

## Seychelles- Sitting Pretty Amongst Top Beach Destinations

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Almost every description of the Seychelles appears to be a bit over the top. Is it only the easily impressed who get to visit and write about the Seychelles? The magic of these islands is however real. Impressions gained of this dream island paradise will be your refuge when you return to those long working hours. Just like everybody imagines paradise, the Seychelles Islands are far away, peaceful and stunningly beautiful....



Mahe - Seychelles

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## **1. Seychelles- Sitting Pretty Amongst Top Beach Destinations**

It is the peace and quiet that attracted the writer Somerset Maugham when he sought to work on a novel without interruption. Most visitors do not however come here to work. The main draw of the islands has always been the beaches, snorkeling and diving. The attractions of the natural world particularly the birdlife, tropical fish and the unique physical environment are a bonus.

After your holiday you may want to impress your friends by these two facts. The Seychelles islands are the only mid ocean island group in the world with a granite rock formation. And that Aldabra, a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site is the largest coral atoll in the world. Some will of course not understand what you are talking about but the point will be clear that you have traveled to a place of distinction.

Jacques Costeau whose part of the documentary, The Silent World was shot in the Seychelles said that he had never been anywhere else with such clarity of water or diversity of reef life.

The islands are also a good place to get married and to enjoy the tropical honeymoon of your life. Few other destinations can beat the combination of beauty and romance. For this and other reasons I cannot go through here, It is my firmly held position that visitors who get married here go on to a happy married life are sooner joined by cute little ones!

The Seychelles is a year round destination. But if you must undertake a specific activity, then you need to pick the most suitable season. Windsurfing and sailing are best at the start and end of the trade winds - May and October. Diving enthusiasts should go for dates between March and May or September to November, although conditions are excellent year round.

Those keen on the birdlife should note that April marks the beginning of the breeding season. Bird Island, in particular is overrun by sea birds between May and September. Due to drier conditions, the period May to September has best conditions for hiking and walking.

The other factor you may want to consider is cost. The Seychelles is considered to be a top-drawer destination. In general, the peak falls between mid December-early January and mid July-end August when most hotels trade in the currency known as top-dollar. The off-season periods vary with each establishment much more widely than most other destinations.

The discount in designated off-season periods relative to the peak season falls between 20-60%. Some of the smaller premises however charge a uniform rate year round. We stand ready to advise you on the period and particular hotels that will give best value for a specified grade of accommodation. If you have a flexible schedule, good planning can result in considerable savings.

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## **2. Destination Facts: Seychelles**

- **Full Country Name:** Republic of Seychelles
- **Area:** 455 sq km (This refers to land area. The Seychelles Archipelago covers 400,000 sq km of the Indian Ocean and contains 115 islands and islets. The country lies about 1600 Km east of Mombasa (Kenya) on the African mainland. Mahe is the main island and carries close to 90% of the population.

Other locations in the Seychelles you may find worth visiting are: Aldabra Atoll, Amirantes Islands (Desroches etc), Aride Island, Bird Island, Bird Island, Curieuse Island, Denis Island, Fregate Island, Praslin Island, Silhouette Island and La Digue Island

- **Population:** 80,410 (1999)
- **Capital City:** Victoria (Population: 70,000- 1998)
- **Peoples:** Seychellois (of African, Indian and European background)
- **Language:** English, French, Creole
- **Religion:** Hindu, Urdu, Christian and Muslim
- **Government:** Republic
- **Time:** GMT + 4 Hrs
- **Electricity:** 240v, 50Hz.
- **Weights and Measures:** Metric
- **Economy:** Tourism, coconut and palm, vanilla, fishing

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### **3. Travel Basics: Seychelles**

#### **Health**

The Seychelles offers a healthy climate and malaria, yellow fever, cholera and other diseases common in tropical environments are not a problem. Visitors entering Seychelles from countries where yellow fever is prevalent need an international certificate of vaccination. Although no other vaccinations are mandatory, it is advisable to consult your physician before travel.

