

TRAVEL LUST

OCTOBER

Vol.2 No.5

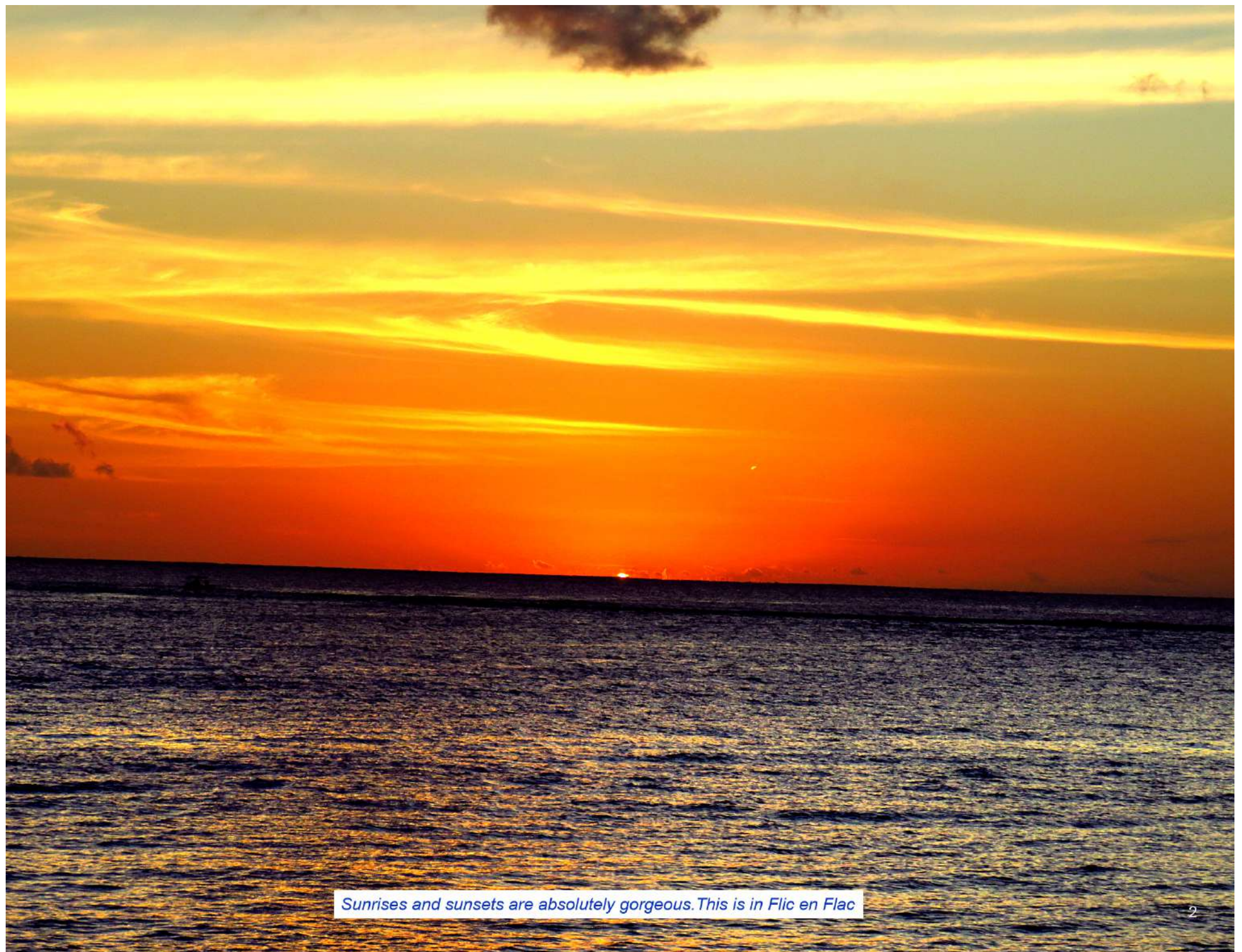
2024

Twelve days in Paradise

*Text and most pics by Abbas Tyabji
Some pics by Javeed Ahmedi and Raihan Ahmedi*



