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Inflight Magazine for Air Seychelles • January - March 2024



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**Dear Guests,
Welcome aboard!**

A brand New Year is upon us, marking a new chapter, and with it, so much to look forward to. Now that the rush and commotion surrounding the holiday season is over, it is the ideal time for a getaway to unwind and rejuvenate in preparation for whatever lies ahead. Welcome on board Air Seychelles, where I hope you will enjoy flying the Creole Spirit with us.

2023 ended on a good note, with encouraging performance results tallied for the destinations on our regional network operated by our two Airbus A320neo aircraft. Our domestic service was maintained with a fleet of five Twin Otter TurboProps, offering hassle free trips between Mahé and Praslin with charter flights on demand. Through a much needed addition, we introduced a twice weekly service to Colombo in June, which is currently greatly facilitating numerous connection opportunities throughout the rest of Asia.

With your help, we also managed to attain three prestigious accolades at the 30th edition of the World Travel Awards held in Dubai last October, read about it on Page 66. These awards mean a lot to us as they reflect our hard work and we count on your support for the years to come.

In order to help us maintain the high service delivery on board and through our products, I encourage you to please complete the survey after your flight so we can gain the necessary insight to improve where it is needed. As our valued guests, your feedback is vital. Our website www.airseychelles.com remains an accessible and easy tool for your bookings and to find out more information about our schedules.

As I always make it a point to do, I extend my wholehearted thanks to my devoted team for whatever success we achieve as an airline, it is down to their collective efforts. In late October, we celebrated 67 of our colleagues for their long service within the company, one of them reaching a 40 year milestone. Page 66 holds more details of this proud moment.

I will end by thanking you for choosing to fly with our national airline, our pride. My team joins me in wishing you a pleasant journey.



Captain Sandy Benoiton
Chief Executive Officer



“

**Thanking you for
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Most pitcher plants are epiphytic: like many orchids, they grow on other plants, often high on trees, without harming them. Some pitcher plants form a total length of 20 metres or more, spreading widely over trees and bushes.

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Mahé Island, Seychelles.
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A journey through the history of maps (1482-1830)

By the Ministry for Fisheries and Blue Economy

Date: From 7 November through 20 January 2024

Venue: National Library, Victoria

Join us at the National Library for a remarkable journey into Seychelles' history. Explore the marine heritage of our islands with a unique collection of maps and marine artifacts. Experience Seychelles through the eyes of the pioneering mariners who created the cartography that put our islands on the map. This is an unprecedented adventure through history, the first of its kind in the Indian Ocean. Embark on an epic voyage through time!



Virtual Tourism Activities and Technology

Date: 29 January 2024

Venue: Anse Boileau

The main purpose of the International Conference on Virtual Tourism Activities and Technology is to bring industry professionals, experts, academicians, and scholars to discuss their expertise for better collaboration in the field.

Seychelles Eco-friendly Marathon

Date: 25 February 2024

Venue: Beau Vallon, Mahé

The Seychelles Eco-friendly Marathon, initiated in 2008, offers a challenging yet immensely rewarding experience. Designed to be a picturesque event promoting both the health of Seychellois and unity among locals and visitors, it allows participants to savour the natural beauty of Mahé Island while running, jogging, or walking along its beaches. Regardless of whether you're tackling the full marathon, half-marathon, or a shorter distance, the enchanting trail takes you from Beau Vallon Beach, along the peninsula to Victoria, and back to the finish. Notably, this marathon holds international recognition through the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS) label.



Domestic Tourism and Economy

Date: 20 March 2024

Venue: Anse Boileau

The objective of the International Conference on Domestic Tourism and Economy is to discuss emerging fields, peasant scarios, and future developments in the subjects. It brings all the top scientists, researchers, scholars, and professionals into one platform for extensive debates. You can gain knowledge, present unique researchers, and create professional networks in various fields.

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International Conference on Sports Nutrition and Supplements (ICSNS)

Date: 14 January 2024

Venue: Malé, Maldives

This conference will bring together top academic scientists, researchers, and research scholars to exchange and share their expertise and research findings on all aspects of Sports Nutrition and Supplements. It also provides a top multidisciplinary venue for academics, practitioners, and educators to present and discuss the most recent discoveries, trends, and concerns in the disciplines of Sports Nutrition and Supplements Conference, as well as practical difficulties faced and solutions taken.



Sri Lanka National Day

Date: 4 February 2024

Venue: All around Sri Lanka

Official celebrations and military parades mark Sri Lankan National Day. The primary ceremonies take place in Colombo, where the President hoists the national flag and delivers a nationally televised speech.

The President outlines the government's accomplishments over the last year, discusses crucial challenges, and asks the people to join him in marking this historic day. The President also pays respect to Sri Lanka's national heroes by holding two minutes of silence in their honour.

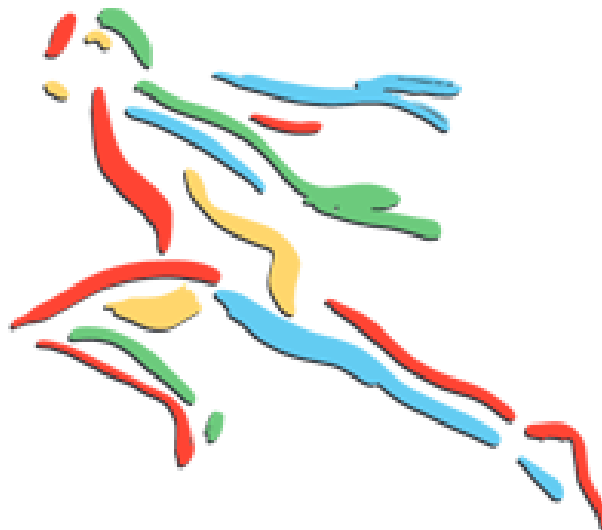
In addition to commemorating the country's independence, National Day is a day of remembering for Sri Lanka's national heroes, both past and current.

Tel Aviv Samsung Marathon

Date: 23 February 2024

Venue: Virtual race, Tel Aviv, Israel

The Tel Aviv Samsung Marathon is a multi-course race that welcomes runners of various abilities and styles. It is a yearly citywide festival for both professional and novice long-distance runners. Marathon runners will enjoy a breathtaking route along the beach and through Tel Aviv's main streets, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, providing a one-of-a-kind experience. This year, 40,000 competitors from all over the world are expected, making it Israel's most popular running event. Prepare to take part in this annual citywide running extravaganza!





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Meetings Africa

Date: 26-28 February 2024

Venue: Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg

Meetings Africa is a Pan-African trade fair that brings together African groups and experts from the meetings sector to present Africa's unique range of business events services and products to worldwide customers. It is the ideal venue for showcasing to the world what Africa has to offer as a business events destination and amplifying the continent's success stories. Buyers from all over the world are also invited to come and see for themselves the extensive range of quality certified business events facilities. Delegates also gather during the trade expo to share knowledge as they collaborate to transform and grow the continent's business events sector.



Mauritius National Day

Date: 12 March 2024

Venue: All around Mauritius

Mauritius' Independence Day commemorates two significant milestones in the country's recent history, both of which occurred on March 12th: independence from Britain in 1968 and establishing a republic in 1992. The colourful flag is displayed all across the island at this time of the year in businesses, residences, schools, government buildings, and local communities congregate for modest celebrations across the country.

Holi

Date: 25 March 2024

Venue: India

Holi, also known as the festival of sharing and love or the festival of colours, is a Hindu two-day spring festival. Every year, the celebration is held in the months of February and March, with the first day being known as Chhoti Holi or Holika Dahan and the second as Dhuleti or Rangwali Holi.

The festival commemorates Radha Krishna's eternal and holy love and is observed in practically every corner of the country. The ritual begins with the lighting of the bonfire one day before Holi, and this process represents the triumph of good over evil. On Holi, people play with colours with their friends and families, and in the evening, they display love and affection to their close ones with Abeer, the traditional name for the colourful powders used in several Hindu rites, particularly the Holi celebration.



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Upcoming Technology in 2024

The rate of technological growth is unstoppable, and each year offers new inventions that revolutionise how we live, work, and connect with the world. Looking ahead, it's evident that this trend will only worsen. Here are some of the most anticipated and game-changing innovations that will impact our lives in the near future.

⑤ 5G technology

In 2024, 5G technology will be widely accessible, providing rapid download and upload speeds, minimal delay, and support for multiple device connections. This breakthrough will revolutionize augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and Internet of Things (IoT) applications. Huawei is poised to introduce a full range of commercial 5.5G network equipment in anticipation of its deployment. This advancement guarantees faster data speeds, expanded bandwidth, and a sharp rise in the number of connected devices relying on speedy and dependable data transfers.



⑤ Breakthroughs in Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI has been slowly advancing, but 2024 is likely to see significant breakthroughs. More sophisticated natural language processing, AI-powered healthcare advancements for early disease detection and treatment, and AI-driven creative works such as music, art, and literature can all be expected. The use of AI to automate processes, enhance efficiency, and improve safety is becoming more prevalent as AI technology advances. Looking ahead, AI development will continue to change and shape our world.



⑤ Quantum computing

Quantum computing is getting closer to having practical applications. While full-scale quantum computers for common use are still a few years away, 2024 might see substantial advances in the creation of quantum processors and algorithms that have the potential to revolutionise encryption, materials science, and drug discovery. IBM's first Europe-based quantum data centre will aim to facilitate access to "cutting-edge quantum computing" while complying with the EU's data privacy rules. The facility will be located in Ehningen, Germany.



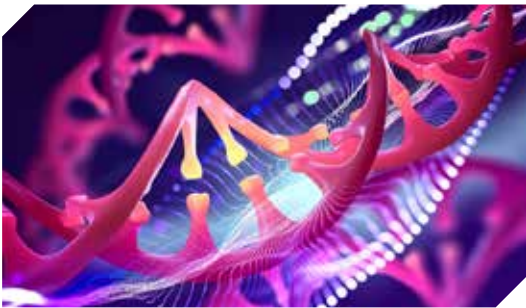
⑤ Autonomous vehicles

In 2024, self-driving cars are poised to become widespread on highways due to advancements in safety measures and more reliable autonomous systems. A conference in the USA will showcase research on sensing, imaging, vision, and perception, with applications in driverless cars, ADAS, drones, robots, and industrial automation. These technological strides will revolutionise how we commute, travel, and transport goods, promising an exciting future ahead.



① Space exploration

Significant progress in space exploration, including missions to Mars and the rise of commercial space travel, marks a pivotal moment. Advances in space technology are set to revolutionise our understanding of the universe, unlocking age-old mysteries and paving the way for a new era of scientific discovery. This wave of innovation not only promises to spur industry and tourism but also shapes the future of humanity in unforeseen ways. Collaborations between private entities, governments, and international space agencies offer the potential for a frontier that expands horizons, drives economic growth, and inspires future generations.



① Biotechnology and genetic engineering

Biotechnology strides forward, bringing forth a new era of healthcare centered on personalised medicine tailored to individual genetic profiles. The evolving CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology raises hope for treating once deemed incurable hereditary conditions. This breakthrough not only promises relief for those affected but also reshapes modern medicine, providing fresh paths to healing and optimism. With deeper genetic insights and advancing technology, we stand on the brink of a medical revolution that will revolutionise our approach to genetic diseases.

② Blockchain technology has applications other than cryptocurrency

While blockchain technology is most usually linked with cryptocurrencies, it has a wide range of applications. Its use in supply chain management, voting systems, and secure data storage may expand in 2024. In a variety of businesses, this technology promises openness, security, and accountability.



① Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)

AR and VR technologies will become more integrated into our daily lives, from education and healthcare to entertainment and remote work. Enhanced hardware and software will make these immersive experiences more accessible and compelling.

While virtual reality is unlikely to overtake traditional gaming platforms anytime soon, its future seems bright. The number of active VR installs is increasing faster than ever before, rising from 27.7 million this year to 46.0 million by the end of 2024.

