

Comoros

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

The Comoros is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, between the north of Mozambique and the north of Madagascar. The country has three main volcanic islands: Grande Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan. Locally, they are called Ngazidja, Mwali and Ndzuani. Swahili, Arab, Persian, Malagasy and French influences mix here. Almost everyone is Muslim, and Islam shapes daily life, dress and the rhythm of the week. The islands are also known as the "perfume islands", because they are among the world's largest producers of ylang-ylang oil.

Tourism is very small, and facilities are basic. In return, you get old stone towns with narrow lanes, black and white sand beaches, the active volcano Mount Karthala, nesting sea turtles and whales offshore. The Comoros suits patient, independent travellers who speak some French and are happy to travel slowly. It does not suit visitors who want resort comfort or smooth logistics.

Money & payments

The Comorian franc has a fixed exchange rate to the euro, so its value against the euro does not change.

Currency

CURRENCY	1 KMF	1 KMF
KMF	**0.002033 EUR** 1 EUR = 491.97 KMF	**0.002266 USD** 1 USD = 441.25 KMF

Cash preferred

- **Cash only**: **cards are rarely accepted**, even in many hotels. Plan to pay for almost everything in cash.
- **Bring euros**: euros are the easiest currency to exchange, and some hotels accept them directly. Bring clean notes and change money at a bank or exchange office in Moroni.
- **ATMs**: there are a few ATMs in Moroni and the larger towns, but they often do not work with foreign cards. Do not rely on them, and bring enough cash for your whole stay, especially for Mohéli and Anjouan.
- **Mobile money**: locals often pay by mobile money, but this is rarely practical for short-term visitors.
- **Costs**: local food and transport are cheap. Hotels, flights between the islands and imported goods cost more than you might expect.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) simple hotel or guesthouse, double room	20,000 – 50,000 KMF €41 – €102
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) main course at a hotel restaurant	5,000 – 10,000 KMF €10 – €20
Inexpensive meal dish of the day at a local restaurant	1,500 – 3,000 KMF €3 – €6
Coffee	500 – 1,000 KMF €1 – €2
Water 1.5 l bottle	500 – 1,000 KMF €1 – €2
Transit ticket shared taxi ride	300 – 1,000 KMF €1 – €2

Tipping

Tipping is not a strong custom in the Comoros. In simple local restaurants, people do not usually tip. In hotel restaurants, you can leave about 5–10 % for good service. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip. Guides for the Karthala climb, turtle watching or boat trips do expect a tip at the end of the trip.

Restaurant 5–10 % in hotel restaurants; not usual in local eateries	Optional
Taxi	Not customary
Tour guide at the end of a volcano climb, turtle watch or boat trip	Expected
Hotel small tip for porters and housekeeping	Optional
Bar	Not customary

Electricity

The Comoros uses European two-pin plugs, so most European chargers work without an adapter. Power cuts are common on all three islands, so bring a power bank and a torch.

ELECTRICITY



Type C

ELECTRICITY



Type E

220 V · 50 Hz

Language

The Comoros has three official languages: Comorian (*Shikomori*), French and Arabic. Comorian is the everyday language, and each island has its own dialect. French is used in government, business, schools and on most signs and menus. Arabic is the language of religion, and many people read it from Quran school, but few speak it in daily life.

English is spoken very little, even in hotels. Basic French is the most useful thing you can bring. A few words of Comorian, such as *jeje* ("hello") and *marahaba* ("thank you"), are always welcome.

Useful phrases

FR

Hello	Bonjour bohn-ZHOOR
Thank you	Merci mair-SEE
Please	S'il vous plaît seel voo PLEH
Yes	Oui wee
No	Non nohn
Goodbye	Au revoir oh ruh-VWAHR
Excuse me	Excusez-moi ex-kew-zay MWAH
How much?	C'est combien ? say kohm-BYAN
Where is...?	Où est... ? oo EH
Help	Au secours ! oh suh-KOOR

AR

Hello	السلام عليكم as-salaamu alaykum
Thank you	شكراً shukran
Please	من فضلك min fadlak
Yes	نعم na'am
No	لا laa
Goodbye	مع السلامة ma'a as-salaama

Staying connected

- **SIM cards**: buy a local SIM card in Moroni, where the mobile operators have shops. Bring your passport.
- **Coverage**: mobile data works in the main towns, but it is slow and often breaks down. Coverage is weak in the countryside and on the less-developed islands.
- **Internet**: hotel internet is often slow and unreliable. Download maps and important documents before you arrive.

