



Do-it-yourself **Mauritius**

Think Mauritian island holidays are all the same – crowded restaurants, schmoozing waiters, kids splashing in the pool and newlyweds making out in deck chairs? Think again – perhaps it's time you considered renting... By Tamlin Wightman.





There are countless luxurious hotels on Mauritius and tourists flock to them in droves. They have private beaches, scary rates and guards to keep out the riff-raff. But for self-sufficient travellers the island's real charm is walking out your door into everyday island life where kids play in the street and women sit on their verandas or cook up aromas that make your mouth water. It's about sipping local Phoenix beer in the bar on the corner surrounded by youngsters and watching old men fishing waist-deep in the ocean. You take buses, shop at corner cafes and cook up a storm using interesting local produce.

So here's our advice: ditch the travel agent, go it alone and stay in B&Bs and self-catering guest-houses. They're good, they're fun and they won't hurt your pocket. We've divided a selection into different regions: west, north, south-east, east and north-east, each offering something different.

WEST COAST

The western part of the island is the hottest and driest. It includes the towns of Flic en Flac and Black River. Both are popular with tourists and lively with nightclubs, bars and restaurants. Flic en Flac has the longest beach on the island and along with Black River is great for swimming and viewing dolphins. The villages of Le Morne and Tamarin are also in the west, as are the best surfing spots you'll find in Mauritius.

1. Les Lataniers Bleus Beach Villas & Guesthouse, Black River

Below La Tourelle Mountain, this B&B is set in a garden with trees which stretches to the beach. There is internet, TV and a bar.

Getting there: On Royal Road.

Accommodation: There are 12 rooms and four villas, each with

a private terrace. Villas have air conditioning, fans, TV, WiFi, a bathroom and individual entrance. There is daily housekeeping and a laundry and ironing service.

Rates: From about R2 800 to R5 890 a villa a night sleeping four to 10 people. One room, sleeping two, costs from R1 092 to R2 184 a room a night. South Africans should call ahead to see if there are any specials.

Food: Unlimited aperitifs and a continental breakfast are included in the cost. Lunch and dinner should be arranged before.

Children: Child-friendly, but watch them near the lagoon.

Things to do: There is a swimming pool and a lagoon in front of the house. The staff can organise excursions, taxis and anything else. Black River Village with its shops, restaurants and bars is three kilometres away.

Contact: Tel 230-483-6541, e-mail latableu@intnet.mu, web leslataniersbleus.com.

2. Escale Vacances Bungalows, Flic en Flac

Escale Vacances, across the road from the public beach of Flic en Flac, offers traditional hospitality that won't damage your budget. There is on-site parking, a laundry service and maid.

Getting there: Situated on Coastal Road, it's a 30-minute drive from the airport.

Accommodation: There are 18 double-storey apartments. The lower floor has a kitchen, terrace and living room with TV and two sofas to sleep two children or one adult. The top floor has an air-conditioned double bedroom, balcony and bathroom.

Rates: R500 a studio a night. R125 for a 125 cc scooter a day. Car hire starts from R300 a day.

Children: Welcome.

Food: It's self-catering, but restaurants are a short stroll away.



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conum publicum.



For those wanting to stay in the north, near the hubbub, but fond of a little peace, Trou aux Biches is ideal.

Things to do: Escale Vacances has a swimming pool, and the beach is nearby. You can rent a car (with or without a driver) or a scooter and book excursions, cruises, water sports and anything else you might wish at the main desk. Flic en Flac offers shops, spas, restaurants, a bank and more.

Contact: Tel 230-453-9389, e-mail ffagency@intnet.mu, web www.fftourist.com.

WEST COAST MUSTS:

Casela Nature and Leisure Park with a bird park and walks with lions – tel 230-727-6076, e-mail casela@intnet.mu, web www.caselayemen.mu.

Horse riding, Ecuries de la Vielle Cheminee – tel 230-686-5027.