② Green energy and storage solutions

In 2024, global efforts to embrace clean energy will gain momentum through battery technology and energy storage advancements. These enhancements will enhance the reliability and accessibility of renewable energy, propelling us towards a sustainable future. Batteries will play a pivotal role by supporting grid stability, providing backup power, and storing renewable energy. The year 2024 promises significant technological strides, encompassing widespread 5G adoption, progress in AI, quantum computing, and biotechnology, reshaping our world and addressing complex challenges while creating new opportunities. However, the ethical and societal implications of these innovations must be carefully considered to ensure they serve humanity's best interests.



Singapore

Kathmandu

Bangkok

Chennai

Dhaka

Kuala Lumpur

Delhi

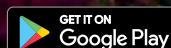
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The charming Jardin du Roi

WORDS: BILL MCATEER & ADRIAN SKERRETT

There are many different spice plants in the Jardin du Roi at Anse Royale, where the French first grew spices more than 200 years ago. Today, it is one of the most delightful visitor attractions, offering an authentic experience of local culture and a window to the roots of Seychelles history.



Spices are an important part of Seychelles history. They were once very valuable commodities, and everyone wanted to be able to grow them. In 1772, the Jardin du Roi, or Royal Garden, was established on Mahé by the aptly-named Pierre Poivre, chief administrator of the Ile de France (as Mauritius was known at this time). Poivre appointed Antoine Nicolas Benôit Gillot, a captain in the Mauritian Militia, as his agent in Seychelles. It was Poivre's vision to create a spice garden in the newly established French colony of Seychelles. Gillot left Port Louis in October 1771 with a letter of introduction to Charles Delaunay, commandant of the first Seychelles settlement which was then becoming established on St. Anne Island. Gillot was given the mission of planting spice plants and seeds stolen and smuggled out from the Maluku Islands, then under Dutch control.

Poivre believed the only way to break the lucrative Dutch spice monopoly in the spice trade was for France to have her own spice islands and from what he had heard of the Seychelles they seemed to be suitable. Significantly, they lay in the same latitude as the Celebes where spice plants were known to thrive.

The relationship between Gillot and Delaunay and their two settlements was not a happy one. There was little co-operation between them; on the contrary, they became bitter rivals. Only with great reluctance did Delaunay loan Gillot a small boat in which to tour the coast of Mahé so he could select a suitable site for a plantation. He settled at last on Anse Royale in



Giant Tortoise

the south-east. The land was flat, watered by two streams, and the soil was thick and black. Today, the Seychelles University stands on what was probably this site. The hills beyond are still known as Mon Plaisir, recalling Pierre Poivre's estate and gardens on Mauritius, which later became the famous Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens.

'There is a beautiful, wide and gently sloping hill, which leads up to a wooded plateau ... where the soil is excellent and fairly well watered,' wrote Gillot, describing the site he had chosen. He began by laying out four separate beds for the precious pepper, nutmeg, clove, and cinnamon plants he had brought with him, each bed bordered by banana trees to provide shade.

Gillot's time in Seychelles was not happy and he suffered dreadfully from hemorrhoids. Even his plantation did not exactly thrive, but then it was dealt a final blow in May 1780 when strange ships were sighted off Mahé. Lieutenant Romainville at the French garrison on Mahé, fearing an English invasion, ordered the spice plants uprooted and burned rather than let them fall into enemy hands. We can imagine Gillot's despair when he later learned the ships were, in fact, French. However, seeds from the cinnamon plants dispersed when the garden was destroyed. They took root, and today cinnamon, at least, grows wild from the coast to the highest hills. Although the burning of the first Jardin du Roi meant the end of Poivre's dream, spices continued to be cultivated in Seychelles, becoming an important, though fluctuating source of income for the islands. Cinnamon, especially, flourished and



the top quality of the bark and oil of Seychelles cinnamon made the islands a major exporter in the early years of the 20th century.

Other spice plants were introduced over the years, both to satisfy local demand and for export. For many years vanilla ran second only to copra as the major Seychelles export. Two types of vanilla, which is an orchid, grow in Seychelles: the wild vanilla, which is found only in Seychelles, and the cultivated vanilla, which is a native of Central America. The latter, the vanilla of commerce, was introduced into Seychelles from Réunion in the 1860s. As the vanilla flower is pollinated by particular bees found only in the countries of origin, it had to be pollinated by hand in Seychelles, usually early in the morning. The green pods of the vine are picked just before they ripen and are dried for lengthy periods, transforming them into the familiar, hard, black vanilla pods. Vanilla was first exported from Seychelles in the 1870s and the trade continued to flourish until the 1920s, when synthetic vanillin ended its time as an important export.

The pervasive, aromatic scent of the clove tree is easily detected during still, tropical nights. The Chinese appear to have been the first to use the clove, actually a small unopened flower bud, as a spice. Nutmeg is the dried seed kernel of an evergreen plant, a native of the Spice Islands. Full-bearing trees can yield as many as 2,000 nuts a year. A popular spice, it was once credited with many exaggerated virtues.

Another aromatic plant, patchouli, was introduced into



Seychelles at the end of the century. Its leaves had been known in the East for centuries as a moth repellent, and later its oil was used as a perfume. It is now valuable as a fixative in perfume manufacture. Micheline Georges, matriarch of the modern gardens, remembers when patchouli was cultivated extensively on the family estate at Anse Royale. This estate later became the Jardin du Roi of today. The land was first developed by her great-great-grandfather William Green, an Englishman, who purchased it in the 1860s. He cleared what was then a virgin forest, and planted fruit trees, tea and coffee. He built the house which is now the Jardin du Roi museum. After his death, his eldest son ran the estate, until he sold it to another branch of the family who continued to add new plants and spices and established a cinnamon oil distillery.

Today, Micheline Georges manages the Jardin du Roi, one of the most beautiful visitor attractions in Seychelles. The gardens are open every day except Christmas day, New Year and Easter. The four original spices of Gillot's garden (and others besides) grow there, and are processed for sale locally.

Officially declared a Historical Site in June 1995, the plantation and surrounding forest extend over some 85 acres. There is a nature trail through the forest, where virtually the only regular inhabitants are the common, and not so common, birds and reptiles of Seychelles. If you feel energetic you can also climb the mountain, Gratte Fesses, from which there are magnificent views of the reef-fringed bay of Anse Royale.

The museum is filled with interesting fragments of Seychelles' past such as old prints and engravings. The fascinating natural world of Seychelles

is also reflected in the display. At the restaurant, you can enjoy not only traditional creole cuisine, but the best ice cream in Seychelles, flavoured with cinnamon, ginger or lemon grass. Whilst you eat you can enjoy a panoramic view of the whole site. There is also a shop which sells souvenirs, books, and the produce of the plantation, including spices of course.

Other attractions include some of the venerable Giant Tortoises for Seychelles is famous and there is a small nursery featuring the medicinal plants traditionally used on the islands. On the plantation itself you can see how the spices grow and learn how they are dried and processed. There are several pleasant walks up into the hills which frame the plantation. The paths wander beneath the shady trees, beside sparkling streams which flow down the hillsides and water the plantation. There will be sights which will stay with you long after your holiday is over.

"We have a huge number of repeat clients," says Micheline, "Many are returning for the third or fourth time, and this week we had a couple return for their tenth visit".

The flourishing spice plantation would surely have warmed Pierre Poivre's heart, and as for poor Gillot, he would perhaps hardly have thought it possible that his Royal Garden in Eden should have become the haven it is now. Even before that unfortunate misidentification of ships on the horizon caused its destruction, his garden at the end contained only one clove tree, five nutmeg trees and four cinnamon bushes. This new Jardin du Roi is certainly a happier place than the one he knew, for people and plants alike.



Micheline Georges, matriarch of the modern gardens



The enchanting wonders

WORDS: TED ROGERS



The Maldives, an amazing tropical paradise hidden in the Indian Ocean, is famous for its pristine beaches, turquoise waters, rich marine life, and magnificent overwater bungalows. The Maldives, which consists of 26 atolls and over 1,000 coral islands, is a compelling blend of natural beauty, rich culture, and one-of-a-kind experiences. This makes the Maldives renowned and this is why it remains a popular destination for tourists from all over the world.

The local term for Maldives is *Dhivehi Raajje*, the "Island Kingdom". The inhabitants, who call themselves *Dhivehi* (islanders) speak their own unique language, *Dhivehi*. Indian traders called the country *Maladiv*, Sanskrit for 'garland of islands' a name that was adopted by other European languages from the Portuguese. Certainly, the country appears like a festoon of green flowers strewn across the blue velvet of the Indian Ocean.

As such, there are no hills or rivers in Maldives. The most common feature are tall palms, white sandy beaches, turquoise lagoons and crystal-clear waters. Some islands, especially those in the south, are covered with lush tropical vegetation. The most common plant the coconut, is the Maldivian 'tree of life'. Other food crops include breadfruit, banana, mango, cassava, sweet potato and millet. No longer just a scatter of dots in the Indian Ocean, Maldives now beckons the world and few can resist the entreaty.



☹ Resort Islands with breathtaking beaches

Around one hundred and sixty-four resort islands to choose from, wherever your final destination in Maldives may be, one thing is certain – you will experience one of the most unusual and exotic holidays in the world. Serenity, tranquillity and natural harmony are its key elements.

The Maldives is also known for its stunning beaches with silky powdery sands as white as snow. Its beaches, with their picture-perfect palm trees, provide a wonderful respite from the stresses of daily life. Visitors are greeted with the attraction of paradise at every turn, whether on the peaceful and serene shores of Veligandu Island or the vibrant beaches of Hulhumale.

Veligandu beach is located on the North Ari Atoll of the Maldives archipelago. The island is a small sliver of land that stretches north and south. It is only 600 metres long and spans an area of 8.9 hectares. This is one of the island's greatest beaches, complete with sunbeds, umbrellas, the beach bar and a panoramic outdoor swimming pool.

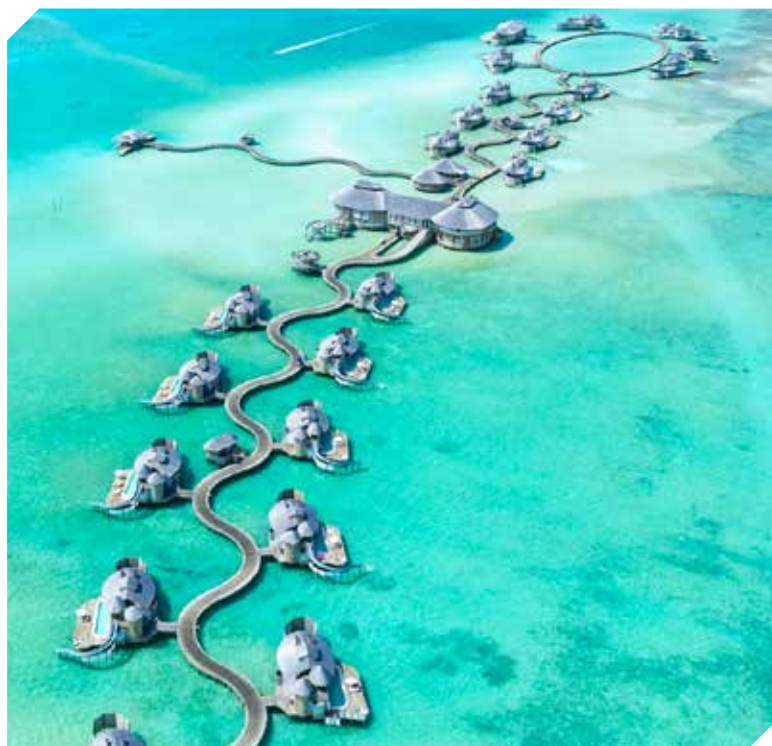
The coastline is encircled by a beautiful, highly populated reef with diverse underwater life. Turtles, manta rays, and other uncommon marine fauna enter the lagoon through a narrow entrance. Herons, which confidently strut on the white sand, are also frequently seen on the beach.

Hulhumale Beach is one of the Maldives' most popular public beaches. Because of its proximity to Male International Airport, the island is ideal for a low-cost vacation in the powder-like white sand and brilliant blue ocean. Although the beach is somewhat crowded, it is clean, tranquil, and provides a variety of activities.

