

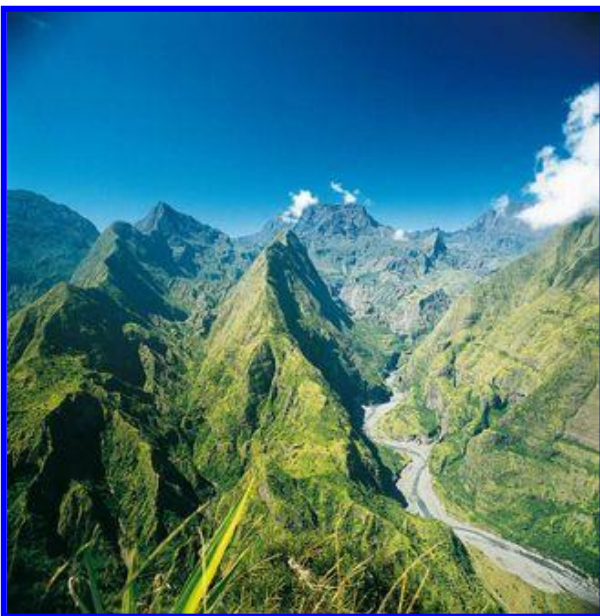
MAURITIUS/REUNION

OCT 2010 - TIM

During October, myself, my wife and 8 month old daughter headed to Reunion and Mauritius for some sun and relaxation. We flew with Air Austral ex Sydney direct to Reunion. The service and food with Air Austral was very good, with the only downside being the lack of personal entertainment systems. The movies playing on the big screen were in French which also made it a long flight, but overall I would recommend flying with Air Austral.

Unfortunately we only had 2 nights in Reunion before flying on to Mauritius, this only left us with 1 full day which was not enough to see some of Reunions amazing scenery. We stayed at the Grand Hotel du Lagon, located beachfront on the west cost of Reunion, approx 40 mins from the main town and airport, Saint Dennis. We spent our day swimming and exploring the nearby town of Saint Gilles.

Reunion, located in the Indian Ocean, is a French colony with most locals not speaking much English, so it would be well worth brushing up on a few French phrases, as we found it hard to converse with them at times. Reunion is a haven for surfing, hiking through the famous 'cirques' and adventure tours. Some of these tours include viewing one of the world's most active volcanoes, Piton de la Fournaise. It last erupted in 2004 and spews orange and yellow lava day and night. A helicopter tour over this bubbling cauldron is a fantastic way to view it.



Some of the spectacular scenery in Reunion



The entrance to Grand Hotel du Lagon, Reunion

After our 2 night Reunion stopover it was a quick 45 minute flight on to Mauritius. Our transfer from the airport, located down the south end of the island, to our resort which was located in Bell Mare on the east coast, only took 50 minutes. Our first 3 nights spent at the 5 star Beau Rivage was amazing! The weather, location and food could not be faulted. We mainly spent our time lazing by the pool/beach, waterskiing, eating and visiting local markets.



The pool area at Beau Rivage, Mauritius.

Many people have a belief that Mauritius is an expensive destination. The initial 'package price' will of course be more than a Fiji or Thailand package, but many people don't realise most resorts in Mauritius include at least breakfast and dinner (with options to include lunch). Other activities such as waterskiing are also included at most resorts, so we found that once we arrived we actually didn't spend much money at all.

Of course, like anywhere around the world, if you purchase extras such as drinks etc in your hotel then they will be expensive, but a short stroll to a nearby supermarket saw us stock up on all essentials at very reasonable rates eg. 375ml beer AUD\$1.50. The food served at our resorts was all world class freshly prepared cuisine and a far cry from the run of the mill 'all you can eat' smorgasbord. I can definitely dispel the myth that Mauritius is just for the lifestyles of the rich and famous!

After a relaxing 3 nights at Beau Rivage, we picked up a hire car and drove to our next resort, Legends, located at Grand Gaube in the north east. En route to Legends we drove via the capital Port Louis, on the west coast. We spent a few hours picking up bargains at busling markets and also had lunch at the Port Louis waterfront area. Port Louis was a change of pace from resort life, but most worthwhile to see the other side of Mauritius.

I would highly recommend hiring a car, as it made everything very accessible and was a great way to fill in an hour or two if you had had enough sun for the day! I was surprised at how easy and quick it was to get around the island, it only took me 1 hour to drive from north to south, on the motorway. Some roads are a bit second rate, but as long as you take your time and have a good map, you should find driving in Mauritius stress free.



Motorised activities such as waterskiing are complimentary



Our private beach at Legends Resort

The 5 star Legends Resort was hard to fault. Just like Beau Rivage, the food was amazing, and the beachfront location was as close to paradise as you could get. The resort wrapped itself around a couple of lagoons, and along with 4 pools, it gave you a sense of privacy as most guests spread themselves around the various bathing areas, thus never seeming to be overcrowded.

It was handy being a 10 minute drive into the popular tourist hub of Grand Baie, although as we ate at Legends each night, we only travelled into Grand Baie briefly to check out the shopping.



The hustle and bussle of the Port Louis markets. Well worth it to pick up some souvenirs and genuine brand garments such as Guess, Abercrombie & Fitch, Calvin Klein, Prada etc.



The modernised Port Louis Waterfront



Our daughter, Lily, was a huge hit with locals!

TIMS TIPS:

- *Don't pigeon hole Mauritius as 'too expensive', it is actually a very good value for money holiday destination. A great option for those who have done the Bali's, Thailand's, Fiji's etc***
- *Hire a car, this gives you the freedom to visit smaller/less touristy villages, markets etc***
- *Incorporate an African safari into your trip, as it only a short flight from Mauritius***
- *Don't buy alcohol from your hotel, it can be very expensive. Grab some at duty free on arrival or pick some up very cheaply from a local supermarket***
- *If going for 7+ nights, try and mix up your stay at 2 resorts. A change of scenery and cuisine made it seem like we had two holidays in one!***

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