Safety & emergencies

No part of the Comoros is under a "do not travel" warning, but take **extra care** because of petty crime, occasional unrest and limited health care. Violent crime against visitors is rare.

- **Protests**: demonstrations happen from time to time, especially around elections. They can block roads in Moroni and sometimes turn violent. Avoid all protests and large crowds.
- **Theft**: pickpocketing and petty theft happen. Avoid walking alone after dark, especially on beaches and in town centres.
- **Ferries**: boats between the islands are often overloaded, in poor condition and without life jackets, and some have sunk with many deaths. Flying is safer.
- **Karthala**: the volcano is active. Check the current situation locally before you climb it.
- **Cyclones**: tropical cyclones can hit the region from January to May. Follow local weather warnings.
- **Local laws**: public drinking and drunkenness are illegal. Same-sex sexual activity is illegal and can lead to prison. Do not photograph military or police buildings.

Emergency numbers

POLICE
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FIRE BRIGADE
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Health

- **Medical care**: facilities are **basic on all three islands**, and supplies of electricity and water to hospitals can fail. Serious cases need evacuation abroad, so buy travel insurance that covers medical evacuation.
- **Hospitals**: the main hospitals are El-Maarouf in Moroni (+269 773 26 04), the hospital in Fomboni on Mohéli (+269 772 03 73) and Hombo hospital on Anjouan (+269 771 00 34).
- **Malaria**: the risk of malaria is high. Talk to a travel doctor about tablets, and use insect repellent and a mosquito net.
- **Other mosquito diseases**: dengue and chikungunya also occur. Protect yourself from bites during the day as well.
- **Vaccinations**: typhoid and hepatitis A are recommended for most travellers. See a travel clinic about 6–8 weeks before your trip.
- **Water**: **do not drink tap water**. Drink bottled or boiled water.
- **Medicines**: pharmacies in Moroni have limited stock, and it is even more limited on the other islands. Bring enough of your regular medicines and a basic first-aid kit.

Visas & entry

All visitors need a visa, but you can buy it on arrival at the international airport near Moroni and at other entry points. It costs **about €30–50**, paid in cash in euros or US dollars.

- **Passport**: it should be valid for at least 6 months after your arrival date, with at least one blank page.
- **Onward travel**: carry proof of a return or onward ticket.

> Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

- **Dress**: dress modestly everywhere except the beach. Clothes should loosely cover the body from the shoulders to the knees. Women should also cover their hair when they visit a mosque.
- **Mosques**: remove your shoes before you enter. Ask first, and do not visit during prayer times. Non-Muslims may not be allowed inside some mosques.
- **Alcohol**: drink only inside hotels and the few restaurants that serve alcohol. Drinking in public, or being drunk in public, is illegal.
- **Ramadan**: during the fasting month, do not eat, drink, smoke, play loud music or dance in public during daylight. Many restaurants close during the day, and life slows down.
- **Photos**: always ask before you photograph people, especially women.
- **Greetings**: greet people before you ask a question. Use your right hand to shake hands, give and receive things, and eat.
- **The Grand Mariage**: on Grande Comore, the *anda* or "Grand Mariage" is a huge traditional wedding. A man's family may save for many years for it, and it gives him a high status in his town. The celebrations last several days, with dancing, music and gifts of gold. They happen mostly in the summer months, when many Comorians living abroad come home. If you are invited, it is a great honour, so dress smartly and accept.

Holidays & opening hours

On public holidays, government offices, banks and many shops close. The Islamic holidays, such as Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha, are the biggest celebrations of the year. Their dates follow the Islamic lunar calendar and move about 11 days earlier each year. Book flights between the islands early around these holidays.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Mar 18	Cheikh Al Maarouf Day
May 1	Labour Day
Jul 6	National Day
Nov 12	Maore Day

Friday is the main day of prayer. Many offices and shops close around the midday prayers on Friday, and some do not open again that afternoon. Shops usually open from about 8:00 until noon and again in the late afternoon. Markets are busiest in the early morning.