☹ Overwater bungalows

One of the most iconic images associated with the Maldives is that of the luxurious overwater bungalows perched above the clear, shallow waters. These bungalows offer guests a truly unique and indulgent experience, allowing them to wake up to stunning sunrises, swim in their own private lagoons, and even watch vibrant marine life from the comfort of their rooms. The Maldives is renowned for pioneering the concept of overwater accommodations, which has since been adopted by other tropical destinations.

Overwater bungalows are popular in luxury travel destinations, but few vacations can match the excitement and romance of overwater bungalows. Every person should experience a luxury overwater bungalow at least once in their lifetime. The benefits are numerous, but one thing is certain: you won't find any other place with the stunning views found from these amazing accommodations. Consider waking up and falling asleep to the sound of waves crashing on the beach. Because your body and mind can relax in such a setting, you'll feel as if you're experiencing a completely new sort of relaxation.





🕒 Maldivian culture and hospitality

While natural beauty is a primary draw, the Maldives is also celebrated for its unique culture and warm hospitality. The locals, known as Maldivians, are proud of their rich heritage, which is a blend of South Asian, Arabian, and African influences. Visitors have the opportunity to experience Maldivian traditions, music, dance, and cuisine, contributing to a holistic and immersive travel experience.

Maldivians display extremely high standards of craftsmanship, especially in boat building and a wide variety of arts and crafts, many catering to the tourist trade. Boats are central to Maldivian life, essential for earning a living, collecting wood and coconuts from other islands and for travel. Almost every family has a small boat, and richer families have many. The caravel-styled boats known as *dhoanis* used by the Maldivians resemble sleek Arab dhows. Made from coconut and local hardwood, the boats are long and slender, with elegant curving prows. *Dhoanis* are made by the local carpenter, *maavadin*, a highly respected member of the community. Most boats are made with simple tools.

The basic diet of the islanders is rice and fish broth, *garudiya*, usually made from tuna. It is sometimes enlivened by a dash of salty fish paste, *rihaakuru*, or a spicy side dish of onion and lime, *asaara*. Another popular snack is unleavened bread and a salad mixture of grated coconut, dried fish, lime and spices, a traditional Maldivian breakfast called *mashuni*.

☉ Pristine coral reefs and marine life

Beneath the surface of the Maldivian waters lies a mesmerising underwater world that attracts divers and snorkelers from across the globe. The coral reefs are vibrant and teeming with a kaleidoscope of marine life, including colourful fish, sea turtles, rays, and even sharks. The Maldives is a hotspot for underwater enthusiasts, offering both experienced divers and beginners the opportunity to explore these marine wonders.

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

Maldives is one of the world's richest coral areas, comparable only with the Philippines and Australia's Great Barrier Reef. There are more than 200 different species of hard coral alone, but it is the shapes that they form which make them so amazing: caverns, fans, shafts, canyons and boulders. So beautiful is this underwater world that at first it's difficult to know where to look. Many divers are inclined to drift or flip from patch to patch on the reef, looking for ever more breathtaking shapes and colours.



☉ Vibrant snorkeling and diving

The Maldives boasts a reputation for being one of the world's top snorkelling and diving destinations. The clear visibility, warm waters, and diverse marine ecosystems make it an ideal place to explore underwater beauty. From swimming alongside gentle whale sharks in South Ari Atoll to discovering ancient shipwrecks, the underwater adventures are boundless.

First-time snorkelers can discover the sheer delight of floating in warm water, where every move is effortless. To wallow in a shallow lagoon with the sun on, your back and white coral sand below is one of the most euphoric experiences. To swim through a channel in the coral reef is breathtaking. The coral edge suddenly drops away to the unknown deep, like suddenly going over an abyss in a dream.

With such amazing coral reefs and wide variety of marine life, it's not surprising that Maldives has become top of the list of the world's great diving destinations. Most resort islands run well-equipped diving centres with excellent instructors who know their patch in Maldives like the back of their hands.

Diving in Maldivian waters at night with lights is unsurpassed. When the sun sets corals open up and extend their flower-like tentacles, spiders and shrimps leave their tubular sponges to search for food and moray eels, along with the other nocturnal predators, prowl the deep, dark depths.



☉ Water sports and activities

For those seeking adventure and excitement, the Maldives offers an array of water sports and activities. From exhilarating jet skiing and parasailing to serene sunset cruises on traditional *dhoani* boats, there's something for everyone to enjoy. The calm waters of the lagoons provide the perfect playground for various water-based activities.

The coral reefs on which the islands stand offer safe shallow waters, teeming with fish, the crystal-clear seas ensure visibility of up to forty metres. In the shallow waters of the atolls, more than 2,500 species of coral, including 100 endemics to the islands, thrive. Several hundred species of fish, including the most colourful Indian Ocean species, also flourish in this benign environment. The border between the shallow lagoons and the deep water is one of the most interesting areas for underwater enthusiasts. Virtually all islands provide the necessary equipment for such sports as surfing, waterskiing, windsurfing, snorkeling and diving.

In conclusion, the Maldives is famous for its unparalleled natural beauty, luxurious overwater accommodations, vibrant marine life, and unique cultural experiences. This tropical haven has earned its reputation as a dream destination, appealing to travellers in search of relaxation, adventure, and a deep connection with the wonders of the ocean. Whether it's the tranquil beaches, enchanting underwater world, or the warmth of Maldivian hospitality, the Maldives continues to captivate the hearts of those who have the privilege to explore its treasures.



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com

Colombo

soul of Sri Lanka

WORDS: SUGATO TRIPATHY

The erstwhile garden city of the 19th century has changed over the years. Decades of tumultuous civil war, economic turmoil and political instability though hasn't fully diluted the city's character. Colombo is steeped in history with several British colonial buildings rubbing shoulders with Buddhist stupas. You will still find Dutch Churches in its by lanes and old Buddhist temples on the lake sides. The chaotic traffic of the administrative and political hub of Sri Lanka will do little to dampen your spirits. Colombo is full of chic cafes, plush malls, gleaming skyscrapers and two absolutely iconic places – the spectacular 5 acre ocean side urban park in Galle Face and the beautiful 16th century Beira Lake.



☉ A stroll at Galle Face Green

Usually iconic monuments, historic famous squares or religious landmarks characterise a city. Seldom is a city so defined by a single seafront. During the 150 years of Dutch occupation in Sri Lanka, this area was cleared by the colonialists. The purpose was to have a clear line for the canons for any approaching enemy from the sea. Today it is a smorgasbord of human enterprise on a beautiful seaside promenade. The place is always buzzing irrespective of the time of the day. Enthusiastic joggers, snuggling couples, adoring families and food vendors are omnipresent at any time of the day. Fried shrimp and lime juice is a particularly sought after dish on the streets. A swathe of designed grassland lies between the high rise buildings and the grey Indian Ocean. Colonial buildings turned to hotels sit on one end and a striking old Parliament building transformed to Presidential Secretariat on the other. It is the quintessential hangout place of Colombo with stunning sunset views in the evenings.



☉ Paddle Boat on Beira Lake

Another spectacular landmark of Colombo which came into existence as a means of protection! Built in the 16th century during the Portuguese occupation, this man-made lake served as a moat to protect the Colombo Fort from invaders, especially local aggressive inhabitants. The Portuguese even had the lake infested with crocodiles as a deterrent to any transgressions from the local populace against their regime. The British, who took over Colombo at the fag end of the 18th century decided to use it otherwise and earmarked the waterbody for recreational activities.

Though not of the same size today, it still occupies a major area in the heart of the city. Apart from the jogging and biking trails around it, Beira Lake has some lovely designated places. Couples throng to Lover's Island via a pretty suspension bridge. Families love taking rides in swan-shaped paddle boats. Devotees visit Seema Malakaya Buddhist Temple right in the middle of the lake. The most popular Buddhist Temple in Colombo is set on three linked platforms jutting out of the lake. Housing a small Bodhi tree, the premise consists of a large central edifice with a lovely imprinted cubicle and two outer podiums standing on either side.



📍 Watch Colombo from the sky!

Probably the most iconic building of Colombo is the Lotus Tower - an architectural marvel on the banks of Beira Lake. The 350 metre high tower is the tallest self-supported structure of South Asia. Known as 'Nelum Kuluna' in Sinhalese, this symbolic landmark was opened to the public in September 2022. The view from the top deck is overwhelming. It gives a spectacular 360 degree view of the mega metropolis. From such a vantage point, it is an overwhelming sight. During evenings the sun sets in the Indian Ocean with the crimson rays scattering randomly on the sea waves. The filtered light which manages to seep through the city buildings, shine like pearls on the ripples of Beira Lake. Trains look like toys while emanating from the Colombo Fort Railway Station. The city lights pop up in unison as darkness falls and the Lotus Tower itself illuminates in many vibrant colours along the tower and especially the dome. The feeling is absolutely surreal. Entry Fee is \$20 for foreigners with no time limit.





☹ Know Sri Lanka's history at the National Museum of Colombo

The largest museum of Sri Lanka became operational in 1877. The British felt the need to preserve the history of this spectacular island nation. Sir William Henry Gregory, the then Governor of Ceylon (erstwhile name of Sri Lanka) is credited for this endeavour. Erstwhile called as Colombo Museum, this place is one of a kind. Built in Italian architectural style, the two storey building has sections dedicated to natural science galleries, cultural depictions and historical representations. On the ground floor, one can see Sri Lanka from the prehistoric period till the time of ancient cities like Anuradhapura and Kandy. The top floor is focused on textiles, paintings, pottery, masks, banners and several art and craft paraphernalia. The museum also houses an expansive library which holds numerous publications printed over the century including handwritten palm leaf manuscripts. Another building in the same premise portrays a large collection of endemic specimen which is rare or has gone extinct.

☹ Experience history at Independence Square

This is the place where the country was officially independent from five centuries of colonial rule. Steeped in history and earlier called Torrington Square, this is the exact location where Prince Henry, the then Duke of Gloucester inaugurated Sri Lanka's first parliament. A beautiful building was constructed in this place to commemorate this historic event. It was designed by eight architects and is modelled after the royal assembly hall of the last King of the island in Kandy. Surrounded by seated lion figurines, the hall interiors are filled with historical symbols of the country along with signs of its political quest for freedom. Today a sprawling park borders it with clean walking paths, marked cyclic tracks and benches and is popular place among walkers and joggers.

Colombo is definitely not only a stopover for the gorgeous beaches and forts to the south. The culturally rich port city gives a profound insight to the national psyche of Sri Lanka.





FACTFILE

Best time to visit

December to March

Where to stay

The ever evolving city has plenty of stay options ranging from budget to luxury. Almost all chain hotels have properties here like Taj, Shangri La, Radisson, Hilton, JW Marriot and Four Seasons etc. Galle Face Hotel on the eastern end is a heritage property and one of the oldest in this region. The sea facing hotel is over 150 years old and prides itself in being one of the finest in Sri Lanka.

Where to eat

Upali's by Nawaloka – It's the epitome of Sinhalese cuisine. It encompasses the entire island's food delicacies from Jaffna to Galle. Some must try dishes are Wambatu Moju (fried eggplant strips, shallots, and green chillies mixed with mustard vinegar), red country rice with native jackfruit seed curry & prawns flavoured with turmeric and coconut milk.

