

silhouette

Inflight magazine of Air Seychelles • July-September 2021

Johannesburg to Seychelles

Paradise is only hours away...

Air Seychelles offers the shortest route
to the idyllic island paradise with
direct flights from Johannesburg.



Johannesburg to Maldives

Weekly flights until October, 2021

Same-plane service from Johannesburg to Maldives



Dear Guests, Welcome aboard!

I am pleased to share this message with you as the new Acting Chief Executive Officer of the airline. Having spent more than 20 years working in the aviation industry, I must say that the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year has created a significant reduction in travel and tourism activities globally.

As the world slowly starts to recover, more than ever, air travel has proved to be a key enabler in connecting families, friends and loved ones together, in addition to maintaining a country's supply chain. This is one of the reasons why I humbly thank you for choosing to fly with Air Seychelles and deeply appreciate your loyalty.

Despite the ongoing challenges, we continue to deliver on our mandate of 'Keeping Seychelles Connected', supporting tourism and economic growth on the island.

During the month of May, we successfully operated a series of charter flights carrying over 500 visitors from Romania to the Seychelles. The success of these flights achieved through collaboration with Seychelles Destination Management Company, 7°South and the local tourism board has enabled us to secure more charters on this route, definitely fruitful in building our revenue streams further.

Due to the ongoing closure of destinations across our network, we have extended our Dubai flights throughout the month of July, offering UAE travellers more choice and travel flexibility during the peak Eid al Adha period.

As we await for Seychelles to open its borders to South Africa, we have also started to operate flights from Johannesburg to Maldives. The direct weekly service, ideal for those looking to explore an exciting destination in Indian Ocean to escape the cold winter in South Africa can be booked via airseychelles.com

Operating in an ever-changing environment is not easy. The intense planning that takes place in the background, ensuring the safety of the aircraft, passengers and crew at all times involves the coordinated efforts of teams across the business.

Today I am beyond proud of the opportunity to be leading the Air Seychelles family, for what they have achieved thus far and for their continuous devotion. KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK TEAM!

With that, remember to follow all the health protocols when flying with us and we look forward to welcoming you onboard our flight soon.

Be safe!



“

**Keeping
Seychelles
Connected.**

”

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandy Benoiton'.

Captain Sandy Benoiton
Acting Chief Executive Officer

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Cover image
Jardin du Roi Spice Garden in Mahé, Seychelles
Photo © unsplash.com

silhouette

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CAMERAPIX
MAGAZINES LTD.

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seyStream

in-flight entertainment



This aircraft is equipped with **seyStream** wireless in-flight entertainment system which can only be accessed on your personal device (*smartphone, tablet or laptop*).

- 1 Activate and maintain airplane or flight mode throughout the flight.
- 2 Enable the WiFi function.
- 3 Select '**seyStream**' network and connect.

*The automatic pop-up will re-direct you to a browser and **seyStream** will be ready for use. If the pop-up does not appear automatically, type in 'airfi.aero' in your preferred browser.

As per the airline regulation, **seyStream** will not be accessible during taxi, take-off and landing or as advised by the cabin crew.

Coollest tech gadgets for 2021

When it comes to gadgets, the trendiest ones will always stop you in your tracks. You will want them even if you don't need them. But even if you don't need them, it's nice to treat yourself, SILHOUETTE reports.



Chromecast with Google TV

This is an excellent 4K HDR streaming device, and the best streaming device you can buy right now. The reason for that is twofold: Not only is this the first Chromecast device to come with a remote, which is the most convenient way to browse content on your TV, but Google TV is a revamped version of Android TV that is built around you and the content you watch. You see, it pulls in all the services you subscribe to and shows you watch, then makes custom-tailored recommendations on the home screen. But you still get all the benefits of Google Assistant and using Google Cast to push content from your phone. **Price: USD \$50.00**



Google Nest Mini

As one of the first companies to make artificial intelligence and voice recognition technology available to the average person, Google is still the top dog when it comes to voice assistants and smart home platforms. And perhaps its most radical move was the Nest Mini, a small and cheap speaker that is fully imbued with the powers to command your smart home.

Once you get used to the particular ways of interacting with a voice assistant, it's rare when you have to raise your voice or repeat yourself to get the Nest Mini to understand you, even when you're on the other side of the room, half-asleep at 1 a.m., telling it to turn off the lights, shut off the TV and lock the doors. **Price: USD \$16.99**



Facebook Portal+

Facebook Portal+ is pretty much the perfect piece of technology for 2021. The Portal from Facebook video calling system makes it easy for anyone to stay in touch with friends and family at the push of a button (or the sound of an Alexa voice command). The Portal+ has a 15.6-inch video screen and high-definition camera, and together they offer a much more intimate connection than phone calls or grainy video conferences. And because Portal works with Facebook Messenger and other chat apps, the person you're calling doesn't necessarily need a Portal of their own to connect. On top of that, Portal does so much more than video calls. The Portal can also act as a smart display and hub, playing music, videos and answering Alexa voice commands. **Price: USD \$199.00**



Oculus Quest 2

Virtual reality might be taking its time to have its 'iPhone moment,' but it is still very much the next big thing when it comes to consumer technology. And there is not a single VR device that flashes that promise more than the Oculus Quest 2.

Without the need for a powerful computer or special equipment, you can simply strap the Quest 2 to your head, pick up the controllers and move freely in VR space thanks to its inside out technology, which uses cameras on the outside of the headset to track your movement in the space around you. In a time where we don't have many places to escape to, the Oculus Quest 2 offers up an infinite number of destinations . . . even if they're only virtual. **Price: USD \$390.00**

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Anker Nebula Capsule Max

Typically when you think of home theatre projectors, you assume they require an overly involved installation process and a PhD-level knowledge of gear to set it all up. But we are in an era where you can pull out the Anker Nebula Mars II. Barely bigger than a soda can, you can point it at a wall, and have it projecting an 80-inch, HD version of your favourite Netflix movie with minimal effort.

Will this replace your fancy 65-inch 4K HDR TV? Absolutely not. But for those moments when you're really craving that movie theatre experience (and really, who hasn't over the last year?), this projector can provide a nice reminder of what that was like.

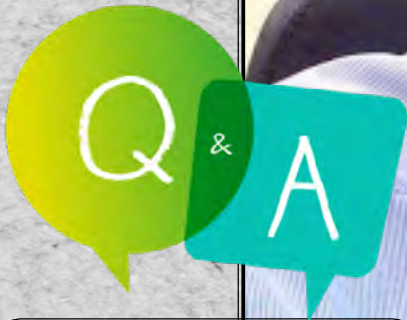
Price: USD \$259.00

Apple Watch Series 6

With each passing year since its 2014 launch, the Apple Watch has continued to become more and more useful in the lives of the average person. Whether it's conveniently providing phone notifications, tracking workouts, monitoring vital signs or making calls without having a phone nearby at all, there is so much that this little wearable can do. The latest iteration, the Apple Watch Series 6, even comes with a very timely feature that will let you monitor your blood oxygen levels. If you're suffering from COVID-19, monitoring SpO2 (oxygen saturation) can be a key in determining when you should visit a doctor or hospital to be treated. And if the last seven years have been any indication, the Apple Watch will only grow to be more useful in the future. **Price: USD \$499.00**



Source: Courtesy of Amazon, Apple, Oculus, The Home Depot, Facebook & Google



The hospitality industry is being hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak. Glynn Burridge asks Glynn Savy, Chief Executive Officer of Islands Development Company (IDC), for his views on how Seychelles is coping today, and what lessons can be learned for the future.

Does the Seychelles' have a unique selling point?

Seychelles is, or should be, selling something that no other country has: its environment. Beaches are everywhere but few places on earth can boast of a living

environment. However, broadly speaking we have allowed this to slip away on the main islands. On the Outer Islands this protection of our environment has been a major priority as we have concentrated on the quality of our surrounds and have never

allowed large hotels, rather concentrating on creating boutique hotels with a maximum of 40 rooms to attract upscale tourists looking for a pristine environment. Over many years, this model has proven to be the most profitable and cost effective as we are able

to charge higher prices for stays. In such places you can enjoy three kilometres of beach as well as unmatched interaction with marine life, birds and tortoises. If Seychelles continues increasing its volume of tourism as in the pre-COVID era, we will pay a heavy price in the long run.

What is your strategy for the future?

My environmental strategy has been shaped by what I have seen. I saw NGOs adopting the policy of look but don't touch, but this has not been effective. The environment needs to be managed like a business in such a way that can be enjoyed by visitors but in a fashion that is also managed to mitigate any negative impact. There is little point having an environment that people cannot enjoy; it has to be managed in a sustainable way and people must be guided in their enjoyment of what Seychelles has to offer. It has also been our policy on the Outer Islands that businesses who are operating there contribute towards conservation and we have contracted the Island Conservation Society to manage this via monetary contributions to environmental funds and this is part and parcel of our business plan.

How hard has the Seychelles been hit by the COVID pandemic?

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a disastrous effect on our tourism industry that has left no hotel unaffected. Hotels on the Outer Islands have fared better than their counterparts on the mainland. During the pandemic, many visitors

chose to go to island hotels for as long as three months because these islands offer a naturally protective environment. Because of this need for exclusivity, hotel operations on the Outer Islands were able to cover costs and this, in turn, enabled them to retain staff and generally weather the COVID storm. However, it is my belief that we are yet to witness the worst of the epidemic as many establishments that have been stretched to the limit in participation of better days that may still be some way off. In this, the smaller hotels of the Outer Islands will have a greater chance of pulling through while the now discounted rates of the larger hotels will take time to recuperate from. Furthermore, few of the large hotels are being well-maintained much less upgraded and will look very tired and unappealing in the coming years.

How should hotels be communicating with guests during this difficult time?

