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Best beds: *The Seychelles*

Dip into the finest boltholes in this Indian Ocean nation, from beachfront bargains to fab private

			
PRICE	<p>Laid-back pad Avani Barbarons</p> <p>Chic doubles from £145, B&B (avanihotels.com).</p>	<p>Desert-island deluxe Four Seasons Desroches</p> <p>Doubles start at £587, B&B, but that's on the rocky side of this secluded private island — £649 bags you a Beach Bungalow on the lovely, soft-sand side (fourseasons.com).</p>	<p>Where the cool gang goes Six Senses Zil Pasyon</p> <p>Doubles cost from £1,016, B&B. Spender villas are essentially the same, but with nicer — and we mean really nice — views (sixsenses.com).</p>
LOCATION	<p>Appealingly alone on a long horseshoe beach on the west coast of main island Mahe. It's just 30 minutes from the airport (which is why so many flight crews stay here).</p>	<p> Miles from anywhere (Mahe's 35 minutes away by £400 propjet.)</p>	<p>On its own virgin-forested islet, Félicité. Getting here is part of the fun: choose little plane, car and speedboat, or helicopter.</p>
THE VIBE	<p>Laid-back, low-slung and loungey; there are beanbags by the pool, a sand-floored restaurant — and a youngish crowd.</p>	<p>Billionaire recluse seeks quiet time. You're on a 6km-long island, with 14km of beach, and only a couple of hundred other people — most of whom are here to serve you.</p>	<p>Posh-piratical. It's quiet and stylish, but with a fun, raffish edge. Think five-star service on first-name terms (even Ms Hurley was 'Liz' when she stayed).</p> 
ROOMS	<p>Simple but stylish. Everything's on two floors, so specify whether you want a balcony (better views, more privacy) or terrace (walk right out to the pool). Room Nos. 170-184 are the quietest.</p>	<p>Sophisticated (cool polished stone and tropical woods), but with castaway touches such as pinchable mismatched straw hats.</p>	<p>Strewn higgledy-piggledy among the palms, and semi-stilted on the hill slopes, they pack plunge pool, sun deck, swing-seat in the bathroom and loads more fun stuff into a sleek, sexy space.</p>
FOOD & DRINK	<p>Rooftop bar, open-sided buffet restaurant, poolside coconut shack — the surroundings are great, the food's not bad.</p>	<p>A little low on variety, extremely high on quality. The Lighthouse bar, perched half way up one, might be the country's best sunset cocktail spot.</p>	<p>Perfectly pitched: meat-free Ocean Kitchen does zingingly fresh seafood, while lantern-bedecked Island Cafe does Creole fusion. Then there's the honesty rum bar...</p>
BEST THING	<p>With spreading gardens and that lo-o-ong beach, it's really easy to find yourself a quiet private spot (not always the case at this price in the Seychelles).</p>	<p>Free bikes + deli for picnic materials + dozens of secluded beaches + thick palm forest = not having to see another soul all day.</p>	<p>A spa Lara Croft might have designed: perched above the waves, tucked between giant boulders, approached via rope bridge, and with its own cliff-top infinity pool.</p>
WORST THING	<p>Roughish waves — and coral beneath them — mean that this bit of Indian Ocean is more for looking at than paddling in.</p>	<p>The resort's only a year old, so the vegetation around the rooms is still growing — which means they're not as private as they might be. Room Nos. 1-12, in particular, are pretty public.</p>	<p>The main beach is a bit rough...</p>
TRAVEL'S TIP	<p>Romantic gesture? Sorted. A nearby stables can arrange horse-riding along the beach (from £92; turquoisehorsetrails.com).</p> 	<p>Can't be bothered to cycle back from the beach? Use the 'emergency' phone to call for a golf buggy. Staff don't mind, we promise!</p>	<p>...but there are tiny secret beaches. Ask staff for directions to Anse Pasyon or — if they really like you — Anse Poppet.</p>

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Petite retreat Anse Soleil Beachcomber

Refreshingly, rates here stay the same year-round. **Standard rooms go for £115** ('Superior' and 'Premier' aren't worth the extra; ansesoleilbeachcomber.com).

On Mahé's west coast, but at **the end of the road**. So no-one comes past (good), but it's a decent drive to get anywhere (not so good).

Once a retreat for Catholic priests, it's still **as sleepy as a Sunday**. No pool, no spa, no frills — but a perfect, tranquil little beach.

Plain, square, white-painted rooms with little verandas looking out over the bay. **Room Nos. 3, 5 and 10 are the quietest.**



The bar/restaurant has some nice Creole options, but best is its overwater terrace for **angelfish sightings beneath.**

That beach — at that price

You're a **bit trapped here without a car** (the only other place on the beach is Chez Julien, better known for its somewhat unpredictable owner than for its food).

Go soon — there are plans for building works next year — but **avoid December, when the sea is rough here.**



Family favourite Constance Ephelia

You can get a double from £272, B&B, but, as with most hotels in the Seychelles, you'll **get better deals through a tour operator** (constancehotels.com).

On a broad spit of land — with **wide beaches on either side** — in northwest Mahé.



Family fun. There's loads to do (zipline, kayak tour, giant tortoise feeding...). Local kids love the beaches, too, which **keeps things lively.**

Well put-together, in calm neutrals. Cleverly, they're **clustered around a set of small swimming pools** (there's no big main one) so things never get really noisy.

Book early for its 'signature' restos

— or you'll end up at the buffet every night.

You're much less cut off than at most resorts: you can walk to local cafes, chat to villagers on the beach and **catch a bus into the capital...**

Towels! In the name of 'eco', they're rationed and have to be **schlepped around with you from room to beach** and back. No fun if you're ferrying your whole family's wet ones...

Get someone to point out the river's wading point and the 1km path up to the **swimmable local secret**, the Sauzier Waterfall.

Or try...

£146 Augerine

Because: Secreted between a casino and Beau Vallon (Mahé's biggest but busiest beach), this incongruously peaceful little place has 15 breezy rooms, a sand-floored cafe and a garden on the beach. Doubles from £146, B&B (augerinehotel.com).

£156 Le Chevalier Bay Guest House

Because: Praslin's Anse Lazio is one of the best beaches in the world — and this is the only hotel that's on it. So who cares if service is a bit shonky? Doubles from £156, B&B (lechevalierbay.com).

£260 Carana Beach

Because: This contemporary-look boutique stay is great value (for the pricey Seychelles). The beach is a peach, but it's the stylish decor that wows its young clientele. Doubles from £260, B&B (caranabeach.com).

£5,740 North Island

Because: Private enough for Wills & Kate; luxurious enough for Posh & Becks; tasteful enough for George & Amal... 'North' is simply 11 villas on one of Earth's most beautiful islands. Doubles from £5,740, all-inclusive (north-island.com).

Get me there

BA (ba.com) flies from Heathrow to Mahé from £584 return. **Inspiring Travel Company** (inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk) has seven nights at Constance Ephelia, in a Junior Suite, from £1,989pp, half-board, including flights and private transfers.



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