

MAIN PICTURE: Le Touessrok is situated on a series of islets linked by bridges.

FAR LEFT, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:

● Enjoy fresh grilled seafood at Crusoe's on Ilot Mangenie. ● The resort's elegant foyer. ● The beach butlers provide everything from towels to refreshments.

ISLAND *styles*

The resort

Easily accessible Mauritius is a favourite destination for South Africans. *Garden and Home* went to investigate the different ways that you can experience the island – at a beautiful resort or in the luxury of your very own villa

Lying on a lounge, under a palm tree overlooking a pristine white beach and impossibly azure water, knowing that I just have to lift a finger for someone to provide a soft white towel, an ice cold drink, a watermelon kebab or just clean my sunglasses is why, I think, the best way to experience Mauritius is at a top resort.

And what a resort! Owned by Sun Resorts Le Touessrok is situated on an idyllic archipelago on Trou d'Eau Bay on the east coast. From the minute you arrive everything is taken care of. At the entrance an ancient banyan tree illuminated by antique lanterns transports you into another world and a cooling towel and refreshing drink remove all traces of travel fatigue while your luggage is whisked off to your room.

Accommodation here is luxurious with a choice of deluxe rooms, split-level suites and the quieter Ocean suites on Frangipani Island. They are decorated in stylish contemporary styles with high-tech modern conveniences such as LCD screen TVs and free internet and all have beautiful views and private balconies or garden terraces. One of the fabulous perks is a 24-hour butler who can help you with anything from mastering the espresso machine to unpacking your suitcase – and in such a way that your clothes look far more stylish than they did at home.

If you're in the same financial league as Richard Branson, the Saudi princes and the Russian *nouveau riche* (some of whom

are reported to pay in cash), you can hire one of three private villas from around R120 000 a day which all have their own swimming pool, garden and beach not to mention a team of staff to make sure that your every need is catered for.

Connected by wooden bridges, the resort has its own private beach, a lagoon and two swimming pools, one of which is heated. All you have to do is decide where you're going to spend the day and once at the pool or beach of your choice, the superb beach staff takes care of everything from towels to refreshments.

If you're not the lying-on-a-lounger type you can snorkel, sail, play tennis or enjoy a round of golf at the Bernhard Langer-designed 18-hole course on Ile aux Cerfs just a five minute boat ride away. For those who need even more pampering, Le Touessrok has the only Givenchy spa in Africa.

Another great advantage of a fabulous resort is that you don't have to go anywhere to enjoy world class cuisine. Le Touessrok boasts a number of fabulous restaurants each with its own ambience. Situated on three levels and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner Three-Nine-Eight serves nine national cuisines from eight show kitchens – hence the name. The breakfast selection is so extensive it takes about 10 minutes for the hostess to explain it all to you. You can start your day with a huge selection of exotic fruits, have an omelette custom made to your specifications and then indulge in a stack of waffles dripping with maple syrup.

With its wooden floors and high-pitched thatched roof Barlens is the epitome of casual chic. Right on the beach on Frangipani Island, it's the place for cocktails and fresh seafood lunches. For a more rustic experience you can 'escape' to Ilot Mangenie (the boat leaves every half an hour) where you can enjoy braaied fish under the casuarinas.

For the ultimate in romantic settings you can't beat Safran which offers sublime Indian cuisine in a thatched pavilion overlooking the lagoon. Try their amazing Manglolean-style prawn curry poached in spiced coconut milk and chilli.

This is the luxury of a resort like this. You have the choice of chilling out by the pool and taking it easy or revving it up at the Sega Bar and jazz evenings. The choice is yours.

Garden and Home was a guest of Le Touessrok, Sun Resorts and World Leisure Holidays, ferried to and from Oliver Tambo International in style by Avis Chauffeur Drive, 011 923 3402 and flown to Mauritius courtesy of Air Mauritius, www.airmauritius.com ▷

SOURCES

Le Touessrok, www.letouessrokresort.com
Sun Resorts Ltd, www.sunresortshotels.com
World Leisure Holidays 0860 954 954, 011 285 2500
 or www.ihavetogothere.co.za

The villa

Launched by Les Villas de Bel Ombre, Villas Valriche is a luxury lifestyle estate in South West Mauritius. What makes this estate so unique is that these villas are available as holiday homes – to buy or rent. There are 288 freehold villas set on a hillside nestled between mountains and the lagoon with a view over the bay of St Martin.