The internet is increasingly taking the lion's share of booking and this is something that you cannot fight. Middlemen taking 20 per cent of a hotel's revenue represents three times more than the hotel can expect to make. Hotels need to get themselves known via the press, media, internet and social media that are increasingly replacing the paper brochures of yesteryear. Regarding the hotels on the Outer Islands, we have a large number of repeat clients and because we are smaller in size we can enjoy a more intimate business relationship with our repeat clients that ensures their loyalty.

What measures have you taken to manage the impact of COVID-19?

At the beginning of the COVID epidemic, and after researching the history of previous pandemics, we realised that the country, and much of the world, would be in this for the long haul and that there would not be an overnight solution. We took steps to mitigate by pursuing long-term activities that were COVID unaffected and we redirected our strategies accordingly. We placed emphasis on heightened efficiency, incurring less wastage and cutting overhead costs. We closed the financial year on 31 March 2021 with our best performance ever at 98 million rupees where our figures for the previous year had stood at 31 million. Since 2008, IDC has performed very well because we have diversified our activities into building a boutique hotel on Platte Island and attracting one of the world's premier brands, the Waldorf, along with Four Seasons on Desroches and Blue Safari on Alphonse. We immediately installed solar power throughout our islands, slashing fuel bills that used to represent 35 per cent of costs. By the end of 2022, all islands managed by IDC will be solar powered. 🌞





Making the most of Seychelles

WORDS: SILHOUETTE

T ravel to exotic and beautiful destinations is slowly returning, and there are few places more beautiful or exotic than Seychelles. This island group includes the oldest oceanic outcrops on earth, yet this was the last of the current 193 members of the United Nations to be permanently settled. There have been just a few 100 years of human history in Seychelles, during which Seychellois have moulded their own culture from elements drawn from Europe, Africa and Asia. It makes the perfect backdrop to the holiday of a lifetime, but how do you ensure you get the most out of your holiday? Here are a few tips.



Life is a beach

"There is no doubt that the best beaches in the world are in Seychelles"; this was the verdict of thousands of ordinary beach-connoisseurs who responded to a survey in the German travel magazine *Reise & Priese*. They decided that six of the twelve top beaches in the world were in Seychelles. No other country had more than one entry on the same list. Assuming you do not yearn for sky-scraper hotels right on the sand, serried ranks of deck chairs and stalls renting out pedalos or selling snacks, you will find the beach of your dreams in Seychelles. For *Reise & Priese* readers Anse Lazio on Praslin was number one, and number two was its close neighbour Anse Georgette, whereas the Travel Channel (sister station to the Discovery Channel) picked out Anse Source d'Argent on La Digue as their world's best. The UK newspaper *The Guardian*, in an article entitled 'The 50 Best Beaches in the World', also named Anse Source d'Argent as number one for 'wow factor'. Then there is Anse Victorin on Frégate Island, or Anse Intendance on Mahé where the



spectacular waves hurl themselves ashore in a mist of spray and snatch your breath away with their display of raw power. For a more tranquil experience there is pretty little Anse Soleil, tucked away at the end of a rickety trail but with the blessing of a quality restaurant nearby serving food even the locals turn out for at weekends. Enjoy the placid waters of Anse la Mouche, a wide bay which encircles shallow, warm waters; perfect for the children to splash about in and even Beau Vallon, the most 'crowded' beach in Seychelles, is still picture perfect, especially on weekdays, and has the added convenience of amenities nearby: hotels, restaurants, gift shops and water sports facilities. Now we can turn our attention to the outer islands – the ultimate destination for the real beach perfectionist with 1,000 pristine beaches and not another soul for miles.



The 50 Best Beaches in the World', also named Anse Source d'Argent as number one for 'wow factor.



Discover Creole cooking

There is no shortage of choice when it comes to eating out in Seychelles, but if you want to get a real taste of Creole cooking, take a stroll along Beau Vallon beach one evening and stumble upon the Boat House. Don't worry about finding it, just follow your nose. You will smell the coconut-shells smouldering on the barbeque as the chef brings them to the perfect glow for grilling the freshest-ever fish steaks: karang, tuna and sailfish to name a few possibilities. There is no menu in the evenings. Pay the fixed price and eat all you like from the array of dishes on the buffet: local chutneys (a sort of salad), pasta dishes, aubergine fritters, fluffy white rice, octopus curry, chicken curry, vegetable curry, shark chutney ... ingredients may vary slightly but everyone will find something they like, even the carnivores. The Boat House is open seven days a week, the atmosphere is informal and very friendly so there is no need to dress up. In fact, if you are staying in a Beau Vallon hotel you probably don't even need to put your shoes on.





Visit the Jurassic Park of Seychelles

A spectacular wildlife site which you don't have to be a nature buff to appreciate. The Vallée de Mai is coco de mer forest, unique to Seychelles; indeed unique to tiny Praslin Island. If you don't go for the botany, go for the atmosphere, because this is Jurassic Park for real. A secret valley left behind whilst the rest of the world moved on. In this green cathedral little stirs but the emerald geckos rustling in the undergrowth and the clatter of the massive coco de mer leaf stalks stirred in the breeze. Occasionally you may hear the whistle of a black parrot passing invisibly above the canopy or a tinkling of silver streams in the distance. As for the coco de mer trees ... impressive, primitive, mysterious they are wonderful, in the literal sense of the word. The nut produced by the female tree is the largest seed in the world and the gigantic leaves grow at the end of the longest leaf stalk in the world. In earlier times the nuts were greatly prized and worth a fortune. Very occasionally nuts would wash up on a beach somewhere in the Indian Ocean, but no one knew from whence they came. They decided that the tree which bore them must grow beneath the sea (hence coco de mer) and that any nut produced by such a magical tree must have magic properties. How fortunate for you, then, that it is now possible to stroll along pleasantly shaded paths beneath these majestic trees, marvelling as you go, and all for a very modest entrance fee which goes towards preserving this remarkable forest.







Visit the Spice Gardens

The original Jardin du Roi was created near Anse Royale on Mahé for the cultivation of spice plants smuggled out of the East Indies in the days when cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper and cloves commanded enormous prices due to their rarity. Laid out in 1771, the plants thrived until the Napoleonic wars, when the commander of the French troops on Mahé unfortunately mistook some approaching ships for enemy English vessels, and rather than let them take possession of such valuable plants, he had them dug up. Of course it turned out the ships were French after all, and the hapless commander received a thorough dressing down from his superiors. The present garden is a plantation reminiscent of eighteenth and nineteenth century farms where these same spices and other useful food plants such as fruit trees, sugar and coffee were grown. This is another peaceful, atmospheric place to visit and soak up the atmosphere of times past.

Make a splash to the underwater world

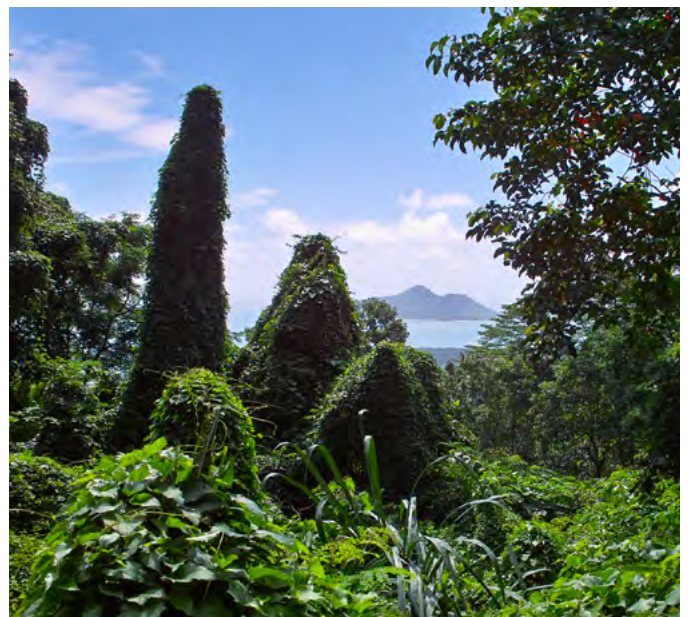
The diving in Seychelles is superb though sadly reefs have been deeply impacted by coral bleaching events. However, the variety of fish life remains stunning, as is the underwater scenery thanks to the topography of the granitic islands and the steep coral walls of the outer islands. If you have never dived, take a one-day introductory course. Seychelles with its shallow sheltered reefs and warm waters is one of the best places in the world to learn. For the more experienced there is the opportunity to dive with whale sharks or entire fleets of magnificent rays. If you don't think diving is for you, there are plenty of rewarding snorkelling spots, often to be found in the corners of sandy bays. And for those who really do not want to get wet, a glass bottom boat trip is a fun day out.





Take a walk on the wild side

Some of Seychelles' wildest and most wonderful spots may only be explored on foot. Nature trails up into the mountains are very well laid out. There are several easier walks in the magical mist forest of the Morne Seychellois National Park on Mahé, such as Copolia or Morne Blanc, although even these are steep towards the summit. The rewards are great, however. The views are stunning, as is the experience of walking in virgin cloud forest surrounded by unique flora and fauna which you can see nowhere else on earth. On Praslin you could take the Jean Baptiste Nature Trail (behind Coco de Mer hotel), which is rich in endemics, purchasing a map and trail guide from the hotel to make your stroll even more enjoyable. There is another walk at Glacis Noir, in the Praslin National Park (a short distance uphill from the Vallée de Mai entrance) which is excellent for the panoramas and views of black parrots. There are roads on Silhouette Island which makes it perfect for walkers, and the rain forest on its steep slopes is second to none.