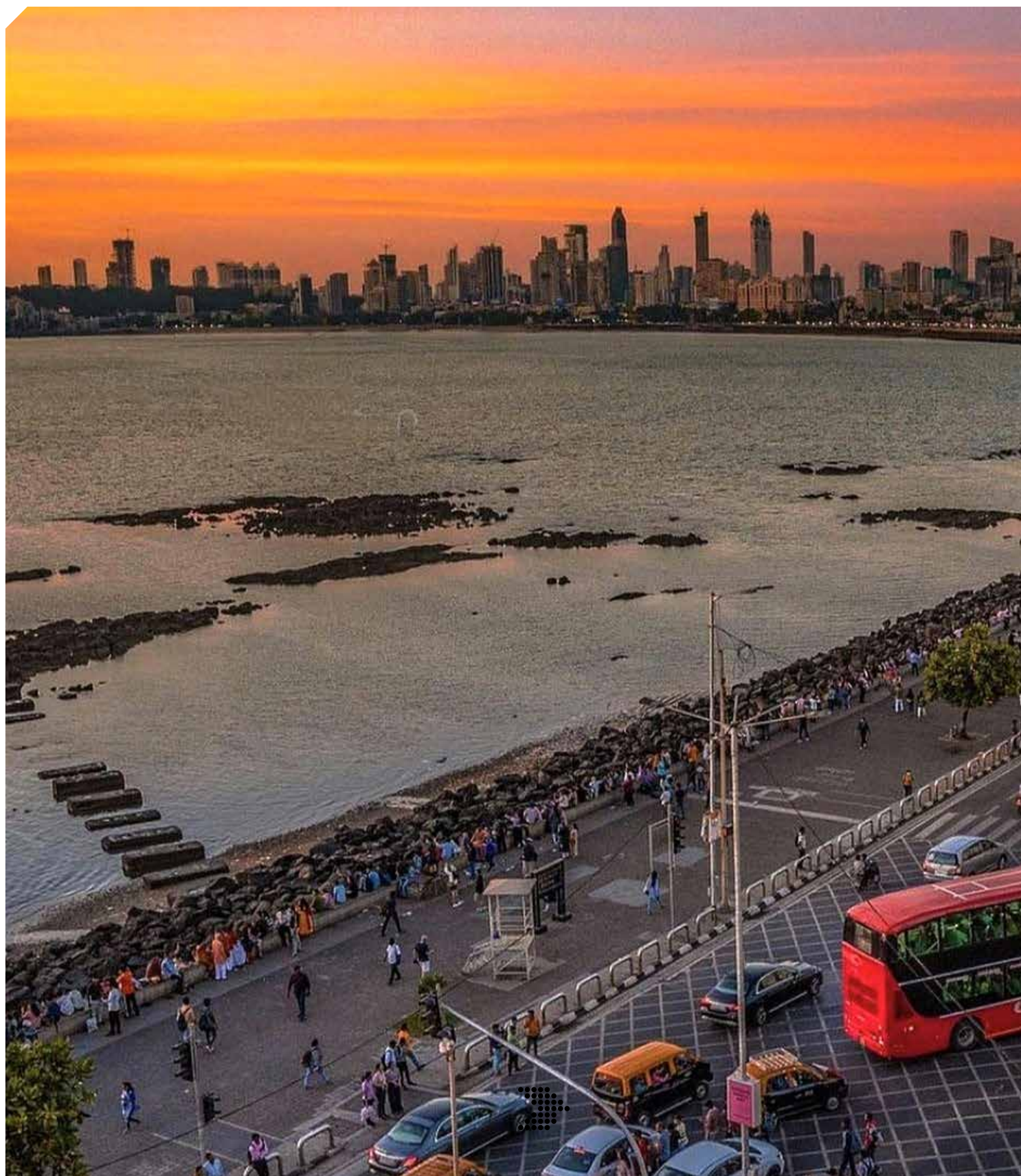
The Lagoon – A seafood lover's paradise, this restaurant has an open kitchen which only cooks fresh catches. Close to 150 dishes are on offer spanning across Sri Lankan, Indian, Chinese, Continental and Thai cuisine. A must try dish and a crowd favourite is Singapore Chili Crab.

Where to shop

Head to Pettah Market if you are looking for the best street shopping experience in Colombo. The colourful place sells everything under the sun at bargain prices. Take help of a guide or local to negotiate best rates. Move on to Barefoot Garden and Café for more upscale shopping. Located on Galle Road, it sells delicate handwoven silks and cotton clothes made in classic Sri Lankan style. It also has a nice array of jewellery products. Buy some beautiful art and crafts from Paradise Road. It is popular for handpainted cookery sets (mugs and plates), Sinhalese printed canvas bags and pillow covers. End your shopping spree at TEAELI Tea Experience – a chic shop selling handcrafted tea blends. It also offers tea tastings and brewing classes.



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com





A dynamic metropolis of contrasts

WORDS: ZARA KHAN

Mumbai, originally known as Bombay, is a never-sleeping city. It is a bustling metropolis on India's western coast noted for its lively culture, historical landmarks, and fast-paced lifestyle. If you only have 48 hours to visit this fascinating city, you're in for a wild journey. Here's how to make the most of your time in Mumbai.



Day 1

Embrace the Heritage

Morning: Start your day with a full breakfast at a nearby restaurant.

To start your day with some local delicacies, try the renowned *Misal Pav* or *Poha*, classic Maharashtrian breakfast dishes. *Poha* is steam-cooked flattened rice with onions, spices, and herbs. The term *Poha* refers to both the flattened rice and the dish made with it. They are thought to be healthy and nourishing.



9:00 AM - 11:00 AM:

📍 Gateway of India and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus

Begin your adventure at the magnificent Gateway of India. This huge archway, built in 1924, is a landmark in Mumbai. The foundation stone for the Gateway of India, which was built in Indo-Saracenic style, was laid on 31 March 1911. The construction is a basalt arch that stands 26 metres (85 feet) tall. The monument's final design by George Wittet was approved in 1914, and construction was finished in 1924. Later, the Gateway was used as a symbolic ceremonial entrance into India for Viceroy and incoming Governors of Bombay. It was used to gain entry and access to India. Walk down the promenade and gaze out towards the Arabian Sea. A short distance away is the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with spectacular Victorian Gothic architecture.

At the terminus, the Central Railway headquarters are located. It is one of India's busiest railway stations, with a total of 18 platforms, serving as a terminal for both long-distance and suburban trains.

The station is designed in the High Victorian Gothic style. The edifice incorporates features of Victorian Italianate Gothic Revival and traditional Indian architecture. The distinctive ground plan, turrets, pointed arches, and skyline are reminiscent of traditional Indian royal architecture. Externally, there are the wood carving, tiles, ornate iron and brass railings, ticket office grills, and balustrades. The huge staircases and other embellishments were made by students from the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art. The station is an example of 19th-century railway architectural marvels due to its remarkable structural and technical solutions.



11:30 AM - 1:30 PM:

📍 Elephanta Caves

Take a ferry ride from the Gateway of India to Elephanta Island. The Elephanta Caves are a collection of rock-cut temples and caves dating back to the 6th century. Explore the intricately carved sculptures and marvel at the historical significance of this site. They have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Elephanta Caves are home to rock-cut stone sculptures, usually in high relief, that display a fusion of Hindu and Buddhist concepts and imagery. The caves are carved out of solid basalt rock. With a few exceptions, much of the artwork has been destroyed and damaged.

Lunch: Head back to the mainland and enjoy a seafood feast at one of the many restaurants near the Gateway of India. Freshly caught fish and prawns are a must-try!



3:00 PM - 5:00 PM:

📍 Prince of Wales Museum and Kala Ghoda

Spend the afternoon at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum, learning about art and culture. It has a large collection of paintings, sculptures, and decorative items.

The Prince of Wales Museum was once a military hospital used for the Children's Welfare Exhibitions. Tourists from all over the world visit this majestic historical structure and explore the different antique artefacts kept within this museum.

The structure is designed in the Indo-Saracenic architectural style, with influences from other architectural traditions such as Mughal, Maratha, and Jain. A garden of palm trees and manicured flower beds surrounds the museum structure.

After that, stroll around the hip Kala Ghoda neighbourhood, which is famed for its art galleries, boutiques, and street art. Kala Ghoda is a trendy, creative neighbourhood filled with designer cafes, art galleries, and sidewalk art shops. The Jehangir Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Modern Art present current visual arts, while the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Museum displays a mix of history and arts exhibits. The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival is well-known for its avant-garde installations, performances, and conversations.

Evening: As the sun sets, head to Marine Drive, also known as the 'Queen's Necklace,' and watch the city light up. It's a serene spot to unwind and take in the breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea.

Watch the sunset from Marine Drive at dusk, the lights twinkling across the water make this a moment of magic. Many of the locals come here for an evening walk to catch a breath of fresh air after a busy day. The road is flanked by Back Bay leading to the Arabian Sea on one side, and a row of Art Deco buildings on the other. At one end is a cluster of tall glass buildings otherwise known as Nariman Point. At the other end of Marine Drive are the leafy green slopes of Malabar Hill, where apartment blocks rise from the lower slopes that overlook Chowpatty Beach. On the ridge above, the terraced Hanging Gardens also known as Ferozshah Mehta Gardens offer a panoramic view of the surrounding city, ocean and countryside.

Dinner: Experience the diverse culinary scene of Mumbai with a dinner at a local restaurant. Don't miss trying some street food like *Vada Pav* or *Bhel Puri*.

Day 2

Modern Mumbai

Morning: Start your day with a visit to the Siddhivinayak Temple, one of Mumbai's most revered Hindu temples. It's a place of spiritual significance and architectural beauty.

The Shri Siddhivinayak Ganapati Mandir is a Hindu temple dedicated to Ganesha. It is located in the Prabhadevi neighbourhood of Mumbai, Maharashtra. It was originally built by Laxman Vitlu and Deubai Patil on 19 November 1801. It is one of the most popular Hindu temples in Mumbai.

The temple has a small mandap with a shrine for Siddhi Vinayak ('Ganesha who grants your wish'). The wooden doors to the sanctum are carved with images of the Ashtavinayak (the eight manifestations of Ganesha in Maharashtra). The inner roof of the sanctum is plated with gold, and the central statue is of Ganesha. In the periphery, there is a Hanuman temple as well. The exterior of the temple consists of a dome which is lit up with multiple colours in the evenings and they keep changing every few hours. The statue of Shri Ganesha is located exactly under the dome. The pillars are carved out with the images of Ashtavinayak.



9:30 AM - 11:30 AM:

① Dharavi slum tour

Gain a unique perspective of Mumbai's socio-economic diversity with a guided tour of Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums. Witness the resilience and entrepreneurship of its residents.

The Dharavi slum was founded in 1884 during the British colonial era as a residential area in Mumbai and today it is considered to be one of the world's largest slums. Dharavi has an area of just over 2.39 square kilometres and a population of about 1,000,000. It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world (but much less than Kowloon walled city).

It grew because of the expulsion of factories and residents from the peninsular city centre by the colonial government and from the migration of rural Indians into urban Mumbai. For this reason, it is currently a highly diverse settlement religiously and ethnically.

Lunch: Enjoy a meal at a local restaurant serving traditional Maharashtrian thali, which includes a variety of delicious dishes.

Thali refers to the metal plate that a thali meal may be served on and is a popular method of serving meals in South Asia. The idea behind a thali is to offer different flavours of sweet, salt, bitter, sour, astringent and spicy food on one single plate. According to Indian food customs, a proper meal should perfectly balance all these six flavours. Restaurants typically offer a choice of vegetarian or meat-based thalis.

Dishes served in a thali vary from region to region in the Indian subcontinent and are usually served in small bowls, called *katori* in India. These *katoris* are placed along the edge of the round tray, the actual *thali*; sometimes a steel tray with multiple compartments is used. Typical dishes include rice, *dal*, vegetables, *roti*, *papad*, *dahi* (yoghurt), small amounts of chutney or pickle and a sweet dish.



🕒 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Bollywood tour

Mumbai is the heart of the Indian film industry, Bollywood. Take a Bollywood studio tour to get a behind-the-scenes look at the glitz and glamour of the movies. You might even catch a film shoot in action.

Film City at Goregaon in Mumbai is spread across the vast area of 520 acres. Along with 20 Indoor studios, it is located in Arey colony also known as home of Bollywood.

It has been the shooting location for almost all Bollywood films. It has many types of location available for shooting including permanent sets of a temple, prison, court, lake, mountains, fountains, villages, picnic spots, gardens and a man-made waterfall. One can easily explore the streets of Film City through guided tours which are easily available.

