

SLEEPOVER FRÉGATE ISLAND PRIVATE

A paradise worthy of a movie star

After a two-year refurbishment of the Seychelles resort's buildings and ecosystem, the tiny piece of land is ready to be explored

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My arrival on Frégate Island, one of the most exclusive resorts in Seychelles, is worthy of a movie star. The helicopter's blades whip the hot, humid air as we land, and we're greeted by smiling staff and handed wet cloths fragrant with lemongrass. Nichol, our very own attendant, whisks us away to Villa Pisantez, where, upon opening the door, the thrill is visceral; floor to ceiling windows frame a private infinity pool and beyond that, the turquoise water of the Indian Ocean. A two-year refurbishment of the resort is complete and ready to explore.

LOCATION, LOCATION

Seychelles is in the middle of the Indian Ocean, 21 hours and three flights from Toronto. Frégate Island is another 20 minutes by helicopter from the main island of Mahé. It's a mere speck of granite – less than three square kilometres – but ecologically rich. Here you'll find one of the top-rated beaches in the world, coral reefs teeming with colourful fish, a jungle where giant tortoises roam freely and one of the rarest birds in the world – the magpie robin.

DESIGN

Each of the 16 one and two-bedroom pool villas are perched on a north-facing cliff. Air-conditioned, with vaulted ceilings, dark teak wood and cream marble floors, the villas offer a cool escape from the sometimes oppressive humidity. More impressive than the restoration of buildings, however, has been the restoration of the island's natural ecosystem, which was almost destroyed by rats, cats, cockroaches, invasive coconut palms and other species. Today, the island is free of rodents and other pests, and the birds have returned. The Aldabra tortoise population numbers more than 2,000, and 80 per



Frégate Island Private in the Seychelles offers air-conditioned two-bedroom villas and one of the top-rated beaches in the world.

cent of the island has been replanted with native trees, shrubs and flowers.

WHOM YOU'LL MEET

The rich, the famous, the powerful – mostly from Europe – are here, but you probably won't meet them. It's not called Fré-

gate Island Private for nothing. Over three days, I saw only a handful of other guests, usually while passing on golf carts. One morning I was the only person at a yoga class.

However, you will meet lots of giant tortoises. Be sure to look for James, the friendliest tortoise on the island and faster on his

feet than you might think. He expects to be fed, so bring a star fruit or two.

EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

As the only resort here, you have no choice but to eat in, but options abound.

A barbecue on the beach, lunch high up in the banyan tree house, or how about a pizza from the cinnamon-wood-fired oven? Unlike most of Seychelles, where granite prevents gardening, Frégate is able to grow most of its fruits and vegetables, making for a wonderful selection of breakfast smoothies and juices. Most of the fish served is caught right here, sometimes by the chef himself, who describes his food as "honest cooking." An appetizer of Red Snapper ceviche tastes divine.

BEST AMENITY

It could be the Rock Spa with products prepared from island's

natural bounty, but I'd have to go with the incredibly private beach, Anse Macquereau. Arrive first, put the do-not-disturb sign up and this intimately sized stretch of white sand at the foot of a cliff is yours alone for as long as you want.

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

I'm not suggesting we pave paradise, but a little more space to turn around golf carts in the villa driveway would eliminate the need for cumbersome three-point turns.

Frégate Island Private, Seychelles, Frégate.com; 16 villas from \$4,500 (€3,100) a night, includes meals, alcohol, massage, private butler, laundry service and many activities.

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The writer was a guest of the resort.

