



# INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

**Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion, Mayotte, & Comoros**

**September 11 - October 03, 2024**  
**Led by Local Guides**

The Indian Ocean covers about one-fifth of the world's total ocean area, spanning from the Eastern shores of Africa to the western shores of Asia and Australia. It is the youngest of the three major oceans, with fewer islands when compared to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Many have explored it - from the Egyptians as early as 2300 BC to the Arabs between the 9th and 15th centuries. European navigators began their explorations of the Ocean in the early 16th century, including the famous British navigator James Cook in 1772. This journey voyages to some of the Indian Ocean's most stunning islands, including the Maldives, Seychelles, Comoros, Mauritius, and Réunion.

The **Maldives**, an archipelagic state in the South India shores, comprises 1,192 coral islands in a double chain of 26 atolls. The islands are known for their attractive white sandy beaches, striking emerald waters, and beautiful over-the-water bungalows. It is also home to around 5% of the world's reefs that attract thousands of fish, making it an excellent destination for snorkeling.

The journey continues west towards the African coast to **Seychelles**, an island republic consisting of 115 islands, mostly uninhabited. It is a paradise for nature lovers who will find its lush, tropical vegetation, rocky mountains, and pristine sandy beaches worth exploring. Seychelles is among the world's leading countries that protect its threatened species, such as the Seychelles black parrot and the Aldabra giant tortoise.

Next is **Mauritius**, a French-occupied island known for its stunning beaches, lush national parks, towering mountains, and iridescent lagoons. Although settled by Portuguese sailors in the early 16th century, it was dominated by the French in the early 18th century contributing to its profound French presence.

A short flight takes you to **Réunion**, another small French volcanic island off the east coast of Madagascar with a substantial ethnic diversity. The country has a high rate of endemic species of plants and is home to many native bird species. Its waters teem with sea life, including eels, angelfish, sea urchins, and sea turtles. Dolphins and humpback whales migrate annually between June and September to breed.

An exciting new addition to this program is **Mayotte**, a French territory that has been politically separated from the rest of the Comoros since the 1970s. This stunning and unique country contains around 30 protected areas that are, home to more than 1,300 plant species – half of them endemic. While there are few mammal species such as lemurs and flying foxes found here, there are many reptiles, snails, butterflies, and bird species that litter the island. Its waters contain some 250 different species of coral reef within a National Marine Park teeming with over 3,600 marine species.


Not far from Mayotte are the **Comoros** Islands on the northern end of the Mozambique Channel off the east coast of Africa that receives very few visitors. This tropical island paradise is a unique destination where one can escape the crowds and familiarity of the well-known tourist paths offering an exotic blend of rich history, strong culture, and magnificent landscapes.

**Ihab Zaki**  
Managing Director

**Wednesday, September 11**  
**Arrive in Malè (MALDIVES) - Villa Park** 

Upon arrival at **Malè International Airport**, meet a representative of the *Villa Park Resort or similar* and transfer by shared **speedboat** to the *Resort*. The rest of the day is free to relax, swim, or soak up the sun. Enjoy dinner and overnight at the *Resort*. **(D)**

*Note: Standard check in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on September 10 or early morning of September 11, an extra hotel night needs to be booked.*

**Thursday - Friday, September 12 - 13**  
**Villa Park** 

Free days at leisure to enjoy the beach, relax by the pool or swim in the turquoise ocean. Optional activities can be arranged directly through the *Resort*, such as **snorkeling, fishing, island-hopping excursions, photo flight by seaplane, and submarine excursion**. Enjoy lunches and dinners and overnights at the *Resort*. **(B,L,D)**

*Note: Please ask the front desk for any desired activities.*

**Saturday, September 14**  
**Malè - Colombo (SRI LANKA)** 

After breakfast, return to **Malè** by shared speedboat and explore the city on a **guided tour**. Malè is the capital of the

Maldives and one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Stroll through the **fish market** to watch the fishermen clean and sell their fresh catches. Visit the **National Museum** to learn more about the Maldivian culture and the **Friday Mosque**, one of the oldest mosques in the city. Wander the local **market** and then transfer to the airport for the evening flight to **Mahè**, via Colombo, Sri Lanka. **(B,L)**

**Sunday, September 15**  
**Colombo - Mahè Island (SEYCHELLES)** 

Upon arrival in **Mahè, Seychelles** around **7:30am**, meet the local representative and transfer to the city of **Victoria**, the capital and largest city in the Seychelles, for a visit. If the **National Museum** is open, stop to learn more about the Maldivian culture and see the **Friday Mosque**. After a chance to explore the local **market**, continue to the *Fisherman's Cove Resort or similar* on the northeast side of the island for check-in, free time and overnight. **(B,L)**

