

INDIAN OCEAN

The Seychelles: the jewel of the Indian Ocean

More character than the Maldives, more pizzazz than Mauritius, the Seychelles is the ultimate Indian Ocean all-rounder. Ed Grenby takes a lazy tour of paradise



Shore thing: Constance Ephéla's secluded beach

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In fact, with every beach a beauty round these parts, the main difference between the Seychelles megabuck resorts and its mom-and-pop guesthouses is privacy. The joint that hosted George and Amal on their honeymoon is North Island, and they didn't come for the room decor (heavy on the hardwoods).

Instead, they came because every one of the 11 villas sits in its own hectare or two of gardens, secreted among an island-wide jungle. And the discretion extends to the staff, who keep schtum if you try to glean even the tiniest detail about the other guests.

North Island is the most understatedly indulgent place I've ever stayed — it wears its luxury as lightly as a linen shirt — but it's not this that gets me. It's that I essentially have all of it to myself: 500 acres ÷ a maximum of about 22 guests = never having to share your sunset.

So, every evening I barefoot a few paces across the sherbet-soft sand for the show. Waves shush, their bright ultramarine mellowing to mere aquamarine; the early-evening breeze on my forearms tempers the late-afternoon warmth on my face; the scent of woodsmoke and chargrilled langoustines drifts down from the barbecue; the citric zing of grapefruit and smooth heat of rum wash over my tongue; and I watch the sun, incandescent orange as it slowly drowns on the watery horizon.

Then, turning back inland towards the mountains and the people and the food and the tortoises, I'm aware that, in the Seychelles, the life-changingly beautiful beaches and #inspirationalquote sunsets aren't even half the story.

Ed Grenby was a guest of Inspiring Travel Company (inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk), which offers a 14-night Seychelles trip from £5,345pp. The price includes seven nights at Constance Ephélie, half-board, and seven at Four Seasons Desroches, B&B, with international and internal flights. For ultimate exclusivity, North Island has villas from £6,455 a night, all-inclusive, for a couple or family of four sharing, including all food, drinks, activities and some spa treatments (north-island.com); at the other end of the spectrum, Anse Soleil Beachcomber, on Mahé, has doubles from £110 a night, B&B (ansesoleilbeachcomber.com). British Airways flies from Heathrow from £462 return