Tour Code
**MCIO**

ADVENTURESABROAD

# INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

## Seychelles, Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar & Comoros

**22 days**

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### Day 1 Arrival in Seychelles

A thousand miles from the African coast, more than 115 islands comprise the Seychelles Archipelago. As we arrive at Mahe, we step into a world where swaying palms frame crystalline lagoons and wildlife thrives as it has for centuries. Unlike most ocean islands, Mahe's granite peaks are a genuine fragment of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana, cast adrift here long before Africa, India, and Madagascar took their present shapes.

This comparatively young nation traces its first permanent settlement to 1770, when French colonists arrived on these remote shores. The islands' position along historic trade routes drew a remarkable mix of peoples--freed slaves, European adventurers, Arab and Persian traders, Chinese merchants, and Indian settlers--who together shaped the multicultural Seychelles we encounter today, an 86000-strong population speaking Creole, French, and English with equal ease.

This evening we gather for our first dinner together, a chance to meet fellow travellers before the journey properly begins.

Overnight in Mahe, Seychelles

Included Meal(s): Dinner

### Day 2 Seychelles: Victoria & Mahe Island Tour

We begin in Victoria, affectionately known as "the world's smallest capital," where the aromatic spices and bright colours of the central market create an immediate immersion into Seychellois life. Stalls overflow with freshly caught fish, tropical fruit found nowhere else on Earth, and herbs that have seasoned local cuisine for generations.

The small National Museum traces the layers of island history, from the ecological evolution behind Seychelles' endemic species to the cultural fusion that defines the nation today. We continue to the century-old Botanical Gardens, where two hectares/five acres of tropical grounds showcase exotic plants alongside towering specimens of the Coco-de-Mer palm, whose giant seeds we will meet growing wild on Praslin.

As we circle Mahe, lush plantations of coconut palm and cinnamon carpet the mountainsides in fertile volcanic soil. The Sans Souci road climbs through misty highland forest to the ruins of Mission Lodge, once a school for freed slave children and a quiet reminder of the island's complex colonial history.

Morne Seychellois National Park protects a full 20% of Mahe's land area, from coastal mangroves to the country's highest peak at 905 m/2969 ft. Here, working plantations still cultivate the spices and essential-oil plants that have sustained islanders for centuries, their terraced gardens a living record of traditional Seychellois agriculture.

Overnight in Mahe, Seychelles

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

### Day 3 Seychelles: Full Day Praslin Island & La Digue Island Tour

We set sail across crystalline waters to explore two of the archipelago's most celebrated islands. Praslin, pronounced "Prah-lin," awaits after a scenic ferry crossing, its reputation as one of the Indian Ocean's original Gardens of Eden well earned by early explorers who found nothing else quite like it.

Our destination is the Vallee de Mai Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site protecting the only place on Earth where the Coco-de-Mer palm grows naturally. These extraordinary trees produce the longest leaves and the heaviest seeds in the plant kingdom, some weighing up to 20 kg/44 lb and taking a full year to ripen.

Beneath the high canopy of this primeval forest, we listen for the rare Black Parrot's distinctive call while endemic palms and Seychelles flying foxes populate the valley in equal measure.

The coastal drive to Anse Lazio explains why this beach consistently ranks among the world's finest: massive granite boulders, shaped by millions of years of wind and wave into smooth, rounded forms, frame turquoise water in a natural gallery unlike any other.

Our afternoon ferry carries us to La Digue, where ox-carts and bicycles outnumber cars on roads shaded by towering palms. At L'Union Estate, giant Aldabra tortoises graze beneath a restored vanilla plantation and copra mill, recalling a more leisurely colonial era. The day's true revelation waits at Anse Source d'Argent, one of the world's most photographed beaches, where pale sand meets sculpted granite in a composition that has inspired artists and photographers for generations.

Overnight in Mahe, Seychelles

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 4 Seychelles: Day Cruise of Mahe Island's Coast

The northeast coast of Mahe unfolds before us as we board our catamaran for a journey along shores that have remained largely unchanged for centuries. Our vessel skirts the reef edge, tracing a coastline once frequented by pirates who careened their ships here to stock provisions and make repairs between raids.

We sail past granite boulders and unspoiled coves that serve as Mahe's last nesting beaches for the critically endangered Hawksbill turtle, ancient mariners whose survival now depends on the careful protection of these coastal habitats from Sainte Anne to Ile au Cerf.

