

Taste of Mauritius

Mauritius is welcoming a new wave of cuisine driven by health, sustainability and local produce. Sarah Bridge unfurls her napkin at some of its leading hotel restaurants

A sparkling jewel in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius has a unique cuisine shaped by French, British, Indian, Creole, African and Chinese influences.

From dim sum and *boulettes* (dumplings), Indian curries with a local twist, the popular Creole *rougaille*, and the fabulously eccentric *bol renverse* – literally, an upside-down bowl of rice, vegetables and fried omelette – to fresh seafood plucked straight from the ocean, Mauritian food is constantly changing, and its hotels are changing with it.

As well as carrying out essential maintenance work during the pandemic, many hotels used the break to improve their F&B offering. The result is a vibrant and modern hotel culinary scene, with experiences full of variety and local insight.

And visitors who have been missing Mauritius's famed beaches and outdoor lifestyle are now returning to the island in force, with more than a million bookings already taken for 2023.

With health, sustainability and local produce all particular highlights of Mauritius's refreshed hotel F&B scene, we take a look at the hotels leading the new wave of Mauritian cuisine.

LUX* LE MORNE

Coastal Road, Le Morne

Five-star luxury hotel Lux Le Morne is located on 600 metres of pristine white sands dotted with palm trees, sheltering under the imposing bulk of Le Morne Brabant mountain, a Unesco Heritage Site. While renovating the resort during lockdown, Lux Le Morne did away with many internal walls in its bars and restaurants to create lighter, airier F&B spaces. It also ditched its standard hotel room minibars, replacing them with stylish bars, which guests can request to have stocked with their preferred drinks.

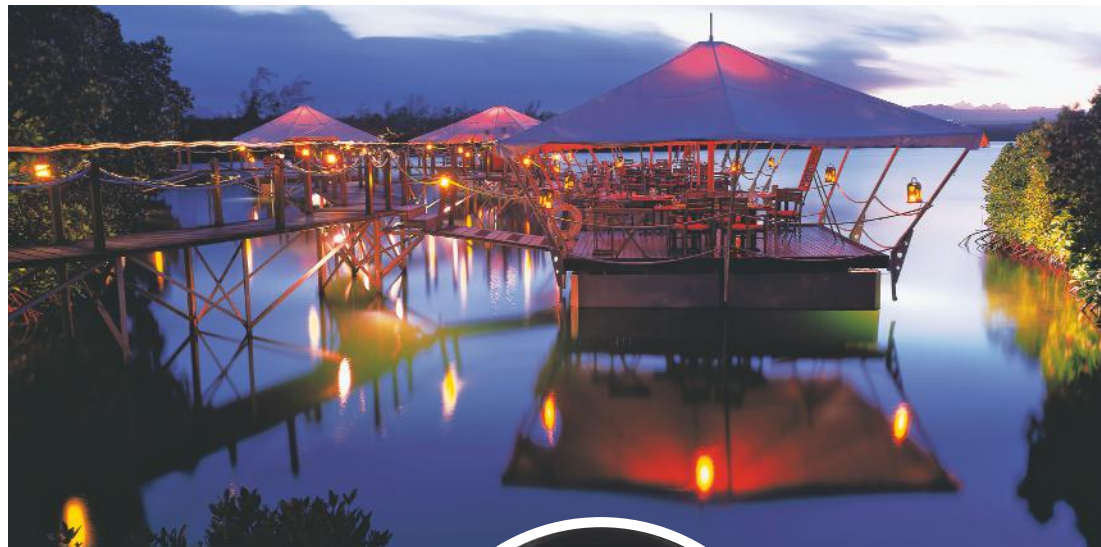
The resort operates a zero-food-waste policy, managing food production and waste and redistributing food to disadvantaged children ➤

Le Barachois floating restaurant, Constance Prince Maurice

FIGURE Adam Bruzzone

DESTINATIONS

INDIAN OCEAN | MAURITIUS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Le Barachois floating restaurant, Constance Prince Maurice; Maison Lux cafe and bar, green curry dish, both Lux Le Morne; Asian restaurant, Constance Prince Maurice **PICTURE:** Jean-Bernard Adoue

in the Le Morne area. This is the case across all its restaurants: The Kitchen, which provides cuisine from around the world including India, Italy and France; East, a fine-dining Thai restaurant just a few steps from the waves; and The Beach, an open-air Mediterranean-style restaurant.

The hotel also organises private picnics for guests in various memorable places, including at the peak of the 556-metre-high Le Morne Brabant (a popular spot for proposals), in its wooden 'Wishing Tree' treehouse and on its own deserted island, with the chef meeting guests in advance to prepare their favourite dishes.

Most memorable of all is a trip to Vik's fisherman's shack on the beach. Drop into see Vik – former F&B manager at the resort – and you could find yourself snorkelling in the ocean to catch sea urchins, which he will then serve to you outside his rustic lodge, together with grilled octopus, washed down with home-made rum, in front of one of the island's spectacular sunsets.

