
Travel Guide Mauritius

02 Quick view
02 Mauritius
04 Travel etiquette
04 Health

05 Phone calls & Internet
05 Top 10 sights
07 Shopping in Mauritius
07 Restaurants

08 Nightlife
10 Calendar of events
11 Hotels

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Quick view

Mauritius – a brief overview

Mauritius' Indian Ocean beaches are famous the world over for their sugar-white sands and limpid waters. Combine these with its rugged interior and elegant colonial-era architecture, and you've got a destination for all. A former British colony and trading hub, the island is peppered with old forts and rustic towns that date back to the 17th century.

Its capital, Port Louis, is no exception, and also has a vibrant mix of thoroughly modern bars, interesting museums and a veritable smorgasbord of places to sample the local seafood. Inland, there is the spectacular Black River Gorges National Park to explore, while offshore the picturesque Ile aux Aigrettes is thought to be the final resting place of the dodo.



Mauritius

General Information

Country overview

A hypnotic blend of Indian, Chinese, African, French and British influences, Mauritius is a dazzling Indian Ocean island that enchants nearly all who visit. But while its famous white-sand beaches and luxurious hotels are its top attractions, Mauritius offers far more to do than most tropical islands, with superb hiking, mountain climbing, diving and ecotourism opportunities.

Off major shipping routes, Mauritius remained uninhabited until the 16th century, allowing it to develop into one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

It was favoured by pirates and occupied briefly by the Dutch before the French brought African slaves to work the sugar plantations. Captured by the British in 1810, Mauritius achieved independence in 1968.

Mauritius today is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, a successful, multicultural society where the friendly co-existence of peoples and religions expresses itself in croissants for breakfast and curry for dinner, and brightly painted Indian temples sitting alongside French colonial mansions.

Geography

Mauritius, a volcanic and mountainous island in the Indian Ocean, lies 2,000km (1,240 miles) off the southeastern coast of Africa, due east of Madagascar. The island state stands on what was once a land bridge between Asia and Africa called the Mascarene Archipelago. From the coast, the land rises to form a broad fertile plain on which sugar cane flourishes and beyond, crater edges form a mountainous backbone.

Some 500km (310 miles) east is Rodrigues Island, while northeast are the Cargados Carajos Shoals and 900km (560 miles) to the north is Agalega.

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 1296303

Population Density (per sq km): 635

Capital: Port Louis

Language

The two official languages of Mauritius are English and French (with French being the most dominant). The most commonly used languages on the street are Creole (pidgin French with other languages added to the mix), Hindi and Bhojpuri. Urdu and Chinese are also spoken. All people speak either some English or some French.

Currency

Mauritian Rupee (MUR; symbol Rp) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of Rp2,000, 1,000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 25. Coins are in denominations of Rp10, 5 and 1.

Electricity

220 volts AC, 50Hz. British-style plugs with three square pins are commonly used in hotels; you can often find European-style sockets (two round pins) as well.

General business opening hours

Mon-Fri 0900-1600, Sat 0900-1200 (some offices only).

Public holidays

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

Note

(a) Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given below are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last up to several days, depending on the region.

(b) Hindu festivals are declared according to local astronomical observations and it is not possible to forecast the date of their occurrence exactly.

2020

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020
Thaiposam Cavadee: 25 January 2020
Abolition of Slavery Day: 1 February 2020
Chinese New Year: 5 February 2020
Maha Shivaratri: 21 February 2020
Republic Day: 12 March 2020
Ougadi (South Indian New Year's Eve): 6 April 2020
Labour Day: 1 May 2020
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 24 May 2020
Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 31 July and 1 August 2020
Ganesh Chaturthi: 22 August 2020
Diwali (Festival of Lights): 27 October 2020
All Saints' Day: 1 November 2020
Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers: 2 November 2020
Christmas Day: 25 December 2020

2021

New Year's Day: 1 January 2021
Thaiposam Cavadee: 28 January 2021
Abolition of Slavery Day: 1 February 2021

Chinese New Year: 12 February 2021
Maha Shivaratri: 11 March 2021
Republic Day: 12 March 2021
Ougadi (South Indian New Year's Eve): 6 April 2021
Labour Day: 1 May 2021
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 13 May 2021
Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 20 and 21 July 2021
Ganesh Chaturthi: 10 September 2021
All Saints' Day: 1 November 2021
Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers: 2 November 2021
Diwali (Festival of Lights): 4 November 2021
Christmas Day: 25 December 2021

All information subject to change.



