

For tours departing beyond 2009, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2010 brochure (issued in Oct 09).

2009
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

WORLDWIDE

SEYCHELLES Dossier Ref. TI

Tropical Island Hopping

Amended 30 Sep 2009. Amended 01 Sep 2009. Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: sightseeing.

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

13 days/12 nights Land Only
Mahé Island back to Mahé Island

Join Mahé Island (day 1)

End Mahé Island (day 13)

Tour ends on arrival in Mahé.

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point on Mahé Island. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

15 days/14 nights Tour including
Connecting Group Flights
London-Mahé Island-London

Depart from London Heathrow airport on overnight flight to arrive Mahé the following day, (day 1 of Land Only Itinerary). Transfer to hotel.

Return from Mahé Island on overnight flight to arrive London Heathrow early morning (day 13 of Land Only itinerary).

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **MAHÉ ISLAND** With chance to visit its Marine Parks.
- * **VICTORIA** Walking tour of one of the world's smallest capitals.
- * **PRASLIN ISLAND** With chance to explore Cousin Island Special Nature Reserve.
- * **VALLEE DE MAI** Walk in Praslin N. Park to see unique *coco de mer* palms.
- * **LA DIGUE ISLAND** Walking tour of laid-back island with old plantations.

Earth Matters

- We stay in 3 locally owned and ran guest house/hotels in the Seychelles, which brings money into the hands of local people.
- The time spent with local boat crews on the optional trips on this tour is an ideal opportunity to get to know the local people and their lifestyles.
- This tour makes use of local Explore tour leaders which generates employment.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism>

CO₂ Offsets Included

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with Explore is the CO₂ generated by your flights. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights forming part of the tour. Our chosen offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

* **BEACHES** Some of the best tropical beaches in the world.

The archipelago of the Seychelles lies four degrees south of the Equator and 'a thousand miles from anywhere'. Of the hundred or so islands of the Seychelles, scattered over an area of some 400,000 sq. km of Indian Ocean, we focus our attention on the inner 'granite' islands. These lush islands were created from a splinter of India when it tore away from Gondwanaland. We'll spend our time hopping between the three contrasting islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue, and visit some of the smaller islets close by. Primeval mist forests, huge flocks of sea birds and giant tortoises, black parrots and possibly the flightless white-throated rail bird (related to the extinct Dodo) are waiting to be discovered. There are old plantation houses, pirate graves and legends of buried treasure. Then, of course, there are the famous beaches! Miles of deserted white sands surrounded by coral reefs and sparkling lagoons. The Seychelles, as a country, is considered by many to be one of the world's most environmentally-conscious; so this tropical paradise is also a dream come true for those with a keen interest in nature, botany and birdlife. Activities on the islands are left flexible to allow you to follow your own interests. Our accommodation is in small guesthouses and hotels with plenty of character and atmosphere and travel between islands is by ferry.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Ferry schedules may sometimes change at short notice. Ferries operate subject to local weather conditions and it may be necessary to gain or lose a day on one of the islands should ferries not operate. The sun can be very hot, so come prepared for some hot conditions and rain can fall at any time of the year.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Day 1. Join tour Mahé Island

Arrive at hotel and check-in. We spend our first afternoon exploring Mahé's capital, Victoria, on foot. While it may be more of a



'capital town' than a capital city, Victoria (population 25,000) is definitely worth exploring. Independence Avenue, the modern shopping centre, is as charming and full of life as the old colonial quarter with its colourful houses and market. Even new buildings are constructed in traditional Creole style in keeping with the preservation of Creole culture. The heart of the city is the area around the cathedral and its clock tower. We include a visit to the Botanical Gardens to see the famous, suggestively-shaped *coco de mer* nut, giant tortoises and a collection of rare, exotic plants. **4 nights guesthouse/hotel H+.**

