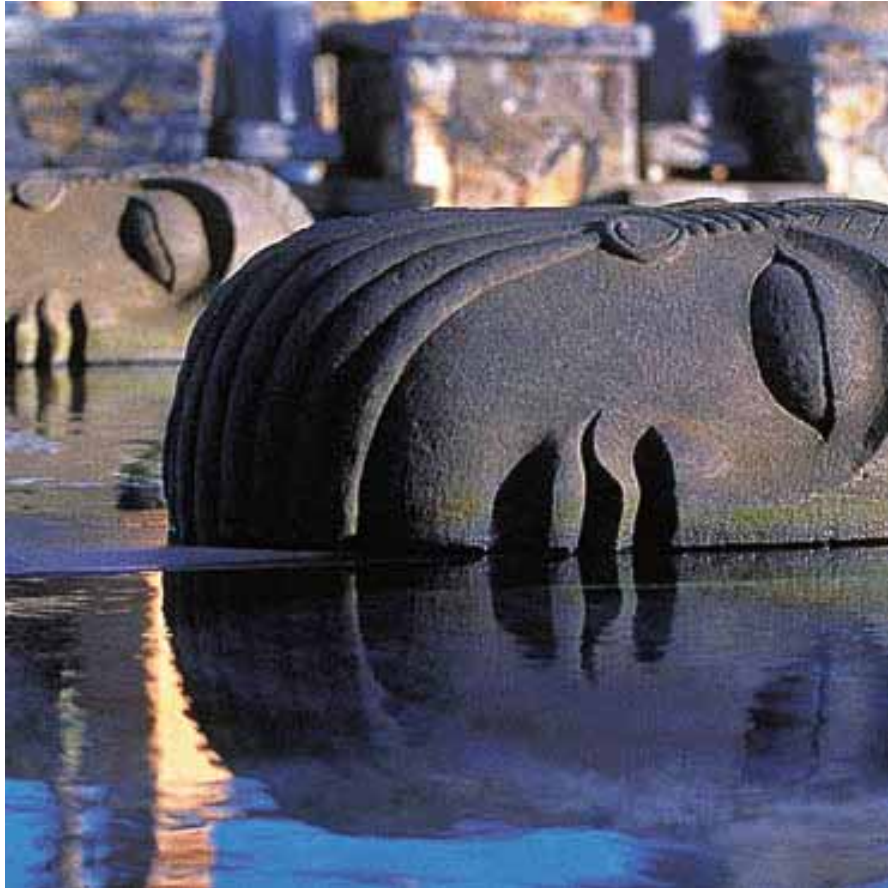


MAURITIUS



Travel Guide

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions, and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip. Be sure to check the web addresses included here for more information.



PORT LOUIS ~ Elevation: 187 feet Latitude: 20 26S Longitude: 057 40E

Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	80	80	79	77	75	72	71	70	71	74	76	78
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	8.8	9.8	9.6	7.8	5.5	3.7	3.9	3.2	2.2	2.3	3.1	7

CLIMATE

Warm coastal climate (particularly January to April), with relatively little seasonal variation in temperatures, although they are generally slightly lower inland, with more rain on the plateau around Curepipe. Cyclones may occur between November and February. Sea breezes blow all year, especially on the east coast.

Required clothing: Tropical lightweights, with warmer wear for evenings and winter months (July to September). Rainwear is advisable all year round. In the summer months, sun-care products and a hat are advisable. Please see suggested packing list at end of booklet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 2040 sq km (788 sq miles)

Population: 1,122,811 (official estimate 2003)

Population Density: 599.4 per sq km

Capital: Port Louis. **Population:** 144,303 (2000)

Geography: Mauritius, is a volcanic and mountainous island in the Indian Ocean and lies 1240 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.

Government: Republic. Gained independence from the UK in 1968.

Head of State: President Anerood Jugnauth

Head of Government: Prime Minister Paul Bérenger

Official Language: English is the official language.

Other Languages: The most widely spoken languages are French, Creole (36 per cent), Hindi and Bhojpuri (32 per cent). Urdu and Chinese are also among the languages spoken.

Religion: 51 per cent Hindu, 30 per cent Christian, 17 per cent Muslim.

Time: GMT + 4.

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. UK-type three-pin plugs are commonly used in hotels.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 230. There are no area codes. Outgoing international code: 00. There are a limited number of public telephone booths, mainly at the airport and in major hotels.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 networks, with coverage extending over the whole island. Handsets and SIM cards can be hired.

Fax: Most hotels have facilities, as well as Mauritius Telecom offices in Port Louis and Cassis.

