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**Mauritius** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr)), officially the **Republic of Mauritius** ([Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr)), is an [island nation](/wiki/Island_nation) in the [Indian Ocean](/wiki/Indian_Ocean) about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) off the southeast coast of the [African](/wiki/Africa) continent. The country includes the island of [Mauritius](/wiki/Mauritius_Island), [Rodrigues](/wiki/Rodrigues) [[Template:Convert](/wiki/%5bTemplate:Convert) east], and the [outer islands](/wiki/Outer_islands_of_Mauritius) ([Agaléga](/wiki/Agaléga), [St. Brandon](/wiki/St._Brandon) and two disputed territories). The islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) southwest) form part of the [Mascarene Islands](/wiki/Mascarene_Islands), along with nearby [Réunion](/wiki/Réunion), a French overseas department. The area of the country is 2,040 km2. The capital and largest city is [Port Louis](/wiki/Port_Louis).

The island of Mauritius was visited during the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Medieval_period) by the [Arabs](/wiki/Arab_people) and then by the [Portuguese](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Portugal), who named it *Dina Arobi* and *Cirne*, respectively. The island was uninhabited until the [Dutch Republic](/wiki/Dutch_Republic) established a colony in 1638, with the Dutch naming the island after [Prince Maurice van Nassau](/wiki/Maurice_of_Nassau,_Prince_of_Orange). The Dutch colony was abandoned in 1710, and, five years later, the island became a French colony and was named [Isle de France](/wiki/Isle_de_France_(Mauritius)). Due to its strategic position, Mauritius was known as the "star and key" of the Indian Ocean.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Mauritius became an important base on the trade routes from Europe to the East before the opening of the [Suez Canal](/wiki/Suez_Canal) and was involved in the long power struggle between the French and the British. The French won the [Battle of Grand Port](/wiki/Battle_of_Grand_Port), their only naval victory over the British during these wars, but they [could not prevent the British from landing](/wiki/Invasion_of_Isle_de_France) at [Cap Malheureux](/wiki/Cap_Malheureux) three months later. They formally surrendered on the fifth day of the invasion, 3 December 1810, on terms allowing settlers to keep their land and property, the use of the French language, and the law of France in criminal and civil matters. Under British rule, the island's name reverted to Mauritius. The country became an independent state on 12 March 1968, following the adoption of [a new constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Mauritius). In 1992, Mauritius became a republic within the [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations).

The sovereignty over the [Chagos Archipelago](/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago) is [disputed](/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago_sovereignty_dispute) between Mauritius and the United Kingdom (UK). The UK excised the archipelago from Mauritian territory prior to Mauritian independence in 1965. The UK gradually [depopulated the archipelago's indigenous population](/wiki/Depopulation_of_Diego_Garcia) and leased its biggest island, [Diego Garcia](/wiki/Diego_Garcia), to the United States. The archipelago is prohibited to casual tourists, the media, and its former inhabitants. Mauritius also claims sovereignty over [Tromelin Island](/wiki/Tromelin_Island) from France.

The [people of Mauritius](/wiki/Mauritians) are [multiethnic](/wiki/Multiracial), multi-religious, [multicultural](/wiki/Multiculturalism) and multilingual. The island's government is closely modelled on the [Westminster parliamentary system](/wiki/Westminster_parliamentary_system), and Mauritius is highly ranked for [democracy](/wiki/Democracy_Index) and for [economic](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_economic_freedom) and [political freedom](/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World). Along with the other Mascarene Islands, Mauritius is known for [its varied flora and fauna](/wiki/Wildlife_of_Mauritius), with many species [endemic](/wiki/Endemism) to the island. The island is widely known as the only known home of the [dodo](/wiki/Dodo), which, along with several other avian species, was made extinct by human activities relatively shortly after the island's settlement.

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The first historical evidence of the existence of an island now known as Mauritius is on a map produced by the [Italian](/wiki/Italian_people) cartographer Alberto Cantino in 1502.[[2]](#cite_note-2) From this, it appears that Mauritius was first named *Dina Arobi* during the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages)[Template:When](/wiki/Template:When) by [Arab](/wiki/Arab_people) sailors, the first people to visit the island.

In 1507 Portuguese sailors visited the uninhabited island. The island appears with a [Portuguese](/wiki/Portuguese_language) name *Cirne* on early Portuguese maps, probably from the name of a ship in the 1507 expedition. Another Portuguese sailor, [Dom](/wiki/Dom_(title)) [Pedro Mascarenhas](/wiki/Pedro_Mascarenhas), gave the name [*Mascarenes*](/wiki/Mascarene_Islands) to the Archipelago.

In 1598 a Dutch squadron under [Admiral](/wiki/Admiral) Wybrand van Warwyck landed at [Grand Port](/wiki/Grand_Port) and named the island *Mauritius*, in honour of [Prince Maurice van Nassau](/wiki/Maurice,_Prince_of_Orange), [stadholder](/wiki/Stadholder) of the [Dutch Republic](/wiki/Dutch_Republic). Later the island became a French colony and was renamed [Isle de France](/wiki/Isle_de_France_(Mauritius)). On 3 December 1810 the French surrendered the island during the [Napoleonic Wars](/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars). Under British rule, the island's name reverted to *Mauritius* [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en). Mauritius is also commonly known as *Maurice* ([Template:IPA-fr](/wiki/Template:IPA-fr)) and *Île Maurice* in French, *Moris* in [Mauritian Creole](/wiki/Mauritian_Creole).

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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The island of Mauritius was uninhabited before its first recorded visit during the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages) by [Arab](/wiki/Arab_people) sailors, who named it Dina Arobi. However, the island might have been visited well before by sailors of ancient times; wax tablets were found on the shores of Mauritius by the Dutch, but since the tablets were not preserved, it cannot be said whether they were of [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greece) or [Phoenician](/wiki/Phoenicia) or Arabic origin.[[3]](#cite_note-3) In 1507 [Portuguese](/wiki/Portugal) sailors came to the uninhabited island and established a visiting base. [Diogo Fernandes Pereira](/wiki/Diogo_Fernandes_Pereira), a Portuguese navigator, was the first European known to land in Mauritius. He named the island "Ilha do Cirne". The Portuguese did not stay long as they were not interested in these islands.[[4]](#cite_note-4)

### Dutch Mauritius (1638–1710)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In 1598 a Dutch squadron under Admiral Wybrand Van Warwyck landed at [Grand Port](/wiki/Grand_Port) and named the island "Mauritius" after [Prince Maurice van Nassau](/wiki/Maurice,_Prince_of_Orange) of the [Dutch Republic](/wiki/Dutch_Republic), the ruler of his country. The Dutch established a small colony on the island in 1638, from which they exploited [ebony](/wiki/Ebony) trees and introduced [sugar cane](/wiki/Sugar_cane), [domestic animals](/wiki/Domestic_animals) and [deer](/wiki/Deer). It was from here that Dutch navigator [Abel Tasman](/wiki/Abel_Tasman) set out to discover the western part of Australia. The first Dutch settlement lasted twenty years. Several attempts were subsequently made but the settlements never developed enough to produce dividends, leading to the Dutch to abandon Mauritius in 1710.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5)

