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Top 10 best things to see & do in Mauritius

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Monday newsletters always feature top 10 travel lists to inspire.

Today: Top 10 best things to see & do in Mauritius

Mauritius is considered a dream destination by many with its heavenly beaches, turquoise waters, and sublime luxury hotels. This small island gem in the middle of the Indian Ocean hides far more treasures that deserve to be discovered during a romantic getaway or a family vacation. The population, its history, cuisine, culture and nature are just some of the facets that make the island unique and rich. Here's my top 10 of the things to see and do in Mauritius (outside your hotel) and to bring back home unforgettable memories from your stay on the island.

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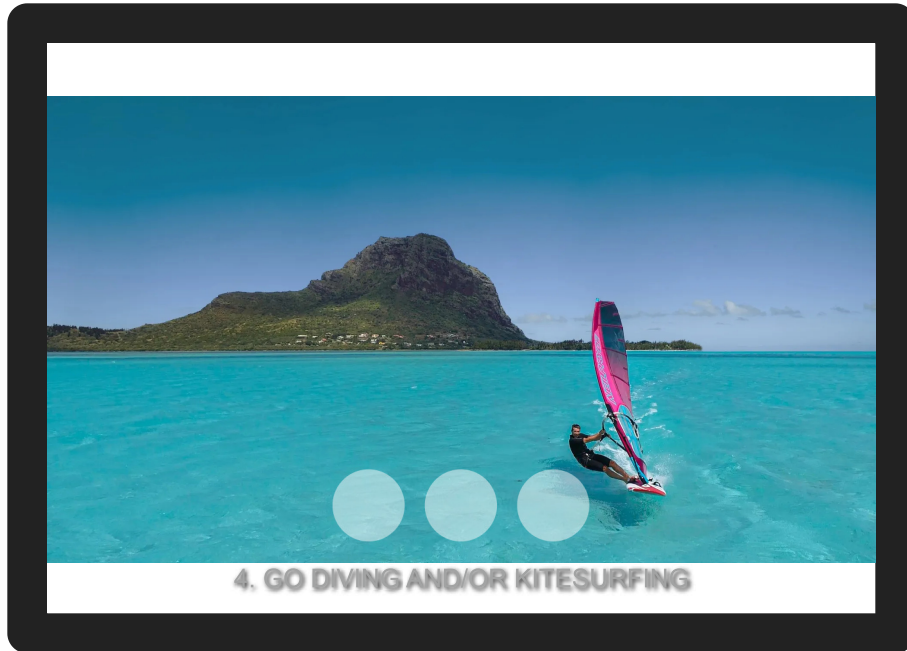
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Think I missed one? Share your favorite thing to see or do in Mauritius in the **comments section**.



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10. SAVOR THE ISLAND'S DELICIOUS CUISINE

An island with so many different cultures can only offer an extraordinary culinary richness. Mauritian cuisine is indeed rich from its origins and its blending. On every table in Mauritius, whether in a hotel or at home, you will taste flavors that may remind you of other countries, but that are unique to Mauritian culture. The dishes are rather spicy, but very tasty and suitable for foreign guests, most of the time. If you want to have a more authentic experience of Mauritian cuisine, you must try its street-food. It is found everywhere, from street corners to markets or shopping malls: dhol puris, chili cakes ("gateaux piment"), samoussas, dumplings ("boulettes"), bryani, or fried noodles. Hotels offer more and more themed evenings where you can taste these delights during your holidays in Mauritius. Food festivals are also held throughout the year, such as the China Town culinary festival, which focuses on Chinese-Mauritian cuisine, and the Port-Louis bread festival, among others.