Unimaginable colours mark the sea around Mauritius



Sunrises and sunsets are absolutely gorgeous. This is in Flic en Flac



Le Morne mountain seen during the cruise to Ile De Benitiers



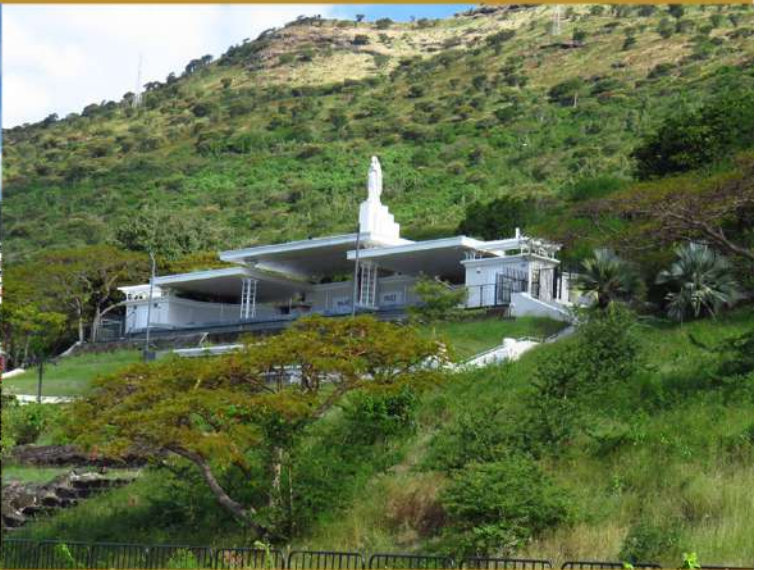
Passengers enjoying the cruise



My family members trying their skill at snorkelling

Aerial view of Le Morne and parts of Mauritius





Port Louis from the mountain where the, statue of Mother Mary stands, on top of the hill

A honeymoon idyll and beachgoer's paradise, Mauritius is legendary for its powdery white sands and crystal waters, but rest and relaxation is only half the story. Fancy swimming with dolphins? Ever thought of learning to kitesurf? Want to try your hand at landing a marlin or ziplining above the treetops? Or perhaps a sedate round of golf, played on a world-class green. Mauritius' diverse landscapes offer abundant opportunities for every stripe of visitor, from adrenaline junkies to young families – and everyone in between. The range of activities available in Mauritius means that every visitor can tailor an itinerary to suit their needs, balancing adventure and relaxation, exploration and entertainment. However they decide to spend their time, some unforgettable memories are guaranteed.

A general view of Port Louis from across the river





A small but interesting fort overlooking Port Louis and a bugle like opening inside the fort (right)

I really envy my sister who stays in this paradise! We had visited her 32 years ago when my children were teenagers. Now, our grandchildren are about the same age! We decided to retrace our steps with my daughter's family to show our grandchildren the same paradise. So we boarded an Air Vistara flight at around 02.00 am and after an uneventful flight, landed in Mauritius bright and early, at 07.00am.

My sister Rafia Aboobakar had invited us for breakfast so after winding our way through the abundant sugarcane fields, we landed at her place, met the entire family, exchanged old memories and proceeded to our villa in Flic en Flac, supposedly the best beach in Mauritius. Since our villa was sited just across from the beach, we had gorgeous views all through. My grandson and I decided to do some reconnaissance and drove through fields, mountains and small villages to a volcano, Trou De Cerfs, near the city of Curepipe. It was a little disappointing as the foliage around the crater walls was so thick, we could hardly see the bottom. Anyway, the drive gave us a glimpse into the glories we would experience during our trip.

The next day was my daughter's wedding Anniversary so we had planned a cruise to an island named Ile De Benitiers, a whole day out on the sea, which kept changing colour from deep to light blue, turquoise and every shade in between. There were other passengers on board and we had a super Anniversary celebration, with a barbecue lunch served on board. During the cruise, we stopped at a couple of places where passengers could swim or snorkel and my family, except my wife and me, jumped into the water which they realised, was quite cold as it was winter in the southern hemisphere! Later we stopped at Ile De Benitiers where we could stroll along the sandy beach or swim, after which we returned to our starting point, very satisfied with a day well spent.

