



Miti Miwiri | Ibo Island

A GUIDE TO GET TO IBO ISLAND
FROM MALAWI

The Malawi/ Ibo Island route, is becoming an increasingly popular itinerary covered by independent travellers. There are number of very interesting places to visit along the way. So whether you come with your own car or by public transport you will find indications regarding your mean of transport. Although there are several possible crossings from Malawi, we look at the most convenient and important ones: Mulanje and Mandimba.

Mandimba border crossing Map I



- *The route marked in green is the way to Ibo Island. It passes through the points A, B, C,D, G, H on the map*
- *The route market in blue are deviations to interesting sites to visit they are the points E and J on the map.*

TRAVELLING BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

For those who choose to travel by local means; there are two different routes you could take depending on how much time you have and on what you would like to visit. Each route is explained with its own map. MapI shows the Mandimba route, whereas MapII shows the Mulanje route:

VIA MANDIMBA (Point B on MapI) is the shortest way and probably the most interesting way for travellers whose movements are depending on public transport. This route is particularly recommended if you would like to take 'the train of life'* between **Cuamba (Point C on MapI)** and **Nampula (Point D on MapI)**. Mandimba is convenient for Cuamba and northern Mozambique. There are frequent transport on the Malawian side to Mangochi, where you can get minibuses to Namwera and Chiponde. Once in Mozambique, vehicles go daily from Mandimba to **Cuamba**. You will have to spend one night in Cuamba to take the train.

* There is a number of things you need to know about 'the train of life'. Firstly the train only goes to Nampula every second day as it alternates between travelling from and to Nampula. The train departs from Cuamba on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and from Nampula on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. So make sure you select the correct day or you will have to spend one extra night in Cuamba. We also recommend that you purchase your ticket the day before travelling. To date there are two classes available, 3rd and 2nd. We strongly recommend taking the second class as you will need the convenience of a bed for this long ride. The train can take up to 14 hours to cover the 197km separating Cuamba from Nampula. It stops at every village along the way where it loads and unloads. Hence the name 'The train of life'.

Once in **Nampula (Point D on MapI)**, you will need to spend one night there to recover from your train ride and to organize your next stop. From Nampula you could go to **Mozambique Island (Point E on MapI)**, **Pemba (Point j on MapI)** or straight to **Ibo Island**. This later requires adventurous minds as you might have to sleep along the way if things do not go according to plan.

If **Mozambique Island** is your next stop you will find many minibuses constantly leaving to the island. It is an easy ride taking 2 hours. Once you decide to leave from Mozambique Island to Ibo, you will need to plan your journey to catch on of the buses described below

