



Mauritius, Réunion & Seychelles



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

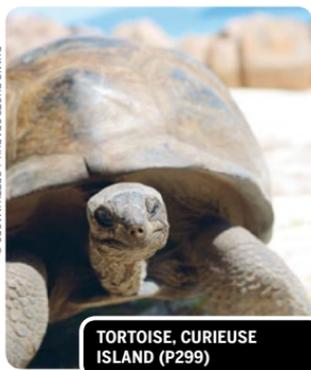
Jean-Bernard Carillet, Anthony Ham

PLAN YOUR TRIP

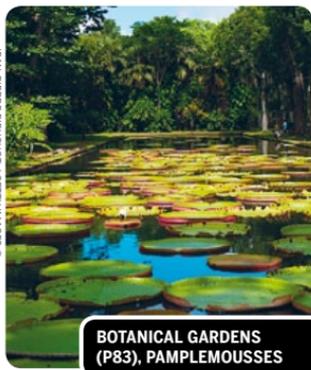
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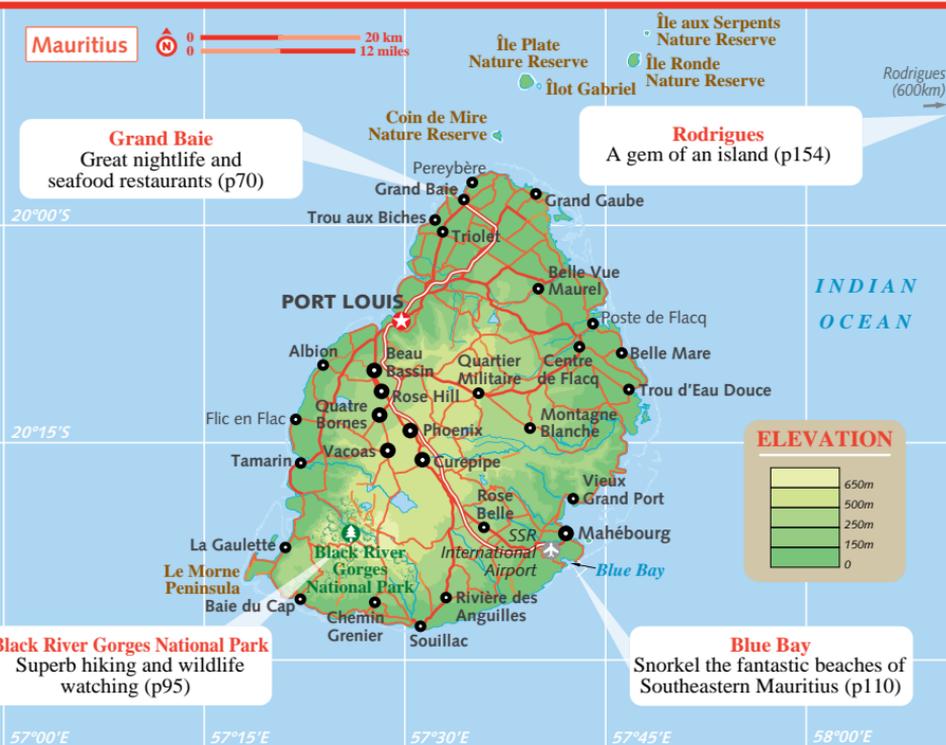
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Mauritius, Réunion & Seychelles





Anse Lazio
A glorious white beach (p293)

Vallée de Mai
Trees with amazingly voluptuous nuts (p292)



Morne Seychellois National Park
Discover Mahé's wild side (p284)

On the Road





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Jean-Bernard Carillet

Coordinating Author, Réunion, Seychelles Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard has clocked up numerous trips to the Indian Ocean and written extensively about Réunion and the Seychelles. A diving instructor and a fan of all things outdoorsy, he never misses an opportunity to explore these islands in more depth. In Réunion he tackled paragliding, hiking, horse riding, diving and canyoning. In the Seychelles he examined every burg, shore and cove

while searching for the perfect beach, the best dinner buffet, the best-value hotels and the most sensational panoramas. As an incorrigible Frenchman and foodie, he confesses a pronounced penchant for the delicious Creole cuisine (hmm, those hearty curries). Jean-Bernard's wanderlust has taken him to six continents, inspiring numerous articles and his writing of some 30 Lonely Planet guidebooks.