Internet: There are Internet cafes in Phoenix, Vaoas and other main towns. Most hotels offer internet facilities.

Telegram: Messages can be sent from the Mauritius Telecommunications Service offices in Cassis and Port Louis. There are also facilities at Overseas Telecoms Services Ltd, Rogers House, John Kennedy Street, Port Louis.

Post: Airmail to Western Europe usually takes five days; by sea, mail takes four to six weeks. **Post office hours:** Mon-Fri 0815-1111 & 1200-1600, Sat 0800-1145.

PASSPORT / VISA

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary. Passports issued by the government of Taiwan are not recognized. The holders of such documents can apply for an entry permit from the Passport and Immigration Office. All visitors must hold valid tickets and documents for their onward or return journey and adequate funds for their intended length of stay.

Visas: U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Mauritius consulate.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

MONEY

Currency: Mauritian Rupee (MRs) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of MRs2000, 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 25. Coins are in denominations of MRs10, 5 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, and 5 cents.

Currency exchange: Available in banks and at bureaux de change. A better rate of exchange can be obtained on travelers checks than on cash.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted.

Travelers checks: May be exchanged at banks, hotels and authorized dealers.

Currency restrictions: There are no limits on the import or export of local or foreign currency.

Banking hours: Mon-Thurs 0915-1515, Fri 0915-1530, Sat 0915-1115 (except for Bank of Mauritius). Some banks may open Mon-Fri 0900-1700.

DUTY FREE

Duty-Free: The following goods may be imported into Mauritius by persons 18 and over without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco products or 50 cigars; 1l of spirits and 2l of wine or beer; 250ml of eau de toilette and 100ml of perfume for personal use.

Restricted items: Vegetables, fruit, flowers, plants and seeds must be declared (all require permit from the Ministry of Agriculture), as must firearms and ammunition. Imported animal products also require a permit.

Prohibited items: Sugarcane and related parts thereof, soil micro-organisms and invertebrate animals.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffel bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

Hint: Some companies such as Aurora Luggage (<http://www.auroraluggage.com/>) post the most current luggage requirements for many individual airlines on their web sites.

CAMERAS & FILM

Photography: Please, approach people with an attitude of respect, just as you would want to be treated. Do not take anyone's picture without permission. Many times it is necessary to negotiate a fee beforehand. Never take any photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible, and do not leave it on the floor of the vehicle when on the road. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. Serious photographers will want them handy. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to

be desired when photographing outdoors. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be hard to find and expensive.

Film: It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA / ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA / ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA / ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

Note: Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in

your carry-on luggage and / or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects. Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eyeshades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.

- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

HEALTH

Yellow fever: vaccination certificate is required of travelers over one year of age arriving from infected areas. The Mauritius government considers those countries and areas classified as yellow fever endemic to be infected.

Immunizations against typhoid and poliomyelitis are sometimes advised.

Malaria risk, exclusively in the benign vivax form, exists throughout the year in northern rural areas, except on Rodrigues Island.

Food & drink: Water used for drinking should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Bottled water is readily available. Milk is unpasteurized and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Other risks: Diarrhoeal diseases, giardiasis, dysentery and typhoid fever are common. Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water; swimming pools which are well chlorinated and maintained are safe. Hepatitis A, B and E occur.

Health care: Public medical facilities are numerous and of a high standard and there are several private clinics. All treatment at state-run hospitals is free for Mauritians, but foreign visitors have to pay. Health insurance is advised.

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler's checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the accommodations have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them.

In cities here as in cities at home, be aware! During the day and in crowds, be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Take taxis from hotels and do not accept rides from unauthorized cabs. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Or, from Bureau of Consular Affairs' website: <http://travel.state.gov>.

TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between our society and that of other countries that may think and do things differently from the way we do them. Traditions and philosophies, some of which are very old, govern attitudes toward time, business, family, and politics. But this is at the heart of why we travel -- to experience the world through other cultures and other people.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial traveling companion makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari. Observing simple rules of common courtesy will better assure the success of your travel.

HOLIDAYS

Jan 1-2 New Year.
 Jan/Feb Thaipooam Cavadee.
 Feb Maha Shivaratri.
 Feb 1 Abolition of Slavery Day.
 Feb 9 Chinese New Year. Mar Ougadi.
 Mar 12 National Day.
 May 1 Labor Day.
 Aug 15 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 Sep Ganesh Chaturti.
 Nov 1 Diwali.
 Nov 2 Arrival of Indentured Laborers.
 Nov 3-4 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan).
 Dec 25 Christmas Day.

