



## **Itinerary proposal**

### **North-west winds (November to April)**

### **8 days / 7 nights**

#### **Day 1: Mahe - St Anne Marine Park (15min)**

Discover Victoria the capital of the Seychelles in the morning. A visit to Mahé's busy and colourful market is the way to get a feel for the Seychellois and their way of life. Built in 1840 and renovated in 1999, it remains the bustling heart of the capital and definitely the best place to buy fresh fruits, fish, vegetables and spices. An attractive array of boutiques and shops selling a variety of souvenirs, clothing and local works of art further complement the lively atmosphere that is especially vibrant on Saturday mornings.

Embarkation at 12 noon and departure to the Saint Anne Marine Park.

This Marine National Park has one of the largest areas of sea grass of the granitic islands where green and hawksbill turtles are often found. Bottlenose Dolphins also frequent the park. St Anne Island was the location of Seychelles' first settlement in 1770, away from the once crocodile-infested swamps on Mahé. Once a whaling station, during the Second World War St Anne was also a base for the Royal Marines defending Victoria Harbour. It is alleged that there is a rich treasure buried on nearby Moyenne Island while Round Island was once a leper colony. The St Anne Marine National Park is an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Seychellois people. We ask that you leave behind nothing but your footsteps and take away no more than photographs and memories.

Night mooring at the marine park.

#### **Day 2: St Anne Marine Park – La Digue (4h)**

Morning sailing from Mahé to La Digue and fishing during the crossing. Fishing in the fish-rich waters of Seychelles promises the possibility of landing your dream catch and a lot of excitement.

Close neighbour to Praslin and to its satellite islands of Félicité, Marianne and the Sisters Islands, La Digue is the fourth largest island in Seychelles. La Digue takes its name from one

of the vessels in explorer Marion Dufresne's fleet, sent by the French to explore Seychelles' granitic islands in 1768. Apart from hosting the Seychelles' black paradise flycatcher, one of the rarest birds on earth, La Digue's biodiversity features such stars as the chinese bittern, cave swiftlet, waxbill as well as two rare species of terrapin. La Digue's forests also contain a wealth of flora in the form of delicate orchids, tumbling vines of vanilla, as well as trees such as Indian almond and takamaka. Gardens blaze with hibiscus and nepenthes against a backdrop of swaying coconut palms. La Digue is an island where time stands still and time-honoured traditions such as travelling by bicycle are still king. Traditional methods of boat building and refining of coconut products (copra) are still practised on La Digue. The friendly atmosphere of this intimate island with its languid pace of life, traditional architecture and breathtaking beaches, such as legendary Anse Source d'Argent, is an absolute must for visitors. La Digue has numerous and diverse accommodation for visitors, and its picturesque satellite islands are ideal for snorkelling and diving excursions. If you want to enjoy horse riding in the sun in paradise, then the place to be is at L'Union Estate on the enchanting island of La Digue. You can either ride inside the large fenced area of the estate or along Anse Source d'Argent, one of the most photographed beaches in the world. Bikes are also available for rental to discover the island.

The granite boulder is a natural wonder that forms part of L'Union Estate and is classified as a National Monument. Covering an acre of land at Anse L'Union on the west coast of the island of La Digue, it is by any standards an impressive monolith. The granite boulder was formed during the Precambrian, around 750 million years ago, by the slow cooling of molten rocks (magma) deep within the earth's crust which gave it its especially large crystals. The granite boulder of Anse L'Union is a spectacular piece of natural sculpture brought forth from the womb of mother nature, its magnificent shape due to its long exposure to the sculpting forces of nature. Anse Source d'Argent is reputed to be the most photographed beach in the world. With its soft white sand, clear turquoise water and huge granite boulders sculptured by the elements and time itself, it is not difficult to see why photographers and film makers still love to come here. The sea is sheltered by the reef, and is very calm and shallow, with only sand underfoot which makes it safe for children. Access to the beach is via L'Union Estate. Overnight anchorage at La Passe harbour.

### **Day 3: La Digue - Cocos (40min) - Felicite (10min) – La Digue (40min)**

Cocos Island can be found 7km north of La Digue and lies in close proximity to La Digue's other neighbours, Félicité and the Sisters Islands. It has been a marine park since 1996 and is a spectacular spot for snorkelling and diving and a popular venue for day excursions from both Praslin and La Digue. No accommodation is offered on this island. Cocos Island is the Marine National Park that catches peoples' attention and makes them long for a holiday in Seychelles. It features on many of the promotional brochures. Ile Cocos Marine National Park is set around 3 small islets in shallow turquoise sea fringed by large expanses of coral reefs that provide the most breathtaking snorkelling experience.

Félicité is located 4km from its neighbour La Digue and in close proximity to other La Digue satellites such as the Sisters Islands, Mariannne and Ile Cocos. This picturesque and steep granitic island was a coconut plantation up to the 1970s and supported a population of some 50 people. In the late 19th century, Félicité was home to the Sultan of Perak, one of Seychelles' most colourful exiles, who spent five years on the island before moving to Mahé. Until recently, the island was home to an up-market lodge offering an exclusive island experience to the likes of British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Today, the Six Senses Zil Pasyon resort, with 30 villas and a spa, covers a third of the island.

After sailing around Felicite, Marianne and La Digue, if the weather is convenient overnight mooring at Anse Cocos, a little bay located on the east coast of La Digue that is only accessible by foot or by sea. Or overnight mooring at the La Passe harbour.