Jean-Bernard also wrote the Welcome to, Need to Know, Islands at a Glance, Diving, Hiking in Réunion, A Glimpse of Paradise and Health chapters.



Anthony Ham

Mauritius, Rodrigues Anthony has spent much of his adult life writing and photographing his way around the world, particularly Europe, the Middle East and all corners of Africa. His passions are wildlife, wilderness and wild places, and it was these that gave him particular pleasure in Mauritius (where he found himself

drawn to Île aux Aigrettes, Black River Gorges and the wild eastern coast) and deliciously remote Rodrigues. After 10 years living in Madrid he recently returned to Australia, where he lives with his wife and two daughters.

Anthony also wrote the Top 17, If You Like..., Month by Month and Itineraries chapters.

Read more about Anthony at lonelyplanet.com/members/anthony_ham

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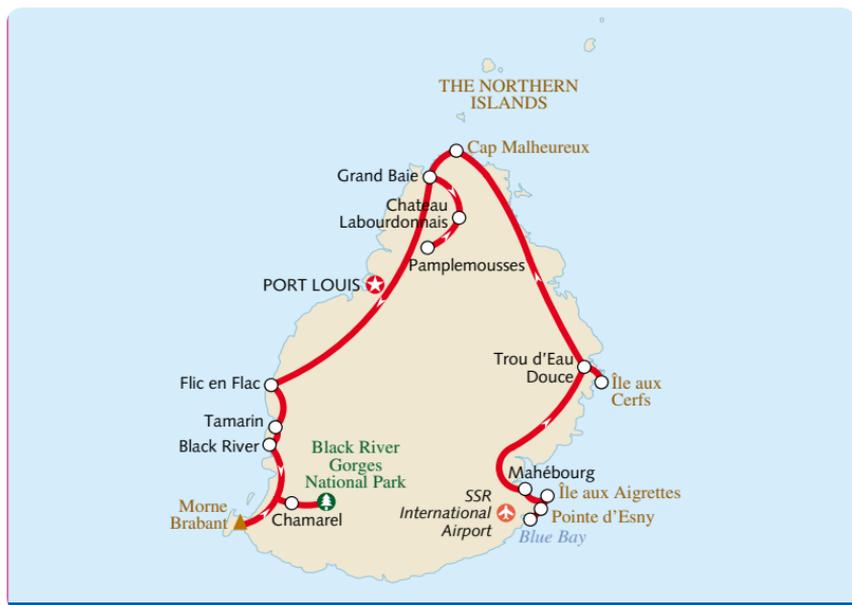
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Itineraries



