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Inflight Magazine for Air Seychelles • October - December 2022



1984



1999



 air seychelles **45**

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STAR CASINO

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Dear Guests, Welcome aboard!

The Air Seychelles livery is indeed flying high this October, as the airline marks its 45th anniversary. We reflect on all the incredible work the team has done over the decades to achieve the high standards that make an important difference for our customers.

Air Seychelles has always been playing an outsized role in a highly competitive industry. Following the merger of Air Mahé and Inter island Airways in 1977, the domestic airline was officially renamed Air Seychelles in 1978.

Now, 45 years since our formation, our vision is keeping Seychelles connected and, as the national airline of the Republic of Seychelles, Air Seychelles continues to support and promote tourism.

To date, the airline's regional network, operated by two Airbus A320neo aircraft, includes Johannesburg, Mauritius, Mumbai and Tel Aviv whilst the domestic network with a fleet of five Twin Otter TurboProps operates between Mahé and Praslin as well as chartered flights on demand.

Air Seychelles has also been ranked as the third youngest airline in Africa by ch-aviation, the influential airline intelligence provider. This is a tribute to all those who were involved in the airline's fleet renewal, and not only shows that Air Seychelles has a fleet of aircraft that operates economically, but it further demonstrates that the environmental impact was given due consideration when opting for the best fleet for the airline. We are proud that our efforts to minimise our environmental footprint has been recognised.

In addition to transporting passengers across the airline's regional network Seychelles also offers ground handling and cargo services to customer airlines operating at the Seychelles International Airport.

Looking back at the history of the airline, we can definitely say that the story of Air Seychelles has and continues to be, a remarkable voyage from the past to the present and future. See story on page 24.

Thank you to every member of our team for your resilience, commitment and incredible talent.

Thank you, also, to our customers who continue to select Air Seychelles and rely on our leading and proven services. We now look forward to extending and improving our track record of value creation, innovation and success in the years to come.

Enjoy your flight!



“

**Celebrating
45 years of flying**

”

Captain Sandy Benoiton
Acting Chief Executive Officer

FEATURES



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THE SPIRIT OF SEYCHELLES

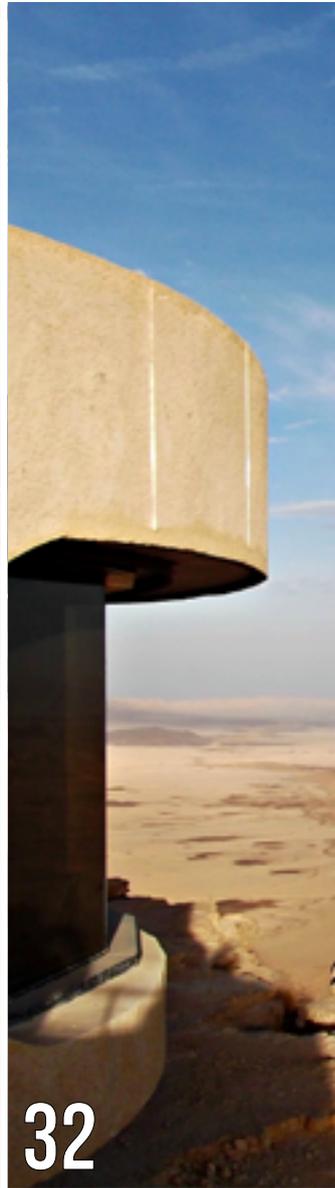
Restoring a dilapidated historical house, turning it into one of the leading cultural and tourist attractions of Seychelles. The house is once again alive with the comings and goings of a busy operation, the site has come alive once more.



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AIR SEYCHELLES — A SMALL AIRLINE WITH A BIG REPUTATION

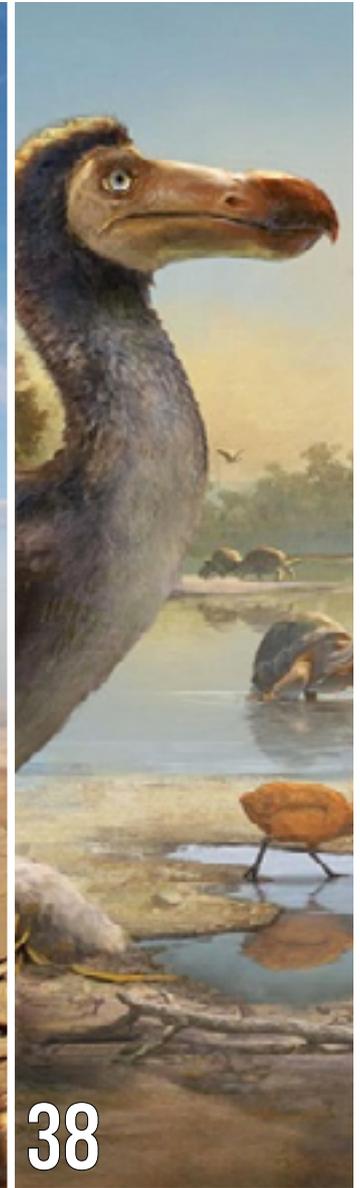
Despite a few setbacks over the years, Air Seychelles is proud of its achievements and looks forward to a bright and profitable future.



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MAKHTESH RAMON

Despite its appearance the Ramon Crater is not an impact crater from a meteor, nor a crater formed by a volcanic eruption, but an erosion cirque. The crater is the world's largest and was created by a collision with an asteroid from space, it was in reality created by water erosion.



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PAST DOMAIN OF THE DODO

It is almost impossible to consider the birds of Mauritius without reflecting on the sad tale of the dodo, doomed to extinction. Mauritius still remains a Mecca for bird-watchers in search of special island forms found nowhere else on earth.



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MALDIVES FLOATING CITY

There could scarcely be a corner of the world further removed in both distance and spirit from the everyday than these Indian Ocean islands. Maldivians have a strong relationship with the sea, so living on water is aligned with their culture and history.



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BUYING ORIENTAL CARPETS

Rugs can be classified according to their country or region of origin. The diverse ethnic mix of the expatriate population puts local dealers in contact with a huge area covering Iran, Pakistan, India, the Central Asian republics, Russia, as well as the other Gulf and Middle Eastern nations.



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TAKE A BITE OUT OF FORDSBURG

For a taste of the multicultural tapestry that makes up Johannesburg, take a stroll on the streets of Fordsburg. Whether you come for the history or the culinary adventure, Fordsburg offers an authentic taste of inner-city Johannesburg.



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GREEN CHRISTMAS

'It doesn't matter whether you're shovelling snow or picnicking beneath palm trees in the tropics, come November, there will be people up ladders practising their 'Christmas décor' skills.'

REGULARS



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

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Air Seychelles news, Air Seychelles global offices; International route map and fleet; Travel tips.



Cover images:
Above: Air Seychelles Boeing 707s, the first long range aircraft.
Centre: Air Seychelles fleet of five Boeing 767s.
Below: Africa's first Airbus, A320neo named Veuve.
Images © Air Seychelles

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The best way to Island hop



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SSFC La Digue Offshore Fishing Tournament

Venue: Mahé

Date: 28-29 October 2022

Email: ssfcmal@gmail.com

SSFC La Digue Offshore Fishing Tournament will be held on Mahé this year due to restrictions. The two-day, 31 hour overnight event challenges anglers with 25 total species in both bottom and trolling categories. It is one of the most attended SSFC events of the year. Even if you are not participating with a team in the tournament, the weigh-in event is an event not to miss. Many of the Seychelles species will be on display at the weigh-in event.



World Conference on Soil, Water, Energy and Air (EUWCSWEA)

Venue: Victoria, Mahé

Date: 4-5 November 2022

Website: <http://eurasiaweb.com>

The conference provides a platform for professionals involved in Soil, Water, Energy and Air to exchange knowledge and gain an insight into the state of the art in the current technology, techniques and solutions in soil, water, energy and air as they have been developed and applied in different countries. Participants include a wide variety of stakeholders from research and academia, to industrial sectors as well as government organisations.



SSFC Big Game Classic & Offshore World Championship Qualifier

Venue: Mahé

Date: 3 December 2022

Email: ssfcmal@gmail.com

The Big Game Classic is a trolling event with a focus on marlin. The all release tournament typically showcases Seychelles largest marlin. In total, 10 species are the target including all marlin, sailfish, swordfish, barracuda, wahoo, dorado, yellowfin tuna and dogtooth tuna.

MATALAN
REAL LIFE READY

MATALAN

Location: New Port, Victoria, Mont Buxton

Leading family value retailer Matalan is now open in the Seychelles. Working with a new franchise partner, Antonia Trading, Matalan brings great quality and value fashion for ladies, men and kids. The store offers plenty of shopping space for customers along with dedicated parking.

Robert Stravens, chief executive of Antonia Trading, said: "We are thrilled to be partnering with Matalan to bring the leading UK value fashion & home retailer to families in Seychelles. Matalan is a brand which many Seychellois seek out in their travel overseas for its reassuring British high quality as well as affordable prices. We feel privileged that Matalan has chosen Seychelles for its first store in Sub-Saharan Africa."

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MATALAN

REAL LIFE READY



GEM OF THE OCEAN

Star Casino is a star attraction of the Seychelles



Flung across 177 square miles of the Indian Ocean, the 115-island Seychelles archipelago may be thinly populated – fewer than 100,000 souls – but it is one of the leading tourist draws of the region. And central to that attraction is the quaint city of Victoria, home to Star Casino. As though there weren't enough islands in the Seychelles, private developers reclaimed land to create one more for a diversified resort. Ensnconed in it are a shopping mall, 1,000 condominiums, homes and apartments, tennis courts ... and Star Casino.

Work on Star began with the acquisition of the necessary acreage in 2016. Behind the project were mogul Sam Arnold of Star Entertainment and ISMS. They put into place veteran British casino managers with 75 years of experience between them.

Work proceeded apace and the casino opened in June 2019 with only slot machines. Table games followed soon after. It almost became Ill-Starred Casino, for when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, the Seychelles government cut off all tourism to the islands. Star Casino had to shut down, too, for three months. From May to December, the gaming palace subsisted on residential play.

A second shutdown at the very end of December 2020 also lasted for three months, followed by a series of curfews. Star Casino is now open 'round the clock again but some



safety measures remain in place. If you play there, expect to have to mask up and to maintain a 1.5-metre social distance from other patrons.

Those punters hail from a wide network of Middle Eastern and African countries. Star Casino counts Turkey, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain, Israel, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and India among its feeder markets. China was a pipeline of customers, too, but a Beijing crackdown on offshore gambling has seen that spigot turned off.

Despite this Babel of cosmopolitan customers, English is the lingua franca of Star Casino. However it also employs staffers conversant in the native Seychelles tongue, Creole, as well as Russian, Hebrew and Turkish. The currency of choice is the Seychelles rupee, although the American dollar may be introduced later this year.

The gambling offering at Star Casino embraces some 11 table games and 158 slot machines. Though the potential for baccarat is in place, at present Star does not offer it. However, its poker repertory is robust, including three-card stud, five-card stud and seven-card poker. Other table games include blackjack and – most popular of all, particularly with Turkish and Arabian players – roulette. Star Casino boasts a single-zero roulette wheel ... try finding one of those in Las Vegas. You can't!

Patrons of Star Casino do have to register with the casino (and, by extension, with its regulator, the Financial Service Authority). However, this gets you enrolled in the casino's players club, which brings with it the chance to earn gifts and promotions, win lotteries and accrue points.

Nor is Star an all-gambling casino. It has a lounge for live entertainment where local bands play twice a week. At the casino's heart is the popular Star Bar, as well as a snack outlet that serves pizza, sausage and other modest foods to players. Management hopes to upgrade further and add a full-service restaurant, as well as a dedicated area for VIP play, with high-limit action. It also wants to ramp up junket business in the near future.

True, one could gamble without leaving the African mainland. There are casinos in Tanzania and on the island of Mauritius. But they are not considered to be of the same quality as Star Casino, nor do they offer the seductive sand/sea/gambling trifecta to be found in venerable Victoria. The latter is a place to unwind in tranquility, unlike such relentless casino destinations as Las Vegas, Macao and Atlantic City. The laid-back Seychelles vibe allows one to take in the natural beauty and then head over to Star Casino to have a flutter.

As one Star executive puts it, "If people want to come for quietness or they want a honeymoon, this is the perfect destination. Or come with your girlfriend – if your wife doesn't mind."



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The Jerusalem March

Venue: Jerusalem

Date: 11 October 2022

Tens of thousands of people are expected to attend the 64th Jerusalem March, as they do each year. The day of the walk includes three main events: a morning walk at Jerusalem's amazing nature lanes, a festive parade at the main streets and a huge happening for families at Sacher Park. The activities and shows are free of charge.



South African Fashion Week

Venue: Mall of Africa, Midrand

Date: 23-24 October 2022

The South African Fashion Week Trade Show is the country's premier B2B expo of contemporary fashion design. Exhibitors comprise men's and womenswear, jewellery, footwear and accessories and are all established small, micro or medium-sized (SMME) enterprises with capacity to supply boutiques and departmental stores in South Africa. The trade expo is a convenient marketing space conceptualized to facilitate deal-making but equally to create a conducive environment for networking and relationship-building with various industry stakeholders, including the media.

Diwali or Deepawali

Venue: All over India

Date: 24 October 2022

Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights falls on the new moon night in the Hindu month of Ashwin coinciding with winter. As evening falls, streets take on a festive look with shimmering garlands of electric and oil lamps lit across balconies and windows. Sweets and gifts are exchanged between families and friends amidst bursting of crackers.





RUM FROM THE OTHER SIDE

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THE *Seychelles*

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Maldives Victory Day

Venue: Malé

Date: 3 November 2022

Victory Day is a public holiday in the Republic of the Maldives. The holiday commemorates the defeat of an attempted coup on this day in 1988. To mark the day, a special flag hoisting ceremony takes place near the Victory monument and parades are held in the streets of Malé and Hulhumalé.



