

Say 'I do' to the Seychelles

Visit the royal honeymoon island hotspot

It's the honeymoon hotspot that played host to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge after their 2011 nuptials, and it's easy to see why a visit to the idyllic Seychelles tops many post-wedding wish lists.

And with 115 picture-perfect coral and granite islands, turquoise waters, deserted sandy beaches, swaying palm trees and luxurious resorts, it's no wonder the Seychelles are seen by so many as a honeymoon paradise.

TV Life flew out to learn just what else this cluster of picturesque islands in the Indian Ocean has to offer...

WHICH STARS WILL I SEE?

The exclusivity and privacy many of these one-resort islands afford make them a huge draw for celebrities. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have visited the islands twice, while George and Amal Clooney, Ronan and Storm Keating and

Strictly Come Dancing duo Janette Manrara and Aljaž Škorjanec also honeymooned there.

WHERE CAN I STAY?

Not long after touching down on Mahé, the largest island in the Seychelles, we took to the skies again, travelling in style on a ZilAir helicopter heading for Silhouette Island. Our pilot, Tim, became our tour guide as he pointed out other islands during the short and scenic journey, including North Island, where William and Kate honeymooned.

Silhouette is the archipelago's third largest island, most of it protected as a national park, and the Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa is its only hotel.

Full of verdant, tropical vegetation and mountains, Silhouette is surrounded by sheltered coral reefs, while the hotel's 110 one-bedroom villas are strung along the seafront or dotted around the lush

gardens. We checked into a King Beachfront Villa, where we fell asleep each night to the soothing sound of waves lapping gently on the beach. And we loved stepping out of our patio doors each morning and feeling the sand between our toes before



The Seychelles are home to miles of sun-kissed beaches

freshening up in our private outdoor rainfall shower.

Heading back to Mahé, our next stop was the adults-only Hilton Seychelles Northholme Resort & Spa on a tiny rocky outcrop overlooking Beau Vallon Bay. With 56 wooden villas and suites to choose from, we stayed in one of the treehouse-style King Hillside Villas. Perched on stilts and nestling amid the forest, they allow honeymooners total privacy. On our balcony, soaking in the whirlpool bath, glass of bubbly in hand, we took in the ocean views while listening to the exotic birds in the trees.

Hotel highlights included the stunning infinity pool and enjoying sunset cocktails on the deck of the Ocean View Restaurant & Bar.

WHERE CAN I RELAX?

The spa at the Hilton Labriz has been built in and around



some of island's huge granite boulders and offers dramatic views from the treatment rooms. Our therapist Punam worked wonders relieving our stress knots with an Ocean Release massage, before we relaxed further with a cup of herbal tea in the stillness room. Elsewhere, on a hillside overhanging the ocean, is the Hilton Northholme's spa, from where we could hear the waves during our treatment.

WHAT MUST I DO?

Head out on the crystal-clear waters, whether it's to dive, fish, kayak or relax on a romantic sunset cruise.

On Silhouette we signed up for one of the tours offered at the hotel's PADI-certified dive centre. A 45-minute boat ride took us to the coral reefs on the other side of the island where we snorkelled in the warm waters. You'll likely see a myriad of colourful fish here and there's a good chance of spotting turtles and stingrays, too.

For active types, the Hilton Labriz offers a host of activities, from morning yoga on the beach to trekking along the island's hiking trails. We embarked on a fairly easy hike up to Pointe Ramasse Tout – there are five peaks over 1,600ft if you're after more of a challenge – and were rewarded with panoramic views across Silhouette to the islands beyond.

Also at Labriz, we took a cooking class at Grann Kaz, the hotel's creole restaurant in an atmospheric, recently-restored plantation house. Here we learnt how to make a smoked marlin salad and a delicious creole fish curry under the watchful eye of chef Ricky.

We also headed into Victoria, the capital of Mahé, where we browsed among the stalls at the Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke food market and picked up the spices we needed to recreate our fish curry back home.

One of the closest beaches to the Hilton Northholme is the famous curve of white sand at Beau Vallon and you'll find plenty of watersports on offer, as well as a number of restaurants and bars that are perfect spots for sunset drinks.

Or, if you're after something a little more off the beaten track, drive out to the beautiful Takamaka Beach. It's the closest to paradise we've ever been.

HOW TO GET THERE?

Beachcomber Tours (01483 445 685; beachcombertours.uk) offers a seven-night package, including return flights from London Gatwick, staying four nights at the Hilton Labriz Resort & Spa, and at the Hilton Northholme Resort & Spa for three nights, from £1,945pp. Both hotels are five star and the price is valid for two people on a B&B basis, including transfers.

For more on the hotels, visit hilton.com. For tourism information, go to seychelles.travel/en.