



the seychelles islands
another world
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Paradise found

Bio-diverse and eco-friendly, the Seychelles is an archipelago of unrivalled beauty perfect for those who want to protect the world as they explore it

Situated 1,500 kilometres off the mainland of East Africa in the western Indian Ocean, the 115-island archipelago known as the Seychelles, with its white-sand beaches, turquoise cays, and some of the rarest flora and fauna on earth, is a paradise of incomparable beauty. Temperatures rarely dip below 24 degrees Celsius, and rarely rise above 33: it's no wonder the Seychelles are known as the "land of perpetual summer".

With direct British Airways flights now connecting London and Mahé, where the country's main airport is located, in just 10 hours, it has never been easier to visit the country. But it is a destination still unspoilt by tourism, welcoming just over 300,000 visitors each year.

PRISTINE PARADISE

In this diverse archipelago, no two islands are the same, with each offering its own geographical character – from granite boulders to coral reefs, dense forests to

sprawling national parks. It is home to two World Heritage Sites: the Vallée de Mai on Praslin, where the coco-de-mer nut grows, and Aldabra, the world's largest raised coral atoll. What truly sets the Seychelles apart is that, because of its dedication to conservation, its environment remains protected and pristine. The tourist office has been working with WiseOceans and the Marine Conservation Society Seychelles on projects that have helped establish it as one of the world's great eco-tourism destinations.

ISLAND HOPPING

With 100-plus diverse islands spread across an area of 1.4 million sq km, there is an incredible choice. Of these, only 16 islands currently have hotels, including Mahé, Praslin, La Digue, ~~Noush Island~~ and Silhouette Island. But one of the joys of a holiday in the Seychelles is the ability to experience several destinations in one trip. Visitors can either sail between islands on the Seychelles Ferry or hire a yacht, allowing them to experience the islands,

both granitic and coralline, at their own leisure. It is, unsurprisingly, also a diver's paradise.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

In 1881, when the Victorian hero General Charles Gordon, a devout Christian, set sail to the Seychelles, he arrived in Praslin, and became convinced that the island's Vallée de Mai was the Garden of Eden, as described in the Book of Genesis. The area, now a nature reserve, is the habitat for the endemic coco-de-mer, a "flagship species of global significance" that can grow to a height of 34 metres. In fact, the Seychelles is known for its endemic species: there are more than 75 flowering plants alone that are unique to the islands, as well as amphibians such as the tiny Gardiner's Seychelles frog, birds such as the Seychelles black parrot, giant tortoises, and mammals such as the Aldabra flying fox. It is no wonder General Gordon thought he had alighted on paradise. ■

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