

Canoeing trip around Mauritius

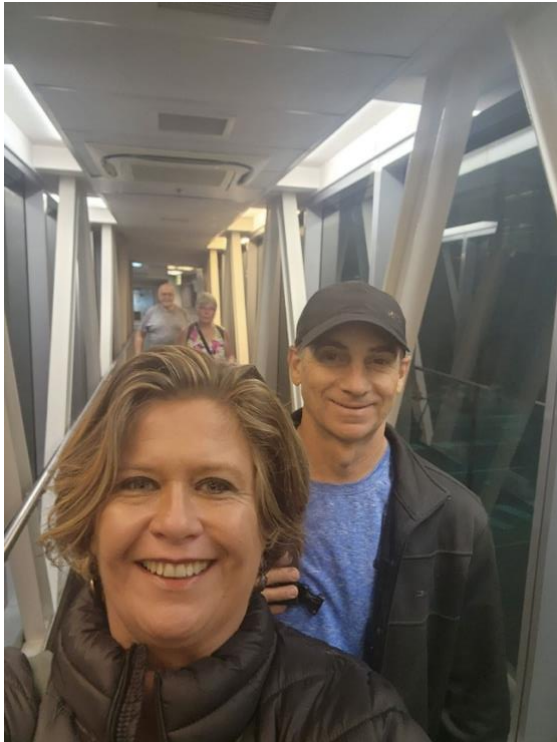
By Liezel Matthee, PA to Nicolette van den Eijkel, Chief Director: Facilities Management

Sunday, 9 April - DAY 1

My husband and I went with Liquid Adventures (from Johannesburg) for a canoeing trip around Mauritius from 9 to 16 April 2023. Below is a map outlining the route for each day of our canoeing journey.



We flew on 9th April (Easter Sunday) from Johannesburg, via Réunion Island, to Mauritius with AIR AUSTRAL.



We traveled with twelve people from different parts of South Africa and met for the first time at Johannesburg Airport. Our departure time was 14:00, and we arrived in Mauritius 22:00 late at night. Anand, our bus driver (formerly from South Africa but now a permanent resident of Mauritius), took us to our guesthouse in Trou aux Biches, situated on the northwest coast. Reaching the guesthouse from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, south of Mauritius, took an additional hour by bus. We reached our guesthouse at midnight, and everyone was tired, so we went to sleep after being assigned our rooms. We stayed there for three nights and returned to the guesthouse after each day of canoeing.



Monday – Day 2

The bus driver Anand took us to Grande Gaube in the northeast, where we began our first day of canoeing. After preparing the kayaks, we set off for our three-hour paddle from Grand Gaube in the northeast after lunchtime. Our route was northward, passing Perebere, Grand Bay, and Mont Choisy. After approximately three hours, we reached our accommodations in Trou aux Biches—the majority of the paddle involved downwind navigation along the reef. During the journey, a brief thunderstorm accompanied by rain occurred for about 10 minutes while we paddled. My husband and I were the strongest paddlers in the group, while the others were beginners. Initially, the group had visible nerves, but as time passed, everyone discovered their role and became more comfortable. Theuns and I also assisted some paddlers who fell out of their kayaks or struggled with their paddles.

Les, the organiser gave each paddler a number for check-in every morning before paddling and when we are finished, to see that every paddler was safe. So, in the morning, Les will say, “Nr” and then everyone shouts out their number.



Ready to start our canoeing trip.

We noticed the approaching storm, but the rain cleared up after 10-20 minutes. The temperature remained warm, and it wasn't cold outside. After our daily paddle each evening, we gathered for a "social meeting" where the organizer briefed us about the next day's trip and what we could anticipate. Additionally, we enjoyed ourselves during these evenings, playfully taking shots of drinks as a friendly gesture for any mistakes made during the day or when someone accidentally fell out of their canoe. The group members also decided to give us "nicknames" just for the fun, and I was "Marilyn Munroe" with my beautiful short dresses.



