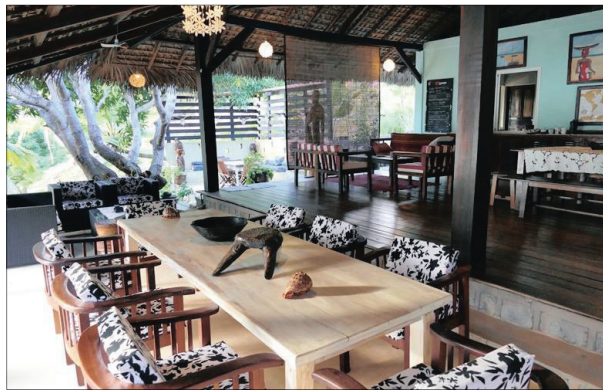




Sunsets are splendid on Nosy Komba island in Madagascar, while swimming and diving in the crystal waters are its simple joys.



## If you're looking for freedom...



The dining area at 293 On Komba.



The idyllic view from the deck of the chalets.

In this three-part series, Adrian Rorvik gets a taste of paradise on Nosy Komba island, Madagascar

“ALWAYS wondered what freedom was,” said Marcine Cooper. “Well I’ve found it” said the owner of 293 On Komba – on Nosy Komba (Komba Island) off the north-western coast of the Madagascar mainland.

From football and rugby administration in the Eastern Cape to Madagascar is a leap in every sense, a life that has to be experienced to understand what Cooper means.

And I got it. The first morning I swung my legs off the bed, I thought – I don’t want to leave.

This was nothing like neighbouring Indian Ocean islands. No infrastructure, no rush, brought to mind the often heard Malagasy phrase “Mora Mora” (relax, it will happen – it just takes time).

293 is a world away from my convenient, five-star stopover – D’Oreal Grande at Emperors Palace. No connecting flights on a Sunday necessitated this both ways – and what a pleasure. I’ve never been so rested and raring to go on arrival at an exotic destination – or on returning home.



The black lemur

Where D’Oreal Grande is opulent Italianate luxury, 293 is rustic luxury – just four guest rooms, solar power and gas. No aircon, no casinos, restaurants, theatres or host of amenities. Instead, well, rest. And in a very comfortable, tasteful perch above a tranquil bay.

Opinions on Madagascar were varied: “Poo Island” said one – and I saw why. No infrastructure – one of three inhabited islands among about 15 – means no loos for the local villagers, with each family claiming a spot on a rocky outcrop.

“Paradise!” exclaimed another who spent some time on a fully crewed chartered yacht. I can see why.



The tsatsaka lizard

Large parts of the mainland have been deforested and exploited, but much of the Nosy Be area is reserve and the 100 000-odd inhabitants of the string of islands have relatively little impact on their environment.

I’m going with “paradise” (293 On Komba has toilets).

Things have really fallen into place for Cooper since she opened five years ago. It has everything to do with her – her way with people she meets, works with and employs.

Local villagers are protective of this single white woman (hubby Ian is still in East London for a couple of years), as is evident in her banter with the local “gang”.

She’s blossomed, especially as a

cook. I had fantastically cooked and presented ‘cuta, delicious coconut rice and mixed fresh veggies, chilli relish and a wonderful chocolate mousse with chunks of rich Madagascan Malagasy chocolate.

We strolled along the shore to the village of Ampangorinina with its interesting mix of locals, French and Italian expats. If you visit, bring back one of the wonderful cotton tablecloths – the best to be had on the islands.

A walk up to the Lemur Park above the village introduced me to these unique and charming creatures and a boat trip took us to Cooper’s “secret island” for a spot of snorkelling, swimming and snoozing before returning and enjoying a delightful lunch upstairs at Chez Madio Hotel, run by Madam Madio, supported by her Italian expat husband Alfredo.

Green Day geckoes (tsatsaka) joined us, with one fella (you can tell the males by their red markings) licking sugar residue off my glass of rum arrangé – the delicious, ubiquitous aperitif. The local beer and the company weren’t too shabby either.

My idyllic stay, with picture postcard sunsets and sunrises was over all too soon and I was on a short boat ride back to Hellville, the port and hub of Nosy Be. I was sorry to leave but a very happy chappie.

● Visit [293onkomba.com](http://293onkomba.com) or visit [facebook.com/293OnKombaGuestHouse](https://www.facebook.com/293OnKombaGuestHouse)



### Getting there

MadagasCaT Charters and Travel arranged Rorvik’s seamless itinerary.

MadagasCaT are members of Nosy Be Tourism Board, the private partner behind Airlink’s direct flight to Nosy Be. It is also Yacht Charter Company of the Year for Madagascar in the 2016 Luxury Travel Guide Awards.

Call 021 2000173 and visit [www.madagascatt.co.za](http://www.madagascatt.co.za)

Airlink connects you directly from Joburg to your African island getaway, Nosy Be, Madagascar, on Sundays. For fully inclusive fly-in packages, contact MadagasCaT to enquire about great specials, or book your flight direct on [www.flyairlink.com](http://www.flyairlink.com) or SAA Central Reservations on 011 978 1111.

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## WIN WIN WIN WIN

### THE MAGIC OF MADAGASCAR

We are giving one subscriber and partner a seven-night stay including dinner, bed and breakfast at 293 On Komba worth R8800. Airlink will sponsor return flights from Pietermaritzburg worth R36000 and Emperors Palace will provide stay-overs worth R8600 at D’Oreale Grande.

Enter with SMMadagascar as the subject. Provide your name, subscriber number or delivery address and telephone number and tell us what award MadagasCaT recently won.

Competition closes at 2pm on August 16.

### 4x4 ADVENTURE

We are giving away a two-night dinner bed and breakfast pamper package at Gwahumbe Game & Spa including game drive, special private dinner in the hydro, 4x4 training, drinks to the value of R1 000, spa treatments worth R500 – all worth R10 470. Enter with SMGwahumbe as the subject. Provide your name, subscriber number, or delivery address and telephone number. Name an activity. See

[www.gwahumbe.co.za](http://www.gwahumbe.co.za) Competition ends 2pm, July 26.

### HOW TO ENTER

The competition SMS number is 33258 (SMSes charged at R1.50). By entering our competitions you give us the right to contact you for marketing. Prizes are for subscribers only and not transferable. T&Cs apply. For enquiries, call 031 3082584 during office hours. For subscriber enquiries, and to save 30 percent on the price, call 0800 204 711.