

The Arts and Crafts of Inhambane

Inhambane is home to a multitude of arts and crafts. Unlike most tourist destinations, the majority of arts and crafts of Inhambane are handmade by the local artisans. Visitors to the province will immediately recognize the multitude of handmade pottery, which are fashioned from traditional storage containers. It is recognizable that many potters in Inhambane have started to make smaller clay pots that are perfect for plants and flowers. Traditionally made from riverbed clay, the pots are then placed in brick furnaces. It is still rare to find glazed or painted pots.

A favourite among many visitors are the baskets which are woven in many sizes and shapes. Many baskets are made with lids that make them a perfect item to store anything from food to accessories; it all depends upon the imagination of the buyer. Priced reasonably, light weight, baskets are perfect items that both decorate and function in any setting. The Capulanas, which are the traditional sarong material worn beautifully by the women of a number of African countries, is prominent in Inhambane as well. The women of Inhambane ingeniously utilize the Capulanas as a sling to carry their infants, a shawl against a cold night, a hood against the rain, and a smaller version is worn as a scarf. The Capulanas vibrant colours and dynamic prints have made it popular for the local tailors to fashion bags, shoes, caps, pants, cushion covers and place mats in hopes to expand their sales to visitors.

Wooden sculptures are an extremely popular form of art and craft in Inhambane. There is a unique form of the facial features of the women who are frequently used as the theme of a sculpture piece. Recurrent themes are that of a woman with children, reflecting the influence of age-old tradition. In addition to the traditional themes, many wood sculpture artists have developed new and different themes as well as items. The marine life which is found in such abundance in Inhambane has become a favourite, as well as birds. Smaller, items such as key rings, pendant heads, and letter openers can also be seen and are ideal for souvenirs and gifts. The most popular wood used in local sculptures is ebony. The grain, weight and unmistakable black sheen add a special value to the sculpture. Ebony walking canes carved with intricate traditional patterns have become sought after items, and are frequently purchased by the well-travelled visitor, as not only a walking cane, but a conversation piece at home.

Recycled materials are transformed into unique sculptures. A visitor to Vilankulo is advised to visit Machilla Magic, where there is a wide selection of not only traditional baskets, wooden sculptures and accessories, but some amazing items made from aluminium cans and other recycled material. Bottles and cans are not to be taken lightly as waste. In the hands of dedicated artists, they are transformed into a one-of-a kind piece. In addition to Machilla Magic, in the Tofu Beach area, there is an open market which boasts a colourful array of art work and unique pieces, as well as a wide selection of Capulanas material items.

String accessories can be found in most market places, and the variety is simply astounding. These amazing works of braiding simple string into bracelets and anklets are fashionably adored by visitors to the Province. The string accessories can be divided into two categories, one, made of different colours of string, and two, those which are adorned with sea shells or beads. Very reasonable that most visitors buy several to colour coordinate with their clothing. These are perfect accessory items to be worn on site at the beach or when swimming, or as gifts for those at home.