Festival of lights

Venue: Joburg Zoo

Date: 25 November 2022

Joburg Zoo in association with the City of Johannesburg entities; Joburg Theatre, City Parks and City power are excited to present the annual Joburg Zoo Festival of Lights featuring an enchanting collection of illuminated life-size animal characters and classical, harmonious entertainment, food and craft night market for visitors to the Joburg Zoo.

Patrons can enjoy a tranquil walk in the zoo on a designated lit route away from the animals under trees decorated in enchanting lights. The Joburg Zoo Festival of Lights offers patrons entertainment and a night out in the zoo for all ages. Children under three years of age enter for free.



Mauritius Marathon

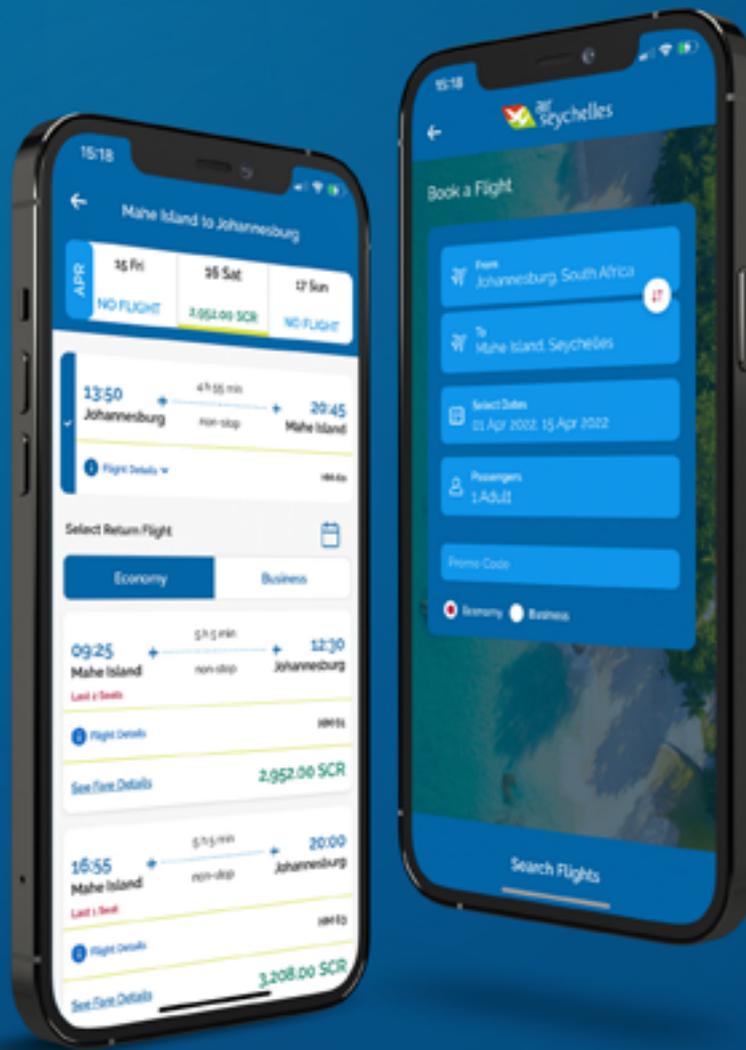
Venue: St Felix

Date: December 2022

The Mauritius Marathon considers itself to have the 'most beautiful track in the world'. Other races also taking place are the Mauritius Half Marathon and a 10K Family Run.

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.



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New commemorative labels for Seybrew

It started as a way to recognise all three main residential islands of the inner archipelago for their role in making Seybrew the national icon it is today. It resulted in three iconic pieces of art in their own right.

For Seychelles Breweries Innovations Manager Nick Ross, ideas for a commemorative label to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Seybrew's launch began to foment toward the end of last year.

"We wanted something that was a tribute to the three main islands," Ross said. "I always felt that La Digue and Praslin did not get the credit they deserve for the business."

Ross had previously worked with Seychellois artist Michael Arnephie more than 18 months ago on a commemorative can for Seybrew to celebrate the islands' 250th anniversary of the arrival of its first settlers, so he reached out to gauge his interest on another collaboration.

Arnephie, whose distinctive work has found its way into the contemporary art scene in Seychelles while also branching out into a cult merchandising phenomenon, relished another opportunity to contribute to the brand.

"Apart from the initial brief, I had a blank canvas to work with," Arnephie said. "I tried to take what is known and famous for these three places and develop these iconic symbols that could be represented in the labels."

Part of that brief was to include aspects of the Seychelles International Airport for the Mahé label, as the opening of air links coincided with the brewery's launch.

"In many ways the airport contributed to Seybrew's success," Ross said, by providing an important market segment: tourists in search of a local brew. This has resulted in the famous BOAC plane, the first to arrive in Seychelles, adorning the Mahé label – the kind of detail some consumers may not necessarily notice until closer inspection.

Other elements of the labels were less prescribed. Ross gave Arnephie plenty of latitude to explore creatively, but this still meant juggling several challenges at once.

Firstly, they all had to retain the character of the current Seybrew label. The labels also had to be consistent with each other, while depicting completely different elements from each island.

Plus, those elements would have to match stylistically in a way that not only tied the labels together in an artistic sense, but also to be reproduced technically as part of the complex process of printing the labels.

"I kept the original label next to me as I worked," Arnephie said. "It was important for me to keep that link with each of the labels."

The process was thus one of constant refinement and tweaks, with a gradual move towards a more illustrative, rather than graphical, look and feel. And every adjustment had its consequences.

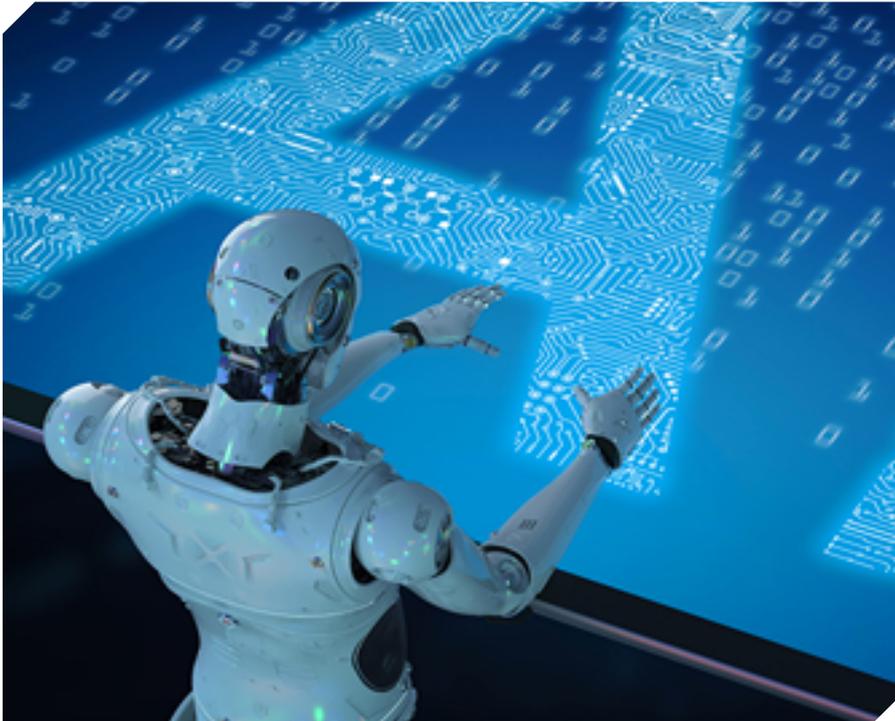
"Things tend to be flatter with graphics, but with this I had to create a lot more depth, especially to bring in the elements of nature for each island," Arnephie said. "But as you changed one, if it moved too far away from the others then you had to adjust them, too. You can get carried away creating anything, so every input helped to improve them as we went along."

The finished product is an intriguing fusion of artistry with a reflection of the patriotic sentiments the Seybrew brand has come to symbolise after 50 years.



TOP TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Technology today is changing at a swift pace, allowing faster change and progress, causing an increase of the rate of change. This means keep your eyes on the future to know those skills which, you will need to know to secure a safe job tomorrow and even learn how to get there. And if you wish to work remotely from home, here are some top emerging technology trends:



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND MACHINE LEARNING

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, has already received a lot of interest in the past decade, but it continues to be one of the new technology trends because its outstanding effects on how we live, work and play are only in the early stages. AI is already known for its advantage in image and speech recognition, smartphone personal assistants, navigation apps, ride-sharing apps and so much more.

Other than that AI will be used further to analyse communications to determine underlying connections and insights, to help predict demand for services like hospitals allowing authorities to make better decisions about resource utilisation, and to detect the changing patterns of customer behaviour by analysing data in near real-time, driving revenues and boosting personalised experiences.

EDGE COMPUTING

Formerly a new technology trend to watch, cloud computing has become mainstream, with major players AWS (Amazon Web Services), Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud Platform dominating the market. The adoption of cloud computing is still growing, as more and more businesses migrate to a cloud solution. But it's no longer the emerging technology trend. Edge is.

As the quantity of data organisations is dealing with continues to increase, they have figured the shortcomings of cloud computing in some situations. Edge computing is designed to help solve some of those problems as a way to bypass the latency caused by cloud computing and getting data to a data centre for processing. It can exist 'on the edge,' if you will, closer to where computing needs to happen. For this reason, edge computing can be used to process time-sensitive data in remote locations with limited or no connectivity to a centralized location. In those situations, edge computing can act like mini datacentres.





VIRTUAL REALITY AND AUGMENTED REALITY

The next exceptional technology trend – Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), and Extended Reality (ER). VR immerses the user in an environment while AR enhances their environment. Although this technology trend has primarily been used for gaming thus far, it has also been used for training, as with VirtualShip, a simulation software used to train U.S. Navy, Army and Coast Guard ship captains.

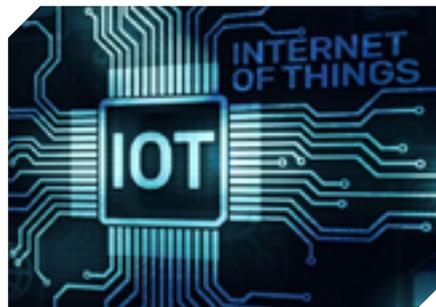
In 2022, we can expect these forms of technologies being further consolidated into our lives. Usually working in tandem with some of the other emerging technologies we've mentioned in this list, AR and VR have enormous potential in training, marketing, entertainment, education, and even rehabilitation after an injury. Either could be used to train doctors to do surgery, offer museum goers a deeper experience, enhance theme parks, or even enhance marketing.



BLOCKCHAIN

Although most people think of blockchain technology in relation to cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, blockchain offers security that is useful in many other ways. In the simplest of terms, blockchain can be described as data you can only add to, not take away from, or change. Hence the term 'chain' because you're making a chain of data. Not being able to change the previous blocks is what makes it so secure. In addition, blockchains are consensus-driven, so no one entity can take control of the data. With blockchain, you don't need a trusted third-party to oversee or validate transactions.

Several industries are involving and implementing blockchain, and as the use of blockchain technology increases, so too does the demand for skilled professionals. From a bird's eye view, a blockchain developer specialises in developing and implementing architecture and solutions using blockchain technology.



INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT)

Another reassuring new technology trend is IoT. Many 'things' are now being built with WiFi connectivity, meaning they can be connected to the Internet – and to each other. Hence, the Internet of Things, or IoT. The Internet of Things is the future, and has already allowed devices, home appliances, cars and much more to be connected to and exchange data over the Internet.

As consumers, we're already using and benefitting from IoT. We can lock our doors remotely if we forget to when we leave for work and preheat our ovens on our way home from work, all while tracking our fitness on our Fitbits. However, businesses also have much to gain now and in the near future. The IoT can enable better safety, efficiency and decision making for businesses as data is collected and analysed. It can enable predictive maintenance, speed up medical care, improve customer service, and offer benefits we haven't even imagined yet. 🌈

5G

The next technology trend that follows the IoT is 5G. Where 3G and 4G technologies have enabled us to browse the internet, use data driven services, increased bandwidths for streaming on Spotify or YouTube and so much more, 5G services are expected to revolutionize our lives. by enabling services that rely on advanced technologies like AR and VR, alongside cloud-based gaming services like Google Stadia, NVidia GeForce Now and much more. It is expected to be used in factories, HD cameras that help improve safety and traffic management, smart grid control and smart retail too.

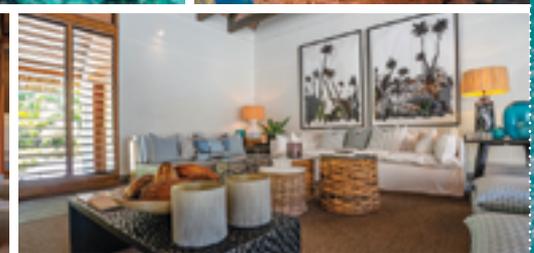
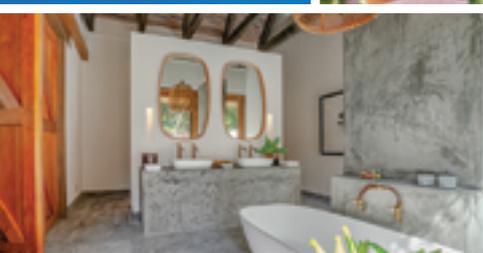




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THE SPIRIT OF SEYCHELLES

WORDS: ADRIAN SKERRETT

In April 1790, Jean François Jorre de Saint Jorre and his family sailed from Port Louis, île de France (now Mauritius) to Seychelles in search of a new life. They hoped to seize a once in a lifetime opportunity to make their fortune in a little-known land that had been uninhabited just a generation earlier, before the first French settlers made a similar journey just 20 years earlier.