Anchoring for an onboard barbecue lunch, we find ourselves within Sainte Anne Marine National Park, the first marine protected area established anywhere in the Indian Ocean, back in 1973. Its coral gardens and fish populations remain some of the most pristine in the western Indian Ocean, a legacy of five decades of careful conservation.

Gentle trade winds may inspire our captain to raise the sails, carrying us further from shore to appreciate the full scale of the Indian Ocean--the same isolation that has shaped Seychelles' unique wildlife and cultures since these granite peaks first broke the surface, hundreds of millions of years before humans ever arrived.

Overnight in Mahe, Seychelles

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

## Day 5 Seychelles - Fly to Mauritius

We bid farewell to the granite peaks of Seychelles and fly southwest to Mauritius--a very different kind of island. Where Mahe is an ancient sliver of continental crust, Mauritius was built from nothing by volcanic fire, and it shows: coral reefs, coconut palms, and casuarina trees fringe a coastline backed by green tapestries of sugar cane running to the horizon.

The island remained uninhabited until Portuguese explorers arrived in the early 1500s. Arab sailors of the Middle Ages had already named it Dina Arobi, but it was the Dutch who first settled here in 1598, followed by the French in 1715 and the British in 1810 during the Napoleonic Wars.

Mauritius gained independence in 1968, becoming a republic within the Commonwealth in 1992, but its real wealth lies in the cultural fusion that defines modern Mauritian life--African, European, Indian, and Chinese threads woven together so that Tamil temples stand beside Catholic churches and Chinese pagodas share neighbourhoods with mosques.

That same volcanic isolation allowed a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna to evolve here, including flightless birds and outsized reptiles found nowhere else--though the best known of them, the dodo, was hunted to extinction within a century of European colonisation, its name now shorthand the world over for something lost forever.

Overnight in Port-Louis, Mauritius

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 6 Mauritius: Port Louis & Pamplemousses City Tour

Port Louis springs to life as we explore the capital, founded in 1735 by the French governor Mahe de Labourdonnais. This vibrant city blends the island's colonial past with its dynamic present, cultures and traditions nestled between the ocean and the Moka Range.

The Blue Penny Museum tells the story of Mauritius through antique maps, photographs, and engravings. Its centrepiece, the legendary 1847 Blue Penny and Red Penny stamps, ranks among philately's greatest treasures--purchased for USD 2 million in 1993 and returned home after nearly 150 years abroad.

We explore the harbour and the sensory rush of Port Louis market, where the scent of spices mingles with vendors' calls over tropical fruit and handcrafted souvenirs. The Caudan Waterfront reflects the city's maritime heritage, while nearby Chinatown recalls the immigrants who brought their traditions and cuisine to the island's cultural mix.

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Aapravasi Ghat offers a more sober connection to this history: the Immigration Depot where indentured labourers from India first disembarked from 1849 onward, marking the arrival point for ancestors of more than 70% of today's Mauritian population.

We close the day at Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens, the oldest in the Southern Hemisphere, where 85 varieties of palm and giant Victoria water lilies form a living record of the island's botanical diversity.

Overnight in Port-Louis, Mauritius

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 7 Mauritius: Full Day Island Tour

The volcanic heart of Mauritius reveals itself at Grand Bassin, a sacred crater lake in the island's mountainous interior. For Mauritians of Hindu faith, this tranquil water holds a direct spiritual connection to the Ganges, with temple ceremonies still conducted on shores cradled by an extinct volcano and pilgrims arriving year-round to make offerings.

We cross Black River Gorges National Park, the island's only national park, protecting over 6500 ha/16062 acres of native forest and endemic plants--including the pink pigeon and Mauritius kestrel, both brought back from the brink of extinction--that survive nowhere else on Earth.

The geological curiosity of Chamarel awaits: the "seven-coloured earth," undulating dunes of red, brown, violet, green, blue, purple, and yellow left by the weathering of volcanic rock with differing mineral content. Oddly, the colours never remix even when the earth is disturbed or rained on.

Our day culminates at Le Morne Brabant, a UNESCO World Heritage site rising 556 m/1824 ft from the island's southwestern peninsula. This rugged mountain sheltered runaway slaves through the 18th and early 19th centuries, its cliffs and hidden caves a refuge for those seeking freedom. The Le Morne Cultural Landscape remains a powerful symbol of that struggle, its name still spoken with quiet respect across the island.