Kitesurfing, Yoaneye Kite Centre,

Le Morne – tel 230-737-8296, e-mail info@yoaneye.com, web www.yoaneye.com.

Yanature Adventure, for hiking, trekking, trail running and more – tel 230-785-6177, e-mail yan@trekkingilemaurice.com, web www.trekkingilemaurice.com.

NORTH

The north coast is the most tourist-friendly part of the island, with everything you could need, from supermarkets and banking facilities to big-game fishing and tattoo parlours. It includes the capital Port Louis, which is about 43 kilometres from the airport, the main harbour and waterfront as well as the popular towns of Grand Baie and Trou aux Biches on the coast. For those wanting to stay in the north,

near the hubbub, but fond of a little peace, Trou aux Biches is ideal.

3. Eureka Guesthouses, Trou aux Biches

These four villas are all large, homely and by the beach. Each has air conditioning, on-site parking and a maid to clean, wash and iron. All villas have an alarm and there is a watchman.

Accommodation: Eureka 1 has steps leading to the beach and a kitchen, TV, DVD player and furnished veranda. There is an en suite bedroom with one double and single bed; two rooms with twin beds and separate bathrooms; and two double bedrooms, one with a sea-facing terrace. Eureka 2 has three en suite bedrooms, two double and one with twin beds.

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There is a DVD player, TV, fan, terrace and kitchen. Eureka 3 has a terrace, three bedrooms, two double, one with twin beds, two bathrooms and kitchen. Eureka 4 has an outdoor braai, kitchen, TV, DVD player, fan, three double bedrooms and two bathrooms. There are two spare beds in a separate room.

Rates: Eureka 1, sleeps 10, is R2 875 a unit a day (high season) and R2 125 (low). Eureka 2, sleeps 6, is R1 150 (high), R825 (low). Eureka 3, sleeps six, is R1 225 (high), R900 (low). Eureka 4, sleeps six, is R1 075 (high), R750 (low).

Food: Eureka 1 has the option of a cook. Dine out at Le Pescatore in Trou aux Biches for seafood, tel 230-265-6337, or Mont Choisy for pizza and pasta, tel 230-265-7000.

Things to do: Each villa has a file of nearby activities, supermarkets, restaurants and bars.

Contact: e-mail dianeox@intnet.mu.

NORTH COAST MUSTS:

Blue Water Diving Centre, Trou aux Biches – tel 230-265-6700, web www.bluewaterdivingcenter.com.

Windsurfing, Centre Nautique, Grand Baie – tel 230-263-8017.

Croisieres Australes catamaran trips – tel 230-670-4301.

Sky diving, Skydive Austral, Riviere du Rempart – web www.skydiveaustral.com.

Le Caudan Waterfront, Port Louis – tel 230-211-9500, web www.caudan.com.

Blue Safari Submarine, Royal Road, Grand Baie – tel 230-263-3333, web www.blue-safari.com.

SOUTH-EAST

About 20 minutes from the airport with some of the bluest waters, the south-east of the island is a popular place with visitors looking to socialise and relax. In the south-east are the towns of Mahebourg, which has many shops and a great



market, Pointe d'Esny, a more suburban area but with an idyllic beachfront, and Blue Bay, a popular marine park. You can take a bus from Mahebourg to Pointe d'Esny and Blue Bay or walk there.

4. Loiseau du Paradis Guesthouse, Pointe d'Esny

You get the feeling here that you are in a far-off jungle, as you duck under trees and skirt around plants. It is one road from the beach and has a tropical theme. There is a TV, library and bar.

Getting there: On Coastal Road.

Accommodation and Rates:

There are eight B&B rooms – divided into comfort and standard rooms – in the main house, all air-conditioned, with bathroom,

safe, mini bar, tea and coffee.

Comfort rooms are R467 single and R607 double a night for a room without balcony; with balcony is R514 single, R700 double and R888 triple. Standard rooms with balconies are R374 single, R467 double; without balcony is R280 single. The self-catering bungalow is great for families and has one air-conditioned double room, living room with two single beds, bathroom, kitchen and veranda with braai: R700 for four people. The villa has four rooms, a sea-facing veranda, three bathrooms and kitchen. For six people it's R1 682.

