

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Anyone flying into Mauritius from the south-west will see this striking emblem of the island, the 1823 ft high *Morne Brabant*. The coral reef in the turquoise-coloured lagoon is one huge underwater garden, and is among the best diving areas around Mauritius. The southern tip of the peninsula at the foot of the sheer cliffs has steady winds which provide ideal conditions for wind-surfing. Pages 8 – 9

From the 2053 ft high *Bambou Mountain* there are wonderful views of the great lagoons on the eastern side of the island. Its summit is still thickly forested, but the sugar-cane fields are spreading over more and more of the original landscape, with the help of modern machinery and irrigation techniques. The steady trade-wind drives the clouds over the mountain peaks to release their rain on the centre of the island. Pages 10 – 11

Many day-trips are made to the uninhabited islands, *Ile aux Cerfs* and *Ile de l'Est*, half-way down the east coast. A huge sandbank has formed in the narrow strait between the two islands. With its three small restaurants it makes an ideal anchorage and bathing place. The Touessrok Hotel takes care of this natural jewel which is one of the most visited and photographed of all Mauritian beaches. Pages 12 – 13

The de luxe Royal Palm hotel stands at the entrance to *Grand Baie* opposite the *Pointe aux Cannoniers* in the north of the island. The catamaran "Ocean Murmur" is waiting for passengers. Security guards attend to the wellbeing of the exclusive guests, especially by protecting them from over-eager peddlars on the beach. On Mauritius all the beaches are open to the public. Pages 14 – 15

We ask the puzzling question about how the different races and cultures get on so well together. For an answer these girls in the boathouse of Le Paradis hotel give us a cheerful laugh. Shabnam is *Indian*, Anastasia *European*, Sandy *Chinese* and Nathalie *Creole*. The people of Mauritius are dependent on each other, like the crew of a ship on the high seas. Pages 16 – 17

The *Trou aux Biches* hotel complex lies on one of the most beautiful stretches of beach in the north of the island. The white coral sand is protected by a long reef. Near *Rose Hill* these *Tamils* from southern India are walking over red-hot charcoal. This is a religious ritual, an act of penance, for devout Hindus. Text by Marion Friedel. Pages 18 – 21

In the village of *Notre Dame*, in the interior of the island, small farmers make a living from the land by growing vegetables. Guests in 5-star hotels live and bathe in luxury. Today tourism is one of the country's largest sources of income. Jobs in this industry are very sought-after. Pages 22 – 25

Seen from the *Flic en Flac* beach, the 2549 ft high *Montagne du Rempart* looks like the Matterhorn. In the foreground, rising up from the sugar-cane fields, are the peaks known popularly as *Les Trois Mamelles*, "the three breasts". In the background on the west coast is the village of Tamarin with its traditional salt-pans. Pages 26 – 27

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In the shadow of *Pieter Both* willing hands are needed in the fields. Beside a sugar-cane field these women lovingly scatter a plantation of young ginger with fertilizer made from the remnants of the sugar harvest. Using farm machinery is not economical in the mountainous land at the centre of the island. In recent years spices and vegetables have been fetching better prices than the sub-sized sugar-cane. Pages 28 – 29

Only from the raised platform of a truck can one see over the 16 ft high sugar-cane. From the low-lying *Plaine des Papayes* there is a good view across to *Pieter Both* and the *Montagnes Longues*. Between May and September the *Saccharum officinarum* blossoms with silvery white, feathery flower-heads. Nine months later the harvest begins. Pages 30 – 31

Mauritius ablaze. In June, at the beginning of the harvest, the fields of sweet grass, on this sugar island, are burnt back to facilitate harvesting. The cutters work in two shifts round the clock from dawn till dusk. The entire harvest must be brought in within a legally fixed period of 140 days, before being processed in the island's 21 refineries. Pages 32 – 33

The hard work in the sugar-cane fields is often left to the women. They carry heavily laden baskets on their heads across the fields, balanced on their heads. Among the familiar features of the sugar island are the fountains flung high into the air by high-pressure pumps. Intensive cultivation is only made possible by continuous automatic spraying with water. Pages 34 – 35

Strange mountain formations bear witness to the volcanic origins of the island. Sun, rain and wind have shaped these volcanoes, which have been extinct for 100,000 years. The village of *Notre Dame* lies at the foot of the *Montagnes Longues*, of *Pieter Both* and the *Deux Mamelles*. The interior of the island is densely populated. After the abolition of slavery the small farmers were able to settle here. Pages 36 – 37