Go to Aride Island Nature Reserve

Even if you are not a nature enthusiast, you should visit Aride, for a taste of Seychelles before man, pristine, positively bursting with life. Aride is one of the finest tropical nature reserves in the world. It is home to more breeding seabirds and more seabird species than the other 40 granitic islands of Seychelles added together. Then there are five types of land birds unique to Seychelles, plants found nowhere else, a fabulous coral reef, other weird and wonderful wildlife, plus what is probably one of the most spectacular views on earth, at the pinnacle of the nature trail. When you step out onto that ledge and look over the cliffs dropping away at your feet, the last dry land until India; when that breeze cools your face and the glitter of the impossibly blue sea dazzles your eyes; when the angelic white fairy terns flutter curiously inches from your nose and beyond you see the columns and spirals of majestic frigatebirds climbing upwards on two-metre wingspans ... well, then you will know why you came, and you'll make the descent with a huge smile on your face, because you have seen one of the most spectacular sites in the world and you know just how lucky you are.

Because Aride is relatively remote (by granitic island standards) this is a full day trip, which is another great thing about it. This is not a 'heads down, charge round, get sweaty, buy the postcard, get the T-shirt and then off you go' island. This is Seychelles how it should be, not 'Seychelles-for-tourists'. Take your time, soak up the atmosphere; see the Seychelles that existed before people settled the islands. At present, less than two per cent of visitors to Seychelles discover Aride. Pity the other 98 per cent, who don't know what they have missed.





Experience the outer islands

To really get a feel for Seychelles, leave the granitic islands behind and stay on a coral island. These sensational, remote islands are the very essence of the tropical idyll and yet Bird Island is just 30 minutes by air from Mahé, and the small hotel (the only hotel in fact), is perfect for those in search of relaxed simplicity. Alphonse Resort takes a slightly more sophisticated approach but guests will still be enthralled by the feeling of true escape this atoll inspires. Fishermen can enjoy some of the best bonefishing in the world in the lagoon, there is sublime diving or snorkelling and plenty to keep birdwatchers happy. And if you have the time, then Aldabra is the ultimate destination because ... well, where to begin? Perhaps Aldabra is one to save for your next holiday in Seychelles when you will probably have your own ideas on what 10 things you MUST do this time round.





Get on your bike on La Digue

It has to be admitted that there are nowadays a few concessions to modern life on La Digue, including a handful of cars and pickups, but life here is still lived in the slow lane and pedal-power remains the favoured means of transport, ideally suited to this beautiful, last-century island. There are plenty of hire outlets clustered around the jetty at La Passe. Choose your mount (having checked the brakes work efficiently first) and away you go. Even those with children can undertake this gentle expedition: You will find bikes with seats for small people on the back, and child-sized bikes for the older children. Make your first call the flycatcher reserve and see the beautiful Paradise Flycatcher, avian symbol of the island of which the locals are justifiably proud. The males are spectacular in a tasteful way, with long black plumes trailing behind them as they swoop through the trees. Take a look at Chateau St. Cloud, a grand house once at the centre of a vanilla plantation and now a small hotel. There are other stately plantation houses to admire on the way. There was once a boom time on La Digue when the planters could make a fortune from selling the vanilla they grew, and they proudly reflected their wealth in these beautiful wooden houses. Carry on along the coast to L'Union Estate, an open air museum of plantation life, and the gateway to the beach which has probably featured in more photo shoots than any other: Anse Source d'Argent, which, after all, is only one of several gorgeous La Digue beaches. Explore and enjoy! 🌴



Dubai Skyscrapers

Glistening Dubai

... there is much more to Dubai than shopping ...

WORDS: KATE NIVISON





An abra, water taxi

For travellers, it is reassuring to note that Dubai was among the first global destinations to reopen in July 2020, with stringent safety measures in place.

A negative PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test result, received within 72 hours from the scheduled flight departure time, is required to enter Dubai for tourists from all countries. Visitors from some countries will be tested again on arrival.

Those hotels which were briefly closed last year amid a global halt on international travel have since reopened with safety measures in place.

Water parks and other amusement parks have all reopened. All have reduced capacity to prevent crowding on rides. Hand sanitiser stations and face masks are mandatory. Visitors must pass through a thermal scanner on entry and sanitising stations are set up across the venue.

All these measures are in place to protect visitors and ensure that their experience of Dubai is as enjoyable as it has always been. In short, Dubai has bounced back to life!



Atlantis Aquaventure Waterpark

A half-day city tour is all you need to realise that shopping and eating out are not so much a way of life, they're the only way of life for many of the people here, whether local, expatriate or just passing through. But if you're prepared to make the effort, there's much more to Dubai than shopping malls and ritzy hotels.

Certainly, Dubai, the second largest of seven tiny emirates strung round the Persian Gulf that form the United Arab Emirates, has come a long way since 1822, when a homesick British naval officer berthed along its main water thoroughfare, the Creek, and dubbed it 'an assemblage of mud hovels surrounded by a low mud wall'.

Dubai simply takes your breath away. It's not just the quantity and scale of the buildings – it's their quality and real style. The use of reflective



Gold Souk



Jumeirah Beach Hotel

facings on many of the large buildings along the Creek is particularly effective in the clear desert light. These gleaming temples to the petro-dollar seem magically enhanced by the dancing images of white clouds or passing boats mirrored on their walls against ever-changing patterns of blue water and sky. Banks, hotels, public buildings, malls, mosques, offices, apartments – they all look great by day. But at night, the spectacle is equally impressive. With imaginative and extravagant lighting along the main streets, it's lively and fun without being Las Vegas-garish.

For the signature piece of Dubai's 'light-fantastic', it's well worth a drive in the direction of the eight star, Burj al Arab Hotel. A gigantic sail-like structure that rises out of the sea, it is the world's tallest hotel and its ever-changing lighting display is a show in itself. They probably won't

let you in unless you're a celebrity, but its neighbour, the equally famous Jumeirah Beach Hotel has a pleasant terrace where a drink and meal won't wreck your budget, even if you've been giving the malls a serious bashing. Most of the malls stay open till late anyway if you're still not shopped out, but it's just as nice to wander inside the Jumeirah Beach and simply stare at the ceiling.

Would you believe, whilst looking for a mid-day snack in a mall, I had the best New England clam chowder I've tasted, served in a piping hot 'bowl' of sour dough bread? Outside it may be cracking the pavements, but the food displays are the height of cool in all senses of the word, and seem to have the best of everything. Even the huge fish market has 'all mod cons', and smells as fresh as an ocean breeze.

In Dubai, East certainly meets West – in a dozen ways and everywhere you look. Much of the design inspiration seems to be Italian. Here you get to watch a well-to-do local family on the stroll; the head of the household, elegant in spotless white gown and flowing headdress, leading his



Burj al Arab Hotel

womenfolk (in head-to-toe black) on an air-conditioned, Chanel-scented glide through a boutique-lined mall. Then remind yourself that this kind of lifestyle isn't only for the super-wealthy.

Not for them, however, the cheerful *abra* water-taxi across the Creek, loaded to the gunnels with foreign workers and backpackers. A smiling but firm haggle will secure an *abra* to yourself for half an hour or more. It's a treat to see the whole show from the water; surreal reflections dancing across all those mirrored-faced banks, the icing-sugar minarets, the serene weirdness of the Dubai Yacht Club (known locally as the Sidney Opera House).

Of course, there's life after shopping. State-of-the-art gyms, amazing water parks, beach-lounging and watersports – and that's before you leave the hotel. Outside are some of the world's best golf courses, camel racing and good scuba diving. For a glimpse of Old Dubai, the Museum is worth a look, and no break would be complete without a 'Desert

Experience'. These excursions are usually in the evenings when it's cooler, and the desert colours are at their best. Do check before going in case it is closed for some reason.

Dubai has many fine and stunning mosques and the largest, and one of the most beautiful – Jumeirah Mosque – is a spectacular example of modern Islamic architecture and one of the most photographed sights in Dubai. It is particularly attractive at night, when its artistry is lit up from all sides.

The Souk Madinat Jumeirah is a re-creation of an ancient Arabian market-place with boutique-style shops set in a labyrinth of winding streets, with waterfront restaurants, cafes and bars. The place comes alive in the evenings as restaurants, offering a huge variety of cuisines from Polynesian to Persian, spill out onto the terraces. Everywhere are stunning views of the Burj al Arab Hotel.

If in old Deira (old Dubai) visit the internationally famous Gold Souk with its roots in the 1940s, when Indian and Iranian



Dubai Creek & Yacht Club



Desert Safari



traders began setting up stalls in the area. Today it's one of the world's busiest jewellery markets, a labyrinth of covered walkways is home to hundreds of shops and stalls offering just about everything that glitters – namely, gold. It is a fascinating place, a 'must' to visit and many organised tours stop here.

In short, Dubai is looking good. Tourists are welcome, and those wonderful hotels do serve top international cuisine, although it isn't available in more public places like the malls. The usual courtesies of dressing reasonably in town is a tiny price to pay when this enterprising place has so much to offer. 🇦🇪



Dubai's ultra modern metro station



Dubai Marina



The Burj Khalifa

Current COVID-19 rules in Dubai:

Live entertainment and activities are allowed for a trial period during summer time.

Hotels can now be at full occupancy (up from 70 per cent) while entertainment venues can increase capacity to 70 per cent.

Weddings can be held with up to 100 people at venues and hotels but all staff and guests must be vaccinated.

Brunches are back on after months of suspension.

The number of people who can sit at one table is back up to 10, seven for restaurants and six at cafes.

Concerts, sports spectator events and social and institutional events are permitted provided the audience, participants and staff are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Face masks are mandatory in public and in private gatherings and people are required to maintain physical distance of two metres from others.

Do check on the opening times of amusement parks before venturing there.



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com

Raptures of the deep

WORDS: SILHOUETTE



Maldives is one of the great diving centres in the world with all the perfect ingredients: Desert islands, warm and clear waters, thriving coral reefs and an unlimited variety of marine life. Its turquoise lagoons and magnificent coral drop-offs make it an ideal place to enjoy the beauties of this quiet and slow moving 'inner universe.'

The most striking impression is the sheer number and variety of fish, all with beautiful patterns and marvellous colours. There are well over 1,000 species of fish, more than half of which are seen regularly on the reefs.