#### **Visas**

Visitors to Seychelles must have passports valid for at least 6 months beyond end of stay. Visas are not required for most visitors. It is however advisable to check with Seychelles embassies and inbound airlines at least one month before travel. But you need an onward air ticket/passage, pre-booked accommodation and sufficient funds to cater for your stay.

#### **People & Culture**

The Seychellois have emerged from peoples with mainly French, African, Indian, Chinese and Arab roots. Creole is the language that has resulted from the positive interaction of these people for the last 400 or so years. It is the language of the street though the official languages are French and English and are both widely spoken.

The people are very friendly and you will notice it right from the time you set foot on the islands. The food in the Seychelles reflects the islands mixed heritage. Fish together with a variety of exotic vegetables, herbs, spices and fruits form the basis of Creole cuisine.

In this mainly Catholic country, the principal non-religious festival is Festival Kreol. The festival is held annually for a week around the end of October with the intention of celebrating Creole cuisine, fashion, art music, puppetry, literature and dance. Masters of these arts hail from the all over the world and bring along a welcome infusion of colour to this quiet corner of the globe. The dates for the festival for the current year are 25-31 October.

#### **Communications**

Telephone, fax, telegram, post and Internet services are available. Direct dialing to most countries is available at most hotels. The country code for the Seychelles is 248. Mobile phones are based on GSM 900 network. You can obtain a GSM card that will allow you to make international calls to any country.

### **Accommodation**

The Seychelles can hardly be described as budget destination. There are no youth hostels and camping is not allowed. The bigger hotels and resorts come equipped with air-conditioning, private bathrooms, swimming pools and a variety of sporting facilities. Some smaller establishments may lack some of these facilities but make up by way of privacy and seclusion.

You can get reasonable rates (by Seychelles standards) for apartments, bed-sitters and bungalows. Most of the hotels sit on Mahe Island while some of the smaller islands host only a single hotel. The Seychelles is deliberately not a mass-market destination. Accommodation can get very tight especially in the high season. It is always advisable to book and if required confirm with a deposit.

Have a look at the kind of accommodation available at our [Seychelles hotel page](#):

### **Money**

The local currency is the Seychelles Rupee (SR). Foreign currency can be freely exchanged at hotels and banks. The currencies that will get you the most reasonable rates are US dollar and Euro. Traveler's cheques (i.e checks) enjoy wide acceptance especially at hotels, shops and restaurants frequented by tourists.

Visa and American Express cards are widely accepted except at the very small establishments. Diners Club and Mastercard and other minor cards are honored in fewer places.

### **Climate**

The islands experience a sub tropical climate that is generally warm and humid. The weather is stable and nearly perfect year round. Hurricanes, cyclones and similar disturbances are absent here.

The mean temperature is 29°C and is usually mitigated by a gentle breeze. July and August are the coolest months at 28°C and at which time sea temperature drops to 27°C! Being so near the equator you can expect 12 hours of daylight.

Between May and September it is cooler, less rainy and the humidity is also lower due the activity of trade winds. In the November – March period it rains more, humidity is higher and is also warmer. Mid December to Mid January is the period with the highest rainfall. When it rains, it is rarely for more than a continuous hour or two. The rainy season need not worry you, as there is still sufficient sunshine to sunbathe!

### **International Travel**

Only a few airlines offer direct flights to Seychelles. Air Seychelles offers direct flights from selected cities in Europe and Africa. Connections to North America, Australia and the Far East are widely available.

Scheduled airlines flying to and from the Seychelles include: Air Seychelles, Kenya Airways, Aeroflot, Air Austral, Air France, British Airways, Air Mauritius and Inter Air (South Africa). There is a departure tax of USD 40 payable in foreign currency. This tax will however most likely be included in your air ticket.

### **Local Travel**

You can get from Mahe to Praslin, Fregate, Desroches, Bird and Denis Islands by using regular Air Seychelles flights. The same airline runs charter services to some of the less visited locations such as Silhouette and Alphonse. Schooner ferries have a regular run between Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. But you can also charter a boat to get you around the other islands.

