



SUN & SEA

Seychelles Regatta Debuts

During the third week of May, we attended the launch of the first annual Seychelles Regatta, hosted by Eden Island and the Seychelles Tourism Board. A festive air, gorgeous sunshine, and windy conditions greeted the eight yachts at the Eden Island Marina as they set sail for the turquoise waters of the Archipelago under the expert guidance of professional skippers, including four Vendée Globe solo round-the-world competitors.



Sailing in the most exclusive sites of the Seychelles islands from 15 to 24 May, the Seychelles Regatta is a new, semi-professional competition on 36 to 57-foot catamarans. It is designed for companies to invite crews of between six and eight people for team building, networking and general camaraderie. The Indian Ocean is one of the world's best fishing spots, so in addition to the sailing competition, a deep-sea fishing event is also on the agenda.

In this debut of the Regatta, crews from prestigious companies based in Belgium, France, the UK, and South Africa participated. Though the spirit of competition was high, the Regatta was not all sweat and spray. Time out for snorkelling off Denis Island, cycling around La Digue and many evenings of drinking and dancing under starry skies punctuated the tough days at sea. In addition to the professional skipper onboard each catamaran, teams were also assigned a local chef, offering the competitors a taste of the inimitable Seychellois hospitality, Creole cuisine and stories about the region.

In fact, participants had the chance to savour the magic of a number of the islands that populate the Seychelles Archipelago. Starting at Eden Island – the biggest property management project in the Seychelles, where almost 500 homes are being built on a reclaimed island located 20 minutes from Victoria's international

airport – the first four legs took the yachts around Mahé, exploring its granite cliffs and quiet coves and the renowned Beau Vallon area. From there, they headed onto Silhouette Island, where they anchored at Anse la Passe for the night. Leg 5 was the "fishing under sail" segment en route to Denis Island. The following day centred on the official deep-sea fishing contest, which was rounded off by a quiet evening near Aride Island and anchoring at Baie Sainte Anne off Praslin, Seychelles' second largest island. A full day's rest here enabled crews to find their land legs again as they toured the Vallée de Mai, a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to the coco de mer coconut. Squeezing in a visit to yet another jewel of a Seychelles beach, participants had lunch at Anse Lazio before setting off once more for Leg 6 to Curieuse.

This segment of the Regatta was the most exciting, as the wind had picked up. The race committee made the most out of the conditions and organised two races. The first, between Anse Lazio and Cousin Island, was fast and was won by Michel Desjoyeaux onboard his cruising catamaran (renamed *Nicolas Feuillatte* for the event), which was especially comfortable in Seychelloise waters. The boats moored off Cousin for lunch. A paradise for birds, Cousin is only open to the public in the morning and limited to those on a guided tour. For the second race of the day, the catamarans took off alongside the flying

fish and turtles. With 12 knots of wind, the heavier boats that had struggled in the early days of the Regatta finally exploited some of their potential. On this particular day, the race was a close one, but saw Sam Davies and her CPR crew victorious.

Leg 7 had the yachts racing around the Sisters Islands in the morning followed by an afternoon race to La Digue. A free evening and morning here the next day allowed participants to totally immerse themselves in the vibrant Seychellois culture and to cycle around the island. Perhaps most memorable was a trip to what many have described as two of the most beautiful beaches in the world, Grande Anse and Anse Source d'Argent.

As the Regatta drew to an end, crews returned to Eden Island for a reception and the awards ceremony. *Nicolas Feuillatte*, skippered by Michel Desjoyeaux, took the winning trophy, with Sam Davis and her CPR Team in second and *Keneos Aubriet*, with a Seychellois skipper, in third. The award for "Fair Play" was given to the crew of *Lady Anya* from Eden Island, skippered by Dee Caffari. First prize for the deep-sea fishing competition was awarded to the crew of *Armel Le Cleach* on *Rome Team*. While the awards were certainly a great incentive for participants in this inaugural regatta, the best reward was no doubt the opportunity to experience some of the wonder of Seychelles. Those who were here for the first time are surely smitten. ❁