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Inflight Magazine for Air Seychelles • July - September 2022

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airseychelles.com

Dear Guests, Welcome aboard!

As travel restrictions relax globally, COVID-19 has become a manageable part of everyday life. At Air Seychelles we are indeed very pleased with the gradual increase in travel confidence, a sign that the aviation and tourism industry is indeed on the right path to recovery.

In fact, reviewing our performance over the last three months, April was our busiest month. Between 15 and 23 April 2022, marking the Passover holidays, the Seychelles flag carrier was particularly noticeable across the Indian Ocean after having operated 19 round trips from Tel Aviv carrying over 5,930 visitors to the beautiful islands of the Seychelles, in addition to conducting a series of weekly charters to Maldives and Mauritius.

The success of these flights would have not been possible without the support of our flight crews, ground, commercial and operations teams as well as our staff members from cargo and technical operations. I extend my gratitude to all, including our outstations teams, for delivering the best experience to our guests. WELL DONE TEAM!

If you travelled with us recently and were happy with the service received do not hesitate to share your feedback via email at feedback@airseychelles.com.

In everything that we do we value your feedback, hence why one year ago amidst the pandemic our e-commerce team embarked on a very interesting and challenging project to further simplify your travel experience. Today, I am pleased to announce that very soon Air Seychelles will be launching its dedicated mobile App named 'Air Seychelles'.

Available for free on iPhone and Android devices, the new App will comprise three key features easily identifiable on the app's home screen, including easy access to book flights across Air Seychelles regional and domestic network, the option to check-in online, in addition to providing you with the opportunity to manage every aspect of your booking, whether on the road, at work or in the comfort of your home at your own convenience.

We are making travel easier for you, so do not hesitate to download our App once it is launched to book the best fares for this upcoming summer holiday.

We have also been nominated in seven categories at the 29th edition of the annual World Travel Awards. Vote for us and we look forward to your support!

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



“

**Delivering the
best experience
to our guests.**

”

Captain Sandy Benoiton
Acting Chief Executive Officer

FEATURES



BRIDE OF THE DESERT

Dates are so adaptable that they can be added to cakes, salads, puddings, biscuits or used in stews and tagines. Stuff them with ricotta or blue cheese for an elegant appetiser.



BIBLE ODYSSEY

Experience the wonders of the ancient city of Bethlehem, which is just a 15-minute drive from the capital city of Jerusalem.



THE GRAND FRIDAY MOSQUE

Malé's crown jewel is the Islamic Centre's iconic Grand Friday Mosque, an impressive whitewashed building marked with a gleaming golden dome.



36

RHYTHM OF RODRIGUES

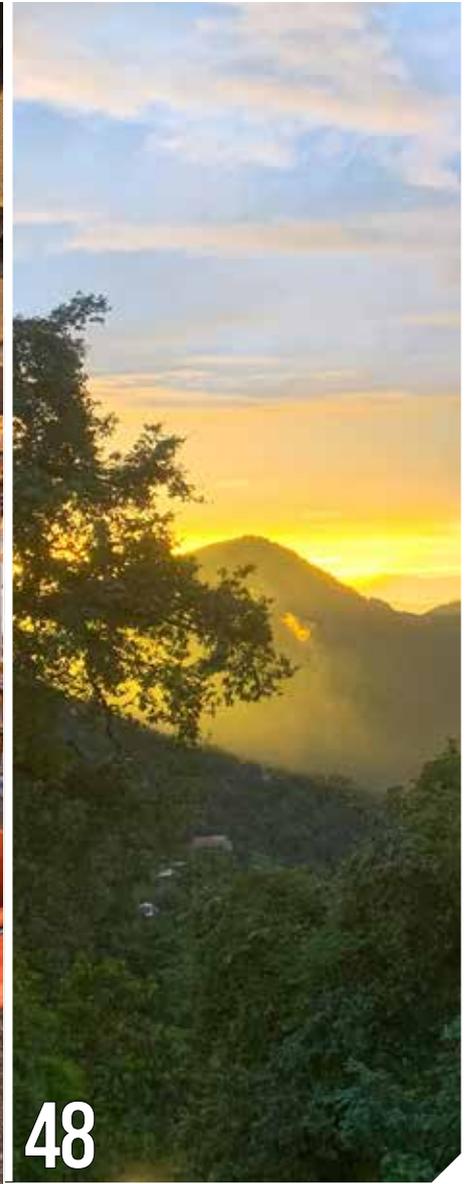
Cast away some 600-kilometres to the northeast of Mauritius, it's a destination that takes a little effort to reach by local flight or overnight ferry.



42

ROSEBANK UNCOVERED

The suburb dubbed the 'richest square mile in Africa', is both geographically and culturally something of a Goldilocks destination.



48

QUEEN OF THE HILLS

An intriguing place to visit, a mix of nostalgia and modernism, of old churches and zip-lines, of steep hills and stunning views.

REGULARS



01
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE

08
KALEIDOSCOPE
Local and international news; Smartest gadgets to buy in 2022.

18
MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST
This is an eerie, spectacular, humbling place. Explore it on foot or by car, but do not leave Seychelles without experiencing it. It is one of the most beautiful places on earth.

22
BUYING COCO DE MER
This is the best souvenir of the Seychelles you could possibly take home. As the cultural symbol of the Seychelles the best place to see this rare nut is in its natural setting.

54
PARADISE IN THE STORM
Let's wander back through our short and often turbulent history. Let's go back to the year 1939: the outbreak of the Second World War.

61
INSIDE AIR SEYCHELLES
Air Seychelles news, Air Seychelles global offices; International route map and fleet; Travel tips.



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Seascape view with turquoise water, Mahé island, Seychelles
Image © Shutterstock.com

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Founding Publisher
Mohamed Amin

Editorial Director
Rukhsana Haq

Editor
Roger Barnard

Editorial Assistant
Cecilia Wanjiku

Creative Designer
Sam Kimani

Production Manager
Azra Chaudhry, London

Production Assistants
Rachel Musyimi
Rose Judha

Editorial Board
Rukhsana Haq, Adrian Skerrett, Glynn Burridge

Contributors
Adrian Skerrett, Sandra Bonnelame, Christine Pemberton,
Richard Holmes, Peter Holthussen, Tony Mathiot

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Camerapix Magazines Limited for Air Seychelles

PO Box 386, Mahé, Seychelles
Telephone: (+248) 4391000
Fax: (+248) 4224305
www.airseychelles.com

Camerapix Magazines Limited
PO Box 45048, 00100, GPO Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: +254 (20) 4448923/4/5
Fax: +254 (20) 4448818
Email: creative@camerapix.co.ke

Editorial and Advertising Office:
Camerapix Magazines (UK) Limited
32 Friars Walk, Southgate
London N14 5LP
Telephone: +44 (20) 8361 2942
Mobile: +44 7756 340730
Email: camerapixuk@btinternet.com

www.camerapixmagazines.com

Correspondence on editorial and advertising matters
may be sent to either of the above addresses.



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Yellowfin Tuna Cup

Date: 24 September 2022

Venue: Mahé

www.ssfc.sc

Anglers head out all day to capture the largest Yellowfin Tuna on the Mahé Plateau. The tournament starts at 3a.m and finishes at 5p.m with a weigh-in event.



Feast of Assumption of Mary

Date: 15 August 2022

Venue: La Digue

The Feast of Assumption of Mary is dedicated to the church of La Digue and is very popular with Seychellois from all islands who flock to the island of La Digue. In the weeks leading up to the event, houses are spruced up, altars are decorated, and statues are repainted before being carried on the 15th as part of the procession to the island's church.



Bazaar Labrine

Date: Every Wednesday

Venue: Beau Vallon

This is an open-air cultural event loved by the Seychellois. It is a place where you can experience the Seychellois Creole ambiance – taste local delicacies, get souvenirs and at the same time have fun.





RUM FROM THE OTHER SIDE

CMR.NSE.SW

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OF TAKAMAKA RUM IN
THE *Seychelles*

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CELEBRATE **20 YEARS** OF THE ISLANDS' FAVOURITE RUM WITH A **LIMITED EDITION BOTTLE**



Mauritius Marathon

Date: 6 July 2022

www.mauritiusrace.com

The Mauritius Marathon is very much a coastal race, but also includes inland sections which allow runners to appreciate the varied scenery of the island.

The race starts and finishes on the beach in Saint-Felix. From there, runners head north along the stunning western coastline to the half marathon start line. There they turn south and then east enjoying some spectacular views including Le Morne Mountain and the many lagoons of the south before returning to Saint Felix public beach.

International Mango Festival

Date: 9 - 10 July 2022

Venue: Dilli Haat Market, New Delhi

<https://rove.me/to/india/international-mango-festival>

Celebrated since 1987, the International Mango Festival is held every year in Delhi with the onset of the summer season with the major objective of promoting the sale of mangoes outside of the Indian territory. At least 500 varieties of mangoes will be available to sample and buy, fresh and in chutneys and other preparations. There will also be a mango-eating contest.



India Independence Day

Date: 15 August 2022

Venue: Red Fort, Delhi

A celebration of India's independence from British rule in 1947, involving a flag-hoisting ceremony, kite flying, and cultural programmes centred around the Red Fort in Delhi.





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Terms & Conditions apply. Economy Class guests can access the lounge at our published rate of USD45. *Please confirm your eligibility with your frequent flyer program.



Among the Vineyards

Date: 12 August 2022

Venue: Meron HaGalil Regional Council, Zefat, Israel
www.carnifest.com

Among the Vineyards Festival is held every year and is known as one of the attractive summer festivals in Israel.

Lots of music shows are performed by the best Israeli artists and bands. In addition to the music shows, visitors can enjoy guided tours and tastes in the Galilee Vineyards, rural food in the colourful farmer fair, etc... The events are held in a number of villages in Merom HaGalil Regional Council (Upper Galilee). The festival's line-up, the events' places and time are displayed on the festival's website.



Ganesh Chaturthi

Date: 31 August 2022

Venue: Around India

The festival celebrates Lord Ganesh as the God of New Beginnings and the Remover of Obstacles as well as the god of wisdom and intelligence and is observed throughout India, especially in the states such as Maharashtra and Goa.

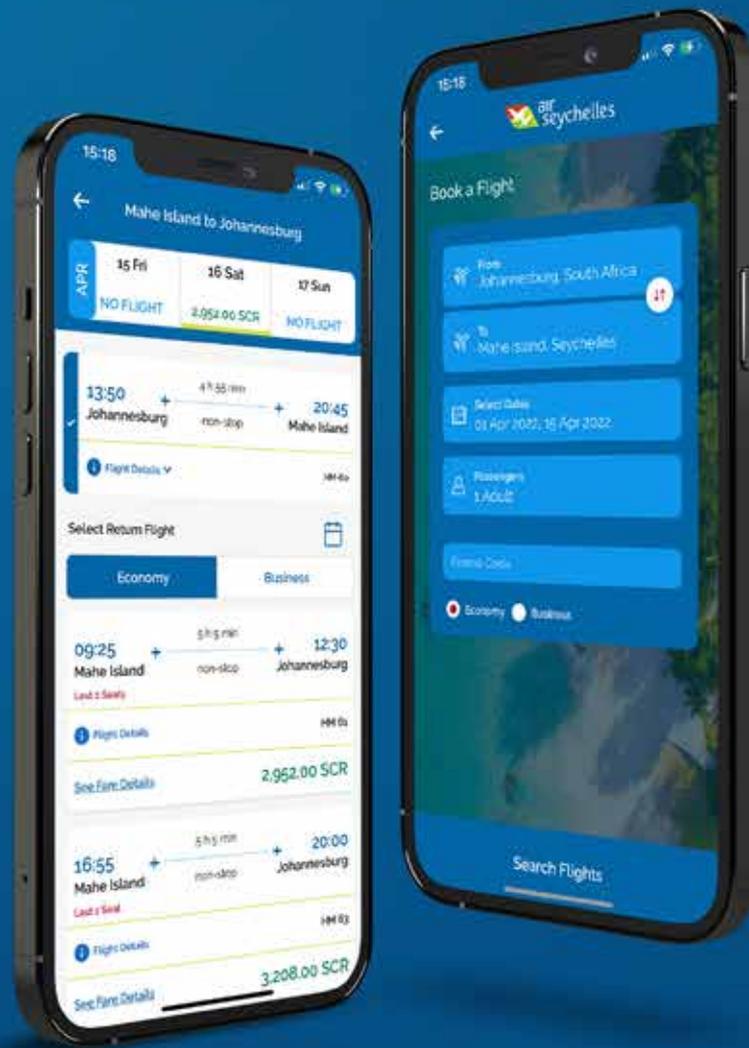
The Fire & Feast Meat Festival

Date: 2-4 September 2022

Venue: Randburg, Johannesburg
www.sa-venues.com

There are few things as undeniably South African as meat, grilled to perfection on an open flame and enjoyed with world-class wines, spirits, or a cold, crisp beer. The Fire & Feast Meat Festival is focused on celebrating the delicious flavours, versatility and excellent quality of the meats being produced locally and abroad. It is hosted by Crown National, a leading supplier to the meat and poultry industry. This event will see some of the best chefs and butchers in South Africa converging to share their expertise and skills. This festival is also about the many utensils, accessories, spices, and sauces that polish each dish off to perfection. Live music always makes for a great vibe and sets the scene for a real South African 'jol' (party).