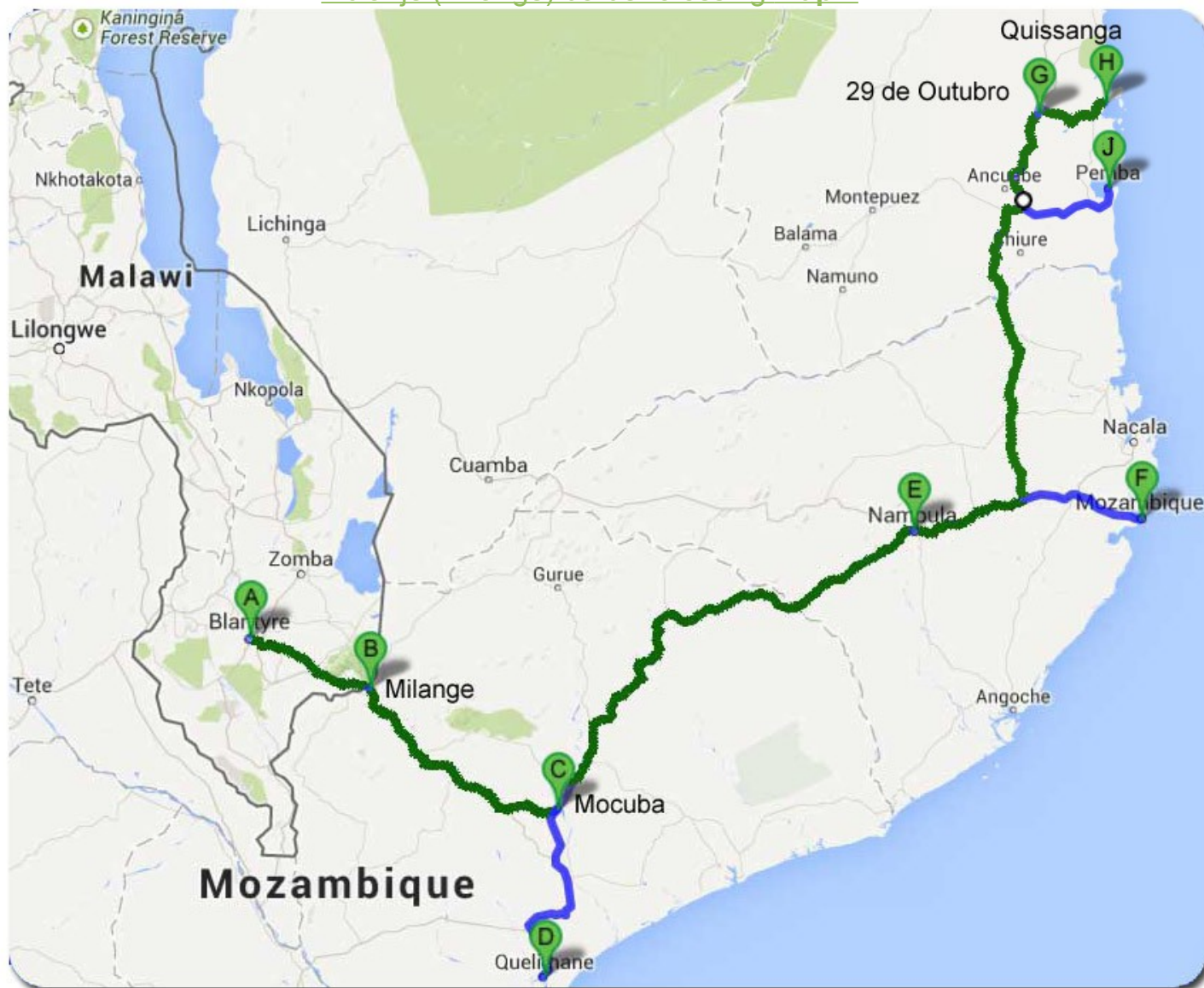
Going to Pemba requires taking a bus very early in the morning with the regional bus company '**Mecula**'. The buses leave early in the morning so be sure to be there at 4am to purchase your bus ticket (ideally you should purchase it the day before departure). Note that having a bus ticked does not guaranty you a seat. You may have to stand if you are not at the bus station early enough to get your place.

Once you decide to leave from Pemba, you may take every day at 4:30 in the morning, in front of the central store Mcel (Mozambican mobile phone company) near the hotel Cabo Delgado, public transport (truck or Minivan) going to Quissanga / Tandanhangue. Once in Tandanhangue, you will need to take a dhow (local boat) to reach Ibo Island. In theory the boat waits for the truck from Pemba before pursuing towards Ibo. The journey departing from Pemba to Ibo lasts six to twelve hours (*extreme case*), depending on the number of stops and the road condition. Although very hard, it can be quite rewarding for those who would like to experience the local means of transport to better understand how the local population lives.

Going straight to Ibo Island is possible but requires a great dose of adventure as you will need to take a bus very early in the morning with the regional bus company '**Mecula**'. The buses departs with the sun rise, so be sure to be there at 4am to purchase your bus ticket (*should ideally be purchased on day prior to departure*). Note that holding a valid bus ticked does not necessarily gain you a seat. You may have to travel standing if you are not at the bus early enough to get your seat. You can take either the bus to '**Mueda**' or the bus to '**Mocimboa da Praia**'.

Once on-board the bus, make sure you inform the ticket controller that you are going to Ibo. They will let you off at the village **29 de outubro (Point G on MapI)**. From this point starts the adventure, as you need to travel towards **Mahate (Point H on MapI)** by *hitch-hiking*. Note that you will probably have to pay something to the driver. There are not many cars passing through this road, so you might be lucky and get a car which is going to **Quissanga**. If you decide to do the road by stages, make sure that the vehicle taking you, will stop in villages such as **Bilibiza** or **Mahate (Point H on MapI)** as if you can not make it to Ibo, at least you will get a basic structures to sleep and eat. Once in Quissanga you need to get to Tanganhande where you can get a boat to the beautiful Ibo Island.

Mulanje (Milange) border crossing **Map II**



- The route marked in green is the way to Ibo Island. It passes through the points A, B, C, E, G, H on the map
- The route marked in blue are deviations to interesting sites to visit they are the points D, F, J on the map.

VIA MILANGE (Point B on MapII) is probably the easiest way to travel. The Milange (Mulanje) crossing is convenient for **Quelimane (Point D on MapII)** and **Mozambique Island (Point F on Map II)**, with regular buses from Blantyre via Mulanje to the border. Once across, daily vehicles service Mocuba, then Quelimane and Nampula.