The exquisite beach at Blue Bay



The interesting cliffs between Flic en Flac and Port Louis



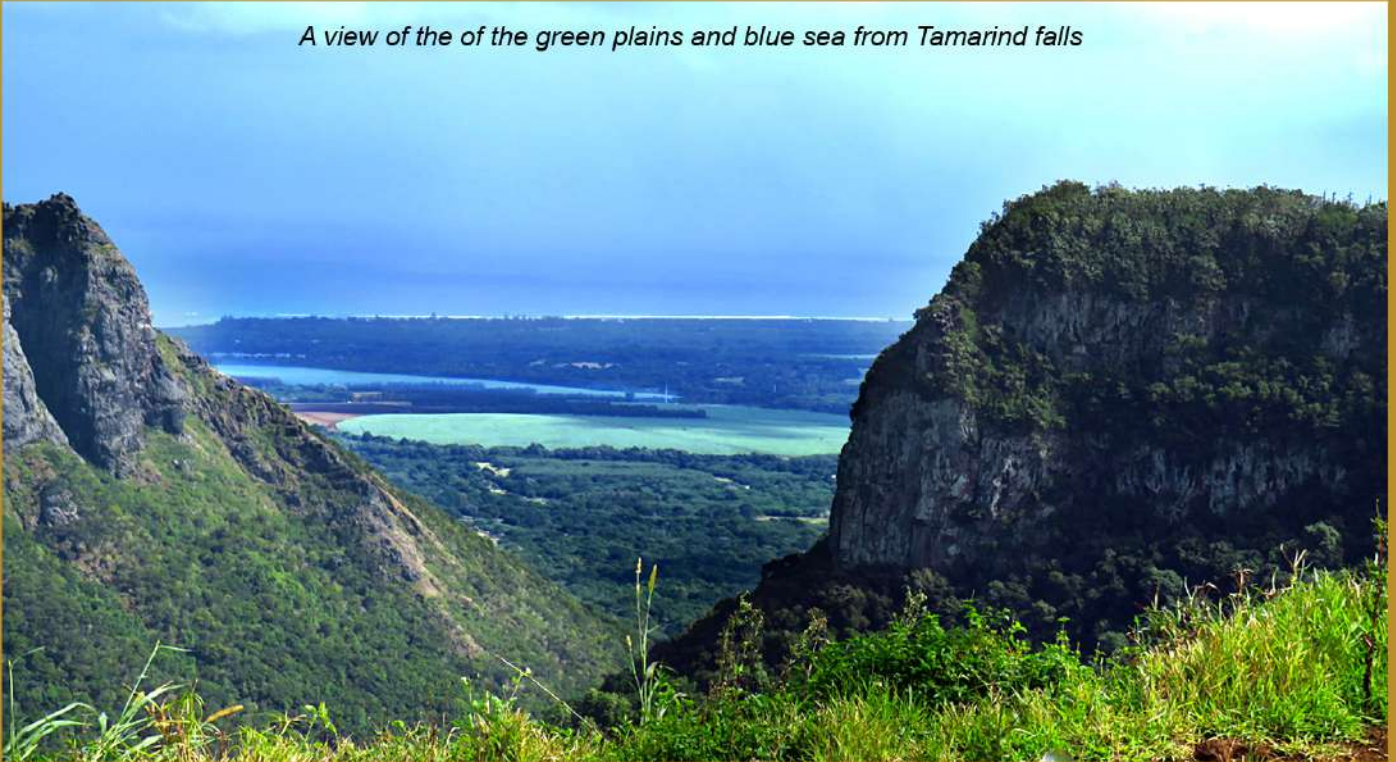
A whale- like rock, Coin de Mire, off the northernmost point of Mauritius seen during our sunset cruise



