

Zanzibar: just the name conjures up exotic images of paradise and wonder from books and films alike. But this island actually exists and, belonging to Tanzania, lies just off the coast of east Africa. It boasts an airport with a single runway and a growing tourism industry. Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous state within the United Republic of Tanzania and consists of numerous small islands and two main larger ones – Pemba and Unguja, the latter of which is usually referred to as Zanzibar.

Once an independent nation and then a British Protectorate, Zanzibar has had an airfield since the 1950s when it was served by the DH89A Dragon Rapides of East African Airways (EAA). The

Indigo Aviation's Douglas DC-3 sits on the apron outside the terminal building.

Rapides were upgraded to Douglas DC-3 Dakotas and EAA went on to also serve Kenya, Tanganyika (later becoming the Republic of Tanzania) and Uganda. In 1977, EAA failed and was dissolved with each government forming its own national airline, Kenya Airways, Air Tanzania and Uganda Airlines. Air Tanzania began operations soon after with three Fokker F-27s and two Boeing 737-200s on routes linking Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar and Nairobi. While Kenya grew and flourished with the growth of capitalism, Zanzibar chose to stay on the socialist side with some backing from Eastern Bloc countries, it remained a quiet, dreamy island with cloves as its main export from Pemba.



Ground handlers stand in the shade of the wings of ZanAir's Let 410 5H-ZAP.

Below - Fly540 flies to the island from Kenya using its ATR turboprops.

However, its fortunes changed in the early 1990s with the growth of tourism and the open market. Kenya Airways, Gulf Air and in 1998, Ethiopian Airlines began flying to Zanzibar. In addition, charter flights from Italy landed weekly, bringing tourists to the islands. Two small airlines kept Zanzibar linked to the rest of east Africa. Coastal Airlines from Dar es Salaam operated Cessna Caravans from Zanzibar to Arusha and the national parks, while ZanAir (Zanzibar's only really local airline) linked Zanzibar to Pemba, the parks and Mombasa. This airlink, using Cessna 404's, a Cessna Caravan, a Piper Seneca and two Let 410s, is the closest in terms of services to the old EAA operation that kept Zanzibar linked with the mainland >>

ZANZIBAR/ KISAUNI AIRPORT	
ICAO Code:	HZTA
IATA Code:	ZNZ
Position:	S0613.19 E03913.29
Elevation:	54ft (16m)
Runway:	18/36 8,077ft (2,462m)



Zanzibar KISAUNI AIRPORT

The main international gateway to the islands of Pemba and Unguja attracts tourists from Africa and Europe. Raf Jah reports.





and the world.

Kenya Airways bought a controlling stake in a Tanzanian airline called Precision Air at the end of the 1990s. It then cancelled all of its own services to Zanzibar and used Precision Air to operate them instead. Gulf Air dropped its route in the 2000s and although this was taken over by Oman Air operating B737-700s and -800s – the service was discontinued because the growth in tourism from the Gulf Region did not meet expectations.

At its peak, Air Tanzania operated

B737s twice-daily from Dar es Salaam to the Islands and four times a week from Zanzibar to the Comoros archipelago. Although this service proved popular, the airline was plagued with management and financial difficulties and many services, including these to Zanzibar, were often cancelled.

Airport

The runway at Zanzibar is 8,077ft (2,462m) long. The airport has limited facilities and inbound aircraft use a Non-direction Beacon (NDB) for their

Local services within Tanzania are flown by small commuter aircraft such as this Cessna Caravan 5H-NAC of Northern Air.

approach as there is no Instrument Landing System (ILS). Due to the warm climate, a fully-laden Airbus A330 cannot take off in the hottest months on the relatively short runway. Instead, it uses a restricted fuel load and makes a refuelling stop at Mombasa on its return flight to Europe.

During the peak tourist season, Zanzibar handles up to five medium-sized aircraft per day as well as the local operators, which include ZanAir, Coastal Aviation, Fly540 (Kenya) and Precision Air. Charter carriers include Eurofly, Air Italy, Neos, Condor and Livingstone, while low-cost operator 1Time links to Johannesburg in South Africa. However, for aviation enthusiasts, the most popular carrier is Indigo Aviation with its sole DC-3 linking the two islands (see *Airliner World*, February 2010, Pages 53-58). There are no air bridges linking to the terminal, so it is usual for passengers to walk to their flights.

The terminal building is a relic of the past years of socialism and is likely to have been built by either the East Germans or Chinese more than 35 years ago; records are virtually impossible to

Left • South African low-cost carrier 1Time links to Johannesburg twice a week.

Below left • Zanzibar Airport's terminal building was built by the East Germans or Chinese and struggles to cope with passenger numbers.

Below • The main attraction for aviation enthusiasts is this Indigo Aviation Douglas DC-3. (All photos author unless stated)



Right • The terminal's shops are rudimentary but they do sell local souvenirs.

Below • ZanAir has a fleet that includes Let 410s, Cessna 404s a Cessna 402 and a Piper Seneca.

Bottom • Most local tourist charters fly to rudimentary airstrips and the Cessna Caravan is an ideal aircraft.

Below right • The attraction for tourists include the unspoiled beaches and shallow sea around the island. (istockphoto)

find. Zanzibar is one of the poorest regions of one of the poorest countries in Africa, and so in the past no funds have been made available to bring the terminal up to any kind of modern standard. Passengers have complained that the building was too small and too hot. However, in recent months, funding has been made available from local companies for an extended terminal and an extension to the runway. The new facility is currently under construction and once complete will ease congestion and allow aircraft to fly non-stop to Europe with full loads.

There has been talk of larger airlines from the Middle East operating into Zanzibar at some stage in the future, but at present, there is no confirmation of any plans. For the meantime, Zanzibar remains, for tourists, the unusual, romantic and exotic spice island paradise (with the occasional sound of Rolls-Royce turbines). **AW**

