For those seeking an alternate to the well-beaten path back to the Caribbean after this summer’s Med season, the paradise islands of the Indian Ocean have captivated sailors for centuries. Considered by many to be heaven on earth, the Seychelles archipelago lends itself majestically to superyacht cruising... but as we discovered during a recent visit, few venture there.

WORDS & IMAGES: MICHAEL AND FRANCES HOWORTH
For the past decade a passage through the Suez Canal, down the Red Sea and through the Gulf of Aden into the Indian Ocean has not been an attractive proposition for superyacht owners. Pirate activity in the area put yachts and crew at risk, inflated insurance premiums and nobody’s idea of a relaxing cruise includes the presence of heavily armed and mustachioed armed ex-Special Forces onboard for protection. In the last year however, the threat from pirates on commercial shipping and private yachts has diminished significantly. From its peak of 176 hijacking attempts in 2011, the presence and efforts of the international Combined Task Force 151 has all but eradicated the threat. In the first six months of 2013 just three commercial ships were approached in unsuccessful attempts of piracy.

As the countries on the east coast of the Arabian Gulf, including Oman, the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain continue to penetrate western commerce with increasing influence, their magnificent new cities become the landmarks for measuring luxury and their calendars fill with international sporting and cultural events, the appeal of an Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf winter season grows. Imagine a winter passage plan that includes the Dubai World Cup – the world’s richest horse race, the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix, film and art festivals, the Volvo Ocean Race, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and of course the Seychelles. It’s certainly an adventurous change and with few yachts doing it, there’s little competition for large yacht charter either! In order to investigate the idea further, we hopped over for a reconnaissance trip to The Seychelles to see what’s on offer…

Located outside the cyclone belt with no risk of contracting malaria, yellow fever, cholera or other common tropical diseases and with a sublime tropical climate, Seychelles offers a carefree, year-round cruising season. Straightforward entry regulations that include a ‘no-visa required’ immigration policy, make for an uncomplicated, hassle-free stay for superyachts seeking to cruise the area. Occupying more than half a million square miles of territorial water, the Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands, split into 43 Inner and 72 Outer Islands. The taller granitic Inner Islands cluster around the main island of Mahé and its satellites Praslin and La Digue and they form the cultural and

INVICTVS

Located 15-minutes outside the capital Victoria, Aéroport de la pointe Larue is the base for all inter-island flights and helicopter transfers to luxury island resorts.
economic hub of Seychelles. Approximately 40 percent of the land is protected as National Parks, with two UNESCO World Heritage Sites including Aldabra, the world’s largest raised coral atoll. The islands are divided into six distinct groups. The first is the ‘Inner Island’ group of the main islands of Mahé, Praslin, La Digue and the surrounding islands up to a distance of 62 miles (100km). Next is the Amirantes group, 155 miles (250km) south west of Mahé, the Southern Coral group, Alphonse group, Farquhar group and finally the Aldabra group, 685 miles (1100km) from Mahé.

Unlike the many islands in the Caribbean and despite the distances this is just one country, meaning that once a yacht has arrived and cleared in, she is able to roam a wide area of pristine Indian Ocean without hindrance.

The nation’s capital Victoria, its international airport and the only superyacht ready harbor in the islands, are all to be found on Mahé the largest of the Inner Islands.

Lush, verdant and draped in rich rainforest, the Seychelles are not desert islands but a rich ocean paradise.

“God created our islands with sailors in mind... so we make it easy for yachts to visit. No visas for crews or guests are required and minimal bureaucracy makes it easier to come and stay.” Seychelles Minister of Tourism

Interview with
Alain St Ange
Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of the Seychelles

Ask any super yacht Captain what it is that prevents them from cruising in the waters of the Indian Ocean and chances are the fear of pirate attacks will be among the top five reasons. If that is so we wanted to know what the facts were and just how safe it was to cruise the waters of the Seychelles. We asked Alain St Ange the Minister of Tourism & Culture in the Government of the Seychelles for his thoughts on Piracy. We were a little taken aback by his immediate response.