Evening: Explore the upscale neighbourhood of Bandra. Visit the Bandra-Worli Sea Link for stunning views and enjoy some shopping and dining at the vibrant Bandra streets.

Dinner: Savour a seafood dinner at a beachside restaurant in Juhu or Versova. Mumbai's coastal cuisine is a treat for seafood lovers.

While the Bombay duck (known colloquially as *bombil*) is popular, other seafood like clams, mussels, pomfret, prawns, salmon, kingfish, ladyfish, red snapper, mackerel, and crabs are also relished. Each community in Mumbai has special dishes that centre food from the sea.

Mumbai is a city that leaves a lasting impression on its visitors. In just 48 hours, you can immerse yourself in its rich history, explore its modern facets, and savour its diverse cuisine. While this itinerary provides a taste of Mumbai, remember that the city has much more to offer. So, plan your trip wisely and soak in the vibrant energy of this dynamic metropolis •



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The flavours of Mauritian Creole cuisine

WORDS: SILHOUETTE

Mauritian Creole cuisine is a diversified and rich culinary legacy that reflects the island's history, culture, and synthesis of numerous influences. Mauritius, located in the Indian Ocean, is a cultural melting pot that includes Indian, African, Chinese, and European influences. This ethnic diversity has resulted in a distinct and tasty food that is popular among both locals and tourists.





🔄 A fusion of cultures

Mauritian Creole cuisine is sometimes described as a delectable combination of flavour and techniques from many civilisations. Because of the island's history as a trading station and its diversified population, it has developed a wonderfully eclectic culinary legacy.

The country's ethnic mix is reflected in its delicious cuisine. Creole cuisine is the norm, a deft blend of the world's three most sought-after cuisines: Indian, Chinese, and, of course, French. *Rougaille* is the epitome of Creole cuisine. It's a spicy tomato sauce used with meat or fish. Rice, *achards* (vegetables prepared with vinegar, oil, and spices), and chutneys made from tomato or coconut seasoned with garlic and ginger are served alongside. A mere glance at the menu is enough to excite the taste receptors.

Starters include starfish *biryani*, *dhal-poori*, *gateau-piment* (chilli cake), and a millionaire's salad with *camarons* (freshwater shrimp) à la sauce rouge. In Mauritius, you may find yourself expecting nothing less unless your preference is Chinese. Then you'd probably choose the *canard laqué* (Peking Duck) or something Szechuan, the latter reflecting the local appetite for spice.

Your fruit dish may also leave you looking at the server puzzled. Along with the papaya, pineapple, and bananas, you're sure to come across custard apples, guavas, carambol, longanes, and jackfruit, as well as some other mysterious delight you've never seen, let alone eaten.



☉ Indian influence

The Indian subcontinent has had a profound impact on Mauritian Creole cuisine. Curry is a popular dish in Mauritian households. Curries are produced with a spice mixture that includes turmeric, cumin, coriander, and chilli peppers. They are frequently eaten with rice or *roti*, a sort of Indian flatbread, and can be cooked with a variety of proteins such as chicken, fish, or vegetables.



☉ African roots

African influences can be seen in Mauritian Creole food as well. *Rougaille* is a traditional tomato-based stew from Africa that is typically served with fish, poultry, or sausages. It's a filling and flavourful dish that highlights the island's African influence.





☯ Chinese cuisine

Chinese immigrants brought their culinary skills to Mauritius, resulting in dishes such as *mine frit* (fried noodles) and *bol renversé* (upside-down bowl). These dishes combine Chinese stir-frying techniques with local ingredients to create delectably distinct flavours.



☯ French elegance

The French have left their mark on the island's cuisine with their love for pastries, bread, and wine. French-inspired dishes like *bouillon* (a rich soup) and *quiche* can be found in many Mauritian households.





⦿ Local ingredients and unique flavours

Mauritian Creole cuisine largely relies on locally obtained resources such as tropical fruits, vegetables, and seafood such as cochon marron, a species of wild boar, and camarons (freshwater prawns). The climate on the island is suitable for growing a wide range of fruits such as lychees, mangoes, pineapples, and passion fruits. These fruits are frequently used in both sweet and savoury cuisines.

The abundance of seafood in the waters surrounding Mauritius makes fish and shellfish an important element of the diet. *Cari poisson* (fish curry) is a popular dish that consists of freshly caught fish cooked in a flavourful curry sauce.

Furthermore, spices such as vanilla, cinnamon, and saffron are grown on the island and play an important part in improving the flavour of Mauritian dishes.

All of this adds up to an enthralling gourmet adventure for guests eager to try a little bit of everything. As an example, consider a typical day. You can start your day with tropical fresh fruits followed by a continental breakfast of freshly made croissants and coffee. An Indian-themed lunch could begin with a variety of appetisers such as *samoosas*, *dholl poori*, and *gateaux piments*, or for a combination of two cuisines, curried chicken in a crusty French baguette from Port Louis' street sellers. This could be followed by a larger portion of fish *vindaye* served with bredes. A Chinese restaurant dinner could include spring rolls, noodles, and Peking duck.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the Indian community is by far the largest on the island, the Indian subcontinent has the most significant influence in Mauritian cooking. Whether the family is of French, Indian, Chinese, or African heritage, Mauritians are likely to eat curry as a family on Sundays. Curry is so widely and often consumed that it might nearly be termed the country's national cuisine. The nice thing about curry is that it can be a low-cost dish of potatoes or a high-end dish of lobster.

Rougaille, a dish with a Creole influence, is cooked with ginger, onion, garlic, many herbs, tomato, and *daube*. A *daube*, which claims French influence because several Mediterranean stews are called *daube*, is nevertheless comparable to *Rougaille*. All of these recipes are eaten with rice, which can be mildly spiced by adding a saffron filament to the boiling water.

Other side dishes include chutneys, which are created from a variety of vegetables and fruits, the most frequent of which are coconut, tomato and eggplant. All are served with a variety of vegetables, many of which are possibly unique to the world yet are plentiful in local markets.





Street food delights

Street food culture is one of the greatest ways to sample Mauritian Creole food. Mauritius' streets are lined with food stalls and sellers selling a range of snacks and quick eats.

Dholl Puri: A sort of flatbread made with ground split peas and eaten with a variety of fillings, including curried vegetables, chutneys, and pickles. *Dholl Puri* is typically served alongside butter bean curry, *Rougaille* and green chilli paste. Non-vegetarian choices are occasionally available. It can be found almost anywhere in Mauritius, from street food booths to food markets (bazaars).

Farata: A flaky flatbread that is typically served with a combination of curries (vegetable, chicken, or fish), *Rougaille*, and green chilli paste. The best *farata* may be obtained at *Roti Aka* in the market next to Les Jardins de la Compagnie in Port Louis, as well as in Sainte Croix.

Boulettes: In Chinatown Port Louis, you'll almost certainly find *Boulettes* on every corner! Mauritian *boulettes*, which are similar to Chinese dumplings or *dim sums*, are made with chicken, beef, fish, or vegetables.

Sao Mai (chayote wrapped in a thin sheet of dough), *boulette chouchou* (chayote), and *boulette poisson* (fish ball) are the most popular. They can be served alone or with chicken or fish broth, chopped spring onions, and chilli paste.

Samosas: Deep-fried pastry pockets that are filled with a tasty blend of veggies, meat, or lentils. They are sold by most street vendors.

Gateau Piment: Spicy, deep-fried lentil cakes with a punch of flavour. These are deep-fried balls of ground yellow split peas that have been soaked overnight and combined with spring onions and dried chilli peppers in copious amounts. They pack a fiery punch, but they are so tasty! When combined with freshly baked bread and a cup of hot tea, you have the traditional Mauritian snack!

Fritters: Vegetable fritters of all kinds are popular among Mauritians, including *gateau bringelle* (eggplant cakes), *gateau pomme de terre* (potato cakes) and *gateau arouille* (taro cakes).

Don't forget to try some *baja* (deep-fried chickpea flour dough), *dupain frire* (deep-fried bread dipped in batter), and *chana puri* (deep-fried flatbread with potato filling).

Fritters are typically sold by street sellers or at farmers' markets.

Pani Puri: Originally from India, *panipuri* is basically a crispy ball-shaped puri into which a hole has been dug to fit in a mixture of tamarind sauce, onions, potatoes and chickpeas. They are mainly sold in Indian restaurants and by street food vendors in Port Louis and other parts of Mauritius as well.

Cassava pudding – Poudine Manioc: Grated cassava cooked with milk, coconut and sugar. Allow the mixture to set before cutting into pieces and coating with desiccated coconut. This sweet delight is also available at 'Pat & Rosy'.

Alouda: A cool drink made with agar-agar jelly, basil seeds, and flavouring syrup. The drink contains milk, vanilla flavouring, agar agar (jelly), and basil seeds. If you don't mind the extra sugar rush, you can also request that the vendor put some vanilla ice cream on top. They are typically sold in food markets, with *Alouda Pillay* in Port Louis Central Market being the most popular.

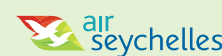
Glaçon Rapé – Shaved Ice: It is a classic Mauritian delicacy created from shaved ice drizzled with colourful syrups, similar to *Ice Kacang* in Malaysia and Singapore.

They were highly popular in the past, and they are slowly making a reappearance. *Glaçon Rapé* can be purchased from a few street sellers in Port Louis, as well as at the beach and the Caudan Waterfront.



Every bite of Mauritian Creole food is a distinct and wonderful experience, from aromatic curries to mouth-watering street food. So, if you enjoy eating, don't pass up the chance to sample the flavours of this beautiful cuisine on your next vacation to Mauritius.

Street food tours are recommended if you want to sample some of the most delectable Mauritian delicacies. A local guide will accompany you and show you where to locate the greatest street cuisine in Mauritius.



Flight information: www.airseychelles.com

Jozi's summer hotspots

WORDS: RICHARD HOLMES

Johannesburg is forever a city in flux, where urban energy comes standard and there's always an entrepreneur with a (sharp) eye for a trend. And that's good news for travellers, with a flush of new openings and must-see revamps on offer. From inspired eateries and luxe hotels to artsy outings, put these spots on your hit list for your next stop in the city.



➔ Pot Luck comes to Jozi

Since opening in 2012, The Pot Luck Club has become one of Cape Town's most successful eateries, fusing Asian flavours and a bold approach to small plate dining with spirited service and creative cocktails. And now, after a series of successful pop-ups, Johannesburg this year welcomed a permanent outpost of chef Luke Dale Roberts' popular eatery.

Set in Rosebank's upscale Oxford Parks development, The Pot Luck Johannesburg opens in the space previously home to Dale Roberts' fine dining restaurant, The Test Kitchen Carbon, with a soft refurbishment giving it a stamp of Pot Luck style.

"In Johannesburg, diners really value the opportunity of choice," says Dale Roberts. "They want to be able to create their own dining experience, not sit through an extended tasting menu. They want to set the pace, the price and the choice of dishes. With Pot Luck, we're only too happy to offer them that."

And in more good news for hungry locals and savvy travellers, The Pot Luck Club has also relaunched their hugely popular Sunday Brunch, delivering a set menu of bespoke plates that showcase the creativity on offer in the kitchen. Look forward to everything from Bloody Mary Oysters and Korean Fish Ssam to more-ish Brioche Porcini and the Pot Luck Club's signature take on an Arnold Bennett omelette. Tables book up fast, so be sure to call ahead.



➔ Art and about at voco

There are many reasons to love the voco The Bank Hotel in the heart of Rosebank, whether it's the Art Deco-inspired décor or creative cocktails downstairs at Proud Mary. And while many guests may not notice what's on the walls, the hotel is home to an enviable art collection stretching to 750 works by more than 40 up-and-coming South African artists.

To showcase the collection, the hotel now offers guided tours of the collection, which stretches from striking murals and photographs to sculptures and light-led installations that are scattered through the hotel's public areas, guestrooms and workspaces.

