

Unique Seychelles



Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum* is one of the rarest bird in the world.



Seychelles Chameleon *Chamaeleo tigris* is the only chameleon in the entire Seychelles.



Black Snail *Pachnodus niger* is endemic to Seychelles.



Coconut Crab *Burgus latro* is the largest terrestrial crab in the world, famous for its ability to crack coconuts to eat. They were once widely distributed in Seychelles but is now restricted to the outer islands like Aldabra.



Aldabra Rail *Dryolimnas aldabranus* is the only resident rail of Seychelles, and the last remaining flightless bird in the Indian Ocean, only found on Aldabra.



Vale de Mai Palm Forest

Smallest Nation in the World

The Republic of Seychelles is one of the smallest nations on Earth with a population of just about 81,000 people of which 90% live on Mahé, about 7% live on Praslin and about 3% on La Digue. Human settlement only started in Seychelles in the 1770s. There were no indigenous people living on the islands at that time. Local people call themselves Seychellois. They originally came from France, the French colonies in the Western Indian Ocean, Madagascar, Africa, India and China.

An archipelago

Seychelles is made up of 115 islands spread over an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1,374,000 km² (99.97% of which is ocean).

Seychelles has been isolated from continental region for about 65 million years. The granite rocks are some 750 million years old. Seychelles was part of the **Gondwanaland Super-continent** comprising parts of South America, Africa, Antarctica, India and Australia.

Island Groups

There are 3 main groups of islands in the Seychelles:

- The central or inner islands (also called the Granitic Seychelles are the **world's only oceanic islands of continental rock**)
- The low-lying sand cays of the Amirantes and Farquhar to the South
- The raised limestone islands of the Aldabra group (Aldabra and Cosmoledo atolls, Astove and Assumption) and St. Pierre.

The inner islands and Aldabra atoll support an unique fauna and flora rich in endemic forms, found nowhere else on earth. The two groups are also identified as **Endemic Bird Areas** by Birdlife International. Individual islands such as Cousin and Cousine Islands are listed as **'Important Bird Areas'**

Islands of Uniqueness

The Seychelles are the oceanic islands with the most amount of endemic amphibian consisting of seven caecilians and five frogs.

40% of Seychelles terrestrial testaceous molluscan fauna is endemic. Most species have restricted habitats and are extremely rare.

Seychelles fauna exhibits extreme forms of island evolution such as "gigantism" – (Giant Tortoise, Coco de Mer – flightlessness – (Giant Tenebrionid Beetle and Aldabra Rail).

Some plants are relicts of a very ancient time – such as the unique Jellyfish tree. Insects exhibit very high endemism – especially beetles. Most of the beetles are endemic.

World Heritage Sites:

Small as it is, Seychelles has two World Natural Heritage Sites, with other potential sites

Aldabra Atoll: is the largest island is set aside for conservation and scientific research only. The atoll is comprised of four large coral islands which enclose a shallow lagoon; the group of islands is itself surrounded by a coral reef. Due to difficulties of access and the atoll's isolation, Aldabra has been protected from human influence. The atoll constitutes a refuge for around 100,000 giant tortoises and some endemic birds, as well a substantial marine turtle breeding population and large seabird colonies.

Vallé de Mai Nature Reserve: Valle de Mai is one of the few remaining areas where Coco-de-Mer forest occurs and is the only place where all six endemic palm species to the Seychelles are found together. The valley also includes a rich and diverse endemic flora and fauna with several threatened species.



Aldabran Fruit Bat *Pteropus sechellensis adabrensis* is only found on Aldabra.



Abbot's Sunbird *Nectarinia abbotti* is an endemic bird, only found on the outer islands of Cosmoledo and Astove.



Seychelles Sooglossid Frog *Nesomantis thomasseti* is one of the four species of the Sooglossid frog family only found in Seychelles, and one of the five endemic frog species



Seychelles Wolf-snake *Lycognathophis sechellensis* is one of the three snake species Seychelles.



Coral Grouper *Cephalopholis miniata* is one of many fish species living in Seychelles coral reefs, is also a great source for food and tourism.



Masked Booby



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Designed by Dao Nguyen. **Photos:** background photo (Giant Tortoise) and Seychelles Magpie Robins by **Martin Harvey**; Aldabran Fruit Bat, Abbot's Sunbird, Coconut Crab, Aldabra Rail, Vale de Mai Palm Forest, Masked Booby, Giant Beetle by **James Hardcastle**; Seychelles Chameleon, Black Snail, Seychelles Sooglossid Frogs, Seychelles Wolf-snake by **Naomi Doak**; Coral Grouper, Black-spotted Puffer, Anemonefish and Soft corals by **Michel Vély**; Mahe Island and Wright's Gardenia by **Don Toews**; Granitic Rocks by **Glen Jackway**; Coco de Mer and Endemic snail by **Gideon Climo**; Jellyfish tree's fruits by **Jacques Fourmy**; Seychelles Warbler by **Cas Eikenaar**.