“I love Pirates!” he exclaimed. “I have done so since I was a child. I used to read tales of Blackbeard, Sir Henry Morgan, pieces of eight, gold doubloons and tales of derring-do. In fact, I can remember telling adults that I wanted to become a pirate when I grew up. Pirates are romantic characters and yes much of the culture here in these islands is colored by the romance of hidden pirate treasures and stacks of bullion. In fact Ian Fleming the creator of the James Bond novels came to these islands in 1956 and searched high-and-low for treasure he thought was buried on Frégate Island.”

Warming to his subject St Ange continues. “Local lore still has you believe that the rubbish from pirates...
La Belle while the Royal Portuguese Golden Cross as it journeyed from India to Portugal. He is said to have died on the island, which in 1618 was a stop on the illegal slave trade. The legend of La Buse has been free from attack in the Seychelles. We work very closely with intelligence forces from countries all around the world. Many of them have seen, and learnt firsthand how it dealt with such territories, but fortunately we have been free from attack for some time now. The smile is back on his face when he says, “Our islands were created by God with sailors in mind. The diversity of our people creates a welcoming of all who travel here by sea. You are friends of all and enemies of none. We have done our level best to make it easy for yachts to visit. They do not need visas for crew or guests and the internal paperwork and formalities have been greatly reduced to make it easier to come and stay.” St Ange has his Tourism ministry just firmly backing him. The interministerial – interdepartmental – intercommunal protocol. “We offer a lot of tourism diversity and above all peace and solitude when you need it. We are not a package holiday destination, we do not seek to become one. What we want is not to find our islands, offering all-inclusive packages. Our islands are disease-free community, they offer yacht owners a secure and disease-free community, they offer excellent service for crew and guests and we have done our level best to make sure there are no restrictions. In fact, we pride ourselves on being free from attack for some time now. Many of them have seen, and learnt firsthand how it dealt with such territories, but fortunately we have been free from attack for some time now. The smile is back on his face when he says, “Our islands were created by God with sailors in mind. The diversity of our people creates a welcoming of all who travel here by sea. You are friends of all and enemies of none. We have done our level best to make it easy for yachts to visit. They do not need visas for crew or guests and the internal paperwork and formalities have been greatly reduced to make it easier to come and stay.” St Ange has his Tourism ministry just firmly backing him. The interministerial – interdepartmental – intercommunal protocol. “We offer a lot of tourism diversity and above all peace and solitude when you need it. We are not a package holiday destination, we do not seek to become one. What we want is not to find our islands, offering all-inclusive packages. Our islands are disease-free community, they offer the Seychelles draw with marlin, sailfish and tuna trolling offshore, plus bone-fishing in the flats.
Invictus

The benefits of property investment in the Seychelles includes no capital gains tax, a low fee structure and renewable five-year resident permits for family or co-owners.

Property Investment

On the two headlands that encapsulate Petite Anse on Mahé there are nine 12 Residential Villas that make up a highly exclusive development. These highly secluded villas with their own pool, are located within the island named as the 48,000 sq.km outer islands of the archipelago. “Trust me,” says Tanguy Adriaenssen is the Captain of the 50 meter Codecasa Aldabra a yacht named after the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Seychelles. Sony also runs a local yacht service and chandlery company to compliment his vast array of local talents. In short, he is a useful guy to befriend.

Sensitively concealed within the natural rainforest on the cliffs, they are well screened from the Spa, fitness center, children’s crèche, beach club, non-motorized water sports and a choice of restaurants. For owners wishing to rent their property, their home can be extended down to the sea and offers the unique potential for a small jetty and possibly a deeper water mooring (subject to processing fee - payable on the unfurnished building value – plus the freedom to transfer sales proceeds in full.

Owners have full access to enjoy the facilities of the Five Star Four Seasons Resort Seychelles such as the spa, indoor-outdoor children’s pool, beach club, car and water sports and a choice of restaurants. For owners wishing to rent their property, their home can be included in the Four Seasons Rental Program. Elsewhere on Eden Island there are a selection of apartments, villas, and townhouses designed for sale. Each property with its own boat, berth, club members day, swimming pool and access along with rental pool, holiday letting benefits double your visit to take advantage of them. All the Residential properties mentioned are sold on the basis of a freehold title and in the case of Four Seasons are fully furnished – to include AV systems and operating equipment. In the Seychelles property owners enjoy benefits including no capital gains tax, a low fee structure of 5 percent Stamp Duty and 1.5 percent sanction processing fee payable on the unfurnished building value plus the freedom to transfer sales proceeds in full. Owners are also able to take advantage of 12 year renewable tenant’s permit which affords unlimited stays on the island for up to six family members or co-owners, dependent on the villa ownership structure adopted.

