.