Please Note: (a) Hindu festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon. The dates given above are approximations. (b) There is a diversity of cultures in Mauritius, each with its own set of holidays. (c) Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the

dates given above 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 may last from 2 to 10 days, depending on the town or region. For more information, see the World of Islam appendix. (d) Chinese festivals are declared according to local astronomical observations and it is often only possible to forecast the approximate time of their occurrence.

FOOD & DRINK

Waiter service is normal in restaurants and bars. Standards of cuisine, whether French, Creole, Indian, Chinese or English, are generally very high but fruit, meat, vegetables and even fresh seafood are often in short supply and restaurants must usually depend on imports. Specialties include venison (in season), camarons (freshwater prawns) in hot sauces, octopus, creole fish, fresh pineapple with chili sauce, and rice with curry. Dhol purri is a wheat pancake stuffed with dhol and dipped in tomato sauce, whilst samosas are also very popular.

Rum and beer are staple beverages for Mauritians but there is good imported wine, mineral water, alouda (almond drink) and fresh coconut milk.

NIGHTLIFE & SHOPPING

Nightlife: In Grand Baie and some towns there are discos and nightclubs with music and dancing. Rivière Noire is a Creole fishermen's district where sega dancing is especially lively on Saturday nights. Sega troupes give performances at most hotels. Gamblers are lavishly catered for; casinos in the island's hotels are amongst the island's attractions.

Shopping: The Central Market in Port Louis is full of beautifully displayed goods, including fruit, vegetables, spices, fish, meat and handicrafts. Island crafts include jewelry, Chinese and Indian jade, silks, basketry and pottery. Shopping centers are located at Quatre-Bornes and Rose-Hill. There is no duty payable on a number of products, including textiles. Shop signs may be in English, French or Chinese. Beside the Museum in Mahébourg, on the southeast coast of the island, is a handicraft village.

Shopping hours: Ranges from Mon-Sat 0930-1930. Some shops are open until 1200 on Sundays and public holidays. There are no shops open on Rose-Hill, Curepipe and Quatre-Bornes on Thursday afternoons.

Special Events: With origins in three continents and three major religions there is a great diversity of religious and cultural festivals. For a complete list and for exact dates of festivals and events, enquire at the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

Tippling: 10 per cent is usual in most hotels and restaurants. Tips are not customary for taxi drivers.

ECONOMY

Sugar dominates Mauritius' agricultural economy: raw and processed sugar accounts for one-quarter of the island's export earnings. Tobacco and tea are the other main cash crops. Since independence in 1968, the government has deliberately sought to develop the industrial and service components of the economy. The island's industrial capacity is centered on a number of Export Processing Zones whose main products are clothing and textiles, consumer and industrial electronics, flowers and jewelry. Mauritius' service economy is based on tourism and financial services. Tourism is well established and now worth over US\$500 million annually. The growth of financial services arose from a government initiative implemented in 1989; as a result, the island has since attracted more than US\$1 billion of investment, mainly from South Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The overall economy grew at 7 per cent in 2001.

The government's economic policy aims to counter the threat to the two largest sectors of the economy – sugar and textiles – from new regulations introduced by the World Trade Organization. The centerpiece of its strategy is the creation of a custom-built 'cyber-city', based on similar development in India, using high-speed communications links to offer e-commerce and financial transactions.

The island's largest trading partners are France, the USA, Hong Kong, the UK and South Africa. Mauritius is a member of the Indian Ocean Commission, which promotes regional economic co-operation, and of the Southern African Development Community.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The island group was uninhabited until the 16th century, when it was occupied by a small Dutch force that named it after Prince Maurice of Nassau. It was abandoned in 1710 and then re-occupied five years later by the French who imported African slaves to work on the sugar plantations. Mauritius and its neighboring islands were captured by the British in 1810 and formally ceded by the 1814 Treaty of Paris. After the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, Indian laborers were imported and their descendants now comprise more than two-thirds of the population. Incorporated into the British Empire, Mauritius remained a colony until 1957, when it was granted internal self-government with an electoral system based on the Westminster model.

Dr (later Sir) Seewoosagur Ramgoolam's Labor Party came to power. Full independence was granted in 1968, but the British kept a number of smaller islands, which were hived off as the British Indian Ocean Territory. These included Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos archipelago, which has been leased to the USA and now hosts a large naval and air force facility which played a key role in both the 1991 Gulf

War and the 2001 Afghanistan conflict. The maltreatment of the former inhabitants of Chagos, known as Ilois, who were expelled to make way for the new base, has been the subject of legal actions in the English courts. Irrespective of the fact that the Ilois won a formal victory against the British government in November 2000, it seems unlikely that the Ilois will be able to return to their former homeland. A final settlement is still under negotiation.

