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Inflight magazine of Air Seychelles • April-June 2020

It's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's both!

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Dear Guests,
Welcome aboard!

As you are probably aware, the aviation industry globally is under considerable pressure over the issue of carbon emissions and its impact on climate change. At Air Seychelles we are indeed proud of the contribution we are making towards sustainable development.

Following the successful delivery of our second Airbus A320neo aircraft, *Pti Merl Dezil* in March 2020, I am pleased to announce that Air Seychelles is now operating the youngest jet fleet in the Indian Ocean.

Performing to standard, the new engine option aircraft is currently on average generating 20% fuel savings per flight and 50% reduced noise footprint. This amazing performance cannot go unnoticed and we remain committed to further implement ecological measures across our business.

Apart from keeping Seychelles connected through air access, Air Seychelles also provides ground handling services to all customer airlines operating at the Seychelles International Airport. Following an upsurge in the number of carriers coming into the Seychelles, in 2019 we surpassed the 1 million passenger threshold handled at the airport, recording an overall growth of 5% increase in arrival and departures.

Combining both inbound and outbound travel including the domestic network, Air Seychelles alone contributed a total of 414,088 passengers after having operated 1,983 flights. With that, I can definitely say that 2019 was one of the busiest periods for our ground handling team of which I convey my congratulations for this amazing result. WELL DONE TEAM!

On another note as we enter the summer season and strengthen our operations further, if you are planning your summer holiday why not opt for Seychelles or Mauritius? Even better fly with us and combine both trips together as our schedule has been carefully timed to provide seamless connection to Mauritius.

Otherwise if you are bound to the Seychelles, be sure to join the various activities planned to mark the island's nation 250th anniversary. Browse page 18 for more updates about this once in a lifetime event, set to be an exceptional celebration of the creole culture.

Best way to discover the Seychelles is through island hopping! Add Praslin on your itinerary during your stay and book your seats with us via airseychelles.com for the best views of the beautiful Seychelles coastline in the air.

The support of our guest is of utmost importance in everything that we do as we aim to improve the level of service we offer both on the ground and in air. Hence do not hesitate to share your experience with us at feedback@airseychelles.com

Thank you for flying with Air Seychelles today and have a great trip.

Remco Althuis
Chief Executive Officer

> **"Best way to discover the Seychelles is through island hopping!"**

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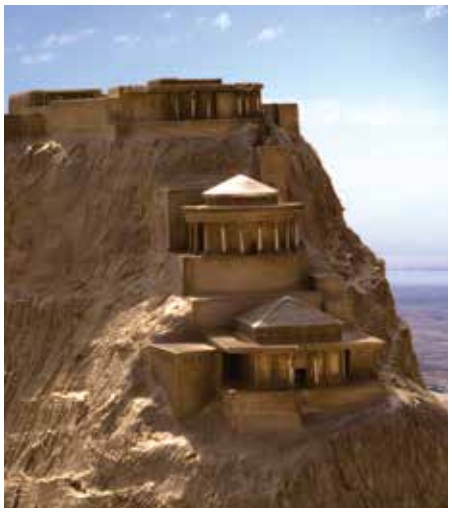

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Cover image
The Seychelles warbler, Pti Merl Dezil.
Photo © Charli Davies – Nature Seychelles

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Flying the Creole Spirit

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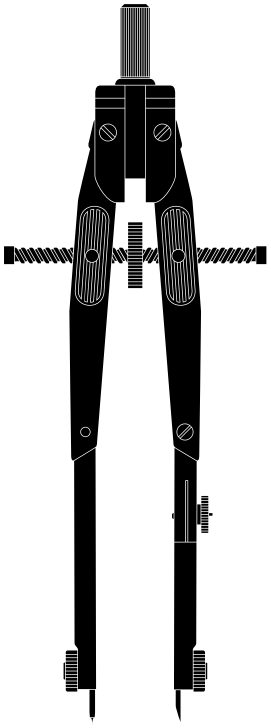

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SSFC National Fishing Tournament

Date: 3 – 5 April 2020
Venue: Mahé
Website: www.ssfc.sc

A combined trolling and bottom fishing tournament, teams will be searching for over 30 species in this two-day overnight event. Typically, calm waters will greet all the teams as they venture far offshore from the main island of Mahé.

Seychelles Nature Trail

Date: 3 May 2020
Venue: Mahé
Website: www.seychelles.travel

Seychelles will have its very own first of its kind, first edition, 25 kilometres nature trail. The aim is not to only attract a different clientele but to raise environmental awareness and exhibit the richness and wealth of Seychelles islands when it comes to its lush nature and exceptional biodiversity.

The Nature Trail will provide Seychellois and tourists alike with the setting for physical and mental growth with the aim of developing green tourism in Seychelles and bringing the island's interior riches to the forefront.

FINA/HOSA

Date: 4 May 2020
Venue: Mahé
Website: www.seychelles.travel

Seychelles will host the FINA Open Water Championship 2020, making it the first African country and small island nation to organise this event.

This is an international mass open water, swimming event, which attracts participants from all corners of the globe. The 10 kilometres open swimming competition takes place annually in May 2020.

National Day

Date: 29 June 2020
Venue: Victoria
Website: www.seychelles.travel

Everyone descends on Victoria to celebrate National Day and its military parade. The occasion will be attended by the President, the Prime Minister, and senior dignitaries. After the parade the President of Seychelles will address the nation. The official celebration of National Day includes music concerts and a spectacular flower show.

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The 35th Annual Gandhi Walk

Date: 5 April 2020
Venue: Gandhi Hall Impala Crescent, Lenasia, Johannesburg
Website: www.gandhiwalk.org.za

The walk is organised annually as a fundraiser by the Gandhi Walk Committee (GWC) creating a fun social platform for nation building, community awareness, and is a terrific day out for the whole family to enjoy. The Gandhi Walk is focused on good health and inspiring a Community in Unity. Delicious Eastern foods and savouries will also be sold at the event to tantalise your taste buds.

Mauritius Tour Beachcomber

Date: 30 April – 2 May 2020
Venue: Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa, Mauritius
Website: www.beachcomber-events.com

The fifth edition of the Mauritius Tour Beachcomber is a must for mountain biking enthusiasts. For mountain bikers this new 5-star adventure offers unique trails in a magical tropical setting. The tour will lead mountain bikers inland into a vast playground cutting across south-western and south-eastern Mauritius, and taking riders through tropical forest, tea and sugar cane fields, and along cliffs overlooking the Indian Ocean along a challenging route that offers both new discoveries and breath-taking scenery.

Buddha Purnima

Date: 7 May 2020
Venue: India

Buddha Purnima holiday is usually celebrated to commemorate the birth, death and enlightenment of Siddhārtha Gautama (also known as Gautama Buddha), a sage and spiritual leader whose teachings helped found Buddhism. Born sometime between the sixth and fourth century BC, he is considered by most to be the Supreme Buddha. Most of the celebrations observed on this day revolve around the teachings of Buddha. For instance, many people will spend the day in temples to meditate and reflect upon their lives. A common practice among Buddhists is to visit a statue of Buddha as a baby that is often set up at one of the many temples on Buddha Purnima.

The Israel Festival 2020

Date: 4 – 20 June 2020
Venue: Jerusalem
Website: www.secrettelaviv.com

The Israel Festival presents high-quality productions in dance, music, drama and performance theatre from all over the world, as well as original Israeli productions and free outdoor performances for the general public.

The Festival offers a programme of unique performances representing contemporary artistic trends from all over the world – new interdisciplinary works not shown in any other setting – that seek to present new theatrical languages alongside classical, high-quality, and unique productions.

Observance of World Oceans Day

Date: 8 June 2020
Venue: South Africa
Source: United Nations

The Observance of World Oceans Day in South Africa allows them to highlight the impact of oceans and the various ways in which oceans contribute to South Africa. Celebrating the day provides the government department with an opportunity to highlight the considerable challenge they face dealing with marine pollution, maintaining the oceans' capacity to regulate the global climate, supply essential ecosystem services and provide sustainable livelihoods and safe recreation.

The celebration of the day coincides with and forms part of the dedication of June as National Environmental Day.

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It's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's both!

WORDS: **DR. NIRMAL JIVAN SHAH**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NATURE SEYCHELLES

Seychelles warbler Photo © Flickr/Ian Silvester

Hats off to Air Seychelles for naming its new bird after our favourite bird, one that has an amazing story unique in the annals of wildlife conservation!

We were delighted to learn that the local name for the Seychelles warbler, *Pti Merl Dezil*, is to take pride of place as the name of the airline's brand-new Airbus A320neo aircraft.

Air Seychelles has said that naming this aircraft after the endemic Seychelles warbler (scientific name *Acrocephalus sechellensis*) will reaffirm its commitment to raising awareness about Seychelles ecosystems and the importance of protecting its endemics for a future generation.

This is a crucial message to share. For the warbler has come a long way from the days it neared extinction in the 1960s. Once the rarest of birds, with only 26 birds clinging desperately to life on Cousin Island, today this songbird numbers over 3,000 individuals in five Seychelles islands, namely Cousin, Cousine, Aride, Denis and Fregate.

Rising from the ashes

Once upon a time there were more Critically Endangered birds in Seychelles than any country in Africa, except Madagascar. Critically Endangered is the highest threat level a species can be classified as in the Red List (the International Union for Conservation of Nature List of Threatened Species). On the list were the Seychelles' warbler, flycatcher, scops owl, fody and magpie robin.

In 1969 the Red Book, the Red List's predecessor, had this to say about the Seychelles warbler: "Could well become extinct in our time."

It concluded by saying: "It is scandalous that so many rare endemic birds are being allowed to disappear in Seychelles…"

It took world class conservation action by BirdLife International, and later Nature Seychelles and its partners, to change this dismal verdict.

For the Seychelles warbler, it began with the purchase of an island.

Cousin Island Special Reserve Photo © Nature Seychelles/Serge Marizy

A year before the Red Book's indictment, the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP, now BirdLife International) had bought Cousin in a last-ditch effort to save the warbler. This was the first ever island purchased for conservation and the warbler became the flagship for conservation in Seychelles.

Cousin, which lies two kilometres off the coast of Praslin, was a coconut enterprise at the time and had wall to wall coconut trees. The warbler survived in the remaining fragment of forest on the island.

An intensive restoration programme began soon after. Coconut trees were cut back allowing native forest to regenerate, especially the native *Pisionia grandis* forest favoured by the warbler. Within a short time, the songbird was thriving once again.

By 1982, its population had reached the maximum that the island could support. But it was restricted to Cousin. Despite its remarkable recovery, the bird's long-term future was uncertain; a single event could wipe it out. To improve its chances for survival, ICBP worked with the owners and management of Cousin and Aride. Both islands were rat-free but on Cousine, ICBP funded a cat eradication campaign and started island restoration. Warblers were then transferred to both islands.

In 1998, newly formed local NGO Nature Seychelles took over the management of Cousin Island, and led the charge for the continued conservation of the bird.

Nature Seychelles worked closely with the Seychelles Warbler Group, who had been studying the warblers since the 1980s, and in 2004 and 2011 carried out two translocations to Denis and Fregate islands respectively. On Denis Island, Nature Seychelles through two Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects and a joint Darwin Initiative project with DICE (Durrel Institute of Conservation and Ecology) had spent several years restoring the vegetation in preparation for translocation of threatened bird species. On both islands, the NGO helped island management to carry out rat eradication programmes before birds could be transferred and provided technical support to keep the islands free of introduced predators.

In a major victory for conservationists, the warbler was reclassified as 'Near Threatened' from 'Critically Endangered' in the Red List in 2015. It was the first time that a species once on the brink of extinction was down listed to the lowest category on the Red List solely because of conservation action. It was also removed from BirdLife's own list of Threatened Birds of the World.

The warbler on the cutting edge of science

The Seychelles warbler is one of the world's best studied birds and is seen as an outstanding model system in the area of evolutionary ecology and conservation. Scientists and researchers from the Seychelles Warbler Group have been studying the bird for over three decades. The endemic bird provides an exceptional, natural system in which to study important questions relating to animal health, evolution and ecology.

Seychelles warbler adult feeding chick Photo © Nature Seychelles/Charli Davies

Conservation works

The time, dedication and hard work of everyone involved in the warbler conservation has paid off. It entailed an international conservation NGO taking the unique and dramatic step of purchasing and managing a tropical island, the entry and strong leadership of a local NGO that took over management, and the support and dedication of island owners and managers. The warbler story is proof that conservation works and that we can save species on the brink of extinction in our lifetime. The name of the new plane is not only the name of a bird, it represents one of the world's most amazing conservation success stories.

The Seychelles warbler is at the cutting edge of science Photo © Nature Seychelles/Arne van Eerden

Sumsung Galaxy S20

Phones in 2020 with new screen technology, better cameras and 5G connection

Get ready for newer phones to try to amaze you again this year and here are the most important features to expect.

In March 2020, Samsung revealed the Galaxy S20 series of flagship phones and the Galaxy Z Flip, a foldable clamshell device whose screen folds from top to bottom down the middle. Galaxy S20 has a new camera design, new screen technology and 5G data to give faster speeds.

It's a different world than a year ago, when hype was high for 5G and the first foldable phone, the Galaxy Fold. 5G networks kicked off in 2019, but the handful of phones that had to be there to support them were either extremely expensive or had extremely limited 5G networks to work with. 5G phones also tend to overheat when it is hot, with the 5G connection shutting down to keep the phone from reaching dangerous internal temperatures.

There were a few success stories. Despite 2019's growing pains, 5G is inevitable in 2020. In countries where carriers are building out their 5G networks, expect every premium phone to be either 5G-ready or to have a 5G variant. For example, Samsung's Galaxy S20 is likely be one of the first to bring 5G to many more people.

Once 5G networks become more widespread, phones will be able to access significantly higher data speeds and more responsive service, which could mean lighting-fast downloads of large files, like Netflix shows to watch offline.

Seamless video calls

Amazing graphics on streaming real-time games and AR experiences.

A split-second advantage in responsiveness with shooters like Fortnite, the popular game.

Get to know the different flavours of 5G – and which real-world benefits will actually come to you.

2020 is about determining if phone screens that bend are a potential future or a gimmick destined to be forgotten like 3D displays.

Samsung, Motorola and Huawei have launched foldable phones that work, each with their own design. The Galaxy Fold gives us a book design that opens into a tablet. The even larger Mate X has one big wraparound screen around the outside of the device, which can be used three different ways. And the Motorola Razr is a small phone, flips up vertically to reveal a tall, narrow display.

Motorola Razr

Sumsung Galaxy Z Flip

The Fold, Razr, and Mate X will get company in 2020 and beyond. Samsung already teased the new Galaxy Z Flip foldable design which will go toe to toe with the Motorola Razr.

Camera quality is one of the top three reasons people buy one phone over another, alongside screen preference and battery life. Phone brands are also using sophisticated sensors and post-processing to achieve shots that were previously only achievable on DSLR cameras. The standout was Google Pixel 4's astrophotography mode, which is capable of taking sharp photos of the starry sky, assuming you're in a dark enough place to begin with. It's astounding.

In 2020, new phone processors will be able to support up to 200-megapixel cameras, and advancements will come to telephoto and ultra-wide-angle photography, particularly with more top-tier phones using 5x optical zoom. Slow-motion and high-resolution video will also get a boost.

Screens on high-end phones will continue to be crisp, detailed and saturated with colour. The standard refresh rate is currently 60Hz. That indicates the number of times the images on your display update per second. So, 60Hz equals 60 refreshes, and 120Hz equals 120 refreshes per second.

A faster refresh rate makes graphics look smoother, which is important for fast-paced and graphically heavy games. But It also enhances graphics for 4K video, screen animations and even scrolling through a web page or your app drawer.

Your phone is only as good as its battery, because if it runs out of charge, or you're dashing for the nearest outlet, then your phone's no good to you.

