

Mauritius Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Mauritius is by far the best country of the three destinations covered in this book for variation and choice in accommodation. It's so good, in fact, that it can be overwhelming. Camping is possible in Mauritius, although there are no camp sites as such. You should ask locals where it's acceptable to pitch tents, and perhaps expect some funny looks. The best value and often the most characterful

accommodation in Mauritius can usually be found in guesthouses or *chambres d'hôte*, where families rent out one or more of their own rooms to travellers. This is a fantastic way to meet locals and there's usually the option of eating with them as well. *Chambres d'hôte* are particularly popular in Rodrigues (where they're often the only place to stay) while those in Blue Bay are some of the most luxurious and unique in the country.

Private houses for rent are available all over Mauritius. They tend to be holiday homes rented out by their owners through agencies at considerable expense, and of course value for money varies enormously. Most hotels and travel agencies can point you in the direction of private rentals.

Hotels cover the rest of the accommodation range. In Mauritius they range from threadbare, no-star affairs (the capital's non-luxury hotels tend to fit into this category), the like of which you'll find all over Africa, through to five-star luxury complexes each seemingly built to outdo the others. While Mauritius enjoys a very well-to-do and exclusive reputation, its main trade is actually in midrange three- and four-star hotels, although its luxury five-star hotels such as Le Touessrok and the Oberoi are truly world-standard, with jaw-dropping luxury and price tags to match.

Generally speaking, for a double you can expect to pay under Rs 2000 for budget accommodation, between Rs 2000 to Rs 10,000 for midrange, and over Rs 10,000 for top-end accommodation. Recommendations under Sleeping entries are in ascending order of price.

ACTIVITIES

There's way more than sun worship and pampering to be had on Mauritius – you'll find world-class diving, snorkelling and a huge range of water sports, as well as some good hiking to keep you occupied here.

Deep-Sea Fishing

The fisheries around Mauritius support large predators such as marlin, wahoo, tuna and sharks, luring big-game fishermen from around the world. November to April is the prime season for marlin, when the water is

PRACTICALITIES

- Mauritius uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- Electric current is 220V, 50Hz; British-style three-pin sockets are most common, though you'll also find the continental two-pin variety.
- The two most important, widely read dailies are the French language *L'Express* (lexpress.mu) and *Le Mauricien* (lemauricien.com). The *News on Sunday* and the *Mauritius Times* are English-language weeklies.
- There are three free channels in Mauritius run by the state Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) – MBC1, MBC2 and MBC3. There are also numerous pay channels. Programming is mainly in Creole but with foreign imports in French, English and numerous Indian languages.
- Radio is a more popular medium, with a huge number of local commercial stations broadcasting in Creole and Hindi, and the BBC World Service and Voice of America, readily available. A couple of the most popular radio stations include Kool FM 89.3 Mhz and Taal FM 94.0 Mhz.

at its warmest. Tuna, wahoo and sharks can be found year-round. Annual fishing competitions are held at Grande Rivière Noire in November and February.

Game fishing has far less environmental impact than commercial fishing, but the weight and the number of fish caught has shown a marked decline since its heyday in the 1970s. It's now rare to catch anything over 400kg. Using the practice of 'tag-and-release' is an option for those who want the thrill without depriving the ocean of these magnificent creatures.

Anglers get to take home a trophy such as the marlin's nose spike, or a couple of fillets, but the day's catch belongs to the operator, who sells it to be served up at local restaurants.

Most of the big hotels run boats, and there are several private operators based at Grande Rivière Noire, Trou aux Biches and Grand Baie. Most outfits have a minimum hire time of around six hours, and each boat can normally take three anglers and three guests. Expect to pay upwards of Rs 12,000 per boat.

Diving & Snorkelling

Diving and snorkelling are very well established in Mauritius and its dive sites compare well to others in the Indian Ocean, although several dive operators during research were keen to point out that Mauritius 'is no Maldives' – a reference to its often lower visibility and less stunning coral. Basically the rule is to choose where you dive carefully and you should have a superb time. The best place

to dive in Mauritius is Rodrigues, where the corals are fantastic and the diver numbers are tiny, so you feel like a pioneer. On the mainland, Blue Bay and Flic-en-Flac have the best diving spots, the particular stand-outs being dive sites Colorado in Blue Bay and Rempart Serpent and La Cathédrale in Flic-en-Flac. Snorkelling can be enjoyed almost anywhere, but again it's particularly fruitful in Rodrigues. Nearly all bigger hotels organise regular snorkelling excursions, often at no charge. For more information on diving in Mauritius, see p27.

Hiking

For those interested in more than the usual beach activities, Mauritius offers some attractive hikes. Most are in the Central Plateau area around the Black River Gorges National Park; see p87 for detailed descriptions. Lion Mountain (north of Mahébourg) is another popular climb, while a day exploring the east coast of Rodrigues is a must for anyone wanting to get away from it all.

As a general rule when hiking, you should pay attention to 'Entrée Interdit' (Entry Prohibited) signs – they may mean you're entering a hunting reserve. 'Chemin Privée' (Private Rd) signs are generally there for the benefit of motorists; most landowners won't object to the odd pedestrian. It's best to ask if you're unsure about where you should and shouldn't walk.

One possibility is to go with a guide. **Yemaya Adventures** (☎ 752 0046; www.yemayaadventures.com) and **Maurisun Adventure & Tours** (☎ 263 0192; www.maurisun.com; Royal Rd) in Grand Baie both offer