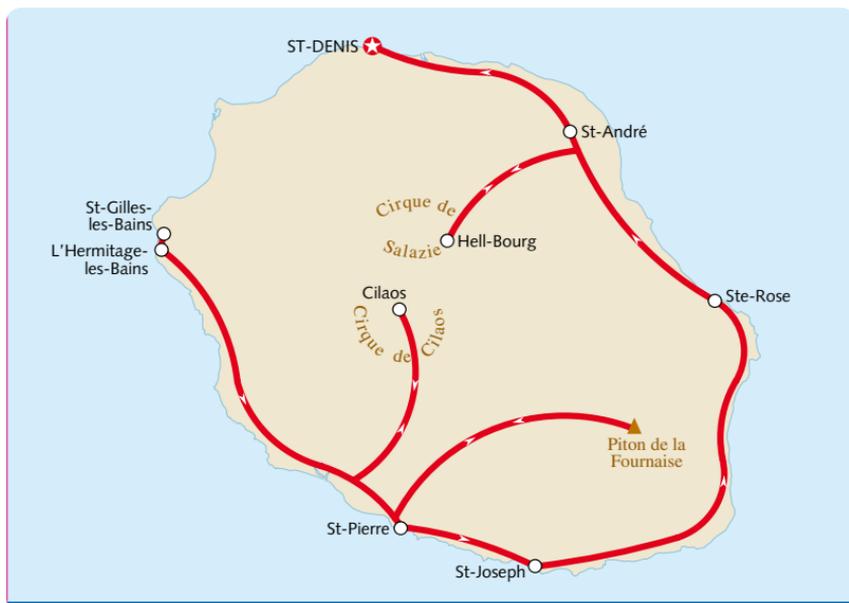
2
WEEKS

Essential Mauritius

Start near the airport along the stunning sands of **Pointe d'Esny**. Snorkel through the sparkling azure lagoon at **Blue Bay**, eco-explore **Île aux Aigrettes**, then slip up to sleepy **Mahébourg** for the Monday market.

Drive north along the coast. Embrace the fisherman lifestyle in **Trou d'Eau Douce** then glide through the crystal lagoon to **Île aux Cerfs**. Pass through the endless acreage of sky-reaching sugarcane before emerging on the north coast to take in the views at **Cap Malheureux**. Hop on a catamaran bound for the scenic northern islands then treat yourself to a round of repasts in lively **Grand Baie**. From Grand Baie, a day trip loop could take in the botanical gardens and sugar factory at **Pamplemousses** and the lovely **Chateau Labourdonnais** in Mapou.

Emerge on the west coast for a spot of diving in **Flic en Flac** then base yourself around **Black River**. From here, there are plenty of exhilarating options to get the blood flowing: canyoning through the **Black River Gorges National Park**, biking in **Chamarel** or climbing the iconic **Morne Brabant**. Don't miss a morning of dolphin-watching just off the coast of **Tamarin**.



2
WEEKS

Tour of Réunion

From sophisticated beach resorts to mountain villages, art galleries to volcanoes, two weeks is perfect to sample the variety Réunion has to offer. Get hooked on the hiking and you could easily fill a month. This tour covers around 400km.

Spend a day sampling **St-Gilles-les-Bains**. This is a classic Indian Ocean resort, with all the accompanying highs and lows. We prefer to focus on the former – white sands, good surfing for beginners, diving and snorkelling and some pretty rowdy nightlife. The best beach to recover from it all is **L'Hermitage-les-Bains**. Allow three days to make the most of the area's botanical gardens, museums and water sports.

Head next to the **Cirque de Cilaos**, where you should allow at least two days to soak up the rugged mountain scenery and the laid-back atmosphere. Hiking and canyoning get you up close and personal with some of the best scenery you'll see anywhere, while there are also thermal springs, wine to taste and ecotourism possibilities thrown in for good measure.

There aren't many places in the world where you can climb an active volcano, but **Piton de la Fournaise** is one of them and in fact is one of the most accessible on earth. Base yourself at the Gîte du Volcan, ready to make a dawn ascent for stunning views.

Next make for the bright lights of **St-Pierre** – if possible, get here for the huge Saturday market and stay the night near **St-Joseph**. Don't miss **Ste-Rose**, where lava laps at the door of a church and narrowly misses the Virgin Mary. It can also serve as a return to civilisation (without the clamour of a big city) if you've been climbing volcanoes and hiking the cirques.

As you head to the north of the island, go inland and stay at least two nights in **Hell-Bourg**, exploring the **Cirque de Salazie**. Finally, set off towards the capital via the Indian-influenced **St-André** and end your trip sampling cafe-culture and Creole architecture in the capital, **St-Denis**.