With four types of plantation-style villas ranging in size from 250–400m², there's a choice between two, three or four bedrooms. Working for a decor magazine, I naturally took a fine interest in the layout and decor of the four-bedroom villa I visited.

Personally, the first area I always look at in a house is the kitchen – this is normally the heart and hub of the family who live there. Fitted with solid African teak cupboards, a combination of granite and timber countertops and the latest AEG appliances, the kitchen was gorgeous!

With an open-plan layout, there's a natural flow through the kitchen, living, dining and outdoor areas. In the TV room, an LCD flat screen is linked to a state-of-the-art Smart Village that provides constant connectivity for Internet and TV so you'll never be out of touch.

All bedrooms have en suite bathrooms, air conditioning (a welcome reprise when temperatures average at 22°C in winter and 31°C in summer) and patio doors leading out onto the veranda that extends round the villa.

Leading on from the undercover veranda is an infinity pool overlooking the Golf du Chateau golf course and further

on, the beautiful azure sea. The spacious veranda is decked out with comfortable natural cane furniture and an outdoor dining area – perfectly suited for entertaining. To the side of this is an outdoor bar and built-in gas braai complete with rotisseries and work surfaces. On the outskirts of the pool is a gazebo with built-in seating.

The decor is gorgeously modern yet comfortable. Decorated by Robin's Nest, a South African interior design company, there's a choice of three styles: contemporary, washed beach or mahogany. I loved the fact that you could choose a style that perfectly suits your tastes and lifestyle (another advantage compared to a hotel).

Another plus of Villas Valriche is that you can choose between self-catering or catering. Going the former route is always a good option – you decide what to eat and when. Mauritius's markets are an interesting experience to say the least. Packed with stalls offering everything from fresh produce to clothing, you can spend at least a few hours foraging for delicious, exotic foods.

Travelling to a nearby market we meandered past villiages of half-built houses (I later found out that this is for tax purposes – if your house isn't finished, the government can't tax you) and what we South Africans would call shacks. But everywhere I looked, the areas were pristine and clean. I was fascinated by the Hindu temples and statues smacked in between houses and mixed with churches of other faiths.

In terms of grocery shopping, the basic items are readily available and it's easy enough to find anything you need, especially as many of the locals speak English and will

make you feel like you belong. Specific cuts of meat, fish or chicken are not always in stock, which means you do need to improvise. Wine and beer can be bought in supermarkets and alcohol, along with food, is about 20 percent more expensive than in South Africa.

Because Villas Valriche is part of a luxurious resort group, you do have certain comforts at your disposal that you wouldn't normally have at any other holiday home. Firstly you have the option of in-villa services, such as a private chef, a butler, 24-hour room service, daily cleaning and a concierge service. As it's on the Golf du Chateau 18-hole golf course, you have free, privileged access to a round of golf. You'd also have access to the neighbouring deluxe hotels: Heritage Awali Golf & Spa Resort and Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort. Feel like a delicious breakfast but really don't want to cook? Just pick up the phone and have it delivered to your villa. Love a massage? Phone up either resort and organise a therapist from the spa to come and pamper you in the privacy of your villa or underneath the gazebo so you can take advantage of the incredible views – absolute bliss.

And that's the beauty of it. You have the comfort, space and privacy of your own home, but you still have the luxury of a five-star resort.

Garden and Home was a guest of Les Villas de Bel Ombre, Villas Valriche and Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort, ferried around by Mautourco, www.mautourco.com, and flown comfortably to Mauritius courtesy of Air Mauritius, www.airmauritius.com or call 011 394 4548 or 011 394 4549. **GH**

