



Mauritian singer-songwriter Annega performing at an Attitude Hotels event

# Music makers

A beachside getaway in Mauritius can be a gateway to the island's culture, finds **Alice Barnes-Brown**

Whenever the British weather gets me down, I play the feelgood 'seggae' – a Jamaican-Mauritian mash-up – of lively musicians Anonym or the percussion-heavy beats of charismatic singer Annega. Both sing in Mauritian Creole, and I first saw them at beach concerts promoting local talent, with my feet in the sand and a cocktail in hand. Even on the greyest day, those memories always put me in a sunny mood.

I was on the idyllic Indian Ocean isle for Attitude resorts' Like a Local mega-fam, where the aim is to showcase how the brand works with the local community, as well as its sustainability credentials.

Attitude, which operates eight resorts across the island, has recently become B Corp Certified – the only hotel group in Mauritius to have achieved such certification.

## LOCAL PRODUCE

Each morning, I take my tea at sunrise, swaying in a balcony hammock at the Ravenala Attitude. It's a taste of how everything at Attitude is infused with local flavour – the tea is

“The tea is a hybrid of assam and ceylon leaves, which are blended with Mauritian ingredients such as coconut and vanilla

produced by family-run brand Corson, which has been growing tea in the misty highlands of Mauritius since 1886. The variety is a hybrid of assam and ceylon leaves, which are blended with ingredients distinctly hailing from the Mascarene Islands – from coconut and vanilla to passionfruit and mango.

Corson stocks all of the handy self-service tea stations across Attitude's resorts and I meet general manager, Déborah Corson Adam, for a brew (or five). “The vanilla tea was introduced in 1919 by my grandfather. Attitude has also asked us to make exclusive blends – they really believed we could do something together,” she says. “Tourism helps make us known.” ➤

# DESTINATIONS

## INDIAN OCEAN | MAURITIUS

### TRADE *views*



**Jim Robertson,**  
senior regional manager,  
Kuoni

“The dining with the locals was brilliant and it’s not expensive. The brand mission, which is people-first hospitality, is what brings Attitude together.”



**Deborah Wadhams,**  
head of long-haul product,  
dnata B2B

“Everyone we met couldn’t do enough for us. Attitude is very community-oriented – for example, Lagoon Attitude gives a local pig farmer the food waste from the buffet, and at the end of the year, he gives them a pig in exchange.”



**Kerry Towers,**  
product manager,  
Best at Travel

“My favourite experience was the winery – the setting was beautiful and the story behind it fascinating. Attitude has something for everyone, with excellent value for money. As an operator, I’d confidently sell its hotels.”



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Hotel guests enjoy a meal at a staff member’s home; swimming pool at Ravenala Attitude; Takamaka winery founder Alexander Oxenham; Zilwa Attitude entrance

PICTURE: Xavier Koenig



### FRUITY WINE

For a slightly stronger beverage, clients will spot bottles of Takamaka wine across Attitude’s restaurants, bars and boutiques. Coming in rosé and white varieties, the sweet wine is Mauritian made, but you won’t find any vineyards on the island. The secret ingredient is surprising – lychee, a spiky fruit with a citrusy tang more commonly used in fruit salads.

Takamaka’s winery, set on a sunny hilltop overlooking the Mare aux Vacoas reservoir, has landscaped European-style grounds. As the founder of one of the world’s only lychee wineries, Alexander Oxenham proves an enthusiastic guide.

“We are a 100% Mauritian business. I wanted to create a wine that represents the terroir of Mauritius,” he says as we sip the blush-hued Apérichy in the afternoon sunshine. “The profile of the lychee and muscat grape is very similar, so I decided to make something different.”

It’s not so different from conventional wine: after the lychees are harvested and peeled, the fermentation process is largely the same, and the taste is light, crisp and moreish. Oxenham adds: “Attitude wants its guests to have the local experience, so hotels promote local industry, be it wine or food. We were meant to work together.”

“Locally made Takamaka wine’s secret ingredient is surprising – lychee, a spiky fruit with a citrusy tang

### TROPICAL TASTES

Speaking of food, one of Mauritius’s USPs is its incredible diversity of dishes, from Indian-influenced *thali* plates to Chinese dumplings and French patisserie – and all the Creole cookery in between.