### French Mauritius (1715–1810)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Combat_de_Grand_Port_mg_9425.jpg) [Battle of Grand Port](/wiki/Battle_of_Grand_Port) between the French and British navies, 1810 France, which already controlled neighbouring Île Bourbon (now [Réunion](/wiki/Réunion)), took control of Mauritius in 1715 and renamed it [Isle de France](/wiki/Isle_de_France_(Mauritius)). The 1735 arrival of French governor [Bertrand-François Mahé de La Bourdonnais](/wiki/Bertrand-François_Mahé_de_La_Bourdonnais) coincided with development of a prosperous economy based on sugar production. Mahé de La Bourdonnais established [Port Louis](/wiki/Port_Louis) as a naval base and a shipbuilding centre.[[4]](#cite_note-4) Under his governorship, numerous buildings were erected, a number of which are still standing today. These include part of Government House, the [Château de Mon Plaisir](/wiki/Château_de_Mon_Plaisir), and the Line Barracks, the headquarters of the [police force](/wiki/Mauritius_Police_Force). The island was under the administration of the [French East India Company](/wiki/French_East_India_Company) which maintained its presence until 1767.[[4]](#cite_note-4) From 1767 to 1810, except for a brief period during the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution) when the inhabitants set up a government virtually independent of France, the island was controlled by officials appointed by the [French Government](/wiki/French_Government). [Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre](/wiki/Jacques-Henri_Bernardin_de_Saint-Pierre) lived on the island from 1768 to 1771, then went back to France, where he wrote [*Paul et Virginie*](/wiki/Paul_et_Virginie), a love story, which made the Isle de France famous wherever the French language was spoken. Two famous French governors were the Vicomte de Souillac (who constructed the Chaussée in Port Louis[[6]](#cite_note-6) and encouraged farmers to settle in the district of Savanne) and [Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux](/wiki/Antoine_Bruni_d'Entrecasteaux) (who saw to it that the French in the Indian Ocean should have their headquarters in Mauritius instead of [Pondicherry](/wiki/Pondicherry) in India).[[3]](#cite_note-3) [Charles Mathieu Isidore Decaen](/wiki/Charles_Mathieu_Isidore_Decaen) was a successful general in the [French Revolutionary Wars](/wiki/French_Revolutionary_Wars) and, in some ways, a rival of [Napoléon I](/wiki/Napoléon_I). He ruled as [Governor of Isle de France](/wiki/Governor_of_Isle_de_France_(Mauritius)) and Réunion from 1803 to 1810. British naval [cartographer](/wiki/Cartographer) and explorer [Matthew Flinders](/wiki/Matthew_Flinders) was arrested and detained by the General Decaen on the island, in contravention of an order from Napoléon. During the [Napoleonic Wars](/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars), Mauritius became a base from which [French corsairs](/wiki/French_corsairs) organised successful raids on British commercial ships. The raids continued until 1810, when a [Royal Navy](/wiki/Royal_Navy) expedition led by [Commodore](/wiki/Commodore_(Royal_Navy)) [Josias Rowley](/wiki/Josias_Rowley), [R.N.](/wiki/Royal_Navy), an [Anglo-Irish](/wiki/Anglo-Irish) [aristocrat](/wiki/Aristocracy_(class)), was sent to capture the island. Despite winning the [Battle of Grand Port](/wiki/Battle_of_Grand_Port), the only French naval victory over the British during these wars, the [French could not prevent the British from landing](/wiki/Invasion_of_Île_de_France) at [Cap Malheureux](/wiki/Cap_Malheureux) three months later. They formally surrendered the island on the fifth day of the invasion, 3 December 1810,[[3]](#cite_note-3) on terms allowing settlers to keep their land and property and to use the French language and law of France in criminal and civil matters. Under British rule, the island's name reverted to Mauritius.[[4]](#cite_note-4)

### British Mauritius (1810–1968)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Numa_Desjardins_Champ_de_Mars_Port_Louis_1880.jpg)[Champ de Mars](/wiki/Champ_de_Mars_Racecourse), Port Louis, 1880 The British administration, which began with [Sir Robert Farquhar](/wiki/Robert_Townsend_Farquhar) as [Governor](/wiki/Governor_of_British_Mauritius), led to rapid social and economic changes. However, it was tainted by the Ratsitatane episode. Ratsitatane, nephew of King Radama of Madagascar, was brought to Mauritius as a political prisoner. He managed to escape from prison and plotted a rebellion that would free all the slaves on the island. But he was betrayed by one of his associates and was caught by the British forces, summarily judged, and condemned to death. He was beheaded at Plaine Verte on 15 April 1822, and his head was exposed to serve as deterrent against any future uprising among the slaves.[[7]](#cite_note-7) In 1832, Adrien d'Épinay launched the first Mauritian newspaper (*Le Cernéen*) which was not controlled by the government. In the same year, there was a move by the procureur-general to abolish slavery without compensation to the slave owners. This gave rise to discontent, and to check an eventual rebellion, the government ordered all the inhabitants to surrender their arms. Furthermore, a stone fortress, Fort Adelaide, was built on a hill (now known as the Citadel hill) in the centre of Port Louis to quell any uprising.[[6]](#cite_note-6) [Slavery](/wiki/Slavery) was abolished in 1835, and the planters ultimately received two million pounds sterling in compensation for the loss of their slaves who had been imported from Africa and Madagascar during the French occupation. The [abolition of slavery](/wiki/Abolitionism_in_the_United_Kingdom) had important impacts on Mauritius' society, economy and population. The planters brought a large number of [indentured labourers](/wiki/Indentured_servant) from India to work in the sugar cane fields. Between 1834 and 1921, around half a million indentured labourers were present on the island. They worked on sugar estates, factories, in transport and on construction sites. Additionally, the British brought 8,740 [Indian](/wiki/Indian_people) soldiers to the island.[[4]](#cite_note-4) [Aapravasi Ghat](/wiki/Aapravasi_Ghat), in the bay at [Port Louis](/wiki/Port_Louis) and now a [UNESCO](/wiki/UNESCO) site, was the first British [colony](/wiki/Colony) to serve as a major reception centre for slaves and [indentured servants](/wiki/Indentured_servants) for British plantation labour.[Template:Clarify](/wiki/Template:Clarify)

An important figure of the 19th century was Rémy Ollier, a brilliant journalist of mixed origin. In 1828, the colour bar was officially abolished in Mauritius but British governors gave little power to coloured persons, and appointed only whites as leading officials. Rémy Ollier petitioned to [Queen Victoria](/wiki/Queen_Victoria) so that coloureds also might become members in the council of government, and this became possible a few years later. He also made Port Louis become a municipality so that the citizens could administer the town through their own elected representatives. A street has been named after him in Port Louis, and his bust was erected in the Jardin de la Compagnie in 1906.[[3]](#cite_note-3) In 1885 [a new constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Mauritius_(1885)) was introduced to Mauritius. It created elected positions on the governing council, but the franchise was restricted mainly to the French and Creole classes.

The labourers brought from India were not always fairly treated and a German, Adolph von Plevitz, made himself the unofficial protector of these immigrants. He mixed with many of the labourers, and in 1871 helped them to write a petition which was sent to Governor Gordon. Subsequently, a commission was appointed to look into the complaints made by the Indian immigrants, and in 1872 two lawyers, appointed by the British Crown, were sent from England to make an inquiry. This Royal Commission had a great impact for it recommended a lot of measures that would affect the lives of Indian labourers during the next fifty years.[[3]](#cite_note-3) At the beginning of the 20th century, in November 1901, [Gandhi](/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi) stopped in Mauritius, on his way to India (from South Africa). He stayed on the island for two weeks, and urged the Indo-Mauritian community to take an interest in education and to play a more active role in politics. Back in India, he sent over a young lawyer [Manilal Doctor](/wiki/Manilal_Doctor) to improve the plight of the Indo-Mauritians. During the same year, faster links were established with Rodrigues thanks to the wireless.[[8]](#cite_note-8) In 1903, motorcars were introduced in Mauritius, and in 1910 the first taxis, operated by Joseph Merven, came into service. The electrification of Port Louis took place in 1909, and in the same decade the Mauritius Hydro Electric Company (managed by the Atchia Brothers) was authorised to power the towns of upper Plaines Wilhems with electricity.

The 1910s were a period of great political agitation. The rising middle class (made up of doctors, lawyers, and teachers) began to challenge the political power of the oligarchs—that is, the sugar cane landowners. Dr. Eugène Laurent, mayor of Port Louis, was the leader of this new group; his party, Action Libérale, demanded that more people should be allowed to vote in the elections. Action Libérale was opposed by the Parti de l'Ordre, led by Henri Leclézio, the most influential of the sugar magnates.[[3]](#cite_note-3) In 1911 there were riots in Port Louis due to a false rumour that Dr. Eugène Laurent had been murdered by the oligarchs in Curepipe. Shops and offices were damaged in the capital and one person was killed. In the same year, 1911, the first public cinema shows took place in Curepipe and, in the same town, a stone building was erected to house the Royal College.[[8]](#cite_note-8) In 1912, a wider telephone network came into service and it was used by the government, business firms, and a few private households.

