

# Jozani Forest: A Magnificent Nature Walk On Exotic Zanzibar

ITM London

Zanzibar's Jozani Forest is home to one of Africa's rarest primates the red colobus monkeys which may number only about 1500.



Zanzibar leopard

Most of Zanzibar's indigenous forests have been lost to agriculture or construction, but the Jozani

Forest in the centre of the island has been declared a protected reserve. It covers 44 sq km,

roughly 3% of the whole island and is only 24 km southeast of the capital Stone Town - an easy stop-off en route to the east coast beaches.

Located on a narrow neck of land between the Chwaka Bay in the north and Uzi Bay to the south the reserve contains about 100 tree species from a total of 43 families.

Colobus monkey and baby



Unique trees in Jozani forest



Jazoni forest

Jozani Forrest together with the adjacent Chwaka Bay forest have been converted into a reserve known as the Jozani Chwaka Bay Conservation Area (JCBCA). This has added the rich mangrove forests of the Chwaka Bay into the reserve making the ecosystem the largest conservation area in Zanzibar.

The large mangrove swamp and the natural forest is home to a few unique species including the

red colobus monkey which are found only on Zanzibar. There are also Sykes monkeys, bush babies, duikers, hyraxes, over 50 species of butterfly and 40 species of birds.

The most unique animal in the reserve is the Zanzibar Leopard (*Panthera pardus adersi*). In the local legend, this reportedly extinct species, has been given a mythical status and is called 'Chui' a creature which features significantly in the superstitious

beliefs of the people. Sorcerers reportedly keep this animal as their pet and scare people by spinning stories that the animal appears like a spirit and disappears into thin air. It was last reported in 1999 and officials, and the locals are assertive that the species is not extinct, though not sighted since 2003. The photographic proof of this species is at present only in the form of a stuffed museum display in Zanzibar Museum and a few skins in museums in London and Massachusetts

in USA. There is also a smaller leopard with spots, which is a biological product of the larger animal.

The reserve is completely managed by the local people from



Enjoying a walk in Jozani forest

JCBCP logo



Mangrove swamp

eight villages: Chwaka, Pongwe, Uroa, Marumbi, Mapopwe, Charawe, Ukongoroni and Michamvi making the management of the new conservation area a unique participatory model.

The villagers operate tree nurseries and act as rangers and guides. From the visitors' centre on the main road to the south, there's a 45-minute nature trail - the mangrove road walk on which a knowledgeable guide

accompanies visitors into the beautiful, very peaceful forest.

The walk begins under the shade of an old tamarind tree. It is a forest in the sea. The brackish water that flows through the mangrove is a nursery ground for hundreds of species of tropical fish, which can be seen feeding in the shallow waters, whilst crabs and other molluscs can be observed feasting in the nutrient rich mud.

As visitors explore Jozani, their senses are awakened to natural scents, and the sounds of the forest. The wildlife and vibrant shrubbery are amazing.

The main attraction in the forest are the colobus monkeys. The back of their heads and back are very red, separated by a black stripe across the shoulders which continues down the arms. The tail has varying shades of red, often graduating to a sandy orange.

Adult males and females are almost equal in body size. There are usually only from one to four adult males, with many more adult females and young of different ages in a group.

Although legally protected the monkeys are highly endangered. Their survival depends on the success of protecting them in their natural habitat as they have never been kept in captivity for a long period of time. Their habitat is



increasingly being destroyed due to the demands of a growing human population for farm land, fuelwood and charcoal. The monkeys' choice of food often brings them into direct conflict with farmers who once killed them as pests when they were found feeding in fruit trees. Now many monkeys live in small groups which are separated from one another and their rate of reproduction is low. Ideas are being discussed to share the revenue from tourism with the

local villagers to ensure their survival.

Even though it is on the list for inclusion as a World Heritage Site, the facilities at Jozani Forest are modest with remarkably few souvenirs and a small local cafeteria with soft drinks and home cooked food.

The reserve is a 'must-see' for those holidaying on Zanzibar and those making a day trip to Tanzania's magical island.