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THE SMARTEST GADGETS TO BUY IN 2022

If looking for gifts, these gadgets make perfect gifts – even for yourself. **SILHOUETTE REPORTS**

LOGITECH LITRA GLOW

If you can't bring yourself to buy an influencer-style ring light for your daily Zoom calls, then this is the perfect alternative. Logitech's Litra Glow clips to the top of your laptop, emitting a wide and soft glow, and while it's technically designed for streamers – i.e. Twitch gamers who haven't slept in two days and would benefit from some flattering lighting – it'll more than do the job for everyday work meetings. You can adjust the brightness and colour temperatures to find the best light for your skin tone, too.

USD 77.00



PHILIPS 3-IN-1 AIR PURIFIER, FAN & HEATER

An air purifier, a fan and a heater, all wrapped up into one sleek package. The fan and the heater are natural adversaries, after all, and the addition of an air purifier would surely guarantee that any such device would end up as large, ugly and spluttering as a 1950s computer. But Philips have created a true triple threat with the 3-in-1: the fan oscillates 350°, ensuring that (warm or refreshing, but always purified) air is distributed around the room.



USD 313.50

DODOW SLEEP AID DEVICE

It might be that you're struggling to turn your brain off and finding it difficult to sleep. There are plenty of mindfulness methods you can apply to fix that, but Dodow is perhaps the simplest tech-based approach. It's a simple device that projects a blue light onto your ceiling at a metronomic pace (for 8 to 20 minutes), which you match to your breath. Take a breath in when it expands, and breath out when it retracts. You should find that focussing your attention on the exercise calms your mind, and you'll be off to sleep in no time.

USD 65.00



SAMSUNG WIRELESS CHARGER

An affordable and unobtrusive wireless charger works with Apple and Android phones too, as well as headphones that are set up for the feature.

An LED light lets you know when the charge is finished, dimming at night so as not to disturb your sleep, and the 9W

Fast Charging support ensures that you'll get the job done quickly.

USD 36.00



FITBIT CHARGE 5

The fifth iteration of the Fitbit Charge is less angular than its predecessor, and has introduced a stainless-steel case to proceedings, but the real visible change is in the screen quality: an always-on colour AMOLED touch display, which only the brand's pricier models have boasted before this point. Beyond that, it's added plenty of cool health apps like the electrodermal activity (EDA) sensor, which reports levels of stress, as well as the electrocardiogram (ECG) app, which checks for irregular heart rhythm. As a fitness tracker, it's up there with the very best.

USD 222.00





LOGITECH ERGO K860 KEYBOARD

It looks like home offices are going to play a key part in the future of work, and that means investing in the kind of tech that just makes things easier. Logitech's ergonomic K860 keyboard is a must-have for people who want to improve their posture and stave away the kind of muscle strain that a bog-standard set-up can cause, thanks to the device's curved, split keyframe, sloping form and pillowed wrist rest (the latter is covered in durable knitted fabric, supported by layers of high-density and memory foam.) It's also made from 71% recycled plastic. **USD 144.00**



HONOR BAND 6

Smartwatches are getting more and more sophisticated with each passing year, and the prices often reflect that. But what if you just want the most essential fitness features? Well, there are plenty of budget models that offer just that, and we're big fans of the Honor Band 6. The design is unobtrusive, understated and super comfortable, with a 1.47" AMOLED touchscreen and a tasteful selection of strap colour options. Feature-wise, it automatically picks up the type of work-out you're on and offers a selection of plans, while blood oxygen, sleep and heart rate monitors ensure you're always on top of your health. The battery life lasts for fourteen days (or 10 days on heavy usage), which is pretty impressive too. **USD 55.00** 🌱



CARLOCK

Keep an eye on your car at any time of the day, from any location, all through your smartphone. The CarLock app (available on both Android and iOS) allows you to monitor when your vehicle is moved, when the engine is started and if there's any unusual vibrations, and can even provide insights on your car's battery. Then there's the detailed GPS function, which helps you to track where the vehicle is going (in the event that it's been stolen) or has been previously. **USD 78.00**

PHILIPS NEOPIX PRIME 2 HOME PROJECTOR

Up there with the very best affordable projectors on the market, Philips' Prime 2 produces vivid colours that scale up to 200 cm from less than two metres from the wall. The surprisingly low power consumption is eco-friendly, too, which means the machine can last up to 20 years. There's also Wi-Fi screen sharing and an OS system loaded with streaming apps. **USD 260.00**



MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST

WORDS: JUDITH SKERRETT

Welcome to Morne Seychellois National Park: over 30 square kilometres of mountain and mist forest spread across the west and central massif of Mahé, rising to almost 915 metres (3,000 feet). This is an eerie, spectacular, humbling place. Explore it on foot or by car, but do not leave Seychelles without experiencing it. It is one of the most beautiful places on earth.

Purists will want to do it for themselves: take one of the sign-posted trails winding up through the forest to the peaks of Mont Blanc, Trois Frères and Copolia or the relatively gentle Salazie trail through the world's only oceanic tea plantation. The paths are marked and there are leaflets available which give guidance and information, but even experienced walkers and climbers should take a few points on board before setting off. The paths are steep; often very steep indeed, and beneath the trees it is hot, humid and airless. It is advisable to have an early start or aim for mid-afternoon, avoiding the hottest hours of the day. The trails are regularly walked but the vegetation grows very quickly and can sometimes hide the trail, so take a guide leaflet and make careful use of it. Although you need no specialised equipment, you must have some reasonably sturdy shoes and a good supply of water. Avoid carrying heavy bags, which may cause you to tire quickly. It would be sensible to let someone know where you are going, just in case you get lost or someone in the party has an accident.

Remember that darkness comes on very quickly and allow yourself plenty of time for your walk. There are no animals to be afraid of in the forests; no nasty venomous snakes or biting insects (apart from the inevitable mosquitoes). Perhaps the biggest 'danger' is that, away from the path, it is easy to step onto what you think is solid ground and discover it is nothing more than a mat of decaying vegetation; or put your foot onto what you think is a solid log and find it is rotten through and gives way beneath you. Watch out if you grab hold of a branch to stop yourself from falling; many of the plants in the mist forest have vicious spikes. After rain the paths become very slippery, especially on the descent and it is easy to slip. But, if you are fit, follow some common-sense rules and place your feet carefully, it is relatively easy to reach some of the most unspoilt and fascinating regions of enigmatic Mahé mist forest.

There is no need to despair if you do not feel equal to such a physical challenge. The Sans Souci road winds right through the park. There is hardly any traffic up here, even though the road is in good condition, and there are plenty of places to pull off to just take in the astonishingly lovely views, and soak up the atmosphere. The first thing which will strike you is the silence: it is broken only by the piping of tiny endemic frogs and the clatter of branches in the tree canopy above and, if you do get into the mist forest proper, the steady dripping of water from almost permanently sodden mosses and other plants growing up in the trees. Here the branches of the trees are swaddled in green moss; ferns, orchids and even other trees grow on other trees and creepers dangle down from above in true Tarzan fashion; though you would be mad to entrust one with your weight. Although the forest is full of life, it is equally a place of decay: decay is all around you, from the thick, slowly decomposing

layer of leaf litter beneath your feet, to the rotting tree branches over your head. After the rain the forest has a smell like cooking cabbage. This feels like a primeval world; a world from a time before mammals existed; in which many creatures had yet to evolve. Invertebrates, insects and skinks; snakes, tiny frogs, millipedes, leaf insects, stick insects, chameleons and snails go about their secretive business in their kingdoms of decaying vegetation, causing the odd rustle, but apart from these micro-animals, little else stirs. It is even too high for the birds. Towards the summits the only call you might hear are the mocking laughter and jeers of the bulbuls, carrying up the mountainside from below: they do not venture into the really high mist forest.

If you want to experience this but feel uncertain about setting off alone, there are local guides who lead walks into the mountains. Not only do they know the paths, they are also very knowledgeable about the flora and fauna and will enhance your journey by showing you things the casual observer might miss. They know the routes very well and can choose the ones best suited to your level of fitness.

Amongst the trails you can choose from is the Trois Frères route, which climbs up immediately after the Forestry Station along the Sans Souci road. Many *kalis d pap* and santol trees line the start of the trail to the 700 metre summit, the second-highest peak on Mahé, and the third-highest point in Seychelles. On this walk it is possible to see the endemic, insectivorous Seychelles pitcher plant. These grow in untidy tangles draping themselves over other plants and bushes, the fleshy tendrils ending either in the perfect lidded goblets of the pitchers, into which insects are attracted and are trapped, unable to climb up the slippery sides to freedom, or in the apple-skin, blushed-pink and green leaves.

On first setting out it is possible you might see or more likely hear, one of the two rarest birds on Mahé – so rare in fact that for much of this century experts thought that the Seychelles white-eye, a tiny grey-brown bird with a white circle around the eye, was extinct. It moves through the trees hunting for insects with other family members, and betrays its presence by a soft, whispering call. Unfortunately, the very reclusive bare-legged scops owl, as is the habit of owls, only ventures out at night and is not often seen. Like the jellyfish tree it was thought to be extinct until 1959 when ornithologist Philippe Loustau-Lalanne rediscovered it. It is a small, dark brown bird and is heard more often than seen. It has a strange, rasping call which has earned it the Creole name for wood cutter, *syer*, because it sounds rather like someone sawing timber with a handsaw.

Once the ubiquitous mynas of Mahé are left behind, the other species you may be aware of flitting through the trees are the sunbirds and bulbuls. The noisy Seychelles bulbul will always make its presence felt. It has a bright orange beak and a scruffy crest. Individuals chase each other through the trees, screeching raucously. The Seychelles sunbird is hardly less vocal, the males trilling repetitively. It enjoys the nectar of such exotics as hibiscus and banana flowers as much as that of the endemic vegetation. Small and with a down-curved bill, this bird flits about nonstop. In the breeding season the throat of the male becomes a metallic blue with a flash of orange or yellow on the body under the wings. When you break out of the forest onto a ledge or viewing spot,



IMAGES COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

look out for the Seychelles Kestrel or *katiti*, which is much smaller than the familiar bird of prey found in Europe. As it flies it makes a continuous flight call: *ti-ti-ti*. You may also see the beautiful Seychelles blue pigeon soaring over the treetops. It has a metallic, deep blue back, a white chest and red wattles on the face.

To reach the summit of 900 metre high Morne Seychellois is quite a challenge, and is especially difficult as the path is hard to follow. For this you should seriously consider hiring a guide or you could easily get lost. Other trails include the one up to the 500 metre peak of Copolia, and the 650 metre path up Morne Blanc. Arguably the finest walk, and probably one of the longest, (taking between four and six hours) is the Congo Rouge trail which starts close to the Mission Viewpoint (off the Sans Souci road) and passes through gnarled northea and *bwa rouz* trees dripping with damp moss, to emerge on a ridge cloaked in hundreds of pitcher plants. The path then descends to Le Niol, and ends close to the reservoir.

Although the forest has, over the years since settlement, been invaded by exotic flora – especially albizzias, cinnamon and santol – the park contains many fine endemic trees and efforts to replace the exotics with endemics are ongoing. All but a handful of the 75 plants unique to Seychelles, and including five of the six endemic palms, four varieties of screw pine, and some of the rarest trees and plants on earth, flourish within the park. One is the *bwa d fer* (*Valeria seychellarum*) which was abundant when the first explorers arrived. It grew tall and straight and was irresistible to ship-builders in the age of sail because it made ideal masts. For this reason it is now an endangered species. Most of the survivors of the onslaught have apparently regenerated themselves from stumps. The *bwa d fer* is found on no other island, and the Morne Seychellois National Park therefore contains the entire world population of this very rare tree.

