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WITH MAY 2015 ISSUE

MIDDLE EAST

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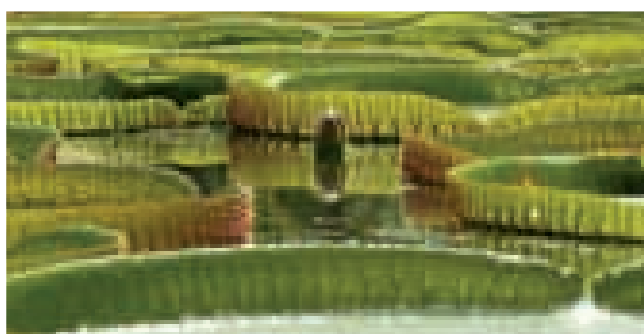
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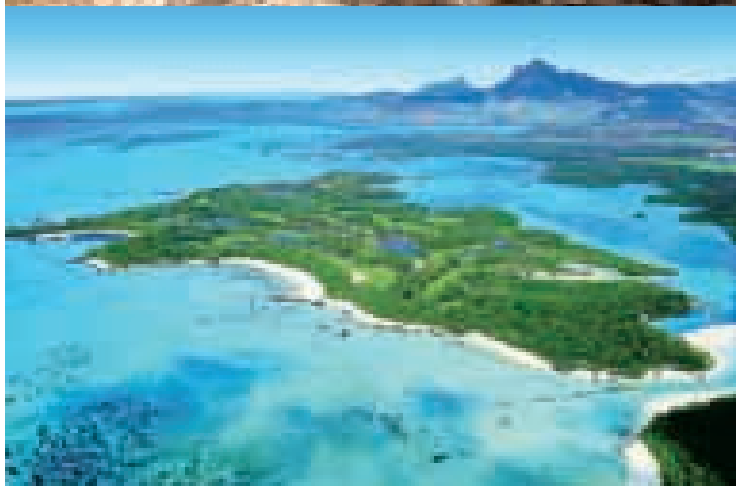
Clockwise from top: Le Touessrok's golf course on Île aux Cerfs; tranquil lagoons lap Mauritius' beaches; Le Morne towers over a golf course; a water lily pond at Pamplemousses Botanical Garden



Choosing the ideal holiday destination that hits all the right spots can be fraught with difficulty. Is it outstanding enough to celebrate a honeymoon or special occasion? Does it have something for everyone in the family? Is it possible to get a taste of the local culture? As is often the case with beach and island breaks, these boxes become even trickier to tick with tourist developments dominating seafronts and small islands lacking the space to host an experience eclectic enough to satisfy a variety of travellers. But look to the south-west Indian Ocean and find Mauritius, an island brimming with natural beauty and layers of diversity and culture.

Lined with 330km of coastline featuring everything from secluded beaches untouched by developments, indulgent escapes for luxury and intimacy, and calm turquoise waters protected by reefs pulsing with marine life, the shoreline is just the beginning of what Mauritius has to offer. Inland, mountains slope to tropical forests inhabited by rare birds and lush sugar cane plantations that recall the island's Dutch, French and British history. From coral gardens to mountain peaks, it can all be explored through a range of activities that include romantic sunset cruises, picturesque horseback rides and fascinating museums revealing the island's history, culture and wildlife. With a population of more than one million made up of cultures from around the world, the result is a heady mix of exciting cuisine, colourful festivals and an experience that is entirely unique as it all blends together harmoniously.

Bienvenue à Mauritius





View from Shores Bar

A wide-angle photograph of a tropical resort. In the foreground, a swimming pool with blue water is visible, with two dark-colored lounge chairs. Beyond the pool is a green lawn and a sandy beach. A row of tall palm trees stands along the beach, with the ocean in the background under a clear blue sky. In the top right corner, there is a red logo for 'Sun RESORTS' and a grey banner with the text 'LONG BEACH' in white.

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MIDDLE EAST



Giant water lilies at Pamplemousses Botanical Garden. **Left:** Dining destination Domaine Anna

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Mauritius is known
for its pristine white
sand beaches

Bienvenue à Mauritius



HISTORY & CULTURE

Steeped in colourful traditions from around the world,
Mauritius is unlike anywhere else



Mauritius
C'est un plaisir

UNESCO World
Heritage Site Le
Morne Cultural
Landscape in
south-west Mauritius



HISTORY

First discovered by Arabs in the 10th century, who named it Dina Arobi, Mauritius remained an untamed and uninhabited wilderness until 1638. It was then that the Dutch under the Dutch East India Company made the first to attempt to colonise the island, and named it Maurits after the Prince of Denmark. Introducing sugar cane to the land and developing the export of ebony wood kept the settlers occupied, but over time the settlements proved too difficult to maintain and the Dutch ultimately abandoned the island around 1710. Already owning neighbouring Réunion Island, the French claimed Mauritius – now Île de France – in 1715. Colonial plantations, road networks and the first sugar mill were established with the arrival of French governor Mahé de La Bourdonnais in 1735, who also commissioned a number of buildings including the Château de Mon Plaisir, which can still be visited today in Pamplemousses.

It was here that the British Royal Navy faced one of their worst defeats by the French Navy during the Napoleonic War, during the Battle of Grand Port in August 1810. Unaware of Île de la Passe's British occupation, the French Navy were lured into the islet's strategic channel by British captain Nesbit Willoughby, but French captain Guy-Victor Duperré rallied and forced his way through the passage to Grand Port. In the days that followed British ships were grounded, captured and damaged by the French. Undeterred, the British led a full-scale assault on the island later that year and successfully captured Île de France in December, renaming it Mauritius. After the capture much of France's influence remained, however the British eventually abolished slavery in 1835.

In the mid-1900s Mauritius began to move towards independence and continual campaigning led to permission from the British to self-govern. The island was named an independent state on March 12, 1968 and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam – founder of the Labour Party and leader of the independence movement – became the nation's first prime minister. During his tenure he shaped Mauritius' government and introduced free universal health care

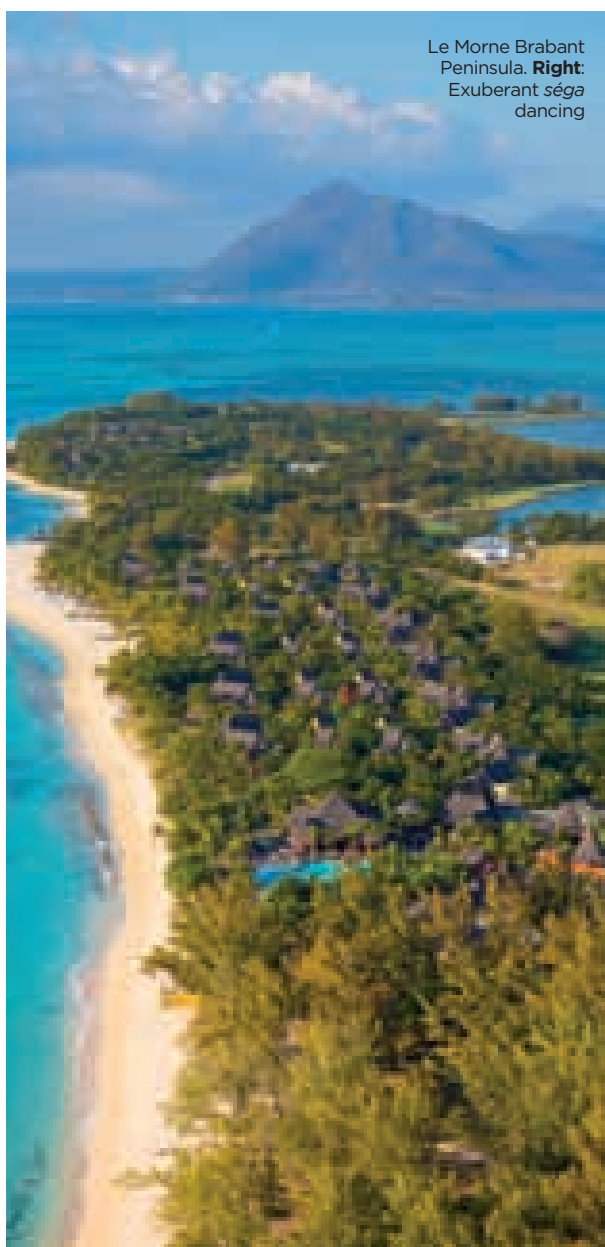
and education. The constitution was later amended on March 12, 1992 making Mauritius what we know it as today: a republic within the Commonwealth.

PEOPLE

A mix of races and religions – Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism – living together on one small island with little conflict, Mauritius is often cited for its harmonious nature. Binding these people together is a strong sense of national identity – due in part to the island's geographical isolation – and lacking any indigenous inhabitants, every resident is either an immigrant or the descendant of one. Respect is a trait found in communities from coast to coast and food, music and placing an importance on family life are bonds all Mauritians share. Four main ethnic groups are found across Mauritius: Indo-Mauritian, Creole, Sino-Mauritian and Franco-Mauritian. The island's majority, **Indo-Mauritians** descended from Indian labourers who came to the island after the abolition of slavery. Today, this group includes prominent business owners and members of the civic community with the Hindu majority at the helm of the country's administration. The **Creoles**, whose ancestry traces back to the island's African slaves and European immigrants, account for a little over a quarter of the island's population. **Sino-Mauritians** usually arrive as self-employed entrepreneurs and often specialise in the island's commerce. They currently make up a small Chinese community located primarily in Port Louis. The smallest group are the **Franco-Mauritians**, ancestors of the French colonists who continue to own many of Mauritius' successful sugar mills, banks and big businesses.

ARTS

With the exception of music and dance, which is unmistakably African in origin, Mauritius' arts have been heavily influenced by the French. Perhaps the island's most well-known piece of **literature** is by French author Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Written in the late 1700s, *Paul Et Virginie* tells the heartbreakingly tragic tale of two lovers and the Saint-Géran shipwreck off Île d'Ambre.



Le Morne Brabant Peninsula. **Right:** Exuberant *séga* dancing



Most contemporary Mauritian authors, such as Carl de Souza and Ananda Devi, continue to write in French, considered the “language of culture”. **Visual art** took its cues from the style of 18th- and 19th-century European engravings and oils, particularly seen in Mauritian landscape artworks. Modern artist Malcolm de Chezal took his surreal inspiration from the island’s nature and wildlife (“Blue Dodo” is the most recognisable).

Mauritian music and dance is dominated by **séga**. Performed at hotels, restaurants, beaches, bars and the odd barbecue, the cheerful African rhythm features influences from Latin America and the Caribbean. *Séga* dancing is uninhibited and joyful, following the pulsating beat of a simple goatskin drum. Recently, a modernised version called

seggae – a mix of *séga* and reggae – has begun taking hold of Mauritian musicians.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

On the south-west coast, **Le Morne Cultural Landscape** displays stunning natural beauty with basaltic mountain Le Morne Brabant towering over the peninsula’s excellent beaches; it is the only location where Mauritius’ national flower, the *boucle d’oreille* or earring tree, grows naturally. But more importantly, this is the location where the island’s runaway slaves, called “maroons”, escaped to in the 18th and early 19th centuries, creating settlements on the hard-to-reach summit and in caves on the mountain’s sheer slopes. The natural fortress of Le Morne became a symbol for the slaves’

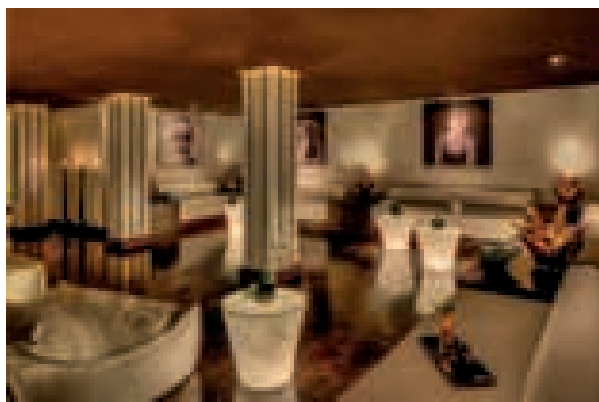
fight for freedom and a place to memorialise the abolition of slavery.

When slavery was abolished in 1835, immigration depots were established to receive indentured labourers from India, Southeast Asia, Madagascar and Africa. **Aapravasi Ghat** in Port Louis’ harbour is the last immigration depot to remain standing and is a significant part of many modern Mauritians’ heritage as the place where their ancestors were first welcomed into the country. As the seat of Great Britain’s “Great Experiment”, Aapravasi Ghat saw over half a million immigrants arrive in Mauritius between the 1830s and 1920s, successfully showing the rest of the world the advantages of abolishing slave labour and instead employing free men and women. Other British colonies and European territories soon followed suit.

FAMILY TREASURES



Clockwise from left: An airy Colonial Oceanfront Suite; Sanctuary Spa's relaxation area; Verandah Restaurant overlooks the pool; the lobby reception; childcare professionals keep the kids busy



Mixing the Indian Ocean's colonial style with activities for every age, a holiday at The Residence Mauritius is a treat for the whole family



Hidden away on Mauritius' pristine east coast and away from beaches bustling with distractions and developments, The Residence Mauritius is a haven of tropical quietude where families can simply focus on being together. The relative seclusion doesn't mean that rustic island bungalows are the accommodation on order – delving into the country's colonial heritage, the resort's style recalls turn-of-the-century plantation homes resulting in a setting that's as inspired by Mauritius' past as it is sophisticated. Airy spaces, from the lofty reception to the spacious guest rooms, let tropical breezes from the aquamarine sea flow through the grounds so that island bliss is always at hand.

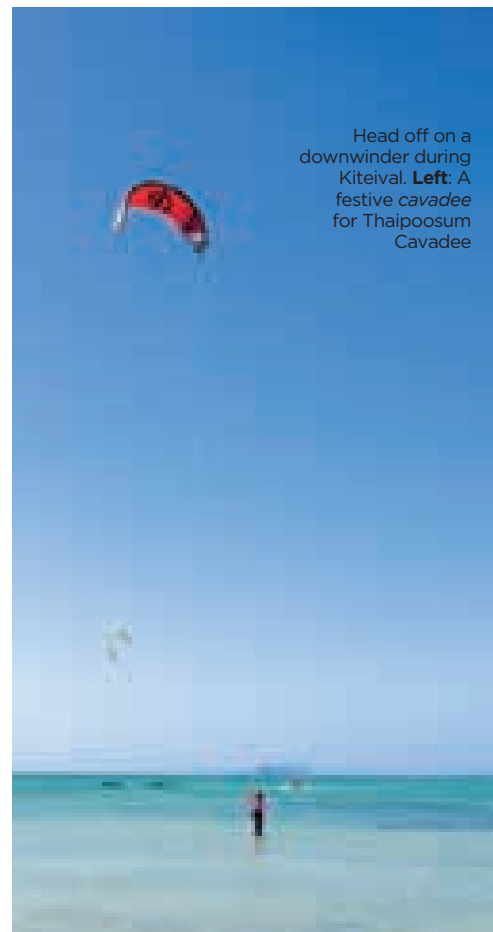
The elegant setting may not immediately indicate a family resort – and indeed it's an ideal romantic location as a retreat for couples – but The Residence also stands out as a stylish getaway for both young and old. The tranquil lagoon, protected by colourful coral reefs, is ideal for beginner swimmers and complimentary activities like wind surfing, snorkelling and glass-bottom boat trips keep a range of ages entertained. For children aged three to 12, The Planter's Kids Club is brimming with activities and will amuse the little ones day and night – great for when mum and dad want to indulge in a romantic dinner at one of the hotel's three restaurants serving authentic Creole and Mauritian fare. The newly renovated Sanctuary Spa ensures that a day of pampering is a family affair with specially designed treatments for children, from facials to mini-manis. It's for these reasons that families return to The Residence Mauritius year after year, creating a lasting set of memories in an idyllic tropical paradise.

**For more details call 00230-401 8888
or visit cenizaro.com/theresidence**



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Colourful festivals and thrilling sporting events take place throughout the year, emphasising the island's vast wealth of diversity in culture and interests



Head off on a downwinder during Kiteival. **Left:** A festive *cavadee* for Thaipoozum Cavadee

JANUARY

14-16 Celebrate the sun entering the Capricorn zodiac constellation during **Thai Pongal**, a festival marked by the sounds of drums, bells and conch shells as bonfires consume unwanted items, earthenware pots overflow with freshly cooked *pangal* (a rice mixture) and families gather together.

24 Thaipoozum Cavadee is a post-fasting spectacle of Tamil devotees embarking on a pilgrimage to local temples, all the while carrying decorated *cavadees* – carved wooden structures colourfully embellished with flowers and fruits.

FEBRUARY

8 Make sure you're in Port Louis' Chinatown when the Chinese Spring Festival, or **Chinese New Year**, is ushered in with processions of dancing dragons, red lanterns decorating the streets and fireworks sparkling in the night sky.

MARCH

8 Dressed in white, devotees carrying *kanwar* – flower- and mirror-covered wooden arches – walk to the sacred lake of Grand Bassin (Ganga Talao) to fetch holy water for **Maha Shivaratri**.

12 Mauritius' many cultures and religions come together to celebrate **National Day** with plenty of parties and fireworks – big events are held at Champs de Mars Racecourse – marking the island's independence from Great Britain on March 12, 1968.

23 There's no celebration more colourful than the Indian holiday of **Holi**, so prepare to get doused as vibrant powders in every colour of the rainbow are thrown through the streets and good fortune is wished for all.

+ Keep an eye out for the **March 2016** dates of **Festival Culinare Bernard Loiseau** (constancehotels.com), an annual culinary competition where international chefs cook up gourmet delights for foodies at the luxe Constance Belle Mare Plage resort.

APRIL

8 The Telegu Indian ethnic group celebrate **Ugadi** – the start of a new year – with a community-focused agenda that includes special meals for family and friends, the giving of prayers and sweets, and attending cultural shows.

MAY

7-10 Watch the pros tee off at the **AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open**

(afrasiabankmauritiusopen.com) at Domaine de Bel Ombre's Heritage Golf Club while trying not to be distracted by the surrounding natural beauty.

JUNE

29-July 4 Part of the Ocean Paddler World Surf Ski Series, the seventh edition of the Mauritius Ocean Classic is the main event during **Mauritius Surfski Week** (sports.luxresorts.com), where paddling champions and enthusiasts race from Bel Ombre to Le Morne.

JULY

18 Marking the end of Ramadan, fasting concludes with **Eid al-Fitr** as those celebrating exchange gifts, feast with family and give donations to those in need.

Mauritius' biggest golfing event takes place in May at Heritage Golf Club

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



26-4 August Kiteival (*kiteivalmauriti.us.com*) events can be found around the island as all level of kite surfers take on “downwinders” – speedy leeward tours – with guides, lunches and competitive events.

AUGUST

31-September 5 The Links course at Paradis sets the stage for the **Beachcomber Paradis Golf Challenge** (*beachcomber-hotels.com/golf*), and gives its participants the chance to win free accommodation and flights from Air Mauritius to return

in 2016 to defend their title.

SEPTEMBER

9 Not restricted to any one faith, the **Père Laval pilgrimage** sees Mauritians making the journey to Sainte-Croix near Port Louis to visit the tomb of Père Jacques-Désiré Laval – who was believed to have had healing powers – where pilgrims may wish for miracles.

17 Commemorating the birth of Ganesh, **Ganesh Chaturthi** takes place on the fourth day of the waxing moon this month. Look for devotees celebrating in the streets and taking small figurines

to the beach or riverbank to immerse before sunset.

OCTOBER

3 The **Moka Trail** (*mokatrail.mu*) is just one of the island’s annual marathon events (see *the Mauritius Trail 2015 on the opposite page*), with 15km and 27km races ready to challenge runners.

NOVEMBER

11 During the Festival of Lights – **Diwali** – the triumph of light (truth) over darkness (ignorance) is exulted through countless clay oil lamps placed on balconies and lit



Clockwise from left: Race on a mountain bike during Get Muddy; Ugadi is observed with family feasts; revellers celebrate National Day

Mauritius Trail 2015

Marathon enthusiasts will find a paradise in more ways than one with the annual Mauritius Trail featuring six ways to get fit

Get Muddy Part of the XTERRA World Tour, this is an off-road triathlon of swimming, mountain biking and trail running.

April 2016; get-muddy.com

Royal Raid View Yemen Reserve, the Parakeet Trail and Domaine de Bel Ombre in one of three runs spanning up to 80km in length.

May 9; royalraid.com

Mauritius Marathon Race down lagoon-lined coastal roads to a finish on a beach with 1,000 other marathoners.

July 19; mauritiusmarathon.com

Dodo Trail Four mountain races – up to 50km long – over the island's peaks in the south and west, with the chance to sight rare birds.

July 26; dodo-trail.com

Ultra Trail Raidlight Beachcomber

See it all – tropical forests, beaches, savannahs – on this 5-star, 120km trail.

August 1-2; ultramaurice.com

Ferney Trail Run through Vallée de Ferney and Domaine de l'Etoile in the Bambou mountain range during one of this event's four races.

September 5; ferneytrail.com


at sunset to bring good fortune into the lamp-owner's home.

DECEMBER

25 Flame trees bloom as **Christmas** is celebrated in tropical style with lively decorations around the island, late-night shopping opportunities and the traditional roast meal is swapped with fresh and flavourful Mauritian cuisine – and possibly even a barbecue.

Dates are based on the May 2015-April 2016 calendar; note that solar- and lunar-based festival dates differ each year





Giant water lilies in Pamplemousses Botanical Garden grow up to three metres in diameter.

Opposite from top: Black River Gorges National Park; Notre Dame Auxiliatrice on the island's northernmost point

Mauritius
C'est un plaisir



THE ISLAND & SIGHTS

Mark Twain once wrote that heaven was modelled after Mauritius and there's no question that its picturesque natural beauty and charming estates give it that otherworldly feel



Mauritius makes good use of its small size with an abundance of sights to discover. Known for its soft white beaches and sparkling turquoise waters, the island is much more than just a pretty shoreline. Lush national parks with dramatic scenery and exotic wildlife offer up endless opportunities for exploration. Yet another grand estate or plantation – or “domaine” as they’re called here – seems to appear around every corner, filled with rich history, verdant grounds and delectable cuisine.

EAST & NORTH-EAST

Romantically referred to as La Côte Sauvage – The Wild Coast – the relatively untouched east calls out to those looking for a laid-back atmosphere. With its pristine natural surroundings and boasting some of the best beaches, the jet set can be found here indulging in some of Mauritius’ most exclusive destinations.

RIVIÈRE DU REMPART

Occupying the northern tip and north-east coast of the island this district is named for the river that runs through it. At the

very northern tip of the island, at Cap Malheureux, lies **Notre Dame Auxiliatrice**, a pretty red-and-white chapel with views of offshore islands and a pleasant beach for strolling. A bit further south, the islets of **Pointe Bernache** and **Île d’Ambre** can be reached on a 30-minute boat trip from the sleepy village of Grande Gaube. Once there, spend a relaxed day sunning on Bernache’s beaches or paddling through Ambre’s lush mangrove lagoons in a kayak. Back on the mainland, find out what life was like in 19th-century Mauritius at restored colonial mansion **Château de Labourdonnais** (entry from AED 37; 00230-266 9533, chateaulabourdonnais.com). Walking the grounds, guests will find a distillery, gardens and orchards ripe with mango, papaya and nutmeg trees – and keep an eye out for grazing Aldabra giant tortoises. Stop at the restaurant for dishes taking advantage of the château’s on-site bounty. On the small north-west coast of Rivière du Rempart is popular **Grand Baie** and the beginning of the more touristic west coast. Filled with shopping, restaurants, water sports and nightlife, it’s this district’s – and the island’s – most lively destination. Check out the colourful **Tamil**



Boats bob along the shore of Mahébourg

Surya Oudaya Sangam Temple. Dripping in decoration – and perhaps even a few local monkeys – be prepared to remove your shoes to enter and pay a few rupees to photograph the frescoes and statues.

FLACQ

This is Mauritius' largest district, but not the busiest. With incredible natural beauty and fewer tourist hotspots than some other parts, it's the ideal location for a serene escape. What it has in superlatives, however, is the island's largest open-air shopping experience, **Flacq Market** at the centre of the district. It's a meeting point for the island's eastern residents, where fresh produce and local crafts can be found amid a lively atmosphere. The village of **Trou d'Eau Douce**, so named because of the sweet water that the Dutch found there in the 1600s, has a strong fishing tradition and a happy mix of cultures as evidenced by neighbouring churches, mosques and a *mandir* (Hindu temple). Travellers are most likely to visit the quiet village to access popular **Île aux Cerfs** (Deer Island). This privately owned 100-hectare islet is one

of Mauritius' most exclusive locales with a luxury resort (see *Le Touessrok* on p 37) and golf course. Deer are no longer found here, but beautiful beaches come in spades making it one of the island's top spots for water sports like parasailing, water skiing and glass-bottom boat tours. Don't leave your flippers behind: snorkelling the coral gardens rife with marine life is a must-do. Head inland for more natural sights at **Domaine de l'Étoile** (00230-5448 4444; terrocean.mu), the set of the 1972 film version of *Paul Et Virginie*. Today the nature park is home to flora and fauna spread over vast green grounds with views up to Lion Mountain and down to the coast, which can be explored on foot, quads or horseback. Touring the park, visitors can also discover sugarcane plantations that continue to be tended, some of the oldest ebony trees on the island and an English garden.

SOUTH & SOUTH-EAST

Until they taper off at sparkling Blue Bay (find out about *Blue Bay beach* on p 30) on the south-east coast, jagged cliffs dominate much of Mauritius' rugged south,

PHOTO: CORBIS



and while there is a selection of luxury retreats, the landscape of the area has kept development largely at bay. It's the go-to spot for nature lovers looking to take on some ecotourism.

GRAND PORT

This was the landing point of the first Dutchmen on the island and **Vieux Grand Port** subsequently became the island's first port and settlement – Dutch ruins are currently being excavated here. Centrally located on the coast, **Mahébourg** was once a busy trading centre but has quietened down in modern times. Still, it's worth exploring for the tasty street food, interesting market, **National History Museum** (*more details on p 32*) and **Biscuiterie H. Rault** (*entry from AED 18; 00230-631 9559, biscuitmanioc.com*). Essentially the same as when the Rault family opened it in 1870, a brief tour of the factory concludes with the chance to taste the square manioc biscuits made there. Stock up on packets to take home as the hand-made treat's recipe remains a secret. A little north of Mahébourg in the Bambou Mountains lies nature reserve **La Vallée de Ferney** (*entry from AED 34; 00230-729 1080, valleedeferney.com*). A hike along its three-kilometre path reveals myriad exotic flora and fauna until you arrive at the Ferney Lodge Restaurant at the end of the trail. Here, hungry visitors can be treated to island speciality venison *vindaloo*.

The restaurant also offers a good chance to glimpse the endangered Mauritius kestrel during their daily feedings at 11:30am. For another reserve, try **Île aux Aigrettes** (*île-aux-aigrettes.com*). The untamed islet can only be visited on a guided tour with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, where visitors are rewarded with sightings of rare birds, unique plant life and glimpses of the unspoilt beauty that greeted Mauritius' first settlers more than 400 years ago. At expansive **Domaine du Chasseur** (00230-471 1269) in the Anse Jonchée hills, take a seat at its rustic restaurant for fresh game dishes or spend the day footing it over 30km of hiking paths replete with stunning views of the blue coastline.

SAVANNE

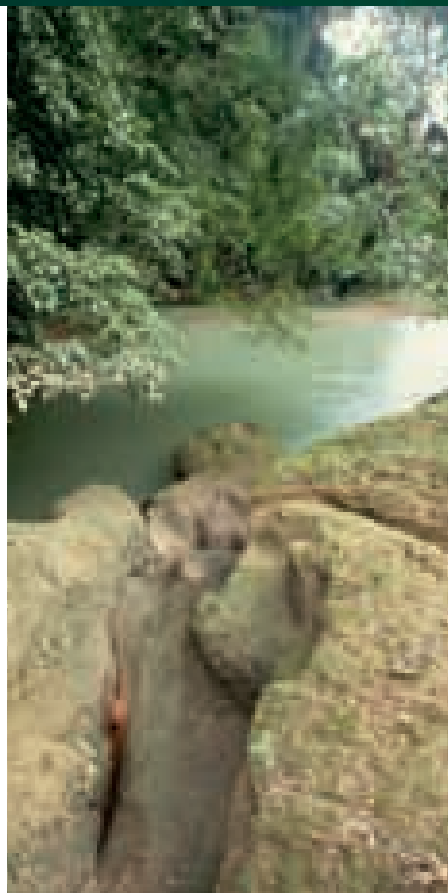
The southern trend of natural splendour mixed with ecotourism continues here. **Black River Gorges National Park** (00230-258 0058) is undoubtedly the island's most incredible natural park, not to mention the largest, stretching into three districts. Bursting with wildlife, the park is home to the Chinese guava, the rare dodo tree, orchids, the endangered echo parakeet, macaques, red deer and flying foxes – to name just a few. Containing 60km of signposted paths, it's Mauritius' largest hiking area with outstanding panoramic views – hike to the 828m summit of Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire – and bird watching

Above: Vieux Grand Fort.
Right: Hike through Domaine de l'Etoile and be rewarded with stunning views





Pristine Île aux Cerfs is home to the exclusive Le Touessrok resort and golf course. **Below:** The Black River Gorge



in the lower forests (see more about bird watching in Mauritius on p 31). If you're wild about flowers, visit between September and January when the area is in full bloom. To the east of Black River Gorges National Park in northern Savanne is **Grand Bassin**, one of Mauritius' two natural lakes. Filling the crater of an extinct volcano, the lake is also known as Ganga Talao and is a pilgrimage site, especially during the festival of Maha Shivaratri (find more details on this festival on p 17). A 33m-high statue of Shiva – the island's tallest – stands at the lake as well as a temple dedicated to a number of Hindu deities. Nearby, **La Vallée des Couleurs** (00230-5251 8666, lavalleedescouleurs.com) got its name from the 23 different colours of earth seen in the valley and caused by an ancient volcanic eruption. There are also a number of activities available within the park in addition to a fern garden, waterfalls and an expansive view of the south coast. Nearing the coast on the eastern side of Savanne, **La Vanille Réserve des Mascareignes** (entry from AED 23; 00230-626 2503, lavanille-reserve.com) offers up tropical grounds inhabited by creatures from the Mascarene Islands (Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues). Giant tortoises, monkeys and deer may appear but the most notable residents are the more than 1,500 Nile

crocodiles, which are bred and reared there. West of La Vanille is **Rochester Falls**, where water from the Savanne River falls 10m over lava walls leading to erosion that has created peculiar geometric blocks in the cliff. Further to the west and close to the shore, serene **Domaine de Bel Ombre** (00230-623 5522, domainedebelombre.mu) was a sugar plantation in the early 1800s. While the sugar factory is now defunct, Le Château de Bel Ombre has been restored to its former plantation-era opulence and houses a fine restaurant serving authentic Mauritian cuisine. Around the rest of the estate, luxury resorts, a golf course, restaurants, a spa and adventure activities can be found, making it a thoroughly pleasant location to call home during a holiday.

WEST

A dynamic region where travellers can stroll through a sprawling botanical garden in the morning, shop along the modern waterfront at lunch, then grab a seat at a table d'hôte in a rural village for supper, no interest has been overlooked, resulting in something for everyone.

RIVIÈRE NOIRE

Stretching along more than half of Mauritius' west coast, the island's longest beach,



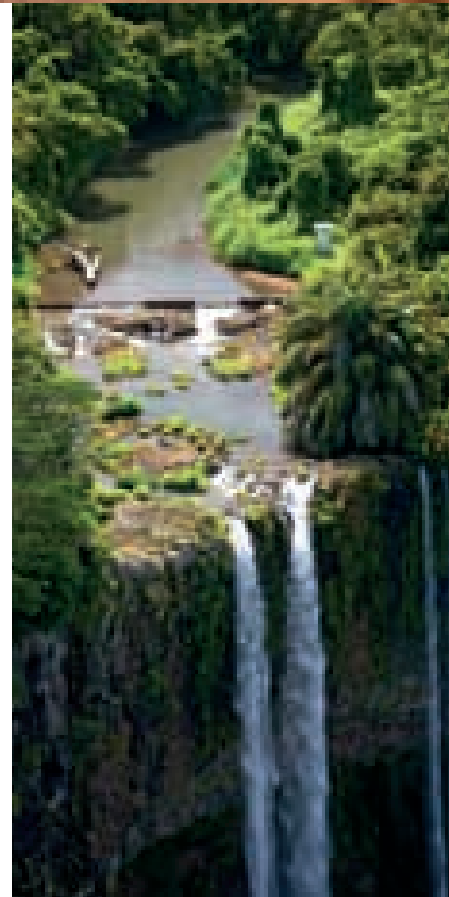
Clockwise from left: Caudan Waterfront at Port Louis; popular natural site, Chamarel Coloured Earths; one section of Tamarind Falls, which features eleven waterfalls

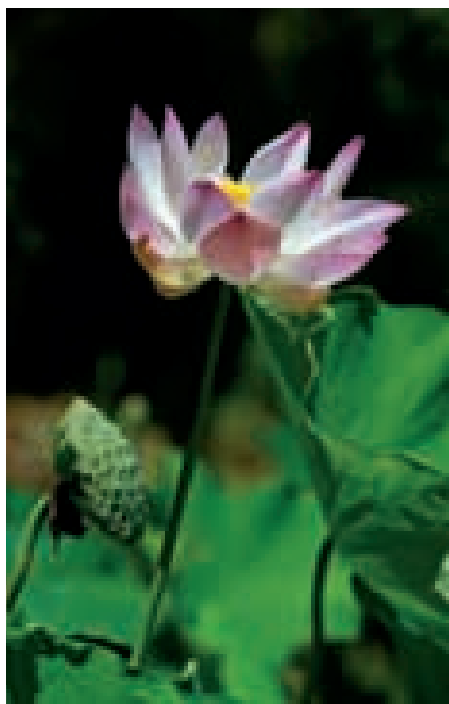
Flic en Flac, can also be found here (*find more details about the beach on p 30*). A tourist favourite, the town is brimming with souvenir shops and hotels and is a good base to easily reach other parts of the island, with most everywhere accessible in under an hour's drive. At the very southern end of the district on Le Morne peninsula, UNESCO World Heritage Site **Le Morne Brabant** (*find out more about heritage sites on p 14*) reaches 556m above sea level as a monolithic crag that can be seen from far down the flat coast. Offshore, boats can visit unusually shaped **Le Morne Crystal Rock** with excellent views of Le Morne Brabant. Also in Rivière Noire's south, the bucolic hamlet of **Chamarel** makes for a convenient stop on the way to or from Black River Gorges National Park. The most famous sight in Chamarel – and one of the best known in Mauritius – may be the **Terres de 7 Couleurs** (*entry AED 13; 00230-483 8298*), or Chamarel Coloured Earths, a small area of sand dunes made up of seven distinct colours from violet to green. Inside the entry of this area on the way to the sands, a view of **Chamarel Waterfall** can be seen dropping 95m into a pool below. To learn how the island's favourite drink is made, stop by **Rhumerie de Chamarel** (*tour with*

tasting from AED 35; 00230-483 4980, rhumeriedechamarel.com). A guided tour explains the spirit-making process and adults are treated to a tasting of different types of the sugar-based drink produced there. Inside the distillery, L'Alchimiste, one of Mauritius' more innovative restaurants can be found. Nearby, a number of other quaint (and delectable) *tables d'hôtes* can be discovered around Chamarel. Farther north and just 15 minutes from Flic en Flac, **Casela World of Adventures** (*entry AED 70; 00230-452 2828, caselapark.com*) is one of the island's biggest attractions. Fourteen hectares of verdant grounds feature exotic wildlife – look out for big cats and zebras – and myriad activities (walking with lions, anyone?) to keep families busy (*find more details on Casela's activities on p 31*).

PORT LOUIS

Mauritius' smallest district is also its capital city. Now the country's main harbour, the area has been highly developed with the modish **Caudan Waterfront** (*00230-211 9500, caudan.com*) being a big draw for tourists and residents alike. Filled with all manner of shops, bars, restaurants and a cinema, it's a colourful entertainment hub. Cultural vultures can get their fill of





museums here with a few located in town (*find more details on museums on p 32*). A mix of island aesthetics combine to form one of the country's most beautiful pieces of architecture – **Jummah Masjid** (jummahmasjid.org), which is also Mauritius' most important Islamic site. At **Fort Adelaide**, Port Louis' only fortress not left in ruins, the barracks have been converted into boutiques and the monument also hosts concerts and plays. Perched atop a hill, the fort offers good views, but for an even better view walk, jog or drive up the very accessible 323m **Signal Mountain**.

PAMPLEMOUSSES

This district was named for the Javan grapefruit trees that the Dutch introduced to the area. Despite – or because of – being heavily populated, it has retained an authentically Mauritian vibe. The area's real claim to fame is the **Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden** (entry AED 20; 00230-243 9401) – usually referred to as Pamplemousses Botanical

Garden. Named after the first prime minister of independent Mauritius, the garden's humble beginnings in 1735 as a vegetable plot for Mon Plaisir Château (peek inside for an exhibition of photographs) belie its current status as one of the world's finest and largest gardens, and the oldest in the southern hemisphere. Today it's filled with innumerable palms and spices, sugarcanes and ebonies. The highlight of the garden is the *Victoria amazonica* water lily pond. These enormous water lilies can open and grow up to three metres in diameter during the day, blooming white flowers one day and closing with a red flower the next. In northern Pamplemousses, the village of Triolet is home to Mauritius' largest *mandir*, **Maheswarnath Temple**, or Triolet Shivala. Built in the 19th century, the temple replicates Bengali architecture with five towers constructed atop a platform and is decorated with vibrant floral motifs and representations of deities painted against a stark white background.



Flic en Flac's calm waters are ideal for snorkelling.

Opposite, from top: Le Morne peninsula; Pamplemousses Botanical Garden in bloom

INLAND

Away from the beaches and on to the central plateau, the island's interior is highly populated, but there are still some superb destinations for travellers looking for slightly cooler temperatures and harbouring a bottomless urge for exploration.

MOKA

This is the place for a dose of Mauritian history, and there's nowhere better than **Maison Euréka** (entry from AED 20; 00230-433 8477, maisonneurka.com), situated a little south of Port Louis. This 19th-century Creole mansion has been impeccably preserved and now as a museum, it acts as a window into the lifestyle of that era with antique furnishings, photographs and décor. Don't miss the marble bathtub that has been carved from one piece of stone. The grounds are good for a leisurely walk, with small waterfalls, rare plants and a tranquil atmosphere. Sate any hunger pangs at the restaurant where exceptional Mauritian fare is dished up. While making your way

through Moka, keep an eye out for 10 million-year-old **Le Pouce's** thumb-like appearance. Straddling the borders of Moka and Port Louis, this mountain can be easily hiked for panoramic island views.

PLAINES WILHEMS

There is more of an urban feel here, with four main villages – Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, Beau-Bassin Rose-Hill and Vacoas-Phoenix – which could hit the right spot if you've come down with a shopping bug (more shopping details on p 32). In centrally located Curepipe you'll also find Trou aux Cerfs, a dormant volcano crater surrounded by woodlands, and a view of the town. Near the border of Rivière Noire, **Tamarind Falls** (also known as Les 7 Cascades) are a breathtaking sight and an adventurer's delight as they take some effort to reach. Your reward for hiking to the destination is unspoilt nature, 11 sets of falls and refreshing pools – some of which adrenaline junkies will have the opportunity to jump into from atop the waterfall.

La Route du Thé



Hit the road and follow the path of Mauritius' favourite flavours from the heart of the island to the southern coast

A must-do for any history buff or gourmand, this tour can be completed in a few hours and is a rich experience well worth the time. Start off at **Domaine des Aubineaux** (entry AED 35; 00230-676 3089) near Curepipe, a classic colonial manor that was the first to be equipped with electricity in Mauritius. A camphor grove, essential oil distillery and old photographs documenting the island's other grand mansions can be seen here – but it's the flavourful Mauritian teas served in a renovated billiard parlour that are the real draw. Moving south, **Bois Chéri Tea Plantation** (entry AED 40; 00230-507 0216) includes vast grounds of sugar cane and a tea-processing facility (active only in the morning) where an hour-long tour explains the steps of production. The restaurant cooks up a tasty set lunch menu (an additional AED 30) of locally sourced ingredients with views over a crater lake. The grounds of elegant **Le Saint Aubin** (entry AED 45; 00230-626 1513, saintaubin.mu) are the final stop. Near the southern coast, it includes a spirit distillery and a museum dedicated to Mauritian vanilla. A *table d'hôte* in the renovated colonial mansion that serves a menu highlighting the plantation's fruits (an additional AED 65) is a sweet way to end the tour.

ACTIVITIES

You won't find yourself lacking something to do in Mauritius – unless, of course, that's exactly what you're looking for

Below: Soft sand and crystalline water make for an ideal beach break.

Opposite, from top: Abundant marine life inhabits the island's reefs; Mauritius is an excellent diving destination





Indulgent pampering, adventurous experiences, simple relaxation, cultured afternoons – Mauritius ticks all the boxes for a diverse holiday. With ample variety in every category, visitors have the luxury of spending their time immersed in whatever their favourite pursuit of happiness may be.

BEACHES

The white sand, palm-fringed, lagoon-lapping beaches are what first catch most people's attention when deciding on Mauritius as a holiday destination. In the north-west, **Grand Baie** and **Péreybère** feature a more vibrant atmosphere surrounded by lively villages. For a quieter scene, head to **Trou aux Biches** where calm, shallow water aids in snorkelling amid the beautiful coral just offshore – it's some of the island's best. Drooping *filao* trees line the beach here as well as in neighbouring **Mont Choisy**, a favourite sandy spot for watching the sun set.



Clockwise from top left: Find fresh produce in Port Louis; quad safaris are a popular island activity; hike Le Pouce for stunning views; Black River Gorges National Park is full of natural wonders; sprawling Flic en Flac beach



On the east coast, unspoilt **Belle Mare's** fine sands are ideal for a secluded getaway thanks to its length and the lack of development in the surrounding area, while a day trip to **Île aux Cerfs** is recommended for its idyllic lagoon setting and water sports. South-eastern **Blue Bay** is true to its name with endless vistas of turquoise sea. Crystal clear and shallow with remarkable coral gardens keeping the ocean waves at bay, it's one of Mauritius' most exceptional beaches.

Gris Gris in the south is the place for waves and views of dramatic cliffs, but

take care if going for a dip as it remains quite wild. Calmer water can be found at **Le Morne**, backed by lush vegetation and iconic Le Morne Brabant – there's excellent swimming and snorkelling to be had in the shallow waters here.

West coast **Tamarin's** rough sea is a surfer's paradise, and swimmers don't have far to go before reaching Mauritius' longest stretch of sand, **Flic en Flac**. This whimsically named beach stretches eight kilometres to Wolmar with a gently sloping seabed, tranquil water and *filao* tree-lined sands.

MARINE DISCOVERY

Teeming with underwater life and coral forests, there's just as much to do in the water as on land. **Snorkelling** and **diving** are arguably the top marine activities with Blue Bay, Trou aux Biches, Flic en Flac and Île aux Cerfs being the best places to dive. Bring an underwater camera to capture shots of vibrant clownfish, parrotfish, anemone, fan coral and sea turtles. To best discover Mauritius' marine world, charter a **catamaran cruise** (00230-5728 3030, www.catamaran-cruises.com). Part



of the ocean on an **underwater sea walk** (00230-263 7819, solarunderseawalk.com) off Grand Baie's shores – or take a seat in a **submarine** or **subscooter** (00230-265 7272, blue-safari.com) for a marine safari off the north-west coast.