In the late 18th century, France's ambitions in India gave a vital strategic value to the little known islands off the east coast of Africa, which acted as staging posts on the sea route to their emergent Indian trading stations. France considered it vital to consolidate their fragile grip on these remote outposts. Concessions were granted to the children of settlers in the new French colony of Seychelles in the hope they would put down roots, thus making a statement that the islands were now French possessions. Each concession comprised 108 arpents (about 44 hectares) of prime land which ran in strips from the coast to the mountains so that each settler had a share of every sort of terrain and access to the sea.

The Saint Jorre family were allocated property on the east coast of Mahé at La Plaine St. André, named after Jean François's place of birth at St. André in Bourbon (now Réunion), and here they constructed one of the finest homes in the islands. In the ensuing two hundred and twenty years, much has happened to the house at La Plaine St. André. It was once at the heart of bustling plantation life, when first the slaves and in later years free workers were summoned to the day's labours by the ringing of a bell, and down at the shore the family welcomed visitors arriving in their pirogues or canoes, the crops were loaded and supplies unloaded and fishermen set off to catch the wherewithal for dinner. Most comings and goings went by pirogue, the roads being more difficult to traverse than the shallow coastal waters. As the heat of the day increased, the family would sit on the airy verandahs, the ladies in their voluminous gowns fanning themselves and complaining of the heat, and the gentlemen resplendent in their white suits and stiff collars, smoking their cigars made of home-grown tobacco and sipping rum and water. The rum they drank was probably also locally made, or perhaps imported from the flourishing distillery on Frégate island. They would not have had to send so far afield even as that these days for their glass of superior rum; for La Plaine St. André is now the setting for Seychelles' premier rum distillery.

Trois Frères Distillery distill and bottle produce three series of quality spirits under the Takamaka Bay label. The Seychelles Series comprises of five white and flavoured rums, including a traditional white rum, a rum laced with the aroma of coconut and a dark spiced rum, while the St. André Series is a collection of four rums crafted to showcase Creole traditions. The Le Clos Series is all about limited edition (often 800 bottle or less) older rums, with releases that tend to be from either a single or a couple of casks bottled at cask strength with nothing added and nothing taken away.

The Takamaka Rum story begins in 2,000, when Robert D'Offay and his son Bernard were inspired by a book they obtained on home distillation. With limited access to conventional distillation ingredients and equipment, they purchased sugar and yeast locally and used their backyard swimming pool as a cooling tower for their makeshift condenser. They were joined by Bernard's older brother, Richard and after

more than a year of experimentation, sometimes with dubious but sometimes remarkable results, they opened Trois Frères Distillery. Within a short time, the first ever order of Takamaka dark rum was distilled and delivered.

The company began life at Providence, Mahé, the main industrial zone of Seychelles. Richard and Bernard D'Offay saw the potential to transfer the business away from the setting of a modern industrial estate to a context more in tune with the roots of rum distillation and at the same time restoring a dilapidated historical house, turning it into one of the leading cultural and tourist attractions of Seychelles. The location could not be more appropriate. The house is once again alive with the comings and goings of a busy operation, the site has come alive once more, and its new custodians, Takamaka Bay, have both a passion for history and a passion for making superb rum.

Rum, once known by the alarming appellation of kill devil is the drink associated in most people's minds with the Caribbean; with pirates and the mariners of the Royal Navy who relied upon their daily tot to make their harsh lives bearable or steel themselves before engaging in the vicious sea battles of the Napoleonic Wars. But wherever sugar can be grown, people will make rum, and for many years it has also been produced in the Indian Ocean region, particularly in Mauritius. Although sugar was never grown on the vast scale in Seychelles as it was in the Americas and on Mauritius, from the times of earliest settlement, every household grew a small patch of sugar cane for domestic use. Interestingly the cane grown in Seychelles is different to other islands in the Indian Ocean region as these islands are the only granitic ones; therefore, the rum produced from this cane has a complexity unique to Seychelles.

The sugar used for Takamaka Bay rum is carefully chosen for its juice and sugar content from selected regions on the island. Once the cane arrives at the distillery it is crushed as soon as possible to ensure the best return of juice. The extracted juice is not as sweet as you might expect and makes for refreshing and healthy juice drink, green in colour and known as vesou. The juice is then transferred to fermentation tanks for up to five days, before distillation. At Takamaka Bay there are two types of stills: the Alembic or pot still used primarily to obtain rum with a lot of flavour components and the column or fractional still which gives a well defined rum of greater purity. Rums produced from both methods have their own unique characteristics which can be further enhanced through the processes of ageing and blending. After distillation, the rum is put into French barrels and aged. Ageing imparts a characteristic flavour to the rum spirit, provides the distinctive amber colour and also tends to smooth out the spirit depending on the length of time the rum spends in the barrel.

With the opening of the distillery, the future of the house was also secured. This was very welcome news to the Seychelles Heritage Board whose property it had become due to its outstanding historic and cultural importance. Prior to this the house had a troubled history. After the Saint Jorre's left the property there were sustained efforts to preserve it. The site was declared a national monument in 1982, and in 1994 restoration work began with financial assistance provided by the French Mission for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs whilst valuable advice about the renovation was given, highly appropriately, by two descendants of



IMAGES COURTESY OF TAKAMAKA

Jean Francois, Danielle and Irene Jorre de Saint Jorre, who had lived in the house as children and became now closely involved in the project. The house was eventually reopened as a museum, but tragedy struck when the main house suffered a major fire. It seemed that one of the best preserved historical sites of Seychelles could be lost forever; but then in 2007 fresh impetus was given to the preservation of Seychelles' cultural legacy with the creation of Seychelles Heritage Foundation. Four sites of great cultural importance now came under the management of the Foundation, including the Plaine St. André house. The aim was to give this site an economic value and generate an income which would fund the restoration of the buildings and gardens to their former glory. Tenders were invited for private partners and it was at this point Richard D'Offay and Trois Freres Distillery stepped in.

Since then the main house has been faithfully restored and now incorporates a modern museum, visitors house and a shop. Other areas of the plantation include a fully operational artisan distillery where they can host tasting, beautiful landscaped grounds featuring botanical, medicinal and herb gardens as well as the historic ruins and a traditionally housed boutique offering the company's products.

Restoration of a house such as this is a labour of love; there are few quick fix solutions or short cuts. These colonial homes were built by craftsmen who combined woodworking techniques devised in the days before power tools, and some handed on from marine carpentry with which many of the earliest settlers were most familiar. The materials used in the first construction were all close at hand: coral and lime slaked from the coral to build foundations, timber from the mountain forests for the framework and the hardwood shingles which roofed the house itself, and leaves from the palms to thatch the outbuildings. The builders knew exactly how to create a home which would maximise the cooling effect of the breeze in those days before the luxury of air-conditioning. There was a wide verandah where much of the family's life was spent. There were 25 windows and doors to allow in whatever breezes were available. Within the house, wall partitions did not reach the ceiling so that air could move freely about the interior and the house was raised up on coral masonry pillars so that cool air could pass beneath the house and up through the floorboards.

For the time, the Saint Jorre house must have provided the height of elegant living. They had a spacious sitting room and dining room, the bedrooms each had a dressing room, and there was an office from which the busy plantation was run. Other facilities, including the bathrooms, toilets and kitchens were all separate buildings for reasons of hygiene and safety. But the house was just one element in the complicated life of a working plantation. There were numerous outbuildings dotted around it: the petit pavilion blanc where guests could be housed, a copra mill with which the valuable oil was extracted from the coconuts, and a coach shed. Behind the coach shed were two pavilions for storage of tobacco carottes and bananas. Today only the ruins of the foundations of some of these buildings survive although they had remained in use right up until the World War II, when they were used to store rationed goods such as rice, sugar, lentils, and flour which were distributed from here to the inhabitants of the Anse Aux Pins and Anse Royale areas. At the far rear of the main house alongside the kitchen, toilets and bathroom was the limestone kiln where lime for mortar was extracted from coral.

There was also a giant tortoise pen; any family which could afford to keep tortoises did so. They were pets, but could also provide a spectacular main course for feast days. These outbuildings now lie in ruins though it is intended to restore them in due course.

On the seafront, opposite the house, was the boat shed which housed the pirogues. Originally a vital point of access to the sea where visitors would arrive and goods or produce were loaded or unloaded, just two coral pillars of the original structure remain today. Once it would have been an unofficial social centre for the plantation workers, who would gather in its welcome shade to chat and pass on the gossip in what leisure time they had. Surrounding the buildings were the gardens which were planted not just with attractive tropical species but with a wide range of medicinal plants and fruit trees. Beyond all this lay the plantation. In the days of the first Saint Jorres the few arpents they were given to develop would have been planted with several different crops, mostly intended for their own use, but with the hope of producing sufficient surplus to sell to other island settlers. As the plantations matured, they might even have been able to export some of what they grew to Mauritius. Their crops might have included sugar, coffee, rice and cotton. At first cotton was the crop of choice, but in time planters dabbled in vanilla, cinnamon and finally the king of all crops, the coconut as demand outside the islands changed. The planters turned to the coconut when slavery was abolished so that the workforce now had to be paid. The old, labour-intensive crops were no longer viable, but you could grow acres of coconut palm trees using relatively few workers, and so Mahé became an island of palms, which were planted from shore to mountain top. The Saint Jorres went with the trend, steadily extending their acreage until they had about 800 acres of land, nearly all planted with coconuts, and by then they were amongst the first families of the island, at the top of the social tree.

Jean François Jorre de Saint Jorre did not live to see this: he died in 1795. At least he saw his beautiful home constructed and knew his dynasty was secure. His descendants played an important role in the growth of the little colony, and the great and good of Seychelles, and of the French and British administration during colonial days, would have sat on the verandah and enjoyed the cool evening air, perhaps even sipping a glass of rum. Their lifestyle was as gracious as the times permitted. The last generation to live in the house recalled rooms lit by oil lamps and candles and one can imagine the soft light falling on the polished wooden floorboards and the sound of a piano, or perhaps of the family's excited voices as they played games to pass the evenings, echoing out across the swept courtyard to the outbuildings where the workers slept. Sometimes there would be visitors, perhaps from the other striking homes just along the coast; the beautiful plantation house of the St. Roch estate, built in 1870, or the stately St. Joseph house. The former is now the centre of the Craft Village and Maison St. Joseph is the headquarters of the Kreol Institute. The distillery at Plaine St. André makes the perfect addition to this range of cultural attractions strung out along the coast of Anse aux Pins, and to round off the story perfectly, Irene Saint Jorre remembers her father raising a glass or two of rum in their house; in particular a rhum préparé which was rum with water, spiced over a period of months with orange peel, currants and vanilla. In those days the rum came from Mauritius; but those days are gone. Delicious Seychelles rum Plaine St. André-style is here to stay. 🍷

A SMALL AIRLINE WITH A BIG REPUTATION

Air Seychelles Celebrates 45 years

WORDS: SILHOUETTE

1971-1983



In **1971** Seychelles International Airport opened and regular passenger flights began. Word spread quickly on the beauty of the islands and the next 10 years saw a steady increase in the number of visitors to Seychelles.

Short airstrips were built on other islands in the group and small private airlines began operating services between them. In **1977** the Government of Seychelles purchased several small aircraft operators and grouped them together under one company, tasked with operating inter-island air services. In **1978** the domestic airline was officially renamed 'Air Seychelles'.

The fleet comprised four small Islander and Trislander aircraft, and the airline was strictly in the business of short-haul operations.

In **1982** recession hit the tourist industry and the number of tourists plunged from 79,000 to 44,000 as two major European Airlines suspended their services to Seychelles.

It was a hard lesson, and the government resolved that they could no longer rely solely on foreign carriers to bring in the tourists. The obvious answer was to expand Air Seychelles into a long-haul airline. The risk was big but Guy Morel, then Chairman of Air Seychelles, was convinced of the benefits.

The cheapest and easiest way to enter the long-haul business was to sign a so-called 'wet lease' agreement with an airline that had capacity to spare. British Caledonian Airways came up with a solution. Its long-haul Douglas DC-10 fleet was underemployed and spare flight time was available.

Air Seychelles and British Caledonian hammered out an agreement to fly DC-10 on the Frankfurt-London service once a week. Air Seychelles bought all 260 seats on each flight and had to find passengers to fill them.

The new services began on 29 October **1983**. The aircraft retained its full British Caledonian livery, and crews wore that company's uniform. The only external sign of the change was 'Air Seychelles' painted in small letters on both sides of the fuselage.

Air Seychelles had taken the first step to becoming a long-haul carrier, but the early months were worrying for those who kept watch on finances. They were losing a huge amount of money as they could only fill 60-65 seats on each flight.

1984-1994

Fortunately, time was on the side of the new operation. Recession didn't last forever; the holidaymakers returned to the islands in increasing numbers and the airline's losses dropped to manageable levels.

In **1984** Air Seychelles entered into another 'wet lease' agreement – again with a DC-10 – with the Dutch company Martinair. As part of that agreement Martinair trained Seychellois flight attendants.

The next year saw another 'wet lease' agreement, this time with Air France for an Airbus A300 – the first aircraft to carry eye-catching Air Seychelles livery on international routes. The entire cabin crew was Seychellois.

In **1987** Air Seychelles took a major step. The airline lease-purchased two Boeing 707-320s from the Brazilian airline Varig and got them refurbished. Air Seychelles was now running its entire operation and aviation Seychelles merged with Air Seychelles Ltd.

In **1988** the aircraft began services to Europe and Singapore but Air Seychelles soon discovered a fundamental problem with the elderly, narrow-bodied planes. Travellers turned to competing airlines with more modern aircraft and Air Seychelles began to lose its share of the market.

In **1989** Air Seychelles took delivery of a new airliner, the Boeing 767-200 which aroused worldwide interest. The flight flew to Mahé from Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, with the then President Albert Rene returning from a state visit to Washington. The 14,311 km flight from Michigan, USA, set a new distance record for a commercial twin-jet aircraft.

