

Lamu Museum

Historical Background

The construction of Lamu Fort commenced in 1813, shortly after Lamu's victory over Pate and Mombasa in the battle of Shela. This major building task was reputedly undertaken with the cooperation of Seyyid Said, the Sultan of Oman who was then cultivating a promising new alliance with Lamu.

Upon its completion in about 1821 the fort marked the Southern corner of the traditional stone town and served as a garrison for Baluchi soldiers sent by the Sultan of Oman. Its protective presence encouraged new development around it. Thus confident Merchants erected the 19th century shopfront and buildings. By 1900 the Fort had become the image of the community, a role which it still plays to date.

For more information contact:

The Curator,
Lamu Museum
P.O.Box 48, Lamu.
Tel: 042- 633073/633402.

It served as a prison from 1910 to 1984 to both the British colonial regime and the Kenya government, before it was handed over to the National Museums of Kenya in 1984. Efforts to turn the Fort into a museum were started with technical and financial assistance from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). With its inception as a museum with environmental conservation as its general theme; Lamu Fort is basically a community center for the people of Lamu old town.

The courtyard is available for weddings, meetings and theatre productions. At the ground floor there is a permanent exhibition which is divided into three major sections

- (i) Marine
- (ii) Freshwater
- (iii) Terrestrial.

Each is further subdivided into its different ecosystem. The many exhibits on display represent the material culture of the various coastal peoples in the context in which the items are used. Upstairs there are administrative offices; laboratories, a workshop and a restaurant named Mazingira (swahili word for Environment) at the rooftop.

Lamu fort thus, has already acquired a strong identity as a World heritage centre.

Lamu Fort is a massive two storey stone structure located in Lamu Old town, Lamu District. It lies about 70 meters inland at the main jetty within Grid Reference 114 498 on the Lamu 1:50,000, Kenya Survey Map sheet No. 180/1.