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Seychelles' Aride Island nature reserve temporarily closes until September 2023

Victoria, Seychelles | June 25, 2023, Sunday @ 08:00 in Environment » GENERAL | By: Salifa Karapetyan Edited by: Betymie Bonnelame | Views: 5968



Aride was designated as a special nature reserve under the Seychelles National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act of 1975. (Island Conservation Society)

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One of Seychelles' special nature reserves, **Aride Island**, has temporarily closed its doors to the public to concentrate on conservation work as migration brings more birds to the island, a not-for-profit organisation announced recently.

Located nine kilometres north of Praslin, the second most populated island, Aride was designated as a special nature reserve under the Seychelles National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act of 1975. It is managed by the **Island Conservation Society** (ICS) since 2003.

The **Aride Island** manager, Anthony Bentley, said that as the monsoon season changes, so are the priorities of the society.

"Seabirds are arriving to nest in their thousands, our focus now has to shift to monitoring these internationally important colonies. On top of this landing becomes unsafe for visitors and island staff during this time of the year," said Bentley.

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Some species such as the frigate bird and others are rarely seen on other islands. (Island Conservation Society) Photo License: CC-BY

Visitors will have to wait until September 2023 to disembark on Aride. September is the period of the year when the Northeast monsoon starts, allowing safer disembarkation directly on the beach via a small dingy in a narrow passageway that only the rangers of the island are accustomed to.

With 10 seabird species having made this inner island their home, Aride is seen as one of the most important seabird colonies in the Indian Ocean. Some species such as the frigate bird and roseate tern are rarely seen on other inner islands of Seychelles. Aride is also home to five species of endemic land birds such as the Seychelles warbler and the magpie robin.

With such an abundance of key species, ICS is therefore keen to upscale conservation work and start new projects whilst the island is closed to visitors.



The Seychelles Magpie Robin is among the five species of endemic land bird on Aride. (Island Conservation Society) Photo License: CC-BY

The director of science and projects of ICS, Greg Berke, expressed that during the closure to visitors, however, "we will still have visiting research teams coming to the island to collect valuable data."

"We also have maintenance of the island such as vegetation management and restoration and maintenance of our facilities. All of these will keep our team occupied and will enhance the visitor's experience when we reopen later this year," said Berke.

He added that "as a nature reserve, it is only right that we look after the biodiversity of the island as it is this key ecological aspect that has made Aride such a unique experience that draws visitors to the island each year which in turn allows Aride to raise funds for its conservation activities."

Due to a prolonged Southeast monsoon last year, which eroded the only beach on the island, Aride stayed closed to visitors until November. As of November 2022, a total of 3,000 visitors got the chance to see what natural wonders Aride holds.

Most of the visitors were from cruise ships and tour operators but given its proximity to Praslin, small boat operators and Seychellois residents also visited.

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