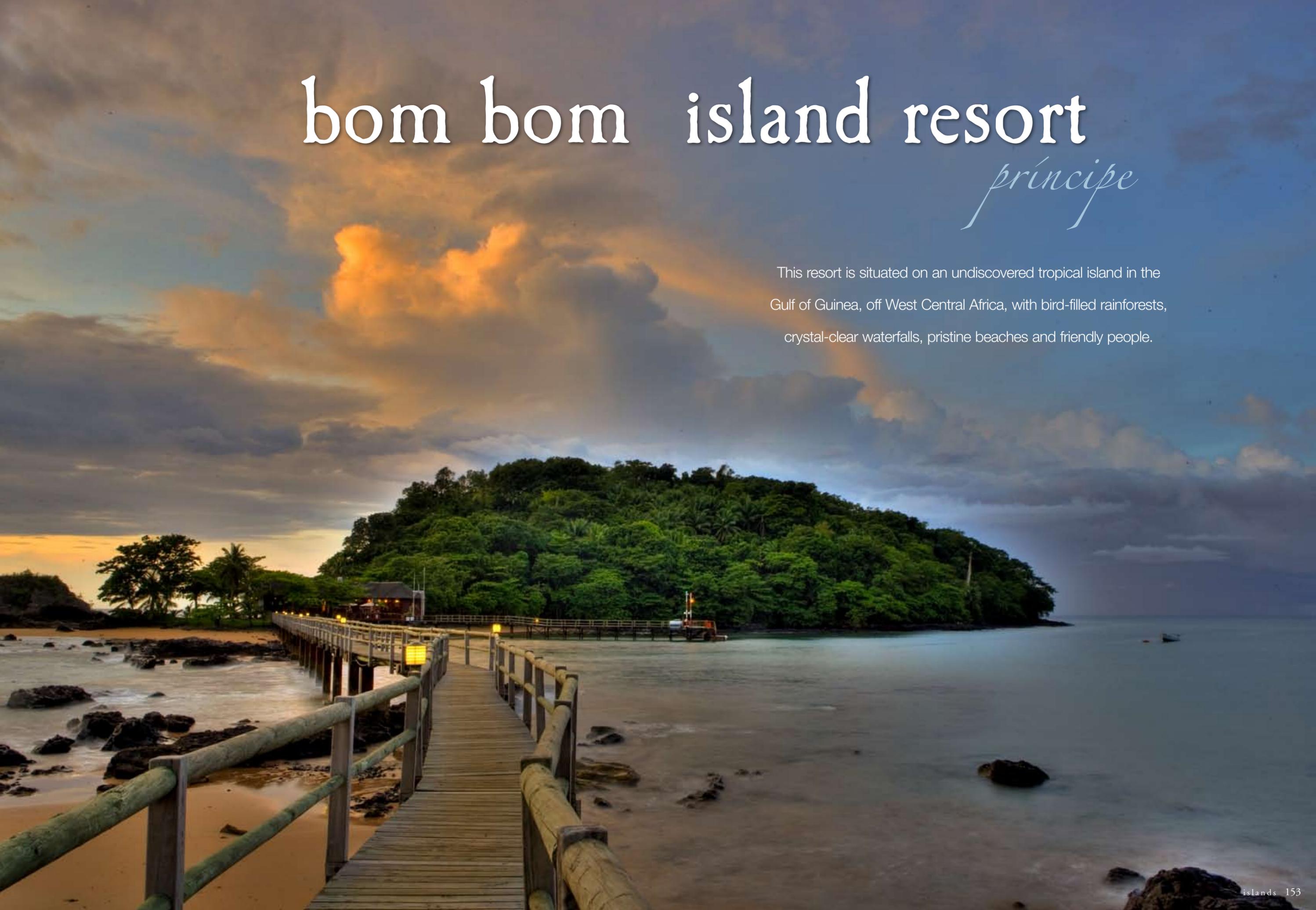


bom bom island resort

príncipe

This resort is situated on an undiscovered tropical island in the Gulf of Guinea, off West Central Africa, with bird-filled rainforests, crystal-clear waterfalls, pristine beaches and friendly people.





*I watch the moon rise
over the Atlantic, and
it slowly dawns on me
that I am in paradise*

Holding a cooling drink in a coconut cup, I survey the beach from the veranda of my bungalow. This is my home for the next few days – Bom Bom Island Resort. Its two sections, the 21 bungalows, a duty-free shop and a swimming pool on Príncipe, and a restaurant and bar on smaller Bom Bom Island, are linked by a wooden footbridge that spans a 230-metre channel of aquamarine water.

