

> TIPS FROM THE BEST TEACHERS

TIGER: TRY MY NEW CHIPPING TECHNIQUE

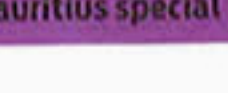
'HIT BETTER DRIVES' BY GEOFF OGILVY

> POWER LORENA'S KEYS TO HITTING IT LONGER

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW TRAVEL MAURITIUS GOLF LUXURY PATTAYA'S BURARH & LAEL CHABANG



AUGUST 09 \$5.50



ISSN 1549-4750



TRAVEL / mauritius special

FOUR SEASONS RESORT MAURITIUS AT ANAHITA
 White Le Touessrok hangs on to a touch of old world elegance, the new Four Seasons Resort at Anahita is the epitome of cutting edge modernity. It is part of a mix-use development that includes private residences and the Four Seasons Golf Club Mauritius at Anahita, an Ernie Els design that opened last year. If you think of Le Touessrok as being in the realm of Sanur in Bali, then the Four Seasons development is its Nusa Dua counterpart.

Few places in Mauritius come even remotely close to the stately grace and contemporary design that underscore the Four Seasons. True to the brand's position at the top of the pecking order of worldwide accommodations, everything shouts class throughout this 26-hectare site.



The Four Seasons Golf Club occupies one of the choicest real estates on the island.



What was previously a privately owned nature reserve has been turned into a luxuriously sprawling enclave of 122 villas that celebrate and, more importantly, conserve the indigenous flora of its former self. Landscaping by the French firm of CEPM Architecture Du Paysage is eye-catching without going over the top. They have captured the essence of Mauritius' indigenous foliage by composing a tapestry of colours, shapes and shadows that, while impressive from an artistic point of view, look like they have been there forever.

To the credit of the owners, the design of the resort – the common space, villas and restaurants – were left to the device of Mauritian company Macbeth Architects and Designers. There was never a question of whether "to be or not to be", for what they've conjured from the smoke of invention is a distinctive personality and style that is contemporary, sensible and ever so stylish.

Despite the fairly large number of villas, you almost feel like you're the only one at the resort at any given time.

There is an impeccable sense of serenity, whether you're sitting on a lounge looking out to the private lagoon or simply strolling along the private island of Ile aux Chats (Isle of Cats), taking in the intricate designs of traditional Mauritian barachois (salt water dams).

True to Four Seasons standards, the villas are superbly appointed oases whereby the world's stresses seem to end at each individual gate. Private plunge pools, exquisite bathrooms and every conceivable room amenity you can think of has been thought of and provided to make your stay as comfortable as humanly conceivable.

Closer to the villas' interiors exposes the use of traditional materials juxtaposed with a modern translation. Wood, stone and marble combine to soften the rugged texture of rocks from local volcanic basalt.

Shades of terracotta, slate green, cream and brown bring you down to earth, reflecting the ode to nature that the entire resort seems to sing.

There are a variety of villas to choose from. Those facing the lagoon offer peaceful views out to the water, while Garden Residence Villas offer families more space by

way of immaculately landscaped gardens where children can play without disturbing the neighbours' peace.

Macbeth designers celebrate the outdoors when they came up with the layout for each villa. Outdoor showers transcend the popular trend with unique accompanying landscaping, and the porch that accompanies each villa lures guests out to enjoy what is best about the Mauritian surroundings. I especially like the outdoor sitting area where you can soak up the day's dying light while curled up on the sofa engulfed by the sounds of silence.

Leaving the comforting confines of your villa might be a tough thing to do, but the promise of further relaxation at the spa is hard to ignore. The 12 treatment rooms are perched over water, with wild mangroves and the sounds of nature setting the mood for your therapy. You can choose from the best in the world, including those inspired by Indian, Chinese, European and even African roots. For something truly Mauritian, the signature Sugar Cane Therapy Massage uses the stem from the ubiquitous plant as part of the ritual.

Even though the Four Seasons is a haven for kicking back and doing nothing, there are lots to do here. Water sport lovers would be in their element and can get gloriously wet imbibing in the host of activities offered.