Days 2 to 4. On Mahé Island

Mahé is the Seychelles' political and economic centre. Only 27km long and 8km wide, the island has some beautiful beaches, particularly in the south, with soft white sand, graceful palms and imposing granite boulders. The incredible diversity of the island's scenery and vegetation is due, in part, to its mountainous interior. Morne Seychellois, with an altitude of 905m, is Mahé's highest peak and is often bathed in swirling mists. Roads on Mahé are well-maintained and provide good access to some of the many coves and villages. On one of our days here you have the opportunity to join an optional tour of the island. During the tour we plan to follow the short 'Glacis Trois Frères Trail' through lush rainforest and across weathered granite boulders to a viewpoint with a magnificent panorama of Victoria. A visit to Port Launay Marine National Park and a drive around the bays and beaches of the south is also included in the optional tour. Baie Ternay was designated as a protected Marine Park in 1979. The calm, crystal clear waters are perfect for snorkelling and the Seychellois are proud to show visitors the magic of an underwater world. An optional boat trip can be booked through your tour leader providing a fascinating insight into the natural history of the reefs. The far-sighted policy of the Seychelles government has ensured that the corals and fish in the Marine National Park form one of the best-protected marine environments in the world. Your leader will also organise other optional walks for those

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interested. You could, of course, choose to simply find your own quiet place in paradise to soak up laid-back island life or cool off in the inviting waters of a hidden cove. **(Included meals: Bx3).**

Day 5. Catamaran to Praslin Island

Today we transfer to Victoria harbour and take the fast catamaran ferry north to Baie Ste. Anne on the island of Praslin (approx. 1 hour crossing). Praslin, the second largest island in the Seychelles, has around 7,000 inhabitants, yet is only 40 sq.km in size! Coral reefs surrounding the island are said to be only six to eight thousand years old – young for reefs – however, they teem with tropical life and are like a landscape painted in the myriad colours of jewel-like shells with an amazing nine hundred species of fish! The rest of the day is free to explore the island. You might like to join your leader for an optional walk in the afternoon. **4 nights guesthouse/hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Days 6 to 8. On Praslin Island

Praslin is home to one of Seychelles' two World Heritage Sites – the Vallee de Mai. It is a primeval rainforest containing the famous *coco de mer* palms that have the largest, heaviest and most suggestively-shaped nuts in the world. Local folklore has it that, at sundown, the male *coco de mer* trees lean over the female trees and no human spectator ever lives to tell the tale of what follows. The result of all this nocturnal activity is the curious double-hulled nut that resembles the female pelvis. Vanilla orchids, a variety of lizards and some of Earth's rarest birds also reside there. We include a visit to this fabulous rainforest in Praslin National Park with an option to follow a scenic 2 hour walking trail through the park. On another of our days on Praslin, your tour leader can organise a trip by local bus and on foot – a great way to discover back road charm and island hospitality. Praslin is also an ideal place from which to visit many of the other, smaller, islands off the coast. Boat excursions can be organised locally including a visit to Curieuse Island Marine Park and the islet of St. Pierre – a perfect place for snorkelling. **(Included meals: Bx3).**

Day 9. Optional Cousin Island; Ferry to La Digue

Cousin Island Special Nature Reserve is of particular interest to nature and bird lovers. It has the largest population of breeding Hawksbill turtle in the Seychelles (though rarely seen) and an occasional Green turtle. There are also a small number of giant Aldabra tortoise which have been reintroduced and 'wander' around freely. The island is, however, mainly noted as a bird sanctuary with over 52 species recorded here. With no predators, ground-nesting birds flourish on Cousin. Lesser Noddies nest in huge numbers in season (up to 100,000

pairs on the island). While Brown Noddies, bridled terns, fairy terns, the Seychelles fody (or *tok tok*), Madagascar fody, shearwaters and warblers can regularly be seen on a half day trip to the island. This afternoon we take a short ferry ride from Baie Ste. Anne to laid-back La Digue Island. We transfer by ox cart to our accommodation and settle in to our new island surrounds. For tropical charm, La Digue has it all – tumbledown plantation houses, dusty roads used by slow-moving bicycles and ox-carts and a working coconut plantation open to visitors. The beaches of La Digue are supposedly the most photographed in the world and are distinguished by the weathered granite boulders that resemble modern art pieces. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore at leisure. **4 nights guesthouse/hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Days 10 to 12. On La Digue Island

Sleepy La Digue is only 10 sq. km in size with a population of around 2,500, most of whom work in either tourism, fishing or boat building. It is the epitome of idyllic isolation and time here is generally left unstructured to allow you to follow your own interests. Your leader will, for those that are interested, lead a walking tour on the island to include the working coconut plantation of L'Union Estate which is home to a wonderful example of Creole architecture and provides access to a succession of stunning beaches featuring massive or bizarrely eroded granite boulders. The island is almost completely encircled by coral reef allowing magnificent opportunities for snorkelling and diving. An optional boat excursion to the nearby islands of Grande Soeur, Cocos and Felicite is possible on one of our days. Bicycle hire is also available. You may like to take a walk through La Digue Vev Reserve. This special reserve was created in 1987 as a safe haven for the rare and very beautiful black paradise flycatcher, (or *vev* in Creole). Your tour leader will also accompany an optional early morning walk to 'Belle Vue', one of the island's best viewpoints. **(Included meals: Bx3).**

