



*Indian Ocean*

# INDIAN SIGNS

*The Indian Ocean island nations are united by their stunning beauty and once-in-a-lifetime appeal, but each can point to a unique and appealing character, says Jane Anderson*

**M**auritius, The Seychelles, The Maldives and Sri Lanka are among the most beautiful destinations in the world, known for their stunning turquoise waters, powder-white sands and now enticing value-added recession-beating special deals.

The Seychelles found itself in the news in April when Royal couple William and Kate spent 10 nights on North Island ([www.north-island.com](http://www.north-island.com)), a world-renowned eco-haven. However with clients continuing to tighten their belts and competition from other destinations keen, the Indian Ocean can be a challenging region to sell.

While the Seychelles sets itself apart as a once-in-a-lifetime destination, Mauritius and The Maldives are happy to keep standards high but bend to the demand for all-inclusive options and special offers.

James Bell of **Turquoise Holidays** advises: "If your clients are flexible with

their length of stay many resorts and hotels offer free nights, such as stay for 14 nights but pay for seven at

**Constance Prince Maurice**, or stay 10 but pay for six at **The One&Only St Geran**. Both resorts are in Mauritius.

"With the strong euro many of our clients are finding the Indian Ocean as affordable as Europe for family holidays. Many resorts have children's and teens clubs and several let kids stay free.

"Mauritius works really well during the UK summer as the temperatures and humidity are not excessive," added Bell.

To get the most for clients' money, many operators are recommending two-centre options, such as Dubai and The Maldives or Mauritius and Reunion. Two-island combinations work well in The Seychelles especially for honeymooners.

**Hayes & Jarvis** has partnered with **Emirates** on its latest brochure to promote Dubai and the Indian Ocean.

A boost for Sri Lanka is the new tours in Yala National Park on the island's east coast.

Both are intended as add-on stays. The three-day Yala tour costs £299 and is recommended for those looking for safari options that are cheaper than Kenya or South Africa.

Many tour operators are turning to a growing number of premium all-inclusive options across the Indian Ocean. Spa, golf or leisure activities like catamaran cruises are also included.

Shamira Kaumaya, commercial director at **Sunset Faraway Holidays**, says: "The demand for high-end premium all-inclusive is working well in destinations such as The Maldives and Mauritius to some extent replicating the success of the all-inclusive model which has worked well in the Caribbean."

Competitively-priced four-star all-inclusive hotels or resorts with

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### WINTER SPECIAL OFFERS



#### CONSTANCE MOOFUSHI RESORT SOUTH ARI ATOLL, MALDIVES

- Free night offers: Stay 7 pay 5; stay 14 pay 10

Valid for stays between  
15 Sep – 31 Oct 11

- Stay 7 pay 6; stay 14 pay 12

Valid for stays between  
01 Nov – 22 Dec 11 & 13 Jan – 31 Mar 12

- Early Booking Discount: Book 30 days prior to arrival, staying a minimum of 6 nights and receive discount on room & meal rate.

Valid for stays between  
15 Oct – 22 Dec 11 & 13 Jan – 14 Apr 12



#### FORTUNE SELECT REGINA CANDOLIM BEACH GOA, INDIA

- Free night offers: Stay 7, pay 6; stay 14, pay 11

Valid for stays between  
01 Nov – 20 Dec 11 & 10 Jan – 30 Apr 12



#### HYATT REGENCY SHARM RED SEA RIVIERA, EGYPT

- Special discounted rates in all room categories.

- Special discounted rates on HB supplements, single supplements, children supplements & third person supplements. One child under 6 years old stays free in parent's room on existing bedding.