*Note: There are no twin rooms available at the Resort.*

**Monday, September 16**  
**Mahè (Praslin & La Digue Islands)** 

After breakfast, embark on a boat ride to **Praslin**, the second-largest island in the Seychelles. Explore the

prehistoric forest of **Vallee de Mai**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered the original "Garden of Eden." Enjoy a delicious **Creole barbecue lunch**, and then take the ferry to **La Digue**, known for its isolated beaches and calm shallow waters. Head to visit the **L'Union Estate**, a refurbished colonial plantation and one of the oldest examples of French colonial architecture in the Seychelles. See **Anse Source d'Argent Beach**, featuring massive rocks and monoliths, and then return to the *Resort* for overnight. **(B,L)**

*Note: Please be aware that the 1.5-hour ferry ride to Praslin may encounter rough and choppy waters. For those who are prone to seasickness, we recommend carrying nausea prevention medicine to ensure a more comfortable journey.*

**Tuesday, September 17**

**Mahè (Ste. Anne Marine Park)**



On today's boat excursion, visit the **St. Anne Marine Park Islands**, the first of its kind in the Indian Ocean. Discover the treasures of the park and learn the rich history the ancestors of the Seychellois people left behind. Today, conservation has provided a haven for many indigenous species of Seychelles, including the free-roaming giant land tortoises at **Moyenne Island**. Enjoy lunch at the island's *Jolly Roger Restaurant*, then spend the rest of the day **cruising** the marine park islands, occasionally stopping at the beautiful coral reefs for **snorkeling** opportunities. The colorful tropical fish are a spectacular site. Return to the *Resort* for overnight. **(B,L)**

**Wednesday, September 18**

**Mahè (Glass Bottom Boat & Wild South)**



Today's exciting **Glass Bottom Boat** excursion allows those who are unable to snorkel the opportunity to view the coral and marine life through the glass at the bottom of the boat. Return to the port and head south past green tea plantations and picturesque villages to **Cap Lazare Nature Reserve**, arriving in time for a Creole buffet-style lunch on the beachfront. Walk along the **nature trails** and watch the free-roaming giant land tortoises. There may be some time for relaxing and swimming at a small, secluded **beach** in Cap Lazare. Return to the *Resort*, free afternoon at leisure and overnight. **(B,L)**

**Thursday, September 19**

**Mahè - Port Louis (MAURITIUS)**



Transfer in the early morning to the airport for a non-stop **9:30 am** flight to **Port Louis**, on the island of **Mauritius**, arriving around **12:00 pm**. Arab explorers were the first to discover the uninhabited island as they forged the "spice route" around 975AD. The earliest recorded "discovery" was in 1507 by Portuguese sailors. Upon arrival, meet the local representative and transfer to *Lagoon Attitude Hotel or similar* for check-in, free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,D)**

**Friday, September 20**

**Port Louis (North Tour)**



After breakfast, meet the guide and head north to the busy city of **Port Louis** where development first started on the island nation under French and British occupation. Visit the beautiful **SSR Botanical Gardens**, full of endemic plants and other treasures, and the spectacular **Kaylasson Multicolored Tamil Temple**. Enjoy a delectable lunch at **Le Chateau de Labourdonnais**, a restored Victorian mansion on a sugar plantation. The drive continues to the island's northern tip to **Cap Malheureux**, a village famous for its red-roofed chapel. In the late afternoon, return to the *Hotel* for some leisure time, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, September 21**

**Port Louis (South Tour)**



Begin the day with a drive to **Bois Chéri**, the largest producer of tea in Mauritius, to learn the process of tea manufacturing. Next, visit **Ganga Talao** (also known as Grand Bassin), the "sacred lake" and one of the Hindus' most ancient pilgrim destinations. This crater lake is nestled in the secluded mountains in the **Savanne District** of Mauritius, and at more than 1,800 feet above sea level, it is as much a visual delight as a spiritual stronghold. Drive through the **Black River Gorges** with photo stops along the way and enjoy a local lunch at **Le Chamarel Panoramic Restaurant** offering spectacular views of the mountainous landscape fringed by the clear blue waters. Stop to visit the breathtaking **Chamarel Waterfalls**, the tallest single-drop waterfall in Mauritius, and a unique natural wonder hen return to the *Hotel*, free time at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, September 22**

