

Africa's Longest Suspension Bridge Could Cut 4 Hours Off KZN-Maputo Drive

By Dana Sanchez
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Artist's impression of the planned bridge over the Bay of Maputo. IOL

Breakfast in Durban, lunch in Mbabane, Swaziland, and dinner in Maputo, Mozambique.

That may be a difficult road-trip scenario at present, but a bridge under construction across Maputo Bay could cut four hours off the drive time from the KwaZulu-Natal border to Maputo.

Ferries currently carry people and goods across Maputo Bay. The alternative — driving around, takes hours with roads to South Africa accessible only by 4x4.

The bridge will connect the two shores of the Bay of Maputo, linking Maputo and Catembe by the end of 2017.

The Maputo-Catembe Bridge is expected to boost trade and tourism between South Africa and Mozambique, and tourism stakeholders are eagerly anticipating its completion.

The drive from Maputo to Kosi Bay is just 90 kilometers (about 56 miles) but the trip takes up to six hours in a four-wheel drive because of the poor condition of the road.

Construction began in 2014 and will become Africa's longest suspension bridge, a joint project of the Mozambique and Chinese governments.

- ▶ The bridge will be 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) long with a main span of 680 meters (2,231 feet).

Completion of the bridge will open up the region for tourism, said Natalie Tenzer-Silva, director at Dana Tours, in a [Tourism Update](#) interview.

The scenery in the region "is spectacular and tourists will finally be able to combine ... magnificent sites within easy reach of each other," she said.

Tenzer-Silva said she anticipates a surge in the self-drive market. "Although the distance from Ponta do Ouro to Maputo is 120 kilometers it currently takes three hours or more – depending on the ferry," she said. "With the new bridge, this should reduce to a third of the time."

The only way to access Maputo by car from South Africa is via the border post of Kosi Bay in northern KwaZulu-Natal, according to Traveller24.

Drivers can also go through the Golela border post into Swaziland and then drive through Swaziland to enter Mozambique at the Namaacha border post.

For access to other parts of Mozambique, drivers can go via the Komatipoort or Lebombo border posts, or the Giryondo border post in the Kruger National Park.

All these routes involve very long drives on bad roads, according to TourismUpdate.

Considered the most important work in Southern Mozambique since the country's independence, the bridge over the bay of Maputo will implement and complete the road link from the far north to the far south, according to Macauhub.

The bridge is part of a larger plan to build the 209-kilometer (129.8-mile) Maputo-Ponta do Ouro road — a project split in three parts. The Maputo-Catembe section is 35 kilometres; the Catembe-Ponta de Ouro section is 109 kilometres and includes repairing and building roads between Catembe, Bela Vista and South Africa. The third section — the Bela Vista-Boane road — is 63 kilometers.

There are also plans to renovate the border gates between South Africa and Maputo.

This project is estimated to cost more than \$700 million.

The bridge will stand 60 meters (197 feet) above sea level with two lanes in both directions, and the project will create 1,500 jobs for mostly Mozambicans over the next two years, said Basilio Nzunga, a civil and structural engineer with the project, according to IOL.

Hundreds of thousands of people travel between the two countries through border gates in KwaZulu-Natal every month. The bridge and linking roads will have a great impact on tourism, said Ndabo Khoza, CEO of KZN Tourism.

"The drive from Maputo to Kosi Bay is 90km but, because the roads are so bad, it takes up to six hours by 4x4. This project will cut that considerably. This will mean easier access not only for tourism but for trade as well," he said.

"This is truly one of the tangible legacy projects of the East3Route. It will make it possible for one to have breakfast in Durban, lunch in Mbabane (Swaziland) and dinner in Maputo."

Sources: [Coastweek](#), [Traveller24](#), [Macauhub](#), [IOL](#), [Tourism Update](#).

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