In the mountains of the island's central highlands it rains almost every day. Most of the rainwater is stored in reservoirs and used to irrigate the plantations which lie in the dry, flat coastal regions. In the rainy season from December to May the waterfalls make a beautiful sight, like *Balfour's Cascade*, below *Beau Bassin*. Pages 38 – 39

This remarkable pillar of rock, the "head" of *Pieter Both*, is the most difficult to climb of all the mountains on the island. After climbing for an hour, 6 to 8 mountaineers can find room to rest on its small summit. In spite of the general economic progress of the island, its rivers and water-holes still make useful places for doing the laundry. Pages 40 – 41

Along the 100 miles of coastline only a few places on the south coast are rocky, wild and rugged. Here there is no protecting reef. The great waves from the Southern Ocean crash unhindered on to the black shore of petrified lava. An attraction is the *blow-hole* near the village of *Le Souffleur*, with its water-spouts which rise over 300 feet. Pages 42 – 43

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The long reef which protects the east coast has built up over thousands of years. The waves breaking on the outer reef provide the oxygen needed to support the rich variety of plant and animal life. Interesting mangrove forests have grown up off the *Ile de l'Est* and the *Ile aux Cerfs*. The white sand is made from fragments of shell and coral. These beaches are one of the chief tourist attractions. Pages 44 – 45

Tourism has turned the coastal areas, which are unsuitable for agriculture, into the most profitable parts of the island. The most beautiful sunsets, especially in June, when it is winter in Mauritius, can be seen on the western side of the island. The sun sinks slowly below the horizon and the balmy air of a tropical night gently caresses your sun-bronzed skin. Pages 46 – 47

What the tango is to Argentina, the samba to Brazil and the waltz to Vienna – that's what the sega means to Mauritius. This rhythmic national dance has its origin in Africa. It is danced with passion by the Creole population of the island and celebrated in colourful costumes. Nearly every hotel puts on a sega evening once a week. Pages 48 – 49

The beach of the *Trou aux Biches* Chalet Hotel at low tide in the early morning light. When the first guests have settled down under the palmleaf-covered sunshades, the beach peddlars appear. They sell colourful Indian scarves, fresh fruit, coral jewelry and sea-shells. The miles of golden beach come to life. Pages 50 – 51

The loveliest colours are created in the big lagoon at the foot of the *Morne Brabant*. The sea bottom of white coral sand, the tropical sun, the blue sky and wind are reflected in the crystal clear shallow water of the lagoon, providing hour by hour an endless kaleidoscope of colour. It is an ideal playground for the little Laser dinghies. Page 52 – 53

Between the *Ile aux Bénitiers* and the *Morne Brabant*, in the south-west of the island, lies the *Baie de la Petite Rivière Noire*. This large, warm-water lagoon is turquoise in colour and crystal clear, but only a few metres deep. Along its shore, well-to-do Mauritians have built weekend homes. Relaxing excursions by boat along the coast reveal to the visitor the most beautiful aspects of the island's landscape. Page 54 – 55

A walk under water in the *Grand Baie*, off the *Pointe aux Cannoniers*. Even if you are a non-swimmer and wear glasses you can experience diving at a depth of 8 feet; your hair stays dry as well. It is fifteen minutes of pure delight, and at the end you get a souvenir photograph. The five-striped reef-perch are fed with bread by the visitors. Page 56 – 57

In the south-western corner of the island, near *Chamarel*, you will find a geological attraction known as "*Coloured Earth*". This striped and undulating soil formation glows in red, mauve, pink, green, blue, purple, ochre and brown. It is probably made up of oxidised, volcanic ash, but so far geologists have not come up with a final explanation for the origin of this phenomenon. Pages 58 – 59

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The delicious spiny perch, also known as the "moontail" because of its crescent-shaped tail-fin, is a good and valuable catch. The colours of the Indian Ocean: colourful parrot-fish, jewel-perch, red snapper, rock-lobster and langouste – all fresh from the reef – on the hotel buffet. For the tourists, something to be enjoyed every day; for the islanders a Sunday treat. Pages 60 – 61

The capital, *Port Louis*, with a population of over 170,000, lies on the west coast and possesses the island's only deep-water port. In its 270-year history the city has been hit a number of times by severe cyclones and today is built on solid concrete foundations. The *Caudan Waterfront* Complex is a modern shopping-centre. At the racecourse on the "*Champ de March*" the world's second-oldest turf club puts on an exciting programme. Pages 62 – 63