2
WEEKS

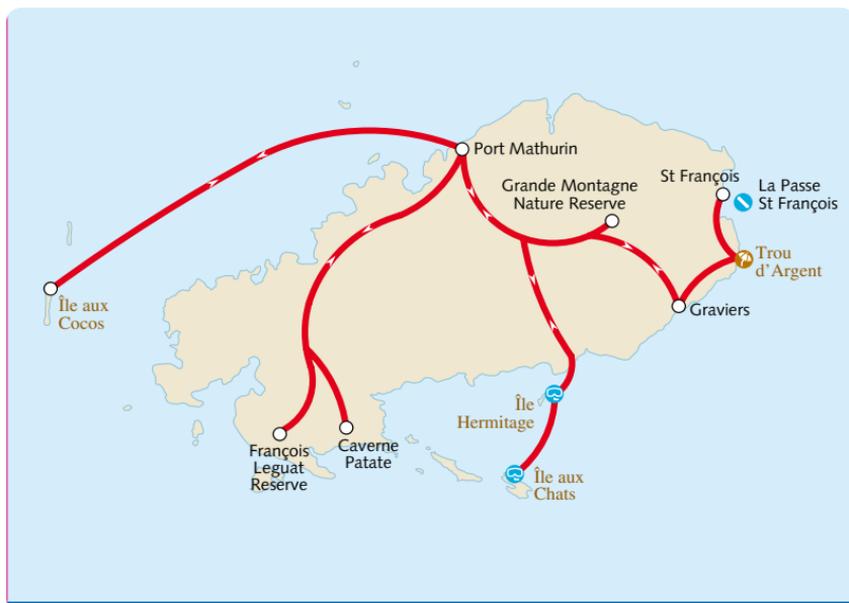
Essential Seychelles

Two weeks is fine for a taster of the Seychelles' islands – allowing plenty of time for enjoying the very best of the country's superb beaches.

On the first day, tune into island life in the capital, **Victoria**, checking out the market and strolling among the palm trees in the botanical gardens. Move on to **Beau Vallon**, where three days can easily be spent messing around in and on the water – schedule in a day's diving or a boat trip to **Ste Anne Marine National Park**. Devote the next two days to the beaches and byways of Mahé, and walking in the stunning **Morne Seychellois National Park**, which has a little bit of everything: a colonial-era ruin, a tea factory and some fabulous hiking.

Next, cruise over to Praslin which closely resembles paradise. Ogle curvaceous *cocode-mer* nuts in the Unesco World Heritage-listed **Vallée de Mai**, hike amid massive palm fronds and then flake out on the perfect, sugar-white sands at **Anse Lazio**, which is one of the prettiest beaches we know. Fill the next four days with snorkelling, diving and swimming off **Anse Volbert**, getting up close and personal with giant tortoises on **Curieuse Island**, home to a large breeding farm of giant Aldabra tortoises, and walking among cacophonous clouds of sea birds on **Cousin Island** with more than 300,000 birds and numerous endemic species – even amateur bird-watchers will want to spend more time here than most tours allow.

From Praslin, set sail for La Digue – if you thought Praslin was paradise, just wait until you lose yourself on La Digue. Three days is the perfect amount of time to lapse into La Digue's slow vibe. Visit **Anse Source d'Argent** – the archetypal idyllic beach, although it's by no means the only one on La Digue. Get there late afternoon for the best atmosphere and try to avoid high tide when the beach all but disappears. Take a snorkelling trip around nearby islands, then find solitude on the beaches of **Grand Anse** and **Petite Anse**. All too soon, it will be time to tear yourself away for the trip back to Victoria.

1
WEEK

Rodrigues – The Other Mauritius

Some call Rodrigues a mini-Mauritius, even though it's different in almost every way. What they really mean is that this is the closest you can get to what Mauritius was like before tourism took off, with a marked lack of development compared to the mainland. Few tourists make it out this far on the 1½-hour flight into the Indian Ocean. A week is ample time to discover the delights of this small, mountainous island. Depending on the weather you can divide the days between walking, diving and taking boat trips to nearby islands. It's a lot easier to fully experience the island's charms if you rent your own vehicle.

