

# DESIGN DESTINATIONS

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## Zawadi Hotel, Zanzibar

The beachy ambience of this stunning new hotel on The Spice Island has been inspired by its stunning location

Perched high on a rocky precipice with unlimited views of the Indian Ocean and the stretch of idyllic beach below, the Zawadi is the newest addition to The Zanzibar Collection, a group of four family-owned boutique hotels on this famed archipelago off the East coast of Tanzania. Like its sisters, this property has a unique concept: inspired by its unrivalled coastal position, the aim has been to create a laid-back though undeniably luxurious retreat.

'We envisaged somewhere that would be truly individual and inviting in terms of style and ambience – a kind of barefoot luxury combined with privacy and tranquillity,' explains owner Nathalie Raguz Fusillo who worked with her husband Adriano Fusillo on the design. 'Designing the hotel from scratch gave us the freedom

and ability to realise that and create something that has not been done on Zanzibar before. We fully intended the ocean setting to be central to the overall design so the suites and terraces are positioned to take full advantage of the spectacular outlook,' she continues. 'The decor throughout is also inspired by the natural tones of the driftwood that washes up on the beach, but it's deliberately understated so as not to overpower the beautiful surroundings and views.'

### Design with conscience

Crucial to the project was that this previously untouched site should be developed as sensitively as possible. Only a small area of the seven-hectare site on the east coast has been built on, with ▶

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Clockwise from far left The Zawadi sits on an unspoilt cliff-top with limitless ocean views. The hotel's three open pavilions are grouped close to the pool at the heart of the property, and are where guests can relax over drinks or delicious meals. Considered design and landscaping leads the eye to the shimmering Indian Ocean from every vantage point.



DETAIL PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHARON PARSONS

**Clockwise from above** In the public areas – such as the elegant dining pavilion – large mirrors have been thoughtfully positioned to reflect the view of the ocean even when guests have their back to it. Every detail has been carefully considered: coconuts and limes are arranged in bowls and vases instead of flowers – which are left to grow in the surrounding gardens. Unique artwork and sculptures are displayed throughout.



the rest of the land dedicated to organic fruit and vegetable gardens, while natural features – including caves considered sacred by the local people – have been left untouched.

The three-year project, which employed only Zanzibari masons and craftsmen and used as much local material as possible, was not without its challenges, however. ‘The site is on hard coral rock that had to be excavated in order to create solid foundations for the construction and for the planting of more than 300 palm trees,’ Nathalie points out. ‘It was a slow and difficult process.’

Introducing ecologically sound initiatives was also intrinsic to the design process. In order to minimise both power and water consumption, for instance, vegetation that doesn’t require watering, including bougainvillea, oleander, frangipani and palms, were chosen for the gardens, while in grassy areas, an

environmentally friendly product, Solid Rain, was employed: this absorbs humidity overnight, and releases it directly to the roots of myriad plants during the day, minimising the need for irrigation by up to 50 per cent. Waste water, meanwhile, is recycled for use in the back garden. The buildings, too, have eco-friendly credentials: the thatched bungalow suites all feature vast glass panels double-glazed with UV absorbent gas, which helps to reduce temperatures inside, while soaring ceilings also allow heat to escape, minimising the need for air conditioning.

**Laid-back chic**

The intimacy of the Zawadi property combined with its spacious layout brings the sense of staying in a private residence rather than a hotel: there are currently only six suites (with plans to ►



The spacious suites all follow the hotel's signature driftwood colour palette with bespoke furnishings and decorative pieces. Vast glass panelled doors create a seamless link to the terrace and sea beyond: the layout of the room means that the views can easily be enjoyed from the beautifully draped beds.



*'The understated decor allows those staying here to really unwind'*



build just three more) together with three airy open pavilions at the heart. 'We believe space and privacy are becoming more and more important to guests' sense of value,' says Nathalie, 'so the rooms are very generous with an understated decor that allows those staying here to really unwind. The suites' terraces are all on the cliff front so there's nothing to disturb the view or privacy.'

Undoubtedly, much of the laid-back feel at Zawadi is down to the decor. A gentle beachy palette of grey, stone and white, combined with organic materials, finishes and textures, inform both the private and public spaces. All the furnishings were specially designed, sourced or adapted for the hotel, while finishing touches include a wealth of handcrafted wrought-iron

and beaded chandeliers, specially embroidered cushion covers, traditional basketware, and sea-inspired motifs. Natural elements such as whitewashed dead tree branches form sculptural artwork, while bowls of bright green coconuts and vases filled with limes bring zingy shots of colour to the otherwise neutral palette.

The Zawadi – the name means 'gift' in Swahili – offers a refreshing, unique and inspiring experience for its guests, but without ever detracting from the magnificent surroundings – just as it has been intended. A stay here is not only a chance to experience peace, relaxation and comfort, but is an opportunity to appreciate the very best that nature has to offer on this beautiful island. It is a gift indeed.

• [zawadihotel.com](http://zawadihotel.com); [thezanzibarcollection.com](http://thezanzibarcollection.com)