Exclusive Yacht Services Ltd, a company dedicated to yacht charter. It provides a wide variety of charter services starting from a simple sunset cruise, day trips or organizing week-long stays on board, always with professional crew. Sony was born in Seychelles and is well known to everybody involved in the local marine industry. An excellent engineer and a great Captain, he is very knowledgeable about the inner and outer islands of Seychelles. Sony also runs a local yacht service and chandlery company to compliment his vast array of local talents. In short, he is a useful guy to befriend.

Sony Adriannassen is the Captain of the 50 meter Codecasa Aldabra a yacht named after the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Seychelles. Aldabra was, when we visited the island, berthed inside Eden Island Marina, a dedicated superyacht facility developed in conjunction with the Eden Island luxury residential project. The man-made resort island is located just off the east coast of the main island of Mahé and is linked to the mainland by a 1,000’ (300m) bridge.

EDEN AND BEYOND

The marina is named by Superyacht Services (Seychelles) Ltd, a 50 percent controlled subsidiary of Hunt Deltel with the company having full management control. The marina can cater to yachts up to 32 метра (100m). The marina’s Bar and Grill, The Beachhead, and the nearby Bravo Sports Bar prove popular with both locals and visiting yacht crews. The main islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue provide enticing opportunities to discover the diversity of anchorages in the Seychelles. Guided nature trails through amazing flora and fauna seeking to rekindle mind, body and soul there are a wide choice anchorages adjacent to luxury resorts, spas and wellness centers dotted throughout the islands. On Mahé, for example there is a bay in the Petit Anse, which is home to the five star Four Seasons resort. This safe deep-water anchorage has much to offer the visiting yacht. The remote hillside retreat is almost hidden from the anchorage and is very welcoming to yachts that drop anchor in the bay. Slip ashore and use the bar or enjoy dinner in the well appointed Zee restaurant. We not only ate in the restaurant, but also stayed in one of the villas that we enjoyed greatly there. The boss gave her that name because the island is one he most favored spots in the world. We have been there and indeed cruised most of these islands many times, not just in this yacht which was launched in 2011 but in other yachts for the same owner.” Aldabra was, when we visited the island, berthed inside Eden Island Marina, a dedicated superyacht facility developed in conjunction with the Eden Island luxury residential project. The man-made resort island is located just off the east coast of the main island of Mahé and is linked to the mainland by a 1,000’ (300m) bridge.
of the delightful ocean view villas, so can vouch for their luxury standing. The resort is perfect spot in which to stop if you do not bring your own yacht. British born General Manager Alex Penton is the perfect host. From here, the other attractions the island has to offer are easily accessible.

Other great anchorages off Mahé include Beau Vallon while vessels fitted with Dynamic Position systems will be delighted to station themselves off the islands of Sainte Anne and Cerf which form part of the Site Marine Naturel Park. Victoria, the charming capital and one of the world’s tiniest, is situated on the main island of Mahé. Within walking distance of the port it is a convenient stepping stone to discovering the charm of authentic island living and the vibrant culture, as well as the attractions of island-hopping. Here, and indeed elsewhere in the principal islands, you will discover quaint art galleries, craft shops, and picturesque restaurants serving delicious Creole cuisine. If you want the former, head off to Kenny House on Francis Rachel Street; if you want the latter, then the Marie Antoinette Restaurant is the place to go. We enjoyed side trips to the La Judia du Roi a magnificent garden open to the public that showcases and explains some of the island’s wonderful trees shrubs and flowers. We are slightly embarrassed to report that we visited the last three but Captain Tanguy Adriaenssen of Aldabra says we missed one of his favorite spots, which is an anchorage off the Takamaka Bay Rum distillery just as much and there was a distinct iCloud as we hefted our luggage off the caroude at the airport.

