



## CELEBRATING THE RE-LAUNCH OF THE QUIRIMBAS ARCHIPELAGO HOPE SPOT

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Lying off the coast of northern Mozambique are the 34 islands of the Quirimbas Archipelago, a jewel of biodiversity. Recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and an IUCN Key Biodiversity Area, the aquamarine waters give life to mangrove forests, mudflats, estuaries and vibrant reefs rich with marine life. Separating the islands and rippling with cool nutrient-rich water, cavernous submarine canyons drive the area's ecological resilience, supporting a wealth of unique marine life, including mass breeding aggregations of sharks, groupers and other fish, as well as some of the world's highest diversity of coral species.

Founder of Mission Blue and world-renowned oceanographer Dr Sylvia Earle believes that the Quirimbas Archipelago is, "a shining beacon of hope on the African Coastline". In 2013 she designated the archipelago among the first Mission Blue Hope Spots. Mission Blue is a global coalition supporting a worldwide network of marine protected areas, known as Hope Spots, a term that Dr Earle says is given to, "unique places that are critical to the health of the ocean". Hope Spots may be notable for their abundance or diversity of species, for their rare, threatened, unusual or representative species, habitats or ecosystems, or they may be home to significant natural processes. Sites may already be protected and in need of further support and effective management, or may be unprotected, requiring formal protection and in need of recovery.

The Quirimbas Archipelago now hails two new Hope Spot Champions, Dr Tessa Hempson, Programme Manager and Principal Scientist, and Dr Mark Ziembicki, Research Scientist, both from Oceans Without Borders (OWB). The goals of the two champions are to highlight the work of partner organisations on the ground, as well as to work with local organisations and communities in the region to build capacity in marine conservation and management. They are also committed to raise awareness about the importance of the Hope Spot as a site of global significance to ocean conservation, and to conduct and facilitate world-class research in the region in order to better understand this critical marine ecosystem and inform well-targeted conservation efforts.

A partnership between luxury travel company &Beyond and Africa Foundation, OWB strives to catalyse positive change across &Beyond's marine footprint.

With the current challenges facing islands and oceans, it is imperative that those directly reliant on local ecosystems for their livelihoods and food security can sustain themselves. Through close collaboration with local communities and partners including Universidad Lúrio and the Friends of Vamizi Trust, OWB facilitates the community-led development of sustainable marine resource use practices in the Quirimbas. It also supports alternative livelihoods to reduce marine dependency. Having established an extensive base, OWB is consistently employing individuals to ensure the upliftment of island communities.

As with many marine and island environments, the Quirimbas Archipelago faces the threat of overfishing, deforestation and rising food insecurity that places immense pressure on natural and marine resources. With the hope of increasing the community-led marine protected area, a sanctuary that sprawls along the eastern third of Vamizi Island, the local Fishers Community Council, or Conselho Comunitário de Pesca (CCP), teams are responsible for patrols and fisheries' regulation enforcement. Mozambique relies heavily on the ocean for a reliable food source. Dr Hempson says, "The artisanal fishing community has been a huge part of the backbone in preserving the Quirimbas Archipelago. They understand that healthy fish stocks and a balanced marine ecosystem are the keys to long-term, sustainable food resources."

The waters of the Quirimbas and around Vamizi Island also play an important role in supporting large marine species such as humpback whales, green and hawksbill turtles, manta rays, and several species of dolphins and sharks, many of which aggregate at certain times of the year as part of their breeding cycle. By studying the movement patterns of these species, knowing where they aggregate to breed and where they go from there, marine biologists are better able to design well-targeted conservation strategies to ensure their survival.

The rich reef ecosystem of the Quirimbas has the highest coral reef species diversity outside of the Coral Triangle, and is located at the centre of an ocean current network that flows north up the east coast of Africa towards &Beyond Mnemba Island, and south towards &Beyond Benguerra Island and Sodwana Bay. These currents carry with them coral and fish larvae from resilient, productive source reefs like the Quirimbas' to replenish coral ecosystems along the entire coastline. OWB, in partnership with Universidad Lúrio, Friends of Vamizi Trust and other local NGOs, is working to support coral reef conservation in the Quirimbas Archipelago, and to facilitate research that will improve global understanding of the ecosystem connectivity of coastlines.

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## **ABOUT &BEYOND**

&Beyond designs personalised high-end tours in 13 countries in Africa, five in Asia and four in South America, offering discerning travellers a rare and exclusive experience of the world as it should be. We own and operate 29 extraordinary lodges and camps in iconic safari, scenic and island destinations in Africa and South America. This enables us to positively impact more than 9 million acres of wildlife land and 2 000 kilometres of coastline. Established in 1991, &Beyond strives to leave our world a better place than we found it through our care of the land, wildlife and people, and the delivery of extraordinary guest experiences.

## **ABOUT OCEANS WITHOUT BORDERS**

A partnership between &Beyond and Africa Foundation, Oceans Without Borders strives to catalyse positive change across &Beyond's marine footprint and to leave our oceans a better place by applying the ethos of Care of the Land, Care of the Wildlife, Care of the People to the ocean, marine wildlife, and coastal communities.

## **ABOUT AFRICA FOUNDATION**

Africa Foundation was founded in 1992 to uplift, up-skill and empower people living in key rural communities close to conservation areas. We believe that for true development to take place, we need to nurture, protect and preserve not only our natural environment and wildlife, but our people, our cultures and our customs. By partnering with communities, Governments and the private sector, Africa Foundation supports the development of sustainable projects that empower communities and contribute to conserving Africa's land and wildlife.

## **ABOUT MISSION BLUE**

Led by legendary oceanographer Dr Sylvia Earle, Mission Blue is uniting a global coalition to inspire an upwelling of public awareness, access and support for a worldwide network of marine protected areas - Hope Spots. Under Dr Earle's leadership, the Mission Blue team implements communications campaigns that elevate Hope Spots to the world stage through documentaries, social media, traditional media and innovative tools like Google Earth. Mission Blue embarks on regular oceanic expeditions that shed light on these vital ecosystems and build support for their protection. Mission Blue also supports the work of conservation NGOs around the world that share the mission of building public support for ocean protection. The Mission Blue alliance includes more than 200 respected ocean conservation groups and like-minded organizations.