

# Aride plantation lodge to be turned into visitor museum

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Aride Island is now well known throughout the Seychelles as a Special Nature Reserve, with the longest running conservation programme in Seychelles and famed for its huge breeding seabird populations.

100 years ago it was a very different story; the forests had been cut down to make way for coconut and other plantation crops and also to harvest birds' eggs and meat, which had been a major source of income for the island since the 1800s. It was sold in January 1973 to Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (now the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) after their President, Christopher Cadbury, visited Aride and realised that it was a site of global importance to seabird populations. He provided the funds to the organisation to ensure its future protection as a nature reserve. In 1975 it became a Special Nature Reserve under Seychelles law and was protected by a warden and his team, who began the removal of the coconuts and replanting with endemic trees. This paved the way for the conservation work currently being carried out by the Island Conservation Society, who took over management of the island in 2004, then ownership in 2007.

To commemorate the island's history we are converting the plantation's old lodge house into a visitor museum. It is one of the last surviving traditional plantation houses in Seychelles and as such an interesting and important part of the heritage of the whole country. It was originally built in the early 20th century in the traditional style for the plantation owner. The joints show both French and English influence in the carpentry and also show the ability of the local carpenters to apply ship construction techniques to house building. Due to the fact that the main structure of building has not suffered major alterations, the special air cooling system is still intact, which gives an architectural and historic importance to the house. It was possible to demonstrate the air cooling system in an experiment carried out during the southeast monsoon season in 2000. The building was also originally thatched with palm leaves.

We require traditional Seychellois furniture from this time (original or replica) and interesting pictures or artefacts to decorate and restore the building to its former glory, so please contact our island manager, Uzice Samedi, if you have any for donation or sale at: [aride@ics.sc](mailto:aride@ics.sc) or 2719778. We are specifically looking for single beds, chairs and a table, drawers and two wardrobes, plus any other interesting stories of the past which would make a nice addition to the museum we would also love to hear from you.

Apart from the plantation house and museum, Aride island is a spectacular place to visit for all the nature of the island and should be a must see place for all Seychellois and tourists, to see the best the country has to offer in endemic birds, lizards and trees. School groups and company parties are welcome and we have a nice barbecue area for visitor use.



James McClelland and Melinda Curran  
Island Conservation Society