Post-independence Mauritian politics have been dominated by Ramgoolam, and then by the two principal figures of the Mauritian Left, Paul Bérenger and (later Sir) Anerood Jugnauth. The charismatic Bérenger made a dramatic contrast to the cautious, pragmatic Jugnauth, and the focus of the Mauritian political scene has often been the personal and political clash between the two.

Both rose to prominence in the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM), which emerged as the principal opposition to Ramgoolam's coalition governments of the late 1960s and 1970s. These administrations were dominated by Ramgoolam's own Mauritian Labor Party (MLP) and the Parti Mauricien Social Démocratique (PMSD) led by Gaetan Duval. The MMM eventually came to power in 1982 following a landslide general election victory. However, the administration was fraught with policy disagreements and personality clashes. Jugnauth then left the MMM to form the Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM) and fought the 1987 election campaign in alliance with the Labor Party and the Social Democrats. This three-party alliance won the poll.

The governments of the 1990s were a series of coalitions between the MMM and either Jugnauth's Socialist Movement or – for a two-year period – the Labor party. The latter was now led by Navin Ramgoolam, son of Sir Seewoosagur, while Jugnauth and Bérenger continued to dominate their respective parties. In 1992, Jugnauth had achieved a key political objective by converting Mauritius into a republic within the Commonwealth with a president, elected by the national assembly, as head of state in what is a largely ceremonial post. At the most recent election in 2000, the MSM and the MMM, under Jugnauth's leadership, won all but eight of the National Assembly's 62 seats. Shortly afterwards, Mauritius achieved a welcome boost to its international profile by narrowly defeating Sudan to secure for the first time a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Jugnauth withdrew from politics in 2003. He handed the premiership over to Bérenger, (who thus became the first non-Hindu to hold the post), and the leadership of the Socialists to his son, Pravind.

Government: Under constitutional amendments that came into effect in March 1992, Mauritius is now a republic. Legislative power rests with the unicameral 62-seat National Assembly, which is elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. Four additional members are appointed by the Supreme Court. The

National Assembly elects the President of the Republic who is Head of State. The President appoints the Prime Minister from the Assembly and other ministers on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

PORT LOUIS

Capital and main port of Mauritius, the city was founded by the French Governor, Mahé de Labourdonnais, in 1735. The harbor is sheltered by a semicircle of mountains. The city has plenty of character and, in some quarters, signs of its past elegance are still evident. Off the main square, the palm-lined Place d'Armes, there are some particularly fine French colonial buildings, especially Government House (built in 1738) and the Municipal Theatre, built around the same time. There are two cathedrals, one Protestant and one Catholic, a fine Supreme Court Building, some 18th-century barracks and the Natural History Museum (exhibiting Mauritius's most famous bird, the extinct Dodo). On the outskirts of the city, at the foot of the mountains, is the Champ de Mars, originally laid out by the French for military parades, and now a racecourse. The splendid Edward VII Avenue and Fort Adelaide, a citadel fortified in the time of William IV, offer the best views of the racecourse, city and harbor. South of Port Louis is Le Réduit, the French colonial residence of the President of Mauritius, set in magnificent gardens. Other places of interest include the Jummah Mosque in Royal Street and the Chinese Pagoda.

The Domaine Les Pailles nature park nestling at the foot of the Moka mountain range covers an area of 3000 acres. Among the attractions are a natural spring, a spice garden, a replica of a sugar mill and an old rum distillery. Trips through the park in 4-wheel-drive vehicles, horse-drawn carriages or trains are also possible.

NORTHERN AND WESTERN MAURITIUS

To the north of Port Louis are the Pamplemousses Gardens. These, created at the end of the 18th century, are known to naturalists throughout the world for their large collection of indigenous and exotic plants, including the giant *Victoria regia* water lilies and many species of palm trees. Of particular interest is the talipot palm, which is said to flower once, after 60 years, and then die. There are also tortoises here, some of them over 100 years old.

Facing the calm water of the lagoon between Pointe aux Piments and Trou aux Biches is the Aquarium populated by 200 species of fish, invertebrates, live coral and sponges, all originating from the waters around the island. An open-circuit seawater cycle of one million litres runs through the 36 tanks every day. The Aquarium offers a unique opportunity to admire the colorful treasures of the Indian Ocean.

The island's main residential town in the west of the country, Curepipe, provides good shops and restaurants. Between Curepipe and Floreal lies Trou

aux Cerfs, a dramatic, extinct crater 85m (280ft) deep and more than 180m (600ft) wide, which offers extensive views of the island from its rim.

