



Mauritius - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture

Tim Cleary

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Mauritius is a conundrum. A small, exotic, multiethnic island nation in the Indian Ocean, to some it is a multicultural “rainbow,” a haven of peace, love, and understanding. Others see it as ethnically divided, cultivating only “sugarcane and prejudice.” Opinions differ as to whether it is a Creole island, a Hindu-dominated Little India, or a neo-colonial outpost of the French-speaking world. Optimists see it as the biggest social and economic miracle of the post-colonial world, whereas pessimists believe it to be a social accident waiting to happen.

For many visitors Mauritius appears to be a carefree tropical paradise, but its complexity will baffle any foreigner who dares to leave the comfort of the luxury beach resort. Daily life is far from idyllic for the majority of the population struggling to reconcile traditional culture and old ethno-religious antagonisms with the demands of the modern world.

Mauritius is a very new nation, formed over the past three centuries. Although the South and East Asian influence is very strong, its most defining characteristic is its very multiculturalism. Its traditions reflect the diversity of the people, and Mauritian language, food and religion form an intoxicating medley. Other customs have been created locally and are shared by all, such as the lively and popular musical tradition of sega. Modernization and global economics mean many younger Mauritians now share a common culture and outlook on life, where the sense of being Mauritian outweighs ancestral ties and divisive communalism.

Culture Smart! Mauritius will help you make sense of the modern and the traditional, of shared and ancestral culture, and enable you to navigate your way through the contradictions at the heart of modern Mauritius. Show the expected courtesy and respect and you will meet many extraordinary, warm-hearted, patient, and friendly people who are keen to welcome outsiders from any part of the world.

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