"We are the only hotel where we have trained up staff members to be Art Butlers," says Jessica Redinger, General Manager of voco The Bank. "The art in our hotel is not just an afterthought. It is very much a part of the look and feel of the hotel, so it makes sense that we have used the art to bring our staff and guests closer together – all while promoting our awesome local art."

The tours, which last for approximately 20 minutes, are a relaxed affair and are offered daily, but need to be booked through reception to fit in with the working schedule of the in-house Art Butlers.



④ Creative escapes at EGG

Looking to tap into leading African design and creativity? Look no further than EGG, which showcases a remarkable cross-section of fashion, food and innovation in the bustling The Zone precinct. Taking its cue from iconic English department store Selfridge's, EGG plays host to a mix of local and international labels, with over 180 home, fashion and design brands across 3,000 square metres of floor space. A fine spot for a little retail therapy, or souvenir shopping.



⑤ A saintly revamp

Restaurateur David Higgs has built a formidable following with his menu of contemporary Italian cuisine on offer at Saint, in the business hub of Sandton. And now a colourfully creative overhaul has infused the space with even more of the theatrical opulence that has made it a must-visit in Johannesburg.

The imaginative new look is the work of Creative Director Irene Kyriacou, whose striking combination of colourful patterns, textures, and playful extravagance has transformed this deeply elegant space. Custom couches and bespoke furniture details add a dash of opulence to the main dining area, while the bar area has been entirely reimagined.

"Saint has always been synonymous with luxury, style, and entertainment," explains Irene Kyriacou, Creative Director and Designer. "With this renovation, we've not only preserved the brand's essence but have also elevated it to new heights. The result is an all-encompassing sensory experience that truly embodies the heart and soul of Saint."

☉ Spirited away

Looking to take a deep dive into the world of premium spirits? At the NPF – Nose Palate Finish – tasting room in Melrose Arch you'll find more than 600 unique expressions and once-off bottlings of the world's best whisky, rum, mezcal and cognac.

It's a relaxed yet contemporary space, with expert spirits ambassadors on hand to lead you through bespoke tastings or niche flights created around a theme or place of origin. And you'll have ample opportunity to explore, with 15ml half-measures allowing you to taste a wider array of spirits in a single visit, and making rare and expensive bottles more affordable. A handpicked selection of special releases is also made available for sale.



☉ Discover Africa through art

Johannesburg welcomed a new cultural landmark in 2023 with the official opening of the Inside Out Centre for the Arts. Founded by world-renowned artist-photographer Roger Ballen, the Centre opened to the public with the exhibition 'End of the Game', which explores the ongoing eradication of wildlife and wilderness in Africa through a historical and artistic lens.

"This exhibition," says Ballen, "encourages vital discussions about our treatment of animals, wildlife management, responsible tourism and environmental stewardship in our current world."

Set alongside the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Museum, and the Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, the Inside Out Centre completes a trinity of cultural hubs, and today offers a combination of exhibition spaces and educational projects, offering an aesthetic perspective on issues affecting the continent. The Centre also plays host to an evolving programme of educational talks, panel discussions, masterclasses, and presentations.

Exhibition viewing is by appointment only. Bookings can be made on the Inside Out Centre for the Arts website. The Centre is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of each month. Reservations are required.



🌐 Global luxe on its way

A bellwether of Johannesburg's continued appeal for global luxury travellers is the opening this year of the Park Hyatt Johannesburg, marking the brand's long-awaited return to South Africa. With interior décor by acclaimed designer Yabu Pushelberg, the hotel promises a revitalised space that celebrates local heritage and craftsmanship within a thoroughly global aesthetic.

When the doors are opened the Park Hyatt Johannesburg will offer 30 guestrooms and suites with king-size beds, well-equipped workstations, and en-suite bathrooms. The on-site restaurant will feature an outdoor terrace, with an intimate house bar indoors, and a multi-purpose event space for conferences and meetings accommodating up to 60 guests. The hotel's location, within walking distance of the airport-linked Gautrain network, makes it a convenient choice for both business and leisure travellers.



🍴 Sultry bites at MAMASAMBA

With a menu drawing rich inspiration from the cuisines and culinary traditions of Central and Latin America, MAMASAMBA has quickly made its mark on Johannesburg's culinary landscape.

It's the latest outing by restaurateurs Gaz Hollywood and Jo Dos Passos, who have created a culinary journey that runs from morning brunch – think piña colada breakfast bowls – to *dulce de leche rabanada* for dessert. Lunch and dinner is inspired, from street-style small plates – with an impressive array of vegetarian dishes – through to larger mains that draw heavily on the Josper grill and open-fire grill glimpsed beyond the open kitchen. But also don't miss the Nikkei specialities, from oysters to sushi, adding a unique twist to the Latin American culinary experience.

An extensive cocktail menu is another reason to visit and is best enjoyed at the buzzy upstairs bar. It's a carnival atmosphere that fits neatly with the jungle theme and riotous décor – a gorilla sculpture, anybody? – dreamt up by acclaimed South African designer Tristan du Plessis.



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Celebration & feasting

Easter, also known as *Paschal* in Hebrew or Resurrection Sunday, is a major religious and cultural celebration in Israel. It commemorates Jesus' resurrection from the grave as well as the biblical tale of the Exodus, in which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt.

WORDS: MAMBO GICHUKI



The Holy Light ceremony in Jerusalem



Easter is religiously significant for both Christians and Jews. Christians observe Holy Week, which begins on Palm Sunday and lasts seven weeks, commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ and marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a significant event in Christian theology.

For Jews, Easter falls on the same day as Passover, a week-long celebration honouring the Exodus. This ancient story of freedom is shared by Christians and Jews alike, making this period particularly emotional in Israel.

The customs differ from one another across the Christian world. In contrast to the preceding season of Lent, which is a period of penitence and fasting, the Easter season is considered as a time of celebration and feasting.

Easter traditions include sunrise services or late-night vigils, exclamations and exchanges of *Paschal* greetings, blossoming the cross, women wearing Easter bonnets, trimming the church and decorating it, and communally breaking Easter eggs. The Easter lily, a Christian emblem of resurrection, often decorates the chancel area of churches on this day and during Eastertide.

Jerusalem is a focal location for Easter celebrations in Israel, and the Old City, particularly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is considered to be the place of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. It is regarded as the holiest Christian site. Other names for the Church include the Church of the Resurrection and the Church of the Anastasis (Greek for 'Resurrection').

The Church's history stretches back to the 4th century AD, when Emperor Constantine the Great commissioned it. It was built on the location where Jesus is said to have been crucified and buried.

The Church is a fusion of architectural styles such as Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic. The inside is lavishly decorated with artwork, chapels, and holy icons. There are numerous noteworthy locations inside the Church.

The Calvary (Golgotha) is a rock escarpment inside the church that is traditionally thought to be the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Pilgrims may observe a crack in the rock that is claimed to have happened during the earthquake during Christ's crucifixion. The stone of anointing is a large stone where it is believed Jesus' body was prepared for burial after the crucifixion. Pilgrims can enter and pray in a small shrine within the church that houses the tomb of Jesus.

The church contains numerous chapels and altars dedicated to various Christian denominations.

Because of its significance to numerous Christian groups, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre enjoys a unique status. It is shared by the Greek Orthodox,



Palm Sunday Procession in Jerusalem

Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox Churches, among others. The 'Status Quo' agreement governs these communities' rights and responsibilities in relation to the church.

Every year, millions of visitors and pilgrims from all over the world flock to the church. It is a sacred pilgrimage site for Christians and a must-see for tourists visiting Jerusalem. Over the ages, it has undergone many repairs and restoration initiatives. In the 20th century, considerable restoration work was carried out to remedy structural difficulties and preserve the property.

On Good Friday, a solemn procession through the streets of Jerusalem carries a cross, attracting both religious observers and curious bystanders. The procession concludes at the church of the Holy Sepulchre, which commemorates the crucifixion and resurrection.

Overall, it is a time of spiritual meditation and celebration, and the food provided frequently has profound religious and cultural meaning for those who observe the festival.

Specific dishes and practices may differ accordingly on the Christian denomination and cultural background of those celebrating.



Dome of the Rock with Christian Church in foreground, Jerusalem

Many culinary traditions are shared between Easter and Passover, with both occasions containing unleavened bread as a sign of haste during the Exodus. For Passover, specific delicacies like gefilte fish, charoset (a fruit and nut combo), and lamb are made in Israel.

A lamb roast is also popular among Israeli Christians as a symbol of the Lamb of God. Hot cross buns, a sweet and spiced bread with a cross on top, are also a favourite Easter delicacy among both Christian and secular populations.

Ma'amoul are popular Easter cookies throughout the Middle East, especially in Jerusalem. These shortbread-like cookies are sometimes loaded with dates, almonds, or figs and are typically baked in decorative moulds. For the occasion, special Easter breads are cooked. Variations such as 'Easter braided bread' or other forms of sweet and savoury bread, frequently formed into crosses or other religious symbols, can be found in Jerusalem.

Decorated and dyed eggs are a ubiquitous Easter emblem. Red eggs are particularly common in some religions, symbolising Christ's blood. Eggs are used in a variety of cuisines, including salads and egg-based casseroles. These foods are intended to symbolise the newness and rejuvenation connected with Easter.



Matzah wrapped in a napkin, ready for passover

Wine is a popular beverage choice for Easter festivities, particularly during the Easter supper. Red wine is frequently favoured in Christian traditions due to its symbolism associated with Christ's blood.

Other particular meals and regional versions of Easter cuisine may be found in Jerusalem, depending on the cultural background and denomination. Some groups, for example, may make filled grape leaves, roast chicken, or a variety of traditional stews.

Because of Israel's diverse population, Easter and Passover are celebrated concurrently, encouraging interfaith friendships and understanding. Many Christians attend Passover seders, while Jews frequently attend Easter celebrations, highlighting the linked themes of liberation and faith.

Because of its unique history and geographical location, Israel is a varied country with a rich tapestry of interfaith connections. Three major Abrahamic religions see Israel as the Holy Land: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This shared religious past has resulted in a variety of interfaith exchanges and partnerships. Many religious monuments in Jerusalem, such as the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, are close together, making the city a hub for interfaith conversation and pilgrimage.

It is home to a number of interfaith discussion programmes that attempt to promote understanding and cooperation among various religious

communities. These projects frequently include leaders and officials from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other faith traditions in Israel.

Every year, Israel attracts millions of religious travellers from all over the world, including pilgrims and tourists of many faiths. These visitors frequently interact with members of other religious communities and have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate other faiths.

Easter in Israel is a time when faith, custom, and history weave together in a colourful tapestry. The Old City of Jerusalem becomes a magnet for pilgrims from all over the world, and the entire country echoes with ancient stories and celebrations. It is a moment when the shared tales of two major religions, Christianity and Judaism, come together to remind us of the continuing power of faith as well as the significance of freedom and redemption.



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In search of the perfect pearl

WORDS: KATE NIVISON

No one knows where or when pearls first became objects of desire. Did some shore-dwelling, hunter-gatherer of oysters or mussels mutter crossly as his teeth crunched on something hard in his seafood stew? Maybe he handed the offending object accusingly to his wife who took a fancy to its miniature moon-like appearance and attractive sheen.





It took many more centuries before it dawned that these pretty things were actually produced by the shellfish themselves, as they laboriously coated any irritant such as grit inside the shell with a substance called nacre, normally used for shell-lining. Appropriately, this secretion is also known as mother-of-pearl.

Both oysters and mussels produce nacre, and there are plenty of seas and rivers warm enough for them to thrive, but in the closed and secretive world of the oyster, nothing is that simple. The champion pearl producers are *Pinctada* oysters, from the *Aviculidae* family, but they aren't good to eat. *Ostodicae* are the best eaters, but if you find a pearl in your oyster platter, it won't be good quality.

Pinctada, a salt-water oyster, is also known as *Margaritifera* (Greek for 'pearl-bearing') – hence the name Margaret, meaning Pearl. It is found mainly in the warm coastal waters of the Indian and South Pacific Oceans. The Gulf of Mannar between India and Sri Lanka, the Celebes

Islands (Indonesia) and the Arabian Gulf were all producers of fine pearls. Colours varied from gleaming white, through the highly prized, rose-tinted Indian Ocean type, to delicate shades of cream, yellow, lavender, green, grey, and even black. Darker shades, known in the trade as Tahiti pearls, also occur naturally in the Gulf of Mexico and California as well as the South Seas.