At first the swirling confusion of fish can be overwhelming but with careful observation you can begin to identify the different species: the groupers, fusiliers, sweetlips butterfly fish angel fish, surgeon fish, parrot fish, and puffers. Then there are the unforgettable encounters with sharks, manta rays and moray eels.

It takes longer to appreciate the different species of coral but is equally worth the effort. Maldives is one of the world's richest coral areas, comparable only with the Philippines and Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

There are more than 200 different species of hard coral alone, but it is the shapes that they form which make them so amazing: Caverns, fans, shafts, canyons and boulders. In the clear, sunlit water they form a kaleidoscope of colour, enhanced by a myriad of fish moving in and out of the nooks and crannies of the reef.

So beautiful is the underwater world that at first it's difficult to know where to look. Many divers are inclined to drift or flip from patch to patch on the reef, looking for ever more breathtaking shapes and colours. If you want to unravel the reef's secrets however you should remain in one place. Travelling fast over the reef is like flying the Amazon forest instead of walking through it.

Physical conditions

The year-round temperature in the waters of Maldives ranges from 20°C – 30°C (68°F to 86°F), with the lagoons often reaching 32°C (90°F). The calmest seas and bluest skies are from November to May. The roughest seas are experienced during June.

The best underwater visibility occurs towards the end of the north-east monsoon from March to April. To appreciate the full beauty



of the corals and fish, bear in mind the effects of water on sunlight. Because of the refraction of light through water, objects seem closer and larger than they really are. Colours also change as the diver descends deeper, more light is filtered out by water absorbing different colours at different rates.

Snorkelling

To appreciate the underwater world, you don't have to be a professional diver. All you need is a silicone mask to keep out the salt water and improve your vision.

Maldives is an ideal place to learn snorkelling – fins on feet and air tube in mouth. By these simple devices you can enter the magical world beneath the surface. It's like being in a brightly lit aquarium full of the most exotic tropical fish.

To swim for the first time through a channel in the coral reef is breathtaking. The coral edge suddenly drops away to the unknown deep, like

suddenly going over an abyss in a dream. But instead of hurtling forever downward you drift and glide like an aircraft. Resist the impulse to return to the lagoon. It's perfectly safe despite the lurking shadows of big fish and sharks deep down by coral face.

Scuba diving

With such amazing coral reefs and wide variety of marine life it's not surprising that Maldives has become top of the list of the world's great diving destinations. Most resort islands run well-equipped diving centres with excellent instructors who know their patch in Maldives like the back of their hands. It is possible, of course, to dive off virtually any reef and discover the stunning world that waits underwater.

Night diving

Diving in Maldivian waters at night with lights is unsurpassed. When the sun sets corals open up



and extend their flower-like tentacles, spiders and shrimps leave their tubular sponges to search for food and moray eels, along with the other nocturnal predators, prowl the deep, dark depths.

But visibility, excellent in the day, is reduced to the narrow tunnel of light from your torch – and bumping into a shark hunting at moonlight may be unnerving.

Shark feeding

One of the great attractions of Maldives used to be the shark feeds but the event has become rarer for several reasons. Firstly, there is the danger. Secondly, there is the damage done to the sharks themselves: Touching a shark can harm its protective body covering, making it prone to infections. Feeding changes a shark's natural behaviour, not only making it a lazy feeder but training it to associate divers with food.

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With such amazing coral reefs and wide variety of marine life it's not surprising that Maldives has become top of the list of the world's great diving destinations.

With the growing ecological awareness among divers in recent years shark feeding is discouraged. It is better to observe the underwater world in Maldives as it is without human interference, particularly as it is one of the last underwater 'wildernesses.'

The best way to appreciate the underwater world of Maldives is to go slowly, conserving energy and looking around carefully. There is so much unearthly beauty that afterwards many divers find it difficult to remember the exact details of all they have seen. They just recall a sense of deep contentment and peace.

Travel advice

The coronavirus pandemic has temporarily changed life for everyone – and scuba divers are no exception. In Maldives diving re-opened on 1 November 2020. Most resorts and diving centres have implemented protocols aimed at protecting the health and safety of divers and guests.

These protocols will help reduce the chances of coronavirus transmission and give divers more peace of mind, knowing that hygiene and cleanliness is at the forefront of all the Dive Centre's operations.

For more information: Check with your resort or dive centre before travelling. 🇻🇪



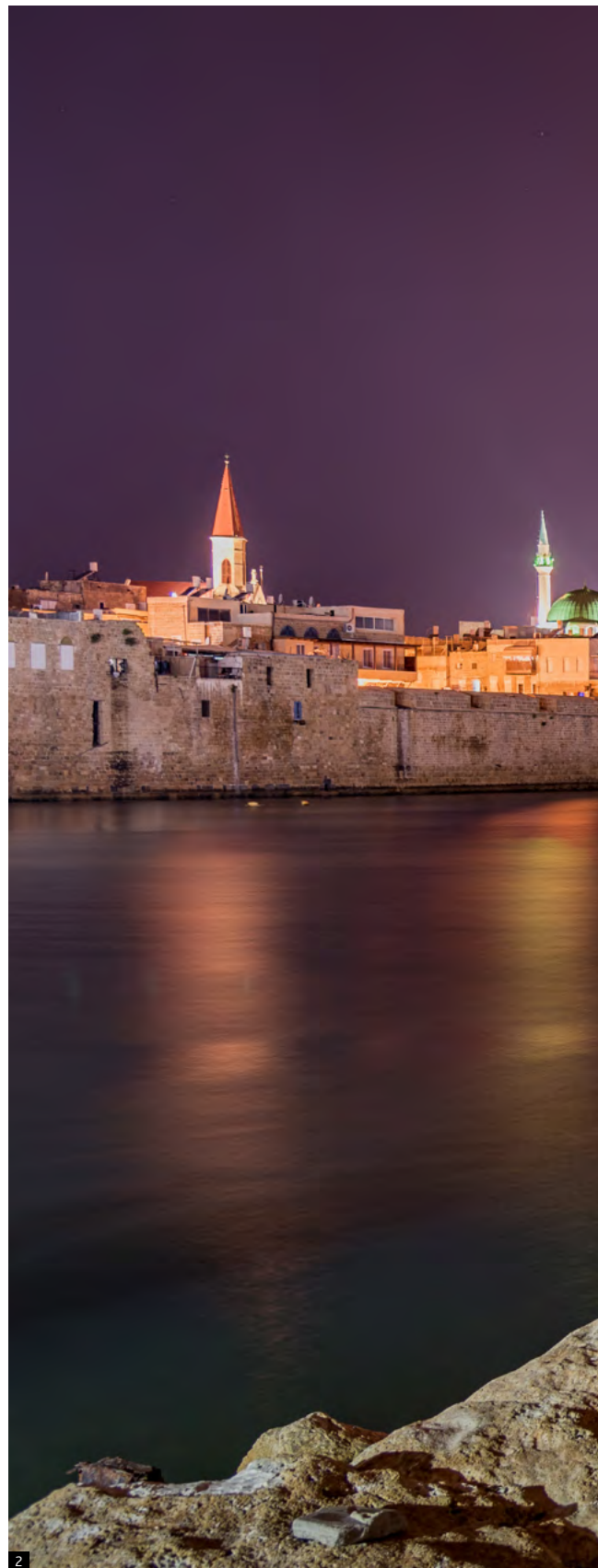
Flight information: www.airseychelles.com

A day in **Acre**

WORDS: JAMES MICHAEL DORSEY



1



2





Empires come and go, but fortunately for those of us who follow, they leave behind monuments as testaments to their one-time greatness. One of those monuments is the ancient port city of Acre in modern Israel. Today it is both a walled, mediaeval city and thriving port where visitors may wander through a labyrinth of shops and restaurants while overlooking an azure sea with a view of the city of Haifa. All the while, just below their feet, is monumental history.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Acre, (Akka, or Accra, depending on local spelling,) was inhabited as far back as 1500 BCE (Before Common Era), making it one of the earliest known occupied cities on earth. At one time its glory rivalled that of Alexandria and Constantinople as a great trading port. While a shadow of its former self, Acre has aged well.

As part of the Kingdom of Israel it was first conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE to be followed by conquest of the Egyptians, (2nd century BCE,) The Muslim conquest, (7th century BCE,) First Christian Crusade, (12th century BCE,) and was finally destroyed by the Mamluks in the 13th century A.D. after which it fell into oblivion for half a millennium.

In more recent times it was assaulted by Napoleon Bonaparte who was turned back by the forces of its then ruler, Pasha El-Jazzar who constructed a magnificent mosque, named for himself to commemorate the victory, a beautiful work by a self-educated architect that stands to this day. Any place with such storied history begs to be explored, and perhaps because of its turbulent history, Acre is best known for its 'Crusader Fort.'

A military monastic order of knights known as the hospitalliers were the self-appointed guardians of pilgrims and wanderers in the Holy Land, providing both security and medical aid to one and all throughout the various crusades. They were centred in Acre as early as 1110 A.D. and then were driven out, but returned several times over the years until 1193, when the city was captured from the Muslim leader, Saladin. They began construction on a vast, multi-level fortress as their permanent base that enchants today's visitors.

When Britain issued its Palestinian mandate in 1918 it kept political prisoners in the old fort, and a spectacular prison break in 1947 was dramatised in the movie, *Exodus*. When the modern state of Israel was formed in 1948, the city and fortress became state property.





Today's visitor enters through a cool, shaded garden expecting to find antiquity but instead are greeted by a massive courtyard with Clegg light racks, a stage, and folding chairs for the outdoor concerts held there during good weather. Once inside there is a dimly lit room where guides inform visitors of the history that surrounds them, or you can pick up an audio tour guide, but once beyond that, you leave the modern world behind.