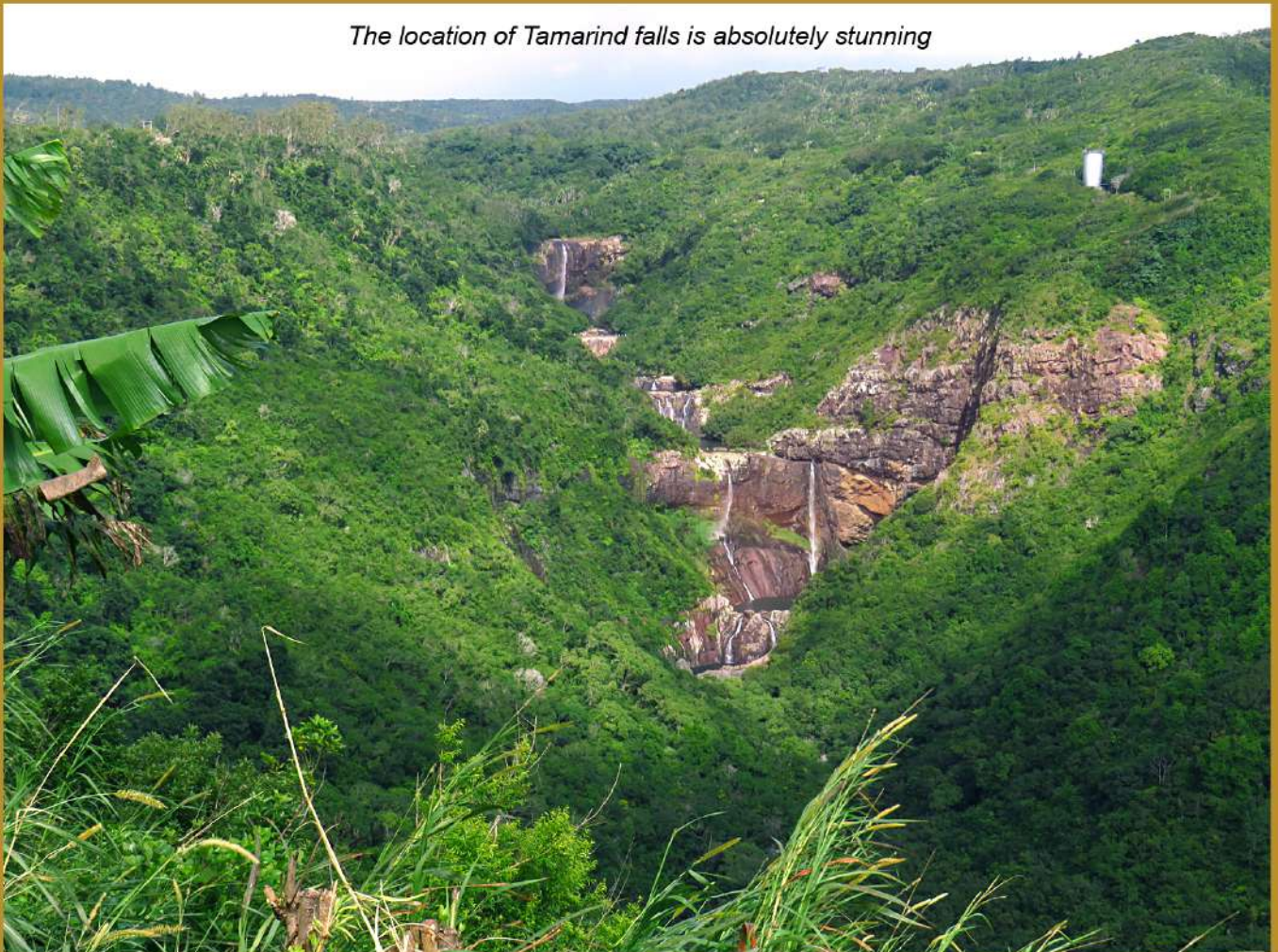
An extraordinary mountain range that resembles a man's face



A view of the of the green plains and blue sea from Tamarind falls



The location of Tamarind falls is absolutely stunning





A rainbow we saw at Tamarind falls gorge

On our third day, I had planned a full day excursion to the North of the island, Grand Bay, where I had booked a sunset cruise. Enroute, we passed some rugged cliffs where caves had been carved by the sea crashing against them. Later we wound through Port Louis, the capital city, of which we had a bird's eye view from on top of a hill where a statue of Mother Mary overlooked the capital. While driving to Grand Bay we had a very cursory glance at the Botanical Garden where the huge lotus leaves spread across a pond were of great interest.

While Grand Bay itself was a beautiful beach with yachts bobbing up and down in the light blue sea, the cruise itself turned out to be a whimper compared to the cruise the day before. The staff were quite rude and the snacks very paltry. Even the sunset could have been seen from anywhere on the west coast of the island. Anyway, we were all together, joking and laughing and that was great!! My mischievous grandson picked up a beer bottle (alcoholic drinks/soft drinks were complimentary), put it in my hand and took pictures which he sent out to our entire family, scandalising them!!!

All part of the fun!!! The next day, we drove into the mountains which make up the spine of the island, our aim being the highlight of a tour of Mauritius, Tamarind Falls. We had not realised that to see the falls at close range entailed a trek of about 4/5 hours through tricky terrain so we opted to drive to a viewpoint across the valley where we could gaze at the falls but from a distance.

Anyway, since it was drizzling, we were told that it was too slippery to undertake the trek. The views across the gorge of the thickly forested hills and the view of the sea through the gorge was stupendous. As a bonus, we saw rainbows four times in the space of just ten minutes!! The next day was another mountain drive to Chamarel where a sort of rainbow mountain had been carved into the hills, with many colours, mainly brown, mauve and maroon could be seen on the ripples eroded by air and water. Interesting but not overwhelming! We drove along the mountain roads and had a stop at the Macande viewpoint where the road takes a sharp u turn alongside the sea, one of the iconic sights in Mauritius. With the blue sea on both sides, it made a picture postcard scene.