Overnight in Port-Louis, Mauritius

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

## Day 8 Mauritius - Fly to Saint-Denis, Reunion: Afternoon Walking Tour

We fly to the French territory of Reunion, where wild volcanic landscapes stand in contrast to Mauritius's gentler shores. Sandwiched between Mauritius and Madagascar, Reunion keeps a resolutely French identity while sharing the same cultural currents that run through

the Indian Ocean.

Portuguese explorers reached this uninhabited island around 1507, though Swahili or Malay sailors may have passed through earlier. Three vast cirques--steep, bowl-shaped amphitheatres carved by ancient volcanic collapse--dominate the interior, giving Reunion a profile not unlike Hawaii, both islands sitting above hotspots deep in the Earth's crust.

Saint-Denis, capital of this French overseas department, greets us with a mix of colonial architecture and tropical energy, its setting wedged dramatically between ocean and mountain at the mouth of the Saint-Denis River.

We begin at the Jardin de l'Etat, botanical gardens established in 1773 as the island's first zoological gardens and now home to exquisite tropical flowers and endemic plants found nowhere else.

Our afternoon walking tour along Rue de Paris takes in the Hotel de Ville, widely considered the city's finest building, and the Cathedral of Saint-Denis. The Prefecture, begun in 1735 as East India Company headquarters, speaks to the island's colonial past, while Creole houses display their characteristic varangues (verandas) and carved wooden cornices along quiet, tree-lined streets.

Overnight in Saint-Denis, Reunion

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 9 Reunion: Saint-Denis - Piton Maido - Cilaos

Reunion's cultural fusion--French, African, Indian, and Chinese--produces a society where Creole and French blend naturally and Catholicism sits comfortably beside Buddhism and Islam. This harmony defines daily life as we head into the island's dramatic interior.

Our route climbs from the coastal highway into mountain towns that form Reunion's geological heart, villages giving way to acacia and tamarind forest, then to cliffs and increasingly wide views. The UNESCO-listed national park covers over 40% of the island, prized for both its biodiversity and its scenery.

Piton Maido delivers our first view into the cirque of Mafate, a wilderness of untouched valleys and ridgelines below us, home to just 700 residents across 15 villages reachable only on foot or by helicopter. Weather permitting, we glimpse Piton des Neiges--the "Peak of the Snows" and, at 3070 m/10072 ft, the highest point in the Indian Ocean, its summit sometimes dusted with frost despite the tropical latitude.

We descend, then climb again to Cirque de Cilaos, in the island's geographic centre and known for its vineyards and thermal springs. The name comes from the Malagasy "Tsilaosa," or "the place one never leaves"--understandable once we see it. The road's 400 curves and tunnels explain why this cirque stayed isolated so long: a crater 1200 m/3937 ft deep and 100 sq km/39 sq mi of peaks, ravines, and forest that feels closer to the Alps than the tropics.

Overnight in Cilaos, Reunion

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 10 Cilaos and the Wild South

We descend from Cilaos toward Reunion's "Wild South," where dark forest meets azure ocean along roads that seem to move at their own unhurried pace. This region captures the essence of authentic Reunion, volcanic slopes running down to quiet beaches and small fishing harbours.

Our route covers the entire southern coast, from the white sands of Grand Anse to the forested slopes of Piton de la Fournaise. At Saint-Joseph, on the island's southern tip, we reach the southernmost point in the European Union--a geographical footnote that says something about how far this island sits from home.

The village of Manapany-les-Bains shows how volcanic activity shaped this coast: a natural swimming pool carved from basaltic rock, its black walls formed by lava that once met and hardened against the sea, now sheltered enough for families to swim safely.
Cap Mechant--"Wicked Cape"--earns its name as we watch the Indian Ocean crash against black cliffs built by relatively recent lava flows. Here Piton de la Fournaise is still adding to the island, molten rock reaching the sea to create new land, a living reminder that Reunion's volcanic story--which reaches its most dramatic chapter tomorrow--is far from finished.