Another great rarity found in the mist forest, and one which keen botanists make great efforts to see, is the jellyfish tree, (*Medusagyne oppositifolia*) or *bwa mediz*, which was only rediscovered in the 1970s. It is so unusual and so primitive that botanists had to create a new family to classify it. For many years it was thought that only six trees, on just one Mahé hill top remained, but later searches have revealed the existence of about 50 specimens of this botanical oddity. To see this peculiar tree you need to ask expert advice, since it still only grows in just a few selected spots.

Introduced species, particularly albizzias, were taking over most of the valleys, but there have been strenuous efforts made to fell them in recent years, leaving more room for the trees which naturally belong on the mountain slopes. Another aggressive invader is cinnamon. It was introduced to Mahé in the very early years of settlement and having arrived, found it to its liking, spreading even to the highest heights of the mountains. At one time the bark, and the oil extracted from the leaves, was exported, but the amounts produced eventually became uncommercial and the trade has dwindled. Unfortunately, where cinnamon dominates there is little or no undergrowth since the chemicals in its leaves kill off competing plants. You may find coconut palm trees more familiar from the beaches, growing even at considerable heights. This is because in the days when the coconut was

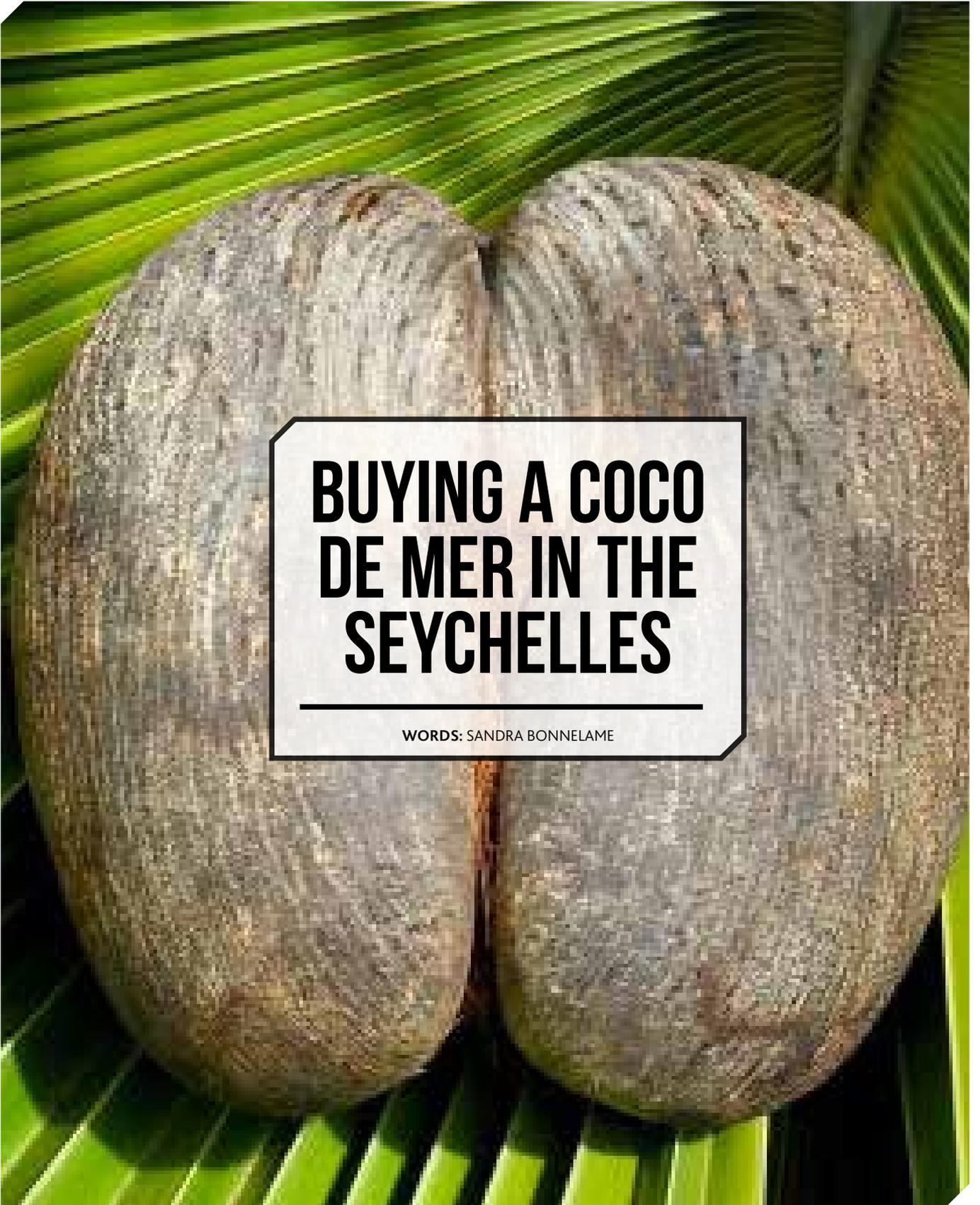
the dominant commercial crop, land which did not have palms trees on it was considered almost unsaleable, and so proprietors would plant them wherever they could, far up into the hills. You will sometimes even come across tropical garden plants growing wild; the only reminder that someone once had a little home here in the mountains, and tended a garden up in the clouds.

Much of what the casual observer sees in the mist forest is not, of itself, spectacular: everything is green and brown and just looks like any other plant, fern or tree unless you are a botanist, or have things pointed out to you: you might be looking at something incredibly rare or incredibly strange without knowing it. One of the few obviously lovely plants is the vanilla orchid (*Vanilla phalaenopsis*) or *lavanil sauvaz*, which fortunately is quite easy to see, and grows even by the roadside. Although it only flowers after heavy rain, you often see its tangle of green, rubbery, leafless stems entwined in small bushes. The flowers are large and white with a peach-coloured centre.

Coming out from the dark, humid world beneath the trees, you will be rewarded by outstanding views across the slopes of the mountains and out across the glittering sea to the horizon. The forests you have walked through are changed with an atmosphere unlike any other place in Seychelles, where the phantoms of mist drift eerily through the trees like ghosts. With the forest behind you, you will feel the cool air very welcome on your hot cheeks. The silence is complete unless a breeze rustles through the treetops. Even on the brightest of days the mood of the mountain changes by the minute and clouds may suddenly settle on the heights or roll up from the sea like a grey, clammy embrace.

If time or energy is lacking, you can get a feeling for the high forest at Mission Viewing Lodge, which is located on a turn off from the Sans Souci road. This was once the location of a missionary school and its ruins are still visible beside the track which leads to the viewing platform. It is only a short distance from the car park and the walk is easy. The view is stunning and you may want to linger here, especially if you have it all to yourself, to really take in the unique atmosphere, the eerie silence and the utter peace of Mahé's mystical mountains. 🌿





BUYING A COCO DE MER IN THE SEYCHELLES

WORDS: SANDRA BONNELAME

"... legend has it that on a night lit by a full moon, in a tiny jungle forest on the isle of Praslin in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Seychelles, a rather bizarre mating ritual takes place between the forest's principal inhabitants. Below the canopy, the jungle is enveloped in a misty sweat as the lovers, locked in rhythm, sway back and forth in a primitive dance, while palm leaves rustle and tiny blooming flowers float through the air in a dazzling finish to a mystical ceremony that will ensure the forest dwellers of generations to come ... "

And so the story of the *Coco de Mer* goes, except the 'lovers' in this case happen to be ancient, endemic palm trees. Legend has it that those who saw the trees making love to each other either died or went blind. This tale is further strengthened by the fact that scientists and biologists alike have still not fully come to an understanding about how the pollination of the nut occurs. Often compared to a female's buttock, its distinct shape, is the main reason for its admiration and as a tourist, this is the best souvenir of the Seychelles you could possibly take home. As the cultural symbol of the Seychelles the best place to see this rare nut is in its natural setting at the Vallée de Mai; home to the largest concentration of *Coco de Mer* trees in the world and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the island of Praslin.

The *Coco de Mer* palm is dioecious; it has separate male and female plants, with the nuts

themselves weighing anywhere between thirty to seventy pounds! For a tree to reach adulthood it can take up to forty years, however, it then takes another seven to ten years for the nut itself to fully grow and fall off the tree. To be allowed for sale it takes an additional 10 years for it to dry.

While the fruit is edible, it is not commercially valuable in Seychelles itself but it has been known to be used in Siddha medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and as a flavouring in Southern Chinese cuisine.

If you are thinking of committing to buying a *Coco de Mer* as a souvenir, it will be hollow inside as they have had their kernels scooped out, so as not to be implanted elsewhere. Although the process involves being sawn in half and then glued back together, its charming peculiar shape nonetheless remains intact.

With tales told as tall as its endangered palm, the famous *Coco de Mer* is truly the pride of

Seychelles. So famous that great lengths are being taken regarding the conservation of this endangered palm species from nut poachers.

Very strict rules apply to its being taken out of the country, but the goose chase to find your perfect nut should be worth it as Seychelles is the only place on earth that the *Coco de Mer* grows. At a nice price too! You can expect to spend up to USD 300 on the best ones, which might seem expensive, but there again it makes for one fantastic souvenir!

Although the worth of a *Coco de Mer* nut will depend chiefly on its quality and size, note that not all shops sell at the same price which means you could probably get as many as thirty nuts at SCR 3,000 in one shop while having to pay more for the same at another. So, look for a nut that fits your budget.

The question is where to look. Ideally, its place of origin, if visiting Praslin Island is on your itinerary. You might just hit the jackpot there where there are *Coco de Mer* nuts for sale at an Anse Lazio Restaurant and Bar called Bonbon Plume. Make sure when you leave with your nut, you have a proper registration for it, as each is given an identification and green label with the main idea being to stop illegal poaching and conserve the few that remain. DO NOT BUY it if the supplier is unable to hand over the right papers, the government seal and export license. You will not be able to leave the Seychelles without these. Do not risk being fined or sent to prison!

So make sure you leave a considerable amount of space in your luggage on your return trip for this wonderful artefact from mother nature. 🌴



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P.O Box 600, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles
Tel: +248 4322 447 - Fax: +248 4324 111
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www.arrivaseychelles.com



DATE-PALMS

Bride of the Desert

WORDS: SILHOUETTE



As pistachios are to Iran, and cloves are to Zanzibar, so dates are to the UAE. Of all the crops cultivated in the emirates, the date-palm is the most important. Not only did it provide a stable foodstuff in the harsh desert climate, but its trunk and leaves were widely used in making all sorts of household items, from the mats on which food was served to the boats that were used to catch the fish served up with the dates on a feast day. The date-palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, is native to countries from North Africa to India. Its fruits are rich in sugar, and form a staple food in each of these countries. The fruits range in colour from pale yellow to a rich burnt-red colour, and during summer, they hang off the top part of the palm tree's trunk, in clusters of as many as 1,000 berries, and often a metre (three feet) in length.

Date-palms grow in all the emirates, wherever there is even a meagre supply of water to feed these hardy trees. Usually, they centred on an oasis, an area where the water table under the desert rises near enough to the surface to provide sustenance to vegetation and humans. The date-palms were watered by the ancient falaj irrigation channels, which channeled water from an underground spring through the groves of palm trees. These are still used, although now they are made of concrete.

Oases that support date-palm cultivation can be found in modern-day UAE at Dhaid in Sharjah, Al Awir in the emirate of Dubai, at Al Ain and Liwa in Abu Dhabi emirate, as well as in large areas of the Northern Emirates and Fujairah, particularly in the fertile emirate of Ras al-Khaimah. Extensive new plantation of dates along highway verges

has been encouraged by the government.