Within the same island group as Mahé, are Curieuse, Praslin, La Digue and Fregate. We visited the last three but Captain Tanguy Adriaenssen of Aldabra says we missed one of his favorite spots, which is an anchorage between Curieuse and Praslin. Each of the islands we visited was a delight and each has its own separate style and individuality. Praslin Island is somewhat quieter, and less developed than Mahé, yet it boasts an exotic paradise of dense vegetation and lush coconut groves. Almost 100 years ago, General Gordon (of Khartoum) visited this island and became convinced that he had found the original Garden of Eden. The island is famous for its Vallée de Mai nature park, home to the Coco de Mer. The coconut tree bears an enormous coconut shaped like a female pelvis, while the fruit of the male tree is somewhat more phallic. They grow almost exclusively on the island and where discovered in 1595. They can be seen along with the insect-eating pitcher plant, vanilla orchid, and some of the earth’s rarest birds: the Seychelles bulbul, fruit pigeon, and the black chid. and some of the earth’s rarest birds: the Seychelles bulbul, fruit pigeon, and the black chid. and some of the earth’s rarest birds: the Seychelles bulbul, fruit pigeon, and the black chid.

Legend has it that, sailors who first discovered the double coconut floating in the sea thought it resembled a woman’s buttocks. This fact is reflected in its old botanical name Lodoicea Callipyge, which roughly translates as “beautiful rump.” Because of the erotic shapes, some say the tree make passionate love on stormy nights.

Praslin is also home to the Raffles resort hotel. It is a delightful sister resort to the famous Singapore hotel. Here white powdered sands, opal-hued oceans and lush green hills ring 86 architecturally interesting villas. It is an ideal place to rediscover the luxury of spontaneity. Swim, sunbath, snorkel, sail, kayak, walk or just do nothing at all. It is the perfect place to escape the everyday, to explore your senses, and to reconnect with yourself and those you love. Little wonder that under the direction of Marketing Executive Tatyina Polunina the resort has become a mecca for those who want that wonderful wedding on the beach. It is after all the most perfect place to spend a honeymoon.

PARADISE FOUND

We left Praslin from the port of Sainte Anne in the south west of the island and motored across to the island of La Digue. It is a favorite of Captain Vaughan Hill, Master of the super yacht Triton, whose charter marketing is handled by David Price at Hill Robinson. He offers this advice. “I have a secret beach...
that I like to recommend, for a spot of privacy. It is on the island’s southern shore, one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. There are three bays on the southern shore but the one to the far east is only accessible by boat and only then when the weather is settled.

Sainte Anne island is a steep granite landmass lying just 3.8nm from Praslin. It is a small island described as ‘the superyacht that does not move’. It’s unsurprising really, when you learn that the island is owned by a gentleman who operates three Eurocopter EC120B, and has used the island as a secluded hideout for a long period in the Eastern Caribbean. December until June, and is very much like in its nature and occurs from late Monsoons. The South East wind is trade system - the South East and North West sea temperature of 82°F (28°C). There are no waves in the Eastern Caribbean.

GETTING THERE

The vegetation of Frégate has been significantly altered by man’s activities. During the 16th and 17th century pirates thought to have used the island as a secluded hideout thanks to its plentiful supply of fresh water and food. During the early 1960’s the island was used for spice production and copra plantation, causing most of its natural forest to be cleared. When these industries became unviable, the plants were abandoned leaving a landscape of extensive monoculture that had displaced indigenous plant species and reduced the natural habitat for native wildlife. Since then, the vegetation on the island has comprised of exotic plants with patches of native woodland that have either persisted or been replanted.

Despite this, the island has still retained many important plant and animal species endemic to Frégate Island and the Seychelles. The ongoing habitat restoration program on the island makes use of native species propagated in the Frégate Island indigenous nursery. The trees themselves are home to over 100 species of birds, of which 12 species are full-time residents that live and breed on the island, while the others are migrants. The island is also home to the rare Seychelles Magpie Robin as well as the relocated Aldabra Giant Tortoises and the Seychelles Magpie Robin – one of the world’s smallest land tortoises.

GETTING AROUND

Seychelles International Airport on Mahé offers a 3-point taxi service to the base for Alphonse and all Seychelles islands.

