



*Far Left: Spotted moray eels are among the abundant sea life of Mauritius. Left: Beach scenes like this one are a testimony of why Europeans have flocked to this island off of Africa's southeastern shore. Above: Abundant rains keep Mauritius waterfalls flowing strong. All photos by Dale Sanders.*

tures are well over 80 feet off the bottom riddled with gullies and passage ways, and covered with deep water gorgonians, vibrant red soft corals and green to red bush coral. Treated as a drift dive, divers travel from one precipice to the next, with visibility in the range of 120 feet.

Besides the undersea dramatic scenery, Mauritius offers a blunderbuss of inland natural beauty. An afternoon's drive through the constantly changing topography of the southwestern part of the island brought forth vistas of lush green valleys with dramatic waterfalls. One such double waterfall can be visited when traveling to the chamarel region. At the Colored Earths, visitors are treated to vivid rainbow-like hues created by iridescent volcanic ash.

At Grand Basin, a hindu holy shrine, wild monkeys flock to take advantage of the many offerings of food, flowers and incense left along the lake's shoreline by worshipping hindus to their god Shiva. Traveling from here through pine forests and chinese guavas, travelers should also stop to view the Black River Peak Waterfall which cascades into a secluded

valley, with tropic birds soaring nearby on updrafts.

While on this side of the island, consider donning a tank with one of the many dive operators around the area of Flic en Flac. An interesting Tug wreck is found here in 60 feet of water with a resident red grouper and lots of big eye sweepers.

A must dive for those adventuresome divers is an all day trip offered to the northern smaller islands off Mauritius. Here divers can experience the literal rush of diving in Shark Pit. Just next to an ancient volcanic magma shaft are pit-like pockets etched away by years of constant erosive surge. Divers enter these volcanic cavities and sink to their bowl-like bottoms whereupon sharks swim in a circular pattern above them. Exciting stuff! Especially when a big bull shark decides to join the smaller guys. Visibility here is usually 150 feet or more with lots of other schooling fish to keep each diver's interest peaked. While diving here, or while in transit by boat to and from this area, keep a close eye peeled for migrating whales or other pelagics, as it is quite common to see sailfish, tuna and

occasionally various species of whales.

Reaching this island outpost might seem complicated at first, but after further inspection most traveling divers can reach the island of Mauritius with only one plane change in Europe. Compared to a recent trip to a small island in the Caribbean, which took three plane changes, Mauritius was a piece of cake, albeit longer. So, for those adventuresome dive travelers, find out for yourself why Mauritius has been the premier getaway location of Europeans for years. ▀

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*With more than 3,000 logged dives around the world Dale Sanders is currently cataloging and writing a manuscript entitled Shipwrecks of the Florida Gulf Coast.*

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