[World War I](/wiki/World_War_I) broke out in August 1914. Many Mauritians volunteered to fight in Europe against the Germans, and in [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia) against the Turks. But the war affected Mauritius much less than the wars of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, the 1914–18 war was a period of great prosperity because of a boom in sugar prices. In 1919 the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate came into being, and it included 70% of all sugar producers.

The 1920s saw the rise of a "retrocessionism" movement which favoured the retrocession of Mauritius to France. The movement rapidly collapsed because none of the candidates who wanted Mauritius to be given back to France was elected in the 1921 elections.

In 1922, the first aeroplane landed in Mauritius, and in 1923 there were 79 cars on the island. The College of Agriculture was started at Réduit in 1925.

Due to the post-war recession, there was a sharp drop in sugar prices. Many sugar estates closed down, and it marked the end of an era for the sugar magnates who had not only controlled the economy, but also the political life of the country. Raoul Rivet, the editor of *Le Mauricien* newspaper, campaigned for a revision of the constitution that would give the emerging middle class a greater role in the running of the country. The principles of [Arya Samaj](/wiki/Arya_Samaj) began to infiltrate the Hindu community who clamoured for more social justice.[[8]](#cite_note-8) The 1930s saw the birth of the [Labour Party](/wiki/Labour_Party_(Mauritius)). It was launched by Dr. Maurice Curé. [Emmanuel Anquetil](/wiki/Emmanuel_Anquetil) rallied the urban workers while Pandit Sahadeo concentrated on the rural working class. Labour Day was celebrated for the first time in 1938. More than 30,000 workers sacrificed a day's wage and came from all over the island to attend a giant meeting at the Champ de Mars.[[9]](#cite_note-9) At the outbreak of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) in 1939, many Mauritians volunteered to serve under the British flag in Africa and the Near East, fighting against the German and Italian armies. Some went to England to become pilots and ground staff in the [Royal Air Force](/wiki/Royal_Air_Force). Mauritius was never really threatened, but several British ships were sunk outside Port Louis by German submarines in 1943.

[thumb|Postage stamp with portrait of](/wiki/File:Stamp_Mauritius_1954_5c.jpg) [Queen Elizabeth II](/wiki/Queen_Elizabeth_II), 1954 During World War II conditions were hard in the country; the prices of commodities doubled but the salaries of workers increased only by 10 or 20 percent. There was civil unrest, and the colonial government did its utmost to crush all trade union activities. However, the labourers of Belle Vue Harel Sugar Estate went on strike on 27 September 1943. Police officers eventually fired on the crowd, and killed three labourers including a boy of ten and a pregnant woman, Anjaly Coopen.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11) The first general elections were held on 9 August 1948 and were won by the Labour Party. This party, led by Guy Rozemont, bettered its position in 1953, and, on the strength of the election results, demanded [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage). Constitutional conferences were held in London in 1955 and 1957, and the ministerial system was introduced. Voting took place for the first time on the basis of universal adult suffrage on 9 March 1959. The general election was again won by the Labour Party, led this time by [Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam](/wiki/Sir_Seewoosagur_Ramgoolam).[[12]](#cite_note-12) A Constitutional Review Conference was held in London in 1961 and a programme of further constitutional advance was established. The 1963 election was won by the Labour Party and its allies. The [Colonial Office](/wiki/Colonial_Office) noted that politics of a communal nature was gaining ground in Mauritius and that the choice of candidates (by parties) and the voting behaviour (of electors) were governed by ethnic and caste considerations.[[12]](#cite_note-12) Around that time, two eminent British academics, [Richard Titmuss](/wiki/Richard_Titmuss) and [James Meade](/wiki/James_Meade), published a report which dwelt upon the social problems caused by overpopulation and the monoculture of sugar cane. This led to an intense campaign to halt the population explosion, and the decade registered a sharp decline in population growth.

### Independence (since 1968)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

At the Lancaster Conference of 1965, it became clear that Britain wanted to relieve itself of the colony of Mauritius. In 1959, [Harold Macmillan](/wiki/Harold_Macmillan) had made his famous [*Winds of Change Speech*](/wiki/Wind_of_Change_(speech)) where he acknowledged that the best option for Britain was to give complete independence to its colonies. Thus, since the late Fifties, the way was paved for independence.[[13]](#cite_note-13) Later in 1965, after the Lancaster Conference, the [Chagos Archipelago](/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago) was excised from the territory of Mauritius to form the [British Indian Ocean Territory](/wiki/British_Indian_Ocean_Territory) (BIOT). A general election took place on 7 August 1967, and the Labour Party and its two allies obtained the majority of seats. Mauritius adopted a new constitution and independence was proclaimed on 12 March 1968. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam became the first prime minister of an independent Mauritius with Queen Elizabeth II remaining head of state as Queen of Mauritius. In 1969, the opposition party [Mauritian Militant Movement](/wiki/Mauritian_Militant_Movement) (MMM) led by [Paul Bérenger](/wiki/Paul_Bérenger) was founded. Later in 1971, the MMM, backed by unions, called a series of strikes in the port which caused a state of emergency in the country.[[14]](#cite_note-14) The coalition government of the Labour Party and the PMSD (Parti Mauricien Social Democrate) reacted by curtailing civil liberties and curbing the freedom of the press.[[8]](#cite_note-8) Assassination attempts were made twice against Paul Bérenger. Neither were successful although the second one led to the death of Azor Adélaïde, a dock worker and activist, on 25 November 1971.[[15]](#cite_note-15) General elections were postponed and public meetings were prohibited. Members of the MMM including Paul Bérenger were imprisoned on 23 December 1971. The MMM leader was released a year later.[[16]](#cite_note-16) In May 1975, a student revolt that started at the University of Mauritius swept across the country. The students were unsatisfied with an education system that did not meet their aspirations and gave limited prospects for future employment. On 20 May, thousands of students tried to enter Port-Louis over the Grand River North West bridge and clashed with the police. An act of Parliament was passed on 16 December 1975 to extend the right to vote to 18-year-olds. This was seen as an attempt to appease the frustration of the younger generation.[[7]](#cite_note-7) The next general election took place on 20 December 1976. The Labour Party won 28 seats out of 62[[17]](#cite_note-17) but the Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, managed to remain in office, with a two-seat majority, after striking an alliance with the PMSD of Gaetan Duval.

In 1982 an MMM government led by prime minister [Anerood Jugnauth](/wiki/Anerood_Jugnauth) and Paul Bérenger as Minister of Finance was elected. However, ideological and personality differences emerged within the MMM leadership. The power struggle between Bérenger and Jugnauth came to a head in March 1983. Jugnauth travelled to New Delhi to attend a [Non-Aligned Movement](/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement) summit, on Jugnauth's return to Mauritius, Bérenger proposed constitutional changes that would strip power from the prime minister. At Jugnauth's request, prime minister [Indira Gandhi](/wiki/Indira_Gandhi) of India planned an armed intervention involving the [Indian Navy](/wiki/Indian_Navy) and [Indian Army](/wiki/Indian_Army) to prevent a [coup](/wiki/Coup) under the code name [Operation Lal Dora](/wiki/Operation_Lal_Dora).[[18]](#cite_note-18)[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) The MMM government split up nine months after the June 1982 election, and the new [MSM](/wiki/Mouvement_Socialiste_Militant) party, led by Aneerood Jugnauth, was elected to power in 1983. Gaëtan Duval became the vice-prime minister. Throughout the decade, the prime minister, Aneerood Jugnauth, ruled the country with the help of the PMSD and the Labour Party.

That period saw a growth in the EPZ (Export Processing Zone) sector. Industrialisation began to spread to villages as well, and attracted young workers from all ethnic communities. As a result, the sugar industry began to lose its hold on the economy. Mammouth stores opened in 1985 and offered credit facilities to low income earners, thus allowing them to afford basic household appliances. There was also a boom in the tourism industry, and new hotels sprang up throughout the island. In 1989 the stock exchange opened its doors and in 1992 the freeport began operation.[[8]](#cite_note-8)

### Republic (since 1992)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

On 12 March 1992, twenty-four years after independence, Mauritius was proclaimed a republic within the [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations).[[4]](#cite_note-4) Political power remained with the prime minister.