#### **Day 4: La Digue – Grand Sœur (1h) – Petite Sœur (5min) – Curieuse (1h)**

The islands of Grande Soeur and Petite Soeur are commonly referred to as 'The Sisters Islands.' Situated 6km northeast of neighbouring La Digue and in close proximity to Félicité and to Ile Cocos, these two islands are a popular venue for excursions on account of their spectacular ocean panoramas and the excellent opportunities they offer for trekking and picnicking. These islands are also famous for snorkelling and diving in waters where the marine life is prolific. The hotel Château de Feuilles on Praslin manages the islands. Sail towards Curieuse late afternoon and moor overnight.

#### **Day 5: Curieuse - St Pierre (15min) – Praslin Anse Volbert (45min.) – Praslin Baie St Anne (1h)**

Curieuse lies just off the north-western coast of its close neighbour Praslin and is now a reserve managed by the Seychelles Centre for Marine Technology - Marine Parks Authority. Once known as Ile Rouge on account of its red earth, Curieuse was eventually named after one of explorer Marion Dufresne's vessels which explored the islands of the Praslin group in 1768. This rugged island was once home to a leper colony situated at Anse St. Joseph, and whose resident doctor's house dating back to the 1870's has recently been converted into an eco-museum and visitors centre. Aside from Praslin, Curieuse is the only other island where the Coco-der-mer grows naturally, and also boasts an endemic vine and eight different species of mangrove. Today Curieuse is home to an exciting giant land tortoise rearing project. The island is also an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles. Hues of red and green colour Curieuse Island, the result of the bare red earth of the hillsides intermingling with the unique green flora of an island peppered with coco-de-mer trees, one of the iconic symbols of Seychelles. Most visitors disembark at Baie Laraie to the sight of multitudes of giant hump head parrotfish and giant tortoises lazing near the rangers' headquarters. The trail from Baie Laraie to Anse José passes through thick mangrove forest and is one of the most breathtaking sites on the island. On the way can be found the ruins of the leper colony, now

well blended into the landscape. The Doctor's House at Anse José, a wonder of Creole colonial architecture, has since been turned into a fascinating museum on whose beach sea turtles still arrive to lay their eggs.

A dive at Coral Garden or Pointe Rouge is a MUST as is a snorkelling trip to St. Pierre. One of several islands in the bay of Côte d'Or on Praslin, this tiny islet with its granite profile interspersed with coconut palms has come, over the years, to represent the quintessential Seychelles island, appearing in numerous advertisement campaigns, posters and evocative photographs. Once home to a number of Coco-de-mer that grew naturally on the island, St. Pierre lies approximately 1.5km from Pointe Zanguilles on Praslin's fabulous Côte d'Or beach. St. Pierre is a firm favourite with swimmers, snorkellers and yachtsmen for whom the island provides the ideal backdrop to a spectacular Seychelles sunset.

Sail towards Anse Volbert also called Cote d'Or that is Praslin's main beach, with its many hotels and guesthouses lining the golden coastline is rarely crowded. Anse Volbert / Côte d'Or is a dazzlingly white stretch of beach and the crystal clear sea here is excellent for swimming and water sports. Further out in the bay, around Chauve Souris island and St Pierre islet, the snorkelling is superb.

Sail towards Baie St Anne Praslin and moor overnight.

### **Day 6: Praslin Baie St Anne – Praslin Anse Lazio (1h15) – Praslin Anse La Farine (1h20)**

Seychelles' second UNESCO World Heritage Site is the legendary Vallée de Mai, administered by the Seychelles Islands Foundation. So remarkable that it was once believed to be the original site of the Garden of Eden, this hauntingly beautiful primeval forest is home to some 6000 Coco-de-mer trees, considered to be among the botanical wonders of the world. The Vallée boasts six endemic palm species as well as many other indigenous trees and is also the last habitat of the endangered Black Parrot.

The most famous beach on Praslin, and rightly so, Anse Lazio can claim to be the perfect tropical paradise beach and is often listed among the world's top ten beaches. Beautifully framed by granite rocks, this dream beach has soft white sands leading gently down to calm clear waters with a gentle gradient absolutely perfect for swimming and snorkelling. The Bon Bon Plume and Le Chevalier restaurants are nearby and can provide lunch and refreshments. Moor overnight at Praslin Anse La Farine

### **Day 7: Praslin Anse La Farine – Cousin (30 min) – Mahé (4h)**

Cousin lies just off the southwest coast of its close neighbour Praslin, just next to its island neighbour Cousine. Cousin is a special nature reserve home to some of Seychelles' rarest birds, such as the Seychelles bush warbler and the Seychelles magpie robin. Cousin has been a nature reserve since 1968 when it was purchased by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. In 1975 it was declared a special reserve by the Seychelles government, first managed by Birdlife International and now by local environment group Nature Seychelles.

Cousin is one of nature's treasure troves where every year 250,000 birds nest, among them the Seychelles sunbird, red turtle dove and moor hen. The island is also home to many fairy terns, noddies, frigate birds and shearwaters as well as being a place where certain species such as the Seychelles bush warbler have recovered from the edge of extinction. There is a population of geckos on the island, giant tortoises introduced from Aldabra and Cousin is also a favourite nesting site for hawksbill turtles. Cousin is a popular venue with visitors for day trips that offer guided tours of this magnificent island sanctuary. Visits are organised from 0930hrs to 1200hrs, from Mondays to Fridays (closed on weekends and public holidays). Sailing towards Mahé and fishing during the crossing. Refuel and night at the marina.

### **Day 8: Disembark at Mahe before 9am**