

FRÉGATE ISLAND

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The most easterly of the granitic Inner Islands, Frégate lies 35 miles from Mahé and just four degrees south of the Equator. One of Seychelles' largest private islands, yet still only 3km², it's a topographical mix of granite peaks and plateaux, mystical forests of banyan trees, and seven startlingly beautiful beaches, from the windswept length of Grande Anse to the photogenic cove at Anse Victorin.

Frégate's varied and striking landscape is home to some unusual flora and fauna. More than 100 bird species are resident and breeding on the island, including the Seychelles magpie robin: almost extinct 30 years ago and the second rarest bird in the world with a headcount of only 14, these charismatic birds have since been restored to a healthy population by resident conservationists. The island has over 2,000 free-roaming Aldabra giant tortoises; both hawksbill and green turtles nest on the quiet beaches; fruit bats circle continually; and even two small endemics can be found: the flightless giant tenebrionid beetle and the Enid snail.

FRÉGATE ISLAND PRIVATE

There are 17 vast residences on the island (which is also known as Frégate Island Private): 13 private pool residences, two private pool twin residences, one spa residence and the 'presidential' villa Banyan Hill Estate, which is booked exclusively by small groups and families of up to six. Although everything has been constructed within strict environmental controls, levels of luxury have not been compromised.

On Frégate's northern curve, between Anse Bambous and Anse Macquereau, each residence is a large colonial-style bungalow, with a spectacular ocean view from the terrace, a butler and a private solar buggy for exploring the island. The elegant interiors, incorporating a spacious bedroom and living area, are in natural tones, with carved timber furniture and wood

cons. The en suite has an indoor and two outdoor showers, and a window-view bath. A shaded day bed, sunloungers and Jacuzzi overlook



Each of the vast villas on Frégate Island has its own infinity pool



There are plenty of deserted beaches to explore on Frégate Island

the sea, though the *pièce de résistance* of these hideaways is undoubtedly the private sapphire-blue infinity pool.

Away from your pool are a host of activities. Water lovers can enjoy two further, huge freshwater swimming pools, a yacht club and a PADI dive centre. From motorboats to kayaks, and sailing to snorkelling, it's all available. Options ashore include hiking, beachcombing, or a trip to the gym. The Zen-like Rock Spa is a perfect retreat for the less energetic. Clear ponds, raked rock gardens, timber pagoda-style treatment rooms and gentle Balinese staff combine to create a true haven. Younger guests (aged 3–12 years) will be warmly welcomed at the 'Castaway Kids Club House' for supervised games, excursions, craft and even cookery classes.

Food is a highlight on Frégate. Served in-villa, at the marina, in the main Frégate

House restaurant or the Plantation House museum, or in relaxing settings around the forest and coast, Creole and international flavours are blended to produce a seasonal menu of elaborate French-inspired creations.

A rich assortment of natural and cultivated mangos, papayas, guava, coconuts, melons, bananas, herbs and vegetables is harvested daily on Frégate Island. A wander around the working gardens to see the coffee bushes, aromatic herb borders and vanilla vines is fascinating. For gardeners, scientists and cooks, the first-class hydroponics project, which produces wonderful salad crops and juicy tomatoes, is well worth a tour.

Whilst Frégate Island Private is very costly, it offers a luxurious private-island experience with first-rate facilities and service, which it delivers with aplomb.

NORTH ISLAND

This uninhabited, former fruit and spice plantation was purchased in 1997 by Wilderness Safaris, with whom we have long worked using their safari camps in Southern Africa. The last 18 years here have witnessed one of the most ambitious rehabilitation, conservation and tourism development projects in the world.

The decision to gradually return the island to its natural state has resulted in a complex, costly and ongoing commitment to eradicate feral animals and alien vegetation, and to reintroduce endangered endemic species. At the heart of North Island's philosophy, this momentous task continues daily under the hands-on direction of a resident ecologist, who is a fountain of knowledge for interested guests.

As the damaging hands of time are turned back, the island's natural beauty is enhanced: twin granite peaks at its extremities, stunning deserted beaches to east and west, and cool native forest between the two. A holiday here is a rewarding privilege.

NORTH ISLAND VILLAS

North Island seems to receive a constant flow of accolades and awards. Be it an award for the Best New Sensation, the Best-Designed Hotel, the Best Room or the Best Hotel on Earth – we would have to concur. North Island is sensational; its standards match both its stunning surroundings and the hype.

Since its opening in 2003, the media, design-conscious celebrities, royalty and affluent travellers from all over the globe have vied to stay in one of North Island's 11 handcrafted villas. In spite of its success, it remains a blissfully understated affair: sanctuary, not stardom, sets the tone here.

Stretching along the island's east beach, the structures and interiors of the villas and central piazza combine traditional styles from mainland Africa, Zanzibar and Bali with the clean lines and space of contemporary design. Intricate, hand-cut floor and door carvings meet concertina glass walls; shaggy, woven thatching covers a sunken marble bath; coral rock curtains contrast with super-soft cotton bed linen – every intricacy is tasteful and thoughtful. Each large, sea-facing air-conditioned villa boasts its own ocean-view plunge pool, open-sided dining room, kitchenette, personal room attendant, WiFi access and golf buggy (for getting around when you don't want to walk, and sunset rides to the funky cocktail bar on West Beach!).

Each villa has a separate lounge which, with its own stylish en-suite bathroom, can

easily be converted into a large second bedroom for a family travelling together.

If you can drag yourself away from your villa, you'll find flexible island activities included in the rate, ranging from mountain biking to guided walks; snorkelling to scuba diving; fishing to body-boarding and kayaking. There is a wellness centre and small gym above the central piazza, a palm-shaded swimming pool hewn into the granitic boulders, a cool library (the venue for pre-dinner drinks and nightly island talks), and a well-equipped activities centre.

The extensive daily menu is merely a suggestion, with virtually all meals being



prepared on request, whilst the wine cellar offers a wide and eclectic selection of fine wines, champagnes and spirits from around the world. Dining is flexible in time and location – though the private beach barbecues take some beating!

On every level, North Island strives to exceed expectations and deliver a truly stupendous experience. It has a price tag to match its very high standards, though it's difficult to argue that it doesn't offer value for money... after all, what price for a private paradise?



Sun-loungers beside Island Piazza on East Beach, North Island



A private picnic on North Island