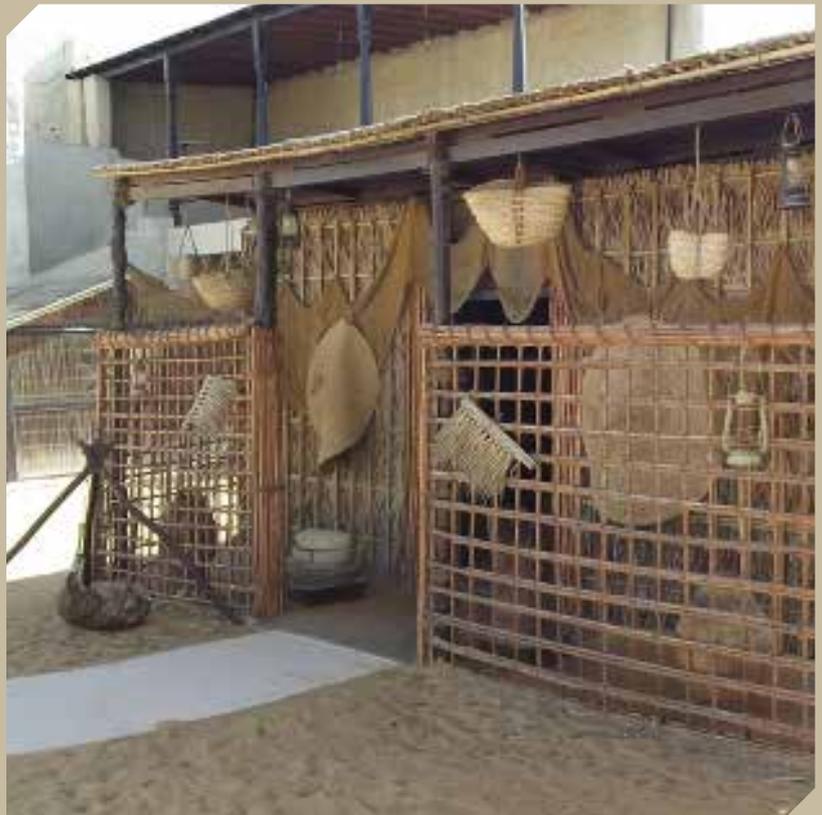
The UAE has around 44-million date-palms that can be grouped under different varieties and together produce 76,000 tonnes of fruit every

year, making it one of the largest date-producers in the world. There are 199 popular varieties, the best-seller being, the Phoenix, Canary Island date palm, the pygmy date palm, the Senegal date palm and al loulou. Red varieties such as *al kheneizi*, *al khisaab*, and *al muselli* are very popular; there are also a number of yellow varieties that include *al nighal*, *al fardah*, and *al bagal*.

The date-palm was known as 'the bride of the desert', and was used in most aspects of daily life, to make housing, tents, agricultural implements, fishing nets and boats. Nowadays, many of these traditional items have been replaced by items made of plastic and metal; but

in the emirates before the coming of oil, these modern materials were simply not available. The date-palm leaves, fronds, fibres and trunks were used for fencing, roofing, weaving, boat-building, and as a general housing material. Anything not used was burnt for firewood.

Dates were collected and carried in baskets made of the leaves of date-palms. *Al makrafah* was a container used to collect the dates in, once they had been picked from the tree, and they would be carried home in *al mezmal*. Date-palm leaves were also used to make baskets to carry the food and other items to and from the markets, as well as for the storage of personal items. The baskets



used by women for carrying things to and from the markets were known as *al jefeer*. Women also used containers made of date-palm leaves for carrying their personal items, for instance, the phials of perfume, henna and kohl used for self-beautification.

As well as eating the dates, other parts of the date-palm were used in the provision, storage and serving of food. Small boats known as *shasha* were made from the leaves of date-palm, on a skeleton of cane, and were remarkably water-tight, at least for short fishing trips in the shallow waters of the Gulf and off the coast of Fujairah. These are not much used now,

but small fishing boats still use a cover of palm leaves above the vessel to keep off the hot sun. The domed fishing-nets known as *al aliakh*, now made almost exclusively of metal, used to be made of palm leaves; palm-tree trunks were also attached to fishing nets to keep them buoyant.

Al sarood were circular mats made of date-palm leaves, on which food was served, and the individual dishes were often covered with conical covers known as *al makab*, also made of palm leaves. People would gather round the mats, squatting or lounging on their sides, depending on the formality of the occasion, and would scoop the food into their hands.

In the past, also the date-palm leaves would be used to make the *barasti* houses that were so widely built before the coming of concrete, at a time when even houses built of mud and coral were the prerogative only of wealthy merchants. The *barasti* houses consisted of a wooden skeleton of supports, with the walls and room divisions made entirely of the palm leaves, which become grey-brown when they dry out. Usually, the building would be topped by a wind-tower also made of palm leaves, open on four sides, which channeled any stirring of wind downwards into the living quarters.



DATES ARE SO ADAPTABLE THAT THEY CAN BE ADDED TO CAKES, SALADS, PUDDINGS, BISCUITS OR USED IN STEWS AND TAGINES. STUFF THEM WITH RICOTTA OR BLUE CHEESE FOR AN ELEGANT APPETISER

The palm frond shelters were airy in summer, as it allowed for ventilation and were either square or rectangular with flat roofs, or triangular tent-like structures. Palm fronds, and abundant local resource and extremely versatile, have also been used extensively in the fishing, pearling and trading settlements of the coast.

Nowadays, *barasti*-style houses remain only in

the museums: there are fine examples at Ajman, opposite the clock tower, and in the courtyard of the Dubai Museum near the Ruler's Diwan. A few coffee-shops retain the traditional *barasti* style, however: these can be found on the Corniche breakwater in Abu Dhabi, at Al Mamsar Park and along the creek in Sharjah, and overlooking the creek in Ras al-Khaimah. 🇦🇪



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com



STICKY DATE CAKE WITH CARAMEL SAUCE

12 Ingredients

5 Method steps

250g pitted dates, chopped

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 1/2 cups boiling water

125g butter, softened

3/4 cup brown sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

2 eggs, at room temperature

2 cups self-raising flour, sifted

CARAMEL SAUCE

1 cup brown sugar

300ml thickened cream

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

60g butter, chopped

STEP 1

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease a 7cm deep, 22cm (base) cake pan and line base with baking paper.

STEP 2

Place dates and bicarbonate of soda in a heatproof bowl. Pour over boiling water. Allow to stand, uncovered, for 20 minutes or until dates are tender.

STEP 3

Using an electric mixer, beat butter, sugar and vanilla until pale and creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Using a large metal spoon, stir in date mixture and flour. Mix until well combined.

STEP 4

Spoon mixture into cake pan. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Stand for 10 minutes before turning onto a wire rack.

STEP 5

Make caramel sauce: Combine sugar, cream, vanilla and butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring, for 3 minutes or until boiling. Reduce heat to low. Simmer for 2 minutes. Pour warm sauce over warm cake. Cut into wedges. Serve.



BETHLEHEM

WORDS: PETER HOLTHUSEN

There is something about Jerusalem that seizes the imagination when you first see the city looming on the horizon. I have been travelling there for over four decades, ever since I was a student, and I never fail to be surprised by my first glimpse of the place, the way it suddenly appears without fanfare as you drive southeast from Ben Gurion International Airport, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, into the Judean Hills.

From the road you see the arid landscape begin to curve and stretch and grow more lush as the car, still in the valley, begins to climb. Eventually, the view is all-embracing, with miles of green hills, red-tiled roofs, and open skies off into the distance.

On this particular visit to Jerusalem, however, I was planning to head out of the city to experience the wonders of the ancient city of Bethlehem, which is just a 15-minute drive from the city centre. It is just as quick to travel here as it is to commute around Jerusalem itself.

Palestinian Territory, West Bank, The Separation Wall. Words that might strike fear into many traveller's hearts will make others curious enough to jump at a chance of a visit. Spending a day or even a week in Bethlehem is one of those must do's for people on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as you could quite easily combine history with religion and add a visit to the ancient city of Jericho or the mysterious Dead Sea and Masada.

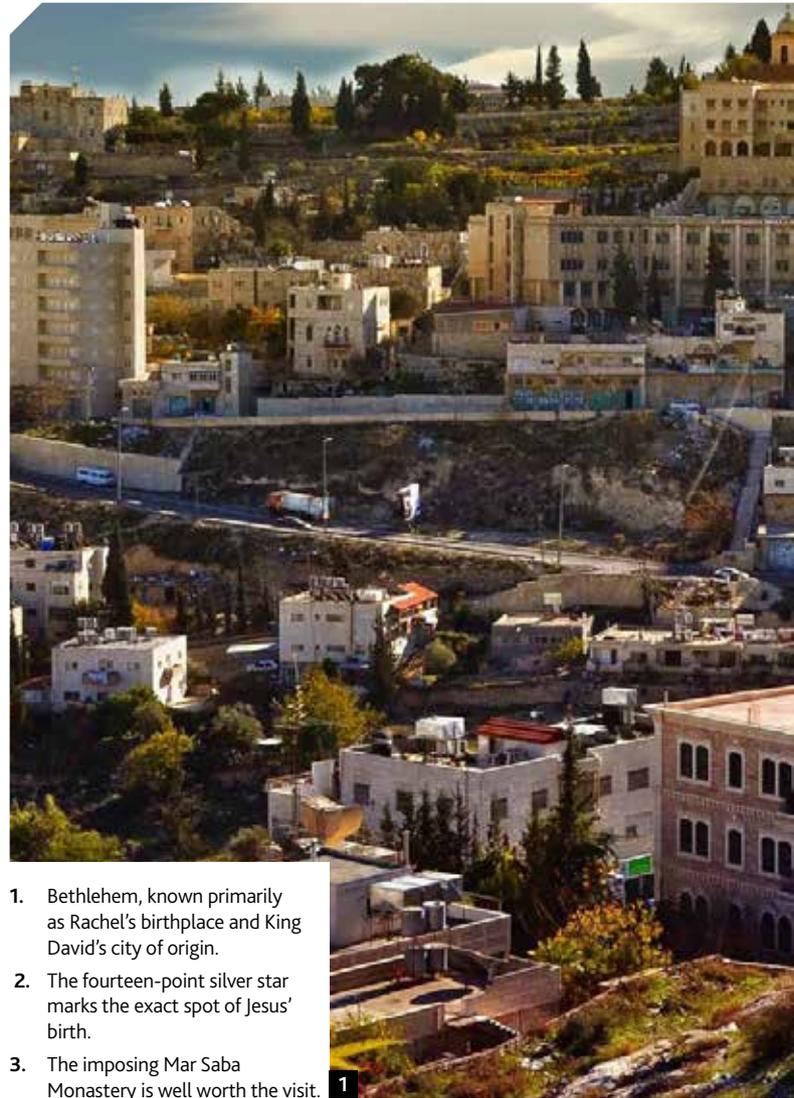
Most people travel to Bethlehem on a day trip from Jerusalem. It's quite easy to take a taxi on your own, but it's far easier to take a day trip, as we did. I have always liked taking guided tours as I have a thirst for knowledge and want someone to answer any questions I may have and point out things that I might miss on my own. Besides, they take care of all the travel arrangements and always seem to take you to where the best restaurants are.

Over one million tourists visit Bethlehem every year, including virtually every Christian tourist to Israel. In fact, for Christian tourism to the Holy Land, Jerusalem and Bethlehem are a tour couplet, and for any visitor, the town holds intriguing history, souvenir shops, olive wood craftsmen, street food vendors and inexpensive eateries.

Bethlehem is first referenced in the Hebrew Scriptures, and known primarily as Rachel's burial place and King David's city of origin. Since the spread of Christianity, Bethlehem is most known as the birthplace of Jesus, and it is the consequent Christian tourism which largely supports this small town of around 25,000 people. The economy is tourist-driven, peaking during the Christmas season, when Christians make pilgrimage to the Church of the Nativity, or Basilica of the Nativity, within whose Grotto holds a prominent religious significance to Christians of various denominations as the birthplace of Jesus.

Manger Square, located in the centre of Bethlehem is the bustling heart of the Old City and a gathering place for all pilgrims visiting the city. It takes its name from the 'manger' where Jesus was laid after his birth, according to Christian belief. The Square is easily accessed through Star Street, which was the main artery leading to the Old City and the Church of the Nativity, and remnants of the city wall can still be seen by the arch that represented the main entrance to the city.

The Church of the Nativity, Mosque of Omar, Peace Centre, and multiple souvenir shops are located around the Square. To the right of the Mosque of Omar, lies the Bethlehem Municipality that was established in 1872.



1. Bethlehem, known primarily as Rachel's birthplace and King David's city of origin.
2. The fourteen-point silver star marks the exact spot of Jesus' birth.
3. The imposing Mar Saba Monastery is well worth the visit.

During the Ottoman period, the Square acted as a market where the traders gathered to sell their fruits, vegetables, and livestock. In 1929, the old market was relocated to its present location in the middle of the Old City. Between 1998 and 2000, the Square was renovated and is today, considered an important cultural and social spot, with many different events, exhibitions, concerts and other gatherings taking place there.

The Church of the Nativity, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is actually a large complex encompassing many structures including the 7th century Basilica, Saint Catherine's Church, monasteries and chapels that represent the different Christian denominations that include the Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches, and the Cave of Saint Jerome, the fourth century monk who translated the Gospels to the Vulgate (Latin).

