

# NORTH *and* SOUTH

Decided to take the plunge and elope to Mauritius? Rose Dykins explores settings for intimate weddings and unforgettable honeymoons at opposite ends of the island



#### DESTINATION INFO:

*A tropical island, Mauritius enjoys a warm climate all year round. There's plenty of humidity and rainfall in the summer months from November to April, and winter, from May to October, brings cooler, drier conditions. The sea temperature is also very welcoming at an average of 28 °C in February.*





### Travel tip

The island is prone to bouts of rain – but don't worry – it clears up just as quickly as it starts.

“Veranda Palmar Beach is the smallest, with the most perfect, icing-sugar-white sand dotted with filao trees



## Up North

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

#### WHAT'S IT LIKE OUTSIDE?

The best months to wed in Mauritius are September and October, when the temperature is the most pleasant. However, the island's micro-climate means its weather is changeable all year round, and it's wise to have a back-up setting for the ceremony in case of rain.

**DOCUMENTS** Provide your tourist agency with copies of your birth certificate and your passport at least one month in advance of your ceremony.

**THE PROCESS** You'll need to visit the Civil Status Office in Port Louis to secure your marriage certificate, which can take a day or two to be processed. You'll need to present your passports and birth certificates.

**CLOSED FOR BUSINESS** It's not possible to marry during the Christmas/New Year period as the Civil Office is closed (double check specific dates with your hotel). It's also closed at weekends, so bear this in mind when choosing the day of your ceremony.

**TOP TIP** Arrive at least two days before your wedding day to finalise details with the planner, recover from jet lag and settle into the island.



or adorn it with indigenous flowers. Each resort has a spa with a hair and beauty salon, and iron and pressing services are thrown in for free with the classic wedding package.

After the wedding, there is plenty to enjoy in the north of the island. Mauritius is ringed entirely by a coral reef, sheltering its land from the ferocious swell of the Indian Ocean, and creating a turquoise lagoon-like ring of tempting, tranquil water. All Veranda properties offer free glass-bottomed boat trips for guests, where you can hop off and explore by snorkel when the mood takes you. Though the coral is rather bleached in places, shoals of fish still flock around you when your driver lobs pieces of bread close by. Veranda Resorts can also arrange scuba diving sessions, and Veranda Grand Baie offers catamaran cruises, where dolphin encounters are highly likely.

### A TASTE OF THE ISLAND

For a slice of Mauritian history, Chateau Labourdonnais (chateaulabourdonnais.com) is well worth a visit. The beauty of the violet-hued colonial house has been painstakingly restored, and it's like travelling back in time to the 19th century, when the home was occupied by the owners of the surrounding sugar estate. The jungle-like terrain of the property's gardens and orchards bear fruits such as mangoes, pineapples and guavas, which are used as ingredients for the chateau's home-brewed rum.

Finally, you can't leave Veranda Resorts without trying a Mauritian take on a Ti' punch cocktail — an intensely sour concoction of “industrial strength” rum and lime, softened by sugar cane syrup. ▶

Tucking into a breakfast of fresh papaya and croissants at Veranda Paul and Virginie, I'm watching the sun stretch serenely over the expanse of ocean before me. Scarlet sparrow-like birds are hopping towards my plate expectantly, only to be usurped by a squawking mynah bird, who eyes my croissant menacingly. The nature flows freely in and out of the resort's public areas, perching on dark-wooden furniture, reminding me of the exotic locale we're lucky enough to be enjoying.

Veranda Resorts has four properties in the north of Mauritius rated three- to four-star — the facilities, service and food are impeccable, making them astonishing value for money. The properties offer a free basic wedding package for guests, and each one has different strengths for hosting personal ceremonies for just the two (or a few) of you.

### TROPICAL LIVING

As well as its adults-only appeal, the 81-room Veranda Paul and Virginie is the best resort if you have your heart set on wearing heels on your special day, as it has a pagoda on a lush grassy area with that hypnotising ocean backdrop – so you can have the Jimmy Choos and the sea views you'd hoped for without getting stuck in the sand.

Veranda Grand Baie is the most buzzy resort, thanks to its proximity to the quaint town of Grand Baie, which boasts pretty Creole architecture, laid-back bars and restaurants, and even a nightclub or two. The hotel's 94 pea-green shuttered rooms are surrounded by foliage, and have beds with sunset vistas blown up onto canvas as headboards.

The 115-room Veranda Pointe aux Biches (probably my favourite, though it's hard) has the biggest beach, as well as the best views of the sun disappearing behind the horizon. Weddings take place on the beach by the Sandy Lane Grill restaurant (part of the couples-only section of the resort) where there's plenty of space to set up tables for a small wedding breakfast with sumptuous charcoaled prawns. Finally, the 77-room Veranda Palmar Beach is the smallest of the properties, with the most perfect, icing-sugar-white sand dotted with feathery filao trees.

### BEACHSIDE BLISS

The Veranda Resorts hotels create airy, ethereal settings for tying the knot. Guests can opt to decorate a driftwood-style beach altar with draped white cloth that billows in the sea breeze,

### Getting Hitched

Veranda Resorts' free Classic Wedding Package includes a bottle of sparkling wine, a cake, a candlelit dinner and a special turndown service. Extra services can be added for a fee, such as a bouquet and a 120-minute session with a photographer.