Overnight in Saint-Pierre, Reunion

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 11 South Coast - Piton de la Fournaise - Saint-Denis

We approach Piton de la Fournaise, the "Peak of the Furnace," crossing a shifting lunar landscape as we near one of the world's most active volcanoes. This hotspot volcano, roughly 530000 years old and rising to 2621 m/8599 ft, sits within the Enclos Fouque, an 8 km/5 mi caldera that has grown by way of the same hotspot forces that shaped Mauritius--here reaching their most dramatic and visible expression anywhere in the Indian Ocean.

Within the caldera, two summit craters tell their own stories: Dolomieu, by far the larger, and Bory beside it, both ringed by pyroclastic cones recording individual eruptions. At Nez de Boeuf--the "Ox's Nose"--we pause 1000 m/3281 ft above the Riviere des Remparts, where ancient lava has carved dramatic gorges through the rock.

The Maison du Volcan explains how this hotspot operates, why it remains so active, and how its eruptions continue to build new sections of the island, from ash and pumice to entire black-sand beaches.

At the upper viewing area we walk the crater rim, calderas stretching out like a lunar landscape, testimony to forces both creative and destructive. On recent lava flows, pioneer plants have begun the slow work of colonising bare rock--the same process that, given enough centuries, produced the lush forests we crossed to get here.

Our return route re-crosses the island's volcanic heart, fertile valleys nestled between the ranges that protect them, before we arrive back in Saint-Denis for the evening.

Overnight in Saint-Denis, Reunion

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 12 Reunion - Fly to Nosy Be, Madagascar: Lemuria Island & Hell-Ville

We fly from Reunion to Nosy Be, at Madagascar's northern tip, known as "the Perfumed Isle" for its scent of ylang-ylang, vanilla, and spice. Madagascar tells a third origin story, different again from the volcanic newborns of Mauritius and Reunion: following the breakup of Gondwana, it split from India around 88 million years ago, a fragment of ancient crust much like the granite we left behind in the Seychelles. That long isolation let native plants and animals evolve entirely on their own terms--over 90% of Madagascar's wildlife exists nowhere else on the planet.

On arrival we visit Lemuria Island, also called the Ylang-Ylang Distillery, a private park where lemurs live in semi-captivity alongside chameleons and ancient tortoises, supporting breeding programs for several endangered species. Plantations of ylang-ylang, coffee, pepper, and vanilla showcase the aromatic trade that gave Nosy Be its nickname, while the distillery shows how essential oils are drawn from the flowers through steam distillation.

We continue through Hell-Ville, where ageing Renault taxis compete for road space with zebu-carts, bicycles, and tuk-tuks. Restored colonial buildings line the sea promenade, and old cannons still stand over the harbour, witnesses to the island's colonial-era strategic importance as a way station between Africa and Asia.

Overnight in Nosy Be, Madagascar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 13 Nosy Be: Excursion to Lokobe Reserve

We venture to Lokobe Reserve, accessible only by traditional outrigger canoe, where 740 ha/1829 acres of lowland rainforest form one of

Madagascar's most important conservation areas.

Our guided walk through the dense forest bordering the reserve searches out the grey-backed sportive lemur, a nocturnal species known for its agility and distinctive grey colouring--one branch of a lemur family tree that diversified into over 100 species after Madagascar's split from the African mainland some 88 million years ago.

The forest carries sounds found nowhere else: rustling leaves, calls of endemic birds, the quiet movement of creatures adapted to a world sealed off for millions of years. Our guide helps us read the jungle, pointing out boa constrictors, tree frogs, and stick insects camouflaged so well they are easy to miss entirely.

The Nosy Be panther chameleon rounds out the picture of Madagascar's reptilian diversity, prized for its vivid colours and its ability to shift hue with mood, temperature, and communication needs--one example among many of endemic reptiles that evolved to fill ecological niches left vacant by the island's absent mammals.

Overnight in Nosy Be, Madagascar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 14 Nosy Be: Excursion to Nosy Komba

We drive through Hell-Ville before boarding a boat for Nosy Komba, known locally as "Lemur Island" for its populations of friendly black lemurs, long accustomed to human company after generations of gentle interaction.

Hidden coves and scenic paths lead through local farms and up into verdant hills, where exotic birds and elusive chameleons inhabit the canopy--proof that each of Madagascar's offshore islands has developed its own distinct ecosystem in miniature.
We begin with a stroll along quiet beaches before visiting a nearby village, where traditional farming, fishing, and social customs continue largely unchanged, reflecting the close bond between these communities and their environment.