The Basilica is one of the earliest and most sacred Christian structures in the world, and was constructed above the Grotto where Jesus was born during the mandate of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 326 AD and by order of his mother Queen Helena, who built a magnificent and majestic church adorned with beautiful marble and mosaics.



Later, during the 6th century, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian built a new and even more intricate church on the same spot. During the Persian invasion in the 7th century, the church was spared destruction. By the 11th century, the Crusaders raised their flag above the Basilica of the Nativity and renovated it.

Over the centuries it underwent successive destruction, reconstruction and expansion until it attained its present morphology. One of the Basilica's interesting features is the Door of Humility, the main entrance that was downsized in order to deter invaders from entering this sacred place on horseback. It compels worshippers to bow their heads in order to get through, which is a sign of the respect and humility that is due to this unique space.

Two sets of stairs lead down to the Grotto of the Nativity where a fourteen-point silver star marks the exact spot of Jesus' birth. An inscription on the star states: 'Hic de Virgin Maria Jesus Christus Natus Est' – meaning "Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary". The actual guardianship of the Church is shared by three Christian denominations: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Armenian.

A short walk from the Church of the Nativity you will find the Chapel of the Milk Grotto, which is said to be the place where the Holy Family found their refuge during the Massacre of the Innocents, before they could flee into Egypt.

The Grotto's name comes from the belief that a drop of the Virgin Mary's milk fell down onto the floor of the cave and changed its colour to milky-white. For ages, childless women of many religions have visited the Milk Grotto in order to ask for the gift of fertility. They usually take with them a piece of the Grotto's white rock that is believed to have magical powers.

A Byzantine Church was built over the Grotto in the 5th century. Remnants of a colourful mosaic floor from that time can be seen in the courtyard of the present chapel, which was constructed around the Grotto by the Franciscan Brothers in 1872.

Of the many interesting sites further afield, Solomon's Pools to the south of Bethlehem are well worth a visit. So great in size and importance were these three stone water basins, cut in the rock during the reign of King Herod in the times of the Romans, that they became associated with the history of





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Jerusalem, for they supplied water to the city and the Second Temple, as well as the desert fortress of Herodium.

If you ever wondered where those “shepherds watched their flocks by night”, then you’ll be well rewarded for paying a visit to the village of Beit Sahour, as the fields around the village are widely recognised by Christian believers as the site of the Shepherd’s Field in which the birth of Jesus was announced by the angels. Beit Sahour is little more than 3 kilometres (1.86 miles) east of central Bethlehem and easily added to your sightseeing itinerary in town, or used as a stop off on your way to the imposing Mar Saba Monastery.

Since Bethlehem is part of the Palestinian Authority, there is a border crossing, so make sure you carry your passport and proof of identification with you. Though Israeli passports are not accepted for entry into Bethlehem, entrance is direct for tourists without the need for prior approval.

If you are on an organised tour with an Arab Israeli tour guide you can simply stay on the bus without any check in general. However, if your guide is Jewish Israeli, you will need to walk through the border crossing and meet your tour guide of Bethlehem on the other side. On your way, you might catch a glimpse of the iconic Walled Off Hotel or the Banksy street art on the 8 metre (26ft) high wall, which separates Israeli controlled areas from Palestinian-controlled areas.

While Israelis are forbidden to cross the border into Palestinian Territory, there are no restrictions for other tourists. Whether on a day trip or visiting for a few days, no visa is required. They will ask you to show your passport,



IF YOU EVER WONDERED WHERE THOSE “SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT”, THEN YOU’LL BE WELL REWARDED FOR PAYING A VISIT TO THE VILLAGE OF BEIT SAHOUR.

which takes moments. Your passage into Palestinian Territory should go smoothly, unless you take photos of the checkpoint. That’s a strict no-no! Once you are within the West Bank, all security is handled by the Palestinian Authorities. The moment you arrive you will see Palestinian soldiers in uniform. You’ll see them carrying guns just as they do in Israel, but don’t be alarmed, that’s for your protection. They are there to keep the peace.

Before the coronavirus temporarily ended, foreign tourism in Israel almost completely, it was experiencing an unprecedented tourism boom. In addition to breaking records for tourist arrivals and the opening of a plethora of new hotels, Israel achieved top billing on many ‘must see’ destination lists, from the breathtaking Negev and Judean deserts, to the Red Sea resort of Eilat, and to the bucolic mountain plateau of the Golan Heights. Now it turns out that when it comes to curiosity and passion, Israel has maintained its appeal to travellers in the post-pandemic era. 🌿



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MALÉ'S GRAND FRIDAY MOSQUE

WORDS: PETER HOLTHUSEN





Few people think of history or architecture when they think of the Maldives, what with the pristine beaches and luxurious overwater bungalows typically getting all the glory. So, it might come as a surprise that Malé's crown jewel is the Islamic Centre's iconic Grand Friday Mosque, an impressive whitewashed building marked with a sweeping staircase and a gleaming golden dome.

The imposing Grand Friday Mosque in Maldivé's bustling capital is a living monument to a bygone age when classical Islamic architecture, exquisite art and elaborate craftsmanship defined the most admired public spaces. The striking cultural forms and often dazzling ornamental detail that characterises Islamic buildings include some of the most awe-inspiring structures on Earth and are a testament to a centuries-old category of architecture that is rooted in the principles of Islam.

Opened in 1984 by former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom with funding from the Gulf States, Pakistan, Malaysia and Brunei, the three-storey Islamic Centre and the Grand Friday Mosque is the Maldives' largest mosque, and a distinct work of architecture in the Republic. With its magnificent golden dome, this impressive structure, built in white marble and virtually free from external decoration, dominates the skyline of Malé and has become a notable landmark for the city.

The Grand Friday Mosque and Islamic Centre is named after one of the most celebrated Maldivian heroes, the indefatigable Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu-Al-Auzam, a captain, environmentalist and a brilliant military strategist who ruled over the Maldivian Archipelago from 1573 to 1585. The mosque is the largest in the Maldives, and also one of the largest in South Asia, welcoming over 5,000 worshippers to its primary prayer hall.

Many believe that this magnificent edifice, with its unique minarets, is of great religious and cultural importance to the city and the country and hence have deemed it to be the golden



symbol of the islands. The locals also celebrate and respect the place of worship by believing that it is not only a symbol of the island but also of the Islamic religion as a whole.

From Indonesia to the United Kingdom, the mosque in its many forms is the quintessential Islamic building. The mosque, 'masjid' in Arabic, is the traditional Muslim gathering place for prayer. Masjid simply means 'place of prostration'. Though most of the five daily prayers prescribed in Islam can take place anywhere, all men are required to gather together at the mosque for the Friday noon prayer.

Mosques are also used throughout the week for prayer, study, or simply as a place for rest and reflection. The main mosque of a city, used for the Friday communal prayer, is called a 'jami masjid', literally meaning 'Friday mosque', but it is also sometimes called a congregational mosque in English. The style, layout, and decoration of a mosque can tell us a lot about Islam in general, but also about the period and region in which the mosque was constructed.

The home of the Prophet Muhammad is considered the first mosque. His house, in Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, was a typical 7th century Arabian-style house, with a large courtyard surrounded by long rooms supported by columns. This style of mosque came to be known as a hypostyle mosque, meaning 'many columns'. Most mosques built in Arab lands utilised this style for centuries.

The architecture of the building in Malé is considered unique, not due to its notable intricacies but because the mosque is made in such a plain and simple way with modest white marble that it seems to stand out. The huge golden dome that towers over the main square called Jumhooree Maidhaan, also known as Independence Square, is also a great source of architectural pride. What makes the mosque more fascinating is the fact that it was built and funded by several places, all of which seem to have contributed to its design in some unique way.



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Aside from this, the interior of the Grand Friday Mosque holds a stark difference to its exterior as the walls of the interior are adorned in detailed designs and intricate wooden carvings. The walls also seem to be covered in Arabic calligraphy and coral engravings whereas the floor is spread wide with woven carpets from around the world. The dazzling crystal chandeliers on the ceiling give it a truly grand feeling that adds to its aura.

Light is an essential feature for mosques, since the first and last daily prayers occur before the sun rises and after the sun sets. Before electricity, mosques were illuminated with oil lamps. Hundreds of such lamps hung inside a mosque would create a glittering spectacle, with soft light emanating from each, highlighting the calligraphy and other decorations on the lamps' surfaces. Although not a permanent part of a mosque building, lamps, along with other furnishings like carpets, formed a significant – though ephemeral aspect of mosque architecture.

The Islamic Centre, aside from the mosque, also houses an Islamic Library, a number of offices and conference halls that have held gatherings of utmost international importance, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meetings.

The Islamic Centre also houses the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, a government agency of the Republic of Maldives, responsible for handling the country's religious affairs, which replaced the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs that was established by the former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

Furthermore, the Islamic Centre acts as a major tourist attraction for visitors to Malé, because of its central location in Jumhooree Maidhaan and near the main jetty of Malé and due to the beautiful architecture of the mosque. The magnificent golden dome of the mosque has become a focal point on the skyline of the city and is quite often the first landmark to be seen by passengers flying into Velana International Airport on nearby Hulhulé Island.

Non-Muslim visitors can only explore the interior outside of prayer times, between 9.00a.m and 5.00p.m. For this reason, the best time to pay a visit to the Grand Friday Mosque is before noon and between 2.00p.m and 3.00p.m. A dress code is also strictly enforced. Occupying groups of casual tourists, who are genuinely interested in Muslim religion and culture and respectfully dressed, you'll be invited in by one of the staff who stand by the main entrance and passage. Shorts are strictly forbidden, so men must dress in long trousers and ladies a long skirt or dress.

Whilst you're here, it's worth stopping by the nearby Hukuru Miskiyy, Old Friday Mosque, the city's main place of prayer prior to the construction of the new Grand Friday Mosque. Built in 1658 and the minaret adjacent to the mosque built in 1675 are the oldest structures in

1. The Islamic Centre (officially named Masjid-al-Sultan Muhammad Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al Auzam).
2. The magnificent golden dome of the mosque has become a focal point on the skyline of the City.
- 3&4. Striking minaret of the mosque.
5. The 'mihrab' – a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Makkah.
6. Maldivé's bustling capital, Malé.





THE ISLAMIC CENTRE ACTS AS A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION FOR VISITORS TO MALÉ, BECAUSE OF ITS CENTRAL LOCATION IN JUMHOOREE MAIDHAAN AND NEAR THE MAIN JETTY OF MALÉ AND DUE TO THE BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE OF THE MOSQUE.

Malé today. In addition to being the most revered centre of worship for many centuries, Hukuru Miskiyi is of great cultural and historical significance to the Maldives and stands witness to the skills of Maldivian craftsmen of the time.

The mosque is built with interlocking coral blocks that are adorned with intricate coral carvings. The roof is supported by cut coral columns and its vaulted, decorated ceiling fashioned by master carpenters. Its unique interiors contain masterpieces of traditional Maldivian woodcarving and lacquer work.

The area adjacent to Hukuru Miskiyi, Old Friday Mosque, contains a 17th century graveyard with intricately carved headstones and tombs. The tombstones with rounded tops mark the graves of women and the ones with the pointed tops mark the graves of men. Gilded inscriptions on the tombstones indicate that the grave belongs to Maldivian royalty.

Hukuru Miskiyi was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008 for its unique architecture, its unparalleled historic tradition and the tongue-in-groove technique of its stone structure, which demonstrates a highly developed building technique for the period of its construction. According to the overall assessment made by UNESCO, "The architecture, construction and accompanying artistry of the mosque and its other structures represent the creative excellence and achievement of the Maldivian people".

With a population of just over half a million people and a land area of 8.3 square kilometres, Malé is the capital and most populous city in the Republic of Maldives. It is also one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Yet, under its veneer of urban bustle, the city remains a surprisingly down-to-earth, manageable place, with a busy seaport, a fascinating mixture of African, Arabic and Indian influences with extremely close ties to its Tamil roots. 🌍

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THE RHYTHM OF RODRIGUES

Marooned amid an idyllic coral reef, the island of Rodrigues offers a laid-back taste of life in the Indian Ocean. **RICHARD HOLMES** sets out to discover the quieter cousin of Mauritius...





The trade winds are whistling through the casuarina trees along the shoreline of Ile aux Cocos, as a pair of fairy terns peer cautiously down at me from the boughs above. In a single moment I'm enjoying two of the things that bring savvy travellers to this quiet corner of the Indian Ocean.

