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MARADIVA VILLAS, MAURITIUS

THIS ALL-VILLA ISLAND RESORT TICKS ALL THE BOXES, WHETHER YOU WANT ART AND ACTIVITIES OR COCKTAILS AT SUNDOWN. BY SELMA DAY

Mauritius has an abundance of five-star hotels offering every luxury, but if you want to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life for a few days and enjoy some chilled time in a tranquil setting, then Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa is the perfect choice.

Situated in Flic en Flac, overlooking Tamarin Bay on the west coast of Mauritius – known for its spectacular sunsets and warm climate – the resort is the only all-villa luxury resort on the island. It is spread over 27 acres of lush, tropical gardens and is owned by a fifth generation Mauritian family, having previously been operated by the Taj group of hotels.

Maradiva, which has won a string of awards including the World's Leading Luxury Villa Beach Resort at last year's World Travel Awards (WTA), comprises 65 villas, two restaurants and bars, infinity swimming pool, sports and fitness centre, kids' club, boat house and spa.

The charm of Maradiva is its laid-back vibe and the sense of privacy that comes through having your own villa – complete with pool and garden, which is rare



to find in Mauritius. So you can spend the day enjoying your own space or head over to the main pool where you can enjoy the beach and turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean beyond.

While the architecture is distinctly local, the villas are spacious, inside and outside, with luxurious bathrooms featuring indoor and outdoor showers, complete with Hermès amenities.

There are plenty of spaces to sit and read a book or to enjoy a glass of wine or eat alfresco – including a covered area for when those tropical rain showers arrive that make the island so green and lush. For families, there are connecting suites, while beach lovers can choose from four luxury beachfront pool villas.

Health and wellbeing are at the core of Maradiva's philosophy and the spa offers a range of holistic and Ayurvedic treatments, which, following a 45-minute consultation with the resident doctor, are tailored to suit your needs and lifestyle. The spa is a retreat in itself, where you could spend hours relaxing and enjoying the pretty gardens and cascading pools – an idyllic little haven where you can recharge physically, mentally and spiritually. Yoga and meditation are available and, for the more energetic, there's a gym, tennis, water-skiing, sailing, scuba diving and windsurfing all available.

A healthy ethos is also at the heart of the cooking at Maradiva – using fresh, seasonal produce grown in the resort's own organic kitchen garden, which has an abundance of fruit, vegetables, herbs and spices. You can choose from two restaurants: Coast2Coast



in front of the lagoon, where you can enjoy a choice of Mediterranean, Mauritian or international food; and Le Cilantro, a warm, cosy space offering Asian and Indian dishes. The Teppanyaki counter, where chef Kelly performs her magic, is also a popular choice. If you fancy a change of scene, you can dine in your own villa, under Raj tents on the beach or picnic by the beach. The Breakers Bar is a chill-out area where you can relax in deep sofas or on day-beds and enjoy light meals, as well as a selection of international wines and spirits.