Getting around

- **Between the islands by air**: small local airlines link Moroni with Mohéli and Anjouan. Flights are short, but schedules change often and flights can be delayed or cancelled. Book locally, confirm your flight the day before, and keep spare days in your plan.
- **Between the islands by boat**: ferries run between the islands, but they are often overloaded and unsafe. Take a flight when you can. Never travel in small open boats (*kwassa-kwassa*).
- **By shared taxi**: shared taxis and minibuses (*taxi-brousse*) link the towns on each island. They follow set routes, leave when full and take cash only. Fares are cheap.
- **By taxi or driver**: in the capital and Mutsamudu, taxis are cheap and usually shared. For day trips, hiring a car with a driver is the easiest option. Your hotel can help you find one.

Driving

Most visitors hire a car with a driver instead of driving themselves. Rental cars are available in Moroni, but the choice is small.

- **Licence**: carry your national licence and an International Driving Permit.
- **Road conditions**: roads are narrow and poorly maintained, with potholes, sharp bends and steep hills. Roads on Anjouan are especially steep and winding. A 4x4 is needed for tracks, including the approach to Karthala.
- **Hazards**: watch for people, goats and cattle on the road. Many vehicles are in poor condition.
- **Night driving**: avoid it. Roads are unlit, and potholes and people on the road are hard to see.
- **Fuel**: there are few fuel stations, mostly in the main towns. Stations are attended, and you pay in cash. Fill up before a long trip, as shortages sometimes happen.
- **Electric vehicles**: there is no public charging network.

PETROL
Essence

DIESEL
Gasoil

Drive on the right

No motorway vignette needed

There are no road tolls in the Comoros.

Food & drink

Comorian food mixes African, Arab, Indian and French cooking. Rice is the staple, and meals often include fish, coconut, cassava, green bananas and breadfruit. Fresh fish, such as tuna, is grilled or cooked in coconut sauce. A classic dish is *langouste à la vanille*, lobster cooked in a vanilla sauce, as the islands also grow vanilla. *Mataba*, cassava leaves cooked in coconut milk, is a common side dish. Lunch is usually the main meal, and simple local restaurants often serve one or two dishes of the day.

Street snacks include grilled meat skewers (*brochettes*), samosas and fried banana. Fresh fruit such as mango, papaya, jackfruit and lychees is cheap in season. The usual drinks are tea, fresh juice and coconut water. Alcohol is available only in some hotels and restaurants. During Ramadan, families eat together after sunset, and food stalls appear in the evening.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Fish in coconut sauce
Fresh fish such as tuna cooked in coconut milk and served with rice.

DINNER

Grilled fish
Fish grilled over charcoal, served with rice, green banana or breadfruit.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Meat skewers · brochettes
Small skewers of grilled beef or goat sold at street stalls in the evening.

Samosas
Fried pastry triangles filled with meat or vegetables.

DRINKS

Coconut water
Fresh water from green coconuts, sold at roadside stalls.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Lobster in vanilla sauce · langouste à la vanille
Lobster cooked in a creamy sauce made with local vanilla.

Cassava leaves in coconut milk · mataba
Pounded cassava leaves slowly cooked in coconut milk, often with fish.

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Where to explore

Grande Comore (Ngazidja)

- Moroni, the capital, has an old medina of narrow lanes and carved wooden doors. The white Old Friday Mosque, with roots in the 15th century, stands by the small harbour. The national museum has displays on history, nature and the coelacanth, an ancient fish found in Comorian waters.
- Mount Karthala is one of the world's largest active volcanoes, with a huge summit crater. The climb is long and hard, and most people take one or two days with a local guide.
- **The coast**: Itsandra beach is a short drive north of Moroni. Further north, near Mitsamiouli, are white sand beaches, the Trou du Prophète bay and Lac Salé, a salt-water crater lake close to the sea.

Mohéli (Mwali)

- **Nature**: the smallest and least developed island is the best for nature. The Mohéli National Park protects coral reefs, small islands and the sea around the south coast.
- **Turtles and whales**: at Itsamia, green turtles come to nest on the beach, and local guides run night visits. Humpback whales pass the island in the southern winter.
- Fomboni is the island's small capital and airport town.

Anjouan (Ndzuani)

- Mutsamudu, the island's port, has a maze-like old medina and an 18th-century citadel with views over the town and the sea.
- Domoni is an old stone town on the east coast, with historic mosques and tombs.
- **Ylang-ylang**: the island is green and very steep. You can visit small distilleries, where the flowers of the ylang-ylang tree are turned into oil for perfume.

DATA SOURCES

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