Despite an improvement in the economy, which coincided with a fall in the price of petrol and a favourable dollar exchange rate, the government did not enjoy full popularity. As early as 1984, there was discontent. Through the Newspapers and Periodicals Amendment Act, the government tried to make every newspaper provide a bank guarantee of half a million rupees. Forty-three journalists protested by participating in a public demonstration in Port Louis, in front of parliament. They were arrested and freed on bail. This caused a public outcry and the government had to review its policy.[[8]](#cite_note-8) There was also dissatisfaction in the education sector. There were not enough high-quality secondary colleges to answer the growing demand of primary school leavers who had got through their CPE (Certificate of Primary Education). In 1991, a master plan for education failed to get national support and contributed to the government's downfall.[[8]](#cite_note-8) Dr Navin Chandra Ramgoolam was elected as prime minister in the 1995 election. The landslide victory of 60–0 was a repeat of the 1982 score, but this time it was on the side of the Labour–MMM alliance.

In February 1999, the country experienced a brief period of civil unrest. Riots flared up after the popular singer [Kaya](/wiki/Kaya_(Mauritian_musician)), arrested for smoking marijuana at a public concert, was found dead in his prison cell. The president [Cassam Uteem](/wiki/Cassam_Uteem) and cardinal [Jean Margéot](/wiki/Jean_Margéot) toured the country and, after four days of turmoil, calm was restored.[[21]](#cite_note-21) A commission of enquiry was set up to investigate the root causes of the social disturbance. The resulting report delved into the cause of poverty and qualified many tenacious beliefs as perceptions.[[22]](#cite_note-22) Aneerood Jugnauth of the MSM returned to power in 2000 after making an alliance with the MMM, which included prominent figures such as [Anil Bachoo](/wiki/Anil_Bachoo), [Pravind Jugnauth](/wiki/Pravind_Jugnauth) and [Sangeet Fowdar](/wiki/Sangeet_Fowdar) [Template:Clarify](/wiki/Template:Clarify) amongst others. In 2002, [Rodrigues](/wiki/Rodrigues) became an autonomous entity within the republic and was thus able to elect its own representatives to administer the island. In 2003, the prime ministership was transferred to Paul Bérenger of the MMM, and Aneerood Jugnauth went to [Le Réduit](/wiki/State_House_(Mauritius)) to serve as president.

In the 2005 election, Navin Ramgoolam, leader of the Labour Party, was brought to power after making an alliance with the [Parti Mauricien Xavier-Luc Duval](/wiki/Parti_Mauricien_Xavier-Luc_Duval) (PMXD) and other minor parties.

In 2008, the French-Mauritian writer [Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio](/wiki/J._M._G._Le_Clézio) was awarded the [Nobel Prize](/wiki/Nobel_Prize) in literature, and boxer [Bruno Julie](/wiki/Bruno_Julie) gave the island its first Olympic medal.

Navin Ramgoolam was again elected in May 2010. This time the Labour Party joined forces with the [PMSD](/wiki/Parti_Mauricien_Social_Démocrate) and the [MSM](/wiki/Mouvement_Socialiste_Militant).

Under the new government, the country continued with its MID (Maurice Ile Durable) project, started in 2008, to make the economy less dependent on fossil fuels. New biometric identity cards were issued in 2014.

The political landscape stayed rather confused. The Labour Party did away with the MSM, and then with the PMSD, whose leader had acted as Finance minister. The MMM made an alliance (known as Remake) with the MSM but broke off with the latter to become the ally of Labour Party. Parliament remained closed for the most part of 2014. A second republic was proposed (by the leaders of Labour and MMM) whereby a president, elected by the population, would hold more power and rule the country in joint collaboration with the PM. Nomination day took place on 24 November 2014 and, for the first time, electoral candidates had the option of not proclaiming their ethnic group. Only a few chose to do so. General elections were held on 10 December 2014, and the Lepep alliance made up of the MSM, PMSD, and Mouvement Liberater (led by an MMM dissident) was elected to power by reaping 47 seats out of 60. The [Westminster system](/wiki/Westminster_system) was thus maintained and Aneerood Jugnauth became the PM for the sixth time.

Shortly after the new government took office, the ex-PM was lengthily interrogated by the Police on charges related to money laundering. The license of the Bramer Bank was revoked by the Bank of Mauritius due to alleged lack of liquidity, and its wake the BAI (British American Insurance) was suspended from trading and placed in receivership. A new state-owned institution, the National Commercial Bank, was set up to take over from the Bramer Bank.

A [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) tribunal ruled that Britain had acted illegally when it created a marine protected area around the Chagos without the consent of Mauritius, thereby depriving this country of its fishing rights. Fresh negotiations began with Jin Fei in view of reviving the project started in 2006. Mauritius will henceforth detain 80% of the shares while the rest would go to the Chinese promoters.

Tourism continued to be the main source for foreign exchange, and the number of visitors to the island reached 1.1 million in 2015. Despite this booming in the Tourist industry, Tourism Minister, Xavier-Luc Duval, has placed a two-year moratorium on the construction of new hotels. This measure is expected to keep the right balance between demand and supply. Furthermore, it will help to uphold the island’s ‘paradise’ image by keeping in check overbuilding along the coast.

### Truth and Justice Commission[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

Operating from 2009 to 2011 the [Truth and Justice Commission](/wiki/Truth_and_Justice_Commission) was established to explore the impact of [slavery](/wiki/Slavery) and [indentured servitude](/wiki/Indentured_servant) in Mauritius. The Commission was tasked to investigate the dispossession of land, and “determine appropriate measures to be extended to descendants of slaves and indentured laborers.”[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24) It was “unique in that it [dealt] with socio-economic class abuses" and explored the possibility of reparations.[[23]](#cite_note-23) The Commission attempted to cover more than 370 years, the longest period of time that a truth commission has ever covered.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Published 25 November 2011, the report outlined over 300 recommendations detailing ways to bring those affected by slavery and indentured labour out of poverty.[[25]](#cite_note-25)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [300px|thumb|The capital,](/wiki/File:Evening_Port_Louis.jpg) [Port Louis](/wiki/Port_Louis)

The politics of Mauritius take place in a framework of a [parliamentary](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [representative democratic](/wiki/Representative_democracy) republic, in which the [President](/wiki/President_of_Mauritius) is the [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state) and the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Mauritius) is the [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government) who is assisted by a [Council of Ministers](/wiki/Cabinet_of_Ministers_of_Mauritius). Mauritius has a [multi-party system](/wiki/Multi-party_system).

[Executive power](/wiki/Executive_power) is exercised by the Government. [Legislative power](/wiki/Legislative_power) is vested in both the Government and the [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Mauritius). The absolute power is split between two positions: the President and the Prime Minister.

### Parliament[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The National Assembly is Mauritius's [unicameral](/wiki/Unicameral) parliament, which was called the Legislative Assembly until 1992, when the country became a republic. It consists of 70 members, 62 elected for four-year terms in multi-member [constituencies](/wiki/Constituency) and eight additional members, known as "best losers", appointed by the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Mauritius) to ensure that ethnic and religious minorities are equitably represented. The president is elected for a five-year term by the parliament.

The island of Mauritius is divided into [20 constituencies](/wiki/Constituencies_of_Mauritius) that return three members each, while Rodrigues is a single constituency that returns two members. After a general election, the Electoral Supervisory Commission may nominate up to a maximum of eight additional members with a view to correct any imbalance in community representation in Parliament. This system of nominating members is commonly called the best loser system.

The political party or party alliance that wins the majority of seats in Parliament forms the government, and its leader usually becomes the Prime Minister. It is the Prime Minister who selects the members of the composition of the Cabinet from elected members of the Assembly, except for the Attorney General, who may not be an elected member of the Assembly. The political party or alliance which has the second largest majority forms the Official Opposition and its leader is normally nominated by the President of the Republic as the Leader of the Opposition. The Assembly elects a Speaker, a Deputy Speaker and a Deputy Chairman of Committees as some of its first task.

### Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Mauritius is a democracy with a government elected every five years. The most recent National Assembly Election was held on 10 December 2014 in all the 20 mainland constituencies, and in the constituency covering the island of Rodrigues. Elections have tended to be a contest between two major coalitions of parties.