A bigger battery that holds more charge is one solution. Fast-charging is another. The idea is that if you can't get everything you need out of your battery, you can at least give yourself most of one in as little as 30 minutes.

It is inevitable that fast charging and battery maintenance are going to become even more of a hot topic in 2020. The fastest fast chargers will start showing up as a matter of course, and we could potentially see Samsung start including 45-watt chargers in the box for its most expensive phones.

At the very least, we might see Apple and other rivals try to close the gap with Samsung's 25-watt charger by introducing their own.

Phone prices have been on the rise in the last several years, with new camera features and larger screen sizes used to justify the hike in cost.

Enter 5G, foldable phone designs and even more camera, battery and processor enhancements and it's clear to see that prices will only go up, at least for the high end.

Source: **www.cnet.com**

Seychelles set to shine at Expo 2020

GLYNN BURRIDGE speaks to John Addo Obiri, Senior Country Manager, International Participants at Expo 2020 Dubai.

How has your past work experience prepared you for your role today?

My current role as Senior Country Manager, International Participants at Expo 2020 Dubai is a combination of diplomacy and project management. It includes the translation of national agendas, including the development of Seychelles' sustainable tourism sector into an interesting and attractive showcase that expresses the country's rich natural ecosystem, gastronomy, and culture. This will of course be on show at the World Expo to be held in Dubai from 20 October 2020 to 10 April 2021.

The 10 years I spent at the Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared me tremendously – from an administrative role at the Embassy of Seychelles in South Africa where I was introduced to the fields of international relations and diplomacy, to my recent work in the bilateral and multilateral affairs divisions of the Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs where I was involved in relations between a number of different countries and regions.

As a Senior Country Manager, with responsibility for eight African countries, the range of skills acquired in my former career as a public servant for the Government of Seychelles is invaluable in my current role, and I am extremely thankful for that experience.

What are some of the things that make your current role meaningful to you?

As an African, one of the most meaningful things for me is to be part of the first World Expo in history where the African continent has such a strong representation. By extending an invitation to people from across the planet to join us for a celebration of creativity, innovation, humanity and world cultures, Expo 2020 Dubai will offer African nations the opportunity to connect with, and learn from, other countries not traditionally on each other's radar. For example, Expo 2020 will showcase Seychelles' leadership in ocean governance as a best practice that can inspire and inform other islands and coastal nations around the world.

Moreover, for the first time in the 169-year history of World Expos, each of the 192 participating countries will have their own pavilion. The entire world will be in Dubai to be part of an opportunity that only happens once in a lifetime. Expo 2020 Dubai will be The World's Greatest Show, a six-month celebration of human brilliance and achievement that will truly affect change and seek solutions to the biggest challenges facing the world today.

To be able to walk Seychelles through its participation journey and watch the pavilion develop has been incredibly rewarding and enriching. Our message to the world will of course be centered on sustainability, whilst creating a new understanding of our country's potential and all it has to offer. As a Seychellois, I am happy to witness the development of a platform that will truly befit our great island nation, where it will be Seychelles' largest – and I believe best – pavilion ever.

To be part of a project that will leave such a legacy – for the UAE, Seychelles and indeed the world – motivates me to contribute my utmost towards its success.

What are some of the things that make Seychelles unique to you?

Apart from its obvious beauty I would say one of the things that I find quite special about Seychelles is the strong sense of not just community, but 'connectedness' between people and nature. This unique aspect is woven into the country's cultural fabric. It is a feeling almost synonymous with purpose, where you understand your importance to nature, and to those around you. For me, this feeling creates a peaceful inner balance, which somehow makes every little problem seem more manageable.

I am very proud and happy that the Seychelles will have the opportunity to showcase its ingenuity, rich culture and great potential to millions of visitors during six months, thanks to Expo 2020 Dubai.

250 YEARS SEYCHELLES
1770-2020
Celebrating
THE YEAR OF CULTURE
& HERITAGE
@250yearsseychelles
Photo: Michel Denousse

Seychelles celebrates!

This year Seychelles celebrates 250 years since the first settlement writes **SANDRA BONNELAME.**

In the millennia of a country's story, 250 years might not seem much. Nonetheless, this year, Seychellois of all persuasions can take pride in the fact that in this short, but significant amount of time, a homeland with its own culture and identity has been shaped from what were unrelated ethnicities with diverse and often incompatible interests.

So, unquestionably, it is fitting that we celebrate how we have pleasantly coexisted with each other thus far, compared to some other parts of the world.

The celebration of the anniversary of the first settlement in Seychelles is a huge milestone in Seychelles history, and August 2020 will be a very important month in the calendar of events for Seychelles as it celebrates its birth.

To ensure the occasion is given due prominence, in August 2019 the President set up a national preparatory committee to spearhead the planning and organisation of the events, with celebrations starting 250 days before the event and continuing throughout 2020.

Among the events, the Central Bank of Seychelles and the Seychelles Postal office will be producing silver and gold commemorative coins and stamps respectively for the occasion and we may even see a celebration beer, courtesy of Seychelles Breweries.

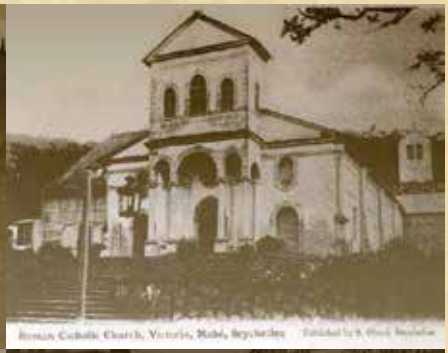
An important component will be an episodic account of Seychelles history since the first settlement, with supporting images and documents, tackled by a panel of authors: Glynn Burridge (chief editor), Tony Mathiot, William McAteer, Bernard George, Penda Choppy, Philippe Michaud, Bernard Shamlaye, Marie France Watson and Richard Touboul. The commemorative book will be a valuable document for scholars and lovers of history and one of the most comprehensive histories ever undertaken in Seychelles.

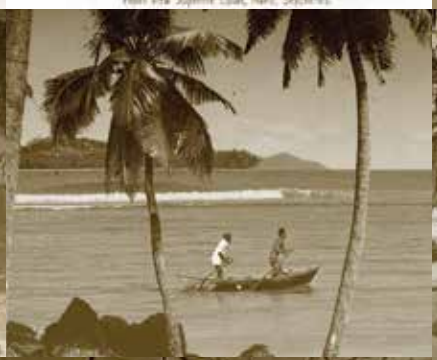
Since the official 250 days' countdown started in December 2019, to keep up the momentum of anticipation and continuous engagement, there have been several historical debates, documentary series and one-minute spots being aired on social media, television and radio. We are hearing from people of all walks of life, selected to share their tales or recollections and to express what this celebration signifies to them and what their hopes are for the next 250 years.

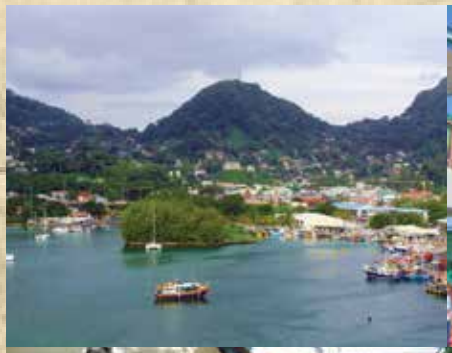
Several iconic landmarks are planned. As Ste Anne is the place where the first settlement took place, the Seychelles heritage foundation, in collaboration with Club Med, is coordinating to erect an iconic Museum project, similar to that on Silhouette, to mark this anniversary.

For Victoria itself, a commemorative replica of the frigate Thelemaque or a similar symbolic icon in Victoria is to be installed as a monument along with a first settlers' plaque. Also in order for this celebration is a life-size sculptured replica of a typical traditional village of the past to bridge the gap in our history. This is intended to be a valuable historical and educational tool for both Seychellois and visitors.

Albert Street, Victoria







IMAGES COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK + FLICKR + WIKIMEDIA

In the second largest island of Seychelles, Praslin, the committee is working with the community to erect a Youth Fisherman Statue in honour of all the people lost at sea. The sculpture is to represent a young boy fishing on a rock, an activity carried out by the older generation and a practice hardly exercised by the younger generation today in this world of technology. This is to be a milestone achievement for the people of Praslin and Seychelles in general.

A history fair is to be led by the Department of Culture in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The idea is to have schools across Mahé, Praslin and La Digue working on exposés to be displayed in one National Fair in August 2020. All entries will be made into a book for those interested to purchase such a keepsake.

An art exposition entitled *Desin mon lavi* has been suggested as part of the build-up. This involves a young artist's meeting with an elderly person to paint a picture on canvas of one of his or her favourite, most remarkable stories.

The activities planned have Government organisations involved to showcase their sector via a walk through in the 250 years of Seychelles, particularly the evolution of land transport, health and maritime voyage.

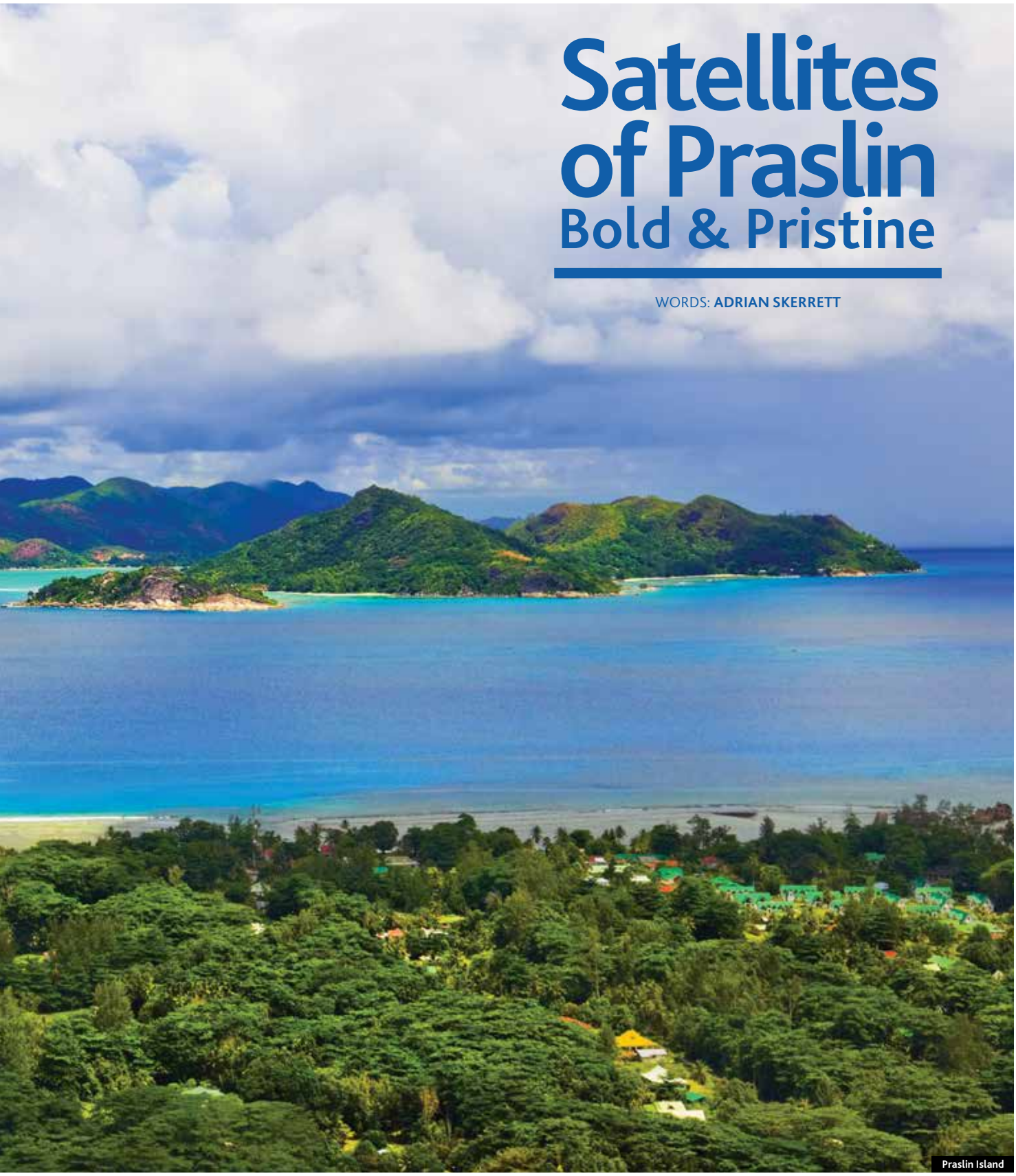
The launching event will involve VIPs, dignitaries and the general public, in the heart of Victoria at Freedom Square, believed to have been formed by the landslide of 1862. Freedom Square, formerly known as Gordon Square, is symbolic as a location as it reflects the spirit of the Seychellois' solidarity and nationhood, especially during the prolonged struggle for Independence between 1964 and 1976.

The main event will be in two parts: The official ceremony and the cultural show, highlighting the key milestones of the journey through Seychelles. This will be followed by the unveiling of symbolic pieces and will finish with a parade of floats which will show the evolution of 250 years since the first settlement.

This is a time to celebrate and carry on weaving the strands of our different roots with great care so as to consolidate the progress we have made as a nation as we continue to move forward in harmony.

Satellites of Praslin
Bold & Pristine

WORDS: **ADRIAN SKERRETT**



Praslin Island

Praslin Island

To fully enjoy the diversity of the spectacular islands of Seychelles there's no better way than an island-hopping trip. Apart from those headed out to the remote coral islands, most visitors have come to explore the 42 granitic islands lying within the shallow waters of the Seychelles Bank. Fortunately, by using Praslin or La Digue as a base you can experience the greatest possible variety of islands without having to live out of a suitcase and move on every day.

The granitic islands of Seychelles are dominated by the nation's two largest landmasses, Mahé and Praslin, each surrounded by a flotilla of smaller cohorts. Mahé is the main point of entry but every self-respecting island-hopper will include a visit to Praslin and the legendary World Heritage Site of Vallée de Mai. It is also well worth using Praslin as a base for a few days in order to visit several of its 15 satellite islands, experiencing the subtle differences in character between them.

By far the largest neighbour of Praslin – really more of a twin than a satellite – is La Digue. There are several hotels and many guest houses here, but if time does not permit a longer stay, it is easily possible to make a day visit from Praslin via the regular ferry that runs from Baie Ste Anne, Praslin. Landing at La Passe on La Digue, bicycles are available to hire, but getting around on foot is also an easy option on the level plateau.

From La Passe it is a short distance to the Vev Reserve, established as a sanctuary to protect the symbol of La Digue, the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher. Vev means 'widow' in Kreol and is the local name of the flycatcher: A reference to the long black tail feathers of the male bird reminiscent of the veil worn by widows in western France at the time of Seychelles' settlement in the 18th century. More than half the world population of this, the most beautiful endemic bird of Seychelles, is concentrated on the western plateau of La Digue. Birds can be seen almost anywhere, but the best starting

Vallée de Mai

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La Digue Island

“Aride Island is the finest nature reserve in the granitic islands in terms of size, the diversity of wildlife and its natural, pristine vegetation.

point is the reserve. Entry is free, and the paths are navigable both on foot or bicycle.

West of the reserve, the road leads back to the coast and turns southward towards L’Union Estate, an open-air museum of plantation life. Other features here include the La Digue Rock, a gigantic granite boulder like a natural sculpture, giant tortoises and a picturesque plantation house.

Bicycles at La Digue Island

Cousine Island

The estate also guards the entrance to La Digue's most famous beach, Anse Source D'Argent, frequently named as the best beach in the world and featured in many films and commercials.