Following a superb lunch – I am unable to resist the freshly caught barracuda – I set off for Santo Antonio, the capital town. Embraced by mountains and sea, it is bustling and colourful, with old colonial buildings and friendly people. The atmosphere is warm, safe and welcoming. Evening falls sooner than I would have liked, and I head back to Bom Bom. At Bar Pescador, I am given a cocktail by a smiling barman. Taking it onto the deck, I watch the moon rise over the Atlantic, and it slowly dawns on me that I am in paradise.

Dinner is served on the restaurant's wooden deck, accompanied by fine wines from South Africa. The Indian chef is only too pleased to share his knowledge with me. He produces dish after dish of wonderful cuisine, and I sample them all, with satisfied 'oohs' and 'aahs'.

The next morning, I am awoken by Chaplin, the resort parrot, squawking: 'Knock, knock, tring-tring, bom dia, bom dia.' I breakfast on local fruits and freshly squeezed pineapple juice, then mount a quad-bike and follow Ramos, my guide, into the jungle. On the way, he shares his knowledge of the local fauna and flora. We arrive at the cliffs of Belo Monte, where a 60-metre abseil has been set up. Holding my breath, I ease

myself over the edge and almost immediately encounter a colony of swallow nests. Beneath me is Praia Banana beach and, as I land on the silky, soft sand, the adrenalin is rushing through my veins. Smiling at my excitement, Ramos produces a picnic with fresh fruit, fish and freshly picked coconuts. After lunch, we set off to explore the massive volcanic boulders just below the waterline, then return to Bom Bom in kayaks, visiting a local fishing village on the way. I spend the evening enjoying a beach barbecue and listening to a local Príncipean band.

I awake at dawn the next morning. A driver-guide, Ti, has agreed to show me the old plantations, or *roças*, established largely by Portuguese landlords around the turn of the 20th century. As we drive around the island, it becomes evident why Príncipe was the world's largest producer of cocoa in the late 1900s. Spectacular buildings, once the homes of wealthy plantation owners, have now fallen into disrepair. We receive a warm welcome from the poor, but friendly islanders who make

PREVIOUS SPREAD A 230-metre walkway connects Príncipe to Bom Bom Island.

THIS SPREAD Soft lighting, swaying palms and a gently sloping beach – Bom Bom is a haven of peace.

Bird-filled tropical forest embraces the resort.

The entire population of the islands is of immigrant descent.

Fine South African wines complement the excellent cuisine.



a living on these once-gracious *roças*. We drive through the fishing village of Praia Abade, where I spend some time watching local fishermen building a dugout canoe. Hundreds of dried flying fish lie neatly arranged among the fishing huts that line the beach.

The following day, I explore the natural beauties of the eastern coast of Príncipe with a guide. We drive past Jocky's Cap, a 305-metre rocky outcrop rising from the sea that is home to dozens of the aptly named Príncipe paradise birds. We then sail to Rio São Tomé, spotting on the way two hump-backed whales that make me grab my camera as they breach and lob their tails. We disembark at Praia Akara for a short walk through the jungle to Rio São Tomé. The views of mountain pinnacles and cliffs are breathtaking. Feeling hot, I plunge into a rock pool, and am serenaded by African grey parrots in the trees. Ramos throws small pieces of coconut into the river, and attracts a catch of freshwater shrimps. Barbecued with a little salt and lemon juice, they are melt-in-the-mouth sublime.

After lunch, we continue into the jungle. We seem to encounter wonders behind almost ever tree – volcanic boulders, extraordinary flora and lianas, and brightly coloured birds that come to investigate the intruders.

We continue our circumnavigation up the west coast. Argentino, the captain, orders the fishing lines cast, and within minutes a strike makes the rod zing. I jump into the fishing chair and soon the largest wahoo I have ever seen is lying on the deck. That evening, dinner is on me! This is a fisherman's paradise, and fish like blue marlin, sailfish, dorado and kingfish are commonplace.

By the time the wahoo reaches my plate, it has been turned into *molbo de fogo*, a fabulous traditional meal served with breadfruit, bananas, salads and some *malagueta*, an extremely hot peri-peri sauce, to give it a kick.

The following morning I pack my bags and, sadly, say farewell to the friendly staff. As the plane takes off, I look down on Bom Bom with its sparkling waters and beautiful reefs. I'll return one day. Hopefully, it will be soon.



Friendly and accommodating staff ensure that every guest has a wonderful holiday experience.

Exploring the extraordinary rocky outcrops and vegetated islands. Príncipe has seven endemic bird species.

Reed-roofed decks, rustling palms and beautiful views entice visitors to Bom Bom to kick back and relax.

The forest-lined beaches are pristine.



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and am serenaded by African
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details

When to go

Bom Bom Resort is open all year. Temperatures are consistently high; the rains fall between October and November, and from March to May. It is dry from December to February, and from June to September.

How to get there

There are flights to Príncipe (via São Tomé) from Lisbon, Gabon, Cameroon and Nigeria. Transport from the airport is included in the booking fee.

Who to contact

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