The 2006–2014 [Ibrahim Index of African Governance](/wiki/Ibrahim_Index_of_African_Governance) ranked Mauritius first in good governance.[[26]](#cite_note-26) According to the 2011 [Democracy Index](/wiki/Democracy_Index) compiled by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](/wiki/Economist_Intelligence_Unit) that measures the state of democracy in 167 countries, Mauritius ranks 24th worldwide and is the only African country with "full democracy".[[27]](#cite_note-27)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Office held** | **Office holder** | **Incumbency**[**[28]**](#cite_note-28) |
| [President](/wiki/President_of_Mauritius) | [Ameenah Gurib](/wiki/Ameenah_Gurib) | 5 June 2015 |
| [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Mauritius) | [Sir Anerood Jugnauth](/wiki/Sir_Anerood_Jugnauth) | 14 December 2014 |
| [Vice President](/wiki/Vice_President_of_Mauritius) | [Barlen Vyapoory](/wiki/Barlen_Vyapoory) | 4 April 2015[[29]](#cite_note-29) |
| [Deputy Prime Minister](/wiki/Deputy_Prime_Minister_of_Mauritius) | [Xavier-Luc Duval](/wiki/Xavier-Luc_Duval) | 14 December 2014 |
| [Chief Justice](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Mauritius) | [Kheshoe Parsad Matadeen](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Mauritius) | 31 December 2013 |
| [Speaker of the National Assembly](/wiki/List_of_Speakers_of_the_National_Assembly_of_Mauritius) | [Mrs. Santi Bai Hanoomanjee](/wiki/Maya_Hanoomanjee) | 22 December 2014 |
| [Leader of the Opposition](/wiki/Leader_of_the_Opposition_(Mauritius)) | [Paul Raymond Bérenger](/wiki/Paul_Raymond_Bérenger) | 14 December 2014 |

### Rule of law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

Laws governing the Mauritian penal system are derived partly from [French civil law](/wiki/French_civil_law) and [British common law](/wiki/British_common_law).[[30]](#cite_note-30) The crime rate reduced from 4.3 per 1,000 population in 2009 to 3.6 per 1,000 population in 2010.[[31]](#cite_note-31) The [Constitution of Mauritius](/wiki/Constitution_of_Mauritius) states that for purposes of separation of powers, the judiciary is independent. According to [The Heritage Foundation](/wiki/The_Heritage_Foundation) the trials are fair and the legal system is generally non-discriminatory and transparent. The Independent Commission Against Corruption investigates offences and can confiscate the proceeds of corruption and money laundering. Mauritius is one of Africa's least corrupt countries.[[32]](#cite_note-32)

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Mauritius has strong and friendly relations with various African, American, Asian, European and Oceania countries. Considered part of Africa geographically, Mauritius has friendly relations with African states in the region, particularly South Africa, by far its largest continental trading partner. Mauritian investors are gradually entering African markets, notably Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The country's political heritage and dependence on Western markets have led to close ties with the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) and its member states, particularly the United Kingdom and France. Relations with China and India are strong for both historical and commercial reasons.

Mauritius is a member of the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization), the [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), [La Francophonie](/wiki/La_Francophonie), the [African Union](/wiki/African_Union), the [Southern Africa Development Community](/wiki/Southern_Africa_Development_Community) (SADC), the [Indian Ocean Commission](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Commission), [COMESA](/wiki/COMESA) and formed the [Indian Ocean Rim Association](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Rim_Association).

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) All military, police, and security functions in Mauritius are carried out by 10,000 active-duty personnel under the command of the Commissioner of Police. The 8,000-member National Police Force is responsible for domestic law enforcement. The 1,500-member [Special Mobile Force](/wiki/Special_Mobile_Force) (SMF) and the 500-member National Coast Guard are the only two paramilitary units in Mauritius. Both units are composed of police officers on lengthy rotations to those services.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Chamarel Falls](/wiki/File:Chamarel_Falls_-_5.jpg) [thumb|Cap Malheureux](/wiki/File:2011-06-26_09-16-48_Mauritius_Rivière_du_Rempart_Cap_Malheureux.jpg) The total land area of the country is 2,040 km2, which is the [180th largest nation](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area) in the world by size. The Republic of Mauritius is constituted of the main island of Mauritius and several outlying islands. The second largest island is [Rodrigues](/wiki/Rodrigues) with an area of 108 km2 and situated 560 km to the east of Mauritius, the twin island of [Agalega](/wiki/Agalega) with a total land area of 2,600 hectares and situated some 1,000 km to the north of Mauritius. [Saint Brandon](/wiki/Cargados_Carajos) is an archipelago comprising a number of sand-banks, shoals and islets. It is situated some 430 km to the north-east of Mauritius and is mostly used as a fishing base.[[33]](#cite_note-33) The nation's [exclusive economic zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) (EEZ) cover about 2.3 million km2 of the Indian Ocean, including approximately 400,000 km2 jointly managed with the [Seychelles](/wiki/Seychelles).[[34]](#cite_note-34)[[35]](#cite_note-35)[[36]](#cite_note-36)

### Mauritius island[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

Mauritius is some 2,000 km (1,242 miles) off the southeast coast of Africa, between latitudes [19°58.8'](/wiki/19th_parallel_south) and [20°31.7'](/wiki/20th_parallel_south) south and longitudes [57°18.0'](/wiki/57th_meridian_east) and [57°46.5'](/wiki/57th_meridian_east) east. It is 65 km long and 45 km wide. Its land area is 1,864.8 km2.[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38) The island is surrounded by more than 150 km (93 miles) of white sandy beaches and the lagoons are protected from the open sea by the world's third largest coral reef, which surrounds the island.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Just off the Mauritian coast lie some 49 uninhabited islands and [islets](/wiki/Islets_of_Mauritius), some of them are used as natural reserves for the protection of endangered species.

The island of Mauritius is relatively young geologically, having been created by volcanic activity some 8 million years ago. Together with Saint Brandon, Réunion, and Rodrigues, the island is part of the [Mascarene Islands](/wiki/Mascarene_Islands). These islands have emerged from the abysses as a result of gigantic underwater volcanic eruptions that happened thousands of kilometres to the east of the continental block made up of Africa and Madagascar.[[33]](#cite_note-33) They are no longer volcanically active and the [hotspot](/wiki/Réunion_hotspot) now rests under Réunion Island. Mauritius is encircled by a broken ring of mountain ranges, varying in height from 300–800 m above sea level. The land rises from coastal plains to a central plateau where it reaches a height of 670 m; the highest peak is in the southwest, [Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire](/wiki/Piton_de_la_Petite_Rivière_Noire) at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Streams and rivers speckle the island, a lot of them are formed in the cracks created by lava flows.

[Template:Wide image](/wiki/Template:Wide_image)

## Territorial dispute[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

### Chagos Archipelago[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Mauritius has long sought sovereignty over the [Chagos Archipelago](/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago), located 1,287 km to the northeast. Chagos was administratively part of Mauritius from the 18th century when the French first settled the islands. All of the islands forming part of the French colonial territory of [Isle de France](/wiki/Isle_de_France_(Mauritius)) (as Mauritius was then known) were ceded to the British in 1810 under the Act of Capitulation signed between the two powers.[[40]](#cite_note-40) In 1965, three years before the independence of Mauritius, the United Kingdom split the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and the islands of [Aldabra](/wiki/Aldabra), [Farquhar](/wiki/Farquhar_Group) and [Desroches](/wiki/Desroches) from the [Seychelles](/wiki/Seychelles) to form the [British Indian Ocean Territory](/wiki/British_Indian_Ocean_Territory) (BIOT). The islands were formally established as an overseas territory of the United Kingdom on 8 November 1965. On 23 June 1976, Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches were returned to [Seychelles](/wiki/Seychelles) as a result of its attaining independence. The BIOT now comprises the Chagos Archipelago only. The UK leased the main island of the archipelago, [Diego Garcia](/wiki/Diego_Garcia) to the United States under a 50-year lease (which expires in 2016) to establish a Military base.[[40]](#cite_note-40)[[41]](#cite_note-41) Mauritius has repeatedly asserted that the separation of its territories is a violation of United Nations' resolutions banning the dismemberment of colonial territories before independence and claims that the Chagos Archipelago, including [Diego Garcia](/wiki/Diego_Garcia), forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius under both Mauritian law and international law.[[42]](#cite_note-42)After initially denying that the islands were inhabited, British officials forcibly expelled approximately 2,000 [Chagossians](/wiki/Chagossians) who had lived on those islands for a century to mainland Mauritius. Since 1971, only the atoll of Diego Garcia is inhabited, home to some 3,000 UK and US military and civilian contracted personnel. Chagossians have since engaged in activism to return to the archipelago, claiming that the forced expulsion and dispossession were illegal.[[43]](#cite_note-43)[[44]](#cite_note-44)

#### MPA Ruling[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[thumb|The biggest island of the Archipelago,](/wiki/File:Diego_Garcia_(satellite).jpg) [Diego Garcia](/wiki/Diego_Garcia) is home to an American military base.