A visit to Aride Island from Praslin involves a full day's commitment but it is well worth it. This is the finest nature reserve in the granitic islands in terms of size, the diversity of wildlife and its natural, pristine vegetation. It has more seabird species than the other 40 granitic islands combined and five land birds unique to Seychelles. It is the last natural home of the fragrant-flowered shrub, the endemic Wright's Gardenia. Breeding seabirds include the world's largest populations of Tropical Shearwater and Lesser Noddy. The island is managed by Island Conservation Society and there is a strong emphasis on conservation, science and research. Unfortunately, it is difficult to visit between late-May and September because the only beach faces south, straight into the teeth of the southeast monsoon winds, making landing difficult. For visitors to Seychelles at other times of year it is a wonderful island and not to be missed.

A local guide leads visitors along the nature trail to a point close to the summit at 135 metres. Here the cliffs drop almost vertically to the sea. There is no comparable cliff top view in Seychelles and nowhere

Coco D'or hotel
SEYCHELLES

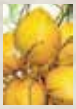
The Coco D'or Hotel, is built on an Acre of lush tropical land, on the north west coast of Mahé. The hotel is a mere four minutes walk from Beau Vallon, one of the island's most beautiful beaches. The Coco D'or sets itself apart from other hotels in Seychelles by virtue of its location, amenities and unparalled service philosophy.

The hotel provides 3 specialized cuisines of Local & International, Pizza and Chinese.

27 appointed rooms and suites, each with a private bath, balcony, terrace and/or living room are divided into two categories:-

Standard room — 24 rooms with a verandah and tropical garden, 6 rooms with a terrace and 2 with a lounge.

Deluxe suites — 3 rooms with a private patio terrace and mountain and garden view, two bathrooms, a kitchen-ette and a separate living room.



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Hawksbill Turtle

else is it possible to look down on thousands of roosting frigatebirds or glimpse the elusive Red-tailed Tropicbird, whilst in the clear turquoise waters below, rays, turtles and dolphins may be seen.

Cousin Island Nature Reserve is owned by BirdLife International and managed by Nature Seychelles. It is a smaller, gentler version of Aride, without the huge number of frigatebirds but with the same land birds and seven of the ten seabird species. It was also largely rehabilitated to its natural state since its purchase as a reserve in 1968. Cousin is only two kilometres from Praslin and fairly sheltered, with a beach surrounding most of the island so that landing is generally possible year-round. On open days, a small armada of boats from Praslin moors offshore and waits for the island's boat to come out to ferry visitors ashore. They are assembled at the boat shelter (a measure implemented to prevent the introduction of pests), which can take some time. Guests are then split into English or French speaking groups for guided tours around the island which last about two hours. It is not possible to roam the island unaccompanied and there is no time to swim or snorkel,

St Pierre islet

IMAGES COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK + FLICKR

Félicité Island

but trips are very well organised and led by knowledgeable guides. Cousin is also one of the most important Hawksbill Turtle nesting islands in the western Indian Ocean and during the nesting season (October to April) there is quite a good chance of seeing one come ashore to lay.

An excursion to Cousin is often combined with a visit to Curieuse Island for a barbeque lunch and to nearby St Pierre islet for snorkelling. Separate day trips to Curieuse Island can also be arranged from most Praslin hotels. Curieuse lies just one kilometre north of Praslin at the centre of a Marine National Park. It is less heavily wooded than other islands and was once known as Ile Rouge because from the sea the red soil is very noticeable. A leper colony was established here in 1833 at Anse St José. Ruins of the lepers' houses remain, whilst the doctor's house has been renovated as a Visitors Centre with an excellent history section on the ground floor and a natural history exhibition on the first floor. A footpath leads over the hill to Baie Laraie, where there is a Tortoise Conservation Project.

Grand Soeur and Petit Soeur (known as The Sisters) are owned by the Praslin hotel Château de Feuilles. There are sandy beaches on each side of Grande Soeur, so that landing is possible in both seasons. It lacks the rich wildlife of Aride and Cousin, but is a beautiful little island and snorkelling is excellent. Nearby, tiny Ile Cocos is surrounded by a small Marine National Park and is another good snorkelling site. There are large numbers of parrotfish, butterflyfish, angelfish and groupers. Whale sharks are sometimes seen in deeper waters. Marianne is nearly two kilometres north of Cocos. It is covered with a monoculture of coconuts but is fun to visit because it is uninhabited. A single beach on the western coast permits landings by small boat.

Félicité, Cousine, Round Island and tiny Chauve Souris each have small facilities for visitors and these too can serve as bases for island-hopping around the Praslin Group. Finally, completing the ensemble are Ile La Fouche and Zavé: Minute islands but still home to interesting populations of seabirds.

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The life aquatic

Leave the sun lounger behind and seek out the best watery adventures Mauritius has to offer…

WORDS: **RICHARD HOLMES**

It's easy to fall in love with the powder-soft sands of île Maurice and the jungle clad peaks that rise from the centre of the island. The markets and vibrant streets of the capital Port Louis equally have their charms, as do the lush fairways of the championship golf courses. But this is an island, don't forget, and so the ocean is the defining feature of this charming tropical destination.

Whether you're a thrill-seeker in search of an adrenalin jolt, or simply want to admire the magical underwater world, these unforgettable aquatic adventures should be top of your bucket-list.

Photo: FLYn'Dive

Photo: Shutterstock

Fly a kite

Steady trade winds, warm waters and calm seas have cemented Mauritius' reputation as one of the most sought-after kite-surfing destinations on the planet.

"The southwest corner at Le Morne is kite-boarding heaven," says Tony Cook, owner of South African tour operator Tony Cook Adventures. An instructor certified by the International Kiteboarding Organization, Cook runs winter tours to the island for both novice and intermediate kiters. "The conditions are ideal for complete beginners learning in shallow water in the lagoon, but then around the corner at One-Eye you have one of the most insane left-hand barreling waves on earth."

While you'll find the sky above Le Morne and Bel Ombre filled with colourful kites at almost any time of year, the steady south-easterly trade winds make the winter months (June-October) peak season for kiters.

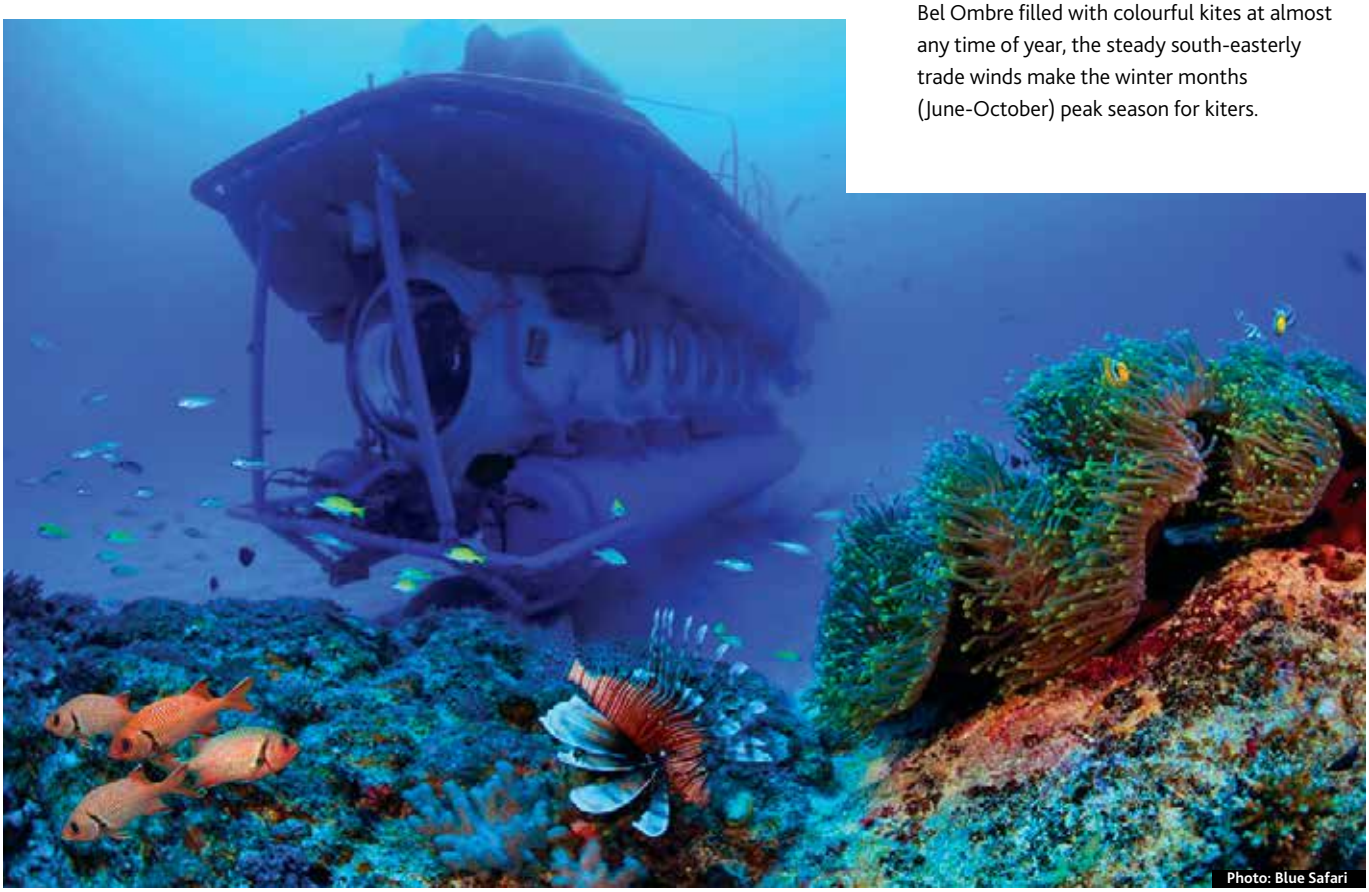
Photo: Blue Safari

Beneath the blue

Live out your wildest Jacques Cousteau fantasies with an unforgettable journey into the depths, with the only leisure-focused submarine operation on the island. With a pair of submarines capable of diving to 35 metres beneath the surface, you'll enjoy a front-row seat to the colorful corals, fish and sea life that thrive in the waters off the island. The two-hour trips – with roughly 40 minutes beneath the waves – take place offshore from Mont Choisy beach in the north-west of the island, and include viewing of shipwrecks and coral reefs.

SubScooters ▶

If you'd rather be captain of your own destiny – and underwater vehicle – then the SubScooters are for you. As the name suggests, this hybrid between a submarine and a scooter offers the freedom to explore underwater with yourself at the helm.

SubScooters can seat two people at a time, with a pressurized glass dome providing both a space to breathe and superb sea views. The SubScooters cruise at just three kilometres per hour, at three metres beneath the surface, and all underwater tours are accompanied by safety scuba divers who can show you the best parts of the coral reef, assist in emergencies and point you in the right direction if needed. No prior experience is needed.

Photo: Blue Safari

Photo: Blue Safari

▲

Walk beneath the waves

Undersea walks have been a popular activity on the island for more than 30 years, offering a memorable opportunity for non-divers to spend time underwater. Undersea walks take place at le Morne, on the east coast, and at Grande Baie in the north. A short boat ride shuttles walkers to a floating platform, where you'll be kitted up with a large glass helmet. Fresh air from the surface is pumped into the helmet at all times, allowing you to breathe easily as you wander the sea floor. If you're worried about your carbon footprint, Solar Sea Walk in Grande Baie operates using solar-powered air pumps, and well-trained staff accompany walkers in case of emergencies.

Blowing bubbles

If you're captivated by life beneath the waves you'll want to get your scuba diving qualification and explore the underwater world with little more than an air cylinder on your back. Thanks to the calm waters of the fringing lagoon, Mauritius is the perfect place for learning to scuba dive, with numerous shallow sites to explore while you build your confidence. Experienced divers can venture further afield to discover the islands diverse coastline, from coral reefs to historic shipwrecks. While there are numerous dives close to the shore, especially in the north of the island, you'll also find excellent diving around the islands of Holt's Rock, Coin de Mire and Flat Island. The summer months from November to May offer the best combination of warm waters, good weather and visibility.

▼

Photo: Château

Take a paddle

Work off all those buffet dinners with a sea-kayak adventure in the north-east of the island. Yemaya Adventures offers half- and full-day sea-kayak excursions that will see you paddling along the serene channels that carve their way through the area's lush mangrove forests. Well-trained guides bring the fauna and flora of these ecologically important mangroves to life, and the kayak tour includes a stop on historic Ile D'Ambre to discover the nature trails and natural pools of Amber Island. After exploring the island, hop back in the kayaks for an easy paddle to tiny Bernache Island for a picnic lunch and a chance to swim in the crystal-clear lagoon.

Photo: FLYn'Dive

Fly away with me

Strapping your feet onto a jet-powered skateboard and soaring high above the seas may not sound like a sensible pastime, but 'flyboarding' is proving hugely popular with island travellers in search of an adrenalin boost. No experience is needed, and certified instructors are on hand to get you started. Operator FLYn'Dive Mauritius say it only takes a few minutes to get the hang of operating your flyboard before you're confidently soaring high above the blue waters of Grande Baie. If you've always wanted to indulge your inner superhero on holiday, this is the aquatic adventure for you.

Photo: Serge Marigny

Stand up and explore

If you'd rather keep your feet firmly on the water, try your hand at stand-up paddle boarding (SUP). While many resorts have SUPs available for guests to use, a guided tour with trained guides offers the opportunity to learn a new sport, improve your technique and discover new corners of the island. An ideal destination for beginners is the lagoon beneath Le Morne Brabant, the iconic mountain in the south-west of Mauritius, where calm seas and shallow waters offer perfect conditions for learning. If you're an old hand with a SUP, the east coast is a great choice for a day of exploring the labyrinth of mangroves, islands and lagoons.

Photo: Veranda-resorts

Set sail

Last, but certainly not least, is one of the most popular aquatic activities for travellers to Mauritius: a leisurely catamaran cruise on the waters of the lagoon with croiseres-turquoise or catamaran-cruise. There are cruise outfits in many corners of the island, each offering a similar experience, so choose the one most convenient to your resort. You'll usually enjoy a half-or full-day sailing on the lagoon, often with a seafood barbecue for lunch or sundowners enjoyed out on the water. Along the way you'll stop for a chance to snorkel on untouched coral, or simply enjoy a dip in the warm waters of the ocean. You may also stop to explore islands in the lagoon, such as the popular Île aux Cerfs on the east coast. It's a relaxed, undemanding activity suitable for the entire family, and a fine way to wave goodbye to the last days of your holiday on île Maurice.

Photo: Croiseres-turquoise

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Both sides of Masada

JAMES MICHAEL DORSEY investigates the dark and controversial history of Israel's ancient fortification.

Masada is a word that invokes emotion. It occupies that rare atmosphere of hallowed one-word sites such as Thermopile or the Alamo; all representing an epic last stand against tyranny – and yet, even today, two millennia after the fact, there are those who see Masada as a monument to extremism and zealotry.

Masada is Hebrew for 'Fortress,' and in conversations with people I met in the country, I was told that Tel Aviv is the brain of Israel, while Jerusalem is its' heart, but, Masada is its soul, imbedded in the DNA of every native sabra. But, that depends on who you are talking to.

First time visitors to Israel may be surprised by its compactness and – the countless security checks aside – you can drive almost anywhere in the country in a couple of hours. A mere 143 kilometres separates the high-rise affluence of Tel Aviv from the blistering desert of Masada. The ancient 24-hour bustle of Jerusalem sits half way between as a buffer between the old world and the new.

Once you arrive, visitors ride in comfort to the summit in a windowed gondola that gives a panoramic view the nearby Dead Sea. Look down upon the ancient 'Snake Path', a winding, narrow lane that was once the only way to the top, and is still preferred by some trekkers and pilgrims. Inside the building there is a historic museum with scale models showing the fortress as it was at the time of the siege. You can watch a film that unfolds historic events in real time. Outside, on the bleak looking summit, you will find free ice cold water dispensers and you can either take an audio guided tour, hire a local guide for a small fee, or wander at your leisure.