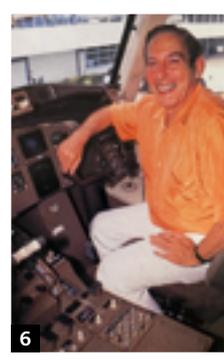
The Boeing 767, named Aldabra, quickly established passenger appeal and the number of passengers increased by 40 percent. During the next three years the airline progressively expanded its long-range route structure, until the single aircraft was no longer sufficient.

Accordingly, in **1993** it took delivery of a new Boeing 757 to operate the medium-haul routes and made its inaugural flight to Johannesburg. At about the same time, three Seychellois first officers with considerable experience in the Boeing 767 were upgraded to captain. Air Seychelles started making a small operational profit.

In **1994** Air Seychelles launched new services: Singapore and Nairobi. It was an exciting development for the airline as the new schedule provided a bridge between the continents of Asia and Africa.



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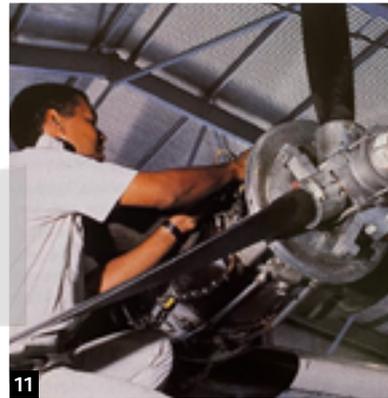
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1. Guy Morel (left), the first Chairman of Air Seychelles, signing the agreement for the lease of the DC-10.
2. Air Seychelles Islander and Twin Otter – part of the Island-hopping domestic fleet.
3. Air Seychelles Twin Otter and Britten-Norman Islander operated daily services to various islands.
4. The DC-10 is welcomed after landing. It retained its British Caledonian livery, and carried the name Air Seychelles in small letters along the yellow strip.
5. Conrad Benoiton, Executive Chairman of Air Seychelles from 1987-1996 was the man responsible for Air Seychelles' initial success.
6. President France-Albert Rene relaxes in the Pearl Class section of Boeing 757.
7. In 1987, Air Seychelles put into service two Boeing 707s, the first long range aircraft to be owned by the company.
8. In 1991, Air Seychelles commissioned new crew uniforms reflecting the airline's sophisticated and elegant style from French fashion house, Balenciaga.
9. The flagship of Air Seychelles, the Boeing 767 during the delivery flight in 1989. It flew non-stop from Grand Rapids, Michigan to Mahé.

1996-2001



Soon Air Seychelles became the world's smallest international airline serving 13 destinations on three continents with two aircraft. For Air Seychelles, small not only meant beautiful, but dynamic and flexible.

The aim was to be the best Indian Ocean airline by relying on the people's dedicated expertise and friendliness. Customer service was blended with the rich Creole touch to retain culture and identity. Air Seychelles became a niche carrier whose main objective was to be a vital instrument of tourism promotion and economic development in a small island state located far from its main markets.

In **1996** Air Seychelles took delivery of a brand-new Boeing 767-300ER, replacing the smaller narrow-bodied Boeing 757. The new aircraft was named *Vallee de Mai*, after the World Heritage site in Praslin. A non-stop Manchester service was introduced, increasing the airline's international network to 10 destinations.



In **1997** strategic alliances were mapped out to better serve the tourism market to the Seychelles. The airline entered into a mutually beneficial partnership with Air France on the Paris – Mahé route. At the same time Air Seychelles strove to establish themselves as a provider of high-quality services, working towards their goal of being the best airline flying the Indian Ocean and beyond.

In **1999** Air Seychelles introduced a new destination: Milan Malpensa, serving the second-largest city in Italy. It also upgraded its domestic fleet in order to improve its performance and level of service to customers. This included new air conditioning units, upgrading the avionics, new improved cabin interiors and the fitting of new wings on the Twin Otter aircraft.

Air Seychelles and Air Austral launched joint services, resulting in two weekly flights between Reunion and Seychelles on a Boeing 737-300.

In **2001** a new Boeing 767-300ER and Boeing 737-700 arrived to replace the smaller 767-200 series which were acquired in 1989. This equipped Air Seychelles with the youngest international fleet in all of the Indian Ocean and Africa, giving the airline a marked advantage over other carriers serving the region. It served Air Seychelles regional routes – notably Mauritius, Nairobi, Mumbai, Dubai and Johannesburg.



2002-2005

Air Seychelles responded to a humanitarian crisis by flying 70 Indian construction workers to Bombay following a major earthquake in the state of Gujarat. The 'Seychelles Plus' frequent flyer programme was launched.

The dream of a non-stop service between the UK and Seychelles was realised in December 2001, thus offering UK passengers the fastest flight time to Seychelles.

In **2002** a Boeing 737-700NG, named *Amirantes*, was added to the fleet to strengthen capacity on the Indian Ocean routes. There were weekly scheduled flights to Comoros, Mumbai, Mayotte, Mauritius, Johannesburg, Dubai and Maldives.

A Fedex service was launched following the signing of an agreement for Air Seychelles to represent the USA-based worldwide courier service. The airline acquired a 36-seat Shorts 360 aircraft for its domestic network and launched the Indian Ocean Pass Programme with Air Mauritius and Air Austral, giving travellers convenient travel options across the Indian Ocean.

During the 20 years that had passed since the first international service in 1983 the United Kingdom had been served continuously by Air Seychelles. At its peak in 1990/91 it operated three flights each week until the Gulf War intervened, when the number was reduced to two.

In **2003** Air Seychelles leased an Antonov-12 aircraft to support the development of Seychelles as a regional cargo hub.

In **2004** Air Seychelles introduced e-ticketing with inter-island ticket sales and later e-ticketing for international flights began. The system benefited both passengers and the airline and eliminated the problem of lost or stolen credit cards. At the same time Freight Department was awarded the ISO certificate.

In **2005**, there were momentous changes in the way airline business was conducted. Not only were airlines facing sharp increases in fuel and security costs but there were significant changes in the airline industry in the Seychelles with the arrival of a number of carriers from the Gulf area. This created a strong competitive environment with repercussions leading to rationalisation of routes. Air Seychelles and Air Mauritius signed a letter of agreement to operate joint flights from the United



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10. Freddy Karkaria, Managing Director and Executive Chairman of Air Seychelles from 1995 to 1997.

11. In 1993, Seychelles International Airport was equipped to carry out routine maintenance on any aircraft which arrived in Mahé.

12. From left Captain David Savy, Steven Quilindo and Francois Jackson, days after successfully qualifying as the first Seychellois jet commanders in history.

13. Air Seychelles check-in counter at the International Airport in 1993.

14. A historic picture of the Air Seychelles fleet of five Boeing 767s taken in 1999.

15. In December 1996, Air Seychelles took delivery of a brand-new Boeing 767-300ER named *Vallee de Mai* to replace the smaller narrow bodied Boeing 757.

16. Captain David Savy, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles from 1997 to 2011.

17. The little touches to the inflight service are drawn from the rich and exotic lifestyles of the wonderful world of the Creoles – and the introduction of the new uniforms for the cabin crew.

18. A Fedex service was launched following the signing of an agreement for Air Seychelles to represent the USA-based worldwide courier service.

19. Air Seychelles fourth Boeing aircraft, a B767-200 named *Isle of Bijoutier* arrived in April 2009 to give the airline greater operational flexibility.

2006-2012



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Kingdom and offer a 'one flight' service to Seychelles and Mauritius.

In **2006** Air Seychelles launched the Training Academy and acquired a second 36 seater shorts 360 named *Isle of La Digue*. To mark the 30th anniversary of Independence Day, the airline launched a new livery on its inter-island fleet featuring large tropical hibiscus flowers.

In **2007** Air Seychelles officially received its IOSA certificate having met the international standards set by IATA and acquired its third Boeing B767 named *La Bel Creole*. Nicole Chang Leng became the first female pilot of the Republic of Seychelles.

In **2008**, Air Seychelles continued with its growth strategy and took delivery of the third Boeing aircraft, a B767-205 EM named *Amirantes* bearing the revamped livery and corporate branding of the national airline. Air Seychelles launched its new duty free shop, named *Trezor* at the airport. *Isle of Fregate*, a B767-300ER aircraft, was a welcome addition. It was primarily a back-up aircraft to the current fleet and would assist during heavy maintenance checks of other aircraft so as to avoid costly leases – also adding capacity when needed during peak times.



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In **2010**, Air Seychelles moved in its own Headquarters at the Seychelles International Airport. It began operations to the Falkland Islands as part of a contract with the UK Ministry of Defence. To mark International Women's Day, the airline operated an all-female crew on its service to Paris. New lie-flat seats were introduced in Pearl Class on board the three B767-300s. On the domestic side new Twin Otter aircraft were added. The B767-200 was replaced with a newer aircraft.

In **2011** Air Seychelles restructured its scheduled operations on international and regional routes. A new Sales and Reservation office was opened at the Seychelles International Airport. First Boeing Aircraft SZ-AHM arrived with new livery.

In February **2012** Air Seychelles announced a partnership with the United Arab Emirates national carrier, Etihad Airways, who acquired a 40 percent stake in Air Seychelles. They launched a two-weekly flight to Abu Dhabi from Mahé to connect to Etihad Airways' 73 passenger destinations in 49 countries. An Airbus A330-200,



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2013-2016

named *Aldabra*, was introduced after over two decades of an all-Boeing fleet, taking comfort levels to new heights.

In **2013** Air Seychelles took delivery of another Airbus A300-200, named *Vallee de Mai*, and introduced flights to Hong Kong via Abu Dhabi. This enhanced the codeshare reach across Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. A VIP lounge service was launched in partnership with Royal Jet.

In **2014** Air Seychelles reached a major milestone with the attainment of a four-star Skytrax rating. The award signified the achievement of a recognised standard of high-quality performance across a broad range of product and service benchmarks. The airline took delivery of two brand new Twin Otter DH6-400 aircraft to replace the existing DHC-6 series 300 Twin Otters to offer enhanced levels of comfort on journeys between the islands. It also took delivery of another Airbus A320, named *Amirantes*. This launched routes to Mumbai, Dar es Salaam and Antananarivo.

In **2015** Air Seychelles continued to grow, with major developments across its network and increased frequencies to many destinations. It was flying directly to Paris three times a week. New codeshare partnerships meant that one could travel to six major cities in France and beyond with Air France. This year also marked the arrival of another DHC-6 Twin Otter-400 aircraft into the domestic fleet. These aircraft made the journey between Mahé and Praslin in 15-minutes and provided other charter services, as needed.

Air Seychelles also expanded its codeshare agreement with Jet Airways to India to allow travellers to fly with Air Seychelles to Mumbai, and then connect seamlessly to domestic flights operated by Jet Airways to nine Indian cities.

The airline sealed a new codeshare agreement with Air Madagascar and operated special flights from Beijing to Seychelles for the Chinese New Year celebrations.

In **2016** Air Seychelles carried more than 550,000 passengers, marking a new milestone for the Seychelles flag carrier. This signalled another year of strong operational growth. It also experienced strong growth in its domestic operations.



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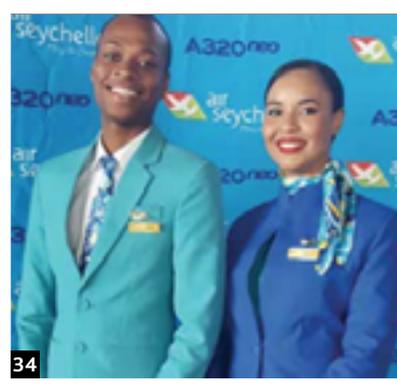
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- 20. In 2011, DHC6-400 Twin Otter named the *Isle of Curieuse* commenced inter-island commercial flights.
- 21. In 2012, A new Airbus 330-200 named *Aldabra* joined the Air Seychelles fleet.
- 22. Crammer Ball, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles from 2012 to 2014.
- 23. President James Michel welcomed Air Seychelles second Airbus A330-200.
- 24. Inauguration of the VIP Lounge launched with Royal Jet .
- 25. Joël Morgan, Seychelles Minister for Home Affairs and Transport and President James Michel and Manoj Papa, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles mark the arrival of Air Seychelles new Twin Otter aircraft.
- 26. Roy Kinnear, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles from 2015 to 2017.
- 27. Air Seychelles takes delivery of second Airbus A330 in 2017.
- 28. Air Seychelles won four top accolades at the 2017 World Travel Awards – 'Indian Oceans leading Airline-Business', 'Indian Oceans Cabin Crew', 'Indian Oceans Airline Brand' including 'Indian Oceans leading Airline' for the third consecutive Year.

2017-2020



2017 was yet another exciting year of growth, with non-stop travel options to eight cities from Seychelles. Air Seychelles acquired its second Airbus A330 aircraft named *Vallee de Mai* as well as two new DHC-400 Twin Otter turboprops which were used on domestic flights between the islands. The Premium Lounge, named *Vallee de Mai Lounge* at the airport, was refurbished and provided a capacity of 102 seats.

A new codeshare route with South African Airways from Seychelles to Durban became effective as well as a codeshare agreement with Etihad for Japan to Nagoya and Narita. A non-stop flight to Dusseldorf in Europe was introduced.

In January **2018** Air Seychelles announced change of direction, to focus on its regional network. The plan was aimed at ensuring the long-term profitability and sustainability for the airline in response to rapidly increasing competition. The launch of competing air services from Europe to Seychelles was significantly impacting Air Seychelles' flights to and from Paris, which accounted for about 30 percent of total passenger revenue at the airline, making the route unsustainable.

Air Seychelles ordered an Airbus A320neo aircraft to refresh its fleet and increase efficiency on its regional network, boosting the capacity on its Johannesburg and Mumbai routes while at the same time reducing the airline's operating costs.

