

## Discovering Mauritius - Beyond the Beaches



Mauritius is often described as a tropical destination, and it is easy to see why. White sandy beaches, turquoise waters, and breathtaking sunsets lure travellers from across the globe, but there is much more to this island than meets the eye feels **Pooja Amritkar**

During my seven days in Mauritius, I experienced a paradise full of scenic landscapes, cultural treasures, and adrenaline-pumping adventures that go far beyond simply sipping wine on the beach. My trip started by meeting Urmila, our wonderful guide from Tam Tam Tours, who instantly made me feel at home with her warm and kind Mauritian hospitality.

stories of Mauritius coming to life here.

**Caudan Waterfront** in Port Louis holds an interesting food tour where we had the chance to try local street food like Dhol puri and the very refreshing Alouda Pillay. This lively hub is a great spot for shopping, dining, artistic, and cultural experiences. The festive Christmas decorations and colourful umbrellas lit up the place and gave us some Instagram-worthy shots. The waterfront is a great spot to take a walk or watch the sunset, with the harbour providing a picturesque backdrop.

### Nature & Adventure

**La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park** is an adventure lover's paradise. This 450 acres of land offers a variety of fun activities including hiking, quad biking, luge-karting, bicycle zipline, and crossing the Nepalese bridge. The park's walking trails lead us to breathtaking viewpoints and the famous geological wonder, 23 coloured Earth where the soil appears in layers of vibrant hues, a consequence of a volcanic eruption centuries ago. It is an exceptional view along with the many natural waterfalls and valleys that give a whole new perspective to the beauty of Mauritius. As I zipped through the air toward a waterfall, the adrenaline rush was high, and the view was breathtaking. It's an experience I'd recommend to anyone looking for adventure in Mauritius. We also saw deer and had lunch at the park's restaurant famous for their European, Indian, and local cuisines.

No trip to Mauritius would be complete without exploring **Chamarel**, home to two most iconic landmarks: the Chamarel Waterfall and the Seven Coloured Earth. The waterfall is a spectacle of nature, the tallest single-drop waterfall in Mauritius at about 100m high cascading down a cliff into lush greenery below. Nearby, the Seven Coloured Earth is a fascinating geological phenomenon where layers of red, brown, and purple soil create an ethereal effect. Although the 2-hour ride from our hotel to Chamarel was tiring, these spectacular views made up for it. We had lunch at Le Chamarel Restaurant, 260 meters above sea level where the panoramic view is as amazing as the food.

### Underwater Expedition

If you are looking for a unique, thrilling yet safe adventure, the **Blue Safari Submarine** is for you. I have always loved the underwater world and this was a rare opportunity to actually go



### History & Culture

Mauritius has a rich colonial history, and nowhere is it more apparent than at **Château de Labourdonnais**. This 19th-century estate, a stunning mansion surrounded by orchards and gardens, a true testament to Mauritius's rich history. The Victorian-style master bedroom and the rare collection of Paul & Virginie are worth seeing. The highlight for me was the rum tasting session, where I savored a variety of locally produced rums infused with exotic flavours. My favourite was the coffee-vanilla rum. We wrapped up our visit by having a delicious and relaxing lunch at La Table du Château, overlooking the garden and château.

**Grand Bassin**, or Ganga Talao, is considered to be the 13th Jyotirlinga and the only Jyotirlinga out of India. The towering statues of Lord Shiva and Maa Durga, each 108 feet tall, greeted us as we entered. Surrounded by lush greenery and a serene lake, it's a spiritual haven for the soul. During Maha Shivaratri, devotees come from all around the island and will walk miles to collect sacred water from Ganga Talao.

Next, we visited the **Natural History Museum**, the oldest museum in Mauritius. The museum boasts an impressive array of exhibits that showcase Mauritius's unique biodiversity and history, including the famous Dodo – an extinct flightless bird endemic to Mauritius. It is captivating to see the old

35 meters deep for 40 minutes, watch corals with colourful fish, discover a 17th-Century anchor and the Star Hope shipwreck – all without getting wet. This was undoubtedly one of the most memorable parts of my trip.

For five days, we stayed at Le Méridien Ile Maurice, a true paradise of comfort and luxury. The buffet was a dream, offering a wide variety of cuisines, with a standout Indian section that is hard to resist. On our last day, we moved to Canonnier Beachcomber,

where the rustic charm of the place stole my heart. The highlight here? Watching one of the most breathtaking sunsets I've ever seen.

Every corner of Mauritius offers something unique, from its stunning beaches to its towering mountains to its warm, welcoming people. This slice of paradise is worth every minute and every place is a postcard moment.

## The Spirit of the Kreol Festival in Mauritius

One of the best times to visit Mauritius is in December, not only because of the perfect weather and Christmas decorations all around but also because of the vibrant **International Kreol Festival**. It's an experience like no other and on this December, from 12th to 22nd, the island was alive with the sounds, colours, traditions, dance, and flavours of Creole culture. The theme for this year was Kreolite boté nou mauricianisme – Creolity, the beauty of our Mauritianism. The celebration is a unique opportunity for locals and tourists to connect with the heart of Mauritius, the soul of its people, and the beauty of its shared history.

The festival kicked off on December 12th with an opening ceremony at the iconic **Le Morne**, a place rich in history and significance. The mountain, towering majestically over the island, stands as a symbol of resistance and resilience. The importance of Le Morne follows a dark and tragic legend when huge numbers of slaves were brought to the island against their will and forced to work. Many slaves managed to escape and seek refuge in the deep and dense forests of Le Morne Brabant Mountain.

However, when the British defeated the French and the army officials approached the base with the aim of delivering this life-changing good news - slavery had been abolished and they were all free now - the escaped slaves, known as maroons, were unaware of this. Tragically, fearing they were about to be captured and forced back to a life of bondage and slavery, they choose to leap from the cliffs into the ocean, preferring death to the risk of enslavement.

Prime Minister, Navin Ramgoolam, inaugurated the ceremony. Tourism Minister Richard Duval and Junior Minister Sydney Pierre emphasized the importance of celebrating Creole identity and how it has shaped Mauritius, "Creolité is the living flame of our multicultural country. And this Festival today represents openness and fusion," he said. This festival goes around the different corners of Mauritius, giving everyone an opportunity to be a part of it. "Our Creole identity has become our strength. Where everyone respects each other's identity. That's why we want this Festival to become an unforgettable moment for everyone", concluded the Minister of Tourism.



Tourism Minister Richard Duval



The next evening was Sega Jazz performance at Le Four à Chaux, Trou d'Eau Douce and we had fun grooving and dancing to the beats on the beach. The highlight for me was the upbeat Grand Concert at Cruise Terminal les Salines, in Port Louis, where talented local and international musicians gathered to perform on the big stage. The crowd was electric and although I couldn't understand much of the lyrics, I found myself swept up in the energy and vibing to the catchy tunes. It was heartwarming to see families, friends, parents, and kids all coming together to create beautiful memories on this unforgettable evening.

The next day, Kreol festival took us to **Grand Baie** to taste Mauritian cuisine and attend a beach concert. Tourists and locals gathered around the many food stalls, savouring dishes that were a mixture of African, Indian, Chinese, and European. I even danced a little with the performers backstage. The festival has it all - good food and good music - two things that quickly bring people together.

I had the privilege of meeting so many locals and it was clear how much they were enjoying this 10-day festival. Although, I couldn't stay for all 10 days, the International Kreol Festival is a powerful reminder of how culture connects people, breaks down barriers, and celebrates the beauty of diversity. Mauritius truly shows the Creol magic.