Since the majority of the population are Indians, and a majority of Indians are Hindus, a large number of colourful temples are scattered all over the island. The main pilgrimage place is aptly called Ganga talao (lake) around which a number of temples have been built. We climbed to a viewpoint from where the entire setting with forested mountains and the blue sea in the background, was quite stunning.



Views of the temples and deities at Ganga Talao (above) and a panoramic view of Ganga Talao (below)





The Alexandra falls hidden in the forests near Chameral are a sight to behold

We had shifted from our villa in Flic en Flac to what was mundanely called 21 LB Ilot Fortier, but it had a gorgeous, sublime setting, right on the water where we could just sit, sip tea and enjoy an absolutely stunning view. We had some stupendous sunrise views right from our balcony. The site was so bewitching that we invited my sister and her family to have dinner with us. However, the dinner came from them and we had a very enjoyable evening. After seeing this villa, they decided to spend a weekend at this delectable spot

Nearby is the most famous mountain of Mauritius, Le Morne, which is one of the hikes one must do to get superlative views of the ocean in all its glory. And that's what we did one day, rising at 5.00 am to reach the starting point by 7.00 am and start the pretty steep climb (but there were some who practically jumped across the hurdles and hurtled upward). One of those who did a fast climb, was my grandson, who was the only one from our family to reach the peak, with the last part requiring scrambling over boulders and climbing a ladder! Hats off! I could make it a little more than half way till a viewpoint providing gorgeous views on both sides of the mountain. I sipped my coffee (a thermos full of the brew was prepared every morning before we set out, only for me!!!).

A great and must do experience when on the island.



The 7 coloured earths are a very interesting landform worth visiting



*The u turn at Macande point is one of the iconic landmarks of Mauritius.
Any visitor to the island must make time to climb the lookout to admire this landmark*



Some of the awesome views one gets along the way





A glorious sunrise seen from our villa mundanely called 21 LB Ilot Fortier



A view of the sea from the start of the hike up Le Morne mountain

Another novel experience was a drive to Pont Natural, an almost hidden gem on the east coast, close to the village of Souillac. We were having lunch and as I was trying to find another spot to visit, when I suddenly came across this. Though not far, it was way off the main road, the small lane passing through sugarcane fields for as far as the eye could see. The road was also strewn with large rocks and extremely muddy and slippery. We thought of turning back but I insisted and the driver, Mr Ravisen, from Tamil Nadu, India, was sporting enough to brave the hurdles and take us to the very scenic spot. Steep black cliffs dove straight into the sea with sea erosion causing very peculiar formations including a bridge (pont in French, we were told by Mr Ravisen). We walked along the cliffs, admiring the waves crashing against the cliffs which stretched as far as the eye could see. A fortunate find.

A view of the sea while going up the mountain



*My daughter's family (left) and me (right) seen enroute to the summit.
Only my grandson completed the arduous climb*



One of the iconic points of interest in Mauritius is Blue Bay and we made it a point to visit it twice, once just to sit on the beach and enjoy the absolutely blue, transparent sea, with boats and yachts bobbing up and down. We were fortunate to see a superb sunset. Another time we took a cruise into the bay with a glass bottom boat and enjoyed viewing beautiful coral formations and a variety of fish swimming amongst them.
A superb experience, which no one should miss.

With that, our absolutely marvellous, unforgettable visit to Paradise came to an end as we boarded our flight to India early the next morning.

A view of the mountains and sea on the other side of Le Morne





A glorious sunset over the Black River gorges (above) and the huge lotus leaves in Pamplamousses botanical garden (below)



Another stunning sunrise from our villa in Ilot Fortier





A church housed in a typical Mauritian hut (left) and its interior (below), a rare sight in Mauritius nowadays



The colonial building that houses the office of the Curepipe Municipal Corporation

Huge banyan trees, many with reddish roots hanging down, can be observed in many parts of the island





Cape Mahlebourg, on the northern tip of Mauritius provides some gorgeous sea views

