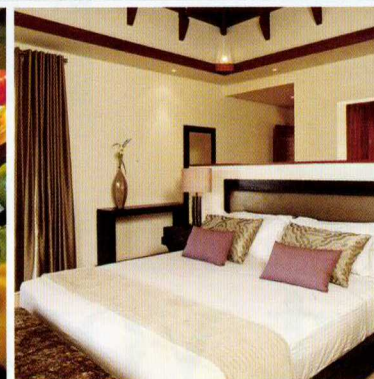




VILLAS VALRICHE

Sun, sand, five-star service and endless space: start the new year in style with the ultimate winter escape, at the Villas Valriche, Mauritius

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A VILLA AT VILLAS VALRICHE; THE STUNNING GOLF COURSE; A LUXURIOUS VILLA ROOM; FRESH, SEASONAL INGREDIENTS ARE USED TO CREATE GOURMET DISHES; THE BEAUTIFUL BEACH



There aren't many villas that can lay claim to having 2,500 hectares of pristine land on their doorstep. Let alone a nature reserve encompassing lush coastal forest, rugged mountains, turquoise lagoons and dreamy white sands, all wrapped around the southwest corner of Mauritius. Enter the Villas Valriche, a gorgeous plantation-style villa resort set in the heart of the Domaine de Bel Ombre estate, a historic 18th-century estate that carries visitors back to the grace and romance of another era. Once home to fishermen and farmers, today Domaine de Bel Ombre encapsulates Mauritius's rich history, with the majestic Château de Bel Ombre at its heart (now a not-to-be-missed gourmet restaurant, set in French-style gardens), and Chinese, Indian, African and European influences harmoniously blended in the cuisine and traditions of one of the island's most untouched regions.

Set against this backdrop, the three- and four-bedroom Villas Valriche offers a unique opportunity to ensconce yourself with friends and family in a pristine environment that unites the Mauritius of old with 21st-century luxury. Situated on a rolling hillside in a natural amphitheatre, surrounded by vast, unspoiled nature reserves and created by skilled local craftsmen, these single and double-storey plantation-style residences bring together five-star hotel

service with elegant villa living. Inside, contemporary interiors encapsulate the estate's colonial history, while offering everything from up-to-the-minute entertainment facilities to private bars; outside, infinity pools, large verandas, private gazebos (just the spot for in-villa spa treatments) and spectacular views set the scene for dreamy, sun-drenched days for the whole family.

Active souls will be spoilt for choice

Sun seekers can satiate their appetite for rays around the pool, or on the golden sands that fringe the estate. The private Beach Club offers water sports such as windsurfing, kayaking, pedalos, scuba diving and snorkelling in, on and under the protected waters of the turquoise lagoon. And then of course there is that glorious Indian Ocean – a natural maritime playground in which to scuba-dive, swim with dolphins, hunt tuna and marlin on deep-sea fishing trips or ride the wind and waves kite surfing.

Golfers are but chipping distance from the 18-hole championship course, recently voted the best golf course in Mauritius at the 2010 WTAs. Here, undulating fairways, cleverly placed bunkers, water obstacles and thick African elephant grass have been creatively designed to challenge all levels. Casual players will appreciate the choice of five tee positions per hole; more advanced players will enjoy the testing

elevations, narrowing fairways and two challenging rivers that wend their way across the course. Beginners can master their swing on the adjacent nine-hole, par three course and driving range, and all can benefit in the expert hands of top-rate instructors at the PGA-run, state-of-the-art golf academy.

And for those who want to immerse themselves in nature, why not explore the 2,500 hectares of virgin land – undulating hills, broad plains, dense rainforest intersected by rivers and waterfalls, and turquoise lagoons – whether on foot, quad bikes or horseback, or even in the comfort of a 4x4. Take a Day Safari in the Frédérica Nature Reserve, on the trail of its endemic flora and fauna – deer, monkeys, mongoose, kestrels and flying foxes – followed by a refreshing waterfall swim. Take a Sundowner Safari in search of the wildlife that awakens at sunset, and stop for a lagoon-side aperitif. Discover the nearby marvels of the World Heritage Site Le Morne Brabant Mountain and of Chamarel's vivid 'coloured earths'; head up the Domaine de Bel Ombre's volcano, or retreat to a private mountain lodge for an evening of stargazing under some of the most twinkly skies in the world.

To book a holiday at Villas Valriche in Domaine de Bel Ombre, email reservations@villasvalriche.com, call +230 266 9700 or visit villasvalricheexperience.com. For further details on the Domaine de Bel Ombre, visit domainedebelombre.mu