

## Bagamoyo - History

Attractions of interest tell the story of Bagamoyo's colorful and at times turbulent past: of fishermen and farmers; of traders, explorers and travelers; of slaves, their captors and owners, and of the succeeding waves of colonialists that preceded the founding of the independent African nation of Tanzania in 1961. Caravan porters praised the town as Bwagamoyo— "to throw off melancholy", while slaves lamented it as Bagamoyo, Kiswahili for "crush down your heart".

A small fishing village on the Tanzanian coast some 70-km north along the coast from Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo first gained commercial prominence and its multi-cultural nature during the late 18th- and early 19th centuries. The Omani Arabs and Indian merchants established Bagamoyo as a trade centre on Africa's east coast. The Germans subsequently made their presence felt, establishing it as their commercial centre and the administrative capitol of German East Africa.

In addition to the Arab and German trading centre for ivory, ebony, copra and other natural resources, Bagamoyo served as the mainland terminus for the lucrative and brutal slave trade. At its peak, an estimated 50,000 slaves per year were taken from the African interior to Bagamoyo for transshipment to the slave markets and spice and clove plantations of Zanzibar.

Numerous sites and buildings dating back to these periods remain, remnants of a troubled, yet rich, past, a history peopled by Africans, Arabs, Indians and Europeans.

Buildings in Bagamoyo's Old Town with beautiful, handcarved wooden door frames of Arabian and Indian design-- such as that of the Old Bagamoyo Tea House-- offer glimpses of the town's former splendour...and the relative luxury the traders' were able to afford.

Remains of Bagamoyo's past also include the Old Fort, the first stone structure built in the region. The fort was built by A.S. Marhabi – most probably a Shirazi arab - and was originally fortified by the Omani Arab Sultan Bargash. The Germans subsequently took control of it, using it to defend the East African coast during their tenure as 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonial rulers of German East Africa.

Other historical sites of interest are the German Boma, which was built in 1897 as the German colony's central administrative office and the residence of the German Colonial Administrator. The Catholic Mission of Bagamoyo is a repository of documentary, as well as other types, of information regarding the town's history. For further information, please contact:

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