Valid for stays between  
01 Oct – 23 Dec 11 & 06 Jan – 03 Mar 12

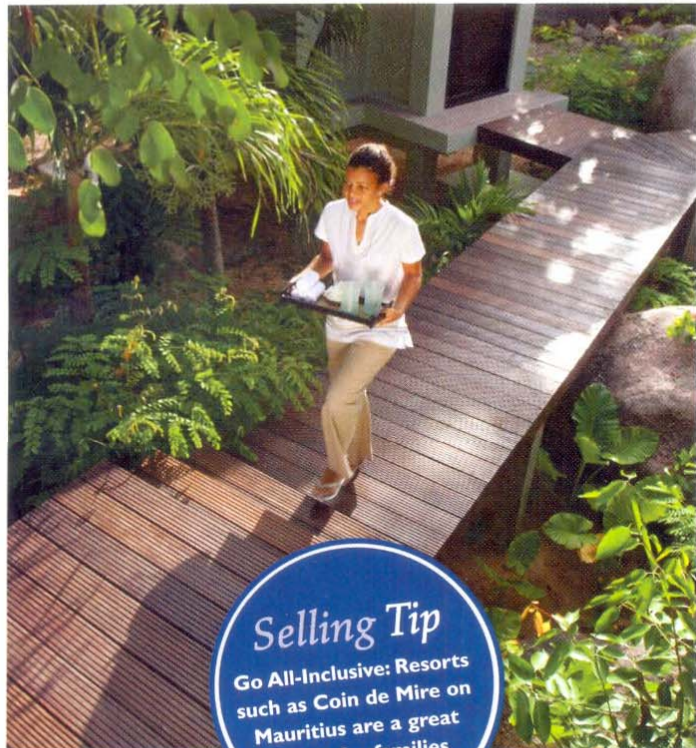


#### RAMADA CARAVELLA BEACH RESORT VARCA BEACH GOA, INDIA

- Early booking offer: Book 60 days before arrival and receive a discounted room rate

Valid for stays between  
20 Nov - 27 Dec 11 & 5 Jan - 30 Apr 12

All above offers are subject to availability.  
Terms & Conditions Apply



**Selling Tip**  
Go All-Inclusive: Resorts such as Coin de Mire on Mauritius are a great option for families

option to upgrade to all-inclusive are selling well in The Maldives, especially late summer deals, said Andrea Loddo, lead regional product manager for Hayes & Jarvis.

"Among the most popular are **Meeru, Kuredu, Reethi Beach, Meedhupparu** and **Vilamendhoo**.

In a market that is very price sensitive, Maldives remains an aspirational destination yet it is becoming an increasingly good-value proposition. It's the same story on Mauritius, where quality four-star resorts like **Tamassa** and **Preskil**, which offer all-inclusive packages, are storming ahead," she said.

Despite the demand for value for money, there is no shortage of new luxury properties. In Mauritius the **St Regis** is set to open Spring 2012, and **Angsana** in December. **Sofitel** recently launched **So Mauritius**, a 92-villa and suite property.

In The Seychelles new hotels include **Seychelles Kempinski Resort**, due for a soft open in September 2011. Located at Baie Lazare on the main island of Mahé, it will feature 173 rooms and suites with a spa, kids' club, watersports centre and casino.

The luxurious **Raffles Resort** opened in February 2011 on Praslin with 86 villas and the first Raffles Signature Spa. It has a stay five nights pay three nights special offer until

December 27. The five-star **Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa** opened in early March. **Per Aquum** opens its first resort hotel in the Maldives this

October. **Niyama** looks set to be the hottest opening in the region and will boast the world's first underwater club, an in-room deli concept, a gaming room and a 24-hour spa. A massage at 03.00 anyone?

#### What's New

'The Vanilla Islands' Indian Ocean partnership includes the Indian Ocean destinations of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Reunion, the Seychelles and Madagascar and is the first of its kind for the Indian Ocean (see *Selling Long Haul* July/August, page 9).

Rather than viewing their immediate neighbours as competitors, the participating destinations are keen to collaborate as 'co-petitors', enticing travellers to experience the variety on offer in the region through including two or more locations in their

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► Indian Ocean itinerary. The **Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA)** is planning a fam around The Vanilla Islands' concept.

### Tourism Talk



**ELAINE BARRETT**  
trade director, MTPA

"Hotels in Mauritius have been very supportive of tour operator needs in terms of value-added offers such as two-for-one deals, additional nights and complimentary spa treatments. We believe the interest generated by the Royal honeymoon will benefit the Indian Ocean as a whole, by highlighting the luxury and exclusivity of the islands. In terms of trade initiatives, we enhanced and re-launched our online training programme earlier this year ([www.onlinetraveltraining.co.uk/mauritius-training.aspx](http://www.onlinetraveltraining.co.uk/mauritius-training.aspx)). The marketing team is also working on a booking incentive in September, in association with Air Mauritius, which involves winning a trip to the island."



**MARSHA PARCOU**  
regional manager  
Seychelles Tourist Office

"British travellers have a perception that The Seychelles is

expensive and it's true that it does cost more than Mauritius and the Maldives.