Forest exploration brings us face to face with playful black lemurs, their curious, fearless behaviour making for genuinely memorable wildlife encounters at close range. The island's hills fold down into sheltered coves that double as harbours for traditional fishing villages--communities that have learned to live in step with their surroundings, a small but hopeful model for Madagascar's conservation future.

Overnight in Nosy Be, Madagascar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 15 Nosy Be - Fly to Antananarivo

A leisurely morning in Nosy Be gives way to an afternoon flight to Antananarivo, Madagascar's highland capital, perched at 1280 m/4199 ft above sea level. Founded in the early 17th century by the Merina people, "Tana" spreads across a dozen hills and valleys in a way unlike any other African capital, one of the few founded by an African kingdom rather than a colonial power.

After settling into our accommodation, the evening is ours to relax after the journey, gathering later for dinner as we look ahead to tomorrow's exploration of the highlands beyond the city.

Overnight in Antananarivo, Madagascar

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 16 Antananarivo: Royal Hill of Ambohimanga - Fly to Grande Comore

This morning we visit the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga, 24 km/15 mi north of the capital and one of Madagascar's most sacred sites. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, its core zone covering 59 ha/146 acres within a much larger buffer, served as the Merina kings' fortified royal

settlement before the capital moved to Antananarivo in the early 19th century. The name itself--"Blue Hill"--refers to its distinctive colour seen from a distance.

We climb the sacred hill through a series of stone gateways that once guarded the compound from invasion. The most impressive, Ambatomitsangana, could be sealed each evening by a circular stone disk 4.5 m/15 ft across and weighing roughly 12 tons--a task that took twenty men working in unison to roll it into place.

Inside, the wooden palace of King Andrianampoinimerina, who united the Merina kingdom in the late 18th century, preserves its original furnishings and demonstrates traditional Malagasy joinery, built entirely without nails, using mortise and tenon construction. Royal tombs, sacred bathing pools, and places of judgment complete the compound; many Malagasy still make pilgrimages here to honour their ancestors, making Ambohimanga the country's most important spiritual site, one held as sacred as any place in Madagascar.

In the afternoon we depart for the Comoros Islands via Nairobi, Kenya, continuing on an evening flight southeast over the Mozambique Channel toward the volcanic Comoros archipelago--leaving behind Madagascar's ancient continental fragment for islands still actively being born. We arrive at Grande Comore in the early hours of the following morning and settle into our accommodation for a well-deserved rest.

Overnight on Grande Comore, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

## Day 17 Grande Comore: Northern Island Touring

After a leisurely morning to recover from our late arrival, we explore Grande Comore's northern coast and volcanic heritage--our first close look at an island still actively building itself, in sharp contrast to the ancient crust of the Seychelles and Madagascar.
Along the western shoreline, mangrove forests now thrive in former lava beds, nature reclaiming ground that was once molten rock.

Our first stop is the largest baobab tree in the Comoros, spacious enough inside its hollow trunk for ten people to stand together. Some of these giants are over 1000 years old, their bottle-shaped trunks storing water through the dry season and their odd silhouettes visible for kilometres.

More than 120 volcanic craters mark this island, and we visit two of the most striking: Lac Sale, a roadside crater lake whose mineral-rich waters are locally believed to hold healing properties, and The Dragon's Back, a coastal crater half-consumed by the sea, leaving only a narrow, dramatic ridge behind.

The village of Bangwa Kouni holds one of the island's favourite mysteries--"The Miraculous Mosque." Legend says villagers woke one morning to find it fully built beside their settlement overnight, though the more likely explanation involves skilled craftsmen and a determined community effort. Nearby, ancient tombs mark the resting places of early Arab traders who first brought Islam to these shores, centuries before the mosque's more mysterious arrival.

Overnight on Grande Comore, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 18 Grande Comore: Southern Island Touring

Our exploration of Grande Comore's southern reaches takes in the island's most dramatic volcanic legacy and its historic sultanate capitals. Driving south through Moroni, we reach Singani, destroyed by lava in 1977 and rebuilt directly atop the hardened flow--the community even used the volcanic rock itself as building material, a striking example of Comoran resilience.

We continue to Foumbouni, the largest town in the south and former capital of the southern sultans, its small medina and old palace speaking to an aristocratic past, with views across the Indian Ocean from the edge of town.