Travel etiquette

How to fit in

Social Conventions

Handshaking is the customary form of greeting. Visitors should respect the traditions of their hosts, particularly when visiting a private house. The type of hospitality the visitor receives is determined by the religion and social customs of the host, which are closely related.

It is appropriate to give a gift as a small token of appreciation if invited for a meal. Dress is normally informal although men will need to wear a suit for particularly formal occasions.



Health

Health

Main emergency number: 114

Food & Drink

Water for drinking should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Bottled water is readily available. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Other Risks

Dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis B occur, and meningococcal meningitis is a risk from December to June. More common is dengue fever and around 5,000 cases of chikungunya virus have been reported - precautionary measures should be taken, especially in summer (Oct to May). Stonefish stings are uncommon but can be fatal.

Contractual physician of Lufthansa

Dr. Madeleine, Louis Pierre Jean-Francois
Fortis Clinique Darne – Medical and Surgical Centre
Guibert Street
Floreal
Mauritius
Tel. +230-601-2300

Please note that Lufthansa accepts no responsibility for the treatment nor will it bear the cost of any treatment.



Phone calls & Internet

Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing code: +230

Telephone

There are no area codes. There are a limited number of public telephone booths, mainly at the airport and in major hotels. Mauritius Telecom (www.mauritiustelecom.com) offers a good, reliable service and payphones are found in their customer service centres in towns around the island.

Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements with international mobile phone companies are available and coverage extends over the entire island. Local mobile calls are the same as the price of landline calls, so it's worth buying a local SIM card for your handset if you plan to make more than a few phone calls on the island.

Internet

There are Internet cafés in both main towns and tourist centres such as Grand Baie and Port Louis. Most hotels offer wireless Internet access.



Top 10 sights

Top 10 sights in Mauritius

Mahébourg

Mauritius' ancient capital, Mahébourg, is where Dutch settlers first landed in 1598. Today, this tranquil little city is a place of winding alleys, pretty seafront restaurants and traditional markets.

Mahébourg
Mauritius

Parc national des gorges de Rivière Noire

A vast stretch of thick and glistening tropical rainforest, the Black River Gorges National Park covers 2% of Mauritius and is home to several native animal and bird species, including the Mauritian flying fox. The park also has 60km of hiking trails and the natural crater lake Grand Bassin.

B103 - Plaine Champagne Road
Mauritius
Tel: +230 464 4016

Maison Eureka

Set within a beautiful nature reserve, the Eureka House was built in 1830 and housed a succession of French and British aristocrats during the colonial period. Now a museum, the displays chart the history of Mauritius under Anglo-French rule.

Eureka - La Maison Creole
Eureka Lane, Montagne Ory

Opening times:
For guided visits, Eureka is opened

Moka
Mauritius
Tel: +230 433 8477

Mon-Sat 0900-1700
Sun 0900-1530

www.maisoneureka.com/

La Vanille Réserve des Mascareignes

A cross between a zoo and a nature reserve, La Vanille is home to the largest number of captive giant tortoises in the world as well as a huge insectarium and a crocodile farm. Crocodile also dominates the menu at the on-site restaurant with everything from curry to burgers.

Savanne
Mauritius

Opening times:
Daily 0830-1700

www.lavanille-reserve.com/index.php/en/

Île aux Aigrettes

Thought to be the place where the last dodo met its end, the Ile aux Aigrettes, a tiny coral atoll just off Pointe Jérôme, is now home to a large population of wild giant tortoises. Along with a number of endemic Mauritian species, the islet also has a large pink pigeon population.

Île aux Aigrettes
Mauritius

Guided tours only.
Boat leaves from Pointe Jérôme:
Mon-Sat 0930, 1000, 1030, 1330, 1400
and 1430
Sun 0930, 1000, 1030

L'Aventure du Sucre

Housed within a former factory dating back to 1787, L'Aventure du Sucre is a quirky little museum that charts the history of Mauritius' sugar industry from inception to present day. Displays also cover the island's rum trade and touch on its history with slavery.

Beau Plan B18
Pamplemousses
Mauritius
Tel: +230 243 7900

Opening times:
Daily 0900-1700

www.aventuredu sucre.com/en

Le Souffleur

A natural grotto and 'geyser' perched on the south coast near Souillac, Le Souffleur explodes with impressive regularity – on average every 20 minutes. Getting there takes some effort – a hike to the cliffs is required – but the spectacular scenery and sea views are well worth it.