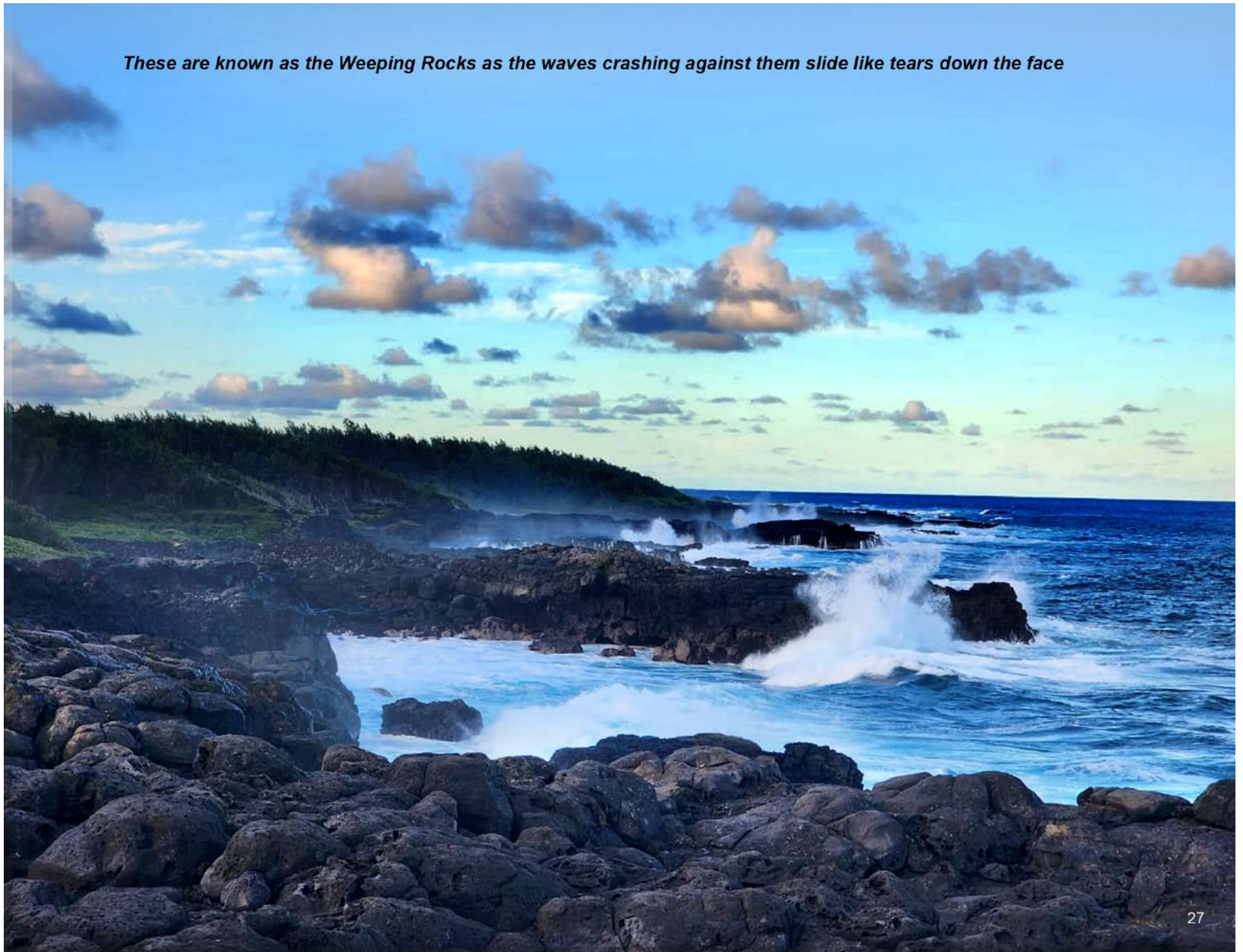


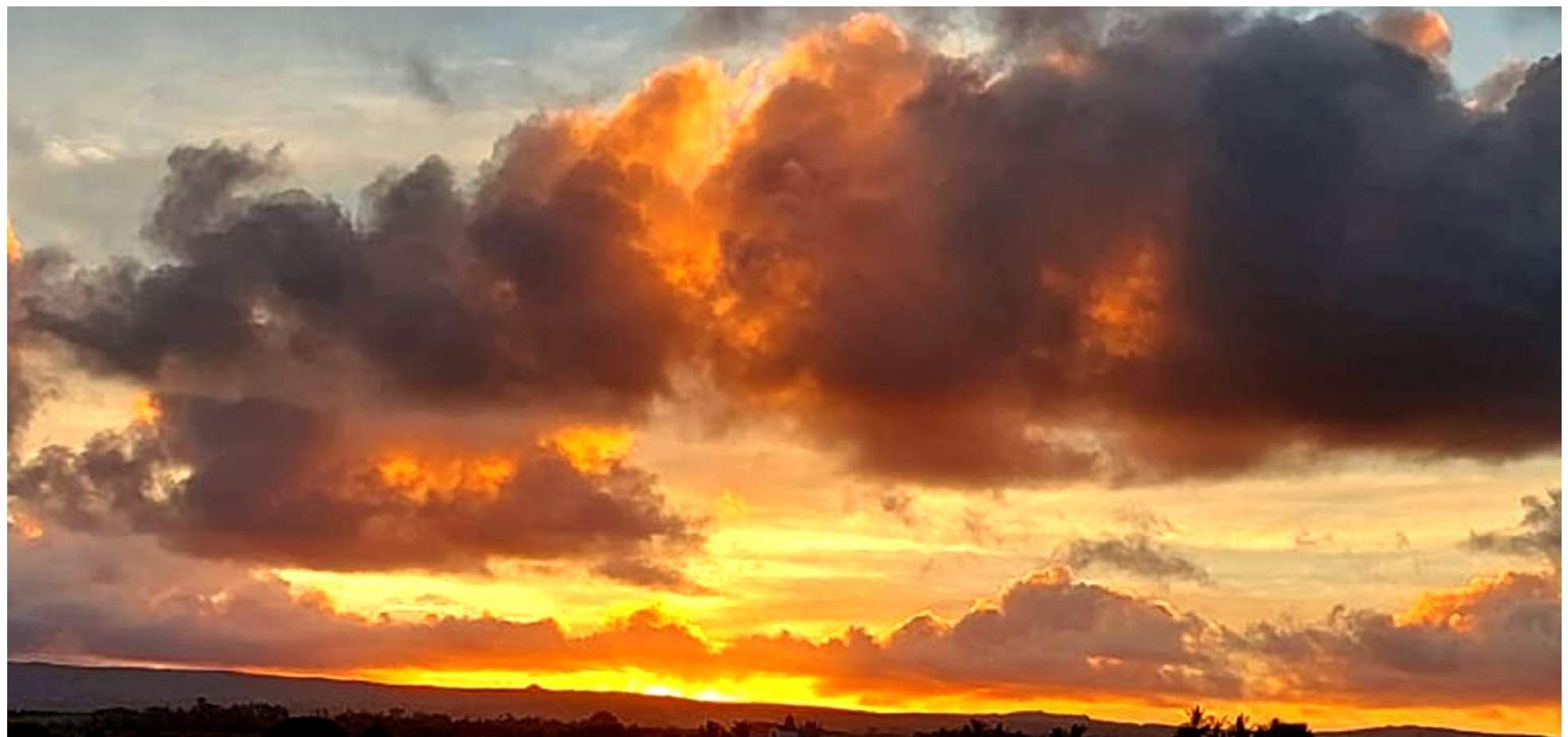


The cliffs near Souillac in the south east of the island have superb views of the sea breaking against the black cliffs and huge breakers not found anywhere else in the country



These are known as the Weeping Rocks as the waves crashing against them slide like tears down the face