At Chindini, gateway to Moheli island, fishermen return from the sea in traditional pirogues while others arrive after multi-hour crossings aboard vedettes, the local boats that remain the only link between these remote islands--a scene of isolation and self-sufficiency typical of life in the Comoros.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, we reach Iconi, an ancient sultan's capital below a steep volcanic cone. During the 1800s, many women

here chose to leap from the cone's heights rather than face enslavement by Malagasy raiders--a history the town has never forgotten, even as its bangwes, the open spaces where men still gather to debate community affairs, carry on traditions unchanged for generations.

Optional: the adventurous may climb the small Iconi volcano to view its old defensive ramparts, rewarded with panoramic views over the town, nearby Lake Marabou, and the sea beyond.

Overnight on Grande Comore, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 19 Grande Comore - Fly to Moheli (Mwali)

We fly to Moheli (Mwali), the smallest, wildest, and least visited of the Comoran islands, where an unspoiled landscape of rich forests, coffee and vanilla plantations, and quiet fishing villages remains largely untouched by modern development. It's also a haven for biodiversity found nowhere else on Earth, from endemic birds like the Blue Vanga and Moheli Scops Owl to the Livingstone fruit bat and the Comorian lemur, with the evening turtle excursion at Nioumachoua ranking among the most memorable wildlife encounters of the trip.

Our exact activities on Moheli will depend on our arrival time, weather, and the group's interests. Some of the island's highlights involve rough, steep terrain and river crossings on foot in considerable heat and humidity--by this stage of the tour, your tour leader will have a good sense of the group's fitness and capabilities and can advise on what's suitable. A few days before we arrive, the tour leader will outline all the options in detail so we can gauge interest and numbers, allowing our local operator to arrange things in advance.

Overnight on Moheli, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 20 Moheli Island Exploration

Our exploration of Moheli reveals an island where biodiversity thrives in near-pristine conditions, still the least developed of the Comoros. Primary forest hikes introduce fruit trees and medicinal plants--vanilla, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and pineapple--while local guides share traditional knowledge of their healing properties, passed down through generations without ever being written down.

A forest walk leads to a scenic waterfall and natural pool, where freshwater shrimp thrive and visitors can cool off beneath the cascade. This route replaced the former coastal waterfall at Merimani, which lost much of its flow to upstream diversions and village pollution in recent years.

The village of Nioumachoua offers a glimpse of authentic island life, where residents keep to "island time," fishing, farming, and gathering much as they have for generations, largely untouched by the pace of the wider world.

The evening brings an extraordinary excursion to witness one of nature's oldest rituals: Moheli is one of the few places on Earth where sea turtles come ashore nightly, year-round, to lay their eggs. In the marine reserve's protected dark, we watch these ancient creatures dig nests and deposit eggs that will hatch weeks later--a quiet reminder of our responsibility to protect them and the habitats they depend on.

Overnight on Moheli, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 21 Moheli - Fly to Grande Comore - Moroni Discovery

We return to Grande Comore this morning, flying from remote Moheli back to Moroni, the nation's capital. After several days in Moheli's untouched wilderness, we appreciate the contrast of this charming port town, where Arab heritage and African tradition blend seamlessly.

Moroni sits on Grande Comore's southwest coast, overlooking a harbour filled with traditional fishing boats. Largely Arabic in atmosphere, the town's old quarter--a maze of narrow streets lined with whitewashed buildings and carved wooden doors--reflects centuries of

prosperity as a key port for Arab merchants trading with Asia. The vendredi mosque, or Friday mosque, its minaret rising above the medina, remains the spiritual heart of the old town.

Along the bustling waterfront, fishermen mend nets beside traditional dhows and vendors sell spices, tropical fruit, and the day's catch, a scene that has changed little for generations. The harbour wall offers a fine vantage point for watching sunset over Mount Karthala, the still-active volcano that built this youngest of our islands, a fitting bookend to the ancient granite where our journey began.

Our final evening in the Comoros is a chance to reflect on this remarkable archipelago, where the modern world feels reassuringly distant.

Overnight on Grande Comore, Comoros

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 22 Departure

We depart from Moroni Airport (HAH), our journey complete. Three weeks have carried us from the ancient granite of the Seychelles and the continental fragment of Madagascar to the restless young volcanoes of Mauritius, Reunion, and the Comoros--two very different ways an island comes into being, and two equally rich sets of cultures shaped by the sea around them.

Bon voyage!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast