PARADISE TO PARADISE: New direct flights to Seychelles pave way to the African Continent

Posted on



Denis Island

It is somewhat not true, if I say I have gone to the ‘Dark Continent’, after visiting the island nation, Seychelles. But the facts are stubborn.

Though it is not a mainland African country, the trip to Seychelles was somewhat a consolation for my dream of going to Africa.

At first the journey did not create any excitement for me. At the beginning it was another island nation. During our four hour flight from the BIA, during a casual chat Captain Pujitha Jayakody asked whether I would use my return ticket. It didn't strike me at first.

The moment I walked out from the Mihin Lanka flight from Colombo at the Seychelles International Airport in Mahe, I knew my assessment was wrong.

I had walked into Paradise. The small airport with a couple of flights on the tarmac, reminded me of the Colombo domestic airport in Ratamalana. It was indeed a friendly welcome by the authorities of the Seychelles Tourism Board and of course the official from the airport made the proceedings much easier for us.

As with Singapore it was a visa on arrival.

On board was a contingent of Sri Lankan journalists on a special media trip organised by Mihin Lanka and the Seychelles Tourism Authority.

Geographically situated 480 kms east of the African Continent, in the western Indian Ocean, Seychelles is not just another beach destination. Blessed with pristine beaches and lush green vegetation, this archipelago consists of 115 islands.

Whether it is to have a relaxed vacation by the beach, explore the rich marine life or learn about the heritage of the islands, the Seychelles has always proven to be an excellent tourist attraction that brings in visitors from all over the world.

Mahe is a comparatively bigger island and we had to travel nearly 45 minutes via Capital Victoria to Beau Vallon, a popular bay, across the island to get to our hotel. The Beau Vallon Bay is a popular tourist attraction with upbeat and vibrant places.

A few beach restaurants with sea food specialties and Sega Music (authentic Creole music of the island nation) mixed with Caribbean reggae are popular attractions of the Bay. Seychellois Creole, also known as Kreol or Seselwa, the French-based Creole language is the official language for the total 90,000 population along with English and French.

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Seychelles was originally under the French before the British took over. But the

French influence on the language seems to be very strong, where most of the names of islands, streets, cuisine and the native Creole language have the touch of French.

Apart from the magnificent beaches and the rocky mountains, Seychelles is a living museum of natural history and a sanctuary for some of the rarest species of flora and fauna on earth.

One time it was a base for Charles Darwin to study on evolution of human kind and the flora and fauna.

Seychelles is home to no less than two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the legendary Vallée de Mai on Praslin Island where the wondrously shaped Coco-de-mer nut grows high on ancient palms and the fabled Aldabra, the world's largest raised coral atoll, first seen by early Arab seafarers of the Ninth Century AD.

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Coco-de-mer is an endemic palm tree that went under Darwin's microscope due to its unbelievable shapes resembling the human male and female reproductive organs.

The place is so remarkably beautiful that it was once believed to be the original site of the Garden of Eden. This hauntingly beautiful primeval forest is home to some 6,000 Coco-de-mer trees, considered to be among one of the botanical wonders of the world. The Vallée de Mai boasts six endemic palm species as well as many other indigenous trees and is also the last habitat of the endangered black parrot. Our guide for the Praslin Island tour explained the myth of how the male and female Coco-de-mer trees make love at night and if anyone sees this action he/she will never survive to see the day light.

Côte d'Or, Anse Lazio Beach on Praslin can claim to be the perfect tropical paradise beach and is now listed among the world's top ten beaches. Beautifully framed by granite rocks, this dream beach has soft white sands leading gently down to calm clear waters with a gentle gradient that is absolutely perfect for swimming and snorkelling.

No meal is completed without Jackfruit in Seychelles. Bread fruit, tropical mangoes,

pineapples, different types of colourful ‘jumbu’ on the roadside reminded me of a typical Sri Lankan village scene.

Seychelles does not have a single production factory but vege farming and animal husbandry has taken off the ground since of late.

Tourism is their main source of income. Traditionally, the islands have attracted a broad diversity of people from the four corners of the earth that has included freed slaves, European settlers, political exiles, adventurers, traders of Arab and Persian origin as well as Chinese and Indians.

Practically every nation on earth has been represented in this melting pot of cultures, each one contributing its special influence to today’s vibrant yet tranquil society.

My short stay was definitely not enough to cover at least a half of the serenity of this archipelago.

The one hour long trips to the islands, Praslin and La Digue on Cat Coco high speed Ferry service were really enjoyable, if you are with a group of friends.

As Seychelles is a free port, the top beverage brands in the world are freely available in every corner of the country. My most outstanding trip was the tour to Takamaka Bay, where the 250 year old La Plaine St Andre Distillery, the makers of the famous Takamaka Rum, is located.

On the South East coast of Mahe in the district of Au cap lies La Plaine St Andre Distillery. This century old beautiful property has been fully restored and at its heart is La Grande Mansion, which was carefully crafted into an elegant vintage cocktail bar and a modern Creole restaurant for the visitors to the island nation.

Victoria Clock Tower, Selwyn Clarke Market, Catholic Church and La Domus and the only Hindu Temple are some of the outstanding attractions of the capital Victoria.

For me it is simply an exotic paradise for a great vacation.

Mihin Lanka’s inaugural flight to the Seychelles took off on the November 16th 2013. With two flights weekly to the island nation of Seychelles on Wednesdays and Saturdays,

the airline is set to offer holiday makers the beauty, pristine beaches and adventure that truly define the Seychelles. The flight will depart Colombo at 1330 hrs and arrive at the Seychelles at 1610 hrs. The departure from the Seychelles will be at 1710 hrs and arrive back in Colombo at 2300 hrs.

The Mihin Lanka's Seychelles package ranges from 56,999 rupees upwards per person with two nights/three day hotel accommodation on half board basis. 6,000 rupees will be added to an additional night.

Mihin Lanka is a leading low fare airline in South Asia, operating to a growing range of destinations in the Indian Sub-continent, Middle East and South East Asia. Since its launch in 2007, Mihin Lanka has come a long way, becoming one of the region's most admired affordable travel brands.

Speaking about the new destination Kapila Chandrasena, CEO, Mihin Lanka had this to say, "the decision to commence flights to the Seychelles was made to offer our travellers the unique experience of beauty and culture that is Africa. This will be a stepping stone to the African Continent especially South Africa and Kenya."

Seychelles and Sri Lanka have agreed to a wide-ranging commercial agreement that will give passengers boarding in Seychelles convenient access to new points in South Asia and the Far East and passengers boarding in Colombo, easy access to Air Seychelles regional network in the Indian Ocean and Africa.