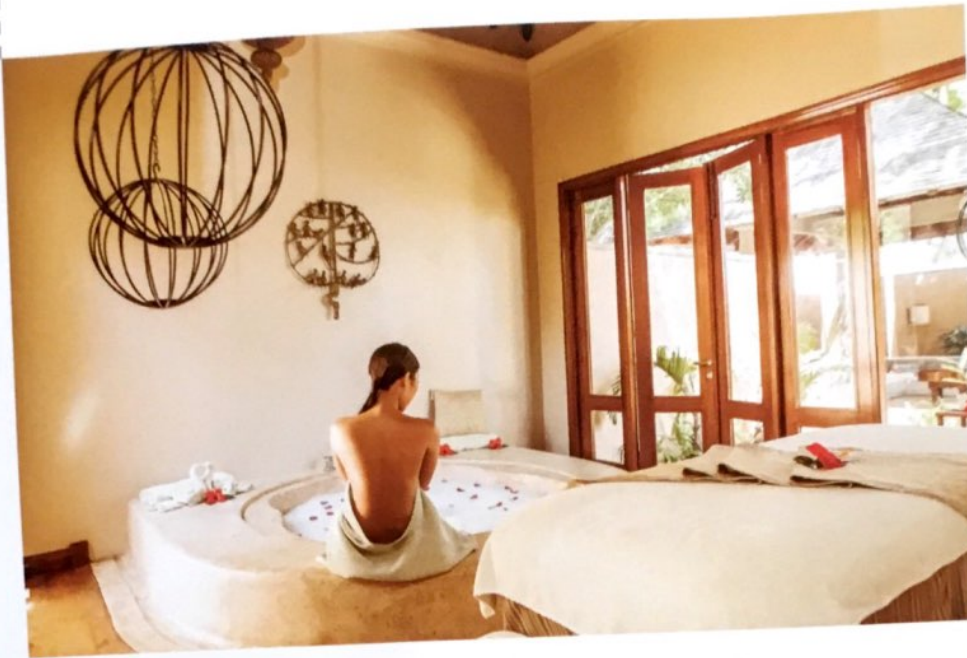
It's the perfect spot to enjoy a cocktail at sundown, although we loved dangling our feet over the edge of the jetty to watch the sunset before strolling along the beach back to our villa before dinner.

Guests also have access to three more restaurants at the neighbouring sister property, Sands Suites Resort & Spa.

If you're a foodie, be sure to have a tour of the gardens with the chef – and enjoy one of the several cooking classes on offer. Usually held outside, depending on the weather, it's a delightful experience – and not only do you get to cook a choice of Japanese, Thai, Indian or Mauritian dishes, but also to enjoy the results of your hard work over a long, lazy lunch.

If art is more your thing, you won't be disappointed as earlier this year, the resort's executive director, Sanjiv Ramdane, launched the Maradiva Art Gallery by Adamah Fine Arts, kicking off with works by the





Indian artist Satish Gupta. Currently on show is *Deciphering Landscapes* by renowned visual artist and photographer Miguel Garcia, which includes the unfinished landscape in India. There will be a rolling programme of exhibitions from other artists throughout the year.

It would be a shame to visit Mauritius – an island so rich in history and culture – and not venture out of the resort. There are plenty of attractions both nearby and around the island. Close to Maradiva is Casela Nature Park, which is home to many animals and endemic plants and – not for the faint hearted – there's the opportunity to ride the longest zip-line of the Indian Ocean, or go for a walk with lions.

Further afield in Pamplemousses is the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, home to Mauritius's famous giant waterlilies. You'll find around 500 plant species, along with trees planted by dignitaries from Gandhi to Mandela to British royals.

It's worth making a day trip to the capital Port Louis to explore the Caudan Waterfront – an open-air space by the port, where you'll find quirky shops selling crafts, alongside international boutiques. Don't miss the colourful central market, selling fruit, vegetables, spices and much more.

A visit to Rhumerie de Chamarel is a must – it is one of the rare distilleries still to cultivate its own sugarcane for the production of Chamarel rums.

If you're into golf, the course at Tamarina is just a 15-minute drive away. Spread over 106 acres of Savannah, the 18-hole championship set-up affords breathtaking views of Rampart Mountain and Tamarin Bay.

Horsing is also one of the most popular sports activities in Mauritius. The Crown Lodge, a private suite at the Champ de Mars, allows guests to



experience horse racing from a strategic vantage point that provides an unobstructed view of the finish line and the paddock.

Whatever you choose to do, you'll know there will be a fabulous sunset and cocktail awaiting you when you get back.

****As part of the Invest Hotel Scheme (IHS) legislation, you can now acquire a villa within the resort. A total of 33 villas are being made available to buy under this scheme comprising: four exclusive suites; four beachfront villas; 21 luxury villas; four interconnecting villas; and one presidential suite, which will be retained by the owner.***

maradiva.com