



# Mauritius, Réunion & Rodrigues

## Magical Mascarenes

Saturday 3 – Friday 16 March 2012

(14 days)

*The Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues are also known as the Mascarene Islands – and are the original source of mascara. So we think you'll be well 'made up' if you join us there on our new tour!*



The Mascarene Islands in the Indian Ocean have been, like Madagascar, biologically isolated for many millions of years, and have developed their own unique array of wildlife, much of it found nowhere else in the world.

The most famous Mascarene creature, the Dodo, sadly became extinct shortly after the arrival of man. Since then, many other less well known animals and plants have also become extinct under the advancing tide of civilisation, and the western taste for cane sugar.

However, in recent years, the wildlife has been fighting back, helped to a large extent by conservationists led by Gerald Durrell, whose foundation still has a hand in administering many of the wildlife reserves and in the sometimes intensive rescue of certain species: the Mauritius Kestrel was down to four pairs at its lowest ebb, but there are now 900 pairs and rising.

We'll visit a selection of the best reserves and other areas for wildlife, and witness some extraordinary schemes of conservation in action.

As well as their wildlife, the islands are beautiful and scenically dramatic, their forms shaped by long-extinct oceanic volcanoes.

Our leader, David Simpson, worked as Island warden for the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation on Ile aux Aigrettes in 2002. This is his second wildlife tour visit.

### Itinerary

**Day 1 :** We take an evening flight from London via Paris, arriving early the next day.

**Day 2 :** We arrive in Mauritius at midday and travel to our hotel through a landscape of sugar cane fields with a backdrop of low mountains. The people of Mauritius are largely of Indian origin and we'll pass through villages with a feel like those of India, with little temples and many small shops.  
*Overnight Mauritius*

**Day 3 :** Our first excursion will be a short trip of ten minutes in a small pleasure boat across the shallow

lagoon to Ile aux Aigrettes, a beautiful small coral island nature reserve managed by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

Here we will see the restoration of lowland tropical forest and associated endemic species such as Pink Pigeon and the huge Aldabran Tortoise, which has been introduced to provide the grazing management.

After lunch we drive up to the spectacular Black River Gorges National Park and the Visitor Centre.  
*Overnight Mauritius*

**Day 4 :** In the morning we travel northwards to the Terre Rouge Estuary Reserve north of the capital Port Louis.

In the afternoon we take a boat trip around the Northern Islets.  
*Overnight Mauritius*

**Day 5 :** Ferney is an old hunting estate which is now a nature conservation showpiece.

We will travel a little further up the coast after lunch and visit Bras d'Eau and a coastal forest which still supports the endemic Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher.  
*Overnight Mauritius*

**Day 6 :** Today we make the first of our island transfers, and fly to pretty petite Rodrigues, where the islanders are arguably some of the friendliest people in the world!

This is a Creole island where, in contrast to Mauritius, most people are of African extraction. It is a very small island with a patchwork of little fields and cattle grazing areas.  
*Overnight Rodrigues*

**Day 7 :** This morning we drive west to take the small boat to Les Iles Cocos, an important seabird reserve.

We will have a barbeque and salad lunch on this away-from-it-all little paradise island.  
*Overnight Rodrigues*

## TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION** will be in good hotels with all rooms en suite.

**LEADERS :** David Simpson with local guides

**NUMBERS :** Max. 14 clients

**PRICE :** £ 4,995  
**Single supp. :** £ 695  
**Deposit :** £ 600 per person

The price includes scheduled return flights London/Mauritius, internal flights as detailed above, ground and boat transportation as described, accommodation, all meals, local taxes, incidental tips, and the services of the leader.

The price excludes holiday insurance, the services of the leader on the extension, optional tips to local guides, drinks and other items of a personal nature.

**Special Note :** While we shall do our utmost to keep to the above itinerary, local weather conditions may make it impossible to land on some of the islands.

**Day 8 :** During the morning we will visit the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation's Solitude Research Station. The woodland at Solitude is also one of the best sites to find the endemic Rodrigues Warbler and Rodrigues Fody.

After lunch we head west to the newly created Leguat Tortoise and Caves Reserve.  
*Overnight Rodrigues*

**Day 9 :** Today we fly to Réunion Island via Mauritius.

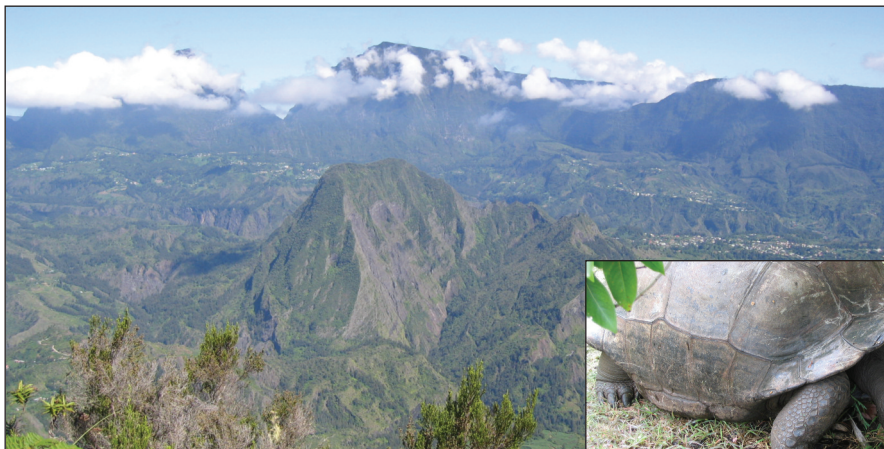
Réunion is a French département with a very different atmosphere to the other two islands. The central mountains, which include an active volcano, attain 10,000 feet in height with virgin forests though much of the lowlands are sugar cane fields as in Mauritius.  
*Overnight Réunion*

**Day 10 :** We will drive up onto the plateau this morning and explore the fascinating and unspoilt Bebour and Belouve Forests.  
*Overnight Réunion*

**Day 11 :** In the morning we travel east along the coastal road to Mare Longue, one of the last vestiges of lowland forest in Réunion.  
*Overnight Réunion*

**Day 12 :** On this final day on Réunion we head back up to the mountains at Cilaos.  
*Overnight Réunion*

**Day 13 :** Sadly on the last day of the holiday we must check-out of our Réunion hotel and transfer to Mauritius for the return flight to the UK via Paris, arriving on **Day 14**.



Cirque de Salazie and, inset, Aldabran Tortoise (Photos: David Simpson)