# Samora Machel Statue - Maputo, Mozambique



Rising in the very heart of Mozambique's capital Maputo, in the historic Independence Square, a monumental bronze statue stands as the most powerful symbol of Mozambique's struggle for freedom and national identity. Samora Machel, the revolutionary leader who brought the country from Portuguese colonial rule to independence and Mozambique's first president, was born in 1933 and led his nation until 1986. Today Maputo is home to a monumental statue bearing his name. This statue has become an unmissable stop for history enthusiasts and tourists visiting the region.

## Construction and History of the Statue

The Samora Machel Statue was officially inaugurated on 19 October 2011, on the 25th anniversary of Machel's death. The statue was designed and constructed in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, by Mansudae Overseas Projects, the country's most prestigious monumental art firm. The bronze statue stands 9 metres tall and weighs 4.8 tons; it is mounted on a 2.7-metre marble plinth and, illuminated at night, commands attention at the head of Samora Machel Avenue. The statue stands on the spot formerly occupied by an equestrian statue of Portuguese Governor-General Joaquim Augusto Mouzinho de Albuquerque. By replacing this colonial-era monument, Mozambique gave visual and symbolic form to a historic transformation that had begun with the declaration of independence.

## Features and Artistic Details of the Statue

The Samora Machel statue depicts the president in a powerful and resolute stance, with his arm raised a gesture interpreted as a symbol of victory and of guiding his people. Every provincial capital in Mozambique has its own Samora Machel statue in a smaller format (2.9 metres), but the

Maputo statue, at 9 metres, is the tallest in the entire country. Illuminated at night, the statue offers a different atmosphere by day and by night. Although it has at times been criticised for bearing little resemblance to Machel, it has secured an indispensable place in Maputo's skyline and in the collective memory of its people.

## Independence Square and Its Surroundings

The statue stands in front of the City Hall in Praca da Independência (Independence Square), at the very heart of Maputo. The square is flanked by the Art Deco-style Maputo Cathedral, built in 1944, and the neoclassical City Hall, dating from 1941. Nearby points of interest include the Casa de Ferro (Iron House), the Tunduru Botanical Gardens and the Maputo Central Market. From early morning onwards the square becomes a gathering place for locals and tourists alike; it is an ideal spot for photography at sunset.

## The Legacy of Samora Machel

Samora Machel was born in 1933 in southern Mozambique into a poor farming family. As commander of FRELIMO's military wing, he led the armed struggle and declared Mozambique's independence on 25 June 1975, becoming the country's first president. A socialist in his political orientation, Machel implemented significant reforms for national development. He also maintained a resolute stance against the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Machel died on 19 October 1986 when the presidential aircraft crashed near the Mozambique–South Africa border. The suspicious circumstances of his death remain a subject of debate to this day.

## Visitor Information

The Samora Machel Statue is located in Praca da Independência in the centre of Maputo, and can be reached easily on foot or by taxi from anywhere in the city. A walking tour that takes in the historic buildings surrounding the square is an ideal way to grasp Maputo's history as a whole, from the colonial era through to the post-independence period. Every year on 25 June, Independence Day celebrations bring official ceremonies and events to the square.

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