Grand Port
Mauritius

Domaine de L'Étoile

A sugar plantation turned film set and then eco-park, the Domaine de L'Étoile is perched at the base of the Bambous Mountains and is home to a number of hiking trails as well as a lengthy zip wire. Horse riding and quad biking are both on offer as are guided walks.

Sebastopol
B27
Mauritius

Rhumerie de Chamarel

Nestled into a nook in the spectacular countryside surrounding Chamarel, La Rhumerie is a traditional working rum distillery that offers guided tours as well as the chance to sample the local brew in the on-site restaurant.

Route Royale, Chamarel
Mauritius
Tel: +230 483 7980

Opening times:
Mon-Sat 0930-1730

Fort Adelaide

Also known as La Citadelle, Fort Adelaide is one of four 18th-century fortifications built by the British in Port Louis, and the only one not in ruins. At 73m above sea level, visitors can wander at will and take in spectacular views of the sea and city below.

Sebastopol St
Port Louis
Mauritius



Shopping in Mauritius Shopping in Mauritius

Key Areas

Although small shopping areas and markets are found in villages up and down Mauritius, most of the retail action happens in the capital, Port Louis, and tourist hubs such as Grand Baie. In the latter, the central Sunset Boulevard is where most of the shops are to be found, although the Grand Bazaar, an open-air market, is more interesting. Port Louis is home to the island's largest shopping mall, Le Caudan Waterfront, which houses a more upmarket selection of shops as well as a smattering of artisan-run stalls.

Markets

Most towns and villages have small markets, but the best and most varied are the daily markets in Grand Baie and Port Louis.

Shopping Centres

Le Caudan Waterfront and Happy World House are the main malls in Port Louis, while the huge Mall of Mauritius is in Moka. Elsewhere, there's the VIP Centre in Flacq and Grand Bay Plaza in Grand Baie.



Restaurants Restaurants in Mauritius

From sophisticated French dishes served in a chateau to simple seaside shacks, Mauritius is a foodie paradise – and one that doesn't cost the earth.

Le Château de Bel Ombre

Housed in a romantic 18th-century chateau, the restaurant serves Mauritian classics with a modern twist.

Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort Price: Expensive
Bel Ombre
Mauritius
Tel: +230 266 9777

Le Courtyard

One of the capital's most high-end restaurants, Le Courtyard is famous for sophisticated French fare.

Rue Chevreau, Saint Louis St Louis St Price: Expensive
Port Louis
Mauritius
Tel: +230 210 0810

La Case du Pêcheur

This thatched open-air restaurant specialises in local seafood including lobster.

B 28 Price: Moderate
Mahébourg
Mauritius
Tel: +230 5422 3937

La Toque Blanche

The tasty seafood at this tiny Creole restaurant tucked down an alley makes the effort involved in finding it completely worthwhile.

Royal Road Price: Moderate
Pointe aux Cannoniers
Mauritius
Tel: +230 5 910 29 89

Le Palais de Barbizon

A cheap and tasty family-run restaurant, Le Palais de Barbizon serves a set-menu comprised of hearty local dishes.

Chamarel Price: Cheap
Mauritius
Tel: +230 483 5078



Nightlife Nightlife in Mauritius

Beach bars and sports pubs dominate the nightlife scene in Mauritius but there are also a couple of decent nightclubs and some upmarket cocktail bars in Port Louis.

C Beach Club

This relaxed beachside spot turns into a nightclub at weekends and has a great Sunday brunch.

Domaine de Bel Ombre
B9
Bel Ombre 742CU001
Mauritius
Tel: +230 605 5400

Les Enfants Terribles

Hugely popular with locals, Les Enfants Terribles is one of Mauritius's top nightclubs.

Royal Road
Pointe aux Canoniers
Pampelmousses
Mauritius
Tel: +230 526 31076

The Flying Dodo

The Flying Dodo is a microbrewery and does some of the best beer in Mauritius. Don't let its mall location put you off.

1, Mall of Mauritius
Bagatelle
Mauritius
Tel: +230 468 8810

Banana Beach Club

A long-term favourite with locals and tourists alike, the relaxed open-air Banana Beach Club has lovely sea views.

Route Royale
Grand Baie
Mauritius
Tel: +230 263 0326

Big Willy's

Popular with sports fans thanks to its big screens, expect a lively atmosphere and cheap beer.

