

## Portrait of the Seychelles

**T**HE SEYCHELLES comprise an archipelago of approximately 100 granitic and coral islands, spread over an area of 400,000 sq km in the heart of the Indian Ocean, 4 degree Lat. South of the Equator. The land area, however, is only 444 sq km. To the extreme north, on the edge of the continental shelf on which the Seychelles lie, 93 km away from Mahé, are the coral islands of Bird and Denis; to the South lie the Amirantes of which Aldabra Atoll, with its large population of giant tortoises, forms part.

Aldabra lies 1218 km from Mahé. Granitic islands such as Mahé, Praslin, La Digue and Silhouette are usually high and rocky, with low, indented coastlines, and with coral or granitic beaches. Coral islands, such as Denis, Bird, Fregate, Cousin, etc., are at their highest points just a few metres above sea level and their beaches are of very fine coral sand. The vegetation which is exceptionally lush, especially on the granitic

islands, is mainly composed of coconut palms and forests with various essences, cinnamon and bushes of various species.

Flowering plants are mostly found at the base of the mountain slopes.

The highest mountain, the Morne on Mahé, exceeds 900 metres in height. Mahé is the main island of the archipelago and it measures 27 km in length and 8 in width. Its total surface area is 152 sq km.

The whole island can be toured by car, on good roads, in just three hours. Victoria, the small and picturesque capital of the Republic, is a pretty little city in mixed colonial and modern styles. It is situated on a hill that descends towards the sea, on the granitic slope known as Trois-Freres. A third of the population of the Seychelles (about 84,600 inhabitants) lives in the capital whose centre, animated on working days, is practically deserted after office hours and on holidays.

