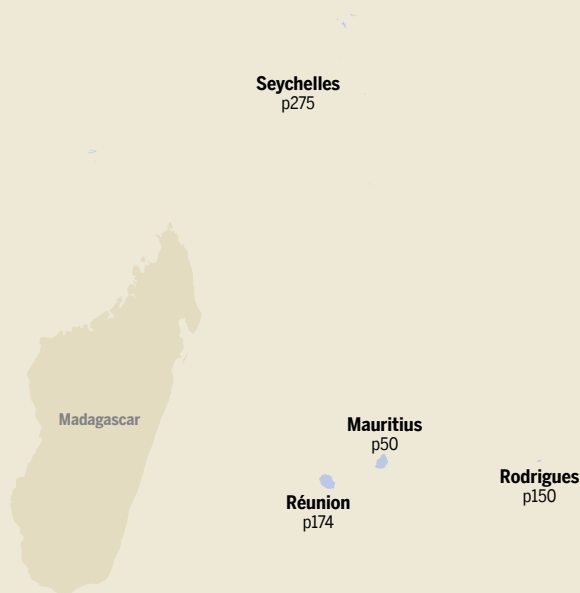




Mauritius, Réunion & the Seychelles



Matt Phillips, Jean-Bernard Carillet, Anthony Ham

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Itineraries



2 WEEKS Essential Mauritius

From the stunning coast of Mauritius' southeast to the dramatic mountain landscapes of the interior and southwest, you'll visit some of the country's prettiest islands, see stunning botanical gardens and explore Black River Gorges.

Start on the sands of **Pointe d'Esny**, snorkel 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 to embrace the fisherfolk lifestyle in **Trou d'Eau Douce**, then glide through the crystal lagoon to **Île aux Cerfs**. Pass through the sugar cane before emerging at gorgeous **Cap Malheureux**. In Grand Baie hop on a catamaran for the scenic **northern islands**, then treat yourself to a meal in **Trou aux Biches**. A day-trip loop then takes in the botanical gardens at **Pamplémousses** and lovely **Chateau Labourdonnais**.

Next is a spot of diving in **Flic en Flac**, then base yourself around **Black River** for hiking and canyoning in **Black River Gorges National Park**, mountain biking in **Chamarel** or climbing **Le Morne Brabant**.



Tour of Réunion

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

Kick things off in **St-Paul**, before heading inland to **Le Maïdo** for a bird's-eye view of the Cirque de Mafate. Then drive down to the coast for some beach action in **Boucan Canot**, one of Réunion's trendiest towns. A five-minute drive takes you to **St-Gilles-les-Bains**, a classic Indian Ocean resort with fine beaches and 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.

Next detour to **Cilaos** for at least two days to soak up the rugged mountain scenery and the laid-back atmosphere. Hiking and canyoning opportunities will immerse you in some unparalleled views, while there are also thermal springs, wine to taste and ecotourism possibilities. The bright lights of **St-Pierre** follow – if possible, get here for the huge Saturday market. From St-Pierre, it's a long but scenic drive up to Bourg-Murat, which is the launch pad for the **Piton de la Fournaise**, one of earth's most accessible volcanoes.

Return to St-Pierre and follow the RN2 that hugs along the scenic south coast. You may want to enjoy a picnic lunch at **Plage de Grande Anse** or unwind in **Manapany-les-Bains** before spending the night near **St-Joseph**. Proceeding east, you'll pass charmingly rural **St-Philippe** and the lunar landscapes of **Le Grand Brûlé** before reaching **Ste-Rose**, where hot lava once lapped at the door, narrowly missing the Virgin Mary.

As you head to the island's north, go inland and stay at least two nights in **Hell-Bourg**, exploring the Cirque de Salazie. Take in the Indian-influenced **St-André** before ending your trip sampling cafe culture and Creole architecture in the capital, **St-Denis**, which 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.



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. Devote the next two days to the beaches and byways of Mahé and to visiting the **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 coco de 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**, 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 seabirds 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, make 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 the island's slow vibe. Visit **Anse Source d'Argent** – the archetypal idyllic beach, although it's by no means the only one on the island. 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**. Grand Anse is incredibly scenic and has a great restaurant, Loutier Coco, where you can enjoy a superb lunch buffet. Petite Anse, which is accessible on foot only, feels wilder and more secluded. All too soon, it will be time to tear yourself away for the trip back to Victoria.



ALEX SALUY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



PHUONG D. NGUYEN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top: Curieuse Island (p305), Seychelles

Bottom: Market in Mahébourg (p104), Mauritius

1
WEEK

Rodrigues – The Other Mauritius

A week is ample time to discover the delights of this small, mountainous island. You can pass the days walking, diving and taking boat trips to nearby islands, as well as kicking back on the beach and indulging in seafood feasts at Rodrigues' great family-run restaurants.

First, spend half a day strolling the streets of **Port Mathurin** – make sure you come on a Saturday, when the island's endearingly sleepy 'capital' springs into life and it seems the entire population descends on the weekly market. Devote another day to two of the island's not-to-be-missed sights: 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** – this is perhaps our favourite coastal walk anywhere in Mauritius. Linger over lunch at one of St François' excellent restaurants, then 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. Set aside a couple of hours on the same day for a hike in search of endangered species in the **Grande Montagne Nature Reserve**.

You're spoilt for choice when it comes to diving. Start your Rodrigues diving experience by exploring the channel off St François, **La Passe St François**, on the edge of the lagoon, with more options beyond the reefs. Follow up the diving with the good snorkelling around the little-visited **Île aux Chats** and **Île Hermitage** off the south coast – it's a bit less exciting than the dive, but a marvellous day trip nonetheless.