Legal proceedings are not included in the package – you must partner with an external tourist agency to arrange a Civil Status office visit and pay for your marriage certificate. Visit [veranda-resorts.com](http://veranda-resorts.com)



## Down South

**W**e're exploring the incredible wildlife of the verdant 25-hectare Ile aux Aigrettes on foot — a ten-minute boat-ride from the coast of Mauritius — when we come face-to-face with a dominant male. His nickname is "Big Daddy", he weighs 700 kilos, he's 90 years old — and he's a tortoise. We're sceptical when our guide warns us that Big Daddy gets rather tetchy during mating season, but when he opens his beak and makes a beeline for us with unexpected speed, we back away comically fast.

The south of Mauritius has a more rugged, wild feel to it than the north, with scenery that morphs abruptly between resembling England's countryside and primeval ravines that could be straight out of 'Jurassic Park'. It's also home to Heritage Resorts, which will appeal to those seeking the stage for a characterful wedding with a touch of luxury. Situated in the Domaine de Bel Ombre, a former sugar plantation estate spanning 2,500 hectares, Heritage Resorts is a veritable microcosm. It comprises 45 serviced villas at Heritage The Villas, a nature reserve, a championship golf course, 12 restaurants, two spas and two five-star hotels with completely different personalities.

### COLONIAL CHIC

The 154-room Heritage Awali Golf and Spa Resort's edgy African decor, all-inclusive service and the signature orangey-cinnamon scent that pervades the resort all create a warm, liberal vibe well-suited to families. Minutes away by shuttle bus, the 158-room Heritage Le Telfair is an elegant property, with white colonial-style architecture, maids in pristine pinafores and a gentle, peaceful ambience.

Heritage Le Telfair provides a free classic wedding package featuring VIP touches such as butler service and flowers upon arrival. The beach area beside Gin'Ja, the resort's sleek Pan-Asian teppanyaki restaurant is the most popular place for ceremonies due to its stunning ocean views. Heritage Awali weddings typically take place on the resort's main beach, and the hotel caters well for couples with children. Both resorts have dedicated bridal rooms in their spas and offer free ironing and pressing.

The majority of weddings at both hotels are couples-only affairs, but there are breathtaking options for larger parties too. There's the Chateau de Bel Ombre, a beautiful 19th century French mansion that is now used as a fine-dining



### Getting Hitched

Heritage Awali and Heritage Le Telfair both offer a free Classic Wedding Package, which includes a bottle of sparkling wine, a cake, a candlelit honeymoon dinner and a special turnaround service, along with other features. Extra services and themed packages are available for a fee.

Both hotels offer a Civil Wedding Package, where all legal proceedings and transfers to the Civil Status office can be taken care of for a fee of £500. Visit [heritageresorts.mu](http://heritageresorts.mu)

Book excursions to Ile aux Aigrettes, the Seven Coloured Earths and Black River Gorges National Park with Mautourco ([mautourco.com](http://mautourco.com)). They can also take care of wedding legalities.

restaurant and can be hired exclusively for parties of up to 100 people. Bats gracefully swoop high above you in the evening, creating a sense of gothic charm as you feast upon exquisite food on the candlelit terrace — such as orange-honey wild boar chops with creamed taro root, lentils and five spices sauce. Meanwhile, the Place du Moulin, a striking former sugar mill within the domain, offers an industrial-chic blank canvas for those with imagination and a bigger budget to play with — it has staged extraordinary technicolour Indian weddings in the past.

### HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Honeymooners may struggle to tear themselves away from the resorts. Heritage Le Telfair's C Beach Club, offering windsurfing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding and Segway rides around the Domaine de Bel Ombre, and the 18-hole golf course of the Heritage Golf Club — the venue for the AfrAsia Mauritius Open this year — will keep restless partners occupied.

Those keen to explore the south of Mauritius will want to visit the Seven Coloured Earths - worth a quick photo - and the Black River Gorges National Park. However, Heritage Resorts also has plenty of natural beauty on its doorstep. The on-site Frederica Nature Reserve can be discovered on quad bikes, where you'll whisk past stags, pheasants and native Ebony trees, and reward your exertion with an icy dip in the reserve's waterfall pool.

The two Seven Colours Spas at Heritage Resorts are well set-up for couples. Both spas recently began offering aromatherapy candle massages, where warm wax made from shea oil is dripped and rubbed all over your skin, making it feel brand new. And in August, the Seven Colours Spa is set to launch its 'Deep into the Sea' massage — where massage tables will be placed in the sea at sundown, and the sound of waves lapping gently below will lull you and your loved one into a pre-dinner seaside snooze.

A firm highlight of our stay is Heritage Awali's Boma evening. We join one of the social, long wooden tables around a blazing bonfire and devour grilled seafood and cardamom-rich curries while being treated to performances from an African drumming trio. Impossibly lithe dancers nimbly move in time to the frenzied cross-rhythms, and invite us to join them. It's not long before everyone is on their feet, fuelled by the jovial atmosphere — and the many shots of fiery rum we've been knocking back all evening. ❤️



“Bats gracefully swoop high above you, creating a sense of gothic charm as you feast on exquisite food”



**Travel tip**  
A Hindu temple is definitely worth a visit. Just don't forget to bring fruit for the local monkeys!