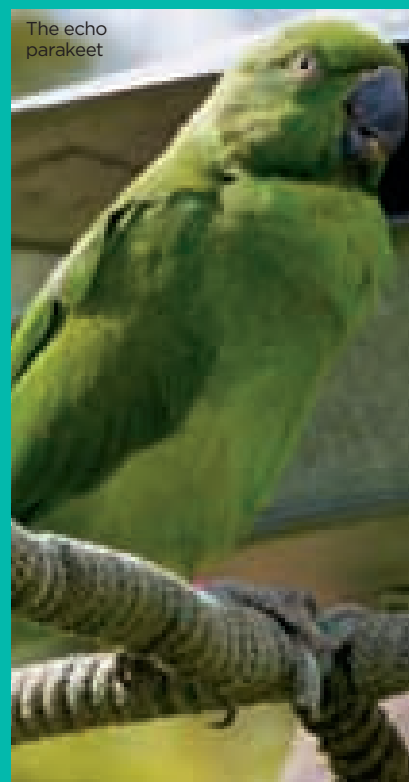
NATURE

The island's abundant wildlife and verdant landscapes are enough to thrill the avid explorer, and **hiking** is the ideal way to get up close and personal with nature. For panoramic views climb to the summit of Moka's Le Pouce. Tamarin Falls has refreshing pools and dramatic canyons and you can glimpse endangered species in Maccabée Forest. With 60km of signposted trails, trekkers can't go wrong at Black River Gorges National Park.

Adrenaline junkies will enjoy **canyoning** experiences in Rivière Papayes or Tamarin Falls; flying across **zip lines** at Rivière de Galets or Yemen Reserve; and **quad biking tours** in parks across the island. For those looking for a slower pace, **horseback riding** gently through the manicured grounds of Saint Aubin's sugar plantation – or in a number of other locations around Mauritius – will appeal.

Family favourite **Casela World of Adventures** (entry AED 70; 00230-452 2828, caselapark.com) is 14 hectares packed with exciting ways to experience the great outdoors. Try Mauritius' longest zip line, descend waterfalls while canyoning

Rare sightings



Some of the world's rarest birds can be found on Mauritius, making it an exceptional destination for bird watching. Here is where to find some of the island's rare and endangered species

Mauritius kestrel Look for this bird of prey's blotched markings in the south-west where it has been brought back from near-extinction.

Pink pigeon The last species of Mascarene pigeon in existence, these blush-coloured birds can be found on Île aux Aigrettes or in Black River Gorges National Park.

Echo parakeet This vibrant grass-green bird is the world's rarest parakeet but can be seen in Black River Gorges National Park – walk the aptly named Parakeet Trail.

Mauritius fody Île aux Aigrettes is your best bet at glimpsing one of these songbirds; the males have a distinct ruby-coloured head and breast.

Olive white-eye One of the island's rarest birds, the olive-green warbler with a distinct white eye-ring may be sighted in Black River Gorges National Park or Île aux Aigrettes.

relaxation and part adventure, a typical day trip includes snorkelling, a barbecue, boat and beach lounging, and calls at pristine islets like Île aux Cerfs, Îlot Gabriel or Île aux Bénitiers; dolphin watching and sunset cruises are also an option. Just as enticing are **kayak expeditions** paddling through the peaceful mangroves of Île d'Ambre. Kick up the speed on a **SeaKart** (00230-5499 4929, fun-adventure.com) where participants can steer and skip their craft across the water on a day tour of the west coast. Alternatively, walk along the bottom



Left: See zebras at Casela World of Adventures.
Right: Tamarina Golf Estate on the west coast



or soar across gorges from a swing. The park is home to an African reserve with wildlife including ostriches and zebras that can be seen on safari from within a vehicle or while driving your own quad or buggy over rugged terrain. The highlight at Casela is the big cat experience. Guests can drive through the enclosure, give a lion a pat during an interaction or – for the most thrilling memory – walk along the Rempart River side by side with the king of the jungle.

SHOPPING

Shopping may not be the first thing that comes to mind when planning a trip to Mauritius, but there are still plenty of worthy places to exercise your credit card. Pleasantly shaded by leafy tree-lined streets, **Sunset Boulevard** (00230-263 4172, sunsetboulevard.mu) in Grand Baie will sort out any resort wear needs with stylish boutiques that include Vilebrequin for swimwear and Tafta for cocktail dresses. For a bazaar atmosphere and to pick up some island souvenirs, flavourful street food and a taste of local life, look to the **Port Louis Central Market**. Local handicrafts can be found inland, including model ships at **Voiliers de L'Océan** (00230-674 6764, www.voiliersocean.intnet.mu) in Curepipe, blown-glass items at the **Mauritius Glass Gallery** (00230-696 3360) in Phoenix and fine textiles like cashmere and silk at the **Floréal Texile Museum** (00230-468 8555). Take shopping indoors on a rainy day at **Le Caudan Waterfront** (00230-211 9500, caudan.com) in Port Louis, **La Croisette** (00230-209 2000, gblc.mu) in Grand Baie or **Bagatelle** (00230-468 8555, mallofmauritius.com) in Moka, all housing international fashion brands.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Get a culture fix at one of many museums and art galleries peppering Mauritius. Brush up on the history of sugar at **L'Aventure du Sucre** (entry AED 35; 00230-243 7900, aventuredu sucre.com) where a large museum replicates an old factory on the Beau Plan Sugar Estate. **Blue Penny Museum** (entry AED 25; 00230-210 9204, www.bluepennymuseum.com) showcases old marine maps, historical documents and the 1847 Blue Penny and Red Penny stamps, worth millions of dollars. Within a colonial villa is the **Natural History Museum** (00230-212 0639; mauritiusmuseums.com) filled with displays of extinct fauna, the island's aquatic creatures, fossils and a dodo reconstructed from the only complete skeleton in existence. Making good use of another colonial home is Mahébourg's **Naval Museum** (00230-631 9329; mauritiusmuseums.com), where relics dating back to the Napoleonic period of the region's naval battles have been salvaged. Go further back in time at the **Frederik Hendrik Museum** (00230-634 4319; mauritiusmuseums.com) in Vieux Grand Port to see items excavated from the surrounding historic site – Mauritius' first human settlement.

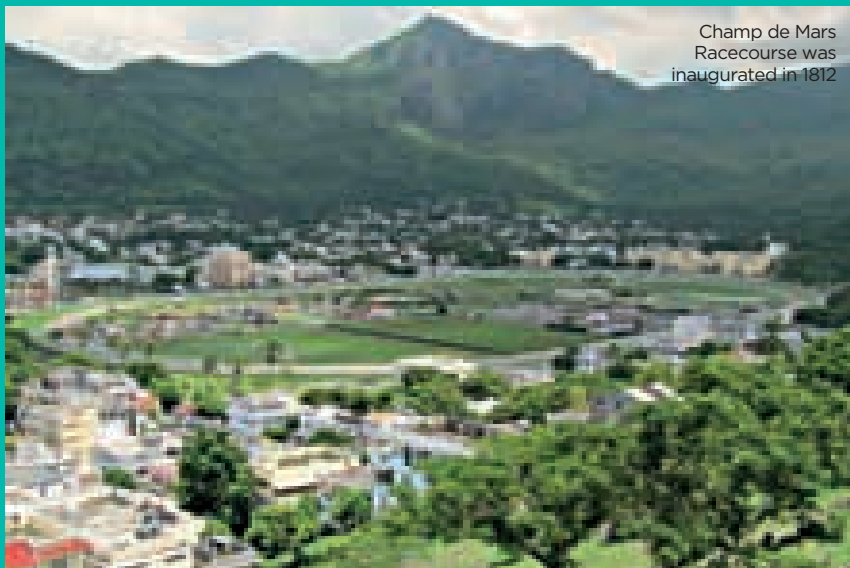




Pick up local handicrafts in the colourful Port Louis Central Market

PHOTO: CORBIS

Thrill of the race



Champ de Mars Racecourse was inaugurated in 1812

As home of the oldest racing club in the southern hemisphere – and second oldest in the world – **Champ de Mars Racecourse** (00230-212 2212, mauritiusturfclub.com) in Port Louis is the island's favourite place to be during the racing season, which lasts from around

April to November. The best races to attend are the Duchess of York Cup (April), the Barbé Cup (July) and the Maiden Cup (September). Also the spot where the nation first marked its independence in 1968, the racecourse continues to host annual National Day celebrations.

For something a bit more contemporary, **Seebaluck Art Gallery** (00230-263 6470) is Mauritius' largest gallery space and exhibits colourful paintings and prints from local and international artists. In an elegant 130-year-old sugar mill, **Galerie du Moulin Cassé** (00230-727 0672) displays the art of nature photographer Diane Henry and Mauritian visionary and painter Malcolm de Chezal. Art gallery-cum-boutique **Imaaya** (00230-263 1628, imaaya.com) places a spotlight on contemporary Mauritian artists and artisans. **Galerie Vaco** (00230-263 3106; vacoartiste.com) displays Mauritian artist Vaco Baissac's bright and cheerful island-influenced paintings that have been exhibited internationally.

GOLF

With courses in idyllic settings, don't leave home without your golf clubs. Designed by Ernie Els, **Anahita Golf Course** (00230-402 2200, anahita.mu/golf.aspx) is an 18-hole championship course with sprawling fairways and six oceanfront holes on the south-east coast. Home of the Johnnie Walker Classic, **Belle Mare Plage Legend** (00230-402

3636, constancehotels.com) is legendary indeed with 18 holes spread throughout an indigenous forest, all designed by champion Hugh Baiocchi. It's hard to find a better location than on exclusive Île aux Cerfs, and **Le Touessrok Golf Course** (00230-402 7720, letouessrokresort.com) makes good use of the islet by winding its championship course across the landscape while ensuring that each and every hole has an ocean view. Watch out for water hazards on the back nine at the 18-hole international **Paradis Golf Club** (00230-401 5050, beachcomber-hotels.com/golf) on the wild Le Morne peninsula, where the towering mountain and placid lagoon make for distractingly pretty scenery. On the west coast, the 18-hole championship **Tamarina Golf Estate** (00230-401 3006, tamarinagolf.mu) takes guests on a tour over rugged savannah terrain and challenges players with an intimidating tee-shot over the River Rempart at hole five. Where better to host the AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open (*find more details on this event on p 19*) than at Domaine de Bel Ombre's **Heritage Golf Club** (00230-623 5600, heritageresorts.mu). The 18-hole championship course was



Intimate resorts are ideal for celebrating special occasions. **Left:** Tree-lined beaches beckon visitors to relax. **Below:** Explore the coastline on a yacht or catamaran

designed by Peter Matkovich and is riddled with tricky rough and bunkers side by side with sugar cane-covered hills. As the oldest golf club on the island, enthusiasts shouldn't miss **Gymkhana Golf Club Course** (00230-696 1404; www.mgc.mu). Designed and built by the British Royal Navy in 1902, the 18-hole course is located inland and – featuring fairly flat terrain and lacking water hazards – is an ideal course for those just getting into the sport.