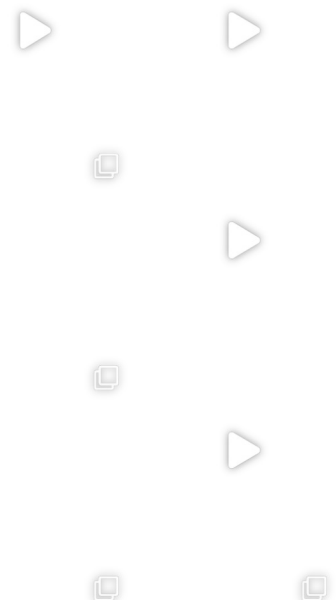
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9. EXPLORE MAURITIUS' HISTORICAL HERITAGE

With its rich history, Mauritius abounds with vestiges of its different colonial eras. In the capital city Port Louis, several buildings are of interest to tourists, like the Government House (built in 1738, facing the harbor), the splendid Port Louis Theatre (one of the first to be built in the southern hemisphere), the Central Post Office (all in stone, next to the harbor), the building of the Supreme Court and next to it, the ancient prison. Also in Port Louis, there is the Aapravasi Ghat which saw the landing of the first Indian indentured laborers in the 19th century, and which forms parts of the UNESCO World Heritage list. The south-east of the island is also home to a concentration of historical remains, especially from the time of the Dutch who landed at Vieux Grand Port in the 17th century; there, you will discover the Frederik Hendrick museum and the ancillary ruins. In Mahebourg, the Naval Museum should as well be added to your list.

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8. TASTE SUGAR, RUM AND TEA

Sugar and tea have been two of the most flourishing industries in Mauritius for a long time, and still have a privileged place in the country today, even if these sectors are no more considered as pillars of the Mauritian economy (which is tourism now). The plantation of sugar cane, introduced by the Dutch, has greatly decreased during the recent decades, same for tea. Yet, these two products are still very popular among locals as well as tourists. Rum, produced from sugar cane juice or molasses, now also forms part of the island's flagship products. In Pamplemousses, L'Aventure du Sucre, a former sugar factory converted into a museum, features a beautiful pedagogical tour on the history of cane sugar in Mauritius. The Tea Route, in the southern part of the island, will immerse you in the history of this delicious beverage through several sites. You will visit the tea plantations, the factory and museums. Tastings are also on the menu, and you can bring home various flavors of teas and unexpected by-products such as tea chutney.



7. VISIT THE SEVEN-COLORED EARTH IN CHAMAREL

A key attraction of Mauritius is the Seven-colored Earth located in the heights of Chamarel. An unexpected site formed by a geological phenomenon that gave to the earth a palette of seven colors. This unique place deserves to be seen. Nearby, you will be amazed by the view of the Chamarel waterfall from the view point. If you're lucky, you will see monkeys or the elegant Mauritian Tropicbird. Parks and nature reserves are also within easy reach, such as Ebony Forest or Lavilleon Park, where you can recharge your batteries and learn more about Mauritian nature, while the more adventurous will try some supervised open air activities. Chamarel is one of the places that reflect the authenticity of Mauritius. It is a quiet small village located on high ground. Take a walk, visit the small church of Saint Anne,

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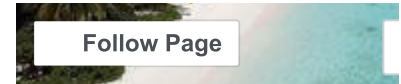


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6. TAKE A STROLL IN THE PAMPLEMOUSSES BOTANICAL GARDEN

Pamplemousses Botanical Garden, or Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, is one of the most visited sites in Mauritius, and the oldest botanical garden in the southern hemisphere. Created under the management of Mahé de Labourdonnais by the king's intendant, Pierre Poivre, more than 300 years ago, the garden houses an extraordinary flora with a myriad of native and endemic plants. Animals have also taken up residence there: turtles, deer, and birds of all species. For nature lovers, Pamplemousses garden is the ideal place to stroll with the family or your partner along the paths bordered with greenery. You might get a chance to see a Talipot tree blooming – it only happens every 30 to 80 years, before the tree dies. The famous ponds with giant water lilies are also worth a visit, perfect place to take some souvenir photos... Take the time to make a small expedition in the village of Pamplemousses after your visit to the garden, and see the oldest church of the island still standing, St Francis of Assisi, with its unique architecture in Mauritius.