Le Barachois
Tamarin Bay, Tamarin
Mauritius
Tel: +230 483 7400



Calendar of events

Calendar of events

Chinese Spring Festival (Chinese New Year)

The Chinese New Year is welcomed with open arms during Mauritius' Chinese Spring Festival, when red decorations symbolising happiness fill the streets. Soaring firecrackers fend off lurking evil, there's no end to the delicious food, and the crowning glory is the Dragon Feast, when Chinese dancers and musicians perform alongside an extravagant swaying Dragon.

January 25, 2020

Venue: Mauritius

Thaipoosam Cavadee

During this Hindu festival, worshippers of Murugan journey to nearby Tamil temples following 10 days of fasting and praying. Beautiful flower- and fruit-laden cavadees – heavy wooden structures carried on shoulders – are a spectacular sight, but don't let the thin needles piercing the repenters' bodies alarm you. The rituals continue with fire walking and sword climbing.

February 8, 2020

Venue: Mauritius

Maha Shivaratri (Shivaratree)

Dressed in pure white, Hindu worshippers of the Lord Shiva head to the holy lake Grand Bassin during this sacred festival. Processors carry intricately built bamboo structures decorated with flowers. Once at the lake, worshippers make food sacrifices and collect holy water before chanting and meditating.

February 21, 2020

Venue: Mauritius, Grand Bassin

Holi Festival

Vibrant colours fly as the people of Mauritius throw paint at each other to promote good fortune and celebrate spring. This Hindu festival recognises the triumph of good over evil and kicks off the night before with a bonfire. The next day brings plenty of singing, dancing and tasty sweets.

March 9 - 10, 2020

Venue: Mauritius

Festival Culinaire Bernard Loiseau

In this friendly food competition hosted by Constance Hotels and Resorts, top Indian Ocean islands chefs pair with Michelin-starred European chefs to create a unique two-dish meal. World-renowned chefs and foodies then judge the signature creations. Guests and attendees can indulge in a six-star meal created by the contestants and witness the anticipated competition results.

March 2020

Venue: Constance Hotel and Resorts

Kiteival Mauritius

Adventurous kitesurfers take to the waves at some of Mauritius's most beautiful beaches during this annual, week-long competition. A rainbow of kites fills the skies as participants travel the coast and battle in the freestyle, race and wave categories. Back on sand, spectators celebrate summer with plenty of food and drink.

July 2020

Venue: Mauritius

Festival International Kreol

Since 2006, this three-day festival has been drawing crowds from all over to celebrate Creole culture in Mauritius. Spend the weekend crooning to traditional Creole tunes and attending discussions and literary readings. Delight in Mauritius fare and desserts, and enjoy traditional dance performances. Events around the area promise parties all night long.

November 2020

Venue: Port Louis



Hotels

Hotels in Mauritius

Mauritius has no shortage of spacious luxury resorts, but there are also plenty of charming boutique hotels and smaller city centre lodgings.

LUX* Belle Mare

A stylish eco-resort set in lush tropical gardens on the eastern coast of Mauritius.

Coastal Road
Quatre Cocos 742CU001
Mauritius
Tel: +230 402 2000

Category: Expensive

Sofitel So Mauritius

The tropical south coast of Mauritius is the perfect setting for the five-star resort Sofitel So Mauritius. Enticing room or exclusive suite, whatever your preference, modern architecture and exceptional interior design make for elegance and creature comforts amid intact nature.

Royal Road
Beau Champs
Bel Ombre
Mauritius
Tel: +230 605 5800

Category: Expensive

Villa Narmada

Perfect for families, Villa Narmada offers clean and spacious apartments at affordable prices, and within easy reach of shops, restaurants and the beach. There is also a swimming pool on site.

Aquamarine Lane
Grand Bay 2726CB
Mauritius
Tel: +230 263 5757

Category: Moderate

Hotel Des 2 Mondes

Set amid a tropical coconut grove, Hotel des 2 Mondes is a charming and intimate boutique hotel.

Coastal Road Mont Choisy
Mont Choisy
Mauritius
Tel: +27 86 771 2272

Category: Moderate

Hotel Le Grand Bleu

Like to spend some magical days on Mauritius that won't cost you a fortune? At the three-star hotel Le Grand Bleu, located just steps from the blue waters of the Indian Ocean and a white sandy beach, you can do just that. From the beach, you can experience a magnificent sunset almost every night.

Pres de Troux aux Beach, Route
Coastale
Trou aux Biches
Mauritius
Tel: +230 265 5812

Category: Cheap