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PLAN YOUR TRIP

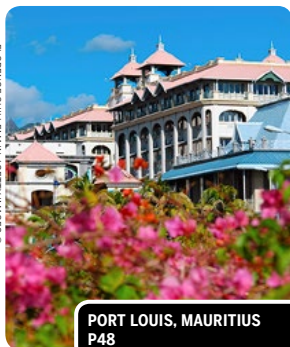
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Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Essential Mauritius

This itinerary takes you from the stunning coast of Mauritius southeast to the dramatic mountain landscapes of the interior and far southwest. En route, you'll visit some of the country's prettiest offshore islands, explore the stunning botanical gardens of Pamplemousses and go canyoning in Black River Gorges National Park.

Start along the stunning 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. Embrace the fisherfolk lifestyle in **Trou d'Eau Douce**, then glide through the crystal lagoon to **Île aux Cerfs**. Pass through the sky-reaching sugar cane before emerging at gorgeous **Cap Malheureux**. In **Grand Baie**, hop on a catamaran bound for the scenic **northern islands**, then treat yourself to a meal in lively **Trou aux Biches**. A day-trip loop could then take in the botanical gardens and sugar factory at **Pamplemousses** and lovely **Chateau Labourdonnais**.

Emergence on the west coast for a spot of diving in **Flic en Flac**, then base yourself around **Black River**. From here, you could try canyoning in **Black River Gorges National Park**, biking in **Chamarel** or climbing the iconic **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 the hiking and you could easily fill a month. This tour covers around 400km.

Kick things off in **St-Paul**, which is a good transit point before heading inland to **Le Maito** 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 south takes you to **St-Gilles-les-Bains**, a classic Indian Ocean resort with fine beaches 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 watersports.

Next detour to **Cilaos**, where you should allow 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 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.

Next make for the bright lights of **St-Pierre** – 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 obvious launch pad for the **Piton de la Fournaise**, one of the most accessible volcanoes on earth.

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 through charmingly rural **St-Philippe** and the lunar landscapes of **Le Grand Brûlé** before reaching **Ste-Rose**, where lava laps at the door of a church and narrowly misses the Virgin Mary.

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 north via the Indian-influenced **St-André**. End 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 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**, 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 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 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**. 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.

1
WEEK

Rodrigues – The Other Mauritius

A week is ample time to discover the delights of this small, mountainous island. You can divide 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 one of Rodrigues' great family-run restaurants.

First, spend half a day strolling the streets of **Port Mathurin** – and make sure you come on a Saturday, when the island's endearingly sleepy 'capital' springs into life and it seems the entire population descends for 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. From St François linger over lunch at one of the village's excellent restaurants, 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. For something a bit less exciting but a marvellous day trip nonetheless, follow up the diving with the good snorkelling around the little-visited **Île aux Chats** and **Île Hermitage** off the south coast.

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 one of the great 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 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. Just north, **Vieux Grand Port** is where Mauritius' human story began centuries ago. 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. **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 World Heritage-listed **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**.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- 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



Anthony Ham

Mauritius, Rodrigues, Seychelles Anthony is an experienced travel and nature writer who has written or contributed to more than 100 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including *Madagascar*, and *Mauritius, Réunion & Seychelles* and almost two dozen African countries. When he's not writing for Lonely Planet, Anthony writes about Africa, the Middle East, Spain and Scandinavia for newspapers and magazines around the world. His particular passions are wildlife, wild places and

searching for remote corners of the earth. Find out more about him at www.anthonham.com.



Jean-Bernard Carillet

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. Being a diving instructor, he was all too happy to check out the best dive sites in the region for this guide, before putting on his hiking shoes to explore the rugged Cirques in Réunion. In the Seychelles, he searched for the perfect beach, the best grilled fish, the most romantic spot and

the best-value hotels. Jean-Bernard has contributed to many Lonely Planet titles, both in French and in English.

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