

Topic Page: [Mombasa](#)

Definition: **Mombasa** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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1 a port in S Kenya, on a coral island in a bay of the Indian Ocean: the chief port for Kenya, Uganda, and NE Tanzania; became British in 1887, capital of the East African Protectorate until 1907. Pop: 828 000 (2005 est)

Summary Article: **Mombasa**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Industrial port and tourist resort in Kenya (the port also serves Uganda and Tanzania); population (2002 est) 707,400. It stands on Mombasa Island and the adjacent mainland (the island of Mombasa is linked to the mainland by the Mukapa causeway). As well as tourism, industries include car assembly, cement manufacture, and oil and sugar refining. Mombasa was founded by Arab traders in the 11th century and was an important centre for ivory and slave trading until the 16th century. One of the oldest buildings, Fort Jesus, was set up by the Portuguese and is now a museum.

History The Portuguese sailed into Mombasa in 1498, where the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama had an unfriendly reception. The town was sacked by Pedro Cabral in 1500 and in 1505 by Francesco de Almeida, the first Portuguese viceroy of India. In 1698 troops of the sultans of Oman seized the port. Mombasa came under the control of the sultan of Zanzibar in 1840 and was leased to the British in 1895. From 1905 to 1907 it was the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate. In 1920 it became capital of the British Protectorate of Kenya. Mombasa officially belonged to Zanzibar from 1895 to 1963 when it was ceded to the newly independent Kenya. Mombasa grew rapidly in the 20th century.

Old and new ports The island of Mombasa is 5 km/3 mi long and 3 km/1.8 mi wide (area 14 sq km/5 sq mi); it is separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, the northern part of which leads from the Indian Ocean to Mombasa Old Port, while the southern part leads to the the new port at Kilindini Quay, which is the finest harbour on the East African coast. It is a railway terminus and handles virtually all the overseas trade of Kenya and Uganda. Mombasa Old Port is dominated by the old Arab town; it is now used exclusively for dhows (Arab sailing ships with one or two masts).

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