But perhaps don't be surprised if you've not yet heard of the island of Rodrigues. Cast away some 600-kilometres to the northeast of Mauritius, it's a destination that takes a little effort to reach – by local flight or overnight ferry – but the rewards are oh-so worth it.

While Rodrigues itself is only 18 kilometres long, and merely six across, the fringing reef that surrounds it encircles some 300-square-kilometres of coral shallows, sandy flats and deep channels; the aquamarine waters peppered with uninhabited islands. All of which is an attractive proposition for both tourists and the birdlife that flourishes here, making the likes of Ile aux Cocos a dream destination for birders.

"The island is called 'Cocos,' because of the eggs, not because of any coconuts!" explains my park guide as we wander barefoot on the island, a slip of land just more than a kilometre long. A third of it is reserved for feathered visitors only. "For the rest of the island, tourists are welcome to explore on their own."

So while my guide for the day prepares lunch, his simple motorboat anchored just off the sands, I wander down the beach. For company the chatter of birdlife surrounds me. Lesser noddy,





brown nobby, white-tailed tropic birds, fairy and sooty terns. The trees at the high tide mark, and the impossibly blue skies above, are full of life.

Birds aside, Ile aux Cocos also offers one of the best swimming beaches on Rodrigues. In fact, it's one of the finest beaches I've discovered in the Indian Ocean. Lunch is served in the shade of casuarinas; a delicious spread of simple Creole dishes. Pickled octopus and haricot beans alongside tangy salads of green papaya, onion, chives and tomato.

By the time we're finished lunch the waters have lost their glassy sheen, as the south-easterly summer trade winds make their presence felt. While it takes the edge off our idyllic island visit, it's the other reason travellers make the effort to seek out Rodrigues.

The combination of calm waters within the coral reef and steady tropical trade winds combine to create one of the world's finest kite-surfing destinations. Without the crowds.

There's a choice of low-key beachfront hotels offering rentals, lessons and boat hire for downwind runs across the shallow reefs, and in summer months colourful kites bob and weave in bright contrast to the blue waters below.

While most of the seas here are shallow, and ideal for kites learning the ropes, a handful of deep passes cut through the reef. Here the waters plunge steeply from waist-deep to 40 metres to offer memorable scuba diving. Too adventurous? Stick to the shallows for wonderful snorkeling too.





Even away from the coast Rodrigues has endless charm to discover, and in the southwest the long and colourful history of the island comes to life in a remarkable conservation project.

In the Francois Leguat Giant Tortoise and Caves Reserve indigenous flora is being replanted to create a sanctuary for the endemic golden fruit bat, while giant tortoises from the Seychelles are gradually repopulating this corner of the Plaine Corail.

Perhaps it's ironic that the reserve is named for Francois Leguat; the island's first settler who arrived here in 1691. Fleeing persecution in France, he and his fellow Huguenots were hoping to settle in Reunion, but were instead deposited on this far-flung island by the French navy. Hungry and desperate, Leguat wrote at the time that the tortoises were so plentiful it was possible to walk hundreds of metres by stepping from shell to shell. Sadly they – and the flightless solitaire, Rodrigues' answer to the dodo – were soon eaten into extinction.

Beyond the reserve, the winding country roads offer no end of island vistas. Heading east it's worth a stop at Mont Limon; the highest point on the island offering 360° views of the island and its impressive fringing reef.

Or head further on past the popular Cotton Bay Hotel to the Baie de l'Est, where an easy fifteen-minute walk leads to the gorgeous little cove of Trou d'Argent. Swim with caution here though, as the undercurrents are strong. It's a rare moment of drama though, for unlike the vertiginous volcanic cirques of Mauritius, the landscape here is low and rolling; a patchwork of small-scale farms – there are no expanses of sugarcane plantation here – and valleys of indigenous forest that cover the hillsides tumbling down to the lagoon and its palette of blues.

The pace of life also feels deliciously slow here. Across Rodrigues part of the charm is the quiet rhythm of island time. Gone are the busy highways and gleaming railways of Mauritius, replaced by winding country roads and





quiet coves. Even the capital, Port Mathurin, feels like a sleepy country town rarely roused from its slumber.

Perhaps the only exception is when the weekly market gets going. Here locals gather to shop and gossip, while farmers bring fresh produce into town. The grunt and squeal of livestock is mixed with the steady thwack-thwack-thwack of a machete shaping young coconuts into take-away drinks. Tourists buy hand-woven straw hats, as locals bustle past with shopping bags heaving.

Unlike so many Indian Ocean islands, on Rodrigues tourism has yet to dominate the fabric of island life. It's an island that's comfortable in its own skin, and fishermen go to sea not to provide for hotel kitchens, but because it's simply what's been done here for generations. Tourists fit into the ebb and flow of the island and life carries on with or without them. But, you can be sure; your welcome in Creole-tinged French is always warm.

That's particularly true at the island's many charming table d'hôte restaurants.

Often attached to a simple guesthouse, and nearly always run by the matriarch of the house, this 'table of the house' experience allows visitors the opportunity to join a family and other guests for the meal of the day. There is no menu, and the meal will vary according to the whims of the host, what's in season, what the fishermen have brought in that morning.

For obvious reasons seafood looms large in Rodriguan kitchens, often the carangue caught in nets and by hand line within the lagoon, or grilled and pickled octopus hunted on the reefs at low tide. Across the island, octopus hangs out to dry like so much island laundry.

Alongside the seafood, or perhaps roast pork for special occasions, expect a delicious array of simple Creole dishes. Fragrant curries are a highlight, alongside plates of island maize and slow-cooked red haricot beans.

It's an authentic taste of island life, delivered to you with a smile. And that perhaps sums up any visit to Rodrigues, where you are sure to discover the warm heart of Indian Ocean hospitality. 🌴



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seychelles

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ROSEBANK UNCOVERED

Whether you're in Johannesburg for business or leisure, the cosmopolitan suburb of Rosebank makes the perfect base for exploring the city.

WORDS: RICHARD HOLMES

Set roughly halfway between the original city centre of Johannesburg – a space that continues to struggle to find its way on the road to regeneration – and the gleaming office towers of Sandton, the suburb dubbed the 'richest square mile in Africa', Rosebank is both geographically and culturally something of a Goldilocks destination.

There is the shimmer and gleam of corporate headquarters and new mixed-use developments, alongside the cultural cachet of leading art galleries and the vibrant colour of local markets. It's also become a hub for fine dining, attracting world-class chefs from across the country. In the wake of so much energy, it's little wonder you'll find a host of fine hotels here too, offering boutique properties and international brands in a suburb that's easily explored on foot.

And, getting here is easy too, with the high-speed Gautrain whisking you in from OR Tambo International Airport in just 22 minutes. Step outside the station, and the vibrant streets of Rosebank lie waiting to be explored...

on is Rosebank.

BOMB

WHERE TO STAY

First, drop your bags. There's no shortage of options, with a good mix of luxury hotel and self-catering options on offer. The latest addition to the landscape is voco The Bank Johannesburg, which opened earlier this year right in the heart of the district.

The voco brand falls under the international IHG portfolio, and so it's no surprise that there's a distinctly global aesthetic and service level on offer here. Across its 131 rooms and suites, voco The Bank Johannesburg delivers a distinct splash of Art Deco glamour, with geometric tiles and burnished copper trim. Upstairs the rooms are beautifully done out in double-volume ceilings, wooden headboards and considered design details. Fine linens are by the Better Cotton Initiative, while bespoke plant-based bathroom amenities come from Antipodes.

Travelling on business? The Wi-Fi is fast, uncapped and free, while plenty of plug points and a comfortable desk space make working in your room a breeze. Or head down to Workshop17, the in-house co-working space that offers a mix of hot desks, private offices and boardrooms for hire.

Another new addition to Rosebank is the arrival in late-2021 of Radisson RED, only the second outpost of this millennial-focused brand in Africa (the other is in Cape Town).

Set in the new Oxford Parks development, which is growing Rosebank to the north, Radisson RED Rosebank offers 222 stylish rooms aimed squarely at the global traveller. The décor is bold and contemporary, with a thoroughly global style perfectly melding with an African aesthetic and local artworks.

On the ground floor you'll find the OUI Bar & KTCHN, host to a generous breakfast buffet and all-day dining, but it's up on the roof terrace where Radisson RED really sets itself apart. Here the Red Rooftop Bar & Terrace boasts 360-degree city views and one of the best sundowner spots in the city, complete with a rooftop pool exclusively for guests.

Both properties are ideal for travellers jetting in for a few days, but if you're staying in Rosebank a week or more consider the stylish apartments at The Vantage. Just a short walk from the supermarkets of the Rosebank Mall, here you'll find a selection of well-equipped contemporary apartments in a security-controlled building with free underground parking.



voco The Bank Johannesburg



Ethos



Rosebank public space



Soko District



Soko Gather

RETAIL THERAPY

At the heart of the suburb is the expansive Rosebank Mall, which has grown to create a retail paradise for travellers. Within the main mall and its extensions, you'll find dozens of international and local brands dishing up everything from clothing to tech. The Exclusive Books here is particularly good, complete with in-store baristas brewing up a truly excellent flat white.

But don't miss out on the Soko District, an innovation in retail and an incubator for cultivating fledgling retail brands. This 1000-square-metre space is filled with micro-brands in the fashion, homeware and luxury space, targeted particularly at entrepreneurs who may not previously have had the backing for a bricks and mortar store in a major mall. By providing smaller retail space it has become a platform for entrepreneurs in the creative space, and an opportunity for collaboration and cross-pollinating customers and ideas. Seek out the laser-cut jewellery of Hallo Jane, the heritage-inspired homeware of Rialheim, and the sophisticated fashion of Kayla Stam.

On weekends, head for the Rosebank Sunday Market, where a laid-back community market takes over the rooftop parking space. Here you'll find African crafts and car boot traders selling antiques and bric-a-brac, alongside stalls offering a delectable array of local dishes.



Soko District



Marble



Marble's signature steak



Chef David Higgs

EATING OUT

You certainly won't go hungry in Rosebank. Over the past five years the suburb has staked its claim as the fine-dining hub of the city, and that's largely thanks to chef David Higgs and his remarkable live-fire restaurant Marble.

Marble is something of an upmarket homage to the South African barbecue, complete with a wood-fired grill imported from the United States. Start with cocktails in the stylish bar – note the remarkable mural behind the mixologists – before taking your table. If you're dining alone, counter seating offers a fantastic view into the kitchens to watch the flames work their magic.

It's an extensive menu of starters, prime cuts and Marble's signature steaks. Meat is the hero here, but Higgs pays equal attention to seafood and vegetarian dishes, from turmeric-roasted cauliflower to line fish. The starter of coal-fired octopus is simply superb, plated with an aioli of black sesame and green pepper salsa, charred corn and green olive balancing the richness of octopus. Mains? You won't go wrong with any of the steaks, not least the rib eye doused in butter-pepper sauce and a side of crisp Hasselback potatoes. There's an impressive wine-list too, but you're safe in the hands of sommelier Wikus Human.

Downstairs, Higgs continues to innovate at The Pantry, which reimagines the traditional convenience store. Sure, you can still pick up milk and bread, but you'll also find hand-selected cuts of prime meat and gourmet convenience foods to go. In one corner the oven turns out artisanal breads, while wines from the Marble list upstairs are offered for sale. Golden rotisserie chickens and fresh salads are here too, alongside delicate pastries and a vibrant display of fresh-cut flowers.

Another new addition to Rosebank's menu of gourmet experience is at Ethos, in Oxford Parks, where executive chef Ken Phuduhudu delivers an inspired menu of relaxed fine dining with a Mediterranean bent. Think fresh burrata cheese filled with roasted rosemary and garlic dressing, or lamb picanha rolled in Turkish spices and coal-grilled. It's all dished up in a gorgeous light-filled space, where sultry banquettes surround a gnarled olive tree as it reaches for elegantly contoured ceilings. Need an elegant space for a business lunch? This is it.

BUT IS IT ART?

Aside from fine food Rosebank is also a hub for fine art in the city, and plays host to some of Johannesburg's most celebrated galleries. The Keyes Art Mile is the heart of the industry, often hosting open-air public art events, and it's where you'll find the storied Everard Read gallery.