Casela Bird Park is set in the district of the Rivière Noire, stretches over 20 acres of land and contains more than 140 varieties, amounting to 2500 birds. Specimens from the five continents may be seen there, but the main attraction is the Mauritian Pink Pigeon, which is one of the rarest birds in the world. Other attractions are the fish ponds, tortoises, monkeys and orchids. Trees, streams and small cascades all add to the remarkably peaceful atmosphere.

Rodrigues Island: Situated 550km (340 miles) northeast of Mauritius, this tiny, rugged, volcanic island is a beautiful and relaxing refuge for travelers. The island is covered in coconut palms, casuarina trees and pink-flowered bushes known as vieilles filles (spinsters). The capital, Port Mathurin is the main port of entry and the 'Mauritius Pride' sails regularly to and from Mauritius.

SOUTHERN MAURITIUS

Domaine des Grands Bois covers over 2000 acres of magnificent parkland, rich in lush and exotic fauna. Ebony, eucalyptus, palm trees and wild orchids provide the backdrop for stags, deer, monkeys and other wildlife.

Near Souillac, in the wild south, La Vanille Crocodile Park breeds Nile crocodiles imported from Madagascar. The site offers a vast park with a nature walk through luxuriant forest studded with freshwater springs. A small zoo of animals found in the wild in Mauritius is also located here.

Situated nearby, the Rochester Falls can be reached by a road which crosses a sugar plantation that is open to visitors. Water cascades over spectacular rock formations. Spectacular joints have been formed by the contraction of lava due to sudden cooling. Within a short distance of Bois Cheri, Grand Bassin rests in the crater of an extinct volcano, this is one of the island's two natural lakes. It is a place of pilgrimage for a large number of Mauritians of the Hindu faith.

To the southwest lies Plaine Champagne, the highest part of the central plateau (740m/2430ft), from where there is a superb view of the Rivière Noire Mountains and the sea lining the horizon. The forest-clad slopes contain some fine specimens of indigenous timber and interesting plants peculiar to the island. For the keen birdwatcher, the mountains are the habitat of most of the remaining indigenous species.

A twisting, tarred road leads from Case Noyale village to Chamarel. This is an area of undulating land of seven contrasting layers of colored dunes: blue, green, red and yellow earth, believed to be the result of weathering. The nearby Chamarel Waterfall emerges

from the moors and the primeval vegetation and is very beautiful.

BEACHES

Tamarin: Lying in the shadow of the Rivière Noire Mountains, Tamarin has a fine lagoon which is split in two by the Rivière Noire estuary. The bathing at this point is a big attraction, and amenities for surfing in the big ocean swells are available.

Grand Baie: The northern coastline beyond Baie du Tombeau has many delightful beaches: Pointe aux Piments, famous for its underwater scenery; Trou aux Biches, with its fringe of filaos (casuarina) and coconut palms and its splendid Hindu temple; further up the coast, Choisy, one of the most popular beaches on the island, offering facilities for safe bathing, sailing, windsurfing and water-skiing; finally, the coastline curves into Grand Baie itself, the main center for yachting, water-skiing, windsurfing and many other sports.

Péreybère: This delightful little cove is midway on the coast road between Grand Baie and Cap Malheureux. The deep, clear water makes it one of the very best bathing places on the whole island.

Cap Malheureux: This is a fishing village in the extreme north, with a magnificent view of Flat Island, Round Island and Gunner's Quoin, which are islands of volcanic origin, rising from the light-green sea.

Grand Gaube: Further along the coast is another charming fishing village where fishermen have earned a well-deserved reputation for their skill in the making of sailing craft and of deep-sea fishing.

Roches Noires / Poste Lafayette: These are both favored seaside resorts, especially in the hotter months, because of the fresh prevailing winds that blow almost all the year round from the sea.

Belle Mare: A beautiful white sandy beach with fine bathing is found here. The coast, with its white sweep of sands at Palmar and Trou d'Eau Douce, stretches out lazily to Grand Port, a quaint little village by the sea. There, the beach narrows and the road follows the coastline closely to Mahébourg. Pointe d'Esny, the adjoining white sandy beach with its string of bungalows, leads to Blue Bay.

Blue Bay: In a semicircle of filao trees lies one of the finest bathing spots on the island. Situated on the southeast coast, not far from Mahébourg, Blue Bay offers a fine stretch of white sandy beach, and a deep, clear, light-blue bathing pool. There is also scope for yachting and windsurfing.