5. LEARN TO DANCE SEGA

In Mauritius, the Sega reflects a whole culture that vibrates to the sound of music. One cannot resist its frenetic rhythm produced by the locally made traditional instruments. Sega dancers move in cadence, dressed in beautiful colorful skirts, accompanied by their partners also wearing typical costumes. More than only a local traditional music, Sega has today the status of cultural heritage of the UNESCO. Originally sung and danced by slaves, it is now part of Mauritian life and heritage, and continues to echo in the hearts of people thanks to the triangle, the maravanne, the ravanne and the djembe, the typical instruments, sometimes modernised by some artists. Ti Frère, Serge Lebrasse and Luc Legris are among the pioneers of Sega in Mauritius. The lyrics, written in Creole, are always very colorful and touch the soul as they express life, heartaches, uprooting, and love. It is a must, you have to learn to dance Sega during your stay!



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4. GO DIVING AND/OR KITESURFING

Mauritius is an island surrounded by warm and clear waters, and practising water sports is a must. Most hotels in Mauritius offer very accessible activities such as pedalo, kayak, stand-up paddle, and glass-bottom boat. A lot of operators will also cater for more specific outings such as a catamaran outing during which you can see dolphins or big-game fishing. For the more daring, there is the submarine ride, the undersea walk, the underwater scooter and the parasailing that will make you get up in the air, just before falling back into the lagoon. Mauritius is also renowned worldwide for its diving and kitesurfing spots by both professionals and amateurs. There are various types of diving activities for sea lovers of all levels. The marine parks of Blue Bay and Balaclava are to be seen by snorkelling enthusiasts, and those who practise free or bottle diving, will be delighted to discover all the intriguing spots around the island. You will easily find recognized and certified diving centres in some hotels and in the coastal regions. Kite surfers will choose the lagoons of the southwest and southeast.



3. RELAX ON THE ISLAND'S IDYLIC BEACHES

Mauritius is surrounded by beautiful white sandy beaches and cliffs that offer, together with the blue lagoon, a dreamy scene that varies according to the seasons and the time of the day. The coastal landscapes also change according to the region, they are nothing alike. In the North, more touristic, the calm and sheltered lagoons call for relaxation and lay back, with a pleasant temperature all the time. In the Wild South, the south-west wind blowing more or less strongly all year round, makes the waves dance endlessly. The East features a long stretch of beautiful sandy beaches, but it is also

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the windiest part of the island, especially in winter. One of the most popular beaches, Belle Mare, is also one of the longest beaches on the island. Ile aux Cerfs, an isle set in the lagoon a few minutes by boat from the coast, is one of the most visited sites by tourists. Finally, the West, with its warm and dry climate, is more popular for water activities such as kitesurfing, surfing or deep-sea fishing.



2. TOUR PORT-LOUIS, MAURITIUS' VIBRANT CAPITAL CITY

A visit to Port-Louis, the capital of Mauritius, is a must when you stay in the island. The noted French governor, Mahe de Labourdonnais, constructed the city in the year 1735. Today it is the economic and administrative center of the island, a city where the ancient and the modern meet. Port Louis has conserved many historic and colonial buildings throughout the years. One of them is a fortification named Fort Adelaide built by the British in 1835. At the city center, there are a number of French styled buildings, which enhance the charm of Port Louis. You can tour the city and see some wonderful French colonial buildings, such as the Government House and the Municipal Theater. Other main tourist attractions in Port Louis include the Caudan Waterfront, the Central Market, the 18th Century Police Barracks and the Mauritian Chinatown. While strolling the city streets you will even come across the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals, the main city Mosque and the Natural History Museum, where you can get a glimpse of the cultural heritage of the island.



1. BE CHARMED BY THE PEOPLE, THE HEART OF MAURITIAN HOSPITALITY

As soon as you set foot on Mauritian land, one thing will strike you: the people. With their spontaneous smile, you will instantly feel welcome. This warm attitude is rooted in the people of Mauritius who are the result of an extraordinary mix of cultures, religions and ethnicities. Here, it is these differences that unite people and make their strength. All the communities live in harmony by nurturing their own culture and heritage, and sharing them with visiting guests. If you want to understand and discover Mauritius, it is essential to mingle with its inhabitants. A stroll through the heart of the towns and villages, a stopover in shopping centers, or a day at the beach to meet the picnickers, mainly on Sundays, are among the activities to be preferred. You can also contact local operators for guided tours. Party-goers will be able to meet locals in night clubs, especially during weekends when night life is more active. Spontaneity, hospitality and sharing are what you will bring back from your foray into authentic Mauritius.