End of Day 2 – Everyone take their canoes out and carry it to our guesthouse.

Tuesday, 11 April – Day 3 - Trou Aux Beaches to Tombeau Bay

On Day 3 of our paddling adventure, we had the morning free. We began our paddle towards the south at noon, heading to Bay Trombeaue. Excitement filled the air as everyone prepared for the next leg of our trip. Before starting each day, the organizer gave us biltong, snacks, and Game (a powdered drink) to enjoy during the journey.

Today's paddle was a 2.5-hour expedition from Trou Aux Beaches to Tombeau Bay. At one point, we had to venture slightly deeper into the water, away from the reef, to avoid some rocks. I felt anxious as I observed the darker and deeper waters. To my relief, my husband, who had 15 years of experience in Berg River canoe marathons, was by my side. He reassured me, urging me to relax and assuring me of our safety under his guidance.

As we paddled on the enchanting blue waters, little fish leaped out of the water before us, adding to the beauty of the experience. Our daily paddling pace was leisurely, allowing us to take regular breaks and enjoy the surroundings.



The views on sea to the land, was spectacular.

After our paddle today, we placed the kayaks onto the trailer. Anand and Les (the trip organiser) transported the kayaks to Albion, south of the island, where we commenced paddling the following morning. This marked our final evening at the charming "Easy Stay" guesthouses, where we were treated to breathtaking sunsets on the beach each night, accompanied by a glass of wine.

The Sunsets were amazing



Wednesday, 12 April, Day 4 – Albion to Tamarin Bay

Today, our journey began at Albion, just south of Mauritius capital city Port Louis. Anand kindly transported our luggage to Chantauvent Guest House, our final accommodation for the past four nights. Following a delightful breakfast the next morning, we set off for Flic Flac at 10:00 AM. Each day, everyone's skills improved noticeably. Although the trip to Flic Flac took 2.5 hours, we felt strong and resilient enough to paddle an additional hour to Tamarin Bay. Unfortunately, we were unable to spot any dolphins during our excursion. Upon completing today's paddling adventure, Anand collected the kayaks and our group and drove us to the southeastern region, specifically Blue Bay, where our next Guesthouse awaited us.





Some of the waterfalls along the route



End of Day 3 - Today we paddled until Tamarin Bay. We were waiting for our bus to take us to Blue Bay where our guesthouse was for the last 4 days.

Everyone, take out their belongings, before the canoes was taken on a trailer to our next stop tomorrow. Some of us took a swim in this nice warm water.



Chantauvent Guest House - The beach in front of the Guesthouse, here we stay for the last 4 days of our canoe trip in Mauritius

Free day – Day 5, Thursday, 13 April 2023

Everyone had a free day to do what they wanted to do. Some group members went with scooters to the South West, and others decided to make their trips near Mahebourg. My husband and I went to Mahebourg by bus and visited The Rault Biscuit Factory.

Mahebourg waterfront





The Rault Biscuiterie - Family own company, making handmade biscuits



This is the plant what they use to make the biscuits.
Biscuits Tasting with tea and coffee



Blue Bay beach - Blue Bay, a marine reserve where the snorkeling is great.

Day 6 – Friday, 14 April 2023 - Blue Bay to Ile aux Fouquets (“Lighthouse” Island)





Today paddle was about 1.5 hours from Blue Bay to Ile aux Fouquets ("Lighthouse" Island). Most of the paddle was in the reef with beautiful shiny blue and visible/translucent waters. It was a comfortable slow trip with regular stops to view the waters and the views.





On our way to Light House island





Île aux Fouquets (also known as Île au Phare, Lighthouse Island) is an island off the south-east coast of Mauritius.