To encourage guests to engage with Mauritians, Attitude collaborates with its staff to offer guests the chance to eat at a staff member’s home. It’s charged at about £20 per person, including transport, and the money goes directly to the hosts.

One starry evening, I hop into a minibus to the home of Akshay Ramdeen, who has tended the bar at Zilwa Attitude for 10 years. His mother Rajini – who works as a housekeeper at Lagoon Attitude – is busy cooking a Mauritian meal.

She picks a delicate hibiscus flower from her garden and gives each guest one to wear, as we step over the threshold. We’re ushered into the kitchen to help knead the dough for *faratas* – pan-fried flatbreads – and ➤

# DESTINATIONS

## INDIAN OCEAN | MAURITIUS

### RESORT ROLL CALL

🌴 **Ravenala Attitude:** The first all-suite family resort in Mauritius features vast tropical gardens. There are nine restaurants to pick, plus a nightclub that opens until 2am.

🌴 **Zilwa Attitude:** The family-friendly, 214-room Zilwa has views of Mauritius's five northern islands. It even has its own private islands: Gran Zil for Mauritian barbecues and Ti Zil for open-air massages.

🌴 **Sunrise Attitude:** Set slightly back from Belle Mare beach, this adult-only property has swim-up rooms and eight villas with a shared pool. Weekly activities include workshops with local artists.

🌴 **Friday Attitude:** The three-star, family-friendly Friday Attitude has just 50 rooms, an outdoor gym, a chilled-out atmosphere and free boat trips to the pleasure island of Ile aux Cerfs twice daily.

🌴 **Tropical Attitude:** Close to Friday, this adult-only property is as tranquil as it comes, with all 58 bedrooms having sea views. Kot Nou restaurant offers a Mauritian menu.

🌴 **Coin de Mire Attitude:** Well connected to Grand Baie by bus, family resort Coin de Mire also has plenty to do on-site, including a glass-bottomed boat and paddleboarding.

🌴 **Lagoon Attitude:** This adult-only resort has its own Marine Discovery Centre (pictured), where guests can learn about the seas around Mauritius. A snorkelling trail brings it all to life.

[hotels-attitude.com](http://hotels-attitude.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Family-friendly Ravenala Attitude; outdoor spa, Tropical Attitude; the mega-fam group



to fry up the scrumptious *gateaux piments* (breaded chilli bites). As we methodically pat the dough, Akshay explains: "Normally, when you go to a resort, you won't meet a family or learn about Mauritian culture. This concept is nice because we meet interesting people from other countries and share how we live."

Over a delicious selection of curries served on home-grown banana leaves, I bond with Akshay's father, Deepak, over our mutual love of Bollywood. The conversation flows as the Ramdeen family are happy to answer any questions about life in Mauritius.

### SCENT OF SUCCESS

No trip to paradise would be complete without a spa treatment. We visit a former sugar plantation in the verdant Ferney Valley to see where Attitude's supplier, Indika, makes the resort's line of Poz spa products.

Veering Nekitsing, the agricultural site manager, gives us a peek into the nursery where the all-important botanicals are grown. There's rosemary, black pepper, moringa, palmarosa and dragon fruit, among other tropical flora. He says: "If we don't grow it, we buy products from the local villages. So they are getting something from the Attitude collaboration too."

When I get to sample a spa treatment at the

“We're ushered into Rajini's kitchen to help knead the dough for *faratas* – pan-fried flatbreads – and to fry up the *gateaux piments* (chilli bites)

Ravenala Attitude on my final day, it's a challenge to pick a massage oil – but a combination of moringa, coconut and geranium neatly sums up what I spied at Indika.

A few hours later, boarding the Air Mauritius flight back to Gatwick, I hear the familiar sound of Annega, who penned the airline's signature track. I may no longer be barefoot in the sand, but her music – and the enlightening conversations I had with other Mauritians – will make me think of this island for a long time to come. **TW**

### BOOK IT

**Kuoni** offers seven nights' all-inclusive at the Ravenala Attitude from £1,749, based on two sharing a Couple Suite. The price is based on select departures in June and includes Air Mauritius flights from Gatwick and private transfers.

[kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)