



# Wild Earth Travel

*Small Ships, Big Adventures*

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**info@wildearth-travel.com**

## SEYCHELLES WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING EXPEDITION CRUISE

Whales and dolphins are among the most intriguing and exciting animals on the planet. Just a few degrees south of the Equator, Seychelles is rich in marine mammals—including the most fascinating of them: Sperm whales, Pilot whales, Bryde's whales, Bottlenose, Spinner dolphins (often associated with Melon-headed whales), and many more like Pygmy Blue whales, Orcas and Beaked Whales.

This is no ordinary cruise, but an expedition for nature lovers eager to get closer to these magnificent creatures. Aboard S.Y. SeaBird, we'll spend four days exploring whale and dolphin feeding and breeding grounds in Seychelles. Using small boats, we'll carefully approach the animals.

Marine Mammal Specialist Michel Vely will join us, offering insights into their biology and habitat.

We'll spend four more days among Seychelles' ancient inner islands—granite formations 650 million years old, brimming with near-pristine tropical beauty. On land, we'll encounter giant tortoises, seabird colonies, mangrove forests, and breathtaking views of secluded bays.

In the water, we'll snorkel and dive among vibrant reef life, including tropical fish, sea turtles, rays, and friendly reef sharks.

In November 2021, this vessel participated in the filming of *Blue Whales: Return of the Giants*, shot over 21 days in the Seychelles region, where we observed a remarkable diversity

and abundance of whales. Building on this experience, in October 2023, we conducted our first whale-watching expedition for tourists, which proved a great success with numerous whale sightings over several days, accompanied by immersive exploration of Seychelles' granite islands and natural wonders.

In March 2025 we observed during 5 days in the same area Sperm and Pilot whales as well as dolphins and beaked whales.

Marine Mammal Specialist onboard - Michel Vely

Michel Vely, a French marine mammal specialist and veterinarian, has studied marine mammals and whale sharks—both in the wild and in captivity—since 1979. He specializes in satellite telemetry to study the movements of large cetaceans such as Humpback and Sperm whales in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Comoros) and the Caribbean (Anguilla Bank), as well as of whale sharks in Djibouti.

He is currently the French delegate of the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee and a member of the Stranding Experts Panel at the International Whaling Commission. For more than 25 years now he is the chairman of the French NGO, MEGAPTERA, and advises governments of Small Island Developing States for whales and dolphins' procedures and marine mammals research and conservation measures. Michel has authored scientific publications,

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contributed to films and guidebooks on cetaceans and whale sharks, and conducted global training on responsible whale and dolphin watching.

Throughout the expedition, we will carry out important scientific work. This includes:

**Photographic Identification:** Capturing and cataloguing images of individuals based on distinctive features.

**Acoustic Monitoring:** Deploying hydrophones to record and analyze whale and dolphin vocalizations.

**Biopsy Sampling:** When feasible, collecting small skin samples to determine gender, genetic profile, diet, and pollutant exposure.

**Satellite Tagging:** Attempting to equip certain individuals with tracking devices to monitor their movements overtime.

Evenings onboard will be dedicated to engaging lectures on cetacean biology and behaviour, as well as workshops where we'll review the day's photos and videos. Guests will learn how to identify different species, interpret their sounds, and contribute to building a photographic identification catalogue.

Your safety and comfort remain our top priority. All activities are carefully planned and carried out under the guidance of the expedition leader and marine specialists. Itineraries are flexible and may change depending on weather and sea conditions.

This region is rich in cetacean life, offering some of the most exciting whale and dolphin encounters in the Indian Ocean.

From playful dolphins to the planet's largest animal--the Blue whale--this area is a biological hotspot. Among the highlights we hope to observe are Orcas, Pygmy Blue Whales and the rarely seen Longman's beaked whale, a true gem for marine wildlife enthusiasts.