Food: A continental breakfast is served on a terrace for B&B (inclusive) and can be ordered for

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self-catering at R56 a person. There are restaurants nearby, such as Blue Bamboo and a *table d'hôte* across the road.

Children: Children are welcome, but preferably well-behaved ones.

Things to do: The manager organises excursions, taxis – anything. There is a small pool. The beach is directly accessed from the guesthouse. Walk to Blue Bay, a marine park where snorkelling trips are offered from the public beach.

Contact: Tel 230-631-5496, e-mail info@oiseauduparadis.com.

5. Azure Bungalow, Pointe d'Esny

This spacious two-storey bungalow on the beach has a lawn between house and sea. There is a living area, kitchen, internet, TV, laundry and parking. Cost includes maid.

Getting there: Coastal Road, Pointe d'Esny.

Accommodation & Rates: There are three bedrooms, two are en suite, and one separate bathroom. There is one double bed and four singles, plus two spare beds and cots. It can sleep six adults. There is a safe, fans and air conditioning in all the rooms. For two people it is R1 128 for the bungalow a night, for four people R1 410 and six people R1 692.

Children: They're welcome but need to be kept watch over near the ocean and balcony. The maid can babysit at no extra charge.

Things to do: Swim in the ocean, tan on the white beach or stroll to Blue Bay.

Food: It is self-catering. There are restaurants on the main road and in Blue Bay and a market in Mahebourg.

Contact: Tel 230-728-4826, e-mail cottous@intnet.mu.

6. Chantemer, Pointe d'Esny

Owner Indra Tinkler says: "We're a big family here. People come because they don't want to pay



expensive hotel bills and prefer to meet people in a casual setting than sit alone in a hotel."

Getting there: Coastal Road, Pointe d'Esny.

Accommodation: The upstairs studio has a balcony, one double and one single bed (ideal for a couple and child), a cot, lounge, bathroom and kitchen. The room next door has a balcony, double bed and bathroom. The en suite triple room upstairs has one double bed and one single. The downstairs en suite double room is convenient for one person. All rooms have a fan. Air conditioning costs extra.

Rates: Rooms are from R470 to R894 a unit a night.

Food: The studio bedroom has a kitchen and all rooms have fridges. There are restaurants nearby.

Children: Best to book the studio if you have a child. Keep watch of young ones by the balcony.

Activities: There's a lawn, beach and lagoon in front of the house. Indra can organise outings and inform you of eateries and taxis.

Contact: Tel 230-631-9688, e-mail chantemer@intnet.mu, web www.chantemer.mu.

SOUTH EAST MUSTS :

Dutch Ruins, Vieux Grand Port.

Ile aux Aigrettes Reserve

Naturelle – tel 230-631-2396,

web www.ile-aux-aigrettes.com.

Blue Bay Marine Park, Blue Bay.

EAST

The eastern section is a quieter, less touristic part of the island so not the place for those after a

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bustling nightlife. There are long stretches of some of the island's most beautiful beaches (as well as many luxury hotels) and it is close to the popular islet Ile aux Cerfs to which many catamarans and boats cruise. The east comprises the towns of Trou d'Eau Douce and Palmar on the coast and the more bustling Flacq, which is a 20-minute bus ride inland.

7. Casa Luna Villas, Palmar

According to the owner, on a good day and with very good binoculars, you can see Australia from these three villas. Casa Luna is ideal if privacy and rest are what you're after. It is situated on the quiet beachfront in Palmar.

Accommodation: Encompassed by a large garden and steps from

the beach are three self-catering villas, one in front and two behind. The double storey closest to the beach is identical to the one behind. They have a kitchen, alarm, living room, furnished terrace, TV and DVD player. There is a bathroom, washing machine, separate toilet and ironing facilities. There are two double bedrooms with balconies with views and air conditioning. The second back row villa has a kitchen, lounge, ironing facilities, CD player, fan, bathroom, one double bedroom and study with a fold-out bed. It sleeps four and is ideal for a couple and two kids.