Chinese records from 1,000 BC mention freshwater pearls from mussels, but 500 years later, the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians and Middle Easterners had all developed a liking for oyster pearls. One Roman general paid for an entire military campaign by selling his mother's pearl earrings – although what she thought about this is not recorded. One story claims that Queen Cleopatra decided to trump an expensive dinner put on in her honour by Mark Antony by staging another banquet where a priceless pearl was crushed into a cup of wine – which she then drank. Since nacre is only a form of Ca CO_3 (chalk or limestone) combined with a little conchiolin (the main constituent of seashells) it would have dissolved quite easily in any weak acid, and





Cleopatra shouldn't have suffered any ill-effects – although it doesn't say much for the quality of ancient Egyptian wine.

Mediaeval knights wore pearls on their helmets to protect them in battle. Sultans and Indian rajahs hoarded them to stud their thrones, and there is a fine example of one of these extravagant pieces of furniture in Istanbul's Topkapi Museum. Shakespeare mentions them; Queen Elizabeth I was often painted wearing her favourite pearl-drop earrings, and both Christopher Marlowe and John Milton refer to 'orient pearl' in their writings.

With pearls now big business, traders developed systems for naming, grading, weighing and valuing which reflected the way the shellfish worked their secret magic. 'Rounds', formed in the softer parts of the oyster's body, have the best shape and are the most valuable. Irregular pearls, known as baroques, form in the tougher muscle tissue. Matching up baroques is almost impossible and, although they make attractive 'one-off' jewellery, their value fluctuates according to fashion. Pearls that develop either

attached to the shell or pressed against it, grow flat on one side. Whether drop-shaped or half-hemispherical, these are called blister pearls.

As demand grew, even the smaller, inferior products of the freshwater mussel became popular, and some countries passed laws restricting pearl-wearing to the nobility. Harvesting mussels was much less dangerous than diving to depths of 40 metres at sea, and places as far apart as the Mississippi, Bavaria and China were soon exporting freshwater pearls.

By now there was a huge incentive to improve on nature by controlling the whole process to make pearl production reliable, safer and cheaper. The Chinese had been inserting grit and even wood, bone and metal splinters into freshwater mussels for hundreds of years to produce blister pearls. But it was Kokichi Mikimoto, a Japanese noodle-maker's son, who, in the 1890s, turned the 'culturing' of oyster pearl 'rounds' into a fine art – if you can call it art to prise open an oyster of tender years and poke something the size of a pea, called a matrix, into its delicate parts.





On being snapped shut again and returned to its bed, the oyster understandably goes into overdrive, producing its best nacre to deal with the intruder.

The best type of matrix turned out to be smooth beads of various sizes, made by grinding broken shells in a ball-mill. These could then be graded and inserted by trained experts. After that, it was simply a matter of farming the right kind of oyster by the million. But oysters can't be hurried and need a minimum of three years to produce a good coating. As a rule of thumb, the thicker the nacre compared to the matrix, the better the pearl, although the value also depends on the quality of the nacre – its colour, lustre and lack of surface blemishes. Size and shape are also a consideration, and ultimately, the value of a finished necklace depends a lot on how skilfully the strand is graded and matched for colour.

Remarkably, many inexpensive cultured pearls around today are as good as some of the best natural or 'wild' ones ever found, and there are only two ways of telling them apart. One is by estimating the age of the pearl, usually by dating the piece of jewellery containing it. If it's from before 1892 and from an oyster, it has to be natural. The other is by X-ray to determine whether the matrix is very regular, and therefore probably manufactured. But even this isn't completely foolproof because every pearl has to start from some kind of matrix, whether natural or cultured.

Then, of course, there are simulated pearls that have never been near an oyster. These are factory-made, by giving glass or plastic beads a synthetic pearl-like coating. Telling these from an oyster's efforts, whether 'wild' or cultured, is comparatively simple. Just rubbing them against your teeth is enough to detect the natural roughness of real pearl nacre from a smooth synthetic coating (assuming they are your own teeth, of course!). Real pearls should also give off a fine nacre powder when rubbed on a dark cloth, but don't try scratching them with a penknife if you want to stay friends with your jeweller.

Good quality, hardwearing simulated pearls are a comparatively recent development. The best come from the Spanish island of Majorca, where a family business still guards the recipe for the coating. There is no intention to deceive.





For a start, anything the size of children's marbles has to be simulated, since there is a limit to what even the toughest oyster can cope with in terms of matrix size. Many of the rich and famous, including Princess Diana, Princess Grace and Audrey Hepburn, have worn simulated pearls with distinction and flair.

However, with cultured pearls no longer costing a king's ransom, even the not-so-rich can afford very attractive pearl jewellery, bought on holiday in the Far East, perhaps, or through a website. The most popular cultured pearl buys are necklaces of 'rounds', of uniform size rather than graded. Earrings featuring a pair of well-matched half-hemisphere 'blister' pearls set in gold, often surrounded by tiny diamonds or 'brilliants', are very reasonably priced because it's much simpler, and therefore cheaper, for semi-skilled workers to super-glue a half-hemisphere matrix onto the inside of the shell than for highly paid experts to insert a round matrix correctly into an oyster's body. It's also kinder to the oyster.

Websites provide a good selection of pictures, with a full description and explanation of quality, colour, grading, type of clasp and stringing techniques. Choose a supplier who has been in business for some time and answers all your questions. A reputable dealer will usually offer a restringing and cleaning service.

Silk thread is best for stringing, and the better the pearls, the more likely they are to have tiny knots in between. The delicate knotting process adds to the cost, but it is worth it for several reasons. It 'sets off' the pearls, prevents friction, and in the case of a break, stops them rolling all over the floor at just the wrong moment.

Getting a necklace wet is not a good idea, not because it damages the pearls – they were formed underwater, after all – but because the silk string could stretch. A generation ago you had to be a duchess to worry about such things, but now it's good to know that you could own a necklace that would have had Cleopatra or Catherine the Great quite green with envy.



The magic of *Nepenthes*

Carnivorous pitcher plants grow in a stunning diversity. *Nepenthes*, as the genus is called, are found mainly in Southeast Asia, but there is one of the species in the Seychelles and two in Madagascar.

WORDS: RETO KUSTER



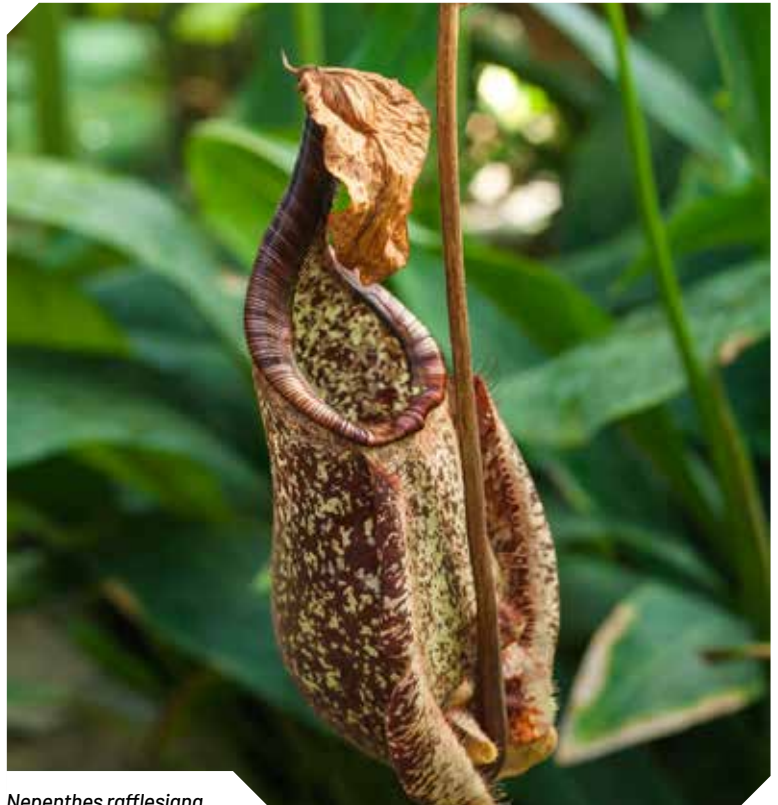
They are simply stunning: huge, shining bright red from the pitchers, hanging in rows from what looked like a weed. "*Nepenthes rajah*, the biggest species we have here", explained Jimmy, my local Dusun guide. It was my first encounter with pitcher plants, years ago while trekking up Mount Kinabalu in eastern Borneo's Sabah state in Malaysia. When botanist Spencer St John found a *Nepenthes rajah* in the 19th century, he noticed the pitcher to be 30 centimetres in diameter and containing more than two litres of fluid. Together with reports of pitcher plants found digesting frogs and rats, his notes seem extraordinary, but some species are truly amazing in their size or shape, such as *N. rafflesiana*, a widespread species with purple and pink patterns on the big pitchers. Others, such as *N. hirsuta*, are small and difficult to find in the rainforest vegetation. *N. bicalcarata* has fanged pitchers: a pair of thorn-like appendages protruding from the bottom of the pitcher lid.

What makes *Nepenthes* unique is the dangling, fluid-filled pitcher. A sweet, honey-like scent, produced by the plant, attracts insects, which is bad news for them. Sliding down the slick inner walls, the victims invariably drop into the fluid, a mild digestive. The plant (many species grow on poor soils) gains valuable minerals from the creatures that have fallen into the fluid. Once inside the pitcher there is no escape: too slippery are the inner walls, covered with a wax-like substance. A hood prevents rain from dropping into the pitcher, which might otherwise dilute the mildly acidic fluid. However attractive the pitcher might look, it is not, as many people believe, the flower of the plant, but instead the modified continuation of a leaf. Flowers of pitcher plants are often small and greenish.

Most pitcher plants are epiphytic: like many orchids, they grow on other plants, often high on trees, without harming them. Some pitcher plants form a total length of 20 metres or more, spreading widely over trees and bushes. Thirty-four species of pitcher plants are currently known from Borneo, while other species can be found in Sumatra, the Philippines and New Guinea. Two species are found in Madagascar and one species in the Seychelles. *N. pervillei* after Auguste Pervillé, (French plant collector) is the only pitcher plant found in the Seychelles, where it is endemic to the islands of Mahé and Silhouette.

Native to the islands of Mahé and Silhouette in the Seychelles, *N. pervillei* grows on massive granitic rock outcrops on just two islands amid a crystal-clear aquamarine sea with white sand beaches. The plants grow in such luxuriant profusion that you can smell the sweet alluring scent of their pitchers that are dripping with nectar.

Long considered one of the most primitive and aberrant of all *Nepenthes*, it was once placed in its own genus based on its unusual seeds and flowers. Its roots reach deep into rock fissures. The species has an altitudinal range of 350-750 metre



Nepenthes rafflesiana



Nepenthes hirsuta



Nepenthes Bicalcarata



Nepenthes pervillei

above sea level. Like all members of the genus, *N. pervillei* is dioecious, having separate male and female plants.

Unlike most *Nepenthes*, *N. pervillei* should be kept in a warm, very bright environment with plenty of airflow. Bright windowsills or conservatories seem to be more suited to grow this unique but quite difficult species.

Some species of *Nepenthes* plants are becoming increasingly rare. The greatest threat is the destruction of their habitat. However, some people roam the forest specifically in search of *Nepenthes*. Keeping these attractive plants at home has become more and more popular overseas, in the US, Europe and Japan. Until recently, supply came directly from the wild, and prices were rather high.

Travellers removing wild *Nepenthes* will soon discover that many species are extremely sensitive and difficult to keep, unless one knows exactly how to do so. They can be divided into lowland and highland species. The latter require even more care, temperatures resembling their habitat at 1,000 to 3,000 metres above sea level and humidity always close to 100 percent.