"But The Seychelles is a once-in-a-lifetime destination which visitors remember. We have exclusive resorts like **North Island** and **Frégate Island Private Island** but can also offer £100 per day options. The main issue affecting the region is that both leading Indian Ocean competitors have direct airline access, though **Air Seychelles** and other airlines offer good services with one-hour stopovers. **Etihaad Airways** has announced it will begin flights from London and Manchester to Mahé on November 1 2011, via Abu Dhabi."

### From The Front Line



**SHAMIRA KAUMAYA**  
commercial director  
Sunset Faraway Holidays

"Sunset's forward sales to the Indian Ocean until the end of December are slightly up on last year.

"Although this implies we are defying the impact of the 'Credit Crunch' and faltering economy, the increased interest is also down to a big trade push for Mauritius between January and March by Sunset, Air Mauritius and the MTPA, as well as deals on package holidays.

Sunset has seen a dramatic growth in enquiries and conversions to The Seychelles and Maldives, with sales for 2011 up 24 per cent. The Seychelles is our third-largest growth destination."



### INDIAN OCEAN

#### Top Selling Tips...

• **Family friendly:** "Don't forget about the family market to Mauritius, there's little or no jetlag to worry about, the beaches are gently sloping with calm seas and the hotels offer fun and friendly kids' clubs. Try the new **Trou Aux Biches Resort & Spa** with its **Bob Marlin Kids Club** for three- to 12-year-olds and, a first for **Beachcomber**, a **Teenagers Club for 13- to 17-year-olds**"

**MARK BOULLÉ**, marketing manager, **Beachcomber Tours**

• **Flight upgrades:** "Look at upgrading flights to a **Premium cabin, especially for night flights. You can do this 'one way' and it is actually more affordable than you might assume**"

**JAMES BELL**, founder **Turquoise Holidays**

• **Moving up:** "Agents should try to up-sell from half-board to all-inclusive, where possible. This will appeal to clients looking to stick to a budget, particularly those who are already stretching themselves for that dream honeymoon or anniversary trip"

**BETH ALCORN**, product and marketing manager, **Emirates Tours UK**

• "The key differentiator between properties is service. It's about tailoring it to a client's needs. There is something for everyone, with underwater spas, nightclubs and barefoot islands"

**SUE SAUNDERS**, product manager, **Seasons**



**SHEENA PATON**  
Indian Ocean market manager, **Kuoni**

"The draw is the quality of accommodation, the natural beauty of the fact Maldives and The Seychelles retain a feel of exclusivity. For clients seeking the best possible value and control their overall spend, recommending the all-inclusive or full-board meal plan. Also check the **Kuoni Plus** options for each property as clients can get additional value such as early-bird savers, free upgrades and bonus nights."



**ANDREA LODDO**  
regional product manager, **Hayes & Jarvis**

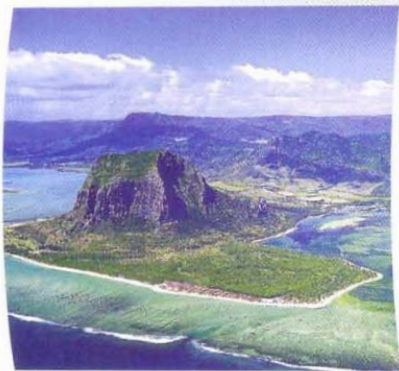
"We plan to focus on building our multi-centre business in the Indian Ocean in partnership with the Emirates, through our joint brochure. The aim is to sandwich stays in Dubai with a wide range of options across the Indian Ocean."



**LISA PARKES**  
Beacon Travel Services, **Crowborough East Sussex**

"As budgets are tight and clients are holidaying closer to home, we've only sold five or six holidays to the Indian Ocean this year, ranging from £6,000 to £10,000 per booking. Le Touessrok and Beachcomber properties in Mauritius

Clockwise from left: Child-friendly in Le Prince Maurice; Kuramathi Maldives; rare birds on Seychelles' eco-friendly North Island, where Kate and Wills had their honeymoon



UP CLOSE & PERSONAL  
BY JANE ANDERSON,  
TRAVEL WRITER

"Mauritius is catching up fast with the demand for extreme sports. The last time I visited I went on a life-affirming trek up *The Pouce*, the third-highest mountain in Mauritius, peaking at 812m, with *Yan de Maroussem*, an eight-generation French Mauritian who runs *Yanature Adventures* (00 230 785 6177, [www.trekkingilemaurice.com](http://www.trekkingilemaurice.com)). This fabulous adventure company offers a choice of treks, climbs and excursions in the western region of Mauritius and is living proof of a new ecological consciousness on the island.