On 2 August **2019**, Air Seychelles became the first airline in the Indian Ocean and Africa to take delivery of a new Airbus A320neo aircraft, named *Veuve*, into its fleet. This airline commenced a new service to Tel Aviv. The arrival of the new aircraft simultaneously marked the launch of a new uniform for cabin crew. A new and improved website was also launched at www.airseychelles.com. This replaced the previous platform that had been in existence for four years.

A second A320neo aircraft was ordered and arrived in March **2020**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Air Seychelles utilised its jet fleet to operate a series of cargo flights to maintain the import and export supply chain in the Seychelles. It also operated a series of

2021-2022

repatriation flights to India, Dubai and Mauritius providing stranded visitors and Seychellois residents the opportunity to return home. By September 2020 the airline was able to announce limited resumption of services across its network.

On 30 June **2021** the partnership between Air Seychelles and Etihad Airways came to an end after the Etihad aviation group sold its 40 percent holding in Air Seychelles to the Seychelles government. Captain Sandy Benoiton was appointed as the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles.

In October 2021 there was an easing in travel restrictions globally and the fleet of A320neos started to return to airports across the Air Seychelles network after being absent for 18 months.

In the same month Air Seychelles collected four accolades at the World Travel Awards including the coveted title of 'Indian Ocean's Leading Airline' for the consecutive year and 'Indian Ocean's Leading Airline Lounge' for the first time in history.

By **2022** Air Seychelles was flying back to all its pre-pandemic destinations, including Johannesburg, Mumbai, Mauritius and Tel Aviv. Despite the easing of travel restrictions, similar to other airlines globally, the airline's business was still impacted by the pandemic, which led to several changes to the schedule.

Air Seychelles has once again been certified by the International Air Transport Association Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) conforming to the most challenging industry standards. Air Seychelles has been a member of IATA since 2006.

Currently, Air Seychelles' fleet of seven aircraft, comprising two Airbus A320neos and five DHC-6 Twin Otter-400 series has been ranked as the third youngest fleet in Africa. The airline's contribution towards fuel efficiency and sustainable development, including significant improvement in decreasing carbon emissions, has also been recognised.

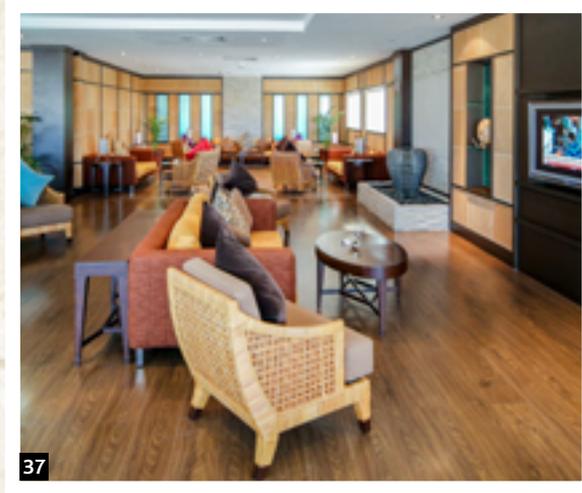
Despite a few setbacks over the years, Air Seychelles is proud of its achievements and looks forward to a bright and profitable future. 



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- 29. Remco Althuis, Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles from 2018 to 2021.
- 30. Africa's first Airbus, A320neo named *Veuve* arrives in Seychelles in 2019.
- 31. An all female crew on a special flight between Seychelles and Johannesburg In celebration of International Women's Day.
- 32. Air Seychelles clinched the 'Indian Ocean's Leading Airline – Economy Class' Award.
- 33. New inflight wireless streaming entertainment system across A320neo.
- 34. In 2019, Air Seychelles also unveiled the new uniform designed for its cabin crew members.
- 35. Sandy Benoiton, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles.
- 36. Air Seychelles was once again certified by IOSA.
- 37. The Premium Lounge was recognised as 'Indian Ocean's Leading Airline Lounge' at the 2021 World Travel Awards.
- 38. Air Seychelles fleet of seven aircraft ranked as Africa's third youngest fleet comprising of two Airbus A320neos and five DHC-6 Twin Otter-400 series.

MAKHTESH RAMON

Into the Depths of a Crater

WORDS: PETER HOLTHUSEN







After leaving Jerusalem, the bus drifted effortlessly along Highway 40 from Be'er Sheva, the largest city in southern Israel, trailing a swirling vortex of dust and gravel through the otherworldly yellow sandy hues and rocky plains of the central Negev Desert, before I alighting at an inconspicuous bus stop on the roadside of a small town called Mitzpe Ramon.

Revelling in the sense of freedom you can only feel in beautiful, isolated places, the only sound in the air was of the bus wheels rolling away into the distance as a scattering of buildings on barren land slowly emerged into view under a crisp, cobalt blue desert sky.

Night had settled upon the Negev as I took a taxi towards my hotel in Mitzpe Ramon, a parched town of about 5,000 people, last autumn. I had left sun-soaked Jerusalem about three hours earlier and I still had 45 minutes to go before reaching my accommodation at the Beresheet Hotel, when it started to rain – heavily. Soon, we were driving into thick fog, inching forward at little more than 10 mph. It felt appropriately biblical; if not on par with the woes of Job, at least worthy of a few lamentations.

Once a camp for workers building the highway through the dusty landscape to the southern Red Sea port town of Eilat in 1951, the development area of Mitzpe Ramon was soon forgotten. Now, this once small settlement is a thriving town that sits on the northern edge of the spectacular landform of the Makhtesh Ramon, the world's largest 'erosion cirque' – attracting adventurous travellers to one of the most popular tourist destinations and challenging hiking spots in all of Israel.

After checking in at the hotel, I wandered around its grounds under the light of a full moon and a suddenly cloudless sky. Rooms and villas, all fashioned out of stone, are scattered like satellites around the main building that houses the fine dining Rosemarine restaurant, two bars, Turkish hammam spa, shop and kids club. In the distance, like a shimmering mirage, the Beresheet's award-winning infinity pool overlooks the Ramon Crater and sweeping views of the surrounding mountains, creating an experience of unparalleled tranquillity.



I had planned to spend the next few weeks exploring the tortured topography of Makhtesh Ramon, a 28-mile-long, five mile-wide and 1,600-feet (487 metre) deep craterlike void carved out of the middle of the country's vast, treeless desert.

Luckily my hotel was perfectly placed, just a few minutes walk to the northern rim of the crater and its easily accessible observation points and trails. Along the makhtesh cliffs, there are many imposing observation points to visit. Each panoramic view reveals another segment of the varied scenery of the Makhtesh Ramon.

Opened in 2013, the new Makhtesh Ramon Nature Reserve and Visitors Centre, is perched high on the northern cliffs of the Ramon Crater and tells the geological story behind this unique and amazing work of nature. The crater is the world's largest 'makhtesh', and whilst rumour often states that it was created by a collision with an asteroid from space, it was in reality created by water erosion.

Despite its appearance the Ramon Crater is not an impact crater from a meteor, nor a crater formed by a volcanic eruption, but an erosion cirque. The correct term is 'makhtesh', the Hebrew word for a mortar grinder. The geological landform was given this name because of its similarity to a grinding bowl. Only seven other such formations exist in the world, five in the Negev Desert and two in the Sinai Desert, just across the border in Egypt. The five in the Negev are Makhtesh Ramon, Makhtesh Gadol, Makhtesh Katan, and two smaller makhteshes on Mount Arif, south of Makhtesh Ramon. The two makhteshes in Sinai, have no names for the basin, but their walls have several names including Jabal al Manzur or Gebel Maghara.

Hundreds of millions of years ago, the Negev Desert was covered by an ocean. Over time this started to recede northwards leaving behind a hump-shaped hill. The hump was slowly flattened by water and other climatic forces. Approximately five million years ago, the Arabah Rift Valley was formed, covering almost the entire length of what today is called



1. The Makhtesh Ramon Nature Reserve and Visitors Centre offers a variety of interactive exhibits.
2. Cloud gliding (radiation fog falling in a katabatic wind) into Makhtesh Ramon.
3. The tortured topography of Makhtesh Ramon, near Be'er Sheva. Raw and rugged desert scenery at its best.
4. Unbelievable display at night of thousands of stars, galaxies, clusters and even meteors at the Makhtesh Ramon crater.
5. Camel Hill (Har Gamal), a small pointed hill located near the northern rim of Makhtesh Ramon.



THE MAKHTESH RAMON VISITORS CENTRE OFFERS A VARIETY OF INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS EXPLAINING THE NATURAL PROCESSES WHICH LED TO THE CREATION OF THE MAKHTESH.

the Jordan Rift Valley, running in a north to south orientation between the southern end of the Sea of Galilee and the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, with rivers changing their courses, carving out the sandstone on the inside of the depression which was a softer rock than that overlying limestone. The crater bottom continued to deepen at a much faster rate than the surrounding walls, which gradually increased in height.

As the crater deepened, more layers of ancient rock were exposed with sedimentary rocks at the bottom being up to 200 million years old. Today, the crater is 500 metres deep with the deepest point being Ein Saharonim, which also contains the makhtesh's only natural water source, which sustains much of the wildlife in the crater, including the critically endangered Persian onager, also called the Persian wild ass, the Nubian ibex, herds of Dorcas gazelle, the caracal, or 'Desert lynx' and the highly sociable rock hyrax.

The Makhtesh Ramon Visitors Centre offers a variety of interactive exhibits explaining the natural processes which led to the creation of the makhtesh. It also offers interesting information about the wide variety of animal and plant life that lives in what might be assumed to be an otherwise barren and inhospitable region. Aside from the makhtesh, the Visitors Centre also serves as a museum and memorial for Ilan Ramon, a distinguished Israeli fighter pilot and Israel's first and only astronaut who died in 2003 along with six other crew members when the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated during re-entry into the earth's atmosphere.

The new Ilan Ramon Memorial is in a fitting setting, overlooking the spectacular lunar-like landscape of the world's largest makhtesh, the Ramon Crater, for which Ilan Ramon, born Ilan Wolfferman, changed his name earlier in life thanks to his love for this part of the Negev Desert.

The view from the Visitors Centre and the Albert Promenade is breathtaking. You can either climb a small hill for a wider view or visit the various constructed ledges along the promenade, including the aptly named 'bird balcony' that hangs over the crater. From here it is possible to understand the elongated structure of the makhtesh: the southern wall can be seen at a distance directly opposite, while its precipitous edges to the east and west are just outside of the range of vision here.

From this vantage point you can also see the winding Nahal Ramon river flowing eastwards and draining the makhtesh, and the black 'volcano hill', which was an active volcano more than 100 million years ago. The distant summit of Har Ardon rises in the east, giving the makhtesh its famous heart-shape. From the Visitors Centre one can enjoy a leisurely walk along the Albert Promenade southwards, to Har Gamal, from which can be seen some spectacular views of the western part of the Makhtesh Ramon.

Heading northwards from the Visitors Centre, crossing the bridge above the road leading to Eilat there are exceptional views. Further northwards along the rim of the cliff close to the Beresheet Hotel, you will find the Sculptures Garden. The garden exhibits a considerable number of interesting environmental sculptures that were created here during conventions of international artists. Some of the sculptures utilise the wind blowing through them to produce sounds.

A new walking trail from Har Ramon, the highest point in the Negev, leads to the Karney HaRamon observation point on the rim of the makhtesh. Karney HaRamon, seven impressive basalt hills at the west of the makhtesh, dedicated to the memory of the seven astronauts who died in the crash of the Space Shuttle Columbia, with Col. Ilan Ramon among them, can be seen from this observation point. From here one can enjoy



6. Opened in 2013, the new Makhtesh Ramon Nature Reserve and Visitors Centre, is perched high on the northern cliffs of the Ramon Crater.
7. Sandstone colour bands in Makhtesh Ramon crater formed by pre-existing faults.



7

the spectacular scenery of the western part of Makhtesh Ramon.

Another beautiful observation point lies at the south-western corner of the makhtesh, where the northern and southern cliffs meet. From Arod one can enjoy an equally spectacular view of the western part of the makhtesh. The observation point is reached by a narrow dirt road which begins opposite the turn-off to Borot Lots. This road is suitable for all types of vehicles.

Of the numerous observation points in the heart of the Makhtesh Ramon, the view from the top of Har Ardon is the best of them all. The observation point is reached on foot only, but the effort is most rewarding! From Har Ardon there is an amazing view eastwards – looking across towards the distant Mountains of Edom and the Arava, southwards – towards the east of Makhtesh Ramon and its southern wall, and westwards – a view of the makhtesh spread out in all its glory. From the top of Har Gvanim, close to the road crossing the makhtesh leading to Eilat, there is a view of the southern and northern walls of the crater and the stunning desert scenery.

