

# Going green

Mauritian resort Lagoon Attitude is making waves with its eco-friendly focus, finds **Rhonda Carrier**



It's just after breakfast at Lagoon Attitude on the north coast of Mauritius, and while I'd normally be sprawling on a sunlounger on the sand or beside the pool by now, this morning I'm in the company of Julie Lepert, who handcrafts organic products.

Julie is showing us how to make our own non-polluting sunscreen from zinc oxide, cassava and soy wax as we take part in one of the hotel's free eco-workshops. Regular sun cream typically uses chemicals including oxybenzone and octinoxate that can kill coral and damage reefs, Julie explains.

And it's to the coral reefs that we're soon speeding, in the company of scientists Shakti and Nina from the resort's marine biology team. They're taking us over the shimmering cerulean waters to an underwater snorkelling trail, where we're lucky enough to spot a turtle along with an array of brightly hued tropical fish, as we follow a waymarked trail through the reefs.

## REEF RESTORATION

Drastic losses in live coral cover – through acidification, pollution, sedimentation, coral blasting, bad fishing practices, rising ocean temperatures and natural bleaching – have put the reefs surrounding Mauritius in peril. But they're crucial to the local economy, protecting the livelihoods of fishermen whose catch depends on the health of the corals and

attracting scuba divers to swim with grey reef sharks.

As such, our marine outing is not all about wondering at the wildlife, gorgeous though it is. Shakti and Nina are engaged in environmental initiatives including coral reef monitoring and rubbish collection – and in educating and involving guests. These efforts are part of the community-based Anse la Raie lagoon ecological restoration project, which involves fishermen and other local inhabitants as well as NGOs and tourism operators.

You don't have to get involved in the project during your stay, of course. You're free to simply chill at Lagoon Attitude's pool or beach, where you'll find dispensers of complimentary mineral sunscreen. But the marine biology team does the rounds to chat, answer questions and invite you to take part in activities should you show interest.

That said, you'd be hard-pressed to find any rubbish to collect at the resort itself. All single-use plastic is banned here – you refill glass bottles from your room at water stations dotted around the grounds, use all-natural toiletries from refillable ceramic containers, and help yourself to complimentary coffee, tea and milk from the 'bulk shop'. The shop also sells natural mosquito repellent, shampoos and homewares made by local artisans.

It's not only Lagoon Attitude putting the emphasis ➤



# DESTINATIONS

## INDIAN OCEAN | MAURITIUS

3  
OF THE  
BEST

### EXCURSIONS

- Take a pirogue or kayaking trip through the Ile d'Ambre's protected mangrove forests.
- Go out on a sunrise sailing excursion with a local fisherman, enjoying a breakfast of chilli bites and bread and butter on board.
- Cycle from Anse La Raie to cosmopolitan Grand Baie, chancing upon fishing villages tucked away in small creeks and watching the arrival of the day's catch.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Marine Discovery Centre, local coral and a recycling workshop, all Lagoon Attitude PICTURES: Jason Goder



### MAURITIUS REOPENS

**From July 15:** Vaccinated travellers will be able to stay in one of 14 designated 'resort bubbles' in Mauritius. If they stay 14 days and have a negative PCR test, they can then explore the whole island.

**From October 1:** Visitors will be allowed entry without restrictions with a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of departure.

on sustainability. All eight hotels in the Attitude group have eco-consciousness at their heart, with the hope of driving sustainability across Mauritius more generally.

But these efforts open up all sorts of conversations, especially in the wake of the pandemic. What does it mean to be sustainable as a property and a destination as a whole – especially one that you have to fly thousands of miles to reach? How far is it possible to be environmentally friendly while delivering the kind of experience that guests expect from an Indian Ocean holiday? And can sustainability and a commitment to the local economy be reconciled with the all-inclusive experience?

### LOCAL LIVING

The Attitude group is rooted in the island's community, so getting guests out and about is a big part of its ethos. The Otentik Discovery app, downloadable before you go or on-site, invites you to head out to explore off-the-beaten-track spots, discovering some of the loveliest but least-known landscapes on foot, by bike or by moped.

My favourite self-guided outing was a foodie jaunt through the island capital, Port Louis. It gave us a chance to immerse ourselves in the island's rich cultural mix (including Malay, Indian and Chinese influences) and meet some of the locals, while taking in the sights and sounds of the markets and sampling the likes of *alouda* (a traditional drink of basil seeds and agar agar), roti rolls and Chinese sweets.

Another delightful Otentik outing was a meal at the



### LAGOON ATTITUDE

With its fresh and funky recycled decor and all-indigenous vegetation, this four-star, adult-only hotel is certified Travelife Gold for its social and environmental sustainability practices. If that all makes it sound too worthy, think again – this is also a place for serious relaxation, with a spa, non-motorised watersports including stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and windsurfing, and several restaurants including Kot Nou with its home-style dishes and Taba-J, a beach shack selling Mauritian street food favourites. This is also a resort for those who like to let their hair down, with live music and DJ parties.

The group also includes the family-friendly Zilwa Attitude, home to the island's first eco spa, as well as a jaw-dropping kids' club, complete with a real decommissioned boat in which playing pirate takes on new dimensions. [hotels-attitude.com](https://hotels-attitude.com)

home of Indian-Mauritian Soveeta, who is operations coordinator at The Ravenala Attitude hotel. Here we helped Soveeta's mum make spicy *gâteaux piments* and feasted on dishes including taro leaf curry, pumpkin curry with mustard seeds and a zingy salad of cucumber, carrot and watercress, all eaten out of banana leaves with our hands, in local style. It's the only Otentik excursion that costs extra, at about £13, but this is incredible value and goes into locals' pockets.

Experiences like these might not be the main reason people come to Mauritius, but they certainly enrich a stay and make it beneficial for locals – which seems like a win-win to me. **TW**

### BOOK IT

**Emirates Holidays** offers a week's all-inclusive at Lagoon Attitude from £1,625 per person, based on two sharing with flights from Heathrow on May 8, 2022. [emiratesholidays.com](https://emiratesholidays.com)