There are historic information plaques all along the way. Take in the remains of the Northern Palace where King Herod once took his leisure, then on to the synagogue, bathhouse, barracks, and a Byzantine church that will take you to the western palace at the other end of the Mesa. Listen to the echo inside the massive water cistern. There is even a dovecote where pigeons were once raised as messengers and food.

The fortress was constructed between 37 and 31 BCE as an opulent palace for Herod the Great. It sits atop a flat mesa that towers 457 metres above sea level in a barren moonscape of hills whose terra colouring was painted by God. From its summit, you can gaze across at the Dead Sea and the hills of Jordan.

1. The cableway built in 1971 carries tourists to the ruins at the top of the plateau.
2. King Herod's northern palace, built on three rock terraces overlooking the gorge below.
3. Architectural drawing of siege tower.
4. Mosaic work in the western palace.
5. The Masada 'Snake Path' is one of the most iconic hikes in Israel.
6. Remains of the Masada ruins on the summit.
7. Ein Gedi Spa is a wellness center along the Dead Sea.

All that is known about Masada comes from a man named Flavius Josephus, a Jewish zealot who was captured by the then ruling Romans during a Jewish revolt begun in 73 CE. When he was later freed, he took up a historian's pen and chronicled the Roman campaign against the Jews as an eye-witness at Masada. His account of what happened there is the only written one known to exist and it contains inconsistencies between his story and what archeology has found. Several scholars who have studied Masada say there is no definitive proof for his story. And yet, many choose to believe it because what a story it is. According to Flavius Josephus, in 73 CE, 970 men, women, and children committed mass suicide on the summit of Masada rather than become Roman slaves.

Josephus's story begins in 66 CE, when a group of Jewish extremists known as the Sicarii overcame the Roman residents of Masada and moved in. They were led by a man named Eleazar ben Ya ir. They were a violent group, known to have clashed with fellow Jews as well as Romans, but Rome had invaded Jerusalem and many people were fleeing to the desert at the time, some taking refuge at Masada among the Sicarii.

Lucius Flavius Silva was then the Roman governor of Judaea that included Masada. He had the Roman legion X Fretensis, encircle the mountain, building camps and a wall that was constantly patrolled. No one could leave and no one could get in. Silva's army, which included women and captives, numbered somewhere around 15,000 of which some 9,000 were actual fighting soldiers. Against this force, less than 1,000 men, women, and children occupied the heights of Masada.

Using Jewish prisoners, Silva began the construction of a massive ramp made of packed earth. The defenders on the summit could only watch, knowing that their death was imminent. Josephus made no mention of the defenders hurling rocks down on the ramp builders and this is significant because he made such mention in his writings of similar Roman sieges. Historians have attributed this to the theory that the defenders did not have the heart to kill their own countrymen who were in fact, helping to kill them. Some pieces of the puzzle will never be known.

IMAGES COURTESY OF JAMES MICHAEL DORSEY + WIKIMEDIA

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In the Spring of 73 CE, after a siege of about three months, the ramp was completed, a huge battering ram was constructed and, once again, Jewish prisoners were employed to move the behemoth up the ramp for a final assault. When the Romans finally scaled the walls with fiery torches they found nothing but human carnage. Bodies were scattered everywhere except for two women and five children who had hidden inside a cistern rather than be killed. They verified that it was Eleazar ben Yà ir who had convinced everyone else to choose death over slavery.

Since Judaism prohibits suicide Josephus wrote that the women told him that lots were drawn to see who would execute whom until the final man left would actually have to take his own life and hope for forgiveness.

The dark history can be overwhelming so before heading down visitors can unwind in the extensive gift store full of both souvenirs and historic photos, videos and even logoed clothing. You can also hit the food court for a delicious falafel, gyro or a cold drink.

Taking in the entire fortress involves a lot of walking so many visitors elect to stop on the way out at Ein Gedi, a nearby private beach on the Dead Sea where for a small fee you can bathe in the warm healing waters, or take a famous black mud bath, or purchase packets of the famous local black mud that many swear by as a beauty aid. Ein Gedi has a full bar, patio lounges and umbrellas, and you can rent a hookah should you wish to smoke. There is also usually a tame camel or two offering rides to the children.

Today, Masada is both a National Park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For many it stands as a symbol of resistance; a permanent reminder that Israel will not be enslaved again, while others see it as an icon of intransigence that helps to fuel the constant turmoil that has engulfed the entire region for more than 2,000 years.

Every story has two sides and no story more so than the Middle East of modern Israel. Masada will remain the controversial symbol that it has been for two millennia.

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The inside track

WORDS: RICHARD HOLMES

When it comes to getting the inside track discovering a city's must-see nooks and crannies, it's hard to beat inside info. To help you get the best out of Johannesburg we asked locals for their favourite corners of the city they call home.

The Whippet

Hell's Kitchen

Apartheid Museum Photo © South African Tourism

Jo'Anna Melt Bar

Jo Buitendach

Craft Coffee

Jo Buitendach

You'll be hard-pressed to find a local more passionate about Johannesburg's inner-city precinct than Jo Buitendach. Trained as an archaeologist and tour guide, Buitendach was rated amongst the world's 10 best tour guides by the *Guardian* newspaper, and in 2019 received the inaugural 'Changing your Mind Award' from *Vanity Fair* magazine.

As owner of tour company Past Experiences, she leads visitors on immersive walking tours of the inner city to discover Johannesburg's central business district, exploring everything from its graffiti and public art to its diverse communities, culture and architecture.

Montgomery Park is the suburb she calls home, a diverse neighbourhood not far from the inner city, where you'll find her leading tours most Saturday mornings. But if she's free she'll start the weekend "with a really good coffee and breakfast," says Buitendach. "The Whippet in Linden is always great."

For antique-hunting she recommends the unexplored suburbs of Albertsville and Newlands, but "Joburg has some great galleries and art studios," says Buitendach. "I love the Artist Proof Studio or Everard Read and CIRCA Gallery."

Unsurprisingly, she recommends visitors to Johannesburg shouldn't leave without enjoying a taste of the inner city: "Have a coffee, take in some of the graffiti and street art," suggests Buitendach, who recommends Craft Coffee in Newtown. "It is a coffee roastery found in an old industrial part of Newtown. Great staff and the best cortado!"

Aside from discovering the vibrant present, she suggests you dedicate some time to discovering South Africa's complicated history.

"One of Johannesburg's major strong points is that we were a political resistance centre," says Buitendach. "If you are visiting you should check out this side of history; the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill and Liliesleaf Farm are all amazing."

Come evening, Johannesburg offers a wealth of vibrant venues for fine food, craft cocktails and live music.

For a night out, head to Melville, says Buitendach: "Specifically 7th Street. Hell's Kitchen always has a cool DJ, and Jo'Anna Melt Bar has a jukebox, so expect to spend too much money picking your own music! For live jazz try Niki's Oasis in Newtown on a Friday evening; old school, simple but always fun!"

Freddie Dias

After a spell in Cape Town as head chef of the acclaimed Pot Luck Club restaurant, 2019 saw Freddie Dias return to his hometown to head up the kitchen of Basalt, the intimate restaurant at The Peech boutique hotel in the suburb of Melrose.

When he's not in the kitchen, Dias is at home in Edenvale. On a night off, you'll probably find him at Eira Moura, which is something of an institution in the area.

"It's my favourite Portuguese restaurant, and it's a family-run business," says Dias. "The owners are friendly; the food is great and the atmosphere is always pleasant."

Dias is proud of his Portuguese roots, and family time is important despite the demands of a professional kitchen.

"I enjoy spending time with my dad and we like to go to a Portuguese bakery in Kensington called Pastelaria Princesa. It's great for a coffee and a breakfast, and they serve the best pasteis de nata in Johannesburg."

When he has friends in town, Dias reckons 44 Stanley in Braamfontein ticks all the right boxes.

"There are great cafés, local boutiques selling handmade chocolates, Bean There coffee roastery, vinyl records and other local artists and design shops."

The Keyes Art Mile in Rosebank is also a favourite hangout, "an inspiring culmination of food, drinks, art, design and culture," says Dias. Look out for the 'Keyes Thursday' events on the first Thursday of each month, when the precinct becomes pedestrianised, and you'll find live music, food trucks and art exhibitions open until late.

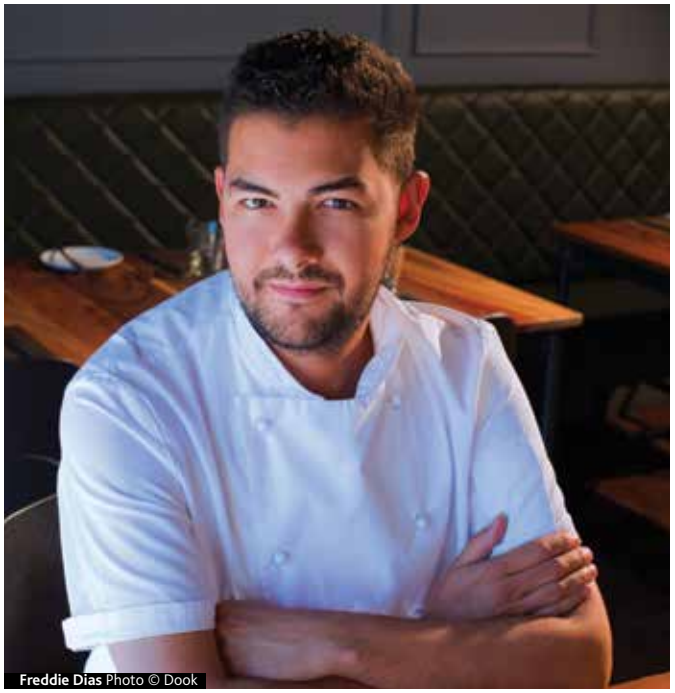
But for a more formal dinner?

Aside from Basalt, of course, Dias recommends Farro in Illovo – "one of my favourite restaurants in Joburg" – or Fermier in Pretoria. "It is run and owned by chef Adriaan Maree, a former Prue Leith [Chef's Academy] colleague of mine. "The food was clean and perfectly and technically executed."

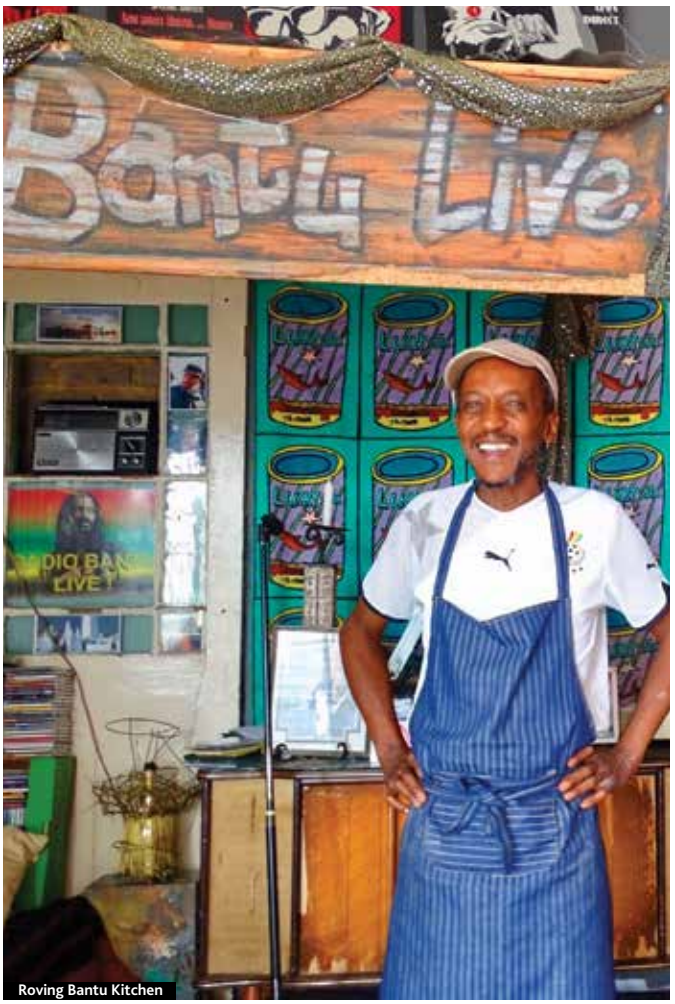
In the mood for music? Dias is a fan of the Radium Beer Hall in Orange Grove.

"It's the oldest pub in Johannesburg, around since the 1920s, and every Friday night they have live jazz. The second spot I'd recommend is called the Roving Bantu Kitchen in Brixton. It's more of a cultural centre than a restaurant or music venue.

They serve delicious traditional South African food and they often have live music there. You have to try their vetkoek and mince served with mango atchar. It will change your life!"



Freddie Dias Photo © Dook



Roving Bantu Kitchen

Fermier restaurant

Keyes Art Mile

Boutique Photo © Robyn Davie Photography

Farro, Illovo

44 Stanley Photo © Robyn Davie Photography

Art gallery installation

Douglas + Hale

Douglas + Hale

Zodwa Kumalo-Valentine Photo © Estee de Villiers

Jazz at Nirox Festival

Zodwa Kumalo-Valentine

Writer, editor and DJ, Zodwa Kumalo-Valentine has a keen sense of the pulse of Johannesburg, whether it's a hidden local eatery or great live music events.

While she loves the jacaranda-lined streets of Killarney, the suburb she calls home, for a lazy Saturday brunch she'll drive the few kilometres to bustling Melville.

"I used to frequent The Whippet in Linden, but now favour its new harvest store in Melville," says Kumalo-Valentine. "My go-to: the breakfast risotto – bacon, mushrooms, micro-greens and a soft poached egg, and a glass of crisp Sauvignon Blanc."

From there Kumalo-Valentine may take her young family to browse the Garden Shop nursery in Parktown North, but "you'll also find me at my favourite galleries – Stevenson, Goodman and Circa."

For antiques and collectibles head to Wizards Vintage, "a treasure-trove of pre-loved garments, shoes, accessories and perishables," says Kumalo-Valentine. "Set in a majestic house in Valley Road, Westcliff, it also plays host to a pop-up restaurant where you can book a seat at one of the lunch tables scattered around the house, after you've done some light shopping while sipping on bubbles."

You may well find a glass of bubbly on the table at some of her favourite local sushi spots too. In the suburb of Norwood "there's a golden oldie called Hokkaido and my new favourite called Fuji. Order the Salmon Brothers at Fuji; and thank me later."

And for a nightcap afterwards?

"Douglas + Hale in Parktown North is a great one for inspired cocktails," says Kumalo-Valentine. "The manager, mixologist Jesse Chinn, is so enthusiastic about his craft and always ready to surprise you with a new elixir."

Aside from her day-job at one of South Africa's largest media houses, Kumalo-Valentine has built a reputation as a DJ in her own right, but one of her favourite music events of the year takes place outside of the city, when a sculpture garden in the Cradle of Humankind opens the gates to the 'Jazz at Nirox Festival'.

Held each September, "music, food, wine and lovers of the outdoors gather at a nature reserve about an hour out of town, and we essentially celebrate the beginning of spring and the start of the social season," says Kumalo-Valentine.