Alternatively in *Domaine de L'Etoile* ([www.cieletnature.com](http://www.cieletnature.com)) there are archery courses, hiking, mountain biking and motorised circuits by quad or 4x4. Or how about zip lining at the *Saint Felix Sugar Estate* ([www.dosomethingdifferent.com](http://www.dosomethingdifferent.com))?

To ride through the surf on horseback, the *Haras du Morne stables* (00 230 450 5247, [harasdumorne.com](http://harasdumorne.com)) in the shadow of *Le Morne Brabant* takes everyone from beginners to experienced riders along the nearby beaches or on wild mountain treks."

Clockwise from top left: Relaxing in North Island, Seychelles; Velassaru Maldives, a private coral island; Sri Lankan wildlife; mountainous Mauritius is great for activities, from horse riding to zip lining

► remain popular for their all-inclusive options. I think The Seychelles is one of the most stunning destinations in the world but it costs at least £2,000pp."

*Where To Book It*

ELEGANT RESORTS - 01244 897517  
[www.elegantresorts.co.uk](http://www.elegantresorts.co.uk)  
Seven nights at *Frégate Island Private*, Seychelles, start from £11,495pp based on two sharing a one-bedroom villa on a full-board basis, with economy flights and private boat and car transfers.

KUONI - 01306 747008  
[www.kuoni.co.uk](http://www.kuoni.co.uk)  
Seven nights at *Lily Beach* in the Maldives is priced from £4,315pp, on an all-inclusive platinum plan (including all food, drinks with branded alcohol, activities and some trips to other islands), flights and transfers.

IF ONLY - 0141 955 4000  
[www.ifonly.net](http://www.ifonly.net)  
A seven-night deal at *Diva Maldives* is priced from £1,465pp in a deluxe room with breakfast, return flights and seaplane transfers.

SUNSET FARAWAY HOLIDAYS  
020 8774 7100  
[www.sunset.co.uk](http://www.sunset.co.uk)  
Seven nights in a deluxe room at the *Grand Mauritian* start from £1,399pp, half-board with flights and transfers.

"With the strong euro family clients are finding Maldives as affordable as Europe"

KUONI - 01306 747008  
[www.kuoni.co.uk](http://www.kuoni.co.uk)  
A five-night deal at *Club Bentota* in Sri Lanka are from £869pp, all-inclusive with flights and transfers.

*Room Report*

**The Residence Mauritius's** Indian Ocean sister property, *The Residence Zanzibar* ([www.theresidence.com](http://www.theresidence.com)), has opened with 66 pool villas. **The Residence Maldives** is set to open spring 2012. **Universal Resorts' Velassaru, Maldives** ([www.velassaru.com](http://www.velassaru.com)) has a new water suite with its own infinity pool, while **Kuramathi** ([www.kuramathi.com](http://www.kuramathi.com)) has new honeymoon pool villas, complete with an open-air garden bathroom with a freestanding bath for two and a private lap pool.

**Naiade Resorts' Maldives** flagship, *Diva* ([www.naiade.com](http://www.naiade.com)) has launched a Marine Biology Centre where guests can join in research and a weekly 'Whale Shark Education Day'.

**The Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives** ([www.centarahotelsresorts.com](http://www.centarahotelsresorts.com)) has a new underwater wedding package, from around £434.

In the Seychelles, **Maia** ([www.maia.com.sc](http://www.maia.com.sc)) has upped its arsenal of boys toys' with a resort helipad and amphibian boat, *Sealegs*. Luxury island resort, **Desroches** ([www.desrochesisland.com](http://www.desrochesisland.com)) has opened its new Spa, using Elemental Herbology products.

*Who Flies There?*

**Air Mauritius** and **British Airways** fly direct to Mauritius and Emirates there via Dubai. All three carriers start a daily service in September.

**Air Seychelles** flies twice a week from Heathrow via Rome or Milan to the Seychelles. **Emirates** and **Qatar Airways** offer a good service with one stop. **Etihad Airways** has announced to begin flights from London and Manchester to Mahé on November 2011 via Abu Dhabi.

British Airways and **Sri Lanka Airlines** are the only direct scheduled carriers to the Maldives. Emirates fly via Dubai with many regional departures such as Glasgow and Birmingham; **Oman Air** flies via Muscat and Qatar via Doha.

*Agent Training*  
THE SEYCHELLES

[www.seychellesuperstar.co.uk](http://www.seychellesuperstar.co.uk)