

Mauritians celebrate half a century of building a nation hand-in-hand



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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As we took our seats in the grandstand, we could feel the electric atmosphere and the nation's uncontrollable excitement - and this was no rock concert, nor was it a World Cup event.



I can only imagine the joyous cries of the masses in the streets on 12 March 1968: the day Mauritius adopted a new constitution and gained its independence as a constitutional monarchy. Now it is 50 years later and it seems as though the event is imprinted in people's minds from a young age.

Just as well - it was quite a momentous occasion.



Celebrations as Mauritius marks 50th year of independence

13 Mar 2018



Mauritians, dignitaries, journalists, and other visitors gathered at the 'Champ de Mars' racecourse in the capital of Port Louis on Monday, 12 March 2018 to celebrate Mauritius' half-a-century of independence. And what a celebration it was! The venue was the same one where the flag was raised on that significant day in 1968.

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The day also signifies Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolan becoming the independent nation's first prime minister, while Queen Elizabeth II remained head of state. On 12 March 1992, however, the Indian Ocean island became a republic within the British Commonwealth, with all political power vested in the prime minister. To this day, it is the prime minister who makes decisions - not the president.

Congratulations and celebrations

The celebrations actually started well before the official ceremony on Monday. In fact, the week leading up to the big event was filled with all things celebratory.



The nation's pride and patriotism was evident all over the island. Wherever we laid our eyes, we could see the Mauritian colours displayed with many flags raised and others draped on business buildings, schools, cars, boats, houses and banks as if to cover the island in a blanket of red, yellow, blue and green.





For many Mauritians, the Sunday was synonymous with fantastic food and Phoenix beer. Being guests of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), we attended quite a couple of interesting events, mainly in Mahebourg, including the regatta, performances by local artists and bands, and an Indian Airforce helicopter show.

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It's not official until a flag is raised

The island's Independence Day is everything you can imagine and more. It's a big deal and the locals go all out. Go big or go home, as they say.

Young and old made their way to 'Champ de Mars' to witness firstly the noble affair of the official flag raising ceremony, also known as 'Levé de Drapeau', military parades, aviation displays by the Indian Airforce, and a police force show which was followed by an extremely well-planned and well-executed cultural, sound, and light production.

The show depicted the island's diverse cultures as well as its journey since the 1600s: from the Dutch arriving and introducing the sugar cane plantations; the French taking control of the island after the Dutch abandoned it; the French being driven out by the British; the abolishment of slavery in 1835; the subsequent arrival of thousands of indentured labourers from India; to the big day of independence. The lively evening culminated in one jaw-dropping fireworks show which left everyone in high spirits.

“ The end of a wonderful evening spent celebrating 50 years of independence with this beautiful nation!

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It was an absolute privilege to join in the festivities and witness the pride Mauritians have over their country, their people, and the history that has made them the iconic nation they are today.

Here's to the next 50 years of *la main dans la main*, lovely Mauritius!

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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