Based on previous expeditions, here are the species we will be looking out for:

Large whales

Large toothed whales;

Sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus*

Large baleen whales:

Bryde's whale *Balaenoptera brydei*

Pygmy Blue whale *Balaenoptera musculus breviceps*

Minke whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*

Sei Whale *Balaenoptera borealis*

Medium and small whales

Orca or Killer whale *Orcinus orca*

False killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens*

Pygmy killer whale *Feresa attenuata*





Short-finned pilot whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*  
Pygmy sperm whale *Kogia breviceps*  
Dwarf sperm whale *Kogia sima*  
Longman's beaked whale *Indopacetus pacificus*  
Blainville's beaked whale *Mesoplodon densirostris*

Small cetaceans off the Mahe Plateau: deep depth waters

Spinner dolphin *Stenella longirostris*  
Pantropical spotted dolphin *Stenella attenuata*  
Common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*  
Melon-headed whale *Peponocephala electra*  
Fraser's dolphin *Lagenodelphis hosei*  
Rough-toothed dolphin *Steno bredanensis*  
Risso's dolphin *Grampus griseus*

Double bed. Each cabin features an ensuite bathroom, as well as reading lights, storage cupboard and power connections for charging computers and cameras or using other electronic devices such as hair-dryers. Cabins are cleaned daily by our crew.

NB Please note that the ship reserves the right to cancel the cruise if the minimum of 10 passengers is not achieved two months prior to departure, in this event full refund of monies paid for the cruise will be made. No refunds will be due for any extra costs such as flights, hotels, visas vaccinations or any

other incidental costs.

ntal costs.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1. Mahe

Mahe is the largest granite island in Seychelles, covering about 150 sq km and home to 85% of the nation's population. This mountainous island is cloaked in tropical vegetation and features are markedly preserved natural environment. Morning embarkation takes place at Port Victoria, Inter-Island Quay, followed by a welcome briefing with the captain.

At noon, we set sail northwards to Denis Island. En route, we will pause for a refreshing swim during sunset in the Indian Ocean. We anchor near Denis Island for the night. A Creole-inspired welcome barbecue will be served onboard, followed by an introductory lecture on the whales we aim to encounter during the days ahead.

### Day 2-5 Whales and Dolphins (Denis Island)

We begin our whale-watching expedition near Denis Island. Seychelles' islands fall into two main geological groups: the granitic islands, such as Mahe, Praslin, Curieuse, La Digue, and Aride, which are over 650 million years old; and the coralline islands, like Denis, composed of either uplifted reef or sandy cays.

Denis lies 95 km north of Mahe and marks the northernmost point of the coralline group. It sits near the edge of the Mahe Plateau--an underwater shelf less than 100m deep, which abruptly plunges into waters thousands of meters deep. This drop-off zone is a feeding ground for many species of marine mammals, making it ideal for whale and dolphin sightings.

Over these four days, guided by marine mammal specialist Michel Vely, we will explore this area by vessel and zodiac, with the chance for in-water observation under strict guidelines.

Sightings may include sperm whales, beaked whales, pilot whales, spinner dolphins, and more. In the evening of day 5, we say farewell to the whales and



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dolphins off Denis Island, as we start sailing south towards our next destination - Aride Island.

## Day 6. Aride

We arrive at Aride at first light and disembark on this secluded island nature reserve, known for its biodiversity and limited visitor access due to ongoing scientific research. Accompanied by a local ranger, we enter the forest to observe a rich variety of seabirds and five endemic land birds—including the Seychelles Warbler, with a population of about 2,000.

Similar to the Galapagos, birds here show little fear of humans, allowing for intimate observation of nesting behaviour. We continue along the trail to the summit, where towering cliffs offer panoramic views over the Indian Ocean. From here, hundreds of seabirds—especially frigate birds with 2-meter wingspans—soar on ocean winds. These agile birds can chase others midair until they regurgitate their catch, which the frigate bird snatches in flight—a spectacular display of agility.

Aride is sole natural home of the endangered Wright's Gardenia (*Rothmannia annae*), a white fragrant flowering tree.

After returning to the shore, we'll enjoy a barbecue lunch on the beach, followed by snorkeling or diving around Aride's coral reef, home to more than 400 fish species. We anchor for the night nearby. After dinner, we gather for an evening lecture session.

