

[Mauritius]

With white sands, turquoise waters and swaying palms, who would bother to venture further than the sunlounger? Yet that would mean missing out on the amazing discoveries to be made beyond the beautiful beaches of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.

This island has an extraordinary landscape, an intriguing mix of cultures and a fascinating history. Mingle with the locals in Central Market in the capital, Port Louis, and you'll soon understand how visitors have shaped Mauritius, from Arab sailors and Portuguese explorers to Dutch settlers and French and British colonists.

Journey to the island's heart and marvel at the spiralling cones of extinct volcanoes, the ebony trees and giant waterlilies at the botanical gardens at Pamplemousses, and the virgin forests that echo to the calls of monkeys and parrots at the Black River Gorges National Park. It isn't all about the beach in Mauritius.



PARADISE FOUND

Kate Simon discovers there's much more to Mauritius than its lovely sun, sea and sand

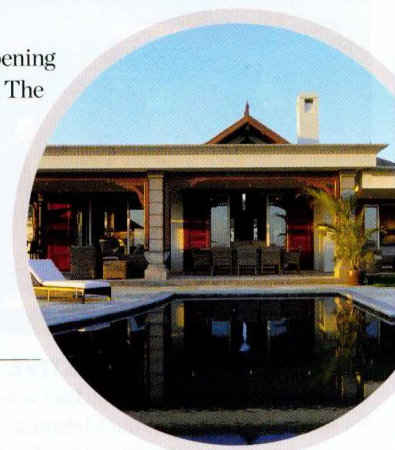
Check out the new check-ins. Just reopened, **Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort** (above) on the south coast now has larger suites, a revamped spa and, from December, a new beach club. **Trou aux Biches**, in the north-west, will also reopen this winter as a tropical village-style resort. And on Réunion island, south-west of Mauritius, the **Grand Hôtel du Lagon** has been extensively refurbished by Naiade Resorts with the help of Philippe Starck. Watch out, too, for **Long Beach** from Sun Resorts, due to open on the east coast in December, and **St Regis Mauritius**, in the south, in summer 2011.

www.beachcomber-hotels.com; www.naiaderesorts.com; www.longbeachmauriti.us.com; www.heritagelotelfair.mu; www.stregismauriti.us.com

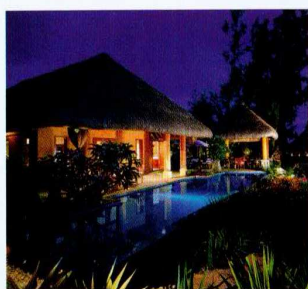
VILLA THRILLERS

More luxury villas are available to visitors this year with the opening of **Villas Valriche Experience** (right) on the south-west coast. The three- and four-bedroom luxury properties sit in landscaped gardens with infinity pools and have large living areas equipped with iPod docks, Wii consoles and plasma-screen satellite TVs. A 24-hour concierge, private chef and butler keep the atmosphere five star. On the east coast, **Villa Tiara** and **Villa Almira** are new luxury properties for hire and fully staffed with chef and butler. At **Constance Le Prince Maurice**, 12 senior suites have been upgraded to villas.

www.villasvalricherental.com; www.villasdemaitre.com; www.princemaurice.com



Life's a breeze



SPIRITUAL HIGHS

Go on a journey of self-discovery at **The Oberoi Mauritius**, which has just launched Touching Senses, a weekly programme of sessions aimed at promoting physical and spiritual well-being. Choose from a range of activities including star gazing, visiting a Hindu temple, and creating dishes from the hotel's organic kitchen garden.

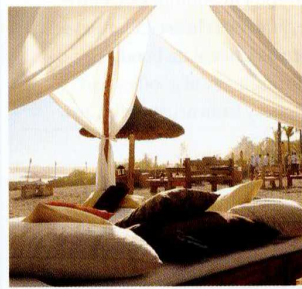
www.oberoihotels.com



WIND CHARMER

Spend a night at sea on the **Wind Dancer 2**. The crewed catamaran is built for comfort and enjoying the views. It can be privately hired, accommodates up to four people in two double en-suite cabins, and has a bar and large sun deck with stereo system. Snorkelling and fishing equipment are also taken along to keep guests entertained.

www.toescapeto.com



A RUM DO

A new rustic bar, the **Fish and Rhum Shack**, has opened on the beach at luxury resort Shanti Maurice, on the south coast. It serves freshly grilled and barbecued food as well as cocktails and a selection of rums and beers produced on the island. Live entertainment is promised, too, courtesy of local Sega dancers.

www.shantimaurice.com

DREAM HOME

Fancy designing and building your perfect holiday home? Now you can at **The Fairways at Anahita Resort**. There are only 18 plots available, all of which come with the bonus of access to some of the luxury hotel's facilities.

www.anahitamauriti.us.com



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