**Port Louis (Local Lunch & Winery Tour)**



Enjoy a light breakfast and free morning at leisure, then meet the guide around 11:00 am for an exciting lunch and winery excursion at **Kot Marie Michelle**, a restaurant established in a village by two young local grandmothers. Surrounded by mountains, sugar cane fields, and tea crops, the restaurant is far from the noise of any city. The fixed menu offers exclusively traditional cuisine based on products from the region. It is a unique experience of local life, authentic Mauritian cuisine, and hospitality. After lunch, drive to the scenic and unique **Takamaka boutique winery** to taste their lychee wines. This is the only winery in the world that makes wine from lychees! Return to the *Hotel* around 3:00 pm for a free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, September 23**

**Mauritius - Sainte-Marie (RÉUNION)**



Free morning at leisure then transfer to the airport for the **1:30 pm** flight to **Réunion**. Upon arrival, at around **2:30 pm**, transfer to *Nautile Beach Hotel or similar* on the island's west coast. Arab traders initially discovered this five-million-year-old volcanic island, followed by the Portuguese, English, and finally, the French, who claimed

the island in 1643. The *Hotel* sits on the edge of magnificent **Hermitage Lagoon Beach**, protected by a reef. Its stunning location and typical Creole atmosphere make it one of the most charming hotels on the island. The rest of the afternoon will be free at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the *Hotel*. **(B,D)**

**Tuesday, September 24**

**Sainte-Marie (Helicopter Tour)**



Réunion boasts 360° breathtaking World Heritage scenery. It is home to some of the most spectacular waterfalls on the planet, including **White Waterfall**, one of the world's highest. Its striking natural landscape includes many rivers, lagoons, and **Piton de la Fournaise Volcano**, and an exciting **helicopter tour** is an ideal way to see it all. After the 55-minute flight, transfer to a **vanilla plantation** to learn about this exotic spice and how it is grown and processed on the island. Return to the *Hotel* for a free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,D)**

*Note: A valid passport is required for the helicopter tour. It is essential to ensure that you have your passport with you before departing for the tour*

**Wednesday, September 25**

**Sainte-Marie (The Deep South)**



After breakfast, embark on a tour of the **Deep South** along the wild Reunion coast. The first stop will be **Grand Anse**, one of the most beautiful **beaches** on the island - very wild and green. Discover the **lava flow road**, which has changed the landscape throughout the years due to volcanic eruptions. The most recent and most significant eruption was in 2007. Continue the drive to the village **Piton Sainte Rose** and visit the **church** surrounded by lava in 1977. Stop at **Anse des Cascades**, a charming fisher's harbor with beautiful waterfalls, before reaching **Cap Méchant**, an amazing coast where the lava flow formed into rock. Return to the *Hotel*, free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, September 26**

**Sainte-Marie (Salazie)**



Head to the eastern part of the island to **Salazie**, one of the must-see villages of Réunion, known for its gorgeous waterfalls and typical Creole houses. Located in the east part of the island, we will be driving for about 2½ hours (depending on traffic) by private car to reach the little village of **Hell Bourg**. Stop to visit sites such as waterfalls (including the most famous **Voile de la Mariée**, aka 'The Bride's Veil' fall). Upon arrival in Hell Bourg, enjoy lunch at a *Creole restaurant* consisting of "caris" (rice, beans or lentils, and meat or fish). After lunch, explore the village and discover its traditions, local art, and crafts and enjoy its lovely authentic old houses before returning to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, September 27**

**Sainte-Marie - Dzaoundzi (MAYOTTE) - Mamoudzou**



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the **9:15am** direct flight to **Dzaoundzi** on the island of **Petite-Terre (Pamanzi)** in **Mayotte**, arriving around **10:30am**. A Territory of France, **Mayotte** was originally populated by East Africans, but invaded by the Arabs in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, who brought Islam. It became a French overseas territory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Upon arrival, meet the local representative and then head out on a short nature hike to a stunning **viewpoint** overlooking a crater lake. Travel by ferry across to the main town of **Mamoudzou**, the capital city of Mayotte on the **Grande Terre Island**. Stroll the **market** to discover its variety of fruits, vegetables, and spices. Drive for approx. an hour to the *Jardin Maore Ecologie or similar* for check-in and overnight. **(B,L)**