Book it: Classic Collection offers seven nights at Lux Le Morne from £3,150 per person, based on two adults sharing a Superior Room on an all-inclusive basis in September. The price includes flights with Air Mauritius from Heathrow and private transfers. classic-collection.co.uk

“One regular here is local resident Johnny, a vast bull shark, who swims silently past just metres from where guests are dining in the candlelight

CONSTANCE PRINCE MAURICE

Poste de Flacq

Gastronomy is very much the main focus at all three Constance hotels on Mauritius, but nothing will stay in the mind quite like an evening at Le Barachois restaurant at Constance Prince Maurice. The restaurant sits on five floating pontoons on a vast, still lake and is reached via a lantern-lit boardwalk through a mangrove swamp. One regular here is local resident Johnny, a vast bull shark, who swims silently past just metres from where guests are dining in the candlelight.

Over the past 20 years, Constance Prince Maurice has shifted from fusion cuisine to molecular cuisine and, more recently, to natural local food using ingredients available in the immediate area of the hotel. Executive ➤

AGENTS' VIEWS



Sheryl Drane,
regional
destination
manager, Middle
East, Indian

Ocean & Africa, Travelbag

“As a lover of craft beer it's great to see this doing so well in Mauritius. Some hotels are partnering with local breweries or brewing their own: Constance Belle Mare Plage has its own craft beer, which tastes a bit like pina colada – it's surprisingly easy to drink!”



Diane Prendergast,
destination
manager, Indian
Ocean & Africa,

Gold Medal Travel Group

“The food in Mauritius is very varied. From Thai to Japanese fusion, traditional Mauritian to mouth-watering seafood, there really is something for everyone. We were lucky enough to visit a local home where we were treated to a home-cooked lunch of local curry dishes and *ti puri* (fried flatbread), all served on a banana leaf. Delicious!”



Ryan Eaton,
ancillary
product
manager,
Travel Republic

“The food and drink was incredible in Mauritius and my favourite meal was at the JW Marriott. We had a lovely pan-Asian menu in their wonderful Asian-inspired restaurant, including dynamite shrimp, golden fried chicken and sushi. It's an idyllic setting for a meal in the evening.”



Buddha Bar,
Sugar Beach

SUGAR BEACH

At the five-star Sugar Beach, part of the recently rebranded Mauritian hotel group Sunlife (formerly Sun Resorts), guests have access to 14 bars and restaurants across the property and at sister hotel La Pirogue. These include the famous Buddha Bar, with its Dubai-trained mixologists serving theatrical cocktails (think anything from smoke to treasure chests). New experiences on offer include Time for Tea in the Sugar Beach Tea Lounge, where Mauritian tea is served with sandwiches and cakes; and Crazy Croquet, where guests enjoy Aperol Spritz and cucumber sandwiches as they don Panama hats and brandish croquet mallets.

ATTITUDE HOTELS

Guests at one of the eight Attitude Hotels across the island can have dinner with a hotel staff member at their home (with the proceeds going to the host in full). Clients can help their host prepare the meal too, if they like – frying up some chilli bites or helping to make *farata* (Mauritian flatbread) – giving them a chance to learn a little more about local traditions.



ABOVE: Floating Market restaurant, JW Marriott Mauritius Resort

chef Michael Scioli oversees the menus at the hotel’s several restaurants, which include its fine-dining Mauritian restaurant Archipel, and restaurant Asian, which serves sushi and dim sum, as well as hosting a regular Punjabi Tadka night featuring Indian spices.

Sales and PR manager Sylvabelle Angeline says the property’s clients are very discerning, adding: “They haven’t travelled halfway round the world to have the same dining experience as in London or Paris. They are looking for something different, authentic and original.”

Guests can also dine in the property’s spa, wine cellar and in a ‘Hidden Jewel’ marquee on a private beach.

Book it: Gold Medal offers seven nights at Constance Prince Maurice on a half-board basis in a Junior Suite from £2,399 per person, based on two sharing, for a departure on June 4. The price includes private transfers and return flights from Gatwick. goldmedal.co.uk

JW MARRIOTT MAURITIUS RESORT

Le Morne

A near-neighbour of Lux Le Morne, JW Marriott Mauritius Resort boasts a range of food and beverage offerings that showcase not only local cuisine and Mauritius’s rich culinary heritage but also give guests a food tour of the world across Africa, Asia and Europe.

One particular hit with travel agents on a recent fam trip to Mauritius was the property’s Floating Market. Its array of Thai, Malay and Vietnamese dishes combine to create a fusion of evocative aromas, tastes and

“ Our guests haven’t travelled halfway round the world to have the same dining experience as in London or Paris – they are looking for something authentic

colours reflecting Asia’s light and healthy cooking. The Asian theme continues at this five-star hotel with Atsuko, which offers classic Japanese favourites given a modern twist, and Simply India, a modern interpretation of an authentic Indian culinary journey by chef Yudhveer Singh.

Guests get a more formal dining experience at Le Manoir Dining Room, a French-Mauritian restaurant reflecting the decor of a stately home’s private dining room, with Creole flavours and classic French cooking styles introducing guests to Mauritian hospitality and heritage. For more relaxed dining, head to the Boathouse Grill, which serves meat and seafood dishes amid live music and dancing. Drinks are taken seriously too, with mixologists and sommeliers on hand to serve anything guests require, from the healthy to the indulgent.

Book it: Sunset Faraway Holidays offers seven nights’ B&B at JW Marriott Mauritius Resort from £2,135, including an upgrade to an Ocean Junior Suite, for travel between May 7 and September 30, including flights. sunset.co.uk