You wander through stone archways, supported by massive circular beams, all hand cut with early iron tools, where crumbling layers show centuries of repairs and additions. You continue through halls of glass display cases filled with both art and artefacts from those who lived and died there long ago. All rooms are artistically backlit to provide an eerie atmosphere. Beautiful hand-blown glass is on display next to ancient oil lamps; stone carvings share space with fine pieces of jewellery. One case holds delicate figurines that appear to be cast in bronze, and pieces of large columns contain what appears to be Egyptian hieroglyphics, not that unusual to find in a once great port city known for international trade.

There are display cases filled with ancient clay and stone pipes, used by the forts' inhabitants. Another holds beautiful terra cotta water jugs and hand-painted pieces of ceramic flooring. The history of the fortress lays all about the visitor like a giant puzzle waiting for one's mind to reconstruct it.

The massive stone halls echo with footsteps and one can imagine the clank of armour as Knights Templar made their way through secret tunnels used during a siege.

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You wander through stone archways, supported by massive circular beams, all hand cut with early iron tools, where crumbling layers show centuries of repairs and additions.

1. Refectory of the Hospitaller fortress.
2. Acre's sea wall at night.
3. Remains of the Crusader-period, Pisan Harbour.
4. Bahá'í shrine outside Acre, Bahji mansion.
5. Column with Egyptian hieroglyphics.
6. The Templar Tunnel linking the fortress with the port.
7. The Old City, its harbour, the ancient walls and the Al-Jazzir Mosque.



On one wall, an animated army of knights is continuously projected, marching past to give the feeling of reality. Massive cannons lie silent next to giant lead balls that seem impossible for a man to lift let alone load, and immense giant hall hosts heraldic banners assigned to noble families.

All along the way there are plaques of information explaining everything from how the hospitalliers bred bees and stored honey, to the numerous messages of graffiti carved into the ancient walls. There are massive woven baskets for the storing of wheat and grinding stones for the making of bread. And for the more adventurous, you can enter large bathing rooms with ingeniously carved irrigation systems that also hold stone cut commodes where knights once relieved themselves. Typical everyday life in the fortress from 1,000 years ago is on full display.

Local artisans maintain stalls, dressed in proper period costume where you can purchase souvenirs or even have your photo taken in a suit of armour or peasant dress while next door a mediaeval armorer handmakes bows and assorted wooden weapons from the period. A full-service apothecary shop is hung floor to ceiling with turtle shells and animal bones, all once used for medicinal purposes and where you can still purchase various modern remedies.

As in all tourist attractions the final spaces are reserved for local merchants who offer everything from water

pipes to belly dancing outfits. There are beautifully carved chess sets and countless religious articles, history books and postcards. Textiles seem to be a favourite and the workmanship is exquisite. Whatever is ones' pleasure, it is for sale.

Upon exiting the dark tunnels, the brilliant sunlight takes a moment to adjust before you can wander the ancient fortress walls that rise directly from the cerulean sea below. Stop for a freshly squeezed glass of juice or spend time at one of several umbrella shaded restaurants, all offering magnificent views of the ocean. You can watch the fishing boats come and go and see octopus drying in the sun, hung on fish nets. Acre is restful antiquity.

Acre lies a mere 98.17 kilometres (61 miles) north of the capitol city of Tel Aviv, but a thousand years in the past. It is an easy day trip that both entertains and informs. 🌈



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Tastes of India

Regional, seasonal & spicy

Indian cooking defies definition.

A portrayal of the many tastes and flavours it represents would be much like the six blind men in the story trying to describe an elephant, reports SILHOUETTE.

To begin with, given India's cultural, religious, ethnic, geographic and climatic diversity it is hard to describe Indian food under a single catch-all title. The British in an overly simplified attempt, called all Indian food 'curry'. It is much like saying that all Western food is roast beef and potatoes.

Basically, Indian food is the inspired use of ingredients meant to bring out in every meal the six main flavours or rasas – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent.

Indian food is not as much hot as it is spicy. Of course, no two cooks agree on the balance of spices to be used. In all, some 25 spices, herbs and condiments, always added in a specific sequence, produce wonderfully aromatic and excitingly flavoured Indian cuisine.

Very loosely, the food habits of Indians revolve around the wheat-eating north and the rice eaters of the south and east. Western India draws a mix of both.





Divine Breads

Accordingly, whole wheat, unleavened fat free *rotis*, browned on a *tawa* or Indian griddle, are the staple of north India. The more wholesome, fat layered *paratha* is frequently stuffed with potatoes, turnip greens, mint and so on. Eaten with *achaar*, pungent pickle the feeling is immensely satisfying.

Rumali roti (handkerchief bread), a delicate chappati from the Mughal era, is cooked on a convex *tawa* and served immediately before it gets dry and papery. Deep-fried *poori*, puffed to perfection with escaping steam, is also part of the bread repertoire.

The delicious northern leavened breads include the *kulcha*, *bhatura* and *naan*. The *tandoori naan*, a Mughal invention, a boon from the north-west frontier to Indian cooking is cooked over live coals in a clay oven, or *tandoor*, buried in a mud furnace. Balls of dough are flattened by slapping between the palms, placed on a large smooth pebble and stuck onto the heated walls of the *tandoor*. As they cook the naans fall on the glowing embers and are lifted out with long skewers.

These divine breads are frequently eaten with an enormous variety of *subzis* (vegetable dishes) and *dals* (split pulses).





Vegetarian delights

To taste the world's finest vegetarian food, visit India. Given the dominance of the Hindu religion and the injunctions of the Buddhist and Jain faiths, all animals are regarded as holy, and meat, fish and even eggs are strictly avoided.

Gujarat is the land where vegetarianism rules supreme. Gujaratis favour sweet foods, and tend to sweeten even their *dals*. Outstanding fare like *dhokla*, *kandvi* (savoury rolls made from curds and *besan* - gram flour) and *undhiyu*, a winter dish of mixed vegetables cooked with coconut are prepared by some of the best vegetarian chefs in the country.

Rajasthan, in northern India, is particularly known for its hot and spicy *gatta* curry. The cooking of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh is known as *avadh* and is probably immortalised in *dum aloo*, flavourful spuds or quartered potatoes steamed with aromatic spices; *malai kofta*, cheese balls in cream sauce; and *navrattan korma*, mixed vegetables gently simmered in cream.

Sindhi cooking shows a fondness for methi (fenugreek greens) and its best-known dishes are *sai bhajji* (dal and greens), *buggha chawal* (onion pulao) and Sindhi curry, not unlike *sambhar* (lentil based vegetable stew). Much of north India produces versions of the immensely pleasing *karhi*, a buttermilk sauce thickened with *besan* and garnished with *pakor*as or *besan* dumplings.

Southern rice creations

Rice is the chief ingredient of south Indian food. *Iddlis* are steamed rice cakes served with bland-to-hot spices, piquant with tamarind.

Dosa is a delectable, crisp pancake, a sure-fire favourite. Stuffed with potato masala, it becomes a *masala dosa*. Other southern rice creations are *uttappam*, *appam*, (spongy pancakes with a crisp fringe, fermented with local brew), *iddiappam* (string hoppers) and *uppuma*, a savoury semolina mix of curry leaves and nuts.





Sumptuous seafood

The coastal districts of the country produce a bewildering array of sumptuous seafood dishes, from the mustardy *macher jhal* of West Bengal to the classic Goan fish curry. Fried Bombay duck, served from the commercial capital of India, Mumbai, is as delectable as *patra-ni-machhi* and *macchi – nu – sas*, contributions of India's Parsi community. Coconut based curries are common. The tastiest Indian fish are *surmai rohu* and pomfret. Crabs, shellfish, shrimp and prawns are other delicacies.

Meat favourites

What is sold as lamb in India is more like goat meat. Meat is usually served well done. *Gosht* is the common name for meat in north India as *murgh* is for chicken, Mughlai cuisine is a world of flavour in itself. Sauces are so rich and delicious, that only a gourmet is suitable guide into this world of cooking. *Malai* (cream) and nuts especially *badam* (almonds), form the basis for most sauces. The eloquent *kormas* are testimony to this craft, as *koftas*, either of meat or vegetables. The most impressive is *raan* or leg of mutton cooked in true *Mughlai* style.

A gourmet's choice would easily be inimitable *biriyani*, the preserve of India's Muslims.

The rice and mutton (or chicken and sometimes vegetables), preparation is spicy, aromatic and rich with ghee (clarified butter), saffron, nuts and dried fruit. Less heavy than *Biryani* is *pilau*. Tandoori delights are reasonably bland and utterly enjoyable. The fiery red colour is artificially created, and does not indicate an injudicious use of chilli. They appear on the menu as *tikkas* or *kebab*.

No table is considered complete without a full range of Indian pickles – *achaars* or pungent pickle and *murrabas* or spiced sweet pickles. Chutneys, usually made from fresh mint, coriander, mango and coconut are meant as relishes.





Heavenly sweetmeats

It is probably safe to say that no other country can boast the range of sweetmeats that India has. Sweets fall into two basic categories – those that are milk-based and those that are not. Milk-based sweets are usually created from whole milk solids (*khoya* or *mawa*) or unmoulded *paneer* (Indian cottage cheese).

