

# Junior

## Travel Reviews

### A private island worth crossing oceans for? Try Fregate Island, a sanctuary in the Seychelles

"Smalls will love the giant tortoises and curious creatures on this Indian Ocean private island," says writer Emma Oxley who travelled with her family



#### Private Peaceful

We visited [Fregate Island Private](#), part of the luxury hotel group [Oetker Collection](#), with our family. This Seychelles private island experience proved one of the most relaxing holidays in the world, because of that magic ingredient - privacy. Your children can never disturb the peace, as you have your own world to behave exactly as you wish. Your own villa, your own beach, your own buggy and a front row seat on the natural world complete with giant tortoises and hatching turtles.



### Strap up and mike up

You can reach Mahé, in the Seychelles, from London with a mid-journey change in Dubai, or fly direct from Paris. Either way, the real fun begins when you strap up and mike up for the helicopter transfer over the Indian Ocean, so clear, we spotted turtles. Then like an opening scene from *Jurassic Park*, a green tropical mound loomed before us, our private island. Before landing the pilot said he had to check for tortoises, in case one had planted itself on the helipad, but we got the all clear.



We were introduced to Bonnie, our Private Assistant. He was there to help us personally 'as much or as little as we liked'. My family, including ten-year-old Marie, hopped into our buggy and followed Bonnie through the winding paths between lush rain forest and blue sea.

Marie spotted her first giant tortoise beneath a papaya tree, then a second, shortly followed by her tenth, they were everywhere. In fact we had a hold up with one settled in the middle of the path. There's no lifting these creatures, some weigh around 400 kilos. Bonnie scratched expertly at the seam in its shell and miraculously it moved on. All around us brilliantly coloured birds and fleet lizards darted across our path, we were quickly immersed in our mini Galapagos.



*To infinity and beyond...*

We stepped through the palm fringed porch of our villa residence, into a cool room with a plantation fan creating a breeze and a spectacular view across our infinity pool to the blue horizon. The water seemingly spilled into the rain forest below which itself cascaded down to an empty beach.

We were perched amidst lush foliage, above the Indian Ocean, secluded from the other 15 villas. The interior was very airy, to one side of the dining room was a vast sitting room come second bedroom, to the other was our gorgeous master bedroom with a bed swathed in white muslin.

All was so stylish, yet sympathetic with the surroundings. Ylang ylang palms lined the ceilings, smooth teak underfoot. The outdoor shower was fringed with ferns. There were all the mod cons too for teched-up teens. Nature soon drew us all into her calm rhythm, floating in our pool, giant fruit bats passed over head as skinks sunbathed on the warm wood.



*Eat anything, anywhere*

Food on the island is spectacular, with fresh produce dropping off trees, or sprouting out of the ground in the huge plantation, or being scooped out of the sea. All food and drink is inclusive, so there's nothing to consider except what would be most delicious and most fun. We ate our way round the island with barbecues on our pool deck, sushi on a boat and lobster on a deserted beach.

The one night we ate in the restaurant was really lovely too, with the moon reflecting off the sea below and those giant fruit bats passing back and forth. It is a very relaxing formula for families, if you wanted a fruit juice or glass of Chablis, nothing was too much trouble for Bonnie. In fact, I dare say he's twiddling his thumbs now that we've left, as he seemed only to exist for our pleasure, a bit like the rest of *Fregate Island Private*.



### *Breakfast in a Banyan Tree*

Breakfast was one of the most extraordinary dining experiences in the world. Bonnie told us where to rendezvous, and accordingly we took our buggy following directions along the paths that criss cross the island. There indeed we found a huge banyan tree, 40 feet up Bonnie leaned over and called us to the table.

We climbed the steps to find he had laid out white linen and a regal breakfast; ginger carrot, lime smoothies, fresh papaya, toast and pineapple jam, hot coffee, muesli, yoghurts. All this had been winched up the side of the tree on his pulley system. We munched away surrounded by a gnarled network of banyan branches watching scarlet fodies and the rare Magpie Robins try to steal our crumbs. The most exquisite were the snowy white fairy terns who settled in cooing couples on nearby treetops.



### *Kids and conservation*

The heart of the island is about conservation. While there are sixteen lovely villas on the island, each offering a very exclusive stay, and about 150 staff to make that happen, guests are there to fund the habitat restoration. This micro project makes an easy lesson for kids, who quickly grasp how commercial plantations ruined the natural order and can also see how to make repairs.

Coconut and bamboo growers ripped out the indigenous trees making life for many creatures unsustainable. Today, more than 10,000 trees have been replanted and the habitat is gradually being rebalanced, but as Tanya, the lead resident ecologist says, her job won't be complete until the fregate bird returns to Frégate Island. Young Marie was genuinely moved to hear that a few fregates had recently been sighted near the island's shores.



*Two-inch insects more thrilling than tigers*

Tanya took us on a night safari. While we didn't see any big game it was thrilling walking around in the dark with our torches looking for smaller wildlife. There are only two places the Tennebaum beetle lives, *London Zoo* and *Fregate Island Private* and there he was, on his favourite tree with a load of mates, and shortly after that in Marie's hand.

On her wrist was an 8-inch black millipede, as well as several by her feet which we gingerly avoided crushing. The highlight was a luminous scorpion which glows green in a fluorescent light. Nothing on the island is really poisonous, these scorpions with small tail and big pincers are no more harmful than a bee sting, but Tanya explained that the other way round and you'd be in trouble.





*Life on earth*

There are seven beaches on this island, and with only 16 villas each with a private pool you could always find a private stretch of sand. If one beach had surf, which was great for body boarding, another on the other side of the island was good for a snorkel.

The only disturbance was Bonnie bringing us high tea, and then extraordinarily the emergence of tiny turtles newly hatched from their nest. We were right there, in a *Life on Earth* documentary. The turtles were so close we could hardly comprehend the fabulous privilege of the moment. Nature in all its raw beauty is at your fingertips on *Fregate Island Private*.



### Essential Info

**Fregate Island Private** is part of the luxury hotel group **Oetker Collection**. They have an amazing Summer Offer for 3,100 euro per night for a Private Pool Residence for a family of four with all food, drinks and many activities included.