SPA

After exploring the island, some down time at the spa is just what's needed. With no indulgence spared, 75,000sqft **Nira Spa** (00230-603 7200, shantimaurence.com) features four spa areas with different focuses – holistic bio, Indian, Oriental, and fitness and wellness – not to mention authentic yoga, meditation and Pilates sessions. Nira's specially prepared wellness cuisine is not only delicious but nutritious and rejuvenating. **Shandran Spa by Clarins** (00230-603 4343, beachcomber-hotels.com/spa) has taken particular care in its natural design with reflecting pools and the scent of exotic flora drifting through Robinson Crusoe-style treatment cabins, where guests unwind with Clarins rituals and body wraps. Located in the Lux* resorts

around Mauritius, the award-winning **Lux* Me Spas** (luxme.luxresorts.com) have earned accolades through personalised experiences and exclusive treatments designed by world-renowned aromatherapist Shirley Page. For a fully rejuvenating experience, head to the Lux* Me Retreat to immerse in seven days of total wellness. Just like the famed earth in Chamarel, **Seven Colours Spa** (00230-266 9700, sevencoloursspa.com) has its own distinct focus points, like light, fragrance and the Mauritian culture of caring, to achieve states of harmony – the Seven Colours Hot Stone Massage even takes advantage of the island's eruptive heritage with energising volcanic rocks. The Kerala-trained therapists at **Kairali Ayurvedic Spa** (00230-5257 1440, kairali.mu) take healing of the mind, body and spirit seriously through the teaching of traditional Ayurveda. Holistic treatments pamper as well as return a state of healthy balance to the body with herbal remedies and synchronised massages. It's no surprise that **Givenchy Spa** (00230-402 7400, letouessrokkresort.com/spa-hotel-mauritius) effortlessly exudes elegance with its sleek yet tropical surrounds. Using specially created products by Swisscare, this is the place for the ultimate facial tweaked to match every skin type – a rewarding way to revitalise your skin at the end of a sun-drenched holiday.



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4 nights stay at Long Beach, Mauritius (two persons sharing a standard room) on a half board basis



4 nights stay for 2 persons in a Deluxe room at Haute Rive Resort & Spa on a complimentary half board basis



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Prize draws to be held on Thursday, 7th of May
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(AF8I5O)

Please check our Facebook page to see the list of winners
and to arrange collection of your prize vouchers.



STAY

Dip into colonial life on a lush plantation, partake in family fun on a sprawling beach resort or celebrate a special occasion at a secluded escape – Mauritius' eclectic hotels offer the ideal holiday experience for every traveller



NORTH COAST

A haven of untouched and tranquil beaches to the east and dominated by vibrant beach towns on the west, this is a destination with a bit of everything

ANSE LA RAIE

Blumarine Attitude Doubles from AED 420; 00230-204 8800, blumarine-hotel-mauritius.com

Paradise Cove Doubles from AED 685; 00230-204 4000, paradisecovehotel.com

BALACLAVA

Angsana Balaclava Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,325; 00230-204 1888; angsana.com

La Plantation Hotel Rates available upon request; 00230-204 3000, laplantation-hotel.com

The Westin Turtle Bay Resort & Spa, Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,325; 00230-204 1400, westinturtlebaymauritius.com

The Oberoi, Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,500; 00230-204 3600, oberoihotels.com

CALODYNE & GRAND GAUBE

Lux* Grand Gaube Doubles from AED 435; 00230-204 9191, luxresorts.com

Zilwa Attitude Doubles from AED 480; 00230-204 9800, zilwa-hotel-mauritius.com

GRAND BAIE

Hotel 20° Sud Doubles from AED 1,105; 00230-263 5000, 20degressud.com

Le Mauricia Doubles from AED 400; 00230-209 1100, lemauricia-hotel.com

Royal Palm Suites from AED 2,730; 00230-209 8300, royalpalm-hotels.com

PÉREYBÈRE

Bleu de Toi Doubles from AED 285; 00230-269 1761, bleudetoi.mu

Hibiscus Beach Resort & Spa Rates available upon request; 00230-263 8554, hibiscushotel.com

POINTE AUX CANONNIERS

Baystone Boutique Hôtel & Spa Doubles from AED 1,180; 00230-209

1900, baystone.mu

La Pointe aux Canonnières Doubles from AED 8,600 for seven-night minimum stay; 00230-209 1000, clubmed.com

Le Canonnier Doubles from AED 810; 00230-209 7000, beachcomber-hotels.com

POINTE AUX PIMENTS

Le Méridien Ile Maurice Doubles from AED 1,010; 00230-204 3333, lemeridien-mauritius.com

Le Victoria Doubles from AED 905; 00230-204 2000, beachcomber-hotels.com

TERRE ROUGE

Maritim Resort & Spa Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,110; 00230-204 1000, maritim.com

The Address Boutique Hotel – Port Chambly Doubles from AED 610; 00230-405 3000, addressboutiquehotel.com

TROU AUX BICHES

Le Cardinal Resort Doubles from AED 1,660; 00230-204 5200, www.lecardinalresort.com

From far left: The Ocean Suite at Le Touessrok; a suite's living area at Le Touessrok; a spa suite at Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort; a room with a view at One&Only Le Saint Géran



Le Palmiste Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 515; 00230-265 6815, hotel-lepalmiste.mu

Le Sakoa Doubles from AED 610; 00230-265 5244, lesakoa.com

Trou aux Biches Resort & Spa Suites from AED 1,535; 00230-204 6800, beachcomber-hotels.com

SOUTH & SOUTH-EAST COAST

Landscapes and heritage mark this region with dramatic cliffs dropping to the southern coastline and romantic colonial estates

BEL OMBRE

Heritage Awali Golf & Spa Resort

Doubles from AED 910; 00230-266 9777, heritageresorts.mu

Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort

Doubles from AED 1,100; 00230-601 5500, heritageresorts.mu

Heritage The Villas Villas from AED 1,440; 00230-266 9777, heritageresorts.com

Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort

Doubles from AED 710; 00230-623 5000, outrigger.com

Shanti Maurice, A Nira Resort Doubles from AED 1,730; 00230-603 7200, shantimaurence.com

Sofitel So Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,645; 00230-605 5800, sofitel-so-mauritius.com

Tamassa Doubles from AED 730; 00230-603 7300, tamassaresort.com

BLUE BAY & BEAU VALLON

Blue Lagoon Beach Hotel Rates available upon request; 00230-631 9046, bluelagoonbeachhotel.com

Le Jardins de Beau Vallon Doubles from AED 325; 00230-631 2850, lejardindebeauvallon.com

Shandrani Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 1,020; 00230-603 4343, beachcomber-hotels.com

LE MORNE

Dinarobin Hotel Golf & Spa Suites from AED 1,920; 00230-401 4900, dinarobin-hotel.com

Hotel Riu Creole Doubles from AED 875; 00230-650 4200, riu.com

Hotel Riu Le Morne Doubles from AED 1,000; 00230-650 4203, riu.com

Lux* Le Morne Doubles from AED 740; 00230-401 4000, luxresorts.com

Paradis Hotel & Golf Club Doubles from AED 1,500; 00230-401 5050, beachcomber-hotels.com

St. Regis Mauritius Resort Doubles from AED 1,865; 00230-403 9000, stregismauritius.com

EAST COAST

Look no further for exclusive escapes sitting on beaches with calm aquamarine lagoons stretching to the horizon

BEAU CHAMP & GRAND RIVIÈRE SUD EST

Anahita The Resort Doubles from AED 1,835; 00230-402 2200, anahita.mu

Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita Villas from AED 2,235; 00230-402 3100, fourseasons.com/mauritius

Laguna Beach Hotel & Spa Doubles from AED 430; 00230-417 5888, lagunabeachhotel.mu

BELLE MARE

Ambre Resort Doubles from AED 940; 00230-402 0100, ambremauritius.com

Long Beach Doubles from AED 785; 00230-401 1919, longbeachmauritius.com

Lux* Belle Mare Doubles from AED 580; 00230-402 2000, luxresorts.com

Solana Beach Doubles from AED 640; 00230-402 7200, southerncrosshotels.mu/solana-beach

The Residence Mauritius Doubles from AED 1,255; 00230-401 8888, cenizaro.com/theresidence/mauritius

PALMAR & TROU D'EAU DOUCE

Crystals Beach Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 1,110; 00230-402 7800, crystalsbeach.com

La Palmeraie Doubles from AED 1,385; 00230-401 8500, hotel-palmeraie.com

Le Touessrok Doubles from AED 1,180; 00230-402 7400, letouessrokresort.com



From pool to sea at One&Only Le Saint G ran. **Left:** A sumptuous free-standing bathtub in Heritage Le Telfair

Honeymoon haven

With romantic activities, gourmet dining and luxurious hotels, this is an island made for couples

Couples heading to Mauritius on honeymoon will be treated to a getaway as thrilling or low-key as they desire. At **Domaine de Bel Ombre's** (domainedebelombre.mu) estate, guests get a little bit of everything: verdant natural surroundings, serene accommodation in the **Heritage Resorts** (00230-266 9777, heritageresorts.mu), Mauritian cuisine in decadent restaurants and a spot of adventure with water sports on Bel Ombre's lagoon or golfing on a championship course. A 10-minute boat ride from the mainland, **Le Touessrok** (00230-402 7200, letouessrokresort.com; rebranding as Shangri-La's Le Touessrok Resort & Spa later this year) – the only accommodation on pristine  le aux Cerfs – offers island seclusion and exclusivity. Newlyweds can sit back and relax without distraction or schedule a couple's massage in the resort's indulgent Givenchy Spa. While it's easy to spend a honeymoon confined to these plush surrounds, there are plenty of special activities available to enrich the experience. Get a bird's-eye view of Mauritius' tropical paradise landscapes on a **private helicopter tour** (mauritiusattractions.com) with a break for a gourmet lunch at a top restaurant. For the ultimate treat, pop a bottle of bubbly on a **sunset yacht cruise** (00230-5728 3030, www.catamaran-cruises.com) with the sky's vibrant sunset colours prominently on display from the island's western coast – where you may even be lucky enough to glimpse dolphins and whales breaching. Dining is another adventure entirely and **Le Barachois** (00230-402 3636, constancehotels.com) sets the stage for a memorable meal with flickering lanterns lighting the way through mangroves. Atop a lagoon where intimate tables sit on floating pontoons, fresh Indian Ocean seafood like faye-faye crab and grilled lobster is served adding to an experience rich in memories. All in all, it's difficult to go wrong with a honeymoon in Mauritius, no matter how you decide to experience the island.

