



MAURITIUS

Pause & Play

Mauritius can be as exciting as it is relaxing, finds Laura French

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It didn't take long to fall in love with Mauritius; mango trees, sugar plantations and giant palms populate the landscapes, and locals greet you with warm smiles. There's a sense of tranquillity everywhere you go, and it's perfectly acceptable to spend days doing nothing other than

watching the tide gently ripple back and forth, mojito in hand.

But the island is no one-trick pony. It is also a hotspot for activity, inviting visitors to explore its sugar-cane landscapes and protected coral reefs as much as it does its world-class spas and wellness retreats. That

means it's ideal for couples or families whose tastes might not always quite go hand in hand.

▶ PAUSE: WELLNESS BREAKS

The unique mix of Asian, African and European influences that characterise this island come



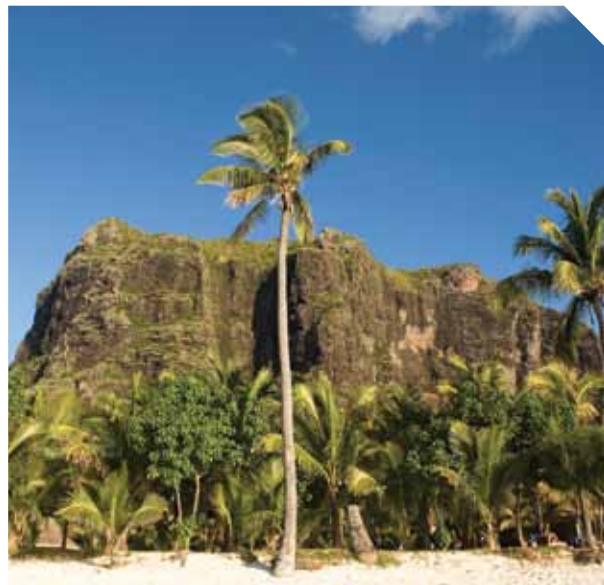
PICTURES: MAURITIUS TOURISM PROMOTION AUTHORITY



LEFT:
Le Morne

RIGHT:
Le Morne
Brabant

BELOW:
Paradis
Beachcomber
Golf Resort
& Spa



→ to the fore in its spa therapies, which are often as spiritual as they are soothing. Ayurvedic treatments drawing on Indian origins are especially popular and can be found at the likes of the Shantigiri Ayuverda Spa in Grand Baie and the Kairali Spa in Phoenix. At the Seven Colours Spa, clients will find chakra-inspired treatments designed according to the colour they're most drawn to.

There are several Seven Colours outposts on the island; I indulged in the exfoliating coco body treatment at Heritage Le

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Telfair and came out feeling so relaxed that I set off for bed 10 minutes later.

Wellness wouldn't be complete without a bit of yoga, and

Mauritius isn't short on options there either, with long stretches of beach and calming, colourful sunsets forming the backdrop to some serious stretching. And if, like me, clients are complete novices with more than a hint of scepticism, tell them to fear not – it's an idyllic place to give it a try.

▶ PAUSE: GOLF

If a round of golf is more in keeping with your clients' idea of relaxation, they're in luck. The International Association of Golf Tour Operators last year named Mauritius as its golf destination

of the year for the Africa, Gulf States and Indian Ocean region, and it's not hard to see why, with championship courses scattered across the island, flanked by stretches of opal water.

Thankfully, they cater to a variety of levels, meaning that despite being a complete beginner, I managed to survive when I ventured to the Heritage Golf Club. Over on the west coast, the Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa has an excellent course shared with sister hotel the Dinarobin, while on the east coast, clients will



✓ Tried & Tested

HERITAGE LE TELFAIR GOLF & SPA RESORT

Set on the Domaine de Bel Ombre Estate, a former sugar plantation, Heritage Le Telfair is surrounded by sweeping mountains on one side and blinding opal water on the other. Its 158 rooms are spread across villas designed in the style of plantation houses, with spacious and airy interiors.

Alongside the Seven Colours Spa Milesime Collection, there's a large wellness programme featuring yoga, tai chi and more, while the neighbouring C Beach Club offers a good range of watersports, several of which are included. Tennis, badminton and other land sports are available too, and there's a comprehensive kids' club, making the resort ideal for families as well as couples.

The golf club features an 18-hole championship course, as well as a nine-hole course and driving range, so it's suitable for different levels.

The food and drink across the resort is superb. My personal highlight was the opulent, French-inspired Chateau de Bel Ombre, where the dishes tasted as exquisite as they looked and the setting – a sprawling expanse of green hills – was even better. Book it: Sovereign offers seven nights' B&B from £1,649, departing October 17. The price includes fast-track security, airport lounge access in the UK, private transfers and Emirates flights from Gatwick. sovereign.com



→ find the Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club, designed by Bernhard Langer and set on its own island.

▶ PAUSE: BOAT TRIPS

The Indian Ocean is justifiably famous for its clear and gentle waters, which hide a whole other world below their surface. But if customers want a glimpse without having to take on a fully fledged dive, suggest a much more relaxing glass-bottomed boat trip or snorkelling excursion.

Both are available across Mauritius, including the Blue Bay Marine Park in the southeast, Flic en Flac in the west and the Bel Ombre lagoon in the south. Within minutes of dipping my head in the water at Bel Ombre, I had exotic fish darting past huge clumps of colourful coral, making it feel like a real-life aquarium.

▶ PLAY: SEA-KARTING

Mauritius caters for a more active



crowd as well, so for a heart-pounding, off-the-seat experience, recommend sea-karting around Le Morne. Unique to Mauritius, it's basically guided go-karting on water and involves bombing



ABOVE: Kitesurfing

along the waves at jet-ski speed without fear of falling off.

My passenger might not have been too sure of my abilities behind the wheel, but it was an exhilarating experience, and when we cut the engines half-way through, we found ourselves surrounded by a school of sleek dolphins darting to and fro as we sat in awestruck silence.

An hour costs about £124 per sea-kart, and can be booked through Fun Adventure Mauritius.

▶ PLAY: WATERSPORTS

There are plenty of other watersports available on the island too though, not least diving, windsurfing and kayaking. I tried my hand at waterskiing and discovered that there's nothing quite like the feeling of eventually standing up and skimming across the Indian Ocean waves, even if it did take me three failed attempts to do so (only to topple over again after a few seconds – think Bambi on skis).

Budding kitesurfers will be in their element around Le Morne, Palmar Beach and Bel Ombre, where KiteGlobber offers lessons (from €140 for a two-hour private lesson). I can't say I'm a pro kitesurfer after our beach-based initiation, but I can safely say that just flying one of those kites is enough to warrant a lie-down.

▶ PLAY: HIKING AND BIKING

Back on land, there's plenty in the way of play. Le Morne Brabant mountain – a Unesco World Heritage Site that hides a tragic history as a shelter for runaway slaves – offers hikers a scenic three to four-hour climb with breathtaking views over the surrounding lagoons.

But if it's biking that clients are after, direct them to Electro Bike Mauritius, which offers half and full-day tours through local villages and verdant sugar plantations (from €42 per person).

I embarked on the full-day tour for an insightful glimpse into local life and the chance to get properly off the beaten track. Villagers greeted us with a pleasant 'bonjour', which was a pretty accurate reflection of the hospitality and happiness I found throughout my stay. And when it came to home time, I wasn't quite ready to leave. [TW](https://www.tweet.com/Travelmood)



ABOVE: Electro Bike Mauritius village tour

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- fun-adventure.mu
- heritageresorts.mu
- kiteglobing.com
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