The island is of pure coral origin and has had Islet National Park status since June 5, 2004. It is located about five kilometers off the south-eastern coast near the islands of Ilot Vacoas and Île de la Passe. South of the islands is the only opening in the coral reef through which larger ships can pass. The size of the Île aux Fouquets is 2.49 hectares. According to the German zoologist Karl August Möbius, the island's name goes back to a species of tern bred in caves there and was called Fouquet by the fishermen.

Around 1694, refugee Huguenots lived for a few years on the Île aux Fouquets under the direction of the Frenchman François Leguat. They had previously tried to establish a Protestant republic called Eden on the island of Rodrigues, 580 kilometers to the east. However, out of loneliness, they broke off the project on the quite fertile island and decided to sail to Mauritius on a self-built barge without anchor and compass. Having safely arrived there, they came into conflict with the Dutch governor, who banished them to the treeless Île aux Fouquets. Only years later were the men taken from there to the island of Java.

In 1810, not far from the Île aux Fouquets, the naval battle of Grand Port took place, which the French won. A good fifty years later, long after conquered Mauritius, the British erected a lighthouse on the island. The building from 1864 is now a ruin but is a listed building.



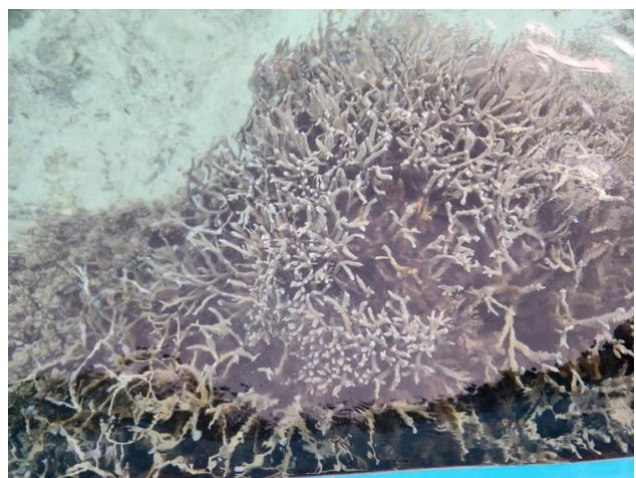
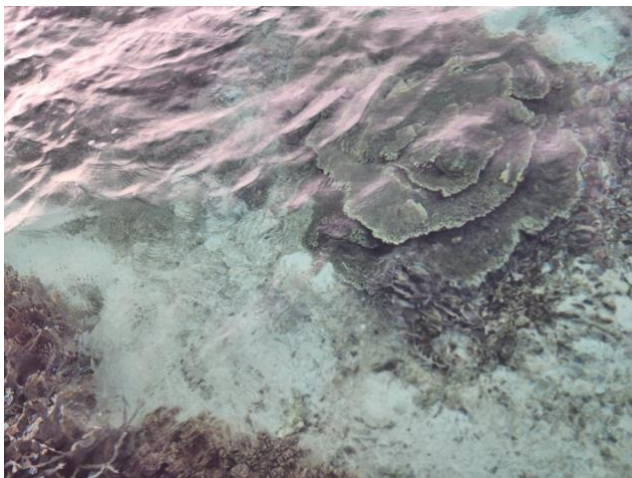
We had a wonderful fish barbecue on the island, prepared by one of the Mauritians. .

Day 7, Saturday, 15 April 2023 - Paddle to Ile Aux Cerfs Island

Today was an hour's bus ride up the east coast, bringing us to Grand River East. We offloaded the kayaks and spent about 3hrs paddling around Ile aux Cerfs island, which includes mangrove forests. We had 2 hours to spend on the island before paddling again. We end the paddle at Trou d'Eau Douce and return to Chantauvent Guest House by speeding boat.



Ile aux Cerfs island – Very expensive island – a glass of wine around R150



Wonderful coral reefs, unfortunately damaged by people

Last stage of canoeing around Mauritius



Group photo at the end. It was an awesome experience and I will definitely do it again.

See you soon again Mauritius.