

Comoros



The Comoros islands are wrapped in a fragrant blend of ylang-ylang oil, Arabic aesthetics, African warmth and French chic. Not only this, but they have a colourful history of sultans and soothsayers, plantation owners and eloping princesses



The four islands of the Comoros archipelago lie between the Northern tip of Madagascar and the African mainland. The earliest inhabitants were probably of Malay-Polynesian origin. Later settlers came from mainland Africa, Madagascar and the Arab world. The Shirazis from Persia became dominant in the 15th-16th century, establishing sultanates in the Comoros linked to their trading settlements in Kilwa (on the coast of present day Tanzania) and Zanzibar, and dealing in spices and slaves to the Middle East. Comoros became known for Islamic learning and exported teachers to Zanzibar. Today the dominant religion is Islam.

Mayotte was the first island of the archipelago to come under French control. France established protectorates over Ngazidja, Nzwani and Mohéli in 1886 and declared the Comoros a French Colony in 1912, administered from Madagascar. In 1947, the Comoros became a separate French Overseas Territory, gaining a degree of internal autonomy in 1961.

In a referendum held in December 1974, 96% of Comorians on Ngazidja, Nzwani and Mohéli voted for independence from France, but a majority on the island of Mayotte voted against it. Political tensions grew until, on 6 July 1975, the Comoros declared independence unilaterally.

Today the Comoros is one of Africa's big surprises. The Comorians remain polite, friendly and honest, despite the political difficulties that have troubled the country since independence. Having been out of the tourist brochures for sometime the Comorians colourful culture is, as yet, uncorrupted by tourism. The islands themselves are some of the world's most beautiful, with scores of empty, spectacular beaches and a mysterious ambience reminiscent of Zanzibar. You will also find picturesque old Arab towns, unique wildlife, luxuriant vegetation, which includes vanilla and ylang-ylang plantations, an active volcano and lots of great walking opportunities.

Grande Comoro, known as Ngazidja by the Comorians, is the largest, and geologically the youngest of the Comoros Islands. Grande Comore is also home to the four Islands only international airport, which is linked by regular flights from Tanzania.

The island's most prominent geographical feature is 2361-meter high Mt. Karthala, the active volcano that bubbles at the roof of the island. The coast is mostly raw black lava with semi-submerged coral on the outer edge. Most of the island's population and activity is concentrated on the marginally level west coast, whilst the sparsely populated and dramatically beautiful east coast remains quiet and traditional, with only a few tiny thatched-hut villages.

As well as Grande Comoro our Discovery tour includes a side-trip to Mohéli, reached by a short flight. Described by many travellers as a super tranquil destination and a little lost paradise the island is well worth a visit. It is the smallest, wildest, least populated and developed island of the Union. The island's south coast, coral reefs and dramatically craggy offshore islets are protected by the Comoros' only national park, the Parc Marin de Mohéli, which safe guards dolphins, whales and sea turtles.

Sample Itinerary: Comoros Discovery

Private Journey: Min 2

Rating: **T**

Transport: 4WD, plane

- Day 1 UK to Grande Comore via Dar es Salaam
- Day 2 Arrive Grande Comore
- Day 3 Grande Comore
- Day 4 North west of Grande Comore
- Day 5 Fly to Mohéli
- Day 6 Mohéli
- Day 7 Fly to Grande Comore
- Day 8 South of Grande Comore
- Day 9 Grande Comore, optional trek of Karthala Volcano
- Day 10 Grande Comore
- Day 11 Grande Comore
- Day 12 Overnight Dar es Salaam
- Day 13 Arrive UK

Guide Price: £1,100

(Including flights from £2,150)

Journey Ideas: For those that are looking to get off the beaten track but still enjoy a fine beach holiday with a difference, why not combine your visit to the Comoros with a safari in Tanzania

For detailed itineraries, prices and dates please visit www.comoros-undiscovered.com or call our well-travelled team.

