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2 nature reserves in Seychelles re-open after new health measures, facility upgrades

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Aride island and Curieuse were this month certified COVID-safe by the Public Health Authority. (Gerard Larose, Seychelles Tourism Board)

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(Seychelles News Agency) - Two major nature reserves in Seychelles have reopened for visitors after closing to tourists and residents for several months. The opening of these parks comes at a time when the island nation is relaunching its tourism sector amidst the COVID pandemic still raging around the world.

The Aride Island Special Reserve and the Curieuse National Park, both islands, are now accepting visitors but have put in place strict health measures and guidelines. Both reserves were this month certified **COVID-safe** by the Public Health Authority.

According to the deputy chief executive of Aride, staff had to also undertake special training to detect symptoms and attend to suspected cases. Shane Emilie said that all visitors will be encouraged to wear masks and to frequently sanitise their hands.

"If someone is found to have a fever, they will be removed instantly from the group. We already have our structure set where we will call the **Public Health Authority** on Praslin and they will advise us," explained

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Emilie.

Emilie added that the person will not be able to travel back on the same boat with other visitors and arrangements will be made for another boat to transfer to the suspected case to Praslin - second-most populated island closer to Aride, where health officials will then take up the case.



The magpie robin is one of the five species of endemic birds found on Aride. (Gerard Larose, Seychelles Tourism Board) Photo License: CC-BY

Aride Island is home to one of the most important seabird populations in the Indian Ocean with more breeding species than any other island in Seychelles. Its population include 18 species of native birds - including five only found in Seychelles, 115 islands in the western Indian Ocean, that breed on Aride.

The island is managed as a nature reserve by the **Island Conservation Society** of Seychelles and is owned by **Island Conservation Society** the United Kingdom, a UK-registered charity.

Curieuse Island – a terrestrial and marine park - closed in April this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The island managed by the **Seychelles National Parks Authority** (SNPA) is home to the endemic coco de mer and the Aldabra giant land tortoises.

Visitors to the island can enjoy the beach, snorkelling - as the seas surrounding the island is protected and is rich in marine biodiversity, barbecue facilities and interact with tortoises. They can also enjoy a trail that runs through a mangrove forest, where the six species of mangroves found only on the island nation are found.

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Visitors to the island can enjoy the beach and snorkelling as the seas surrounding the island is protected. (Salifa Karapeyan, Seychelles News Agency) Photo License: [CC-BY](#)

During the past seven months, the authority carried out upgrade work on its existing facilities as well as the construction of new ones. "The upgrade work is taking place in two phases. The first phase includes new, bigger, improved barbeque area facilities at both Baie Laraie and Anse St José. Toilet facilities have also been improved and the 433-metre boardwalk, which is the longest in Seychelles, has also been upgraded," explained the chief executive of SNPA.

Selby Remy added that "the next phase will include the construction of a visitor centre, souvenir shop and café at Baie Laraie as well as the installation of photovoltaic panels on the barbecue area buildings."

The national park has also introduced new health measures, where visitors will be screened upon landing on the island. Another measure is the new electronic ticketing system whereby visitors can purchase their tickets online. Card transactions are also available.

Nonresidents have to pay a fee to visit the islands' reserves. A fee of \$30 for adults \$14 for children applies for Aride, whilst for Curieuse there is a fee of \$14 for adults only.

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