Once in **Nampula (Point E on MapII)**, you will probably spend one night there to recover from your train journey and to prepare your next stop. From Nampula you can organize your next move to **Mozambique Island (Point F on MapII)**, **Pembina (Point J on MapII)** or straight to Ibo Island. This later requires adventurous minds as you might have to sleep along the way if the journey does not go according to plan.

* We strongly recommend that you call Miti Miwiri on +258 825438564 or +258 26960530 to reserve your room and above all to find out about the tide hours and heights. Some tides will not allow you to make it to Ibo Island on the same day

If **Mozambique Island** is your next stop you will find many minibuses not far from Nampula train station constantly leaving to the island. It is an easy ride taking 2 hours. Once you decide to leave from Mozambique Island to Ibo, you will need to plan your journey to catch one of the buses described below at the intersection of Namialo, which is the intersection to Nampula/Pemba/Nacala.

Going to Pemba requires taking a bus early in the morning with the regional bus company '**Mecula**'. Ensure to be there at 4am to purchase your bus ticket (*Should ideally be purchased one day before*). Note that having a bus ticked does not guaranty you a seat. You may have to stand if you do not physically secure your seat.

Once you decide to leave from Pemba, you may take every day at 4:30 in the morning, in front of the central store Mcel (*Mozambican mobile phone company*) near the hotel Cabo Delgado, public transport (*truck or Minivan*) going to Quissanga / Tandanhangue. Once in Tandanhangue, you will need to take a dhow (*local boat*) to reach Ibo Island. In theory the boat waits for the truck from Pemba before continuing to Ibo. The journey departing from Pemba to Ibo lasts six to twelve hours (*Very unlucky*), depending on stops and road conditions. Although very hard, it can be quite rewarding for those who would like to experience the local means of transport to better understand how the local population lives.

Going straight to Ibo Island is possible but requires a great dose of adventure as you will need to take a bus very early in the morning with the regional bus company '**Mecula**'. Be at the bus station at 4am to purchase your bus ticket (*Should be ideally be purchasing it one day before*). Note that having a bus ticked does not guaranty you a seat. You may have to stand if not personally securing your seat. You can take either the bus to '**Mueda**' or the bus to '**Mocimboa da Praia**'.

Once on-board the bus, make sure you inform the ticket controller that you intend to go to Ibo. They will drop you off at the village **29 de outubro (Point G on MapII)**. Where you will need to go towards **Mahate (Point H on MapII)** by *hitch-hiking*. Note that you will probably have to pay, make sure that the vehicle taking you will stop in villages such as **Bilibiza** or **Mahate (Point H on MapII)** as if you can not arrive on Ibo Island, at least you will get a place to rest and nourish. Once in Quissanga you are only 7 km away from Tanganhande where you can get a boat to go Ibo.

* We strongly recommend that you call Miti Miwiri on +258 825438564 or +258 26960530 to reserve your room and especially to know about the tide times and heights. Some tides will not allow you to arrive on Ibo Island on the same day

TRAVELLING BY CAR

From our experience people travelling by car often use a GPS to help them to find their ways. For this reason we indicate below the GPS coordinates for two places: Ibo Island and Tandanhangu (Quissanga).