While it remains the oldest commercial art gallery in South Africa, the Everard Read exhibition space on Keyes Avenue celebrates contemporary African artists across a series of gallery spaces. Across the road, the striking Circa gallery is an artwork in itself, the curving concrete ramp ascending to a striking oval gallery of screed floors and triple-volume ceilings. Both are open to the public, at no charge. 🌍



 air
Seychelles

Flight information: www.airseychelles.com



1

QUEEN OF THE HILLS

WORDS: CHRISTINE PEMBERTON



2

High in the Himalayas of northern India is the little town of Mussoorie, a popular hill station. Mussoorie has drawn travellers for nigh on 200 years, a majority of them trying to escape the fierce summer heat of the plains. Actually, we can exaggerate by a year, surely, and say 'for 200 years' rather than 'nigh on' because the date when Mussoorie was founded is traditionally given as 1823. This was when Captain Frederick Young set up a small hunting lodge there for his own use. His fellow Brits quickly followed his example, and in a couple of years a sanatorium was built for convalescing soldiers in Landour, a short distance away.

Nostalgic colonial officials built themselves holiday homes in the forested hills, which reminded them of 'home', giving their cottages names like Wildflower and Shamrock. It was cool, and damp, and green, and the homesick Europeans loved it. They recreated their world as best they could, high in the Indian hills building churches, and libraries, and schools, and – sadly but inevitably – cemeteries. They held amateur dramatics, they partied hard, they played polo, they had grand balls, freed from the constraints and protocol of Delhi and Shimla.

Indian Maharajas quickly followed, many shunning Shimla, where the Viceroy and his entourage summered, in favour of the less stuffy atmosphere in Mussoorie and Landour. Of all the royal homes in town, none is more resplendent than the wonderfully named Chateau Kapurthala, the Mussoorie residence of the Maharajah of Kapurthala, built

in the late 19th century and modelled on a French chateau, complete with turrets.

For a little town, Mussoorie has always punched well above her weight. You might, for example, have heard of one of the town's most famous residents, a George Everest who lived there in the early 19th century for almost a decade. Yes indeed, he is the very same man whom the mountain is named after. Sir George was the Surveyor General of India, and in fact his cottage, which had fallen into disrepair has recently been renovated, which is welcome news.

The ex-Amir of Afghanistan, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, all lived in Mussoorie, so it's little surprise that there is a palpable sense of history about the crowded little streets, which wind their way up and down and up and down the steep hills. From the colonial architecture to the street and house names, you feel as though you have stepped back in time.

The Mall. Picture Palace. Library – the names are a living link to the colonial days, but in the decades following independence, Mussoorie has evolved into a thoroughly Indian-ised town (despite the street names!). It is now a busy, crowded place – packed during long weekends and the summer holiday – but there is still a distinct hill station vibe. People go for walks to see waterfalls and the views over the mountains. They shop for woollens. They go for pony rides. The pace of life is altogether slower and more relaxed than in the city.

The first schools in Mussoorie were built by the British, including one of the country's top public schools, Wynberg Allen, founded in the 19th century and as more and more schools followed suit, the town became an education hub.

The town is built along a 15 kilometre long horseshoe ridge, and there are mountain and forest views in all directions, but with so much new construction, it can sometimes feel too crowded. At moments like that, the solution is to head to Landour – originally a separate village, but now part of Mussoorie. In Landour the pace of life is slower and quieter, and as an army cantonment town, construction is regulated so there is a much more sedate, old fashioned feel to the place.



3



4

1. Sunset over the Himalayas seen from Chaman Estate, on one of the hillsides overlooking the little town.
2. Mussoorie Library, dating from 1843, is more than just a historical landmark. That part of town is universally known as 'Library' and the surrounding market is called 'Library Bazaar'.
3. There are little paths leading up and down the hills, all waiting to be explored.
4. A cute little home in the Benog Wildlife Sanctuary, festooned with prayer flags.
5. A stunning sunset and rainbow over the Himalayas.
6. Everywhere is a climb in Mussoorie, but then you are rewarded with stunning views over the forested mountain ranges.

It is charming, with a handful of shops and a church and a famous language school, established over 100 years ago, and still teaching Hindi to foreigners, as well as Woodstock School, founded in the mid-19th century by American missionaries.

The secret to exploring Mussoorie and Landour is to walk, as much as you can. There are little back roads and switchback-y paths, that bypass the busy centre of town, and as you walk through tall deodar forests, and pass little stone cottages, you relax into holiday mode. This is, after all, why you come to a hill station – to explore the outdoors and to enjoy the bracing air. And if your walk somehow ends up in a little café or coffee shop – especially in Landour – then so be it.



IMAGES COURTESY OF CHRISTINE PEMBERTON + WIKIPEDIA

“

KNOWN AS THE QUEEN OF THE HILLS, MUSSOORIE IS AN INTRIGUING PLACE TO VISIT, A MIX OF NOSTALGIA AND MODERNISM, OF OLD CHURCHES AND ZIP-LINES, OF STEEP HILLS AND STUNNING VIEWS”

5



6

And, of course, there are the mountains. The panoramas of the Himalayan ranges are breathtaking, and the views of snow covered peaks from Mussoorie on a clear day are stunning and awe-inspiring. On a clear day you can have amazing views of Bandarpooch, Srikantha, the Gangotri group and the Chaukhamba.

There are forests and nature reserves to explore, which are (surprisingly) usually quite empty, making it a joy to explore and try your hand at bird watching.

Known as the Queen of the Hills, Mussoorie is an intriguing place to visit, a mix of nostalgia and modernism, of old churches and zip-lines, of steep hills and stunning views. 🌄



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com



The Ropeway/Cable Car is a tourist attraction in Mussoorie.

PARADISE IN THE STORM

WORDS: TONY MATHIOT

During the Second World War, when Seychelles was a British colony, the echoes of thunder even reached this Indian Ocean island, a thousand miles from anywhere.

At Mont Fleuri, a stone's throw away from Victoria is the largest Cemetery in Seychelles. It opened in 1875 on 22 acres of land. In a corner of the Cemetery, in the heavy shade of a great yellow flame tree, there is a cenotaph inscribed with the names of the 314 Seychellois men who lost their lives in German East Africa during the First World War (1914-1918). It also includes the names of many of those who died in Libya, North Africa and Egypt during the Second World War.

Let's wander back through our short and often turbulent history. Let's go back to the year 1939: the outbreak of the Second World War. Seychelles was then a British colony administered by a 51 year old governor, Arthur Francis Grimble and King George VI was three years into his rule as head of the British Empire.

As German armies, headed by massive mechanised divisions, marched across the frozen wastes of Poland, the rest of the world shuddered at the chilling prospect of what indeed became the most overwhelming tragedy of the 20th century.

Over here, on this side of the Equator, the Seychelles with its population of 32,015 inhabitants seemed safely remote from the gathering storm. Most of them earned their livelihood as fishermen or as labourers on plantations. During the first half of the 20th century, vanilla and patchouli production, cinnamon leaf oil, guano export along with the coconut industry were pivotal sources of revenues for the Seychelles. The complacent landowners who had in February of that same year formed the Seychelles taxpayers and landowners association saw no obvious need to diversify their agricultural produce until governor Grimble it seemed, must have seen the sword of Damocles suspended over our islands and initiated, The Food Production Ordinance of 1939. The compulsory powers of the bill compelled all landowners to allocate more land to the cultivation of food crops instead of focusing mainly on the production of spices and copra for export abroad. That ordinance would have prophetic significance in the years that followed...

In September 1940 when Great Britain became the target of devastating air raids by the German Luftwaffe and the Italian forces invaded Egypt from Libya, it was assumed that the Seychelles, being





a British protectorate and part of His Majesty's dominions could consequently become a target for the axis powers.

The colonial administration took initiatives that enabled Seychelles to make small but important contributions to the war effort. In 1940, garrisons of Indian troops arrived, followed later by the King's African Rifles who remained until 1946.

Military look-out posts were established in various strategic locations on Mahé and on the island of Ste. Anne. On Mahé these were situated mainly in the north from where the Port of Victoria could be monitored.

These look-out posts, constructed of stone, were essentially gun-emplacements where mortars were kept at the ready. These were breech-loading canons with a maximum range of about 25 kilometres (15 miles). They were fixed on trunnions so that the angle of elevation could be adjusted. A typical example of one of those look-out posts can still be seen on the coast line of North East Point. Its seemingly impregnable concrete ceiling and small rectangular gun turrets conjure up images of British soldiers on the alert behind their guns.

On 8th May 1941, a German war ship 'Penguin' was sunk by H.M.S Cornwall close to Farquar. Sixty officers survived and were transported to Mahé. Yes, enemy vessels did create ripples in our part of the Indian Ocean. German and Japanese submarines preyed through our waters like rapacious sharks. Apart from sinking thousands of tonnes of allied shipping, on 12th February 1944, a ship named khedive Ismael was sunk. It was carrying a whole battalion of the King's African Rifles on its way to Burma and some 1,000 troops drowned.

Signal Hill, north west of Victoria, was also a strategic observation site where Seychellois and British officers kept watch on Victoria Harbour. This 417 metre mountain is enshrined in the Maritime History of Seychelles because for many decades even before the war, the location was used to send, by means of an elaborate use of different colours of flags, 'maritime messages' to officers on duty at the wharf.

There is also a gun battery at North East Point, with the Royal Navy insignia in relief on the front wall that faces the sea. A British garrison was stationed there.

During the greatest war in modern history, our country was used as a depot for refuelling ships of the Royal Navy and as an advance base for anti-submarine patrols.

A total of 1,735 able-bodied young Seychelles men volunteered to join the commonwealth forces. The Seychelles pioneers who were employed locally as sentries at the look-out posts earned 80 cents a day or 24.90 Rupees per month. Those who worked

outside Seychelles earned BS 1.11 per day or 33.30 Seychelles Rupees per month. Their four companies were known as the Seychelles' Pioneers. The recruiting centre was Carnegie Hall (now the Natural History Museum building). The first group of 400 recruits left Seychelles on 7th April 1941. There was a parade at Gordon Square and the St. Louis college brass band played 'Rule, Britannia' and crowds cheered as the young recruits in uniform, hardly out of their teens, made their way aboard the ship 'Talamba' and left for Mombasa, Kenya.

Many would later return to get married and start families but more than a few would never see the mountains and the emerald sea of their beloved homeland again. France Lafortune (of Roche Caiman) was only 17 years old when he volunteered for service in 1941.

'We had to spend six months in a training camp at Beau Vallon' he recalled. There were around 400 of us. We left Seychelles for Kenya on 21st December 1941. From there, we were taken to Quassassin in the Suez Canal zone in Egypt where we underwent basic military training. France Lafortune was in the second company of Seychelles Pioneers who left Seychelles to join the Commonwealth forces that were involved in the North African Campaign.

At the legendary Battle of El Alamein the Seychelles Pioneers delivered rations to front-line troops, built bridges and aerodromes. And, as combatants, some made the ultimate sacrifice. There was carnage and mayhem at the siege of Tobruk in June 1942.

Indeed, inhabitants of Mahé occasionally read on the front pages of the Government Gazette, the much dreaded 'Roll of Honour'. In 1942, there were 14 deaths.

In September 1943 the Allies followed their North African success by invading Sicily and bombing the Italian mainland. The second company of Seychelles Pioneers formed part of the commonwealth forces that landed at Salerno, the seaport city of Italy.

It was not until June 1944 that the allied forces entered Rome after having lost an estimated 22,000 men in heavy fighting against a strong defence of axis forces. About 60 of the Seychelles volunteers never came back.

Right from the outset of the war strict regulations were introduced and rigidly enforced that altered the normal way of life for most of the Seychelles inhabitants. There were various Defence Regulations, from taxes on the manufacture of fermented juice (three cents on every litre) to petrol and food rationing. In 1940 all motor vehicles had to be 'immobilised' between 7p.m and 5a.m. The contravention of this regulation entailed a penalty of 5 Seychelles Rupees. Those days, a trip in a rickshaw within the town cost 40 cents. People were advised to dig trenches in their gardens, to be used as air raid shelters and to keep water buckets filled.