## Day 7. Praslin

During breakfast, we set sail to Praslin, Seychelles' second-largest inhabited island. Discovered in 1744 by French explorer Lazare Picault and originally named "Isle des Palmes," the island remains renowned for its lush vegetation and natural beauty. After disembarking, we explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Vallée de Mai, a prehistoric palm forest where the famous Coco de Mer grows. These ancient trees produce the largest seed in the plant kingdom—up to 15 kg—and are known for their uniquely shaped double coconuts.

Walking under 30m-tall palms with 8m-long leaves, we'll explore the primeval atmosphere of the reserve. You may spot the elusive Seychelles black parrot—the only parrot species endemic to the country, with a population of just a few hundred.

Later, we rest at Baie Ste Anne and can browse a local market. After a late lunch on board, we cruise to Anse Lazio in northern Praslin. Often listed among the world's most beautiful beaches, Anse Lazio is ideal for swimming, snorkeling or diving amid granite rock formations and vibrant marine life. After dinner, we'll hold another engaging lecture session.

## Day 8. Curieuse St Pierre

At sunrise, we anchor off Curieuse Island, home only to conservation rangers. This protected natural park is a sanctuary for the Aldabra giant tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*), which roams freely along the beaches and forest trails. These gentle giants can weigh up to 250 kg and live well over a century.

We'll also visit a nursery for juvenile tortoises, where they are raised safely until ready to return to the wild. Our walk continues through a mangrove forest—a unique salt-tolerant ecosystem teeming with life. Look out for the large Mangrove crab (*Cardisoma carnifex*), whose claws can reach 30 cm in span. The trail ends with a viewpoint offering a sweeping vista over the island.

At its far end, Curieuse reveals beaches adorned with surreal granite formations, where coconut palms lean dramatically towards the sea. We'll relax here before returning to the vessel for lunch. In the afternoon, we'll snorkel or dive around the small but iconic St. Pierre Island, whose jagged granite spires and palm crowns rising from turquoise waters are emblematic of Seychelles.

Evening lecture onboard after dinner.

## Days 9-10 La Digue & Ave Maria Rocks

After an early breakfast, we disembark at La Digue, Seychelles' third-most populated island. Our morning begins with a visit to Anse Source d'Argent—often cited as one of the most photogenic beaches in the world, thanks to its dramatic granite boulders, shallow turquoise lagoons, and powdery white sands.

We then proceed to Union Estate, where we'll witness traditional copra (dried coconut) processing, stroll through vanilla plantations, and see colonial-era architecture. Our visit continues to a panoramic viewpoint overlooking several inner islands, before heading into the Veuve Reserve, a nature park where we

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may spot the rare Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphonecorvina*), with its glossy plumage and long tail feathers.

In the afternoon, we sail to the Ave Maria rocks for more snorkeling or diving opportunities. These striking granite formations rise abruptly from the sea and provide a final chance to appreciate Seychelles' unique island geology and marine biodiversity.

After dinner, we gather for a final evening lecture. While sailing among the inner islands, we may encounter schools of friendly Indo-Pacific dolphins, known for their acrobatic displays.

**\*\*Disembarkation\*\***

Early morning on day 10 we set sail to Mahe. Disembarkation at the Inter-Island Quay at 08:30 hrs.



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## YOUR SHIP: SEA STAR & SEA BIRD

<b>YOUR SHIP:</b>	<b>Sea Star &amp; Sea Bird</b>
<b>VESSEL TYPE:</b>	<b>Motorised Schooner</b>
<b>LENGTH:</b>	<b>40m Sea Star / 42m Sea Bird</b>
<b>PASSENGER CAPACITY:</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>BUILT/REFURBISHED:</b>	<b>2002 / 2000</b>



The SY Sea Star is a 40-metre custom-built yacht with three masts and five Bermuda sails, with classic wood finishings across its 9 spacious guest cabins and common areas.

The SY Sea Bird was redesigned in 2007 to begin cruising in Seychelles, is a two-masted 42-metre yacht with four Bermuda sails, sleek contours and modern interiors across its 9 en-suite guest cabins and common areas.

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## INSIDE YOUR SHIP

SY Sea Bird



Double Cabin





PRICING

21-Mar-2026 to 30-Mar-2026

Double Cabin	5658 USD pp
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ADDITIONAL CHARGES: Conservation fees 210 USD pp