Growing tips for *Nepenthes*

Tropical *Nepenthes* plants can be difficult to care for and thrive because they require regular bright, humid, and warm environments. For long-term culture, this frequently necessitates the use of a greenhouse. Tropical pitcher plants prefer light, well-drained, porous soil and sufficient air movement. It is best to use a soil mixture of peat, sand, perlite, orchid bark, and chopped Sphagnum. Maintain an equal moisture level and a well-drained soil. Water from above that is mineral-free.

Mature *Nepenthes* prefer to be grown in a hanging pot, basket, or plant stand. They prefer direct sunlight and high humidity. Lowland species prefer hot days and cool nights, whereas highland species prefer hot days and chilly nights. A misting system is useful. Browning traps or traps that do not form are frequently signs of insufficient humidity. This can be addressed by growing new pitchers in a large clear, vented plastic bag while they form, and then removing them once the traps are ready.

They prefer soil that is regularly moist yet drains well. Water the soil, not the traps, though keeping a small amount of water in the trap, $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1 centimetre), will help it survive hot, dry spells. Lowering the pot into a pail of water and fully soaking it is a practical approach to water the entire plant. Though they prefer mineral-free water, they are more tolerant of occasional tap water than other carnivorous plants. Even in a terrarium, high humidity and sufficient ventilation are essential. If your conditions are a bit dry, consider frequent misting. Repot with fresh soil mix every few years.

Nepenthes pitcher plants can be propagated through cuttings that root in water or through air layering of stems. Seeds grow slowly and require consistent conditions. Clones benefit from tissue culture. *Nepenthes* plants can be male or female, and their blossoms can have a distinctive scent.

Consider putting the plants outside beneath a tree in the summer. They will benefit from the bright light and insect-infested environment. Keep an eye on the humidity. Misting could be necessary on a frequent basis. Flowers appear on the developing vines' tips. Pitchers on young plants near the plant base are usually slightly different in shape and hue than traps on upper vines. Upper vines can be removed and utilised to propagate new plants. The remaining plant foundation will sprout new growth.

Nepenthes, like most carnivorous plants, benefit from repotting every few years in fresh carnivorous plant soil.

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HONOURING LONG-SERVING STAFF

On Friday, 31 March 2023, Air Seychelles celebrated 25 years of service. Air Seychelles honoured 67 long-serving staff members for the year 2023. Air Seychelles conducted a Long Service Awards Ceremony for 67 staff members who had been with the airline for 10 years or more.

The celebration was hosted at the Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino, and over 400 airline staff members, as well as Air Seychelles board members and Minister for Transport, Mr. Anthony Derjacques, attended.

Over half of the award recipients that evening marked their ten-year anniversary with the company, while the longest serving team members Mel Edmond and Williana Savy celebrated 30 years and Norbert Lepathy was acknowledged for his 40-year commitment.

"A company is only as good as the staff that work for it. We have some very dedicated and loyal staff at Air Seychelles and I am very proud of our retention figures. Our employees are our most prized assets and are integral to the airline's success. To celebrate over 60 long-serving



staff in one year alone is remarkable" said Captain Sandy Benoiton, Chief Executive Officer.

Captain Sandy Benoiton, Chief Executive Officer of the national carrier, and Minister Anthony Derjacques presented the awards. On Thursday 26 October 2023, Air Seychelles celebrated its 46th year of operations.



AIR SEYCHELLES AWARDED INDIAN OCEAN'S LEADING AIRLINE BRAND

Air Seychelles was awarded three new titles at the World Travel Awards 2023, which was held in Dubai this October, at the glitzy Atlantis The Royal.

For the year 2023, the national airline was named:-

- World's Leading Airline for the Indian Ocean
- Indian Ocean's Leading Airline Brand
- Indian Ocean's Leading Airline – Economy Class

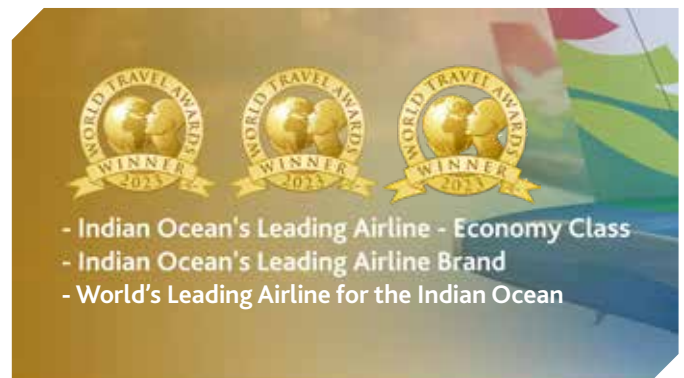
The World Travel Awards, established in 1993, observes its 30th anniversary in 2023, commemorating three decades of acknowledging, rewarding and celebrating excellence across all sectors of the global travel and tourism industry.

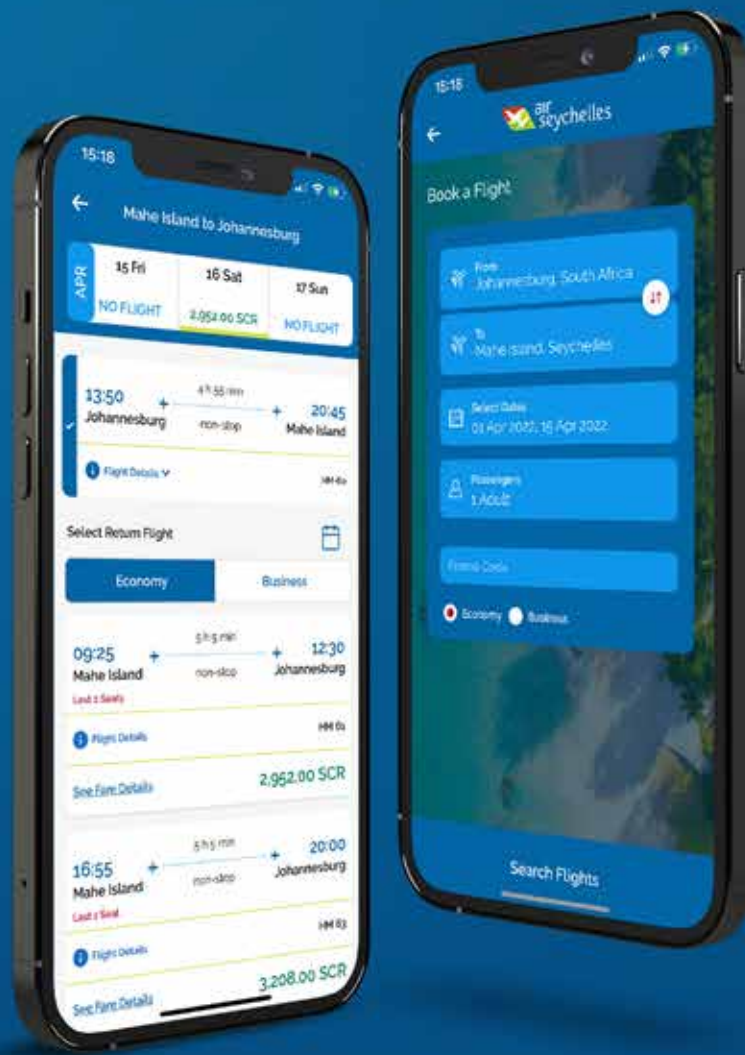
Today, the World Travel Awards brand is acknowledged across the globe as the ultimate travel accolade. Each year, a comprehensive programme is initiated across a range of awards developed to recognise the industry's most vital sectors and product offerings.

Speaking of the awards, Air Seychelles' Chief Executive Officer, Captain Sandy Benoiton, said "I accept these accolades with fulfilment, on behalf

of my team, without whom we would not be winners. Air Seychelles takes great pride in being the national airline and we ensure to live the values and embody the brand every day. I take this opportunity to thank everyone who voted for us, your support means a lot."

Air Seychelles was nominated and shortlisted alongside other Indian Ocean carriers, namely Air Mauritius, Air Austral, Maldivian and Madagascar Airline.





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Our Network

International Network

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



MAP KEY

- Air Seychelles Flights
- - - - Air Seychelles Seasonal or Charter Route
- Air Seychelles Codeshares
- Air Seychelles Interline Partner

CODESHARE PARTNER



INTERLINE PARTNER



Sri Lankan Airlines Network (India)



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

Air Seychelles Domestic Network



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

The best way to Island hop



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

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Air Seychelles global offices

India 	Capital: New Delhi Languages: Hindi, English Currency: Indian Rupee Area: 3,287,590 km ² 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 km ² 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
Maldives 	Capital: Malé Languages: Dhivehi, English Currency: Maldivian rufiyaa Land area: 300 km ² Population: 579,330 Air Seychelles destination: Malé	Universal Travel Services Pvt Ltd 39 Orchid Magu PO Box 2015 Malé 20-02 Republic of Maldives Tel: +960 3332231 Email: Shifa.Faiz@utsmaldives.com
Mauritius 	Capital: Port Louis Languages: French, English, Creole Currency: Rupees Area: 2,040 km ² 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 km ² Population: 95,235 Air Seychelles destination: Mahé & Praslin	Air Seychelles Ltd Seychelles International Airport PO 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 km ² 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 benjaminc@rogers-aviation.co.za
Sri Lanka 	Capital: Colombo Languages: Sinhala, Tamil Currency: Sri Lankan Rupee Area: 65,610 km ² Population: 22.16 million Air Seychelles destination: Colombo	Air Park (Pvt) Ltd. 377A/1 Galle Road, Colombo 03 Sri Lanka Tel: +94 (0) 11 237 2870 Email: airseychelles@airpark.aero

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. Saturday 0830hrs-1100hrs

Public holidays 2024

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| • New Year | 1 Jan |
| Holiday | 2 & 3 Jan |
| • Good Friday | 29 March |
| • Easter Sunday | 31 March |

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| • Easter Monday | 1 April |
| • Labour Day | 1 May |
| • Corpus Christi | 30 May |
| • Constitution Day | 18 June |
| • National Day | 29 June |
| • Assumption Day | 15 Aug |
| • All Saints Day | 1 Nov |
| • Immaculate Conception | 8 Dec |
| Holiday | 9 Dec |
| • Christmas Day | 25 Dec |

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.

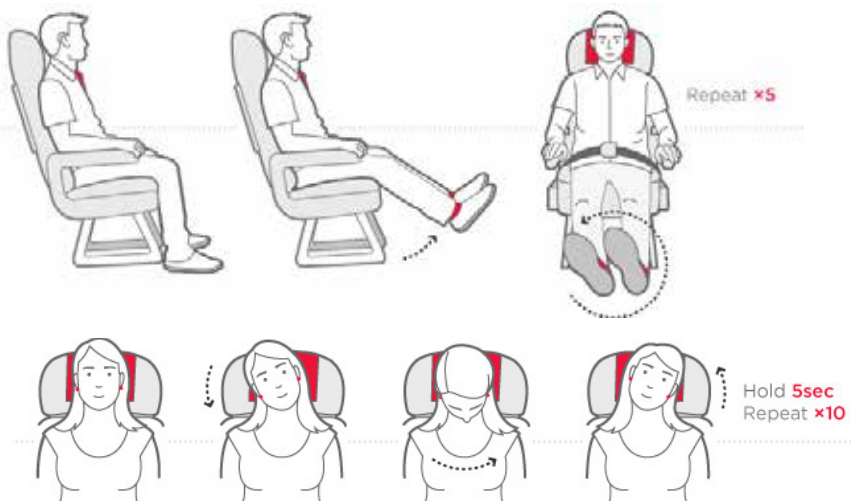
Taxi service

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 visitors to the Seychelles.

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 for Seychelles.

Valid travel and health insurance cover is required for potential COVID-19 related costs. Visitors may be subject to routine health screening on arrival.

Note: All individuals arriving in Seychelles are advised to report any symptoms they develop, that may be associated with COVID-19 to their nearest health centre.

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NATURE OF
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IN ALL OF US**

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