Cloudburst over *Port Louis*: brief, warm and refreshing. The Chinese merchant in Royal Street has closed for lunch. The Creole stallholder is selling imported oranges and apples from his cart. During the day island life centres on this business metropolis; but from 5pm and at weekends the place seems deserted. The exceptions are Saturdays in the horse-racing season. Pages 64 – 65

The shopkeeper on a busy street corner in *Port Louis* entices customers with spicy aromas. The local housewives distrust the prepacked goods offered by supermarkets, and anyway everything is cheaper in the grocers' shops: rice, curries, cinnamon, muscat-nut, coriander, saffron, pepper and dried fish. They are imported directly from the Far East and Africa. Pages 66 – 67

Mangoes of many varieties, avocados, lemons and pumpkin sold by the pound – these are today's special offers. The *Central Market* in *Port Louis* is divided into three zones. The first is reserved for fruit, vegetables, spices and medicinal herbs; the second for poultry, meat and fish. The third section is laden with basketware, household utensils, textiles and souvenirs. Pages 68 – 69

In February and March tomatoes, pumpkins and pineapples come into season on Mauritius. They are grown by smallholders or co-operatives and sold in the *Central Market* or in the narrow streets of *Port Louis*. The sun-ripened pineapples, taste deliciously sweet and juicy. The sellers compete for your attention with artistic displays. Pages 70 – 71

It's not all junk – even though it looks like it. Specialist dealers hoard the precious spares, because they are no longer available for vintage British cars, such as the *Morris Minor*, many of which are still in use on the roads of Mauritius. On all islands, cars are a particularly valuable possession. There are high import tariffs on imported vehicles and spare parts. Pages 72 – 73

The giant water-lily *Victoria amazonica* in the botanical garden of *Pamplemousses*. This public garden is among the oldest of its kind in the world. In the colonial period the British and French laid out botanical gardens in all their tropical possessions, in order to assess plants for their commercial value and then increase their yield. Pages 74 – 75

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A *sega* folk-music group practises at sunset on the west coast. *Sega* has its origins in Africa. However, this music and the dance that goes with it can only be found on the islands of the Indian Ocean. In the Mauritian summer the *flamboyants* bloom, turning whole stretches of the island into a sea of red flowers. Little of the original vegetation has been preserved. Pages 76 – 77

A *Tamil* man performs a purification ritual and has a sacred bathe in a river near *Rose Hill* shortly before the *fire-walking* ceremony. A leaf of the betel plant holding some burning incense is committed to the waters. After ten days of fasting, the penitents prepare themselves for the climax of the ceremony, the fire-walk, by making sacrificial offerings, praying to exorcise evil spirits and deep meditation. Pages 78 – 79

The *Central Market* in *Port Louis* is the city's favourite rendez-vous and place for exchanging gossip. These two housewives of African descent talk to each other in *Creole*, the everyday language of the island. The peaceful co-existence of Creoles, Africans, Indians, Europeans and Chinese, and their different cultures, give Mauritius a very special place in the world. Pages 80 – 81

An Indian bride at her wedding ceremony. Body-piercing as a penance is part of the ritual of *Thai-Poosam-Kavadee*, an important festival of the Tamils. *Ramesh Ramdoyal* writes about the multi-cultural society of his homeland, which in his story comes together at a big wedding. The miracle of Mauritius is that it has no serious racial problems. Pages 82 – 85

The *Maritim*, on the west coast near *Port Louis*, is one of the large, international, 5-star luxury hotel complexes of which the Mauritians are so proud. The most important of the beach hotels which typify the coastline of Mauritius, are to be found on this bay. To give a better impression of their extensive facilities, they are usually photographed from the air. Pages 86 – 87

Catching a *black marlin* weighing a quarter of a ton is quite a common occurrence in the waters around Mauritius. World records are regularly established here. Every type of water sport can be practised. *Karl Braunecker* writes about the variety of sports, the first class facilities and equipment, on land and water, which are offered by the island and its hotels. Pages 88 – 89

Michael Friedel photographed Mauritius from the air, on land and in the water. He tried out new optical equipment. He often took shots from the waterline, half above and half below the surface. He photographed from the mast of a catamaran and from the open door of an *Air Mauritius* helicopter. Here he tells you how these pictures were created. Pages 90 – 91

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