It was prohibited for crowds to gather for sightseeing or for any other recreational purpose because crowds could hamper any military activity



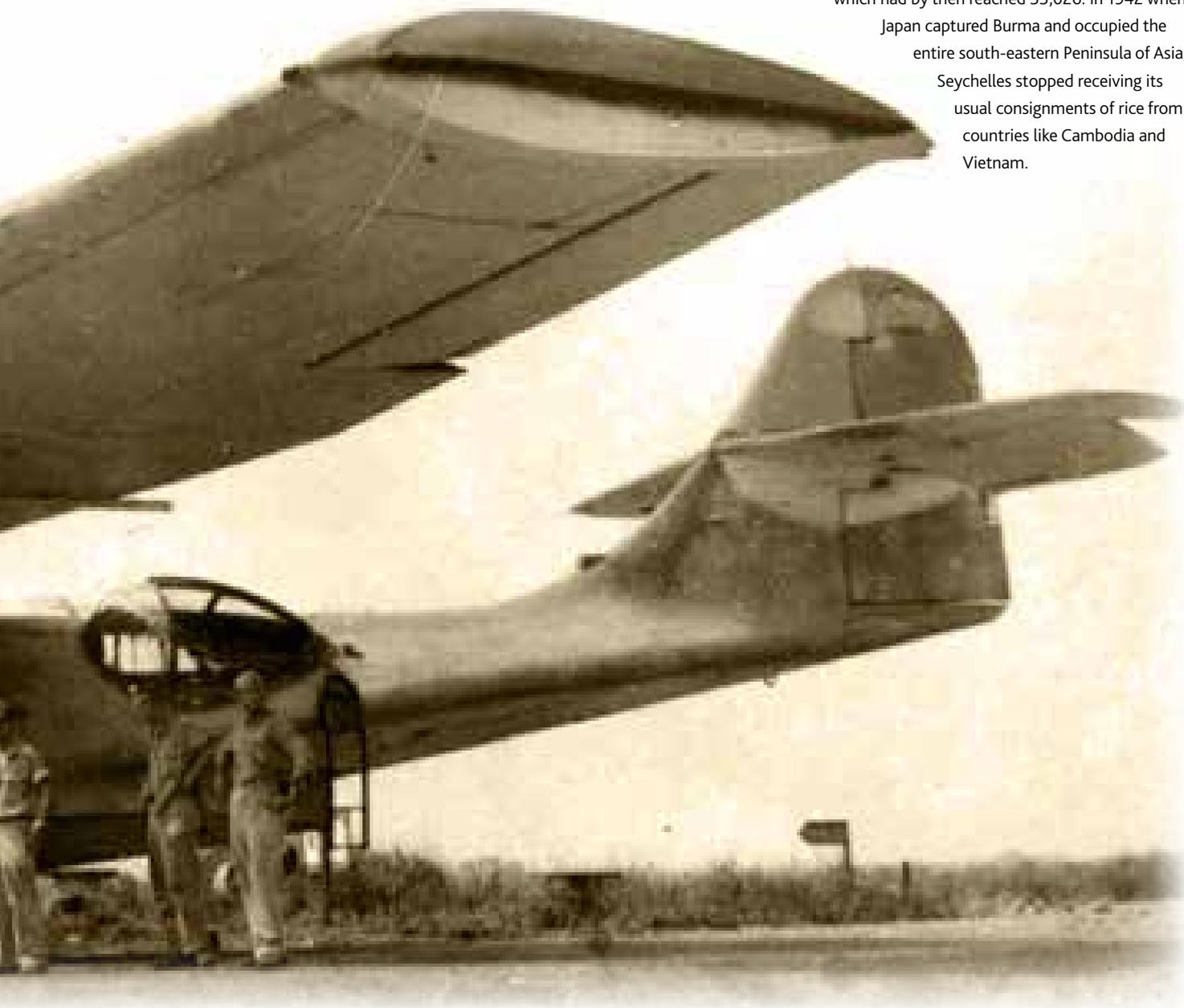
and could also be easy targets for enemy aeroplanes. Even the private ownership of cameras was banned. Few people then could have afforded to own a Kodak but the thought of snapshots of the location of the look-out posts falling into enemy hands must have been considered a risk.

It was an eventful Wednesday on 23rd July 1941. At 2.20a.m an RAF Catalina seaplane which was heading for Colombo crashed in the sea six miles north east of Victoria. Wreckage was found but there were no survivors and ten crew members perished. Suddenly, the remote Seychelles was jolted out of its tropical somnolence and the inhabitants of Mahé became aware that the disaster was somehow linked to the war taking place thousands of miles away.

During the war, Catalina seaplanes, or 'flying boats' as they were called, were used for anti-submarine patrols and for directing the Royal Navy to survivors of ships sunk by Japanese or German U-boats. Four of them were based at Ste. Anne.

At the beginning of 1942, a new governor – William Marston Logan – was appointed. He re-enforced his predecessor's wartime-austerity measures and implemented new ones through his legislative council. He had hardly begun to take stock of the social situation on the islands when he was confronted with the most vexatious problem that a governor could ever face during wartime: food shortages.

The problem was aggravated by an increase in the population which had by then reached 33,026. In 1942 when Japan captured Burma and occupied the entire south-eastern Peninsula of Asia, Seychelles stopped receiving its usual consignments of rice from countries like Cambodia and Vietnam.







And rice being the staple food for all the inhabitants, its scarcity was enough to create panic and the anticipation of famine.

Maize flour was imported to substitute rice and farmers were urged to cultivate more food crops like yams, cassava and sweet potatoes.

To help ease the food situation the colonial government took a decision to bring tortoises over to Mahé from Aldabra to be slaughtered and sold at 25 cents per half kilogramme!

Early in June of that same year, food rationing came into effect and the inhabitants got acquainted with the precious monthly food coupons.

During that same month British forces landed in Madagascar to forestall possible Japanese intervention which could threaten the allied supply route to the Middle East. For the greater part of the war, the colony was in air communication with the outside world, an amenity that was of paramount importance. Since 1940, when France had been captured, communications by cable between Britain and her possessions east of the Mediterranean had been severed so Seychelles became a central point for the connection of telegraph cables between Zanzibar, Ceylon and Mauritius.

The colonial government would not let Hitler interrupt the etiquette of colonialism. Empire Day was celebrated as usual on every 24th May during the war years with a parade and grandiloquent speeches of allegiance to his Majesty. Of course very few of those who were in the cheering crowds then are with us today.

But many who were born at the end of that savage and brutal war are basking in the glory of the nation that they have built over the long and peaceful years. And as for the ruins of the last remaining look-out post, on the coast of North East Point, it will remain standing for yet many more years until the dilapidated walls crumble and disintegrate...

It is a decaying shrine to those sons of Seychelles who, in the bloom of their youth, dared to venture out to fulfill a noble cause in a wretched war that brought so much devastation and agony, around 80 years ago. 🇲🇵

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AIR SEYCHELLES GOES ALL OUT IN ISRAEL, MAXIMUM PRESENCE AT IMTM

Air Seychelles is going all out to strengthen its position in becoming the airline of choice to the Seychelles and beyond, within the Israeli market. Kick-starting its extensive range of media, trade and marketing activities in the most vibrant city of Tel Aviv, the lively Air Seychelles colours attracted visitors and travel trade professionals at the 28th edition of the International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM). Featuring exhibitors and trendsetters from every aspect of Israel's tourism, alongside a significant number of exhibitors from overseas, the travel trade fair also comprised of workshops, seminars and press conferences.

Maximising its presence at the fair, the airline was also able to showcase its product, services, and special deals on offer to those planning their summer getaway to further boost confidence amongst the travelling public.

Commenting about the travel show, Charles Johnson, Air Seychelles Chief Commercial Officer said: "As the only non-stop carrier between Seychelles and Israel, we are thrilled yet again to increase our capacity on this popular route to meet the peak season demand." "Air Seychelles has become the airline of choice for Israelis flying everywhere in the Indian Ocean, and April 2022 was no exception. With relaxed travel rules and a desire for sea, sun and sand destinations, Air Seychelles was able to deliver Israeli's to Seychelles, Maldives and Mauritius for the holiday of their dreams."



AIR SEYCHELLES TO CELEBRATE ITS 45TH ANNIVERSARY

Air Seychelles will celebrate its 45th anniversary on 26th October this year with a series of special offers planned for its guests across its international network.

Incorporated in 1977, following the merger of Air Mahé and Inter-Island Airways, the national flag carrier was then renamed 'Air Seychelles'.

The airline started to operate domestically using Britten-Norman Trislander, Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander and later Short 360 aircraft before expanding into long haul services in 1983.

Currently, Air Seychelles continues to offer flights across its regional network to Johannesburg, Mauritius, Mumbai and Tel Aviv in addition to operating domestically to the islands across the Seychelles archipelago.

 air
seychelles 

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF FLYING



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, providing guests a bird's eye view of the Seychelles inner islands.



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

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Air Seychelles global offices

India



Capital: New Delhi
 Languages: Hindi, English
 Currency: Indian Rupee
 Area: 3,287,590 km²
 Population: 1,263,830,000
 Air Seychelles destination: Mumbai

Bird Group Ltd
 204, 2nd Floor A Wing
 Kanakia Wall Street 400093
 Mumbai
 Tel: +91 959 4013686
 Email: hmsales@bird.travel
 hmres@bird.travel

Israel



Capital: Jerusalem
 Language: Hebrew
 Currency: Israel Shekel
 Area: 20,770 km²
 Population: 9,085,610
 Air Seychelles destination: Tel Aviv

AIRLINES GSA
 3 Gilboa St
 Airport City 7019900
 Tel Aviv
 Tel: +972 3 5160598
 Email: hm@airlines-gsa.com

Mauritius



Capital: Port Louis
 Languages: French, English, Creole
 Currency: Rupees
 Area: 2,040 km²
 Population: 1,243,000
 Air Seychelles destination: Port Louis

Rogers Aviation (Mauritius) Ltd
 The Gardens
 Bagatelle Office Park
 Moka, Mauritius
 Tel: +230 2026697
 Email: salim.mohungoo@rogers-aviation.com

Seychelles



Capital: Victoria
 Languages: Seychellois Creole, English
 Currency: Seychelles Rupee
 Area: 456 km²
 Population: 95,235
 Air Seychelles destination: Mahé & Praslin

Air Seychelles Ltd
 Seychelles International Airport
 P.O. Box 386
 Mahé
 Tel: +248 4391000
 Email: callcentre@airseychelles.com

South Africa



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

Rogers Aviation
 280 Oak Avenue
 Ferndale
 Randburg 2194
 Gauteng
 Tel: +27 11 3264440/+27 83 3871698
 Email: airseychelles@rogers-aviation.co.za
 helenM@rogers-aviation.co.za

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 2022

- New Year (1 January)
- Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday (15, 17 & 19 April)
- Labour Day (1 May)

- Corpus Christi (16 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.

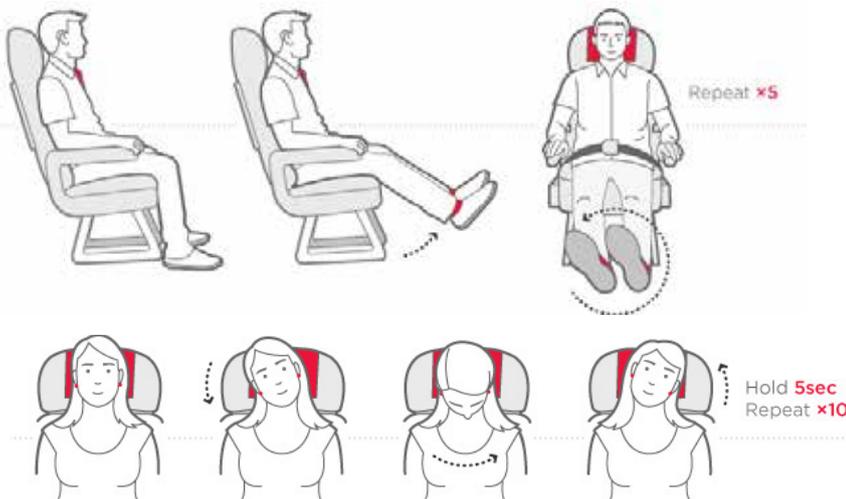
Taxi service

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.



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.

Seychelles is welcoming visitors from across the globe, irrespective of their vaccination status.

PCR test is no longer required for fully immunised visitors to the Seychelles. Exemption is also granted to visitors having recently tested positive to the COVID-19 virus-between 2 to 12 weeks prior to travel – upon provision of proof of infection and recovery.

Asymptomatic infants under the age of 2 years old are exempted from providing a PCR or Antigen test for entry.

Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated visitors, will need to have a negative 72 hour PCR test or antigen test taken 24 hours prior to departure.

Regardless of vaccination status, and although no visa is required for entry into Seychelles, all visitors must complete the mandatory Travel Authorisation (TA) at seychelles.govtas.com prior to arriving at the airport.

The TA document is essential for travel and will be required at check-in counters. Visitors failing to provide the approved TA document will not be allowed to board for Seychelles.

Johannesburg to Seychelles

Paradise is only hours away.

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

Flights bookable on airseychelles.com



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www.cwseychelles.com