An absolutely stunning sunset we saw near Souillac (above) and moss collecting on the rocks create fascinating patterns (below)





A beautiful rainbow forms under the Pont Naturel or Natural Bridge, near Souillac

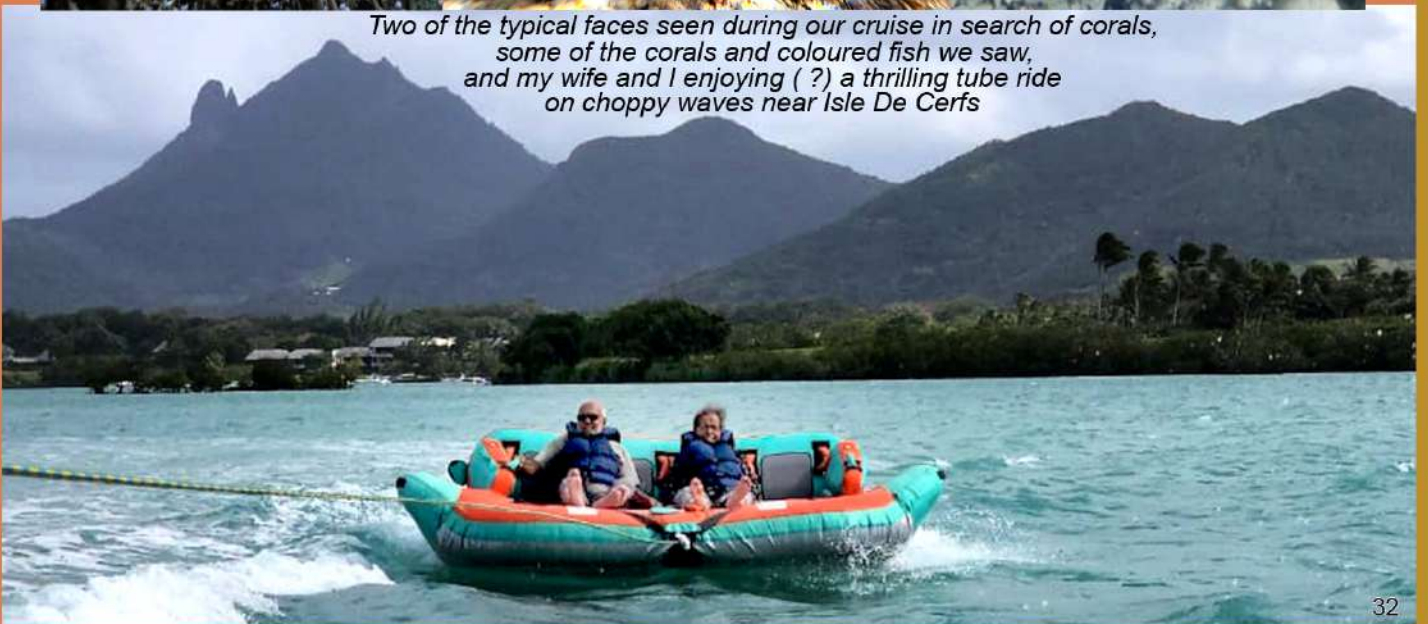
*The photo below left has Mr Ravisen, our driver, who was very energetic and co operative.
My family at Isle De Cerfs at cente, and a hole in a tree at Blue Bay through which one can get a view of the sea*