My time in Mitzpe Ramon ended where it started – at the bus stop. Except for this time, there were local people travelling with me, bringing me full circle in my journey of realisation that it isn't all that isolated here after all. On the contrary, the Negev is very much full of life, rapidly garnering attention as a must-see destination in Israel. With the rise of luxury hotels, eco lodges, adventure activities, including jeep touring, biking, abseiling, stargazing and an abundance of wineries to visit, not to mention the authentic Bedouin hospitality and growing arts scene here, you'll be well rewarded for planning a visit. 🌵



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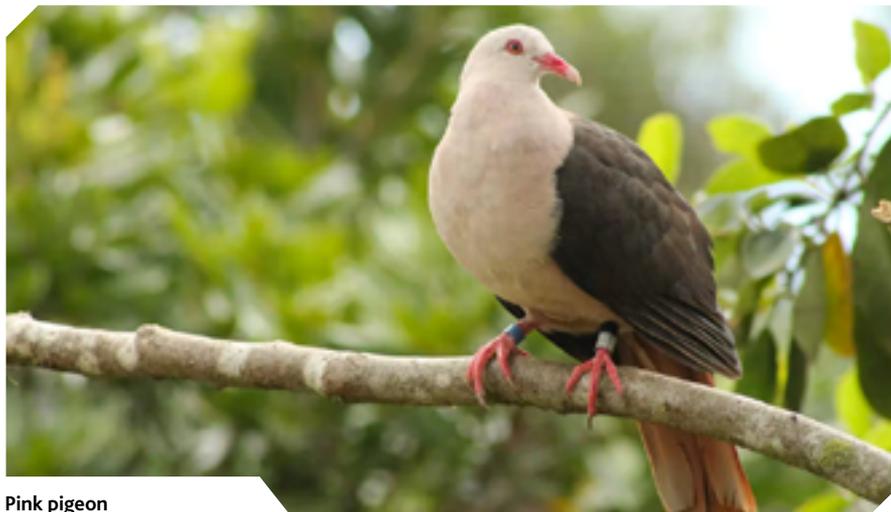
BIRDLIFE

PAST DOMAIN OF THE DODO

WORDS: SILHOUETTE



Mauritius kestrel



Pink pigeon

It is almost impossible to consider the birds of Mauritius without reflecting on the sad tale of the dodo, doomed to extinction almost as soon as the first Europeans landed on the island. Moreover, the dodo is not the only weird and wonderful land bird to have been lost forever from Mauritius's original unique avifauna. However, before mourning the dead it is fitting to praise the living, for Mauritius remains a Mecca for bird-watchers in search of special island forms found nowhere else on earth.

Back in the 1970s, it seemed as if the dodo's fate would continue to be repeated over and over again. The Mauritius kestrel was down to a population of just four known birds and probably ranked as the rarest bird in the world at the time. Also on the way out, it seemed, were the pink pigeon and the echo parakeet. Without desperate action to reverse the fortune of these and other endemic Mauritian birds, future visitors would have been able only to reflect on what a wonderful place it must once have been.

Fortunately, due to local and international endeavours, it still is a wonderful place. Gerald Durrell and the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust were leading players, together with the Mauritian Wildlife Fund and others. Their 'man on the spot' in Mauritius was Carl Jones, now a legendary figure in ornithological circles, having achieved what many believed to be impossible.

Captive breeding, habitat management, blood, sweat, and tears all played a part in the story. Mauritius kestrels reared in captivity have been reintroduced into the wild. Nest boxes have been erected and, though sometimes hijacked by Indian mynahs, a combination of efforts has slowly brought about a significant increase in the number of birds. Reintroduced into three mountain areas, there are now 600-800 wild Mauritius kestrels.

This is a phenomenal success story, beyond perhaps the wildest hopes of all, except such visionaries as Carl Jones and Gerald Durrell. Another 'hopeless case' was the echo parakeet and, indeed, it is not yet close to being taken off the danger list. But there are some signs of hope. The bird declined as the native forest of Mauritius contracted. It reached the stage where attempts by echo parakeets to breed appeared



Mauritius paradise flycatcher

to have been virtually abandoned. There are some signs that the trend has been reversed, with a slight increase in numbers in recent years.

More spectacular has been the pink pigeon programme, with the hundredth captive bred pigeon released in late 1994. The wild population is now well in excess of 400 – a dramatic success considering that in 1986 the total population may have been as small as 20.

Other rarities include the beautiful Mauritius paradise flycatcher, whose population also suffered a steady decline throughout most of the human history on Mauritius. It now survives in the patchy remnants of such indigenous forests as Bassin Blanc.

Then there is the Mauritius cuckoo shrike, perhaps a fraction less common than the flycatcher. Indeed, some writers considered it doomed early in

the 20th century. It has defied their dire predictions but remains very rare, with probably over 300 surviving pairs. Unfortunately, although they feed mainly on insects, they are also partial to pink pigeon eggs when these are available, a not particularly helpful habit for those who wish to save both species from extinction.

The Mauritius fody is rarer still, with a population of perhaps 180-200 individuals. Some blame their decline on competition with the Madagascar fody. However, the Mauritius fody is mainly insectivorous, while the Madagascar bird is principally a seed eater and, while there is some overlap, the true reasons for the decline of the Mauritius fody may be more to do with habitat destruction and rat predation. Not all the unique birds of Mauritius are so rare. The Mauritius grey white-eye is



Mauritius cuckoo shrike



Mauritius fody

common in hotel grounds, gardens, and, indeed, all over the island. This is the only species to have adapted well to man's arrival. The noisy social bird moves through the vegetation in groups of up to 20, feeding on insects and sometimes nectar. Throughout the native forest there are more grey white-eyes than all other native species combined.

Strangely enough, by contrast, another very closely related bird, the Mauritius olive white-eye, has suffered a huge fall in numbers, with probably less than 150 pairs surviving, though the number is difficult to assess accurately as the birds range over a large area, often remaining silent and inconspicuous within the undergrowth of the south-western forests of Mauritius.

Far less silent, but also found in the native forests, is the Mauritius black bulbul. Once it was a popular game bird and had this practice continued it would probably now be extinct. Fortunately, today the Mauritians recognise the value of their special birds and, though numbers remain low, there is hope that the bulbul's most critical days are now over.

Apart from the direct consequences of human exploitation, habitat clearances, and introduced rats, cats, and monkeys, Mauritius's unique avifauna has also had to face competition from a whole host of introduced birds, such as the world's most successful bird colonist, the house sparrow, and noisy, ubiquitous Indian mynah. Red-whiskered bulbul are also common, the legend of their origin being that a single pair that escaped from a cage during a 1892 cyclone gave rise to the entire population now common all over Mauritius.

The ring-necked parakeet is fairly common, especially where maize or grains are abundant. Indeed, this introduced bird – another late 19th-century escape artist – is a pest on agricultural land. Barred ground doves – deliberately introduced during the French era – are fairly common, too. These tame, endearing birds feed on the ground, often meandering around the chairs and tables of restaurants and hotels searching for scraps. Sometimes they are seen feeding with spotted dove, also introduced during the French period. Before all these man-made changes occurred, seabirds were undoubtedly far more common, but today it is still possible to enjoy



Mauritius olive white-eye

many tropical specialties. The brown noddy, blue-faced booby, and sooty tern breed on Serpent Island. Red-tailed tropicbirds and wedge-tailed shearwaters breed on Round Island, while on the mainland of Mauritius, white-tailed tropicbirds are a fairly common sight.

But to get back to the world's most famous extinct species, though the last dodo died more than 400 years ago, the legend lives on. This was just one of the 11 species on Mauritius eliminated in historical times (compared with nine species on the list of survivors), but it is by far the most widely known. It was Dutch settlers who first named it, giving it the title *Valghvogel*, which means 'disgusting bird'. The later name dodo was also Dutch meaning a sluggard. The European navigators of that era were interested in birds solely as a resource, and the dodo was not a favourite on the menu. As one Dutch captain wrote in 1602, 'even a long boiling would scarcely make them tender'. As other birds were plentiful, he noted, his



Mauritius black bulbul



Ring-necked parakeet



Red-whiskered bulbul



THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS EXTINCT SPECIES, THOUGH THE LAST DODO DIED MORE THAN 400 YEARS AGO, THE LEGEND LIVES ON.

men became disgusted with dodo meat. Dodos were easy to catch, and many were killed for killing's sake. However, the *coup de grâce* was given by introduced animals, which preyed on the adults, chicks, and eggs.

So strange was the dodo's appearance that it took some time before its nearest relative was identified. Some thought it to be some kind of ostrich, others a kind of vulture, and others still an albatross. The last dodo was long dead when, in the middle of the 19th century, Professor Reinhardt of Denmark surprised the scientific world by claiming the dodo was a giant flightless pigeon. It took some time for this insight to be universally accepted.

Today it is believed that, millions of years ago, a race of pigeons arrived in Mauritius, probably from neighbouring Madagascar. They found an island with no mammal predators, an avian paradise, with nothing to challenge the dominance of birds. In such a haven, flight became unnecessary. The dodo's fate was sealed, for when man and his entourage of animals arrived, the means of retreat was gone. The last dodo was seen on Mauritius around 1672.

All that remains today is a skull, a right foot, and some scientific plates of the left eye at the Oxford University Museum. But, as Joseph Connolly noted in *The Sunday Times* in 1995, 'The dodo may be dead, but it sure as blazes won't lie down'.

Even more important, the loss to the world of such a natural treasure emphasises the importance of conservation programmes such as those to save the Mauritius kestrel, the pink pigeon, and the echo parakeet. Come what may, we have to make sure they never become as 'dead as a dodo'. 🌿



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MALDIVES FLOATING CITY

Where there is nothing, anything is possible!

WORDS: PETER HOLTHUSEN

The Maldives are well known as a bucket list vacation getaway. Hearing the country's name conjures up images of luxury thatched bungalows overlooking an aquamarine clear blue ocean with ivory white, palm-fringed beaches. But climate change is a real and present danger here and may cross the country off the map completely.

There could scarcely be a corner of the world further removed in both distance and spirit from the everyday than these Indian Ocean islands.

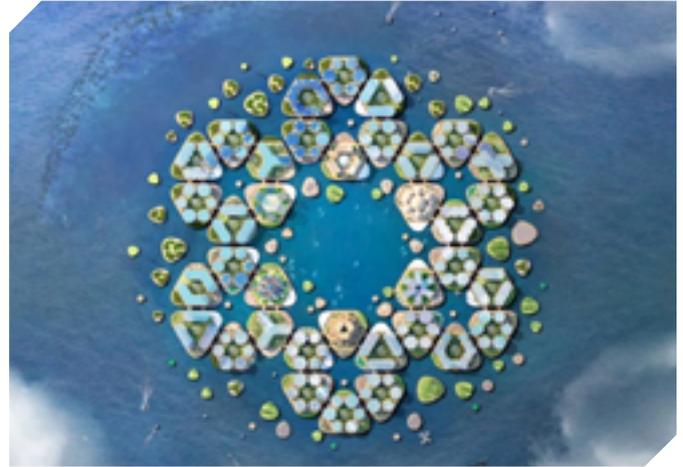
The archipelago, which is made up of over 1,100 coral islands and pristine coral atolls in the middle of the Indian Ocean, is the lowest lying island nation in the world. Therefore, sea level rise caused by global climate change is an existential threat to the island group. At the current rate of global warming, almost 80% of the Maldives could become uninhabitable by 2050, according to multiple reports from NASA and the US Geological Survey. That's only 28 years away. The islands that are home to local Maldivians, not the resort islands, stand to lose the most.

In the late '90s, the Maldives began construction on the island of Hulhumalé, located in the south of North Malé Atoll through the process of land reclamation. The artificial island is being built up by pumping sand from the sea floor, in order to meet the existing and future housing, industrial and commercial development demands of the Malé region and as a response to the threat posed by rising sea levels. Hulhumalé is already 6.5 feet above sea level, which is more than double the height of Malé, the current capital of the Maldives. It is possible this island may be a future site for relocation of Maldivians suffering from sea level rise. Small wonder, many Maldivians call their manmade island the 'City of Hope'.

However, with sea level rise caused by global climate change increasing at such an alarming rate, time is running out for the islanders. It's extraordinary that there is not more of a sense of urgency to combat climate change and safeguard the Maldives from the threat of rising sea levels. Human complacency is a strange thing. But there is hope, for there are innovators out there who are working on contingency plans for the destination.

In this case, the renowned Netherlands-based floating property developer Dutch Docklands International BV which claims to be the 'world's leading developer for floating cities' is working with the Government of Maldives





to build a floating city that is set in a warm-water lagoon, next to the Presidential island retreat of Aarah and only ten minutes by boat from the Maldivian capital, Malé, and neighbouring Velana International Airport. The Maldives Floating City (MFC) project is intended to be a blueprint for sustainable, scalable, commercially viable, floating real-estate. Dutch Docklands said it envisions the Jules Verne style futuristic city to take the form of “thousands of waterfront residences that float along a flexible, functional grid across a 200-hectare lagoon”. Inspired by traditional Maldivian sea-faring culture and developed in close cooperation with the Maldivian authorities, MFC will eventually be joined by an abundance of hotels, restaurants, stylish boutiques and a ‘world-class’ marina, in the hope of increasing tourism in the post-pandemic era. The city will be composed of hexagon-shaped segments modelled, in part, on the distinctive geometry of coral and connected to a ring of ‘lush barrier islands’ that serve as wave breakers. Sandy beaches will also help to stabilise and protect key structures within the lagoon. Maldives Floating City is the first development of a new era in which Maldivians return to the sea with resilient eco-friendly floating projects. The city has a nature-based network of roads, bridges, water canals and docks resembling the beautiful and efficient way in which real brain coral is organised.





The idea of having brain coral as the leading concept is that the goal of living with nature and learning to improve and respect natural coral is at the heart of the development, which leads to new knowledge emphasising the responsibility Maldives takes as a leading centre for coral reef protection in the world. All MFC buildings will be low-rise and facing the sea with shops, homes and services precisely positioned along a labyrinth of tidy, palm-lined streets. This network of roads, bridges, water canals and docks will give the MFC an "overall sense of cohesiveness and facilitate easy access to its wide-ranging amenities".

The Maldives Floating City is a benchmark for vibrant communities beyond the waterfront. It is the first floating city with thousands of houses that has full governmental support, based on a legal framework and title deeds for the owners. It also offers potential investors the unique possibility to obtain a residence-permit with the purchase of a house, inviting the international community to live here (semi) permanently and enjoy the Maldivian lifestyle, mixing green values with a sense of place based on centuries of experience with living with the sea. And then, the perfect weather and tropical surroundings ...

Maldivians have a strong relationship with the sea, so living on water is aligned with their culture and history. The city characterises as a modern boating community, using the canals as the main infrastructure for logistics and gateways, and by doing so, reducing land-based movements to walking and biking on natural white sand roads. No cars are allowed, only bicycles and electric noise-free buggies/scooters.

