

# ZANZIBAR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL'S SPECTACULAR SETTINGS SHOWCASE HIGH QUALITY AFRICAN CINEMA, MUSIC AND ARTS



## Danny Glover's "Toussant" Will Open Festival, June 27- July 4, 2009

*World class films with an African focus, international music presentations, and a stunning natural setting are in store for those cinema and arts lovers attending the 12th annual Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF).*

Stone Town, the Festival's venue in Zanzibar, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, provides an exotic setting for the 10 days of festivities. ZIFF has captivated serious followers of International film and music, students of African culture past and present, and travelers interested in arts'-centered fun for over a decade. Originally called the Festival of the Dhow Countries, ZIFF is now not only the largest annual event in East Africa, it is truly one of the most unique in the world. The Festival events in Stone Town typically attract 7,000 foreign visitors and more than 120,000 local guests; while the total number of people attending all the Festival events held throughout Zanzibar and Pemba is 220,000.

## Galaxy of Stars

Stars attending the festival will include Danny Glover, whose film "Toussant" will open the Festival, Charles Burnett, star of the expected hit "Namibia", and Mexican acting sensation Gael Bernal Garcia. The event's theme this year is "Media, People and Environment."

For the first time ever at a film festival, ZIFF 2009 will present four feature films directed by African women directors (from Zambia, Uganda, Sudan and South Africa). In total, 24 African directors and 8 festival directors from world film festivals are expected to come together in Stone Town for this year's festival. In the musical realm, there will be a "Reggae Sunsplash" theme, with bands from the African continent combining with those from Australia and the Netherlands in a tribute to the late Jamaican reggae artist, Bob Marley.

## Tourism Minister Hassan

There is no question that the ZIFF festival can only take place in Zanzibar. The Hon. Samia Hassan, Zanzibar's Minister for Tourism, Trade and Investment said, "The Zanzibar International Film Festival and its rich cultural diversity reflects the essence of Zanzibar itself, a Zanzibar of dreams,

of journeys yet to be undertaken and the Zanzibar of history impregnated by traces of thousands of visitors."

"Visitors are attracted to the Zanzibar International Film Festival for its outdoor setting and to celebrate the unique cultural heritage of Africa and the Dhow countries of the Indian Ocean region and their global Diaspora," says ZIFF's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Martin Mhando. "And then to enjoy the charm of Stone Town and the miles of white sandy beaches of Zanzibar and Pemba."

ZIFF's major outdoor performances take place in the city's Old Fort, featuring an ancient amphitheatre; others occur in the House of Wonders and Zanzibar's Museum of History and Culture. There will also be street performances, including story telling, live music and dance, art exhibits, and a range of film and video industry workshops, seminars, screenings, and social events.

## About Stone Town

Stone Town is a place of festivals, from music to movies to dance. It has been selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, based on the fact that it is a "fine example of the Swahili coastal trading towns of East Africa. It retains its urban fabric and townscape virtually intact and contains many fine buildings that reflect its particular culture, which has brought together and homogenized disparate elements of the cultures of Africa, the Arab region, India, and Europe over more than a millennium." Retaining much of its 16th Century architecture, one can walk winding streets and stroll to the former Sultan's Palace, the House of Wonders Museum, the Portuguese Fort and Gardens, and the Turkish Baths. Working plantations outside of the city produce spices including vanilla, nutmeg and cinnamon.

Founded in the 16th century as a Portuguese trading post, Stone Town was given to the Sultan of Oman in the 19th Century. It became a major center of the East African ivory and slave trade. In 1890, it became the capital of the new British protectorate of Zanzibar, which also included the island of Pemba. In 1963, Zanzibar became an independent republic, with Stone Town remaining its capital. When Zanzibar then merged with Tanganyika in 1964, it became part of today's democratic United Republic of Tanzania.

## Zanzibar Festival Tours

The official tour operator for ZIFF is Zanzibar Festival Tours. It offers a 12-night program to the Festival from June 26-July 8, including expert guides, festival performances, exploration of Stone Town, trips to Prison Island beach, with its century old tortoises, spice plantations, Jozani Forest, home to rare monkeys, antelopes and birdlife, the Mbweni ruins, which includes an exotic botanical garden and the famed Mbweni Ruins Hotel.

### ABOUT ZIFF

The Zanzibar International Film Festival is organized annually as a non-profit organization whose goal is to protect and conserve the rich cultural heritage of the African region and its Diaspora as well as showcasing the works of modern contemporary artists. In no other festival is there such a unique chance to learn about Africa's cultural past and present in such a relaxed and exotic setting.

### ABOUT ZANZIBAR

Zanzibar is part of the East African United Republic of Tanzania. It consists of the Zanzibar Archipelago in the Indian Ocean off the coast of the mainland. There are numerous small islands and two large ones: Unguja (the main island, informally referred to as "Zanzibar"), and Pemba.

### Getting There

A 15 minute flight from Dar es Salaam, or a two hour boat ride, Zanzibar's East coast, has beautiful coral reefs and sand bars revealing small pools of starfish, minnows, and anemones. Up north, ocean swimming, smooth beaches and white sand make for dazzling days in the sun. The port city of Stone Town dominates the west coast. The beaches of Mangapwani, where former

slave caves are visible at low tide and nearby Bububu are less than half an hour's drive away. The Chole Island Marine Park is just off Stone Town, as are Prison, Grave, and Snake Islands.

On the south coast of Zanzibar lies the Menai Bay Conservation Area, a sea turtle protection area for the endangered species that come to breed on the island. Roads to the southeast coast take visitors through the Jozani Forest, home to Zanzibar's rare Red Colobus monkeys and a number of other primate and small antelope species.

### ABOUT TANZANIA

Tanzania, the largest country in East Africa, is focused on wildlife conservation and sustainable tourism, with approximately 28 % of the land protected by the Government. It boasts 15 National Parks and 32 game reserves. It is the home of the tallest mountain in Africa, the legendary Mt. Kilimanjaro; The Serengeti, named in October, 2006, the New 7th Wonder of the World by USA Today and Good Morning America; the world acclaimed Ngorongoro Crater, often called the 8th Wonder of the World; Olduvai Gorge, the cradle of mankind; the Selous, the world's largest game reserve; Ruaha, now the largest National Park in Africa; the spice islands of Zanzibar; and seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Most important for visitors, the Tanzanian people are warm and friendly, speak English, which together with Kiswahili, are the two official languages; and the country is an oasis of peace and stability with a democratically elected and stable government.

### Information

For more information about ZIFF visit [www.ZIFF.org](http://www.ZIFF.org)

For Zanzibar Festival Tours visit [www.zanzibarfestivaltours.com](http://www.zanzibarfestivaltours.com)

[zanzibarfestivaltours.com](http://www.zanzibarfestivaltours.com)

For more information on Zanzibar visit <http://www.zanzibartourism.net>

For more information about Tanzania visit [www.tanzaniatouristboard.com](http://www.tanzaniatouristboard.com)

### Photos:

Left: The ancient amphitheatre in Stone Town, Zanzibar is one of the many outdoor sites featuring the films, musical performances and other entertainments presented at the annual Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), taking place this year from June 27-July 4, 2009. (Photo courtesy of ZIFF.)

Below: This is something mesmerizing to watch and listen to for both adults and children of every age and nationality at the annual Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), taking place this year from June 27-July 4m 2009. (Photo courtesy of ZIFF.)



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