The Seychelles is a small place with the main island Mahe being only 27 km long. The capital Victoria is reported to be the smallest in the world. Most visitors take this as a blessing and you can confirm at the airport that there is a disproportionate number escaping from some infamously huge metropolis.

Walking is a quite a good way to get around. Bus services are only available in Mahe and Praslin islands. Taxi service is to be found in these two islands and also in La Digue. Small cars (mainly open Jeeps and mini mokes) are also available for hire in Mahe and Praslin. Get to our [Seychelles Car Rental](#) page to check out what is available:

### **Travel Insurance**

The Seychelles islands are far away for anywhere. For this reason make sure your travel insurance includes emergency evacuation. Evacuation in case of illness or injury even to a hospital in Victoria can be quite expensive and means of payment may need to be ascertained in advance.

### **What to Wear**

Light comfortable casual clothing is advised. Except for those attending church you will find very few people in suits and neckties. Even on business, turning out in a safari suit and open neck shirt is perfectly acceptable. Light cotton dresses, slacks and shorts are sufficient for women in this tropical climate. Sandals or light canvas shoes are usually adequate. The Seychellois are a modest people and you should avoid wearing swimwear except on the beaches

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## **4. About Africa Point**

**Africapoint.com** is an Africa specialist travel agent, offering travel services through the company website -Africapoint.com and also offline. This pioneering Africa travel website has been assisting travelers make bookings online since early 1999.

The company was started in 1997 has its central reservations office strategically located in Nairobi, Kenya. The company is supported by a network of partner offices in the leading destinations in Africa. This includes Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo (Egypt), Kampala (Uganda), Victoria (Seychelles), Harare (Zimbabwe). We are members of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

### **What services do we offer?**

We provide reservation services for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars, tours and safaris to the top destinations in Africa. Among the countries we are currently covering are Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mauritius.

We have special discounts for most of the services we offer and some of our prices are upto 50% off standard rates. Please visit our website to view the links of all the services we offer.

### **How do we make your Africa travel planning easier?**

Ours is one of very few websites offering one-stop travel booking and information service to a number of different African countries. In addition:

- We know our destinations and our products **very well**. We are in a position to give you good advice on the best hotel, rental car, tour or safari to suit your particular requirements.
- We are committed to working to the highest industry standards. We have many our past clients who are happy to share their experiences with you. Please visit the [Client Profile & Testimonials](#) page and see what some of our clients have to say.
- Our patience is the stuff of legend! We will patiently seek to answer all your queries until you are ready to pick what is most suitable for your needs. For high value items such as safaris we have communicated with our clients for 6 months and even longer before they are ready to buy.

Others have come back to and said: "Do you remember that tour we discussed 2 years ago? I am now ready to travel." And of course we remember. We always remember!

- Together with our partners, we are based in the African destination whose travel services we are selling. For this reason we are usually able to get you very good prices. For some products our prices are **40-50%** below standard rates.
- As members of **ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents)** we are committed to upholding **ASTA's** motto of " Integrity in Travel" and operate to those same standards you would expect from an ASTA member anywhere in the world.

One of our North American clients for whose 36 person missionary group we provided an air charter, hotel booking, safari and road transport to 2 African countries had this to say.

*"My experience with Africapoint.com was good as any service that I've received any where in the USA. Not only were they helpful before and during, but they went out of their way to also be helpful afterwards.*

*I'm using them again for an upcoming trip in November and will look forward to using them for years to come."*

In addition our membership of ASTA assures you of a **neutral and trusted** arbitrator in the event that a disagreement occurs between us.

### **What is the experience of other travelers with us?**

We continue to serve the many needs of travelers who seek our services. From straight forward single night hotel bookings to short and long term **car rental, tours and safaris** for individuals and groups, international conferences.

## **5. Forward This Report**

If you've found this report to be informative and useful please forward it to your family and friends. We're sure they will like it as much as you did!