*Two of the typical faces seen during our cruise in search of corals,
some of the corals and coloured fish we saw,
and my wife and I enjoying (?) a thrilling tube ride
on choppy waves near Isle De Cerfs*



A rainbow at sunrise at Flic en Flac, two Mauritian people we saw, a crab walking on the coloured sand at Blue Bay beach and the full moon shining through clouds at Tru Deau Deuce beach



A mesmerising scene during our travels around the island





Mauritius is nothing less than a Paradise on earth





An avenue of trees we passed through during our drive to the airport



As we departed from Mauritius, we saw this painted rainbow of a sunset, a superlative conclusion to our wonderful escape to paradise.

Information for Mauritius Travellers

We had organised our transport and accommodation before departing for Mauritius. I am sharing the details for information of intending travellers, as many expressed interest in going there, after seeing some of the pictures I shared.

I researched a large number of taxi providers and zoomed in on KIRBY ARBISTEUR, with whom I had full discussions regarding our requirements. Mr Shueb who was the contact person, was very co-operative and helped us out of many tricky situations. His Whatsapp number is +230 5836 4657

We also organised 3 accommodations, one through Air B&B and two through Booking.com. We stayed in Rock Villa in Flic en Flac thru Air B&B, 21 LB ILOT FORTIER in the south of the island and Villa Kai at Trou de Deuce, both thru Booking.com. While the second had the most scenic location, it was also extremely comfortable for our family of 6. The last was also superbly located overlooking the sea and very close to the point from where we were to take our cruise for Isle de Cerfs. The names of the contact persons are given here. For Villa Kai, you have to contact directly thru Booking.com

21 LB ILOT FORTIER
ROCK VILLA.

Geraldine
Michael Afocque

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Abbas A. Tyabji is a Hyderabad, India, based photo journalist, who left Tata Motors, one of the largest auto makers in India after heading the Publications Division of the Company over a career spanning nearly 3 decades.

During his tenure he travelled all over India and to neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius and the Middle East on photo journalistic assignments. His articles, pictures and photo features appeared not only in the Company publications but in national and international magazines.

He was invited by the then People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (S Yemen) to photograph the natural and man made wonders of that ancient land and prepare publicity material for their govt. The effort was appreciated by Govt officials and even India's Ambassador to S Yemen wrote an appreciation letter to Tatas on his efforts.

He is the recipient of over 50 national and international awards including:

The President of India's Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing on TWO OCCASIONS

Best Feature Writer Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 4 times

Best Photo Feature Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 5 times

The internationally circulated magazine "Bus Ride" from the US found his pictures so exceptional that they selected 2 for the First Place Award in their 1989 Worldwide photo competition, the only time in their history that two pictures were given this honour.

Almost half a dozen of his pictures appeared in Japanese calendars and dozens have graced Indian calendars.

He has also published a book on Hyderabad, for which the text, photography and design was done by him.

For his photo journalistic achievements he has found mention in "Who's Who of India", and "Reference Asia".

He also operates guided, customised tours from Hyderabad and is listed in LONELY PLANET as a Tour Guide.

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Abbas Tyabji receiving the President of India Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing from then President of India Dr. N. Sanjeeva Reddy