POSTE DE FLACQ

Constance Belle Mare Plage Doubles from AED 870; 00230-402 2600, constancehotels.com

Constance Le Prince Maurice Doubles from AED 1,980; 00230-402 3636, constancehotels.com

One&Only Le Saint G ran Doubles from AED 2,240; 00230-401 1688, lesaintgeran.oneandonlyresorts.com

POSTE LAFAYETTE & ROCHES NOIRES

La Maison d' t  Doubles from AED 555; 00230-410 5039, lamaisondete.com

Poste Lafayette Resort & Spa Rates available upon request; 00230-402 3700, catherine.capdor@hrresort.mu

Haute Rive Resort & Spa Rates available upon request; 00230-402 3700, catherine.capdor@hrresort.mu

WEST COAST

Stay close to all the action with the island's family activities in easy reach while taking advantage of sprawling beaches and excellent snorkelling

ALBION

La Plantation d'Albion Club Med Doubles from AED 10,328 for a seven-night minimum stay; 00230-206 0700, clubmed.com

FLIC EN FLAC & TAMARIN

Hilton Mauritius Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 750; 00230-403 1000,

placeshilton.com/mauritius

La Pirogue Mauritius Doubles from AED 625; 00230-403 3900, lapirogue.com

Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa Villas from AED 1,685; 00230-403 1500, maradiva.com

Pearle Beach Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 1,190; 00230-401 6300, pearle-beach.com

Sofitel l'Imp rial Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 1,125; 00230-453 8700, sofitel.com

Sugar Beach Doubles from AED 655; 00230-403 3300, sugarbeachresort.com

Tamarina Golf, Spa & Beach Club Doubles from AED 635; 00230-404 0150, tamarinahotel.com

The Sands Resort & Spa Doubles from AED 1,000; 00230-403 1200, sands.mu

PORT LOUIS

Labourdonais Waterfront Hotel Doubles from AED 970; 00230-202 4000, labourdonnais.com

Le Suffren Hotel & Marina Doubles from AED 810; 00230-202 4900, lesuffrenhotel.com

INLAND

Surrounded by nature reserves and verdant domaines, this is the ideal location for a retreat into nature

CHAMAREL &  B NE

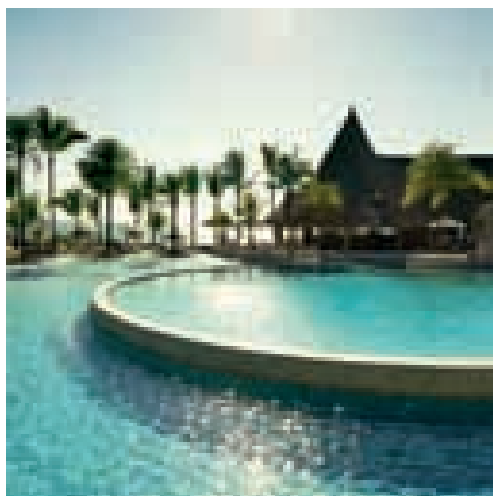
Hennessy Park Hotel Doubles from AED 715; 00230-403 7200, hennessyhotel.com

Lakaz Chamarel Doubles from AED 770; 00230-483 4240, lakazchamarel.com



The Place to Be

Humour us. Close your eyes. Picture your dream beach escape. Is it a hip hideaway as tranquil as a desert island? Is there a butler poised to send you scuba or skydiving? Then, as your thoughts drift to inspired cocktails and unforgettable dining, does your paradise conjure buzzing bars or an ice cream parlour that magically makes your own secret recipe in a liquid-nitrogen-fuelled instant. Oh, and the beach. That beach. A private corner of powder-soft blonde sand lapped by crystal-clear turquoise waters... Hang on – are you imagining this or have you actually been to LUX* Belle Mare?



Mauritius' freshest-faced five-star luxury stay was a knockout even before its \$13 million remodeling. Now this flagship resort has more va-va-voom than ever. With the island's largest swimming pool at its heart, LUX* Belle Mare is a postcard-perfect expanse of thatched villas, family-friendly suites and romantic rooms, all personally designed by interiors visionary Kelly Hoppen. Attention to detail is paramount, from Stephen Woodhams' fragrant flower-filled gardens to the Instagram-worthy flat whites crafted by skilled baristas. These are bars and restaurants not just on trend, but ahead of the curve. From the Teppanyaki to tandoor ovens, eating and drinking doesn't look or taste better than at M.I.X.E., where the gastronomic goal is to cook as much as can be right in front of you. Forage for your own fungi? Sure: here, guests take their pick from still-growing wild mushrooms – an update on pointing at lobsters in a tank. Another surprise: those shiny taps in K-BAR's microbrewery pour whisky-barrel-aged beers laced with a whisper of Café LUX*, the organic house coffee, roasted right here. All-new Asian flavours abound too. While Michelin-starred Vineet Bhatia brings his sophisticated spices to Amari – the world's poshest curry house – Duck Laundry flaunts contemporary Chinese flavours from delicious dim sum to Sichuan-style dandanmian. As for Mari Kontan – it's not just the rhums arranged making the rum cabana magnetic – it's personality of our Creole music maestro entertainer, Jean-Christophe.

No one understands better that holidays should be about discovery and original experiences. Take the LUX* ME wellness experience, which offers Zhengliao from the Daoji Clinic in China's Yunnan region – you can now try this detoxifying treatment available exclusively at LUX* Resorts and Hotels.

Whether you're a slow-paced sybarite or a thrill-hungry adventurer, you can stop dreaming. At LUX* Belle Mare, fantasies are soon made a reality.

LUX*
BELLE MARE, MAURITIUS

For further information call
+230 698 22 22 / 27 27
or visit luxresorts.com
or call your travel agent.

Le Barachois
floating restaurant at
Constance Le Prince
Maurice. **Opposite:**
Salade Palmier Royal
at L'Alchimiste



Mauritius
C'est un plaisir

DINE

The globetrotting epicurean can depart on a dining world tour thanks to this island's cultural mix of international fare



ASIAN

Whether dining in Port Louis' Chinatown or a waterfront gazebo on an idyllic estate, flavourful Asian fare from Canton to Thailand is an island favourite.

Domaine Anna *Flic en Flac*; 00230-453 9650, domaineanna.net

First Restaurant *Port Louis*; 00230-212 0685

La Pagode *Grand Baie*; 00230-263 8733

Palais de Chine *Grand Baie*; 00230-263 7120

Restaurant Lai Min *Port Louis*; 00230-242 0042, restaurantlaimin.com

Wang Thai *Péreybère*; 00230-263 4050, thai.mu

CREOLE

Mixing French, Spanish and African influences with a hint of Asian spice, Mauritius' Creole fare has been evolving for generations, culminating in the fresh, island-unique dishes served there today.

Chez Tante Athalie *Pamplemousses*; 00230-243 9266

Clos Saint Louis *Domaine les Pailles*; 00230-286 4225, domainelespailles.net

Domaine de l'Étoile *Beau Champ*; 00230-5448 5444

Escale Créole *Moka*; 00230-422 2332, escalecreole.net

La Jonque *Grand Baie*; 00230-263 0340

L'Assiette du Nord *Trou aux Biches*; 00230-265 7040

Le Café des Îles *Port Louis*; 00230-211 7151

Le Jardin de Beau Vallon *Mahébourg*; 00230-631 2805, lejardindebeauvallon.com

EXPERIMENTAL

Mauritius may be geographically isolated but that doesn't mean that the art of fine dining was left behind. Here, upmarket and local cuisines mix with finesse.

Euréka *Moka*; 00230-433 8477, maisonneureka.com

L'Alchimiste *Chamarel*; 00230-483 4980, rhumeriedechamarel.com/restaurant

La Clef des Champs *Floréal*; 00230-686 3458, laclefdeschamps.mu

La Table du Château *Mapou*; 00230-266 9533, chateaulabourdonnais.com

Le Château de Mon Plaisir *SSR Botanical Gardens, Pamplemousses*; 00230-243 9401

Le Courtyard *Port Louis*; 00230-210 0810

Le Pescatore *Trou aux Biches*; 00230-265 6337, pescatore.restaurant.mu

INDIAN

Brought over in the 19th century with South Asian migrants, a local take on Indian cuisine gives curry dishes here a curious twist.

Amari by Vineet *Lux* Belle Mare*; 00230-402 2000, luxresorts.com

Green Palm Restaurant *Souillac*; 00230-625 8100

Happy Rajah *Grand Baie and Phoenix*; 00230-263 2241, 00230-427 1400, happyrajah.com

Indian Pavilion *One&Only Le Saint Géran, Poste de Flacq*; 00230-401 1888, lesaintgeran.oneandonlyresorts.com



Clockwise from top left: L'Alchimiste at Rhumerie de Chamarel; *assiette du chasseur* at L'Alchimiste; green salad from La Table du Château; smoked marlin with coconut and green banana at La Table du Château

Opposite, from top: For drinks and dancing try C Beach Club in Bel Ombre; fine food is prepared at La Table du Château; authentic Mauritian cuisine is created with locally sourced ingredients



Indian Summer Ébène; 00230-5788 2288
Indra Domaine les Pailles; 00230-286 4225, domainelespailles.net
Namasté Le Caudan Waterfront, Port Louis; 00230-211 6710, namaste.restaurant.mu
Sitar Bagatelle, Moka; 00230-468 8188

INTERNATIONAL

The range of cuisines confirms Mauritius as a global melting pot.

Beach Shack (World cuisine) Flic en Flac; 00230-453 9080
Chez Mme Beeharry (Vegetarian) Chamarel; 00230-483 8364
Divino (Italian) Grand Baie; 00230-269 6935
La Fourchette (Mediterranean) The Address Boutique Hotel, Port Chambly; 00230-405 3000, lafourchette.restaurant.mu
La Rose des Vents (Fusion) Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel, Port Louis; 00230-202 4000, labourdonnais.com
Le Café du Vieux Conseil (European) Port Louis; 00230-211 0393
Les Canisses Resto & Plage (World cuisine) Grand Baie; 00230-263 5231, lescanisses.restaurant.mu

MAURITIAN

With a focus on fresh, chefs look to their surroundings – the bountiful sea and fertile fields of produce – when harvesting for globally influenced Mauritian dishes.

Chez Rosy Le Gris Gris Souillac; 00230-625 4179
La Toque Blanche Pointe aux Cannoniers; 00230-263 4597, la-toque-blanche.restaurant.mu
Le Chamarel Restaurant Chamarel; 00230-483 4421, le-chamarel.restaurant.mu
Le Château de Bel Ombre Domaine de Bel Ombre; 00230-623 5522, domainedebelombre.mu
Le Fangourin L'Aventure du Sucre, Pamplemousses; 00230-243 7900, le-fangourin.restaurant.mu
Varangue Sur Morne Chamarel; 00230-483 5710

SEAFOOD

The region is known for its excellent lobster, calamari and capitaine fish – diners will face tough choices when deciding between the varied catch of the day.



Le Barchois Constance Le Prince
Maurice, Poste de Flacq; 00230-402 3636,
constancehotels.com

Le Capitaine Grand Baie; 00230-263 6867,
le-capitaine.restaurant.mu

Le Four à Chaud Trou d'Eau Douce;
00230-480 1036

Le Goût du Large Grand Baie; 00230-5440
3520, legoutdularge.restaurant.mu

Restaurant Amigo Cap Malheureux;
00230-262 8418

Restaurant Rêve d'R Petit Raffray;
00230-282 1414, restaurantreve.com

BARS & LOUNGES

Grab a sundowner and settle in for
a night out

C Beach Club Domaine de Bel Ombre;
00230-605 5400, cbeachclub.mu

Cocoloko Grand Baie; 00230-263
1241, cocoloko.net

Flying Dodo Brewing Company
Bagatelle, Moka; 00230-468 8810,
www.flyingdodo.com

Lambic Restaurant & Beer Port Louis;
00230-212 6011, www.lambic.mu

Little Barabar Grand Baie; 00230-263
8437, littlebarabar.com

Rum Shed Shanti Maurice, Rivière
des Galets; 00230-603 7200,
rumshed.restaurant.mu

Snack attack

Need a quick bite while on the go
to your next island activity? You're
in luck with Mauritius' street fare, a
tasty mélange of flavour in bite-size
packages from the island's cross-
cultural denizens. Here are some of the
top treats that residents and travellers
alike can't get enough of.