First, though, spend half a day strolling the streets of **Port Mathurin** and make sure it's a Saturday when the island's endearingly sleepy 'capital' springs into life, when it seems the entire population descends for the weekly market. Two of the not-to-be-missed sights on the island are the giant tortoises at **François Leguat Reserve** and the caves at **Caverne Patate**. Another day could be taken up by the classic coastal hike from **Graviers to St François**, passing en route a gem of a beach at **Trou d'Argent**. From St François either walk back the way you came or take a bus to Port Mathurin. Another day should be dedicated to the boat excursion to **Île aux Cocos** with its quiet beaches and lively seabird colonies, with a couple of hours set aside for a hike in search of endangered species in the **Grande Montagne Nature Reserve**.

You're spoilt for choice when it comes to diving. Top spots include the channel off St François, **La Passe St François**, on the edge of the lagoon, with more options beyond the reefs. There's good snorkelling around the little-visited **Île aux Chats** and **Île Hermitage** off the south coast.

And of course, you'll want to dedicate as much time as you can to simply kicking back on the beach for hours at a stretch and indulging in seafood feasts at one of the great family-run restaurants scattered around the island.

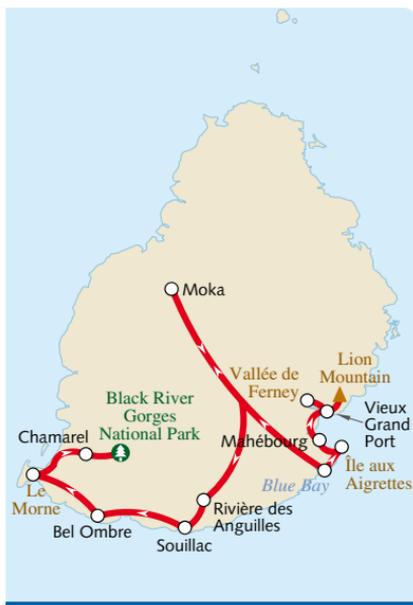


Réunion's Sud Sauvage

Réunion's 'Wild South' offers volcanic landscapes, massive ravines, wave-lashed cliffs and sensational hiking trails. You can discover the best of the region in a reasonably leisurely week.

Start at **Ste-Rose** and head south to find the first tongues of lava tumbling down to the sea. Cross the threatening lava fields of **Le Grand Brûlé**, to spend a night or two near **St-Philippe** or **St-Joseph**; stay up in the hills for a real taste of rural life. From here you can hike the spectacular **Rivière des Remparts**.

Pass quickly through **St-Pierre** en route to the high plateau of **Plaine-des-Cafres** to visit the **Maison du Volcan**. Take the magnificent forest road up to **Piton de la Fournaise**, Réunion's restless volcano. Now drop back down to Plaine-des-Cafres, where you could spend a couple of days hiking to **Grand Bassin**, a village at the end of the world. Finally, head for **Plaine-des-Palmistes**, where the hikes through the **Forêt de Bébou-Bélouve** and to **Trou de Fer** provide unforgettable experiences.



Southern Mauritius

The south of Mauritius offers the perfect combination of outstanding beaches and glorious natural scenery.

Blue Bay is everything its name suggests and its proximity to a host of postcard-pretty landscapes makes it the perfect base for the island's southeast. Don't miss the excursion to **Île aux Aigrettes** where you can spy pink pigeons and giant tortoises. **Vieux Grand Port** is where Mauritius' human story began centuries ago, and there's an untouched feel to the forests of **Vallée de Ferney**, home to the iconic Mauritius kestrel. **Lion Mountain** is a challenging but extremely rewarding hike. From your Blue Bay base, consider a day trip inland to Eureka in **Moka** high on the Central Plateau.

Now head west, pausing at La Vanille in **Rivière des Anguilles**, then in **Souillac** and **Bel Ombre** to enjoy the pretty coast. Continue on to Unesco World Heritage-listed **Le Morne** where dramatic hiking trails await. Climb up into the hills to **Chamarel**, with its terrific eating scene, the perfect base for scenic drives and hikes through **Black River Gorges National Park**.

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