Developer Dutch Docklands and the architects of Waterstudio have between them, conceptualised a next-generation sea-level rise-proof urban development, bringing safety and development space to the Maldives with a harmonious mix of green technology, safety, commercial viability and a healthy new lifestyle, which will be the backbone of future floating cities. By doing so, the Maldivians will rewrite their destiny from climate refugees to climate innovators.

It is a unique city, both above and underneath the water surface, creating blue habitats protecting and stimulating coral growth. Artificial coral banks will be attached to the underside of the city, which will stimulate coral to grow naturally. The submerged and protected coral reefs of the lagoon will provide a natural wave (reduction) breaker that, in combination with the interrelated grid of floating structures, provides comfort and safety for the residents. Mohamed Nasheed, the former President of the Maldives, says: "Maldives Floating City does not require any land reclamation, therefore has a minimal impact on the fragile ecology of the coral reefs. What's more, giant new reefs will be grown in the lagoon. Our adaption to climate change mustn't destroy nature but work with it, as the MFC proposes. In the Maldives we cannot stop the waves, but we can rise with them."

The entire city will shift up and down on a pile drilled into the sea floor. It will also take advantage of its environment to better provide for those living on the floating city. Lead architect Koen Olthuis explains how the

floating city is designed and what it should eventually look like: "By being on the water we want to take advantage of the water – and using the coolness of the water – so this will be a water-cooled city, for which we will take cool water from outside of the atoll and pump it through the complex to activate the air conditioning systems," Olthuis said.

Since the floating city is sustainable and leaves no carbon footprint, Olthuis called the floating cities 'scarless' and said they are essentially 'renting space from nature'. Now nearing the end of its planning stages, the MFC will commence construction in January 2023 with an estimated five-year timeline to completion. Once fully realised, a new hospital, school, cinema and government building will complement the project's commercial and residential structures.

What will it cost to live on the MFC? It is estimated that individual homes will be sized from 100 square metre (plus a 40 square metre roof terrace) and priced from US\$250,000. The question is – will local Maldivian fishing families really be able to afford to buy a home there when the average monthly salary is US\$650? Or will it just be for the wealthy, overseas investors? What will happen to these people when they are displaced by rising sea levels?

Although home to just over half a million people, the Maldives has its own unique culture and traditions. While heavily influenced by various cultures around the rim of the Indian Ocean, the Maldivian culture, crafts and traditions have been shaped by the island environment and the seas that surround it. 🇻🇪



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BUYING ORIENTAL CARPETS

WORDS: SILHOUETTE



If you bring back one thing from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a souvenir, it is likely to be an Oriental carpet. These represent excellent value. The emirates' role as a trading centre means that carpets from all over the Middle East and Central Asia are available at relatively fair prices in all the emirates.

The point about the UAE is that the government is keen to promote it as a tourist destination and rip-offs on the scale you see in Iran or Turkey are unlikely to occur, mainly because a vague sense of trading standards exists.

It's difficult to recommend anything in a field as complex and 'knotty' as that of bargaining for carpets; roughly, in the UAE, it would seem reasonable to assume a bargaining position of half whatever the quoted cost of the carpet might be, and to settle for something nearer to your position than the vendor's. But that is only a rough guide: and if buying a carpet, remember, it is very easy to lose all sense of proportion in your delight in the item on sale.

RUG BASICS

A rug consists of two sets of threads crossing each other at right-angles: the warp threads, which act as a kind of frame, crossed horizontally by the weft threads, through which a series of knots may be tied to create the pile of the carpet. Depending on the tension of the knot, and the proximity of the warp threads, rugs of greater or lesser fineness are made.

The look of the rug also depends on the type of material used. Most rugs are made from cotton, silk or wool. The latter may be made from the hair of a number of different animals: camels, goats or sheep are the most commonly used.

The animal hair used will almost invariably be dyed: either synthetically or using natural dyes. Rugs dealers tend to swear blind that their rugs are made from natural dyes, and to claim that these last much longer than synthetic dyes.

RUGS TYPES

The classification of the different types of rugs is complex: a variety of terms is used to define the purpose and size of the rug, the type of weave and pile, and the characteristic decoration of the rug. All these factors, as well as the age of the rug, will determine the value of the carpet.

To the lay person, the bewildering variety of the rugs available will be confusing enough: they will be presented with kilims, soumaks, prayer mats, medallion rugs; they will hear that these are Anatolian, Indian, Persian, Turkish, Baluchi, Afghani, Azeri, Kazakh, or tribal in origin; that they are silk, wool, or cotton; and be shown the clearly natural dyes and the huge amount of handiwork that has gone into the rugs.

It is even harder not to make a decision given the zeal with which the vendor has displayed his wares. Moreover, as a rule of thumb, the rug

you choose will invariably be the 'jewel of the vendor's collection'. This may make you feel good, but equally is not likely to be sincere.

Brief descriptions of the terms used are given below. Reading around the subject is invaluable homework. But remember, the basic thing in assessing any rug, apart from whether you like it, is how it was made. A rug is first and foremost a manufactured item, whether it is done by hand or by machine.



PRAYER RUGS

Some rugs are defined by the purpose for which they are used. These include the well-known prayer rugs which are used by Muslims to afford them comfort when kneeling in prayer. These are often pile rugs, about 90 centimetres (three feet) by 60 centimetres (two feet) and with a square, angular or rounded arch at one end which is pointed in the direction of Mecca.

The arch represents the mihrab, the niche in the mosque wall that points towards the Muslim holy city. Prayer rugs are decorated with designs reflecting their purpose, including incense burners, lanterns and water rugs. The rugs are often made of wool, but fine silk rugs are also frequently found.



BAGS AND COVERS

Rugs are also used to make storage and other bags – which may be single or double pouched and often make good cushion or sofa coverings – and a variety of ornamental covers for animals, including horses and camels.

PILE CARPETS AND FLAT-WEAVE

Another way of classifying a rug is by the type of weave used. There are two basic types: pile rugs, in which knots are tied between the warp and weft make up the carpet without knots.

Two basic types of knot are used to make a pile carpet: a symmetrical knot passing round two weft threads and then up through the middle of them; and an asymmetrical knot, wrapped around one weft thread and then looped behind the second.

The symmetrical knot is often called a Turkish or ghiordes knot; the asymmetrical knot is also called a Persian or senneh knot. These are the basic designs; regional variations in which a single knot covers as many as four warp threads are sometimes found.



BOKHARAS

Pile carpets often have a central medallion, or series of medallions, either circular or polygonal, set in a rectangular border around which a larger main border is decorated with a variety of geometric or floral motifs. Bokharas are a popular type of pile carpet of Turkoman origin, usually consisting of a red background with a medallion motif that is repeated across the whole rug.

KILIMS

Kilims are flat-woven rugs, that is they have no pile, and often come from Turkey, Persia or India, where they are called dhurries. The designs are usually fairly simple, and many are reasonably priced. Kilims can be woven in strips which are then sewn together, or made in a single piece; often the design is reversible.

Kilims use a type of weave called tapestry weave, in which the weft threads are woven in colour blocks rather than running across the whole width of the loom, with the blocks of colour totally concealing the warps threads. The 'grain' of the carpet thus goes horizontally across the warp threads but in distinct angular patches of colour. The warp threads are often undyed and you can only see them if you pull the weft threads to one side.

SOUMAKS

Soumaks are flat-woven rugs that use a different stitch to the kilim, are tend to have designs similar to those of some pile carpets. In a soumak, the weft is wrapped around the warp threads in loops, often taking in two parallel warp threads.

They are almost always woven in one piece and have a finer, more fiddly look to the typical kilim. Many soumaks come from the Caucasus area of Central Asia, in what used to be the Soviet Union, but they are also widely made in Iran.

Soumaks often use the technique of brocading, in which wefts or warps are added to a basic interwoven structure, and the separate threads hang off the back of the carpet, clearly visible when the rug is turned over.

PLAIN-WEAVE RUGS

Plain-weave rugs are produced by simply passing the weft under one warp and above the next alternately. This system creates a basic flat-weave rug of uniform thickness and design, often beautifully coloured but without great complexity. Brocade and embroidery can be used to add to the appeal of the basic plain-weave rug.

MOTIF

Rugs can also be designated according to the style of motif that decorates them. The range of designs is almost infinite, but certain motifs recur among rugs from different cultures and ethnic groups.

Many silk rugs from Iran and the Caucasus seen in Dubai have highly stylised bird, animal and human motifs, repeated hundreds of times across the carpet. These are very square-cut representations, partly because the Qur'an proscribes showing living creatures in art.

A number of motifs recur in all types of carpet, often in many guises: for instance, the tree-of-life motif is rather like candle-labra, but can range from a simple stick-like design on tribal rugs, to highly ornate floral representations on more sophisticated rugs. Boteh motifs are similar to the paisley-design in neck-ties, while herati motifs consist of a richly four-leaf design in a diamond shape. Diamond motifs also recur in geometric patterns, as do stylized designs of amulets.

Finally, rugs can be classified according to their country or region of origin. The UAE has shores on both the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and the diverse ethnic mix of the expatriate population puts local dealers in contact with a huge area covering Iran, Pakistan, India, the Central Asian republics, Russia, as well as the other Gulf and Middle Eastern nations. Each country, and within that each region, has its distinctive weaving culture. 🇺🇦





TAKE A BITE OUT OF FORDSBURG

For a taste of the multicultural tapestry that makes up Johannesburg, take a stroll on the streets of Fordsburg, suggests

RICHARD HOLMES...

There's no shortage of new beginnings in Johannesburg right now. Take even a brief turn through the likes of Sandton and Rosebank and you'll be bowled over by lofty skyscrapers – at 55 floors, The Leonardo is the tallest in Africa – and acres of shimmering plate glass from buildings under construction. This is a city built on reinvention, where dynamic energy thrums beneath the city streets.

But on my most recent trip to Johannesburg, I found myself in a corner of the city with a rich history dating back to the very earliest days of the 'City of Gold'. In fact, it was here, beneath the very pavements of Fordsburg, that Johannesburg found some of the first seams of its enormous wealth.

Today Fordsburg is a vibrant meeting point of cultures. It's often referred to as the 'Indian Quarter' of Johannesburg, but the truth runs deeper than that, for these potholed streets are home to a colourful collection of cultures and cuisines from across the Levant and South Asia. Whether you come for the history or the culinary adventure, Fordsburg offers an authentic taste of inner-city Johannesburg, and a chance to walk on the streets where it all began.

A MAN NAMED GEORGE

It was a Sunday afternoon in March 1886. An Australian miner by the name of George Harrison was out walking on a section of the lonely farm known as Langlaagte, which stretched across the modern-day suburbs of Mayfair, Sophiatown and Fordsburg. Two years earlier the first seams of gold had been discovered on a hillside not far off, and Harrison was no doubt looking for a similar payday. He was in luck, and struck gold. He staked his claim, and as word spread it sparked a gold rush as miners flocked to the dusty hillsides.

The site of his claim was just to the west of today's Fordsburg, which in the ensuing years grew into an important housing suburb for miners tapping the rich seams of ore. In 1922 those same miners created another pivotal moment in South African history. Angry at the increasing use of black workers in the gold mines, white mineworkers embarked on a strike that turned into a violent revolt that peaked in the heart of Fordsburg. Hundreds died and thousands were injured in what later became known as the Rand Rebellion.

TAKE A TURN PAST THE PLAZA

There's little evidence of that turmoil as you wander through Fordsburg today, and far and away the best place to start is at the Oriental Plaza. This is the heart and soul of Fordsburg. Though its creation in the 1970s was in response to the race-based town planning of apartheid-era South Africa, today it's a vibrant multicultural gathering space, filled with a babel of languages on any given day. Spread across 17 hectares, it's a vibrant marketplace that could easily have been lifted straight from India, Nepal or Bangladesh. Hundreds of traders operate from every nook and cranny of the Plaza, selling everything from ornate crockery to spices, perfumes and dresses to knock-off luggage brands. It's a place where haggling is





welcomed, let alone expected, and you'll be missing out if you don't leave without a bolt of cloth or a shopping bag of clothing. For its textiles that keep the Plaza alive, and on any given weekend you'll find families thronging the corridors as they shop for raw cloth or school clothes, wedding dresses and formal suits.

A WORLD OF FLAVOURS

All that shopping is likely to work up an appetite, and happily, a thriving food hall keeps visitors well fed. You'll be spoilt for choice, but be sure to stop in at the Plaza's most famous takeaway, the World of Samosas. This family-owned restaurant has been a staple of the Oriental Plaza for more than three decades, and today the owner Zaheer Bayant keeps a close eye on business from behind the counter.

Customers come from across the city to stock up, and on any given day up to 700 samosas leave the kitchen. There's an impressive array of flavours to choose from, with a menu ranging from beef, mutton and vegetable to samosas filled with fish, prawns, potato or cheese and corn.

"You won't find this variety of samosas anywhere in the world," says Bayant with a smile. "We even do a coconut samosa, with desiccated coconut and raisins, and we've now introduced a chocolate samosa with nutella. There will be something here that you love!"