**Saturday, September 28**

**Mamoudzou (South & Center)**



The day is dedicated to exploring more of **Grande Terre**, known for its breathtaking scenery and friendly Mahoreses. See the **bangas**, small, colorful houses built by young men when they move out of their parents' home. This ritual helps them to mature and find their status in society without any influence from their parents. When these men find a woman to marry, they move to their wife's home. Only a few of these houses can be seen today. Travel along the coast across the heart of the island past many plantations and through dense, tropical forest to Sada, stopping to see its **minaret** & a small **islet**. From **Chirongui Pass** there are amazing views of the **Bay of Boueni** and **Choungui peak**. Continue to **Musical Plage** to see the largest **baobab trees** in Mayotte, which are endemic to the island. Enjoy a leisurely boat ride through the **lagoon**, a natural Marine Park and home to a diversity of marine life such as clownfish, green sea turtles, and coral reef, then return to the *lodge* for overnight. **(B,L)**

**Sunday, September 29**

**Mamoudzou - Moroni (COMOROS)**



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the **10:00am** non-stop flight to **Moroni**. Upon arrival around **11:00am**, meet the local representative and transfer to *Golden Tulip Resort or similar*, the best resort on the island, for check-in. Afterwards, explore the **Moroni Medina** and its **mosques** dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century on foot. At the **Moroni Museum**, learn more about the history of the island. Enjoy lunch at the *Habana Beach Restaurant*, then head to the historic town of **Itsandra**, one of the oldest on the island, dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The town was the cradle of the local Swahili civilization and, for a long time, the capital of Ngazidja. The most impressive of the town's historical attractions is the 17<sup>th</sup> century **fortress** that was once linked to the city by a long, walled corridor. Some sections of the ramparts surrounding the walled city are still visible. Admire some fine local woodcarvings and other arts and

crafts examples at the **handicrafts shop**. Return to the *Resort* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, September 30**

**Moroni (Legends of the North)**



After breakfast, begin the drive north to discover the geological features created through countless millennia of volcanic activity. These are some of **Grande Comoro's** most intriguing features, with incredible scenery and local myths about their remarkable history. Visit the legendary **Trou du Prophete**, followed by a seafood lunch under the baobabs on the shores of the **Indian Ocean**. Continue to **Dragon's Back (Dos du Dragon)**, a moss-covered rocky outcrop resembling a mythical creature resting in the waters. Stop at **Lac Sale**, a stunning turquoise saltwater lake in a volcanic crater called the "bottomless lake." Visit the **Miraculous Mosque**, a small stone mosque said to have magically appeared on the beach and is now a sacred pilgrimage site then return to the *Resort* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



**Tuesday, October 01**

**Moroni (Dolphins & Lunch with Locals)**



Begin the day with an exciting **dolphin-watching tour** by boat. Experience the thrill of watching these fascinating creatures in their natural habitat while enjoying breathtaking coast views. Return to the pier for a scrumptious **home-cooked lunch** with a local family. Return to the *Resort*, free afternoon at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



**Wednesday, October 02**

**Moroni (Southern Cross)**



Spend the day exploring **South Grand Comores**, beginning with a visit to **Singani Village**, which was destroyed by lava in 1977. Explore the charming village of **Chindini**, featuring one of the most beautiful beaches on the island, surrounded by palm trees and dramatic rocky outcrops. Continue to **Iconi** and enjoy a home-cooked lunch prepared by one of the locals in their home. Iconi is the ancient capital of Grande Comore and one of the oldest settlements on the island. Marvel at the dramatic cliffs and wander the ruins of an old **palace** built from coral limestone. Return to the *Resort* in the late afternoon, free rest of the day at leisure, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



**Thursday, October 03**

**Moroni - USA**

**OR Continue to MADAGASCAR**



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

**OR** Continue to **Madagascar**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".*

## Tour Cost (Land Only): \$9,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single supplement: \$1,995.00

Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 10 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: \*\*\*



### Tour Includes:

- Airport/Hotel/Airport Transfers.
- Accommodation in standard first-class hotels and lodges (3-4\*) mentioned or similar.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- English-speaking guide or naturalist/assistant during all tours and safaris.
- Transportation by 4-WD or vans.
- Bottled water during tours.
- Helicopter Tour in Réunion and boat/catamaran excursion mentioned in the itinerary.
- All entrance fees to mentioned sites, activities, and safaris.

### Trip Grade:

**II Active:** Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides.

### Lodging Level:

\*\*\* **Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards (3-4 stars).

### Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA - Maldives / Comoros - USA.
- Flights in-between islands (approx. \$1,500-2,000).
- **Maldives & Comoros visas** (obtainable on arrival), **Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion, and Mayotte** - no visa required (all subject to change).
- Beverages (including water), and alcoholic drinks with or without meals and meals not mentioned.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, hotel staff, etc.
- Travel protection insurance (HIGHLY Recommended).