Children: Welcome.

Food: Self-catering. Restaurants and shops are nearby.

Rates: Around R611 in low season and R1 128 in high season a unit a night.

Things to do: The beach is at your doorstep. Trou d'Eau Douce is a 10-minute drive or eight-kilometre walk away with boat trips to Ile aux Cerfs on offer.

Contact: e-mail 2sbc@intnet.mu, web www.wix.com/natili/casa-luna.

EAST COAST MUSTS:

Speed boat from Trou d'Eau Douce to Ile aux Cerfs – Trou d'Eau Douce Co-operative Ferry (tel 230-519-0452) and Croisières des Îles (tel 230-519-0876).

Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita for drinks, tel 230-402-3100, web www.fourseasons.com.

Centre de Flacq – banks, shops and a market every Wednesday and Sunday.

NORTH-EAST

Much more devoid of tourism, the north-east is the ideal retreat if R&R is what you fancy. It's close to Grand Baie in the north and Trou d'Eau Douce in the east, offering an oasis of peace between two centres

of various activity. It includes the town of Poste Lafayette.

8. La Maison D'été Beach Villas & Bungalows, Poste Lafayette

This establishment is situated in the isolated town of Poste Lafayette, where lush plant life meets a preserved lagoon and sandy coves less teeming with people than most parts of the island.

Getting there: It is on Coastal Road, one hour's drive from the airport and 35 minutes from the capital of Port Louis and Grand Baie. It isn't on the bus route so you'll have to take a taxi or hire a car to get to it.

Accommodation: There is a lounge, bar, restaurant, pool, recreation area and private parking. Accommodation consists of a villa with four double rooms and six double bungalows. Rooms have a sea-facing terrace and are en suite, spacious and include double beds with a fan and mini-bar. Bungalows have double or twin beds, a bathroom, kitchen, lounge and terrace. There is a daily cleaning service.

Children: Welcome.

Food: There is a restaurant with local and international dishes and good wines. Meals cost from R38 to R75. It is closed for lunch and dinner on Sunday and Monday for lunch. The bar is open during restaurant hours.

Things to do: There are mountain bikes, kayaks, scuba diving equipment, table tennis, volleyball, internet and more. Booking for excursions, car rental, horse riding, diving, hiking, spa and more can be arranged.

Rates: Accommodation is from around R376 to R470 a person a night.

Contact: Tel 230-410-5039, e-mail info@lamaisondete.com, web www.lamaisondete.com.

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Travel planner

Best time to go:

Mauritius is a year-round tourist destination with a hot, wet season from December to April and a cool, dry season from May to November.

Flights:

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport is in the south-west of Mauritius. Direct flights from Joburg or Durban take four to five hours and 11 hours from the UK and are operated by Air Mauritius and British Airways.

Transport: If you have a valid driving license and are 23 years old or above, you can hire a car. There are rental shops in the airport, including Avis, Budget, Europcar, ADA and Hertz.

Buses run from 05h30 to 20h00 in towns and 06h30 to 18h30 between villages. Fares are cheap. While slow, the

bus drivers aren't reckless.

Taxi-trains are communal and the cost is divided between occupants.

Language: English is the official language, but most people speak French and French Creole.

Currency: The Mauritian rupee (Rs) is used. 4 Rs equals about R1. ATMs are widespread but not everywhere. Find them at the airport, larger supermarkets and outside some banks.

Safety: Avoid remote areas and use common sense, especially in tourist hubs Port Louis, Grand Baie, Flic en Flac and Tamarin. Incidents of assault and rape do occur. For emergencies contact Tourist Police Service on tel 230-213-2818.



Get more online...

While you're in Mauritius, try making a few of the local, mouth-watering cocktails.
www.getaway.co.za/article/mauritian-cocktails



www.getaway.co.za



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