A BITE OF FORDSBURG

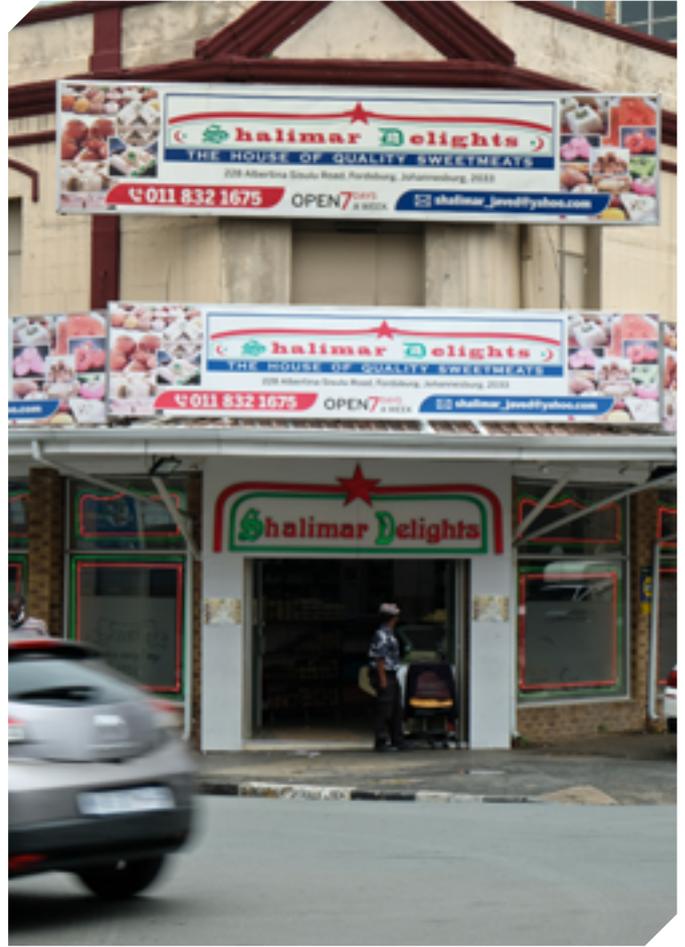
Bayant isn't wrong, but be careful not to overindulge, for the streets of Fordsburg are filled with restaurants and street stalls worth discovering.

From the Plaza, wander to the south and onto Albertina Sisulu Road, one of the main thoroughfares through Fordsburg. Here you'll discover just how the suburb dishes up a menu that rambles across southern Asia. With Johannesburg's summer weather steaming up the streets, stop in at Falooda House; heaven in a bowl for those with a sweet tooth. Order up a bowl of wobbly sweetness, topped with fragrant *sabja* (sweet basil) seeds or buy a popsicle of frozen kulfi, an unchurned Indian ice cream, and keep exploring.

A few steps further you'll find Taj Mahal BBQ, which serves up some of the best tikka chicken the city has to offer. Out on the pavement, a tandoor oven turns out piping hot naan bread ideal for mopping up the 'special sauce' on offer. At Rands 20 for a quarter chicken and sides, it's one of the best value bites Fordsburg has to offer.

If pavement seating on plastic chairs is a little too rough for you, head across the street to Syrian Rose, a family-owned restaurant and takeaway where piping-hot laffa bread is baked at the street-side counter. The shwarmas are superb but don't miss out on the array of juices, including the signature blend of avocado, dates and milk.

Need something sweet? Stop in at Shalimar Delights, which opened here in 1992. They specialise in traditional Indian sweetmeats; a sweet confectionery of flour, ghee, sugar and milk that is flavoured with



IMAGES COURTESY OF RICHARD HOLMES + WIKIMEDIA + FLICKR



cardamom, rose water and saffron. Still hungry? Seek out Bismillah, a short stroll along Mint Road, for authentic North Indian cuisine. They have since expanded to open branches across South Africa, but the original is right here in Fordsburg. The mutton curry is not to be missed.

FORDSBURG MARKET

If you're here on the weekend you'll find the Fordsburg market a hive of activity. This covered market bustles with busy traders, hawking everything from clothing to electronics. Around the fringe food stalls do a roaring trade in the traditional street snacks you'd find sold on a corner in New Delhi. Trays of chilli bites, pakoras and pani puri are wonderful to snack on as you explore, while filled paratha and steaming pots of biryani are on hand if you're really hungry.

But also take a minute to stop and let your mind wander. The site of the modern-day market is where the Rand Revolt took place, and a century ago this year the square would have been the site of military crackdown and mayhem. A quashed rebellion that, in its own way, changed the course of South African history.

PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO GANDHI

The Rand Rebellion isn't the only seminal event to have taken place on the streets of Fordsburg. On 16 August 1908 Mohandas Gandhi – who crystallised his *satyagraha* philosophy of non-violent resistance during his time in South Africa – led thousands of supporters on a march to the Hamidia Mosque in the eastern reaches of Fordsburg. They marched in protest at the 'pass' documents that non-whites were forced to carry in urban areas. On arrival at the mosque a fire was lit in an iron cauldron and thousands set flame to their hated pass documents. Today, a monument to this courageous act stands on the streets outside the mosque. It's another reminder of the key role this unsung suburb has played in the chequered history of South Africa. 🇿🇦



IS IT SAFE?

Fordsburg is a bustling urban space, and not without its social problems. While most visits are hassle-free, it pays to take a few simple precautions when exploring. Avoid displaying jewellery or valuables in public, and keep cash concealed wherever possible. While most areas are perfectly safe to explore in the daytime, be aware of your surroundings at night. If in doubt, book a guided tour with a local who knows the area.



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com

HAVE YOURSELVES A MERRY EVERGREEN CHRISTMAS

WORDS: KATE NIVISON





Now that Christmas has become an almost universal holiday, it seems that the urge to decorate both private and public spaces in all kinds of extravagant ways has pretty much gone global too. It doesn't matter whether you're shovelling snow or picnicking beneath palm trees in the tropics, come November, there will be people up ladders practising their 'Christmas décor' skills.

Up will go streamers of tinsel and fairy lights, glowing plastic Santas and all kinds of trees, from pines to palms, real or fake, along with baubles, trumpeting angels and twinkling stars. In China whole towns are devoted entirely to the manufacture of sparkly seasonal bits and bobs. Fashions may change, but the trend everywhere is towards the bigger and brighter, with ever more stylistic, themed and 'designer' displays.

Of course, nobody likes a 'party pooper' or a Mr. Scrooge muttering 'Humbug!', but with worries about global warming and general belt-tightening, perhaps this is the year to consider getting back to the basics of a simpler age.



It all started out modestly enough on a local scale, and well before Christmas appeared on the scene. In the cold north, the sun would do its worrying annual disappearing act, leaving the residents huddled together round the roaring fire in the communal hall under bearskins and reindeer hides. To keep their spirits up, the Northmen made a ceremony of dragging the largest log they could find into the big hall, crowned with evergreen foliage as a reminder that spring would come again. They called it the yule log – ‘yule’ meaning ‘wheel’ to symbolise the ever-turning year. These days, the memory survives mainly in the form of a gorgeously gooey, log-shaped cake covered with chocolate and sprinkled with icing sugar ‘snow’.

The custom of bringing mid-winter greenery into the house easily survived the coming of Christianity. ‘The Holly and the Ivy’, one of the best know Christmas carols, explains the use of these two ‘evergreens’ in terms of Christian symbolism rather than the traditional pagan beliefs they replaced, with holly prickles representing the crown of thorns, and so on. But ‘decking the halls with boughs of holly’ requires determination and thick leather gloves, so the custom survives mostly in the form of a holly sprig, real or fake, stuck on top of the Christmas pudding. However, real holly berries are poisonous, so don’t let the kiddies mistake them for sweets.

Ivy is much more amenable to the decorator’s art. Its long streamers of glossy, heart-shaped leaves are just begging to be worked into decorative swags festooned with red and gold ribbon and bows. Any thick-leaved creeper will do, and the children can be let loose to add their own flourishes. It’s cheap – since gardeners are usually pleased to get their wayward evergreens pruned. It looks nicely ‘traditional’ and can be thrown on the fire or composted after the celebrations.

The ultimate form of ever-greenery is, of course, the Christmas tree. If ever a symbol of seasonal goodwill has taken off, it is this surely this one. It started quietly enough in Latvia, where there’s a plaque in the town square of Riga marking its first official appearance in 1510. Queen Victoria’s German husband brought the custom to England, and Charles Dickens also played his part, with his ever-popular ‘A Christmas Carol’ and a famous short story, ‘The Christmas Tree’.

Charmingly, whole countries now send each other a huge tree for Christmas. The one in London’s Trafalgar Square is presented each year by the people of Norway in thanks for wartime comradeship. Maybe that custom could catch on too. Even better would be to send lots of sapling trees instead, to countries that badly need them to ‘re-green’ barren lands – or the cash to grow them locally.



Amongst all the greenery, the other Christmas colour is undoubtedly red. No great mystery there, since red is the colour of fire and love – or maybe Santa hijacked his red gear from the traditional costume of the Lapp people of northern Scandinavia where he gets his reindeer. Or was it from red church robes? After all, he may well have been a saintly bishop in an earlier life.

More red (and green) was added to the décor from the New World where, in 1829, an American official, Joel Robert Poinsett, first brought back the beautiful Flor de Noche Buena (Holy Night Flower) from Mexico to the United States, and gave his name to it. The stunning scarlet form of Poinsettia is now one of the most popular Christmas emblems. Millions of pot Poinsettias, much reduced in size from their wild bushy state, are produced in greenhouses each year. Locally produced plants are more 'green' than imported ones, but better yet is to cut the carbon out completely and go in for homemade fantasy flowers in reusable rich red fabrics.

Extra lighting is also part of the festive season. It is Sweden we have to thank for the association of Christmas with candles. December 13th, is the feast of St. Lucia, the patroness of light, at the darkest time of year. It goes back to pre-Christian times and was similar to the Hindu festival of Diwali. But we've now gone from candles to a positive orgy of electric lights, from

the daintiest winking 'fairy' types to enormous street displays, on town halls, in department stores, even cascading off bridges. Lately, coloured lasers beamed at the stars have been added to list. It's true that candles, bush lamps and night-light lanterns can be a fire hazard, but in the open air round a communal big tree or city square, a Carols by Candlelight get-together is one of the season's treats, and it's far more atmospheric with less garish lighting around. Another way of using a tiny amount of light effectively is to revive the old custom of putting a candle in the window on Christmas Eve to show travellers the way home.

As for mistletoe, that seasonal excuse for getting in touch with your inner pagan by stealing a kiss under a sprig of it at the office party, it has little do Christmas. This small, bunched parasitical plant grows mainly on old oak or apple trees, but mysteriously retains its pale green leaves and squishy white berries in winter when its host's branches are bare. Delve into its murky past, and out will pop tales of druids cutting it with a golden sickle by the full moon, wild fertility rites, and the use of its berries to cure almost anything. It is possible, though, that its reputation may have less to do with festive naughtiness than we'd like to believe. Tribal disputes were sometimes settled in sacred oak groves, where sworn enemies could be persuaded to offer the 'kiss of peace' under a bunch of mystic mistletoe. Perhaps this aspect of mistletoe-related activity should be revived, and not just at parties, but at the United Nations as well. If all you can get is the plastic variety, at least it can be recycled for next year. 🌿

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THE FIRST AIRLINE TO RECEIVE RIGHTS TO FLY OVER SAUDI ARABIA AIRSPACE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN

Air Seychelles achieved another important milestone in its flights between Israel and Seychelles. The carrier became the first airline to receive permission from the Saudi Arabian authorities to overfly their territory on flights between the two countries. Saudi Arabia announced last month that flights operating to and from Israel would be allowed to use this airspace, which previously was highly restricted with few exemptions.

Captain Sandy Benoiton, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Air Seychelles said: "The granting of this airspace is very significant for the airline. The fact that the flight can now fly in a more direct manner and a higher altitude also means a reduction in fuel burn between 500kg-1,000kg per flight. In addition to this important environmental benefit, it means the aircraft can now carry an additional 20 passengers per flight and

eliminates the payload restriction previously employed. This ultimately will have a positive impact on the number of Israelis implementing their dream of a holiday in Seychelles – rightly perceived as The Paradise on earth."

The first flight to access this new route was Wednesday 3 August, flight HM#21 between Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport and Seychelles International Airport. The flight's Captain was Ronny Morel who

commented: "It was a joy to operate today's flight which overflew Jordan and Saudi Arabian airspace en route to Seychelles. The Saudi air traffic controllers were extremely helpful and allowed us to navigate with optimal conditions for passenger comfort." Air Seychelles currently flies three times per week between Tel Aviv and Seychelles non-stop, and an additional weekly flight to Seychelles via Malé, Maldives.



AIR SEYCHELLES AND TURKISH AIRLINES SIGN CODESHARE AGREEMENT

Air Seychelles has signed a codeshare agreement with Turkish Airlines. The official signing ceremony was performed in Istanbul by Air Seychelles Acting Chief Executive Officer, Captain Sandy Benoiton, and Turkish Airlines Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Bilal Ekşi.

The codeshare agreement reinforces the commercial partnership between the two aviation companies, providing additional travel alternatives connecting Seychelles and Turkey.

Under this agreement, Turkish Airlines will place its 'TK' code on Air Seychelles domestic services between Mahé and Praslin. In turn, Air Seychelles places its 'HM' code on flights operated by Turkish Airlines between Istanbul to Mahé, Istanbul to Tel Aviv, and Istanbul to Paris flights. The two partners wish to expand further beyond this agreement in the future.



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MAP KEY

- Air Seychelles Flights
- Air Seychelles Seasonal or Charter route
- Air Seychelles Codeshares

CODESHARE PARTNER



Disclaimer: Actual flight paths depend on the weather, government approval or other operational factors. The flight routes depicted on this map are for illustrative purposes only.

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

Domestic Network



airseychelles.com

Updated Sept 2022

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

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

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
 3A Riley Rd, Building 11
 Bedfordview Office Park, Bedfordview
 Johannesburg
 Tel: +27 11 326 4440
 Email: airseychelles@rogers-aviation.co.za
 Reservations2@rogers-aviation.co.za
 benjamins@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 SCR 50,000 or foreign currency equivalent in any form 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 0830hrs-1430hrs.

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. A copy of valid return ticket and proof of confirmed accommodation is required. 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 two 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 Seychelles Travel Authorisation (STA) at seychelles.govtas.com prior to arriving at the airport.

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

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