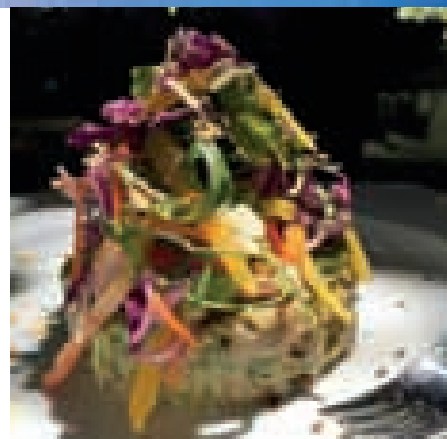
Dholl puri A trip to Mauritius wouldn't
be complete without trying this
favourite – a pan-fried pancake stuffed
with a savoury split pea mix.

Alouda Refresh with a glass of this
sweet drink that includes crushed
ice with milk, water, vanilla, sugar
and basil seeds.

Mine frite These wok-fried noodles
with sesame oil, garlic, fish sauce,
seasoning and sugar, mixed with a
bit of fish or vegetables, is influenced
by Chinese cuisine.

Gateau arouille Deep-fried balls of
grated taro root with a moreish sweet-
and-salty flavour.

Undé Rice cookies made with refined
sugar, vanilla, cardamom and topped with
grated coconut to satisfy a sweet tooth.



NEED TO KNOW

GETTING THERE

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport (00230-603 6000, aml.mru.aero) is well connected to the GCC making Mauritius an easy destination for a tropical island escape or even as a long weekend break.

From Dubai, it's a direct six-and-a-half-hour flight with Air Mauritius (airmauritius.com) or Emirates (emirates.com); from Abu Dhabi various airlines, including Etihad (etihad.com), fly to Mauritius with a single transfer; from Muscat, Doha, Kuwait, Bahrain and Riyadh, Emirates flies to Mauritius via Dubai; from Jeddah, Saudi Airlines (saudiairlines.com) flies to Mauritius via Nairobi.

VISAS

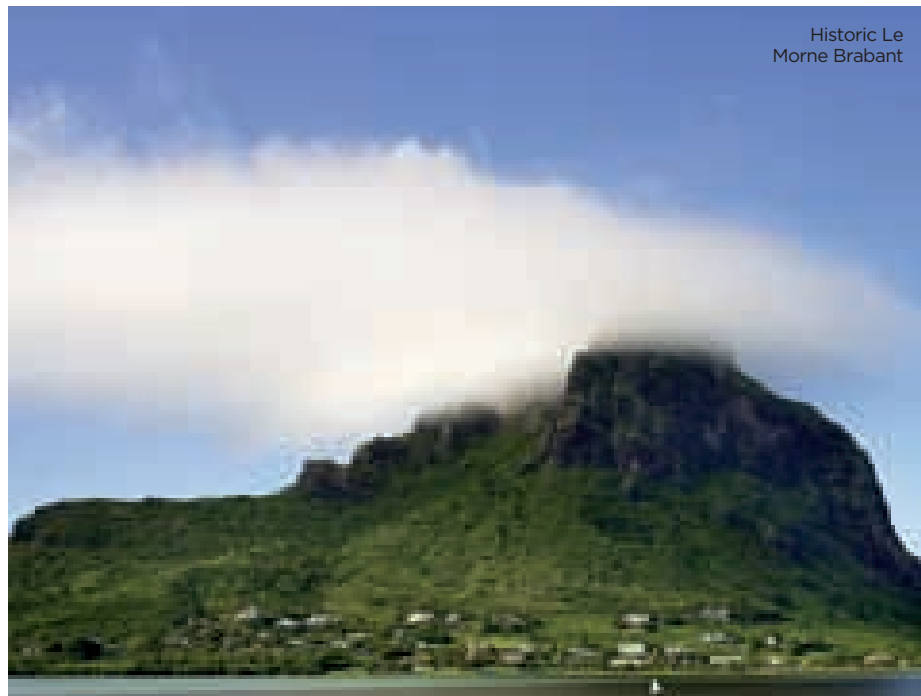
Citizens of many countries – such as members of the GCC, the EU, America, Canada, India, Australia and New Zealand – do not need a visa to enter Mauritius and will be granted entry for a maximum of two weeks to 60 days. Bring evidence of your booked departing flight as this is required for entry. Additional visa conditions apply for accompanying Sri Lankan and Filipino personnel of GCC national visitors. For more information on this or any other visa requirements, visit passport.govmu.org.

GETTING AROUND

There's no shortage of ways to get around Mauritius, but **hiring a car** – or motorcycle for the more adventurous – is likely the easiest option. Driving is on the left and keep an eye out for buses, pot holes and sudden rain. Both local and international operators – including Europcar (europcar.com) and Hertz (hertz.com) – can be found in kiosks at the airport or can be arranged through hotels. **Taxis** are readily available around the island, especially in hubs like Port Louis and Grand Baie – agree on a price before getting in as meters are not often used. Taxis can also be rented out for a full-day tour of the island for a flat fee. The island has a good network of reliable **buses**, but prepare for long journeys. For a more slow-paced tour, **bicycles** do nicely on the flat and generally well-maintained roads (stick to the coasts as the interior roads are a bit too busy).

LANGUAGE

While there is no official language, French-based Mauritius Creole is



Historic Le
Morne Brabant

spoken by the majority of the population and is considered the native language. Given the vast array of cultures in the country, a number of languages are widely spoken (and many residents are bilingual or trilingual) including French, English and Hindi.

CLIMATE

The island's mild tropical climate and occasional rainfall means it's pleasant to visit through the year, but the best times are considered to be from April to June and September to December. Austral **summer** (November-April) sees higher humidity, peaking temperatures (26-32°C) and the most rainfall (abundant in the interior from February to March). Cyclones are also possible during this season, however they often miss the small island. Dipping humidity and temperatures (20-26°C) mark austral **winter** (May-October) with the north and west seeing the warmest and driest climate during this time.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Port Louis police headquarters

00230-208 1212

24-hour tourist information 152

In case of emergency call:

Police 999 or 112

Medical (SAMU) 999 or 114

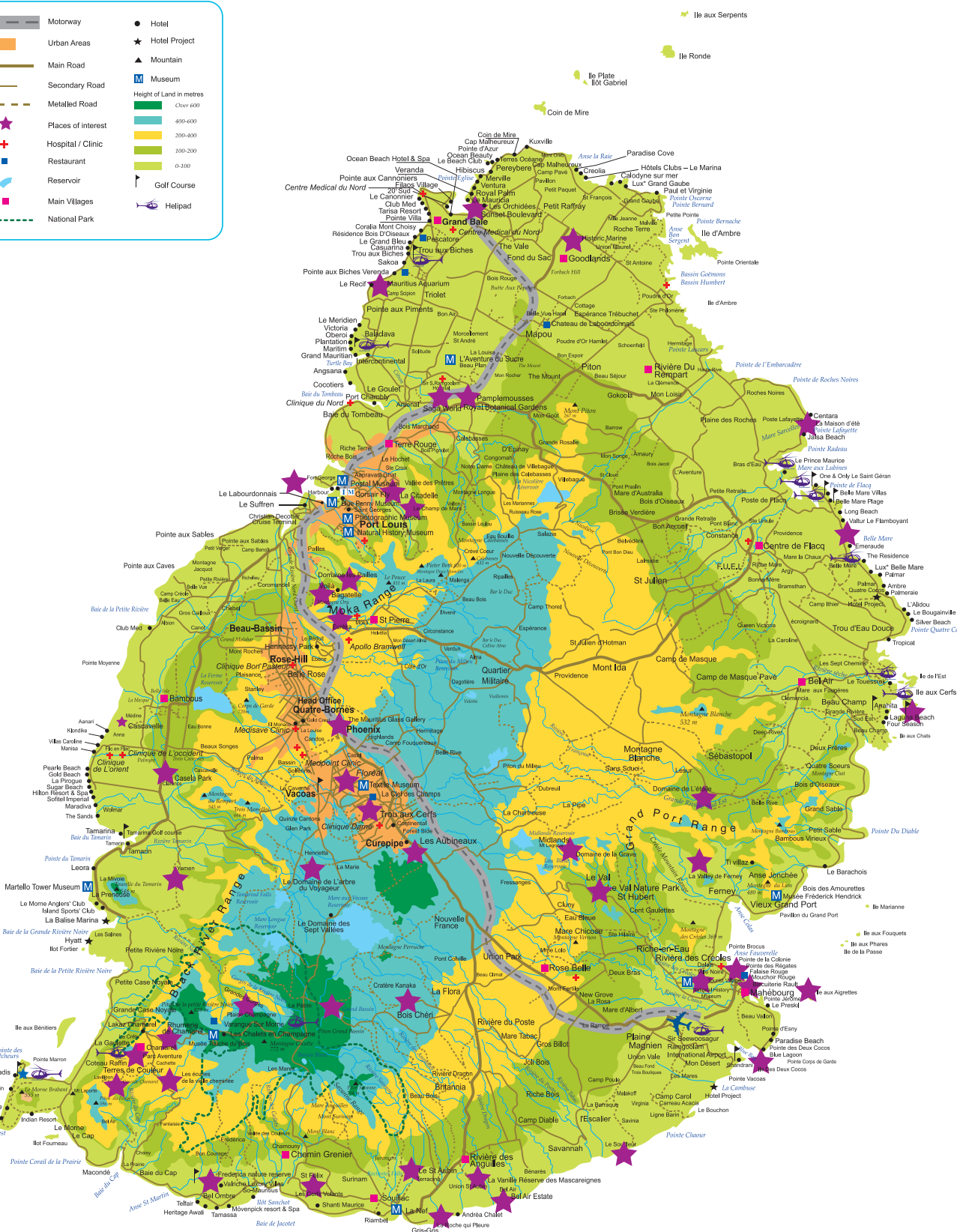
Coastguard 00230-212 2747

The dodo

With a name as whimsical as its plump, long-beaked appearance, the dodo has now been extinct for over 300 years. At three feet tall and around 20kg, the bird did not have the ability to fly – but with no predators on Mauritius, its only habitat, it didn't need to. Unaccustomed to and fearless of humans, the flightless bird was easy prey for the Dutch when they arrived in 1638. Killed in excess for food and by the creatures the settlers brought with them – rats, dogs, cats, monkeys – the dodo became extinct just 30 years later. The dodo was scarcely documented but in the 1800s a complete skeleton of the bird was discovered and reassembled, and is what all reconstructions of the unfortunate creature are based on today. One of these reconstructions can be seen in the Natural History Museum in Port Louis.

C Beach Club
on the shores
of Bel Ombre







Latitude 20° , Longitude 57.5°

Mauritius is an enchanting destination with an abundance of fascinating things to do and see. With a gentle climate, tropical green forests and white sandy beaches, it has the vibrant colours and flavours drawn from its multi-cultural routes.

Whether it's an energetic mountain bike ride through the hills, deep sea fishing on the ocean or a round of golf on one of the islands stunning courses, your choice for a truly memorable family holiday is our pleasure.

MAURITIUS, YOUR CHOICE FOR A GREAT FAMILY HOLIDAY



Visit Mauritius. Visit www.tourism-mauritius.mu