

Rodrigues

In	cl	lu	de	25	→
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Port Mathurin 167
Around Rodrigues172
Understand
Rodrigues 179

Best Places to Eat

- → La Belle Rodriguaise (p178)
- Chez Robert et Solange (p177)
- Le Marlin Bleu (p171)
- → Mazavaroo (p177)
- → Cases à Gardenias (p178)

Best Places to Sleep

- Tekoma (p177)
- Bakwa Lodge (p177)
- → Cases à Gardenias (p176)
- → La Belle Rodriguaise (p176)
- → Chez Bernard & Claudine (p176)

Why Go?

Blissfully isolated over 600km northeast of the mainland, this tiny volcanic outcrop surrounded by a massive turquoise lagoon is a stunning mountainous gem that barely feels connected to its big sister, Mauritius, let alone the wider world.

Often billed as the 'Mauritius of 25 years ago', Rodrigues actually bears little resemblance to its neighbour beyond the scenic strips of peach-tinged sand. The island's population of around 40,000 is predominantly African and Creole – a far cry from the ethnic melting pot on Mauritius' main island – and you won't find a stalk of sugar cane anywhere on Rodrigues' hilly landscape. The pace of life, too, is undeniably slow, which gives the island its time-warped vibe. Great food, some fine natural sites and a host of activities round out an experience that lives long in the memory as one of those beautiful forgotten worlds in some remote corner of the globe.

When to Go

- November to February means high season and high prices; cyclones are possible from January. Accommodation and air tickets can be hard to come by, so book well in advance if travelling at this time.
- October, March and April are still considered high season in places, but there are generally fewer crowds. Underwater visibility is especially good for diving and snorkelling at this time. All in all, it's a nice time to be on the island.
- Lower prices and milder temperatures arrive from May to September, when there's little chance of cyclones.

Port Mathurin

POP 6000

This tiny port is the island's hub, its largest town and, for want of a better word, its capital. The word 'soporific' may come to mind, but during the day the town has a friendly vibe, especially around the buzzing market stalls. Apart from its banks, supermarket and handful of restaurants, there's not much to do here.

Sights

★ Saturday Market

MARKET

(Map p170; ⊕ 4.30-10am) The Saturday market is as busy as Rodrigues gets and it's the best place on the island to shop for fresh produce and souvenirs. It's open the rest of the week but really gears up on Saturday, when much of the island turns out. It's next to the bridge near the post office. Turn up later than 10am and you'll wonder what all the fuss is about.

La Résidence

ADCHITECTURE

(Map p170; Rue de la Solidarité) One of the oldest buildings still standing in Port Mathurin, La Résidence dates from 1897, when it provided a fairly modest home for the British chief commissioner. Its facilities are now used as function rooms for the new Regional Assembly. As such, it is closed to the public, although it is possible to get an idea of the structure from the veranda of the tourist office across the road

Sleeping

Port Mathurin makes a convenient base if you're travelling by bus, but frankly the options in town lack the quality you'll find outside it and taxis rarely cost much. The main concentration of hotels and guesthouses is found 2km east of town at Anse aux Anglais.

La Cabane d'Ete

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(Map p168; 2831 0747; www.lacabanedete.com; Baie Malagache; s/d incl breakfast €35/50) Adorable studio accommodation in Baie Malagache,



Rodrigues Highlights

- 1) Île aux Cocos (p173)
 Taking a boat ride out to the seabird colonies of this small, uninhabited slice of paradise.
- 2 François Leguat Reserve (p172) Cavorting with hundreds of curious giant tortoises in a lovely setting.
- **3 Port Mathurin** (p167) Getting up early and immersing yourself in the island's busiest market.
- Graviers to St François (p175) Hiking past Rodrigues' best beaches along the island's northeast coast.
- 5 La Passe St François (p174) Diving the pristine waters off the east coast.
- **Graviers** (p176) Eating the best in local cooking then sleeping by the sea at La Belle Rodriguaise.