Day 13. Ferry and Catamaran to Mahé Island

Today we return to Mahé Island by ferry and catamaran and enjoy our last day in this tropical paradise. Passengers with group flights booked direct through Explore have access to hotel rooms until departure for the airport. Land only passengers end their tour on arrival in Maché at approx 11am. **(Included meals: B).**

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You will also need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Seychelles Rupees.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We suggest you take most of your spending money in cash (in small denominations). Euros and US Dollars are more easily used than Pounds Sterling. N.B. US\$ notes should be in good condition and not torn or marked. Notes prior to 2000 of any currency are often not accepted.

Credit Card Acceptance: Widely accepted, but the government does impose a levy which is passed on by the retailer, so check first.

Note: Since January 2008 visitors are required to use only foreign currency in making payments in hotels and restaurants and for other holiday-related expenses such as car or boat hire, the services of local tour operators and some entrance fees. EUR is the most widely accepted international currency. Exchange rates can vary on each island and credit cards are subject to a service charge.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 12 breakfasts are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Seychelles
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	£1.20
Soft Drink	0.80	1.00
Bottled of Water	0.80	1.50
Bottle of Beer	2.50	3.00
Bottle of Wine	10.00	20.00
2 Course meal*	10.00	12.00
3 Course meal**	18.00	17.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Prices may be subject to change due to increasing fuel costs and weakening currency.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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MAHÉ ISLAND Island Tour €45; Glass bottom boat trip (including lunch and snorkelling) €90.

PRASLIN ISLAND Visit to Cousin Island Special Nature Reserve (4 hours) €75
Bicycle hire €10 per day; Boat trip to Curieuse Island & St. Pierre £60.00 (4 hours).

LA DIGUE ISLAND Full day boat/snorkelling trip to Grande Soeur, Cocos and Felicite Islands €95, Bicycle hire €5 per day.

Diving on the Seychelles

There are spectacular diving opportunities around the Seychelles. For the non-qualified, there are "intro-dives", but if you are already qualified, take your certification with you. Prices vary from €50-75 per dive.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

The location of the Seychelles, almost directly on the equator, ensures the islands of the Mahé group have a relatively constant climate. Average daytime temperatures range from 24 to 30°C. Relative humidity hovers around 80%. Seasonal winds provide not only refreshment, but also a certain amount of climatic variation. The 'cooler' dry season between May and October is a result of the southeast trade wind. From December until mid-March the northwest monsoon is responsible for warmer, wetter weather. Between these two distinct seasons the islands experience intense heat occasionally aggravated by a complete absence of wind.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

Visas are not required, however passengers must hold an onward or return air ticket, have confirmed accommodation and have sufficient funds for the intended length of stay. A Visitor's Permit will be issued on arrival valid for 1 month.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Yellow fever is required if coming from S. America or Africa.

Following the advice given by the Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we strongly recommend the wearing long sleeved shirts and the liberal application of insect repellent as a precautionary measure to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These precautions should be taken at all times as the mosquitoes are also active during daylight hours.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information Booklet**', available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main bag – either a holdall, soft bag or suitcase, plus a daysack. Please remember that you will have to carry your luggage on and off ferries, so try not to overload yourself. Total allowance **20kg maximum**.

Clothing: Pack for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'. Clothing should be lightweight and ideally cotton all year round. Shorts and T-Shirts are acceptable everywhere though take long trousers/skirts for evening wear. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Footwear: Lightweight walking boots/shoes or trainers are useful for exploring the islands. Sandals for relaxing and beachwear.

Equipment: Take a small torch, water bottle, sunglasses, sunhat, sunscreen, insect repellent, binoculars if planning to birdwatch and a beach towel. Hire of snorkel, mask and fins locally is unreliable, it is recommended that you take your own. Bring a lightweight rainjacket just in case.

Trek Kit Bag: For an exclusively designed Explore Trek Bag, follow the relevant link at www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Personal First Aid Kit: For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

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