On 20 December 2010 Mauritius initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to challenge the legality of the [Chagos Marine Protected Area](/wiki/Chagos_Marine_Protected_Area) (MPA) which the United Kingdom purported to declare around the Chagos Archipelago in April 2010. The dispute was arbitrated by the [Permanent Court of Arbitration](/wiki/Permanent_Court_of_Arbitration).

After lengthy written pleadings by the Parties and a hearing from 22 April to 9 May 2014 in [Istanbul](/wiki/Istanbul), Turkey, the Arbitral Tribunal set up under Annex VII to UNCLOS gave its Award on 18 March 2015. The Award is final and without appeal, and is binding on both Parties.

The Tribunal unanimously held that the ‘marine protected area’ which the UK purported to declare around the Chagos Archipelago in April 2010 violates international law. It is the first time that the United Kingdom’s conduct with regard to the Chagos Archipelago has been considered and condemned by any international court or tribunal.[[45]](#cite_note-45) The Tribunal held unanimously that, in declaring the ‘MPA’, the United Kingdom violated international law. It ruled that the United Kingdom has breached its obligations under Articles 2(3), 56(2), and 194(4) of UNCLOS. In reaching these conclusions, the Tribunal made a number of important findings. It considered in detail the undertakings given by the United Kingdom to the Mauritian Ministers at the Lancaster House talks in September 1965. The UK had argued that those undertakings were not binding and had no status in international law. The Tribunal firmly rejected that argument, holding that those undertakings became a binding international agreement upon the independence of Mauritius, and have bound the UK ever since. It found that the UK’s commitments towards Mauritius in relation to fishing rights and oil and mineral rights in the Chagos Archipelago are legally binding. Moreover, the Tribunal also found that the United Kingdom’s undertaking to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius when no longer needed for defence purposes is legally binding.[[45]](#cite_note-45) The Tribunal went on to hold that the United Kingdom had not respected Mauritius binding legal rights over the Chagos Archipelago. It considered the events from February 2009 to April 2010, during which time the ‘MPA’ proposal came into being and was then imposed on Mauritius.[[45]](#cite_note-45) The Tribunal also observed that the failure of the United Kingdom to balance its own rights and interests with those of Mauritius is to be contrasted with the approach adopted by the United Kingdom with respect to the United States. It noted that the record demonstrates a conscious balancing of rights and interests, suggestions of compromise and willingness to offer assurances by the United Kingdom, and an understanding of the United States’ concerns in connection with the proposed ‘MPA’. Those elements were noticeably absent in the United Kingdom’s approach to Mauritius. Accordingly, the Tribunal found that, in declaring the ‘MPA’, the United Kingdom had acted unlawfully and in disregard of Mauritius’ rights.[[45]](#cite_note-45) The parties differ on the characterization of the dispute. Mauritius states that its case is that the MPA is unlawful under the Convention. The UK argued that the dispute is one about sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. Mauritius requested the Tribunal to adjudge and declare that the United Kingdom is not entitled to declare an “MPA” or other maritime zones because it is not the “coastal State within the meaning of inter alia Articles 2, 55, 56 and 76 of the Convention.”[[46]](#cite_note-46) The sovereignty of Mauritius was explicitly recognised by two of the arbitrators and denied by none of the other three. Three members of the Tribunal found that they did not have jurisdiction to rule on that question; they expressed no view as to which of the two States has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. However, and very significantly, two members of the Tribunal, namely Judges [Rüdiger Wolfrum](/wiki/Rüdiger_Wolfrum) and James Kateka, held that the Tribunal did have jurisdiction to decide this question, and concluded that the United Kingdom does not have sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. They found that;[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[47]](#cite_note-47)

* internal United Kingdom documents suggested there was an ulterior motive behind the ‘MPA’ and noted the disturbing similarities and common pattern between the establishment of the so-called “BIOT” in 1965 and the proclamation of the ‘MPA’ in 2010;
* the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 shows a complete disregard for the territorial integrity of Mauritius by the United Kingdom;
* UK Prime Minister [Harold Wilson](/wiki/Harold_Wilson)’s threat to Premier [Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam](/wiki/Sir_Seewoosagur_Ramgoolam) in 1965 that he could return home without independence if he did not consent to the excision of the Chagos Archipelago amounted to duress; Mauritian Ministers were coerced into agreeing to the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago, and that this detachment violated the international law of self-determination,
* the ‘MPA’ is legally invalid.

The Tribunal’s Award also determined that the United Kingdom’s undertaking to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius gives Mauritius an interest in significant decisions that bear upon the possible future uses of the Archipelago. The result of the Tribunal’s decision is that, it is now open to the Parties to enter into the negotiations that the Tribunal would have expected prior to the proclamation of the MPA, with a view to achieving a mutually satisfactory arrangement for protecting the marine environment, to the extent necessary under a “sovereignty umbrella”.[[45]](#cite_note-45)

### Tromelin[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

Mauritius also claims sovereignty over [Tromelin](/wiki/Tromelin) island from France, a small island that lies 430 km to the north-east of Mauritius.[[48]](#cite_note-48)

## Environment and climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[250px|thumb|Tropical beach,](/wiki/File:Mauritius_beach.png) [Trou-aux-Biches](/wiki/Trou-aux-Biches). The environment in Mauritius is typically tropical in the coastal regions with forests in the mountainous areas. Seasonal cyclones are destructive to its flora and fauna, although they recover quickly. Mauritius ranked second in an [air quality index](/wiki/Air_quality_index) released by the [World Health Organization](/wiki/World_Health_Organization) in 2011.[[49]](#cite_note-49) Situated near the [Tropic of Capricorn](/wiki/Tropic_of_Capricorn), Mauritius has a [tropical climate](/wiki/Tropical_climate). There are 2 seasons: a warm humid summer from November to April, with a mean temperature of 24.7 °C and a relatively cool dry winter from June to September with a mean temperature of 20.4 °C. The temperature difference between the seasons is only 4.3 °C. The warmest months are January and February with average day maximum temperature reaching 29.2 °C and the coolest months are July and August when average night minimum temperatures drops down to 16.4 °C. Annual rainfall ranges from 900 mm on the coast to 1,500 mm on the central plateau. Although there is no marked rainy season, most of the rainfall occurs in summer months. Sea temperature in the lagoon varies from 22–27 °C. The central plateau is much cooler than the surrounding [coastal](/wiki/Coastal) areas and can experience as much as double the rainfall. The prevailing trade winds keep the east side of the island cooler and also tend to bring more rain there. There can also be a marked difference in temperature and rainfall from one side of the island to the other. Occasional [tropical cyclones](/wiki/Tropical_cyclones) generally occurs between January to March and tend to disrupt the weather for only about three days, bringing a lot of rain.[[50]](#cite_note-50)

## Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Phelsuma_ornata_-_journal.pbio.1001382.png)[Mauritius ornate day gecko](/wiki/Mauritius_ornate_day_gecko)

The country is home to some of the world's rarest plants and animals, but human habitation and the introduction of [non-native species](/wiki/Non-native_species) have threatened its indigenous flora and fauna.[[43]](#cite_note-43) Due to its volcanic origin, age, isolation, and its unique terrain, Mauritius is home to a diversity of flora and fauna not usually found in such a small area. Before its discovery by the Portuguese in 1507, there were no terrestrial mammals on the island. This allowed the evolution of a number of flightless birds and large reptile species. The arrival of man saw the introduction of invasive alien species and the rapid destruction of habitat and the loss of much of the endemic flora and fauna. Less than 2% of the [native forest](/wiki/Forest) that once stretched from the mountain tops of the central plateau to the shore now remains, concentrated in the [Black River Gorges National Park](/wiki/Black_River_Gorges_National_Park) in the southwest, the Bamboo Mountain Range in the southeast, and the Moka-Port Louis Ranges in the northwest. There are also some isolated mountains, [Corps de Garde](/wiki/Corps_de_Garde), [Le Morne Brabant](/wiki/Le_Morne_Brabant), and several [offshore islands](/wiki/Islets_of_Mauritius) with remnants of coastal and mainland diversity. Over 100 species of plants and animals have become extinct and many more are threatened. Conservation activities began in the 1980s with the implementation of programmes for the reproduction of threatened bird and plant species as well as habitat restoration in the national parks and nature reserves.[[51]](#cite_note-51) [thumb|175px|right|Mauritius was the only known habitat of the extinct](/wiki/File:Dronte_dodo_Raphus_cucullatus.jpg) [dodo](/wiki/Dodo), a flightless bird.