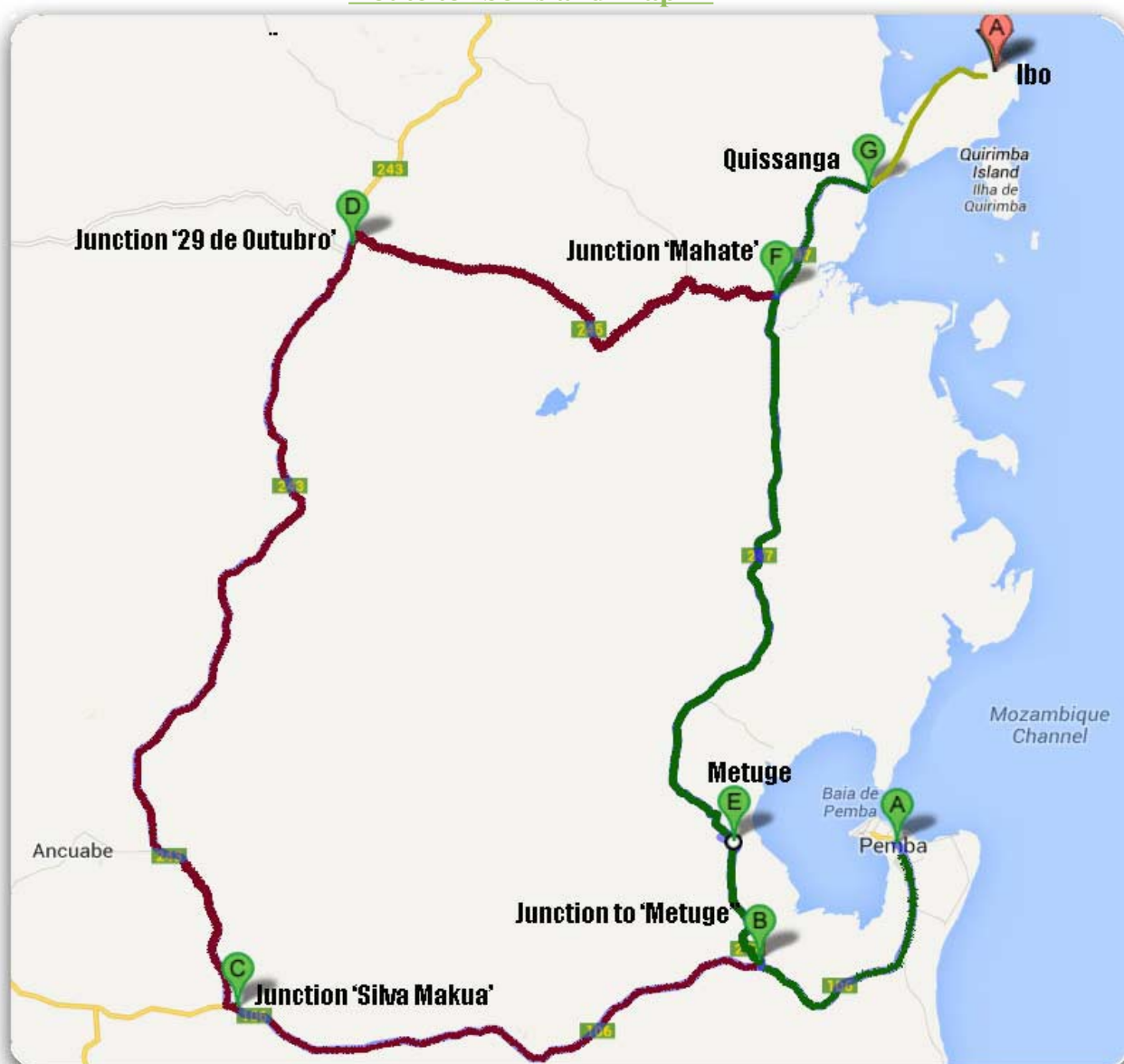
Ibo Island: $-13^{\circ} 39' 44.58''$, $40^{\circ} 35' 56.89''$

Tandanhangu (Quissanga): $-13^{\circ} 36' 21''$, $40^{\circ} 31' 15.85''$

If you have your own car we can only recommend coming via the Milange border. The road has been improved over the last years.

From Blantyre tar road go to **Milange** (*Point B on Map II*). Milange is a breathy town and if you want to have lunch or breakfast it is good idea as the next section of the road to Mocuba is dirt road with no real infrastructure to eat or to refuel. So ensure you that you possess enough fuel reserves. It will take you approximately 5 hours (200Km) to reach Mocuba. From Mocuba to Alto Molocue the road is relatively good but be careful as you might find a hole in the middle of the road. It will take you approximately 1 hour (100Km). From Alto Molocue to **Nampula** (*Point on Map II*), you will be taking an additional 2 hours (210Km) on a recently tarred road. From Nampula if you still have energy you may continue to Ibo Island or Pemba:

Route to Ibo Island Map III



Ibo Island via **Bilibiza** (*Marked in red on the MapIII with the points C, D, F, G*). This road is in better condition than **Metuge's road** (*Marked in green on the MapIII*). From Nampula go in direction of Pemba, Mueda Mocimboa da Praia. When reaching the junction **Silva Macua**, (*Point C on MapIII*), which is about 80Km away from Pemba. Turn to the left in the direction of “Mocimboa da Praia” / Mueda. Continue until reaching the village named **29 de Outubro** (*Point G on MapII and Point D on MapIII*), where you will see a large sign with a red background and white letters written “ADPP”. There turn right on the dirt road towards Bilibiza. Once in Bilibiza continue on the same road, you will reach the village of **Mahate** (*Point F on MapIII*) after 30Km. There you will find another “T” junction: Turn the to left in direction of **Quissanga** (*Point H on MapII and point G on MapIII*).

Once in Quissanga still at the top of the hill find a road sign indicating Tandanhangue on the left. follow the road until you get to the bottom of the bay.

Pemba (*Point J on MapII and point A on MapII*), The road from Nampula to Pemba is tarred but with potholes covered. You can cover the distance in 5 hours (*400Km*).

***Once in Tandanhangue, you will find a number of places to park your car. We recommend to park it in James' Place near the baobab tree.**

For further information on how to get to Ibo from Pemba, please download the pdf file 'To Ibo from Pemba'.