TRUE TO FOUR SEASONS STANDARDS, THE RESORT IS AN OASIS WHERE THE WORLD'S STRESSES END.

TRAVEL / mauritius special



Four Seasons turned what used to be a private nature reserve into an environmentally conscious luxury haven.

The resort operates its own Padi licensed dive centre, Quayside, that not only offers lessons and certification, but can also take divers out to HMS Sirius, a sunken naval frigate dating back to 1810, and Crayfish Cave, a site famous for its undersea fauna corals and sponges.

One of the drawbacks of travelling with children is often what to do with them. This is never a problem here. The Kids' Club lets kids up to the age of 12 have a ball of a time through activities that range from staging performances to making cookies at the specially designed

children's kitchen. Teenagers can adjourn to the Karaoke Young Adults Centre, where they can not only play online games, table tennis or table football, but also hone their spinning skills as DJs at its own disco.

Arguably the main attraction at the Four Seasons is the Ernie Els course at the Four Seasons Golf Club. The three-time major winner from South Africa has not had that many designs to his name, which is probably a testament to his commitment to continuing his playing career. But the ones that he has put his signature on are rare gems worth every shot you hit at each hole. The 7,580-yard monster at Anahita is no exception. The Ernie Els Championship Golf Course is a muscular layout, with each nine playing out and back from its exquisite clubhouse. Top

service runs through the veins of the resort and extends itself through to the golf club as well. Cookies and cold drinks – and a charming hostess – welcome you at the first tee and then again at the turnaround, never leaving any golfer in a lurch for sustenance.

But if the service impresses you, the golf would bowl you over. The holes at Anahita are as bold and approachable as Els himself. Wide fairways and generous greens welcome you. But if you don't pay attention to the nuances, it is unlikely you will score very well.

There is a great sense of seclusion when playing the Els course. Each hole is so well insulated from the next, providing an innate sense of tranquility. Although the layout runs along the coastline, abutting the sea, none of the holes really brings you close to the water.



While open fairways are characteristic of Ernie Els' course at the Four Seasons.



The thatched-roof clubhouse welcomes golfers from all over the world.



(Top to bottom, this page): A tub at the Presidential Suite, Acquapazza Italian Restaurant, a villa bedroom.



What it does offer an elevated platform by which you can take in the rugged beauty of the neighbouring hills, and the blue of the ocean in the distance.

This probably allows Els to craft more creative holes to entertain the golfer. Often, holes that are built too close to the beach are one-dimensional designs restricted by the flat lay of the land and the dearth of green vegetation. That's not the case here. Fairways are immaculately draped in green, and not a blade of Bermuda 419 turf is out of place on the putting surfaces. If you have a tendency to spray your drives, this is the place to get your game back on track.

The Tidwarf fairways are so wide, it brings about great confidence from the most chronic, driver-impaired golfer. But finding the short grass is only one side of the coin to playing well. For one thing, if you're teeing off from the tips, there are six par 4s that are over 400m long. One of the trickiest is the handicap 5, 429m 11th hole where bunkers pinch the fairway tightly. Even finding it is no consolation, as the deep bunker in front of the elevated

green makes for a difficult target. What the course takes away with the long par 4s, it provides some slack in the manageable par 5s. The finishing hole, at 512m long, is a key example. Teeing off with the ocean on the left and the clubhouse in the distance, strong players can go for the green on the second shot, making it an ideal hole for a championship finish.

"There really is no weakness on the course," says Marc Amelot, the director of golf at Four Seasons Golf Club. "Every hole has its own character and is a true hallmark to the game."

"We are lucky to be able to use all of the land here, and golfers can enjoy and relax through their rounds. They don't lose many golf balls here, that's for sure," continues the Frenchman, who has been a long-time resident in Mauritius, and who once coached Christian Cevaer, winner of the 2009 European Open.

Els' course is not even two years old and it has already won the CNBC Best Golf Development Award for Africa (2008). There is little reason to doubt that it will make a name for itself beyond the continent. ■