When it was discovered, the island of Mauritius was the home of a previously unknown species of bird, the [dodo](/wiki/Dodo). It is claimed that Dodos were descendants of a type of [pigeon](/wiki/Pigeon) which settled in Mauritius over four million years ago, but this is disputed[Template:By whom?](/wiki/Template:By_whom?). It is understood that with no predators to attack them, they lost their need and ability to fly. Arabs became the first humans to set foot on Mauritius, followed by Portuguese around 1505. The island quickly became a stopover for ships engaged in the spice trade. Weighing up to 50 pounds, the dodo was a welcome source of fresh meat for the sailors. Large numbers of dodos were killed for food. Later, when the Dutch used the island as a penal colony, new species were introduced to the island. [Rats](/wiki/Rat), pigs, and [monkeys](/wiki/Monkey) ate dodo eggs in the ground nests. The combination of human exploitation and introduced species significantly reduced the dodo population. Within 100 years of the arrival of humans on Mauritius, the once abundant dodo became a rare bird. The last one was killed in 1681.[[52]](#cite_note-52) The dodo is prominently featured as a (heraldic) [supporter](/wiki/Supporter) of the national [coat of arms of Mauritius](/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Mauritius).

## Districts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Mauritius is divided into nine districts which consist of different [cities, towns and villages](/wiki/List_of_cities,_towns_and_villages_in_Mauritius).

[Template:Mauritius Districts Labelled Map](/wiki/Template:Mauritius_Districts_Labelled_Map)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Mauritius_population_pyramid_2011.svg)[Population pyramid](/wiki/Population_pyramid) of Mauritius according to 2011 census.

The estimated resident population of the Republic of Mauritius was 1,261,208 as of 1 July 2014. The female population was 637,032 compared to a male population of 624,176. The population on the island of Mauritius is 1,219,265, and that of Rodrigues island is 41,669; Agalega and Saint Brandon had an estimated total population of 274.[[53]](#cite_note-53) Mauritius has the highest [population density](/wiki/List_of_African_countries_by_population_density) in Africa.

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

Official statistics on ethnicity are not available, as such questions were removed from the population census in 1972.[[54]](#cite_note-54)[[55]](#cite_note-55) Mauritius is a [multiethnic](/wiki/Multiracial) society, drawn from [Indian](/wiki/Mauritian_of_Indian_origin), [African](/wiki/Mauritian_of_African_origin), European (mostly [French](/wiki/Mauritian_of_French_origin)) and [Chinese](/wiki/Mauritian_of_Chinese_origin) origin.

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[thumb|The Hindu festival of](/wiki/File:Thaipusam_in_Mauritius_-_January_2011_(5372546759).jpg) [Thaipusam](/wiki/Thaipusam) According to the 2011 census conducted by [Statistics Mauritius](/wiki/Statistics_Mauritius), [Hinduism](/wiki/Hinduism) is the major religion at 48.5%, followed by [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) (32.7%), [Islam](/wiki/Islam) (17.3%) and [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism) (0.4%). Those of other religions accounted for 0.2% of the population, while [non-religious](/wiki/Irreligiosity) individuals were 0.7%. Finally, 0.1% refused to fill in any data.[[56]](#cite_note-56) Mauritius is the only country in [Africa](/wiki/Africa) to have a [Hindu](/wiki/Hindu) plurality.

An officially [secular](/wiki/Secular) state, Mauritius is a religiously diverse nation, with freedom of religion being enshrined as a constitutional right.[[57]](#cite_note-57) The vibrant and colorful culture of the Mauritian people is reflected in the various religious festivities that are celebrated throughout the year, some of which are recognized as public holidays.

### Language[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) As both an English-speaking and French-speaking nation, Mauritius is a member of both the [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations) and the [Francophonie](/wiki/Francophonie). The [Mauritian constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Mauritius) makes no mention of an [official language](/wiki/Official_language). In Parliament, the official language is English; however, any member of the National Assembly can also address the chair in French.[[58]](#cite_note-58) English and French are generally accepted as the official languages of Mauritius and as the languages of government administration, courts, and business.[[59]](#cite_note-59) The constitution of Mauritius is written in English, while some laws, such as the [Civil code](/wiki/Civil_code), are in French.

The Mauritian population is [multilingual](/wiki/Multilingual); most Mauritians are equally fluent in English and French, while [Mauritian Creole](/wiki/Mauritian_Creole) is the [mother tongue](/wiki/Mother_tongue) of most Mauritians, people tend to switch languages according to the situation; French and English are favoured in educational and professional settings while [Asian languages](/wiki/Asian_languages) are used mainly in music, religious and cultural activities. The media and literature are primarily in French.

The Creole language, derived mainly from French (a [French-based Creole](/wiki/French-based_Creole)) with influences from the other dialects, is spoken by the majority of the population and is the country's native language.[[60]](#cite_note-60) The Creole languages which are spoken in different islands of the country are more or less similar: [Mauritian Creole](/wiki/Mauritian_Creole), [Rodriguan Creole](/wiki/Rodriguan_Creole), [Agalega Creole](/wiki/Agalega_Creole) and [Chagossian Creole](/wiki/Chagossian_Creole) are spoken by people from the islands of Mauritius, [Rodrigues](/wiki/Rodrigues), [Agalega](/wiki/Agalega) and [Chagos](/wiki/Chagos). [Bhojpuri](/wiki/Bhojpuri) which was widely spoken as mother tongue, has been decreasing over the years. According to the 2011 census, there was a decrease in the use of Bhojpuri at home, it was spoken by 5% of the population compared to 12% in 2000.[[61]](#cite_note-61) Some ancestral languages that are also spoken in Mauritius include [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic),[[62]](#cite_note-62) [Bhojpuri](/wiki/Bhojpuri),[[63]](#cite_note-63) [Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_language),[[64]](#cite_note-64) [Hindi](/wiki/Hindi),[[65]](#cite_note-65) [Marathi](/wiki/Marathi_language),[[66]](#cite_note-66) [Sanskrit](/wiki/Sanskrit),[[67]](#cite_note-67) [Tamil](/wiki/Tamil_language),[[68]](#cite_note-68) [Telugu](/wiki/Telugu_language)[[69]](#cite_note-69) and [Urdu](/wiki/Urdu).[[70]](#cite_note-70) School students must learn English and French; they also have the option to study Asian languages and Creole. The medium of instruction varies from school to school but is usually French or English.

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

Mauritius had a life expectancy of 75.17 in 2014.<ref name=rank>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> 39% of Mauritian men smoked in 2014.[[71]](#cite_note-71) 12.9% of men and 23% of women were obese in 2008.[[71]](#cite_note-71) [Heroin](/wiki/Heroin) use has a high prevalence rate of 0.91% (2011 UN figure);[[72]](#cite_note-72) see also [Drugs in Mauritius](/wiki/Drugs_in_Mauritius).