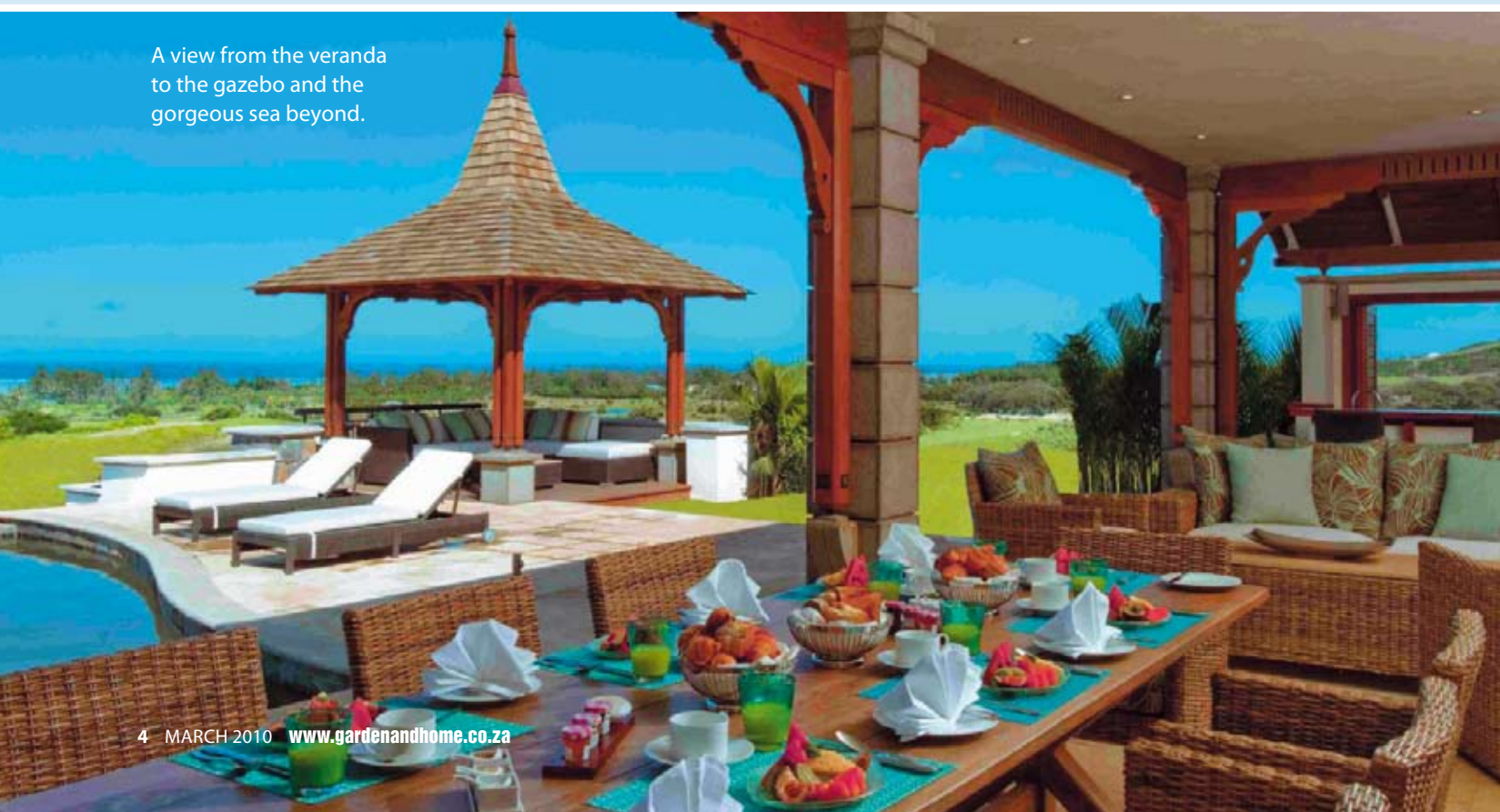


Golf du Chateau.



The veranda decked out with cane furniture.

A view from the veranda to the gazebo and the gorgeous sea beyond.



FACTS AND FIGURES

- As Villas Valriche is a Mauritian approved Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS), if you buy a villa you are entitled to Mauritian Permanent Residency for you and your immediate dependants. The documentation is completed during the purchase process. Hayes, Matkovich and Associates, the South African-based company responsible for sales, manages the entire process. They will ensure that the permanent residency is in place before the deposit on the villa is paid.
- The IRS allows foreigners to buy freehold property in an approved development such as Villas Valriche with the added attractions of: 15 percent income tax, no capital gains tax and no inheritance tax.
- Pricing starts from US\$950 000, which is roughly about R7 million. Although the price is high, you're paying for prime property on a tropical island which attracts a lot of tourists and you can recoup your investment by renting your villa out through a professionally managed rental pool when you're not using it.
- Rentals start from US\$995 (approximately R7 500) per three-bedroom villa per night between 12 April and 30 June 2010.
- To purchase a villa, contact Hayes, Matkovich and Associates on 0861 113 985.
- To rent a villa, please contact Audrey Herval on 00 230 266 9700 or e-mail audrey@villasvalriche.com
- For more info, visit www.villasvalriche.com

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