



TRAVEL GUIDE
MAURITIUS

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Introduction



Mauritius, so far away, yet so much at home... Mauritius, a sparkling crystal in the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, will fascinate you. The contrast of colours, cultures and tastes makes the island so charming that the scene is set for an unforgettable holiday.

Here, you have the opportunity to experience unparalleled luxury, a level of refinement that is head and shoulders above that on offer in other tropical holiday destinations. Here, you will discover the true meaning of 'beauty' – a realisation that will compel you to return to Mauritius' shores time and again. Mauritius was named after Dutch Prince Maurice Van Nassa.

The East

The East coast with its succession of beaches is undoubtedly one of the island's most beautiful coastlines set alongside emerald coloured lagoons. Punctuated with numerous luxurious hotels and authentic villages, this coast has the particularity of being exposed to the constant south-east trade winds. The several kilometres long Belle Mare beach is its main attraction.

The North

In Mauritius, when we speak of "the north", Grand Bay is the first thing that comes to mind. Grand Bay, through sustained development, has become the premier tourist destination of Mauritius. The starting point of nautical trips to the northern islands and other sea activities, Grand Bay has two beaches, one of which is "La Cuvette, a discreet hideaway, where you can still find the rare "tec-tec" hidden in the sand, small white shells that need to be preserved. Take a walk through the narrow streets behind the main road and enjoy what the small local boutiques have to offer. Known for its wide variety of restaurants and its nightlife, you will immediately be drawn to this charming and exuberant village. Another picturesque village in the north of Mauritius is Cap Malheureux, with its famous red-roofed church, its view of the northern islands and its important fishing community.

The West & South-West

The West and South-West coasts of Mauritius are the driest areas on the island. At first glance, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in the African bush. Protected from the prevailing winds, the region boasts some superb hotels and lagoons calm enough for swimming, snorkelling, diving, water-skiing, kayaking, pedal boats and sailing activities. Head to Tamarin Bay, or to the world famous "One Eye" at Le Morne, where you can find the best waves for surfing. Le Morne is also well known by kitesurfers due to the steady winds that blow in from the South-East and accelerate in this corner of the island almost all year round. The West is where you'll find the lush Black River Gorges. You can spend the day visiting the different Nature Parks (Casela, Gros Cailloux) in the region, going for walks, great activities for kids and taking in the stunning surroundings. There are even some tame African lions, giraffe and other animals to see. Do some shopping at the nearby shopping centres and why not try a karting race at Cascavelle? For a truly magical experience, be sure to book a trip to Ile aux Bénitiers and swim with wild dolphins!

Introduction



The South & South-East

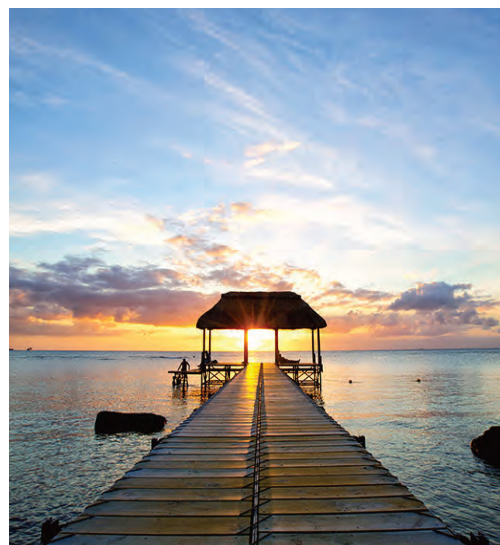
The wildest and most beautiful landscapes of the island are in the South: sandy beaches bordered by cliffs carved by waves, rocky shores, sugar cane fields as far as the eye can see, and mountainous terrains offering magnificent panoramas. The integrated tourist area of Bel Ombre is also a model of its kind.

Inland & Centre

Time to leave the usual beaches and try a few excursions inland to get a feel for the heart of the island. Cooler than the coastal regions, the central plateau is situated between 400 and 600 meters above sea level. Starting from the South of Port Louis, this vast urban area is home to about 400,000 people, representing over one-third of the island's population. High up on the plateau, you'll also find forests, lakes and plantations that are well worth a visit.

Port Louis, Capital City of Mauritius

Port Louis, the cosmopolitan capital city of Mauritius was founded in 1735 by the French governor and pioneer Bertrand-François Mahé de La Bourdonnais. Located on the Northwest Coast, Port Louis is the administrative and business capital of the island. Buzzing with activity during the day, the city is full of cultural and historical treasures that should not be missed. Beyond the central market, which is a focal point for those who want to feel close to the soul of Mauritius, are many historic sites including the Champ de Mars - the oldest race course in the southern hemisphere.