And of course, along the way 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 the island's family-run restaurants scattered around the island. Perhaps reserve your spot at Graviers' La Belle Rodriguaise for lunch on your final day – it's an excellent choice to round off your week on Rodrigues.

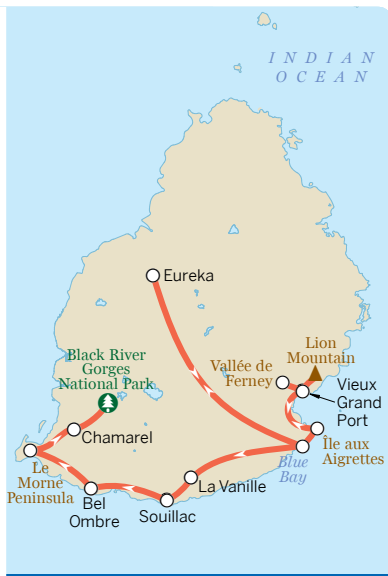


Réunion's Sud Sauvage & Hautes Plaines

Réunion's 'Wild South' and central plains offer 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-Joseph**; stay in the hills for a real taste of rural life. From here you can explore the picturesque **Rivière Langevin** valley – bring a picnic.

Continuing west, take a dip in **Plage de Grande Anse** before spending the night in **St-Pierre** and partying up at its buzzing nightlife. The next morning, head to the high plateau of **Plaine-des-Cafres** to visit the Cité 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 Bébour-Bélouve** 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 post-card-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. Just north, **Vieux Grand Port** is where Mauritius' human story began centuries ago. The challenging but rewarding hike up **Lion Mountain** provides sweeping views of the bay. There's an untouched feel to the nearby forests of **Vallée de Ferney**, home to the iconic Mauritius kestrel, which you can see being fed most mornings. From your Blue Bay base, consider a day trip inland to **Eureka** in Moka.

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 **Le Morne**, where dramatic hiking trails await. Climb into the hills to **Chamarel**, with its terrific eating scene and rum distillery – it's the perfect base for scenic drives and hikes through **Black River Gorges National Park**.

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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OUR READERS

Many thanks to the travellers who used the last edition and wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes:

David Kozma, Elisabetta Galliani, Melanie Astor, Peter Williams, Roman Hauser, Stephan Brox, Rudolf Marek, Stephan Brox

WRITER THANKS

Matt Phillips

A huge thanks to Lonely Planet for inspiring my travel, and for investing their time and resources in me over the years. This dream assignment wouldn't have been possible without the backing of Jen Carey or the support at home from Amanda Pirie. As always, a big shout out to my family who've always been there for me, through thick and thin. And to all the Seychellois who greeted me with warmth and a smile, a sincere thank you – I'll be back!

Jean-Bernard Carillet

Heaps of thanks to the commissioning and production team at Lonely Planet, especially Matt, for his trust and support, and to the editorial and cartography teams. In Réunion, a special mention goes to my friends Jean-Paul, Isabelle and Anaïs, who it was a pleasure to meet again. And how could I forget my daughter Eva, who had already shared some of my Réunion adventures during a previous trip? We'll be back.

Anthony Ham

Thanks as always to Matt Phillips, long-time collaborator and wise Africa head, for his ongoing faith and for sending me to such glorious places. Thanks to our lovely Norwegian friends in Beau Vallon. To Marina, Carlota and Valentina – so happy to share these places with you, *con todo mi amor*. And to Jan, for always keeping the home fires burning and being the faithful follower of my journeys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Climate map data adapted from Peel MC, Finlayson BL & McMahon TA (2007) 'Updated World Map of the Köppen-Geiger Climate Classification', *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences*, 11, 1633–44.

Cover photograph: Seychelles beach; IM_photo/Shutterstock ©

THIS BOOK

This 10th edition of Lonely Planet's *Mauritius, Réunion & Seychelles* guidebook was curated by Matt Phillips and researched and written by Matt, Jean-Bernard Carillet and Anthony Ham. The previous two editions were also written by Jean-Bernard and Anthony. This guidebook was produced by the following:

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Thanks to Sasha Drew, Genna Patterson

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RE Réunion
RO Rodrigues
S Seychelles

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- Drinking & Nightlife
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- Shopping

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- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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



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Seychelles Raised in sunny Tsawwassen (just south of Vancouver) and now at home on the banks of the Thames in Hammersmith, London, Matt loves pushing his boundaries and exploring areas of the world that challenge him. His first such trip was to India, which inspired his love of life, and his second was a solo overland adventure from South Africa to Morocco. The latter thrust him out of a career working as a geologist in underground gold mines and into a life of travel

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Mauritius, Rodrigues, Seychelles Anthony is a freelance writer and photographer who specialises in Spain, East and Southern Africa, the Arctic and the Middle East. When he's not writing for Lonely Planet, Anthony writes about and photographs Spain, Africa and the Middle East for newspapers and magazines in Australia, the UK and US.

In 2001, after years of wandering the world, Anthony finally found his spiritual home when he fell irretrievably in love with Madrid on his first visit to the city. Less than a year later, he arrived there on a one-way ticket, with not a word of Spanish and not knowing a single person in the city. When he finally left Madrid ten years later, Anthony spoke Spanish with a Madrid accent, was married to a local and Madrid had become his second home. Now back in Australia, Anthony continues to travel the world in search of stories. Anthony also wrote and researched the Planning and Survival chapters.

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

10th edition – Dec 2019

ISBN 978 1 78657 497 8

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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