

# Turquoise and Emerald Trails in Seychelles

*Pristine beaches, crystal clear waters, dramatic granite boulders and lush tropical plantations make these islands in Seychelles an unforgettable getaway!*

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Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands  
(Photo: Seychelles Tourism Board)





Mission Lodge is the best place for a bird's-eye view of the oceans and mountains (Photo: Pallavi Pasricha)

Usually, it is the various shades of blue that catch the eye in an island country but in Seychelles it wasn't just this colour. Green is all pervasive as well. From the moment I land till I leave, I see shades of emerald everywhere, from the lush mountains to the famed coconut, palm and takamaka trees.

Seychelles, so aptly called 'The Land of Perpetual Summer' due to its warm tropical climate, is an archipelago of 115 islands that lies off the coast of East Africa. I landed in Mahé, the largest island which is also home to the country's capital Victoria, with the idea of island hopping, and that is exactly what I do for a week.

Without wasting a minute, I fly to one of the most popular, Praslin, that's home to some of the world's best beaches.

#### Best of both the worlds in Praslin

It is pouring during our 15-minute flight from Mahé so I do not get even a glimpse of blue or green through the clouds. But when we begin to descend, the Indian Ocean and the lush expanse of this island unfold before my eyes and it looks as if the Gods themselves have painted a pretty picture for me.

Within an hour of checking into my hotel I hit the beach, stepping on the white sand at Anse Lazio that feels as soft as powder. The ocean is in a slightly rough mood today but somehow the roar of the waves adds to the charm. Located on the northwest tip of the island, this beach used to be a pirate hideaway, but it is now counted among the top beaches in the world. Peppered with coconut palms and tall granite boulders that set the Seychelles landscape apart from other islands, I feel as if I am in the middle of a gorgeous postcard.



The Coco de mer nut takes about 10 years to ripen (Photo: Gerald Larose/STB)

I walk under the shade of massive coco de mer palms from where the famous coco de mer nut, the world's largest and heaviest nut originates. I am taken aback by its sheer size. Also called love nut or double coconut, it weighs anywhere between 15 to 30 kg a piece

I venture into the unbelievably clear water and spot a few fish darting just around my feet. No wonder it is a great place for snorkeling. Despite being so popular, the shackless beach never feels crowded and after getting out, I spend some time just





A visit to L'Union Estate Park at La Digue island cannot be skipped  
(Photo: Michel Denousse/STB)



Anse Source d'Argent is one of the most photographed beaches in the world  
(Photo: Pallavi Pasricha)

gazing into the ocean. The trip has just started and the luxury of doing nothing is high on my agenda.

Shrugging those thoughts aside, I head to Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Taking the shortest of the three trails here, I walk under the shade of massive coco de mer palms from where the famous coco de mer nut, the world's largest and heaviest nut originates. I am taken aback by its sheer size. Also called love nut or double coconut, it weighs anywhere between 15 to 30 kg a piece and it takes about 10 years to ripen. Since it is endemic to Seychelles, the country uses this as the visa stamp. Going around the reserve I learn more about the flora and fauna of this country.

After two days of beach-bumming, drinking local beer and tucking into Creole cuisine, I head to discover another gem in Seychelles.

#### La Digue: The island where *Cast Away* was shot

At a short 15-minute ferry ride from Praslin lies a tiny island that measures barely 10 sqkm, but is gorgeous. La Digue's charm

Giant Aldabra Tortoises, massive creatures that can live up to 200 years and weigh about 250 kilograms, are waiting to be petted at L'Union Estate Park that was once a coconut and vanilla plantation. Feeding them is allowed but only with the leaves kept there



Giant Aldabra Tortoise in La Digue (Photo: Pallavi Pasricha)

begins to unfold the moment you set your eyes on it. Electric buggies or cycling is the most common way of going around and that is such a welcome change from the city where I stay. It's easy to walk around as well.

I make my way to L'Union Estate Park where the most photographed beach in the world, Anse Source d'Argent, lies. Devoid of noisy shacks and beach chairs, the massive granite boulders, tall coconut trees, pure white sand and the shallow lagoon lend it a sheer raw beauty and there is nothing manmade to spoil the picture. Getting a panoramic view of these vistas from the ocean while kayaking in a glass bottom boat makes it look even prettier. Maybe that is why this spot is popular here. This is also the beach where some scenes of the famous Tom Hanks-starrer, *Cast Away*, were shot.

If you can tear yourself from the beach, and I swear it's tough, then there's much more to do here. Giant Aldabra Tortoises, massive creatures that can live up to 200 years and weigh about 250 kg, are waiting to be petted at L'Union Estate Park that was once a coconut and vanilla plantation. Feeding them is allowed but only with the leaves kept there. A few trails and hikes that lie amid the coconut palms and takamaka trees make it attractive for active souls.

#### Beyond the beaches in Mahe and Victoria

Roaming around one of the smallest capital cities in the world





Local Creole cuisine in Seychelles is a must (Photo: Seychelles Tourism Board)



Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Photo: Pallavi Pasricha)



Soaking in the laid-back island vibe at Club Med (Photo: Pallavi Pasricha)

has its own charm. Victoria may be smallest capital, but within the Republic of Seychelles it is the largest city. And there's a lot to do here apart from soaking in the sun on the beach. History buffs should start at the National History Museum to learn how this country was ruled by the French and British. Interestingly these islands were where 18th century pirates would come here to hide their treasure. You may find a touch of London here at the white clock tower that was built in 1903 in memory of Queen Victoria, it is similar to the one at London's Victoria Station.

The best place for a bird's-eye view of the ocean and the mountains is Mission Lodge. This vantage point, at the height of 500 metres, has a lot of history attached to it. This was earlier called Venn's Town, a boarding school for children of African slaves. I spend some time at a gazebo here and was thrilled to learn that this is the same spot where Queen Elizabeth II had tea with a few officials when she visited Seychelles in 1972, and the views are incredible.

Soon, it is time for some stiffer beverages than tea and as Seychelles is famous for its rum, I head to La Plaine St André where the Takamaka distillery is located to understand how this



Water sports is popular in Seychelles (Photo: Torsten Dickmann/STB)

brand is made and carry back some with me.

We sip six different ones that vary not just in taste but also alcohol percentage that ranges from 25 pc to a whopping 69 pc. The last one, an overproof rum, is definitely not for those who like their drinks light. The pineapple and coconut flavours are mild and on the sweeter side. After sampling three other varieties, I get a bottle of Dark Spiced rum that has hints of vanilla, cinnamon and papaya.

#### Club Med at Saint Anne Island

This island is home to the oldest marine park in the country, Saint Anne Marine National Park. It's gorgeous coral reefs and colourful fish have made it a favourite place for diving and snorkelling. I spend two days here at the only resort on this island, Club Med. This all-inclusive property that has two restaurants and three bars, offers a variety of activities and excursions throughout the day.

I opt for a small trek within the property to understand its rich flora and fauna and spend the rest of the time sitting by the beach, sipping margaritas and just soaking in the laid-back island vibe. This is what Seychelles is all about and I am getting addicted to this life. But reality hits and I have to head back. But now I know where to come when I want to escape and be just one with nature. 