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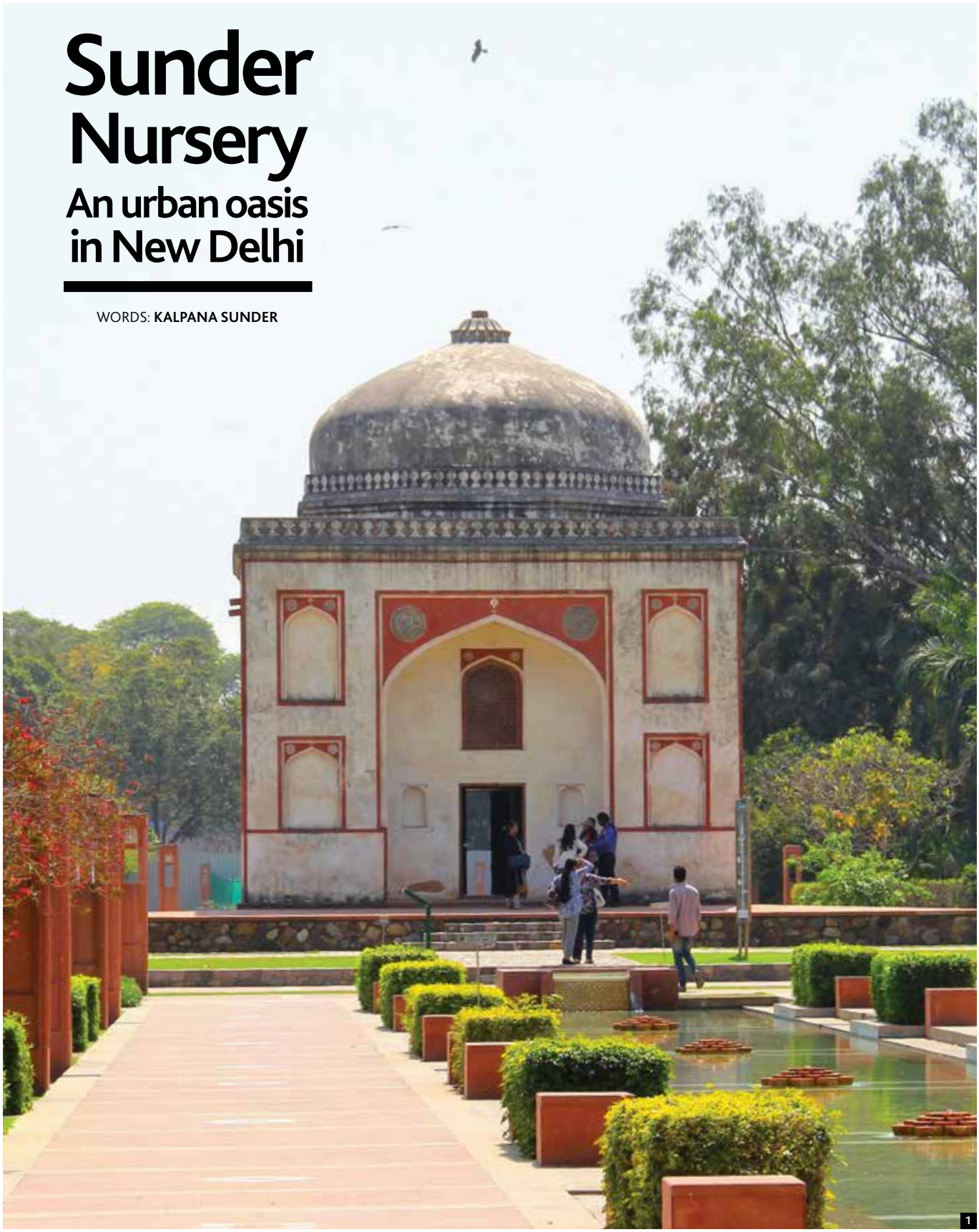
Sunder Nursery

An urban oasis in New Delhi

WORDS: **KALPANA SUNDER**



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It's a beautiful spring day in Delhi. Pink bougainvillea and gargantuan trees with gnarled roots, manicured lawns and stone benches – I have found a tranquil haven in the heart of crowded Delhi. Locals sit on picnic mats under overhanging trees, children play ball. I am at Sunder Nursery, a century-old plant nursery near Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi which has been converted into a world-class urban park with as many as 15 historical tombs, pavilions and monuments. It's a calm and green oasis in the heart of this crowded city. This sprawling 90-acre expanse has flowerbeds, varieties of trees, water bodies and restored monuments. This park has been chosen by *Time Magazine* as 'one of the 100 world's greatest places to visit'.

This 16th century necropolis which used to be called Azim Bagh was in a derelict state; today it shines with its Mughal gardens, benches, flowerbeds and marble fountains. The Nizamuddin area, which it is part of, has always been a hub of building activity with mosques, tombs, step wells and garden pavilions from the 14th century onwards. In the 16th century the Grand Trunk road was built through this area and had several garden tombs.

The nursery appeared during British times in 1913, and was used as a laboratory for propagating trees and growing plants and also for testing flora that came from other places and seeing how they adapted to Delhi's harsh weather. Later it became a dumping ground for construction rubble from surrounding areas.

This place was restored by a public-private partnership between the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Archaeological Survey of India and the Central Public Works Department. The restoration process took over 11 years and the park was opened to the public in February 2018. A 16th century lotus pond was discovered during the restoration process in 2009 and this has also been carefully restored.

I walk through the park, with a central axis and Mughal style gardens that have been inspired by Persian carpet designs. There are as many as six monuments that were given UNESCO status in 2016. I explore Sunder Burj, a 16th century historic tomb near the south west entrance

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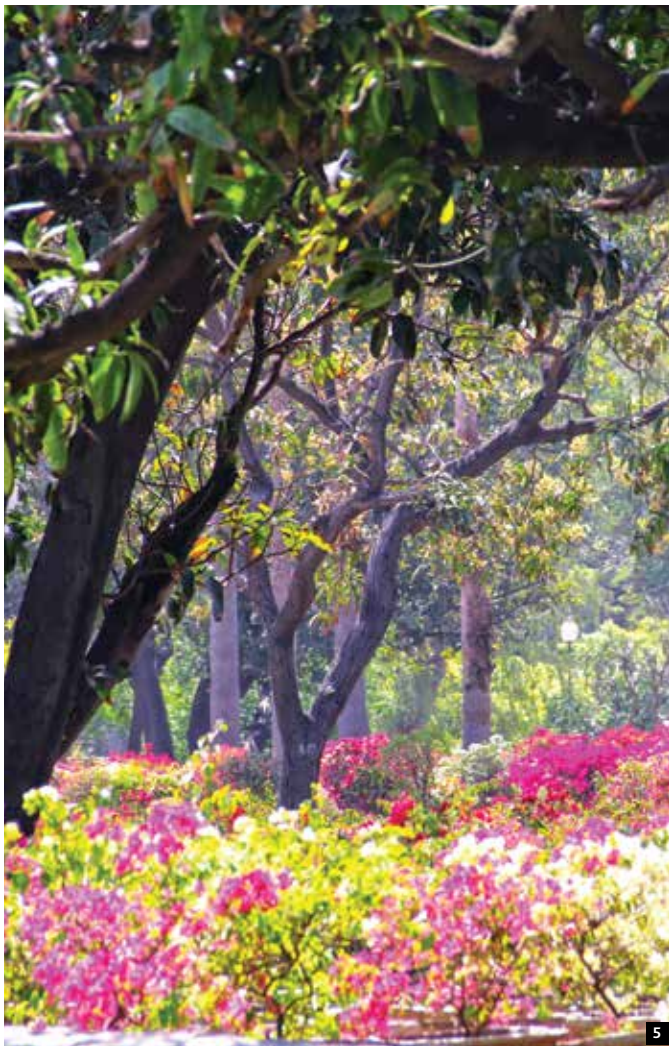

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of the park, which is the show stopper of the park with beautiful intricate detailing and various inscriptions which have been restored.

I enter the tomb with a huge dome and star designs in concentric circles on the ceilings and Arabic verses etched into the marble. Close by is a water canal with fountains shaped liked lotuses. On the other side is the Lakkarwala Burj monument with lattice stone screens, honeycomb vaults, and calligraphic verses etched on walls, situated on an two metres platform, fronted by a beautiful rose garden with more than 30 varieties of roses.

The restoration process was long and laborious and involved looking at old photographs, together with the efforts of hundreds of stone carvers, masons, engineers and gardeners working together. Efforts were made to use traditional craftsmanship techniques like lime plaster using local ingredients like jaggery and lentils. To restore the tiles in the garden tomb of Emperor Akbar's son-in-law, artisans from Uzbekistan were called in to train the local craftsmen.

1. The Sunder Burj, built in the 16th century.

2. Waterbodies, fountains and benches, a favourite with locals.

3. Ceiling of Sunder Burj after restoration.

4/5. The park has more than 300 varieties of trees.

6. An old structure with a tomb.

7. Sunderwalla Mahal built in the 16th century.

Today, the park is an ecological hotspot with more than 20,000 saplings being planted, 300 varieties of trees, 80 species of birds and more than 30 varieties of butterflies. There is also a Bonsai House with a collection of over 400 plants, and the first arboretum of the city. A micro habitat zone showcases plants of different landscapes found in Delhi and many school children visit this for a lesson on Delhi's ecology. Music performances and cultural evenings are held in the garden amphitheatre where it is said that the great musician, Hazrat Amir Khusro, created the Qawali music traditions in the 14th century.

The lake at the northern edge of the park attracts migratory birds; on the other end of the park runs the wall of the Azimganj Serai, an ancient, 108-room travellers inn, built in Mughal times to house pilgrims and travellers visiting the city. The eventual plan is to link this park with the neighbouring zoo and fort to create a 900-acre swathe of greenery.

IMAGES COURTESY OF KALPANA SUNDER

6

Today, the park is an ecological hotspot with more than 20,000 saplings being planted, 300 varieties of trees, 80 species of birds and more than 30 varieties of butterflies.

History and nature go together in every inch of the park. Peacocks and grey hornbill flit behind trees. I see workers cleaning the fountains, sweeping the leaves off the lawns and constantly keeping the spaces spotless. Interpretative boards stand throughout the park, some showing the history of the monuments, others showing the park in different stages of restoration.

Today, the park is also the site of nature walks and Sunday markets. As for me, I spend a lazy morning here, reading a book under a tree and marvelling at how conservation efforts have created a thing of beauty and tranquility from a neglected wasteland.

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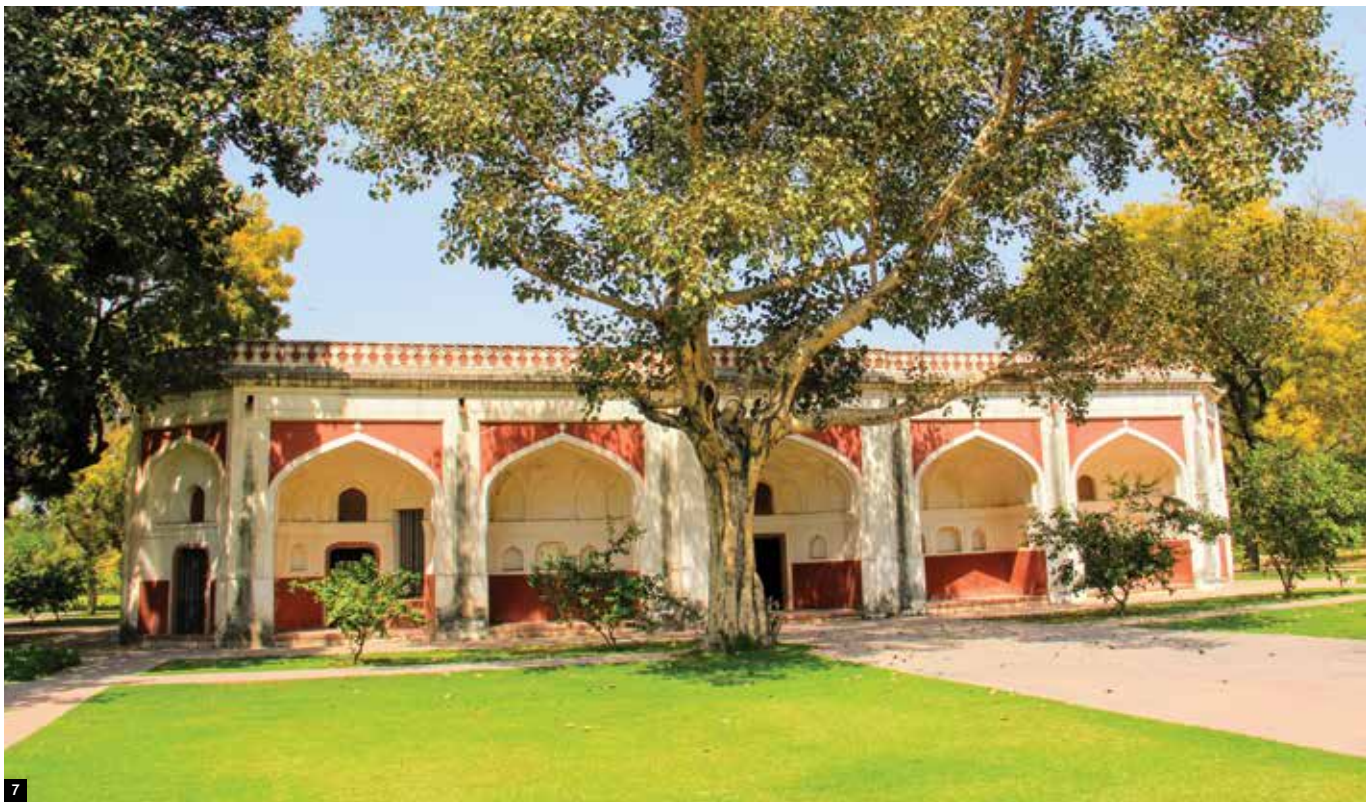

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The many tastes of Israel

SILHOUETTE REPORTS

The story of Israeli food is not just a Jewish story – its recipes cross borders more easily than people do. It is also the story of a land that has overcome harsh natural deprivation to bring forth new agricultural produce. Because it constantly incorporates so much from the rest of the world, Israel may never boast of one 'cuisine,' but it will always retain a rich mixture of fine tastes.

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Increasingly trendy worldwide, Israeli cuisine is a subtle and harmonious blend of culinary delights which mixes the flavours of the Middle East with the Jewish Diaspora. It reflects the modern mosaic of the country, embracing the culinary influences of its Arab neighbours and accommodating the varied tastes of the world's Jews.

Despite their global lifestyles, the new Israeli chefs still cultivate a link to the traditional foods of the Old Testament. Olives, grapes, wheat, corn, barley, dates, figs, lentils, honey, yogurt, almonds, pomegranates and an abundance of herbs and spices are but a few of the ancient ingredients that have captured their imaginations in producing signature dishes, along with indigenous foods such as prickly pears and chickpeas.

Geographical location has had a significant influence on the cuisine of Israel. Coming from over 80 countries, Jews have returned to their ancient 'Land of Israel' bringing with them the foods and recipes they developed during their exodus. These traditions have blended with other Jewish recipes, Hebrew dietary laws, and the native ingredients of the Holy Land. It continues to adapt elements of various styles of cooking from the Middle East and Mediterranean countries and foods such as falafel, hummus, tahini, *msabbaha*, chakchouka (also called shakshouka), and couscous are widely popular.

Kashrut, the body of Jewish dietary laws dealing with what foods they are permitted to eat and how they are prepared, also has a strong influence in Israel, such as the separation of milk and meat and the avoidance of foods such as pork and shellfish. Food that may be consumed is deemed 'kosher', meaning "fit for consumption". Jewish holidays and festivals influence the eating of sufganiyot (round jelly doughnuts) during the festival of Hanukkah and the original Israeli Passover food is *charoset*, which is a sweet, dark-coloured paste made from dates, raisins, walnuts, saffron, cinnamon, and a sweet red wine.

Israel's cultural diversity is beautifully expressed at the dining table, and the dishes you eat will often represent a specific culture. Sephardic Jewish tradition, for example, takes the region's finest produce and prepares it with a distinctly Middle Eastern flair. You will be sampling this cuisine when you dip pita bread into creamy hummus, drizzle tahini over falafel, or chop vegetables into Israeli salad. Meanwhile, gefilte fish, baked goods, and Eastern European flavours characterise Ashkenazi Jewish food. And great tastes do not discriminate: You're just as likely to enjoy the best meal of your journey in an open-air market as a high-end restaurant.

In the downtown areas of most large Israeli cities and towns, such as Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the ancient port city of Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, Ashdod and Be'er Sheva, you're likely to find street food vendors on nearly every corner. These offer a wide variety of foods and culinary delights for visitors and locals alike.

Tel Aviv is a veritable haven for food lovers and while there are many upmarket eateries, it is the fresh local street food

1. Open air market selling fresh produce.
2. Masabacha, also known as Israeli hummus, is a signature dish on the menu at Abu Hassan in Jaffa, one of the oldest and most famous restaurants in Israel.
3. Breakfast at the Espresso Bar.
4. Sufganiyot is a round jelly doughnut eaten in Israel and around the world on the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.
5. Entrance to Carmel Market established in the 1920s is open every day of the week, except Shabbat (Saturday), and sells mostly food but also a variety of other items.

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which attracts the locals and visitors the most. The streets of the city are lined with a multitude of inexpensive eateries. To be on the safe side look for places where the locals eat and a good sign is to go where there are long queues or packed tables.

Located on the Israeli Mediterranean coastline, Tel Aviv's sprawling waterfront along the famous Shlomo Lahat Promenade is the place to rock to the rhythm of modern Israel. Strolling couples, creative street vendors, foamy cafés, and strumming folk musicians all conspire to wipe out any memories of Israel's struggles. For those in search of traditional foods, you can pick up an amazing array of unique spices, fresh local produce and souvenirs at the lively and diverse Carmel Market (Shuk Ha'Carmel), which is one of the must-see visitor attractions in the city.

Established in the 1920s as a humble Yemenite market, it rose to prominence in the 1950s as the best place in Tel Aviv to procure fresh local produce and not much has changed since. The market today is home to a wide range of culinary treats, so you'll be well rewarded for making your way to one of its many intimate restaurants and hidden eateries, such as Hummus HaCarmel, noted for its mouth-watering hummus, Bar Ochel, located in the middle of the market, which is the definition of simple market fare, or Arepa's, the new kid on the block, serving Venezuelan food including arepas (a maize flour pancake with fillings which are gluten free), empanadas and patacones.

Should you feel like indulging in a real home cooked meal, Petit Mamo is your stop. They serve an array of hot dishes including stuffed zucchinis, meatballs and stewed lamb. If you feel yourself working up a thirst there's no better place to quench it than at the market's famous Beer Bazaar, a street bar which offers close to 100 different Israeli craft beers from a range of local microbreweries.

At Messa, the feast is for the eyes as well as the palate. Recently voted the best restaurant in Israel, this famous eatery has also won plaudits for its 'beautiful interior'. Despite its comparatively recent opening, Herbert Samuel has established itself as one of the stars of Tel Aviv's fine dining scene, while just outside the city within the vaulted portals of the famous Yoezer Wine Bar, you'll find classic French cuisine with an Israeli twist at this atmospheric-laden stone mansion in historic Jaffa.

There are thousands of restaurants, casual eateries, cafés and bars throughout Israel, offering a wide variety of foods, all cooked to perfection and prepared in their own individual style. Among the most famous streets for food are Dolphin Street in Jaffa, Hashomer Street and Tchernichovsky Street in Tel Aviv, which are noted for their mouth-watering Israeli-Iraqi street foods, Derech Allenby in Haifa, and the labyrinth of alleyways in neighbouring Tzfat (or Safed).

Abu Hassan on Dolphin Street, Jaffa, is one of the oldest and most famous hummus restaurants in Israel, and the place to go for the authentic taste of this iconic dip. For a real local experience, order their award-winning *masabacha* topped with chickpeas in their juices. The restaurant offers this signature dish with a selection of extras such as tahini, hardboiled eggs, falafel, onion, pickles, lemon and garlic sauce, accompanied by freshly baked pita or taboon bread.

6. A brightly coloured selection of dips, salads, olives and pickle vegetables – is ever-present on the Israeli table, both at restaurants and at home.

7. Hummus ful, the third most popular variant of hummus in Israel. It consists of hummus topped with warm ful medames, a heavily seasoned fava bean stew.

8. Chakchouka (also called Shakshouka), breakfast made simply of fried eggs in spicy tomato sauce with other vegetables and served in the same pot.

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The Mizrahi and Sephardi Jewish, Middle Eastern or Arabic restaurants are very popular in Israel and relatively inexpensive establishments, often offering a selection of meze salad platters, followed by grilled meats with a side portion of French fries and a simple dessert.

Most Israelis will drink local wines in moderation, and almost at every meal or social gathering. In addition to notable Israeli wines such as Shvo Rosé, Golan Heights Syrah and Margalit Enigma, an increasing number of wines are imported from France, Italy, Australia, the United States, Argentina and Chile.

Israel is one of the world's great culinary melting pots, and the breadth of its cuisine reflects the discerning tastes of its new populations, and the development of modern Israel cooking. There is an air of perpetual renewal: Flowers bloom, new restaurants open and there's always a party somewhere. This vibrant country is quite simply the Mediterranean vacation you didn't know you needed, and where you'll be taken on a journey to gastronomic nirvana.

"Israel's cultural diversity is beautifully expressed at the dining table, and the dishes you eat will often represent a specific culture.

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Here are just a few examples of the signature dishes you are likely to encounter during your travels there.

Falafel: These are fried balls or patties of spiced, mashed chickpeas or fava beans and are a common Middle Eastern street food that has become identified with Israeli cuisine. It is mostly served in a pita, with pickles, tahina, hummus, cut vegetable salad and harif, a hot sauce. For sides you can have fresh cabbage salad, sauerkraut, pickles, tahini and hot or garlic sauce.

Shawarma: (meaning "rotating" in Turkish) is usually cooked with turkey and lamb fat on the top for flavouring. The shawarma meat is sliced and marinated and then roasted on a huge rotating skewer. The cooked meat is then shaved off and stuffed into a pita or wrap, plainly with hummus and tahina, or with additional trimmings such as fresh or fried onion rings, French fries, salads and pickles.

Chakchouka (also called Shakshouka): Originally a workman's breakfast made simply of fried eggs in spicy tomato sauce with other vegetable ingredients, or sausage which is optional. Shakshouka is typically served in the same frying pan in which it is cooked, with thick slices of white bread to mop up the sauce, and a side salad.

Jerusalem mixed grill (Me'orav Yerushalmi): This consists of chicken giblets and lamb with onion, garlic and spices. It is one of Jerusalem's most popular and profitable street foods. Although the origin of the dish is Jerusalem, it is today common in all of the cities and towns in Israel.

Jerusalem bagels: Unlike the round, boiled and baked bagels introduced by Ashkenazi Jews, these are long and oblong-shaped, made from bread dough, covered in za'atar or sesame seeds, and are soft, chewy and sweet. They have become a favourite snack and are also served in hotels as well as at home.

Malabi: A creamy pudding originating from Turkey is prepared with milk or cream and cornstarch. It is sold as a street food from carts or stalls in disposable cups with thick sweet syrup and various crunchy toppings such as chopped pistachios or coconut.

Sabikh: This is a traditional sandwich that Mizrahi Jews introduced to Israel and is sold at kiosks throughout the country, but especially in Ramat-Gan where it was first introduced. Sabikh is a pita filled with fried eggplant, hardboiled egg, salad, tehina and pickles.

Tunisian sandwich: Mostly made from a baguette with various fillings that may include tuna, egg, pickled lemon, salad, and fried hot green pepper. It is a staple of the Israeli soldier's lunch. The bread is shorter than the French original bageuette and the texture resembles a roll or a bun. It is the larger version of the pita-sandwich.

IMAGES COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

Tel Aviv

Gateway to Israel

Discover the rich history that can be found throughout Israel.

Dead Sea

Thinking of having a spa-like experience or a relaxing day at the lowest point on earth?

Hop on the Dead Sea Tour Shuttle from Tel Aviv for the quickest and simplest way to one of the must-see attraction in Israel.

Jerusalem

This religious and historical epicenter of the world is one of the most visited landmarks in Israel. Escape the hustle and bustle of Tel Aviv for an inspiring pilgrimage tour of the ancient Holy Land.

Sea of Galilee

This amazing unique spot is historically rich with its beautiful coastline, promenade and panoramic views. From quiet getaways to crowded lively beaches including nearby sites such as the Hamat Gader hot springs and the Jordan River you will need to be ready for a full day of adventure.

Haifa

Visit the Bah'ai Gardens which form part of the Bah'ai World Center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These beautiful gardens are a place of pilgrimage and are set across terraces sloping down Mount Carmel towards the beautiful Mediterranean Sea.

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airseychelles.com

Pamplemousses botanical gardens

A veritable oasis of flora and fauna

WORDS: **PETER HOLTHUSEN**

The first view the air traveller has of Mauritius is of an emerald-green island set like a gemstone in the cobalt blue of the vast Indian Ocean. Situated just north of the Tropic of Capricorn, this small pear-shaped island was once an active volcano that formed part of a long chain stretching from La Réunion in the south to Seychelles in the north. Over time the original volcano has been severely eroded so that Mauritius today bears little resemblance to the cone shape so typically associated with most volcanoes.

Boasting some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, a wonderfully diverse culture, unspoilt white sand beaches, exhilarating water sports, exotic menus and excellent shopping opportunities, Mauritius is far more than just a tropical beach destination. In fact, it is difficult to believe there is so much to see and do on an island that covers just 787 square miles.

Port Louis, which the locals pronounce either as 'Paulwee' or 'Port Loo-is', is the bustling capital and commercial centre of Mauritius and nestles in a basin with the Moka mountain range's

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jagged peaks providing a dramatic backdrop. At the foot of the city is Mauritius' only harbour, making Port Louis the commercial hub around which the rest of the island rotates.

Situated just north of Port Louis is the small village and administrative district of Pamplemousses, which is one of the most historically important districts in Mauritius. It was here that the highly influential early French Governor of the island, François Mahé de La Bourdonnais, bought the property at Mon Plaisir, had his house built and a vegetable garden created there. However, it was the celebrated French horticulturist and botanist, Pierre Poivre, who was the passionate creator of the Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens which he first established there in 1770.

The indefatigable Pierre Poivre was a missionary to East Asia, intendant of the French colonial islands in the Indian Ocean. In the 1760s he became administrator of Isle de France (present day Mauritius) and neighbouring Île Bourbon (now La Réunion) islands which were then an overseas department and region of the French Republic, but his greatest legacy is the beautiful gardens he established at Pamplemousses.

Over the years, the gardens came to be known under various names, ranging from 'Jardin de Mon Plaisir', to 'Jardin des Plantes', 'Le Jardin National de Isle de France', 'Jardin Royal', 'Jardin Botanique des Pamplemousses' – and during the British colonisation: 'The Royal Botanical Gardens of Pamplemousses'.

Finally, on 17 September 1988, the gardens were formally named the 'Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden', in honour of the celebrated politician, statesman and philanthropist who led the country to independence in 1968 and who was the first Prime Minister of Mauritius.

Although this name is quite a recent one, it seems to be scarcely used, even ignored by the visitors. The gardens are more frequently known as 'Jardin de Pamplemousses', which clearly originates from the adjoining village.

Famous for its long pond of giant Amazonian waterlilies *(Victoria amazonica),* the gardens cover an area of around 37 hectares, and are one of the most popular tourist attractions in Mauritius. This veritable oasis of flora and fauna is the oldest botanical garden in the Southern Hemisphere and for many years was ranked third among all the botanical gardens in the world, second only to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew in London and the Orto botanico di Padova, the oldest surviving botanical garden in the world, created in Padua, Italy in 1545 by the Venetian Republic.

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1. A monument was constructed at the garden in memory of Seewosagur Ramgoolan.
2. Lotus flower in Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens.
3. Reconstruction of an old Mauritian sugar mill, L'Aventure du Sucre.
4. The white marble obelisk, erected by François Liénard de la Mivoye.
5. The setting of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden.

A pleasant couple of hours can be spent with a local guide appreciating the rare botanical specimens and historical features in the Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens. The slight air of neglect adds to its appeal. Instead of being manicured, the grass blows in the wind and you can quite easily lose yourself in the tree-lined avenues. At weekends the gardens are alive with visitors picnicking beside the ponds or under the shade of exotic trees. During the week a kiosk just inside the car park entrance sells a useful guidebook with a map. If you plan to visit at the weekend it is worth picking one up from a bookshop in Port Louis.

Many of the palms, including the majestic Royal Palm *(Roystonea oleracea)* lining Poivre Avenue, were introduced during the second half of the 19th century by the then Director James Duncan. The gardens were developed as a nursery for new sugarcane species and later for eucalyptus trees, which were introduced in the late 1860s to dry out the island's wetlands following a devastating malaria epidemic which struck Mauritius in 1866.

The highlights of a visit include the giant waterlily pond, the lotus pond and the iconic wrought-iron entrance gates, which won first prize at the famous Great Exhibition, held at the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park in 1851. Look for the coat of arms – a lion, unicorn and crown – on each of the gate's pillars.

The gates were a donation to the gardens from the Franco-Mauritian ichthyologist, adventurer, zoologist, botanist and naturalist, François Liénard de la Mivoye, who settled in the Isle de France in 1805. He also donated the white marble obelisk, inscribed with the names of the gardens benefactors, which stands on the corner of Avenue de La Bourdonnais, close to the giant baobab tree that appears to grow upside down.

The long, rectangular lake with its huge Victoria amazonica waterlilies never fails to enthral. The enormous, floating leaves with their upturned edges look like giant stepping-stones. Apparently, they can withstand a weight of 45 kilogrammes. The great lily of the Amazon flowers for only two successive days a year. On the first evening the beautiful flowers are creamy white with a delicious fragrance; by the second day they have turned pink.

Three other species of lily *(Nymphaea)* are also present in the lake; their blue, white and pink flowers punctuating the regular green circles of the leaves. Not far away, on Cossigny Avenue, is a row of very large palms whose flowers resemble a gigantic umbrella. The towering talipot palm *(Corypha umbraculifera)* bears flowers only when the tree is 40 to 60 years old, sprouting up to 50 million tiny blossoms, which may reach up to six metres above the height of the tree. Seemingly spent by this dramatic display, the tree then dies. Here, too, you will find the

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monument to Pierre Poivre, the garden's indefatigable founder, overlooking his flourishing creation.

The crescent-shaped lotus pond is usually awash with the white and yellow flowers of the Indian lotus *(Nymphaea nelumbo)*, also known as the sacred lotus, a flower venerated by Hindus. Next to the pond is the Sir Henry Barkly Avenue, which is lined with betel nut palms *(Areca catechu)*. The nut, when sliced, mixed with lime paste and wrapped in vine leaves, acts as a mild stimulant and turns the user's lips bright red.

In addition to its famous giant waterlilies, the gardens also feature a very large collection of exotic spices, ebonies, sugar canes, and 85 varieties of palms from Central America, Asia, Africa and the islands around the Indian Ocean, 25 of which come from the Mascarene Islands. Many trees have been planted by visiting world leaders and royalty, including Princess Margaret, the Countess of Snowdon, François Mitterrand, Indira Gandhi and Robert Mugabe.

Tours of the gardens also include a reconstruction of an old Mauritian sugar mill. Giant Aldabra tortoises, once a common inhabitant of Mauritius, are also resident in the park as are deer which were brought to the island from Java over 300 years ago.

These exquisite gardens also house the 'Samadhi' funerary monument where Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was cremated in 1985. His ashes were scattered on the River Ganges in India. The beauty, the interesting botanic diversity and the cool tranquillity of the gardens makes them a 'must' on any holiday itinerary to Mauritius.

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www.airseychelles.com

The gateway of India

WORDS: **PETER HOLTHUSEN**

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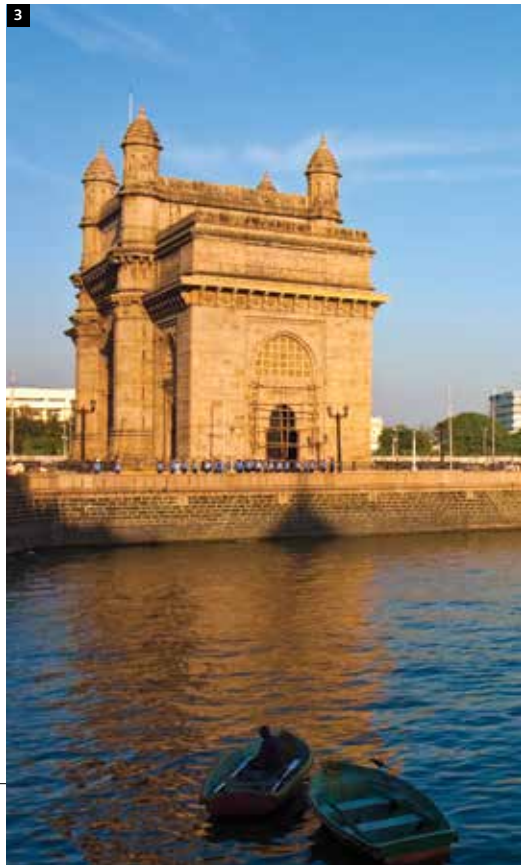
2

1. The iconic Gateway of India is a living monument to a bygone age.
2. The inscription reads: "Erected to commemorate the landing in India of their Imperial Majesties King George V and Queen Mary on the Second of December MCMXI".
3. The iconic Gateway of India.
4. Jaali work on an arch.

Mumbai, the capital city of the Indian state of Maharashtra and the second most populous city in the country after Delhi, is rapidly becoming one of India's most popular tourist destinations. As any discerning visitor will soon discover, Mumbai is a spectacular paradox of chaos and hope, glamour and squalor, modernity and tradition.

Often fondly referred to as the 'City of Dreams', Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay, the official name until 1995) lies on the Konkan coast on the western coastline of India and is a beautifully blended melting pot of cultures and lifestyles. It is also the wealthiest city in India and has the highest number of millionaires and billionaires among all the cities in India.

Mumbai is home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Elephanta Caves, the imposing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, and the city's distinctive ensemble of Victorian and Art Deco buildings. Foremost among them is the iconic 'Gateway of India' stone arch, which is a living monument to a bygone age when classical architecture, exquisite art and elaborate craftsmanship defined the most admired public spaces. The Gateway of India is located on the waterfront at Wellington Pier, at the end of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Marg in south Mumbai, overlooking the Arabian Sea.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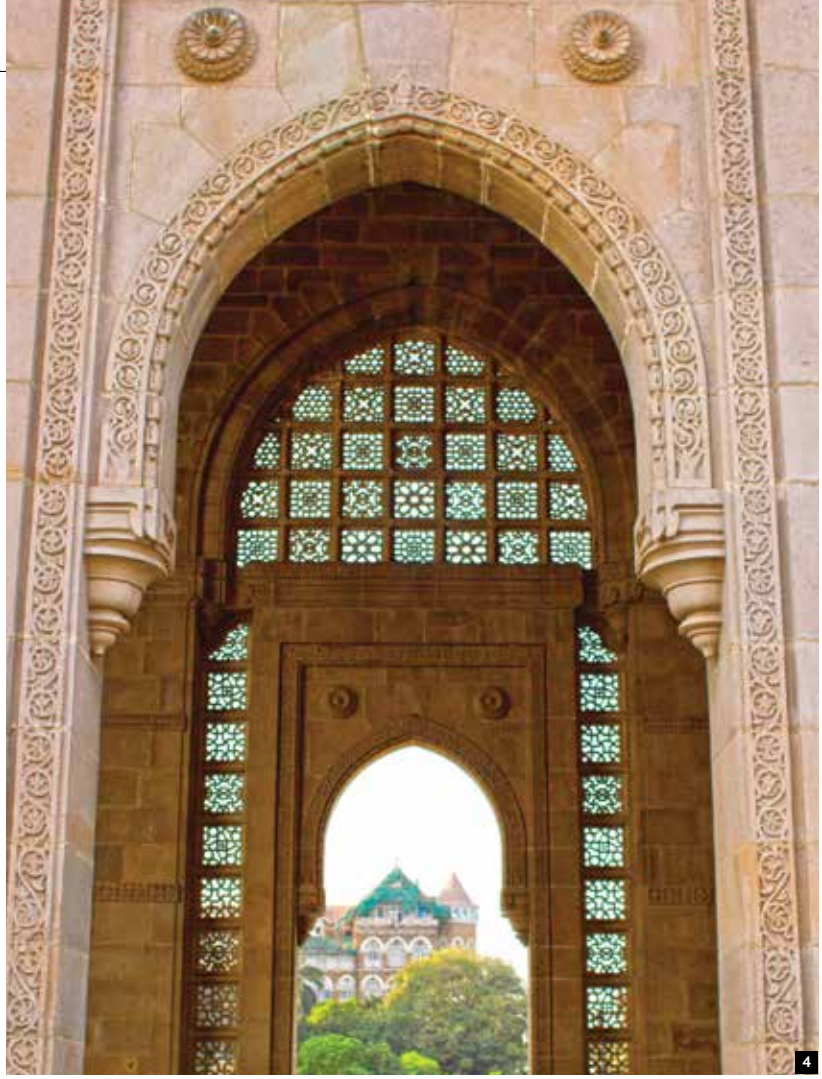
The Gateway of India was erected to commemorate the landing on 2 December 1911 at Apollo Bunder (now known as Wellington Pier) of King George V and Queen Mary who travelled to India to attend the Delhi Durbar, a ceremony proclaiming the royal couple Emperor and Empress of India. This was then an event of grand significance for British India and the British Empire, but today serves as a "monumental memento" of colonial rule over the country.

King George V was the first British monarch to visit India. However, the royal couple only got to see a cardboard model of the monument, as construction of the triumphal arch as we know it today did not a begin until 31 March 1913, when the foundation stone for the gateway was laid by then Governor of Bombay, Sir George Sydenham Clarke, with the final design of the Scottish architect, George Wittet, for the gateway sanctioned in August 1914.

Prior to the new gateway's construction, Apollo Bunder served as a native fishing ground and the pier was a maze of wharves and docks where brisk trading took place. During the months of April and May the pier was particularly busy, with thousands of baskets of cotton being stacked ready to be loaded on to ships. There was frantic activity on the Cotton Green, at the Customs' House and at the hydraulic presses where the raw staple was baled for export.

Between 1915 and 1919 work proceeded at the Apollo Bunder to reclaim the land on which the gateway was to be built, along with the construction of a sea wall. Gammon India Limited, which is one of the largest civil engineering construction companies in India, was entrusted with the



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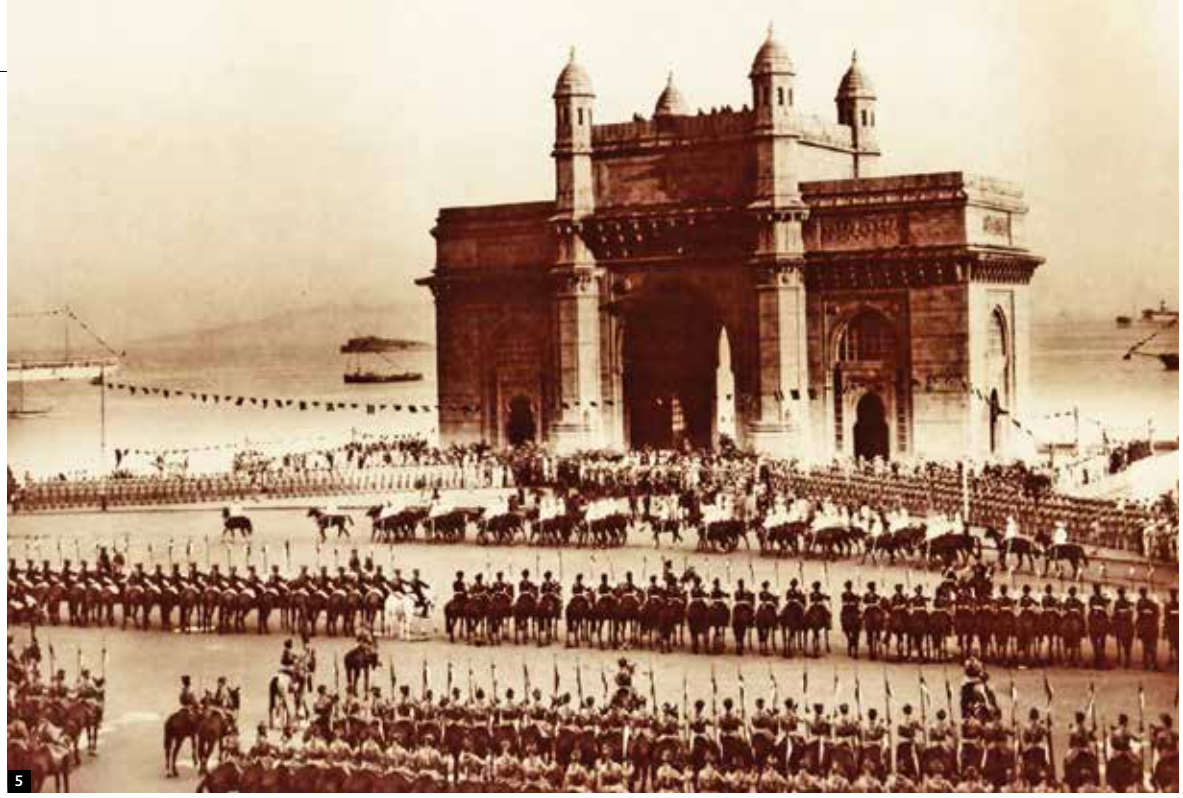
construction work for the gateway. Its foundations were completed by 1920 while construction was finished in 1924. The gateway was opened to the public on 4 December 1924 by the then Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Rufus Isaacs, when this symbolic arch was officially named the 'Gateway of India'.

Following Indian independence in 1947 the last British troops to leave India, the First Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, passed through the gateway with a 21-gun salute, as part of a ceremony on 28 February 1948, signalling the end of the British Raj.

The structural design of the Gateway of India is principally a large arch 26 metres high. The monument is built of yellow basalt and reinforced concrete (the first precast reinforced concrete piling job in India). The stones were sourced locally while the perforated screens were brought in from Gwalior, a major city in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

The monument is built in the Indo-Saracenic style, incorporating elements of 16th century Marathi architecture. One can also find traces of Muslim architectural styles in the structure of the grandiose edifice. The design features intricate stone latticework (also known as *jali* or *jaali* work). There are four turrets on the structure



5. Commemorating the landing on 2 December 1911 of King George V and Queen Mary who travelled to India to attend the Delhi Durbar.
6. Wellington pier serves as a native fishing ground where brisk trading takes place.
7. The monument stands little more than three minutes' walk from the equally legendary Taj Mahal Palace built in 1903.
8. There are four turrets on the structure of the gateway, and there are steps constructed behind the imposing arch which lead down to the Arabian Sea.

of the gateway and there are steps constructed behind the imposing arch which lead to the Arabian Sea. On each side of the arch there are large halls with the capacity to hold 600 people. The architect, George Wittet, combined elements of a Roman triumphal arch and 16th century architecture of Gujarat.

The total construction costs of this monument was 21 lakhs (two million one hundred thousand rupees) and the whole expense was borne by the Indian government. Due to a paucity of funds, the approach road to the Gateway of India was never built. Hence, to this day, the monument stands at an angle to the road leading up to it, little more than three minutes' walk from the equally legendary Taj Mahal Palace (built in 1903) and new Taj Mahal Tower Hotel.

In the grounds of the gateway, opposite the monument, stands the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the celebrated Maratha warrior-hero who fought against the Mughal Empire to establish the Maratha Empire in the 17th century. The statue was unveiled on 26 January 1961 on the occasion of India's Republic Day. It replaced a bronze statue of King George V that had stood at the same location. The other statue in the locality of the gateway is that of Swami Vivekananda, an Indian Hindu monk who is credited as a key figure in the introduction to the west of notable Indian philosophies such as Vedanta and Yoga, and the bringing of Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the late 19th century.

There are five jetties located around the monument. The first is exclusive to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), India's premier nuclear research facility, while the second and third are used for commercial ferry operations, the fourth one is closed, and the fifth is exclusive to the famous Royal Bombay Yacht Club (RBYC), one of India's premier gentlemen's clubs which was founded in 1846 and

IMAGES COURTESY OF PETER HOLTHUSEN + SHUTTERSTOCK

7

The iconic 'Gateway of India' stone arch, a living monument to a bygone age.

8

offers chambers for residence overlooking the Gateway of India. The second and third jetties are the embarkation point for tourists to reach the Elephanta Caves, which are 50 minutes away by boat. Other routes from the gateway include passenger ferries to Rewas-Mandwa, which is a popular weekend beach destination, and Alibag, while cruises also operate from the gateway.

With its erstwhile garden esplanade, street vendors, annual festivals, music and dance, abundance of food stalls, and easy access to nearby visitor attractions, the Gateway of India is one of India's most popular tourist destinations. The monument is now almost as familiar a part of Mumbai's waterfront as the iconic landmarks which surround it. Small wonder, the imposing Gateway of India is often referred to as the Taj Mahal of Mumbai.

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AIR SEYCHELLES NEWEST ADDITION NAMED

Air Seychelles' second Airbus A320neo aircraft will be named after one of Seychelles' critically endangered birds called *Pti Merl Dezil* also known as the *Seychelles warbler*.

Delivered in March 2020 under the code S7-PTI, the newest addition to the fleet reaffirms the airline's commitment to raising awareness about the Seychelles ecosystem and the importance of protecting its endemics for future generation.

Scientifically recognised as *Acrophalus sechellensis* with current population over 3,000, the small song bird, which can be identified by its brown feathers, long legs and narrow beak, was on the verge of extinction in the 20th century.

Reclassified as Near Threatened in 2014, following an increase in its population, *Pti Merl Dezil* can be found on five granitic and coralline islands of the Seychelles including Cousine, Aride, Denis, Fregate as well as Cousin Island, declared a nature reserve in 1968 to protect this species.

Remco Althuis, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles said: "Seychelles as a destination is actively advocating for sustainable tourism and at Air Seychelles we are doing our part to introduce more ecological practices.

"In 2019, besides the delivery of our first fuel efficient aircraft, we invested in a range of electronic equipment and introduced new service methods to reduce single use plastics and aluminium as part of this initiative.

"As visitors are becoming more aware of the impact of climate change, naming our second A320neo aircraft after one of Seychelles critically endangered birds will make our guests aware of the continuous efforts being done locally to safeguard the Seychelles environment for generations to come."

MORE THAN 1 MILLION PASSENGERS HANDLED BY AIR SEYCHELLES IN 2019

Air Seychelles recorded an extremely strong performance in its ground handling business in 2019.

The positive result, driven by the increase in the frequency of flights to the Seychelles including arrival of new customer airlines, has also been supported by a number of ad hoc private charters operating at the Seychelles International Airport.

Between January and December 2019, the ground handling department handled 475,029 incoming and 533,686 outgoing passengers amounting to 1,008,715 passengers in total compared to 927,856 passengers in 2018, representing a 5% growth.

Vania Larue, Head of Ground Services, said: "To manage the high volume of passengers we reviewed the entire ground handling procedures, implemented new work schedules and made considerable investments in our ground support equipment.

"Surpassing the 1 million passenger threshold is indeed a great achievement. I proudly extend my congratulations to the ground handling team for keeping up the great team spirit and for delivering the highest performance in 2019."