Fact File

The islands have a tropical climate, enjoying year round daytime temperatures, ranging between 80°F (27°C) & 86°F (30°C), with periods between and above 90°F (32°C). There are two seasonal changes in the weather system - the South East and North West monsoons. The South East wind is a trade wind and comes from the South, bringing sunshine and light sea. The North West wind is a monsoon that brings heavy rain and bad weather conditions.

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care of – all you have to do is turn up and flop out. Seven beaches, each with talcum-soft sand, a private butler service, spa, a killer wine cellar, boutique and gallery, library, fitness center, full-on audio visual equipment, Jacuzzi, complimentary Wi-Fi and private gardens make for a pleasing inventory of facilities. Like the very best of superyachts “Anything, anytime, anywhere” is the Frégate Island moto but when comparing it with a superyacht we found one thing it lacked! There was no at anchor stabilization. But given that, it’s a super yacht that never moves. It does not need to!

As an alternate to the Caribbean, the Seychelles takes some beating – especially when you factor in the Maldives and glittering cities of the Arabian Gulf on your winter passage plan.

**PROCEDURES**

- Masters are required to give notice of ETA 72hrs, 48hrs, 24hrs, and 12hrs prior to arrival. Clearance formalities take place in the anchorage prior to entering the marina. Pilots are required inside harbor limits. Victoria Harbor Control can be contacted on Channel 12 or 16.

**CHARTER YACHTS**

- TG Radek Masin arrange crewed charters aboard craft in their ownership.
- These include Ferretti, Mochi Craft and Chris Craft. Sunseeker Charters and The Moorings are also at Eden Island Marina.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**CONTACTS**

- Air Seychelles: www.airseychelles.com
- Eden Island: www.edenislandmarina.com
- Eden Island Resort: www.edenisland.sc
- Etihad: www.etihad.com
- Exclusive Yacht Services: www.exclusive-yacht-services.com
- Four Seasons Residential Properties: www.petiteansedevelopments.com
- Four Seasons Resort: www.fourseasons.com/Seychelles
- Frégate Island Private: www.fregate.com
- Hunt, Deltel & Co: www.hundel.sc
- Raffles Praslin: www.raffles.com/praslin
- Seychelles Tourism: www.seychelles.com
- TG Radek Masin: www.radekmasin.com

**SHIPS STORES AND SUPPLIES AGENTS**

- ISPC - www.ispc.sc
- Apex - www.apex.sc
- As an alternate to the Caribbean, the Seychelles takes some beating – especially when you factor in the Maldives and glittering cities of the Arabian Gulf on your winter passage plan.
Suggested Charter

Itinerary taking in islands mentioned in this report:

Day 1 - Depart Eden Island Marina and steam to St Anne National Park and relax for day in the Marine national park move to anchor off the Four Seasons Resort in Petit Anse over night.

Day 2 - Use the facilities of the Four Seasons resort as a base and visit the Rum Distillery and the Garden du Roi. Leave time for a spa treatment at the resort and take sunset drinks on the terrace above the spa while watching fruit bats swoop down to tackle an unsuspecting mango.

Day 3 - After early morning use of jet skis and other water sports steam to the 40 miles to Bay St Anne in the South of Praslin. Tender ashore and hire an island guide (Michael Juan-Louis tel: 2524150). Visit the Valley De Mai and take a drink at the beach front Café des Arts at the Le Duc de Praslin Hotel on the golden sands of Cote d’Or Beach. Anchor off Raffles resort choosing a spot between Praslin and Curieuse Island.

Day 4 - Tender ashore to Curieuse Island, arrange rendezvous diving or simply snorkel the crystal clear waters that are teeming with fish.

Day 5 - La Digue, rent bicycles or charter a bullock cart and tour the island visiting Le Union Estate and the beach at Anse Source D’Argent. Anchor over night off the island’s southern shore.

Day 6 - Steam to Frégate Island and arrange a shore visit to Island. You will need to arrive before 10am and request transfers, no unauthorized tenders are allowed to enter the marina. Arrange a shore excursion to see the Giant Tortoise and wild life. Ask for the island Ecology manager to take you on a walking trail through the Rain Forest and hike up Mount Signal to watch the sun set. Overnight at anchor off the hotel’s own marina and take a private dinner in the resort’s very own Yacht Club.

Day 7 - Return to Eden Island Marina, perhaps via the resort on Round Island, and dock in time to arrange the short drive to the airport.