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:University_of_Mauritius.jpg) [University of Mauritius](/wiki/University_of_Mauritius). [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The government of Mauritius provides [free education](/wiki/Free_education) to its citizens from pre-primary to tertiary level. In 2013 government expenditure on education was estimated at about Rs 13,584 million, representing 13% of total expenditure.[[73]](#cite_note-73) The adult [literacy rate](/wiki/Literacy_rate) was estimated at 89.8% in 2011.[[74]](#cite_note-74) Male literacy was 92.3% and female literacy 87.3%.[[74]](#cite_note-74) The education system in Mauritius consists of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. The education structure consists of three years of pre-primary school, six years of primary schooling leading to the Certificate of Primary Education, followed by five years of secondary education leading to the School Certificate and a further two years of higher secondary ending with the Higher School Certificate.[[75]](#cite_note-75) The [O-Level](/wiki/O-Level) and [A-Level](/wiki/A-Level) examinations are carried out by the [University of Cambridge](/wiki/University_of_Cambridge) through [University of Cambridge International Examinations](/wiki/University_of_Cambridge_International_Examinations). The Tertiary Education sector includes colleges, universities and other technical institutions in Mauritius. The country's two main public universities are the [University of Mauritius](/wiki/University_of_Mauritius) and the [University of Technology](/wiki/University_of_Technology,_Mauritius). The Tertiary Education Commission's Strategic Plan envisages Mauritius as a regional knowledge hub and a centre for higher learning and excellence. It promotes open and distance learning to increase access to post-secondary education and lifelong learning locally and regionally.[[75]](#cite_note-75)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Sugarcane plantation in Mauritius](/wiki/File:Sugarcane_plantation_in_Mauritius_(reduced_colour_saturation).jpg) Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has developed from a low-income, agriculture-based economy to a middle-income diversified economy. The economy is based on [tourism](/wiki/Tourism_in_Mauritius), textiles, sugar, and financial services. In recent years, information and communication technology, seafood, hospitality and property development, healthcare, renewable energy, and [education](/wiki/Education_in_Mauritius) and training have emerged as important sectors, attracting substantial investment from both local and foreign investors.[[76]](#cite_note-76) Mauritius has no exploitable [natural resources](/wiki/Natural_resource) and therefore depends on imported petroleum products to meet most of its energy requirements. Local and renewable energy sources are biomass, hydro, solar and wind energy.[[77]](#cite_note-77) Mauritius has one of the largest [Exclusive Economic Zones](/wiki/Exclusive_Economic_Zones) in the world, and in 2012 the government announced its intention to develop the marine economy.[[78]](#cite_note-78) Mauritius is ranked high in terms of economic competitiveness, a friendly investment climate, good governance and a free economy.[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) The Gross Domestic Product (PPP) was estimated at $22.025 billion in 2014, and [GDP (PPP) per capita](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita) was over $16,820, one of the highest in Africa.[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) Mauritius has an *upper middle income economy*, according to the [World Bank](/wiki/World_Bank) in 2011.[[81]](#cite_note-81) For the fifth consecutive year, the World Bank's 2013 [Ease of Doing Business](/wiki/Ease_of_Doing_Business_Index) report ranks Mauritius first among [African economies](/wiki/Economy_of_Africa) and 19th worldwide out of 183 economies in terms of ease of doing business.[[80]](#cite_note-80) Mauritius has built its success on a free market economy, according to the 2013 [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom) Mauritius is ranked as having the 8th most free economy in the world, and the highest score in investment freedom.[[82]](#cite_note-82) The report's ranking of 183 countries is based on measures of economic openness, regulatory efficiency, rule of law, and competitiveness.

### Tourism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Seven_coloured_earths_mauritius.jpg) [Seven Coloured Earths](/wiki/Seven_Coloured_Earths) at [Chamarel](/wiki/Chamarel). [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Mauritius is one of the world's top luxury tourism destinations.[[83]](#cite_note-83)[Template:Better source](/wiki/Template:Better_source) It possesses a wide range of natural and human-made attractions, enjoys a tropical climate with clear warm sea waters, attractive beaches, tropical fauna and flora complemented by a multi-ethnic and cultural population. These tourism assets are its main strength, especially since they are backed up by well-designed and run hotels, and reliable and operational services and infrastructures.[[84]](#cite_note-84)[Template:Better source](/wiki/Template:Better_source)

Mauritius received the World Leading Island Destination award for the third time and World's Best Beach at the World Travel Awards in January 2012.[[85]](#cite_note-85)

### Transportation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Since 2005 public bus transport in Mauritius is free of charge for students, people with disabilities and senior citizens.[[86]](#cite_note-86) There are currently no railways in Mauritius, former privately owned industrial railways having been abandoned. To cope with increasing road traffic congestion, a Light Rail Transit system has been proposed between [Curepipe](/wiki/Curepipe) and Port Louis.

The harbour of Port Louis handles international trade as well as a cruise terminal. The sole international airport for civil aviation is [Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport](/wiki/Sir_Seewoosagur_Ramgoolam_International_Airport), which also serves as the home operating base for the national airline [Air Mauritius](/wiki/Air_Mauritius); the airport authority inaugurated a new passenger terminal in September 2013.[[87]](#cite_note-87) Another airport is the [Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport](/wiki/Sir_Gaëtan_Duval_Airport) in Rodrigues.

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

The major musical genre of Mauritius is [Sega](/wiki/Sega_(genre)) music, other musical genres are its [fusion genre](/wiki/Fusion_genre), [Seggae](/wiki/Seggae) and Bhojpuri songs.

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further)

Seafood is an important component in the [cuisine of Mauritius](/wiki/Cuisine_of_Mauritius).

### Holidays and festivals[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

The public holidays of Mauritius involve the blending of several cultures from Mauritius's history. There are [Hindu festivals](/wiki/Hindu_festivals), [Chinese festivals](/wiki/Chinese_festivals), [Muslim festivals](/wiki/Muslim_festivals), as well as [Christian festivals](/wiki/Christian_festivals).

[Template:Holidays of Mauritius](/wiki/Template:Holidays_of_Mauritius)

There are 15 annual public holidays in Mauritius. Seven of these are fixed holidays: 1 and 2 January; 1 February; 12 March; 1 May; 2 November; and 25 December. The remaining public holidays are religious festivals with dates that vary from year to year. However these are public holidays, many other festivals such as [Holi](/wiki/Holi), [Raksha Bandhan](/wiki/Raksha_Bandhan), [Père Laval Pilgrimage](/wiki/Jacques-Désiré_Laval) also exist in Mauritius.

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|The Maiden Cup in 2006.](/wiki/File:Horse_racing_in_Mauritius.JPG) The most popular sport in Mauritius is [football](/wiki/Association_football)[[88]](#cite_note-88) and the national team is the [Club M](/wiki/Mauritius_national_football_team), other popular sports in Mauritius include cycling, table tennis, badminton, volleyball, basketball, handball, boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, weightlifting, bodybuilding and athletics. Water sports includes swimming, sailing, scuba diving, and water skiing.

[Horseracing](/wiki/Thoroughbred_horse_racing), which dates back to 1812, when the [Champ de Mars Racecourse](/wiki/Champ_de_Mars_Racecourse) was inaugurated, remain very popular. The country hosted the second (1985) and fifth editions (2003) of the [Indian Ocean Island Games](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Island_Games). Mauritius won its first Olympic medal at the [2008 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2008_Summer_Olympics) in Beijing when boxer [Bruno Julie](/wiki/Bruno_Julie) won the bronze medal.

In golf, the former [Mauritius Open](/wiki/Mauritius_Open) and the current [AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open](/wiki/AfrAsia_Bank_Mauritius_Open) have been part of the [European Tour](/wiki/European_Tour).

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

* [Outline of Mauritius](/wiki/Outline_of_Mauritius)
* [Index of Mauritius-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Mauritius-related_articles)
* [List of Mauritius-related topics](/wiki/List_of_Mauritius-related_topics)

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

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## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)

[Template:Refend](/wiki/Template:Refend)

## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Cookbook](/wiki/Template:Cookbook) [Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Reference

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Mauritius](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/370153/Mauritius) entry at [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](/wiki/Encyclopædia_Britannica)
* [Mauritius](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/mauritius.htm) at *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Country Profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13882233) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Key Development Forecasts for Mauritius](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=MU) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)

Government

* [Mauritius Government portal](http://www.govmu.org/)
* [Statistics Mauritius](http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/)
* [Board of Investment](http://www.boimauritius.com/)

Geography

* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)
* [WikiSatellite view of Mauritius at WikiMapia](http://www.wikimapia.org/#lat=-20.2544671&lon=57.5614929&z=10&l=0&m=b&search=mauritius)
* [Mauritius Meteorological Services](http://metservice.intnet.mu/)

Travel

* [tourism-mauritius](http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu/)

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