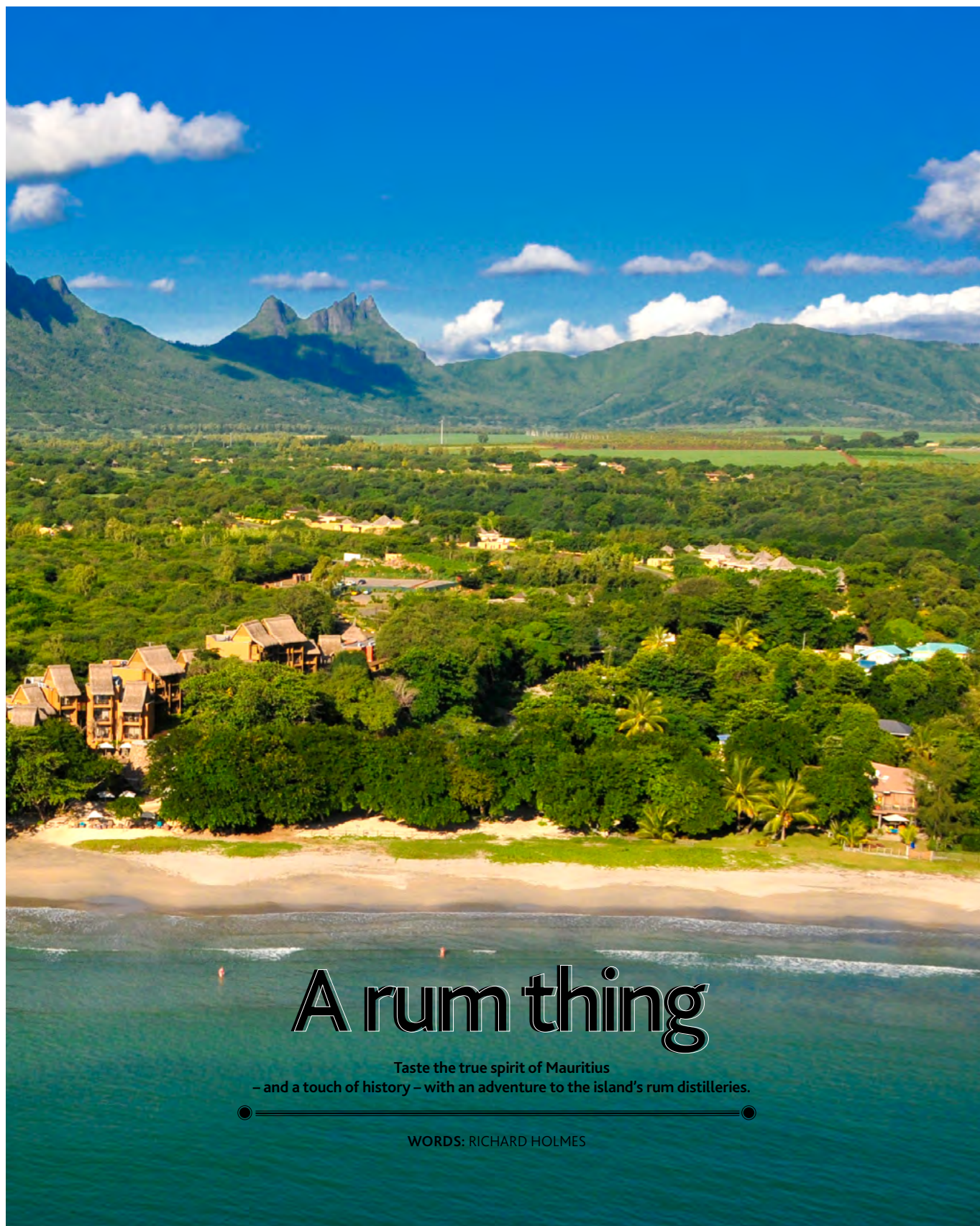
West Bengal is famed for its sweets, particularly *rasogullas*, *rasmalai*, *sandesh* and *mishit doe*. A number of sweets are first fried in ghee before they are immersed in warm, sugar syrup. Kaju (cashew) *burfi* is especially exotic. Most *burfis* are decorated with *varquek*, the impossible fine edible silver or gold foil. *Halwas* are also great Indian sweets and come in irresistible red, green, orange and yellow chunks packed with nuts; Famous are Mumbai *halwas* and black *halwa* of Kerala made from rice, coconut milk and *gur* (jaggery).

The dominant spice in Indian sweets is cardamom. Almond, *gulab* (rose) and *kewra* are other traditional flavours. *Falooda*, a delicious and awfully filling milk drink with vermicelli, flea seeds and ice-cream, comes in a variety of flavours, the most popular being *gulab* and *kesar* (saffron). *Kulfi* is the Indian equivalent of Western Ice-cream and *phirni* is sweetened milk thickened with rice flour. *Kheer* in the north and *payasam* in the south represent rice pudding, with semolina and vermicelli frequently substituted for rice.

Thankfully, a visitor to India can hope to eat foods from all the regions in most of the big towns and cities even if authenticity is sacrificed a bit. And, as anyone will confirm, partaking of India's vast table can soon become a lifetime fascination. 🌸



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com



A rum thing

Taste the true spirit of Mauritius
– and a touch of history – with an adventure to the island's rum distilleries.

WORDS: RICHARD HOLMES



There's no shortage of memorable scenery on the island of Mauritius. Whether you are choosing to stay in the shadow of Le Morne Brabant, or the shimmering beaches that stretch around the island like a diamond necklace, you're never far from a memorable view.

And yet for most travellers, the first piece of striking landscape they're likely to

come across after leaving the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport isn't golden, but green: the waving fields of lush sugarcane.

Sugar is indelibly woven into the history, economy and culture of Mauritius. Since a Dutch settler arriving from Asia brought the first plants to the island in 1639, this remarkably productive perennial

grass has guided the island fortunes. Through successive centuries of French and British colonisation, sugar formed the backbone of the island's exports. It has even shaped the people of the island. When slavery was abolished the vast sugar plantations still required armies of labourers. On 2 November 1834 the first indentured labourers from

India arrived to work on the plantations, the start of a cultural and culinary shift that would define the make-up of modern-day Mauritius. Indeed, 2 November remains a public holiday today, with 'Arrival of Indentured Labourers' celebrated each year.

While the importance of sugar in the island's economy has long been



overtaken by tourism and hospitality, the bundles of cane harvested each year from July to December continue to play their role in touting the varied charms of Ile Maurice. But glorious tropical scenery aside, the latest reason sugar is putting Mauritius on the map is down to the growing interest in island rums.

Globally, rum is enjoying something of a renaissance. Once seen as little more than a mixer – or the preferred tipple of piratical types – today aged rums and niche releases from respected producers command premium prices. While the shift is largely thanks to the efforts of leading Caribbean producers, Mauritian brands are equally capitalising on the growing thirst for great rum.

With the Mauritian rum industry still relatively young, by global standards,

where Mauritius often stands out is in its infused rums. From island-grown vanilla to citrus and coconuts, rum infused with a variety of tropical flavours appeals to a wider audience and is well suited to younger rums not mellowed with age.

And some of the finest examples are to be found at La Distillerie de Labourdonnais in the north of the island.

Situated on the expansive Domaine de Labourdonnais estate, which dates to 1774, the distillery here was established in 2006; soon after government restrictions on producing rum from sugarcane juice were lifted. Before this date rum could be made, but only from the molasses that is a by-product of the sugar refining process.

Today La Distillerie de Labourdonnais uses freshly pressed sugarcane juice to produce a wide range of



that is ideal as a base for the infusions the brand has become known for, infusing vanilla, citrus and orchid petals. Also produced here is the premium Penny Blue rum, whose single cask and XO aged rums promise 'a real expression of its Mauritian terroir'.

In the deep south of the island, Rhumerie de Saint Aubin traces its heritage back to 1819, and is today celebrated as one of the island's leading producers, and a pioneer in producing rum from pressed sugarcane juice.

Once the cane is cut and crushed, the distillery uses column and pot stills, the latter for its more artisanal aged rums. You'll discover the history and craftsmanship of Saint Aubin on the informative guided tour, which includes a visit to the colonial-era plantation house as well as a tasting at the distillery. Today the distillery

produces an array of rums in different styles, from spiced rum redolent with cinnamon and citrus, to the white rum distilled from the first crushing of the cane. Unusual here too are the vintage rums in the History Collection, with the offering a careful blend of the best barrels in each harvest.

A short drive to the west, near the famed landscapes of Chamarel, lies the acclaimed Rhumerie de Chamarel.

It's a hugely popular destination for visitors to the south-west, and with good reason. Lying 300 metres above sea level, in a fertile valley with a unique micro-climate, the rhumerie offers a superb visitor experience for those looking to understand the journey of rum from cane to glass.

The estate grows and crushes its own cane, with the fields hand-harvested







From island-grown vanilla to citrus and coconuts, rum infused with a variety of tropical flavours appeals to a wider audience and is well suited to younger rums not mellowed with age.

between July and December each year. Within hours of being cut the fresh cane is transported to the distillery for pressing and filtering, before being transferred to stainless steel tanks for fermentation.

Then the fermenting juice follows one of two paths: into the column still or copper pot still, in a similar method to distillation of cognac. With the heart of the spirit separated during distillation, the rum is settled in steel tanks and a portion set aside for ageing in a variety of French and American oak barrels. The result? Some of the finest rums on the island, ranging from exotic spiced rums to premium rums aged patiently for years on the estate. Also look out for the Rhumerie de Chamarel's unique range of hand-selected single barrel rums.

That fragrant rum is the end product of nearly 400 years of history, heartache and hard work, all encapsulated in a single sip. And while Mauritian rums make a name for themselves abroad, travellers to the island have the good fortune to experience this remarkable spirit first-hand. 🍷



From a different cellar

It's not only rum that travellers can discover on Mauritius. At the Takamaka Winery trained oenologist Alexander Oxenham is forging a brave path in the world of island wines. With grapes unable to ripen in the humid tropical climate, Oxenham has turned to lychee fruit from the island to craft a range of uniquely Mauritian wines. Tastings are available Monday – Saturday at the winery in Plaine Bonnefin.

www.takamakawinery.com



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com



Serenity in the city

WORDS: RICHARD HOLMES



The global pandemic has made travel – and life – more stressful, and now more than ever we all deserve the chance to slow down, take a deep breath, and reboot. And while Johannesburg may seem like the ever-bustling urban jungle, the economic heartland of South Africa also offers plenty of opportunities for restorative escapes. If you're looking to embrace wellness, and carve out time to rest and rejuvenate, be sure to book in at these wonderful wellness destinations.



The Saxon Spa

The Saxon has long been spoken of in hushed tones amongst savvy travellers to the city. As famous for its elegant hospitality as its opulent luxury, a night at The Saxon is certainly something for the bucket-list. But even if you're not checking in, the Saxon Spa is a haven of restorative energy that is well worth a visit.

The Saxon Spa experience begins at least an hour before your actual treatment, with a slow and steady journey into relaxation. After checking in and changing into a luxurious robe, spend time in the heated indoor Jacuzzi, or sip on a healthy juice from the bar. You'll want to be hydrated for a session in the steam room or sauna, opening pores and relaxing muscles before a spell of flotation therapy to put you in the right frame of mind for your signature wellness treatment.

The Saxon Spa offers a wide array of signature treatment options, from a digital detox to crystal therapy sessions.

But it's the Saxon Himalayan Signature Journey that's not to be missed. Aimed at reducing stress and replenishing depleted energies, the Journey begins with a milk foot ritual and Himalayan salt scrub, followed by a full body hot granite massage to work away stress and tension. Finish your spa session with a health-boosting meal from the dedicated spa menu, or a spell of quiet meditation in the peaceful confines of the spa. As urban spa escapes go, the Saxon Spa is hard to beat.

www.saxon.co.za





Mowana Spa

Resting amid the tranquil bushveld gardens of the Indaba Hotel in the suburb of Fourways, north of the city, the Mowana Spa embraces African traditions across a range of spa packages and treatments that are best enjoyed on an overnight spa escape.

Drawing inspiration from the healing properties of the baobab tree, the Mowana Spa offers a range of hour-long Pamper Treatments alongside a tempting menu of indulgent Pamper Journeys. And you'll want to set aside time for the extended Journeys, which include full-day immersive experiences that will leave you feeling, well, pampered.

Take the African Rejuvenation Journey, for instance, which begins at 800hrs with a welcome cocktail and spa breakfast, followed by a morning of massage and a two-course lunch. The afternoon is given over to facial treatments and focused limb massages before departing the spa in the early-evening. An entire day of me-time!

But don't rush off. The Indaba Hotel offers charming country-style hospitality close to the city, with 260 stylish en suite rooms overlooking tranquil gardens. For dinner, book a table at the colourful Chief's Boma to indulge in an African style feast.

www.mowanaspa.co.za





Mount Grace Hotel & Spa

For a weekend away from the city, the Mount Grace Hotel & Spa has long been a favourite with spa-loving locals. While it's seen some changes in ownership, it remains a popular escape thanks to its bucolic country location, charming hospitality and extensive spa offering.

Although only an hour's drive from Pretoria or Johannesburg, Mount Grace feels a world apart, cradled by the rugged charms of the Magaliesberg Mountains. With 121 contemporary rooms and suites on offer it's by no means a boutique property, but with the accommodation scattered amid lush gardens so it never feels overwhelming. But, if you value your peace and quiet, book one of the larger executive suites with more living space and their own private heated plunge pools.

If you're in pursuit of wellness you'll be spending plenty of time at the spa, set apart on a hillside with wonderful valley views. The spa offers an excellent range of body and facial treatments, each affordably priced and perfectly timed to allow guests to curate their own spa experience by selecting an assortment of treatments.

The on-site spa café offers a compact à la carte menu of health-focused light bites.

www.tsogosun.com/mount-grace-hotel-and-spa





Oxford Healthcare Retreat

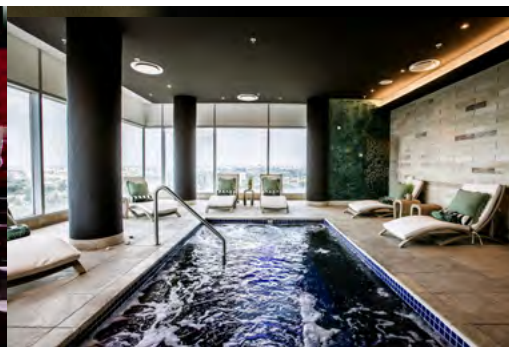
While many city spa destinations are focused on offering a day of pampering and relaxation, the Oxford Healthcare Retreat takes a more holistic approach to wellness, focusing on long-term goals rather than short-term stress-escapes.

There are only six luxurious suites here, all with balconies, set amid spacious gardens to ensure plenty of peace and tranquility. Once you're settled in you'll discover the wealth of wellness opportunities open to guests.

Those range from mindfulness sessions and meditation, to a wellness-focused spa offering with massage treatments and a sauna, flotation pool therapies to yoga classes. Psychologists and shiatsu therapies are also on offer, to complete an holistic approach to wellness that encompasses both body and mind. Although revitalising day-visit packages are available, a three- or four-night escape is ideal to truly dial down your stress levels and regain a sense of equilibrium.

www.oxfordhealthcareretreat.co.za





The View by 27PINKX, Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton

Whether it's business or leisure that brings you to Johannesburg, there's no shortage of good reasons to base yourself in the northern business hub of Sandton. With direct rail links from OR Tambo International Airport on the high-speed Gautrain, and world-class shopping, restaurants and entertainment on the doorstep, it's a glamorous taste of all that 'Jozi' has to offer.

And the opening of The View by 27PINKX on the 10th floor of the Radisson Blu Hotel in Sandton is yet another reason to spend time in the area. For starters there are those eponymous views: A full 180 degrees of glorious panoramic vistas gazing out over the surrounding city. Relax on a lounge at the heated Roman Pool as you feel the stress of the week melt away, and the city spread out before you.

Views aside, the spa offers up some serious wellness credentials, with 10 elegant treatment rooms and all manner of facilities and services on offer. Rasul chamber? Tick. Kneipp therapy. Of course. Vichy showers? Naturally. A unique offering here is the salt therapy room, where atomised salt mist is dispersed in the air, promising a myriad health benefits.

While there's a range of spa journeys and stand-alone treatments on offer, for the full experience book The View Pamper Package, which includes massage, a Rasul session, light lunch and other body pampering treatments.

You'll need a bed for the night, and the adjoining Radisson Blu is certainly a fine choice. The hotel's 302 rooms offer contemporary luxury, with the added benefit of an outdoor sun deck and swimming pool on the 8th-floor. There's also a free shuttle to key destinations in and around Sandton.

<https://27pinkx.co.za/the-view-sandton/>

www.radissonhotels.com

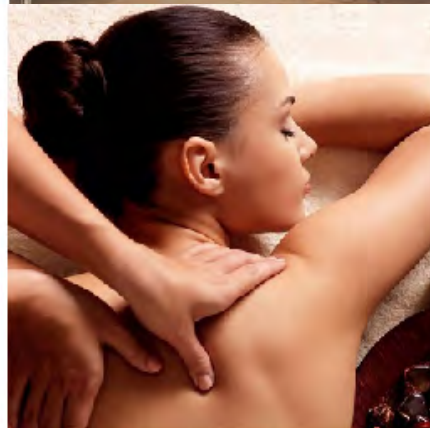
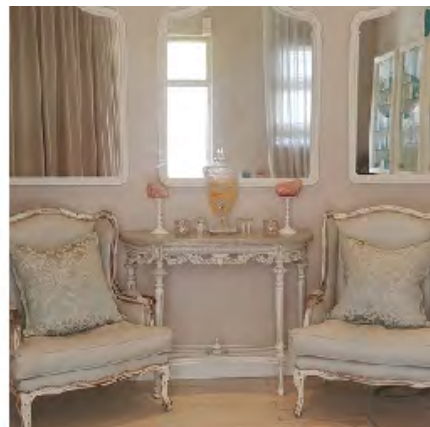




Sanctuary Spa, The Catalyst

A brand new addition to Sandton's hotel landscape is The Catalyst, a chic destination for business and leisure travellers, with 207 rooms catering for both long- and short-stay guests. Central to the new property is the on-site Sanctuary Spa, one of the best-known spa brands in South Africa, where weary travellers will discover a wide range of signature treatments inspired by Africa. 🌿

<https://newmarkhotels.com>



Before You Travel

Due to the unprecedented events surrounding COVID-19, your travel plans may be delayed or cancelled at any given time.

Before you travel:

- Ensure your flight is still operating as scheduled.
- Proceed with PCR testing upon receiving confirmation of your flight.
- Pay attention to the latest COVID-19 entry requirements at your country of final destination.
- Adhere to all safety measures at the airport and on board the aircraft.

Contact your travel agency or the airlines' Call Centre via email at callcentre@airseychelles.com or contact **+248 439 1000** for more information.



Inside Air Seychelles

News and information



Inside Air Seychelles

Global offices

Route network

Our fleet

Travel tips

AIR SEYCHELLES WELCOMES THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW ACTING CEO AND CFO



Acting Chief Executive Officer - Captain Sandy Benoiton



Acting Chief Financial Officer - Tyrian Gendron

The Air Seychelles management team and staff members has welcomed and congratulated the airlines' new Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Captain Sandy Benoiton and Acting Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Tyrian Gendron in their new roles, following their recent appointments by the Ministry of Transport.

Sandy Benoiton, a certified airline pilot, has been working with the national airline for more than 20 years. Having occupied the position of Chief Operations Officer (COO), overseeing the general operations of the airline since 2018, the newly appointed acting CEO has also been exposed to various facets and challenges of the business.

Sharing a wealth of experience and vast knowledge in the field, the new acting CEO will continue to drive the transformation plan forward to further strengthen business operations amidst the unprecedented environment.

Tyrian Gendron, the new acting CFO joined the Air Seychelles finance team in 2017 and was most recently occupying the role of financial controller.

The certified chartered accountant will be responsible for the planning, forecasting and management of the airline's financial systems including the collation of the annual budget.

As part of his new role, the finance professional will also focus on cost management, ensuring continuous implementation of cost benefit initiatives across the business, to further build on the airline's revenue streams.

The management and staff members of Air Seychelles also takes this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chief Executive Officer, Remco Althuis and Chief Financial Officer, Michael Berlouis for their strong contribution to the airline and wishes them all the best in their future plans.

ESCAPE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN WITH AIR SEYCHELLES

Air Seychelles is operating direct services from Johannesburg to Maldives, offering travellers the perfect opportunity to soak in the warm tropical weather of the Indian Ocean islands.

The flights depart Johannesburg on Friday evenings to Maldives with an intermediate stop briefly in the Seychelles. To offer greater choice and connectivity to travellers thinking of an all-inclusive vacation or a stunning retreat on a private island, the returning flights from Malé scheduled on Saturdays will provide travellers a full week of complete relaxation in the Maldives.

The flights to be served by the airline's A320neo aircraft are on sale via www.airseychelles.com and through travel agents. Travellers to the Indian Ocean paradise, will need to present a negative PCR test taken no more than 72 hours upon check-in prior to departure.

MORE FLIGHTS TO DUBAI IN JULY

To boost tourism to the Seychelles and offer UAE travellers more holiday choices during the peak Eid Al Adha period, Air Seychelles is operating more flights from Seychelles to Dubai in July 2021.

The weekly service, started on 1 July 2021 and will operate until 24 July 2021. Utilising the airline's A320neo jetliner, it will provide a total of 840 seats on this route. To give leisure and business travellers the chance to plan a quick getaway to Dubai, the airline will also operate an additional flight on 18 July 2021.

The scheduled service will depart Seychelles International Airport on Thursday afternoons, whilst the returning flight from Dubai International Airport Terminal 1 will operate on Friday mornings.

All travellers to Dubai must hold a printed negative PCR test taken no more than 72 hours beforehand, with available QR code present on the certificate. Travellers must also have international COVID-19 medical travel insurance prior to departure. Further COVID-19 tests may be conducted at Dubai International Airport upon arrival.

Flights are on sale via Air Seychelles website at www.airseychelles.com and through travel agents.

The flight schedule between Seychelles International Airport and Dubai International Airport :

Flight	Origin	Destination	Depart	Arrive	Day
HM016	Seychelles	Dubai	1445hrs	1815hrs	Thursday
HM015	Dubai	Seychelles	0800hrs	1230hrs	Friday
Additional flight to be operated on 18 July 2021					
HM016	Seychelles	Dubai	1445hrs	1815hrs	Sunday



AIR SEYCHELLES FLIES AUSTRALIAN SKIES

Air Seychelles made history by operating into one of Australia's largest cities, Sydney, as part of a special charter on 16 May 2021.

The A320neo jetliner *Pti Merl Dezil* which flew from Maldives to Australia carrying a group of 38 players from the Australian Indian Premier Cricket League, landed at the Sydney Kingsford Smith International Airport under the command of Captain Randy Francois and Julius Nancy.

The players, who were looked after by Cabin Manager Jacques Tirant, Cabin Senior Kethra Quatre as well as Flight Attendant Nelly

Fostel and Vigel Rosette, had been staying in the Maldives following the suspension of their tournament in India, due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

Remco Althuis, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles said: "This remarkable achievement clearly demonstrates the capabilities of our company and the hard work, agility and perseverance of our team who continue to push boundaries during this unprecedented operational environment with great determination. I am extremely proud of the Air Seychelles team!"

The airline's Chief Commercial Officer, Charles Johnson, added: "It has been an honour to work with Air Partner Middle East and

Cricket Australia to bring home the Australian Cricket team after their tour in India.

"While we are a small airline, we have big wings, capable of achieving heights and destinations beyond

our usual network. It is also clear that sporting teams and charter clients around the world trust in Air Seychelles to deliver their VIP guests safely at their destination."



*All flights will be subjected to the approval of the government including regulatory approval as well as that of the health authorities at each destination. Times shared on the schedule are the local time at each destination.

International Network



MAP KEY

- Air Seychelles Flights
- - -●- - - Air Seychelles Chartered/Special Flights

Our Fleet

The airline now operates the youngest fleet of A320neo aircraft.

On its domestic network, the airline owns and operates five DHC6-400 aircraft and offers over 350 weekly scheduled services between Mahé and Praslin, as well as charter flights to other islands within the Seychelles archipelago. Air Seychelles also offers a 30 minute scenic flight product on a daily basis providing guests a bird's eye view of the Seychelles inner islands. The scenic flight can be booked up to 24 hours prior to departure.



Airbus A320-200neo

Aircraft: 2

Length: 37.57m

Wingspan: 34.09m

Passenger capacity: 168

Cruising speed: 840km/h

Cruising altitude: 37,000ft



Dhc-6 Twin Otter-400 Series

Aircraft: 5

Length: 15.80m

Wingspan: 19.80m

Passenger capacity: 19

Cruising speed: 260km/h

Cruising altitude: 10,000ft

Domestic Network



airseychelles.com

Updated March 2021

The best way to Island hop



Make more of your holiday with a trip to Praslin. On the short 15 minutes flight from Mahé, you can enjoy a bird's-eye view of the Seychelles beautiful inner islands.



With over 20 daily departures, getting there and back has never been easier.

Charter services are also available.



Book your ticket
on airseychelles.com

Air Seychelles global offices

<p>India</p> 	<p>Capital: New Delhi Languages: Hindi, English Currency: Indian Rupee Area: 3,287,590 km² Population: 1,263,830,000 Air Seychelles destination: Mumbai</p>	<p>Bird Group LTD 204, 2nd Floor A Wing Kanakia Wall Street 400093 Mumbai Tel: +91 959 4013686 Email: hmsales@bird.travel hmres@bird.travel</p>
<p>Israel</p> 	<p>Capital: Tel Aviv Language: Hebrew Currency: Israel Shekel Area: 20,770 km² Population: 9,085,610 Air Seychelles destination: Tel Aviv</p>	<p>AIRLINES GSA 3 Gilboa St Airport City 7019900 Tel Aviv Tel: +972 3 5160598 Email: airlines-gsa.com</p>
<p>Mauritius</p> 	<p>Capital: Port Louis Languages: French, English, Creole Currency: Rupees Area: 2,040 km² Population: 1,243,000 Air Seychelles destination: Port Louis</p>	<p>Rogers Aviation (Mauritius) Ltd. The Gardens Bagatelle Office Park Moka, Mauritius Tel: +230 2026697 Email: salim.mohungoo@rogers-aviation.com</p>
<p>Seychelles</p> 	<p>Capital: Victoria Languages: Seychellois Creole, English Currency: Seychelles Rupee Area: 456 km² Population: 95,235 Air Seychelles destination: Mahé & Praslin</p>	<p>Air Seychelles Ltd Seychelles International Airport P.O. Box 386 Mahé Tel: +248 4391000 Email: callcentre@airseychelles.com</p>
<p>South Africa</p> 	<p>Capital: Pretoria Languages: English, Afrikaans (11 official languages) Currency: South African Rand Area: 1,221,037 km² Population: 45,919,000 Air Seychelles destination: Johannesburg</p>	<p>Border Air Pty Ltd. 280 Oak Avenue Ferndale Randburg 2194 Gauteng Tel: +27 11 3264440/+27 83 3871698 Email: reservations@border-air.co.za helena@border-air.co.za</p>

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.

Public holidays 2021

- New Year (1 January)
- Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday (2, 4 & 5 April)
- Labour Day (1 May)

- Liberation Day (5 June)
- Corpus Christi (3 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.

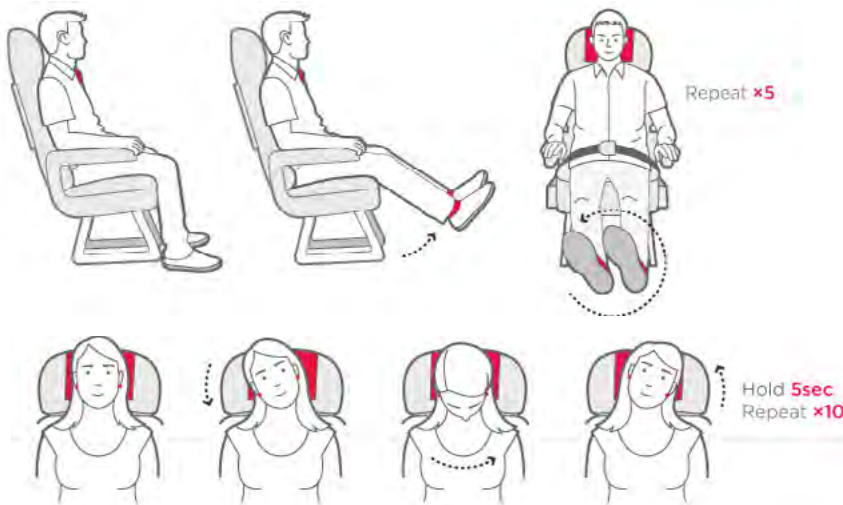
Taxi service

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.



Seychelles reopens its borders to visitors from across the globe except those coming directly from South Africa.

All visitors are required to present a negative PCR test taken 72 hours prior to departure and stay in certified accommodations.

There will be no quarantine requirement nor restriction on movement upon entry into Seychelles.

Visitors have to adhere to public health measures, which include the wearing of faces masks and social distancing in public, regular sanitisation or washing of hands. The new measures also give visitors access to all communal area within the hotel premises inclusive of bars, swimming pools, spas and Kid's club.

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.

Journey in Style

Business Class on our new A320neo



Receive access to our Premium Lounge before departure. Recline and relax whilst enjoying our inflight streaming service.

Savour a blend of Seychelles and internationally-inspired dishes from our à la carte menu and experience the convenience of our Dine on Demand service.

Discover the best of the Seychelles



Enjoy a bird's eye view of the Seychelles islands with the Air Seychelles scenic flight.

The Seychelles islands, a living museum of nature and a sanctuary for some of the rarest species of flora and fauna on earth. Let us take you to the sky and see places not accessible by foot.

Discover magnificent boulders, lush tropical greens of the mountains or simply be amazed with long strings of beaches and crystal clear blue seas on our 30 minutes scenic flight to the North or South of Mahé.

For more information, please email hmcharters@airseychelles.com or call +248 439 1000.



airseychelles.com