Weather

Low Season (May–Sep)

Cooler temperatures of 18°C to 25°C but still tropical. The worst months for diving and snorkelling. Spikes in European (particularly French) school holidays push prices up and availability down.

Shoulder (Mar, Apr, Oct & Nov)

Visitor numbers fewer but temperatures still high. Cyclones rare but possible into April. Best months for diving visibility include October, November, March and April. Accommodation prices slightly lower than high season.

High Season (Dec–Feb)

Extremely humid; temperatures between 25°C and 33°C (5°C cooler in the interior). Peak cyclone months are January and February. Christmas–New Year causes spike in prices. December is among the best months for diving and snorkelling.

Tipping

Tipping is not generally practised in Mauritius and is never an obligation. Top-end hotels and restaurants sometimes add a service charge of about 10% to 15% to the bill.

In most resort hotels, tips are always welcome, but most prefer that you contribute to an overall tips box, usually at reception, rather than tipping individual staff.

Voltage

In Mauritius the power sockets are of type C and G. The standard voltage is 230 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.



Shopping & Wellness

Take a little something back home. Whether a diamond necklace, a cashmere pashmina, fragrant spices or a colourful woven basket, Mauritius has shopping opportunities for everyone!

Duty & Customs

Duty-free items available in Mauritius now include popular photographic and cinematographic equipment and accessories, watches and clocks, cellular phones and other types of telephony equipment, paintings, engravings and antiques, sunglasses and binoculars. Duty is not applied to leatherwear or jewels, and levies have been reduced on perfumes and cosmetics.

Spa & Wellness

You've been planning your wedding for months, now it's time to relax and de-stress! Take a journey of serenity and harmony to revive your senses at one of our beautiful spas. Using only the finest beauty and body care products we guarantee that you will be pampered from head to toe, and time will seem to stand still in this haven of peace and tranquillity...

After enjoying the seemingly endless kilometres of white sand beaches, the warm hospitality of the Mauritian people, and the gastronomic delights of three continents brought together in one location, indulge yourself at one of Mauritius's world-class spas. You will soon see why a visit to one of our spas is regarded as a 'must have' excursion on every tourist's itinerary. Give your senses the journey of a lifetime!

With the increase in demand by our foreign visitors, the market has become extremely competitive, resulting in an amazing range of pampering treatments and state-of-the-art health and beauty facilities. The biggest names in cosmetics such as Clarins, Givenchy, Guerlain, La Prairie and Shiseido, are found in the best spas in the country, ensuring that our brides and grooms-to-be enjoy the highest quality beauty treatments.

A local brand, Seven Colours, has earned respect from our clients and is the first and only Mauritian spa and cosmetics brand. The island's mix of cultures has inspired an eclectic blend of therapies, with visitors able to choose from a range of Asian Ayurvedic massages, ocean-inspired treatments, and African and Creole treatments made from locally grown flowers, herbs and essential oils.

Making the most of their beautiful surroundings and the warm year-round temperatures, some wellness centres have created dedicated outdoor treatment areas, in gardens or private gazebos on the beach. If you are not staying in a resort, do not despair! Most hotels and resorts welcome non-guests to their spas and there are a number of independent health and beauty centres around the country. Step into one of these havens and let expert hands pamper you...

Health & Safety



Diving Health & Safety

Health Requirements

Officially, a doctor should check you over before you do a diving course, and fill out a form full of diving-health questions. In practice, most schools will let you dive or do a course if you complete a medical questionnaire, but the check-up is still a good idea. This is especially so if you have any problem at all with your breathing, ears or sinuses. If you have asthma or any other chronic breathing difficulties, or any inner-ear problems, you shouldn't scuba dive.

Decompression Sickness

This is a very serious condition – usually, though not always, associated with diver error. The most common symptoms are unusual fatigue or weakness; skin itch; pain in the arms, legs (joints or mid-limbs) or torso; dizziness and vertigo; local numbness, tingling or paralysis; and shortness of breath.

The most common causes of decompression sickness (or 'the bends', as it is commonly known) are diving too deep, staying at depth for too long or ascending too quickly. This results in nitrogen coming out of solution in the blood and forming bubbles, most commonly in the bones and particularly in the joints or in weak spots such as healed fractured sites.

Avoid flying after diving, as it causes nitrogen to come out of blood even faster than it would at sea level.

The only treatment for decompression sickness is to put the patient into a recompression chamber. There are recompression chambers in Mauritius.

Insurance

In addition to normal travel insurance, it's a very good idea to take out specific diving cover, which will pay for evacuation to a recompression facility and the cost of hyperbaric treatment in a chamber.

Source: Lomelyplanet.com

