



# Mauritius

## Includes ➔

Port Louis .....	49
Curepipe .....	61
Grand Baie .....	70
Pereybere .....	78
Pamplemousses .....	82
Flic en Flac .....	85
Tamarin & Black River (Rivière Noire) .....	92
Chamarel .....	96
La Gaulette .....	100
Mahébourg .....	106
Trou d'Eau Douce .....	120
Belle Mare & Palmar .....	125

## Why Go?

Mark Twain once wrote that 'Mauritius was made first and then heaven, heaven being copied after Mauritius'. For the most part, it's true: Mauritius is rightly famed for its sapphire waters, powder-white beaches and luxury resorts. But there's so much more to Mauritius than the beach when it comes to attractions. There's bird-watching and hiking in the forested and mountainous interior or world-class diving and snorkelling. Or there are boat trips to near-perfect islets and excursions to fabulous botanical gardens and colonial plantation houses. Either way, the possibilities can seem endless. And the *real* Mauritius – a hot curry of different cultures, traffic and quiet fishing villages – is never far away.

Ultimately, Mauritius is the kind of place that rewards even the smallest attempts at exploration. So, if your biggest discovery is the beach butler service at your hotel, then you'll need to plan a second visit!

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Eureka Table d'Hôte (p59)
- ➔ Chez Tante Athalie (p84)
- ➔ Lambic (p54)
- ➔ Rasoi (p128)
- ➔ 1974 (p69)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Le Saint Géran (p126)
- ➔ Le Prince Maurice (p127)
- ➔ La Maison d'Été (p128)
- ➔ L'Oiseau du Paradis (p112)
- ➔ Le Preskil (p113)

## When to Go

➔ Mauritius enjoys a typically tropical climate with year-round heat. The summer months are from December to April, when it can be extremely humid, and the cooler winter, such as it is, runs from May to November.

➔ Peak cyclone months are January and February, with cyclones possible until April.

➔ Coastal temperatures range between 25°C and 33°C in summer and between 18°C and 24°C in winter. On the plateau it will be some 5°C cooler.

➔ High season roughly runs from November to April, with a Christmas–New Year peak, although other factors (French school holidays for example) can also cause spikes in prices and visitor numbers.

## Driving in Mauritius

Driving a rental vehicle around Mauritius shouldn't pose too many problems or cause too much anxiety. Most roads are in reasonable condition, although be wary of unsigned pot-holes or poorly signed speed humps on minor or residential roads. The main concern for first-time drivers is that, apart from the motorway that links the airport with Grand Baie, many roads can be quite narrow – fine under normal conditions, but slightly trickier when buses, trucks and meandering cyclists are factored in. The only solution is to err on the side of caution and remain vigilant. Also watch out for other vehicles overtaking when it's not entirely safe to do so. See also p152.

### ESSENTIAL FOOD & DRINK

Mauritius's complex mix of cultures has bequeathed to the island an equally complex culinary scene – Chinese, Indian, Creole and French influences are all evident. It's the Creole element that shines through most strongly at the *tables d'hôte*, the eating equivalent of a family-run guesthouse where diners often eat at a communal table and can enjoy a range of traditional dishes spread over a number of courses. If you don't eat at a *table d'hôte* at least once in Mauritius, you've missed an essential part of its gastronomic culture.

Seafood is the mainstay of all the different cuisines on the island. Prawns (*crevettes*) and octopus (*ourite*) are special highlights, and octopus in particular appears in all manner of varieties – salads, cooked in saffron, or in a curry (sometimes with green papaya). The fish of the day is nearly always a good order.

When it comes to meat, steaks can be terrific here, especially those from South Africa. Creole sausages are distinctive and are often cooked in a red Creole sauce.

When it comes to street food, *dhal puri* (lentil dhal served in a chapati pancake) and *boulettes* (tiny steamed Chinese dumplings) are fantastic.

## Keeping Costs Down

- ➔ If your accommodation is based on a half-board regime, eat lunch outside the hotel
- ➔ Rent a car from a local (rather than international) company – their rates are invariably cheaper
- ➔ For most upmarket hotels, try to book through a travel agency – otherwise you'll pay the full rack rates
- ➔ For excursions, try to get a group together – quoted costs are usually for the vehicle or boat

### AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Mauritian rupee (Rs)
- ➔ **Language** French, English
- ➔ **Mobile phones** GSM network through Orange and Emtel; international roaming available
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread on main island, less common on Rodrigues
- ➔ **Visas** Not required for most nationalities for stays of up to three months

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Port Louis
- ➔ **Country code** 230
- ➔ **Population** 1.322 million
- ➔ **Time** GMT + four hours

## Exchange Rates

For current exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

A\$1	Rs 26.9
C\$1	Rs 28.5
€1	Rs 39.6
¥100	Rs 30.4
NZ\$1	Rs 23.7
UK£1	Rs 46.4
US\$1	Rs 29.6

## Resources

- ➔ **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/mauritius](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mauritius))
- ➔ **Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority** ([www.tourism-mauritius.mu](http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu))
- ➔ **Mauritian Wildlife Foundation** ([www.mauritian-wildlife.org](http://www.mauritian-wildlife.org))