SEYCHELLES IMPRESSES AT INDIA'S LARGEST TRAVEL MARKET

Air Seychelles together with the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) and representatives from the local tourism industry, recently participated in the largest and most influential international travel trade gathering held in Mumbai. The event was held at the Bombay Exhibition Centre and attended by more than 50 countries, 1,500 trade visitors and 1,000 exhibitors.

Charles Johnson, Chief Commercial Officer of Air Seychelles said: "India is a very important market for Air Seychelles. The joint efforts of all the partners including the STB plus travel trade at the event were highly appreciated."

AIR SEYCHELLES MARKS FIVE YEARS IN INDIA

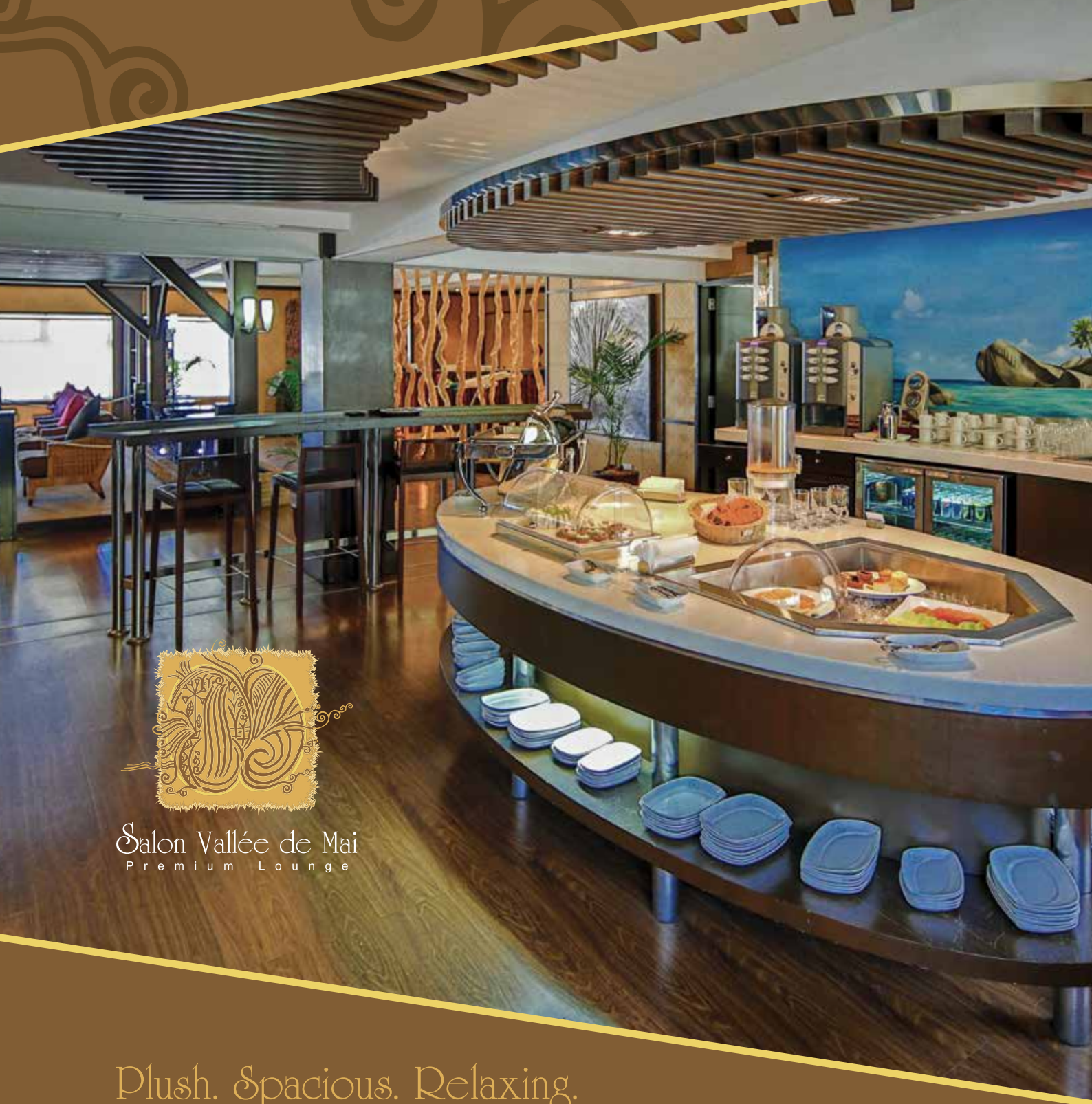
Air Seychelles, has celebrated five years of non-stop service between India and Seychelles.

Launched as a three-per-week service in December 2014, the Seychelles flag carrier currently operates six weekly flights to India's financial capital. It has also transported more than 900 tonnes of cargo between the two countries.

Chief Executive Officer, Remco Althuis said: "Marking five years of successful operations between Seychelles and Mumbai is definitely a proud moment for Air Seychelles.

"India is one of Air Seychelles' top markets and over the years the national airline has grown its presence within the destination substantially, moving from three to six flights per week, in addition to offering domestic services to eight cities in India with the support of Air India as codeshare partner. The continuous support received throughout the alliance has enabled both airlines to increase inbound and outbound tourism across their network, besides gaining great visibility plus marketing opportunities.

"Air Seychelles remains committed to providing more choice and unparalleled service to both its passengers as well as cargo suppliers to and from India. As proof of our commitment to further support our network growth plans, in 2020, during the peak summer months, Air Seychelles will increase its services to India from six flights per week to daily, thus providing holidaymakers and business travellers more choice when planning their travel during the peak seasons."



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Air Seychelles global offices

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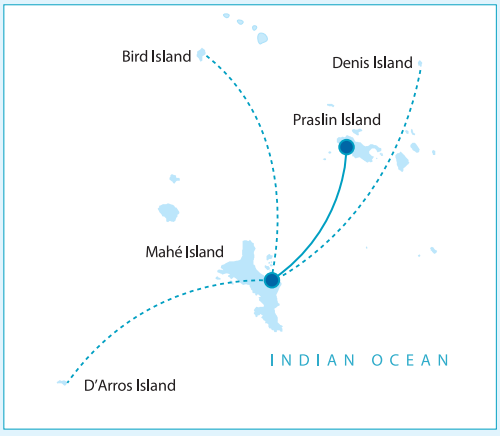
Israel 	Capital: Tel Aviv Language: Hebrew Currency: Israel Shekel Area: 20,770 km^2 Population: 9,085,610 Air Seychelles destination: Tel Aviv	BSR 1 2, Ben Gurion Rd Ramat Gan 5257334 Tel Aviv, Israel Tel: +972 3 795 2104 / 51 000 18 Email: info@tal-aviation.com
Mauritius 	Capital: Port Louis Languages: French, English, Creole Currency: Rupees Area: 2,040 km^2 Population: 1,243,000 Air Seychelles destination: Plaisance Airport	Rogers Aviation Ltd 2, Gardens of Bagatelle Bagatelle Office Park Moka, Mauritius Tel: +230 2026665 Email: olivier.malepa@rogers-aviation.com
Seychelles 	Capital: Victoria Languages: Seychellois Creole, English Currency: Seychelles Rupee Area: 456 km^2 Population: 95,235 Air Seychelles destination: Mahé & Praslin	Air Seychelles Ltd Seychelles International Airport P.O. Box 386 Mahé, Seychelles Tel: +248 4391000 Email: callcenter@airseychelles.com
South Africa 	Capital: Pretoria Languages: English, Afrikaans (11 official languages) Currency: South African Rand Area: 1,221,037 km^2 Population: 45,919,000 Air Seychelles destination: Johannesburg	Border Air Pty Ltd Lu Dowell Representations 280 Oak Avenue, Ferndale Randburg 2194 Johannesburg, South Africa Tel: +27 11 3264440/4443/4483 Email: helena@border-air.co.za

Route Network

New York

Air Seychelles Domestic Network



MAP KEY

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- Air Seychelles Chartered Flights
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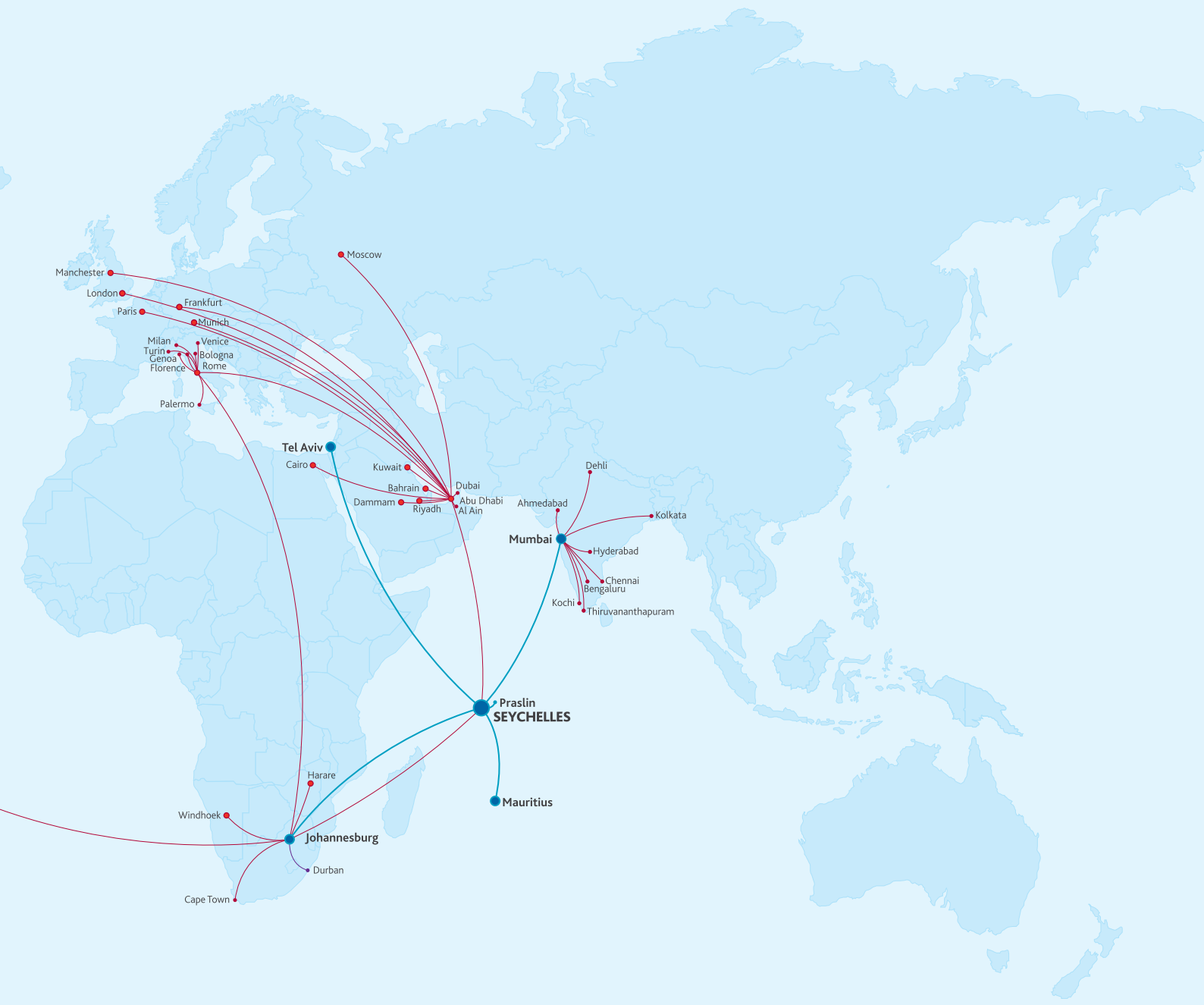
Updated February 2020



Our fleet

A320neo

Airbus A320-200neo (Veuve, S7-VEV)

Aircraft: 2

Length: 37.57m

Wing span: 34.09m

Passenger capacity: 168

Cruising speed: 840km/h

Cruising altitude: 37,000ft

Business Class seats: 12

Economy Class seats: 156

Seat Configuration one aisle passenger cabin:

Business Class: 2-2 configuration and Economy Class 3-3 configuration

Twin Otter DHC 6

DHC-6 Twin Otter-400 Series

Aircraft: 5

Length: 15.80m

Wing span: 19.80m

Passenger capacity: 19

Cruising speed: 260km/h

Cruising altitude: 10,000ft

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Airport
Seychelles International Airport is the main airport on the main island of Mahé. There are two terminals for International and Domestic.

Information
There is a tourist information/ hotel booking desk in Arrivals. There are ATMs, a Bank and a Bureau de Change at the airport.

Time
Seychelles is four hours ahead of GMT and three hours ahead of Central European Time.

Electric supply
The power sockets are of type G. The standard voltage is 240 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

Language
Creole, English and French are the official languages of the Seychelles.

Currency
The Seychelles Rupee. There is no restriction on the import and export of domestic and foreign currency in the country. However, anything over USD 10,000 should be declared on arrival or departure. Banks and Bureaux de Change are authorised dealers in foreign currency.

Credit cards
Most credit cards and travellers' cheques are accepted.

Banking
Banking hours are generally Monday-Friday 0800hrs-1400hrs, and Saturday 0800hrs-1100hrs.

Public holidays 2020
- New Year (1 January)
- Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday (10, 12 & 13 April)
- Labour Day (1 May)
- Liberation Day (5 June)
- Corpus Christi (11 June)
- Constitution Day (18 June)
- National Day (29 June)
- Assumption Day – festival on La Digue (15 August)
- All Saints Day (1 November)
- Immaculate Conception (8 December)
- Christmas Day (25 December).

Passport requirement
Valid passports or other travel documents recognised by Seychelles are required for entry into Seychelles. The passport MUST be valid for the period of the intended stay.

Visa requirement
Visa is not required for entry into the Republic of Seychelles regardless of the nationality of the passport holder. Re-confirm before travel.
www.ics.gov.sc

Ground transport
Driving in Seychelles is on the left side of the road. You can rent cars on Mahé and Praslin. There are several car hire counters outside the arrivals hall at Mahé International Airport. Seychelles Public Transport runs daily bus services from morning to evening. The bus usually passes by every 15 minutes.

Taxi service
Taxi service is safe and reliable and you can get one from the International Airport or call for one from your hotel.

Tourist information office
The Seychelles Tourist Office is located in Independence House, Victoria, Mahé.

These simple exercises will help to relieve the tiredness and stiffness associated with flying. Check with your doctor first if you have any health conditions which might be adversely affected by exercise.

Other tips for a comfortable flight
- For your comfort try and travel light.
- Wear loose clothing and elasticated stockings made of natural fibre.
- Increase your normal intake of water.
- Use moisturising cream to keep your skin from drying out.
- Take off shoes in the plane to prevent your feet from swelling.
- Avoid heavy meals during the flight.
- Short walks once every two hours are excellent for circulation.
- On arrival at your destination, have a hot shower or relaxing bath.
- Try to touch your toes when waiting in the aisle to stretch your hamstrings.
- On arrival a quick job, brisk walk, or a vigorous scrub will help stimulate your circulation.

Shoulder circles
- Sit tall and move forward in your seat.
- Bring your shoulders up towards your ears, then circle back downwards.
- Reverse the exercise by lifting your shoulders towards your ears and drop them back.

Neck rolls
- Sit back in your seat and flatten the headrest.
- Gently and slowly roll your neck to one side, then back through the centre towards the other side.
- Try keeping the back of your neck extended.

Sit up straight
- Place the pillow at the hollow of your back.
- Sit tall in your seat to avoid compressing your spine.
- Do not cross your legs. Instead, try to sit with your weight evenly balanced.

Ankle circles
- Sit tall in your seat, and place the pillow under your thigh, just above the knee.
- Keep your weight even as you circle your foot around, keeping the whole foot as still as possible.

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