



# Seychelles

**Status:** Republic in Western Indian Ocean  
**Area:** 176 sq. miles  
**Population:** 1,759,159 (2016 est.)  
**Currency:** 14 Seychellois Rupees = U.S. \$1



Like many British colonies, the first stamps created for Seychelles feature a familiar portrait of Queen Victoria, Scott 7.

The Republic of the Seychelles is an archipelago of about 155 islands in the Indian Ocean about 600 miles north of Madagascar. The islands are widely scattered with only a few permanently inhabited. Although they were known to Arab sailors and perhaps earlier cultures, the islands first appeared on Portuguese maps in 1502 after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. An expedition from the British East India Company visited the islands in 1609, but did not find them of great interest. It was left to Mahé de Bourdonnais, an activist French governor of Mauritius to claim them for France in 1744. In 1756 the islands were formally annexed by France and named after the Moreau de Séchelles, comptroller for Louis XV.

French planters from Mauritius settled on Mahé, the main island, in 1768. Memories were still fresh in France of its loss to England just a decade earlier of Canada, India, and other lucrative colonies. So the French settlement was largely kept secret. However, the Napoleonic Wars led to British seizure of the islands in 1810. The Peace of Paris ratified the British conquest in 1814.

Under France the Seychelles were a dependency of Mauritius 900 miles to the south. The British retained this arrangement until 1903 when the Seychelles became a separate colony. In 1963, the United States established a satellite tracking station and built an airport on the main island. The British granted the Seychelles self-government in 1975 and independence in 1976. Today, tourism has replaced the coconut and spice plantations as the driver of the economy.

Early mail service to small, remote European outposts was capricious, dependent on the goodwill and trustworthiness of captains of such ships as were available. In 1661, the French established a regular mail service out of Marseilles. The first sailings to Mauritius took place in 1786. These French paquebots continued to be an important communications link to the islands even after they came under British control.

Mail from the sparsely populated Seychelles was rare indeed. The earliest records of a government postal service in the Seychelles date from the 1850s when the governor of Mauritius appointed a resident mail agent in the Seychelles. On



A set of pictorials from 1962 to 1969 show native flora and fish and island life, and include a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, Scott 206.

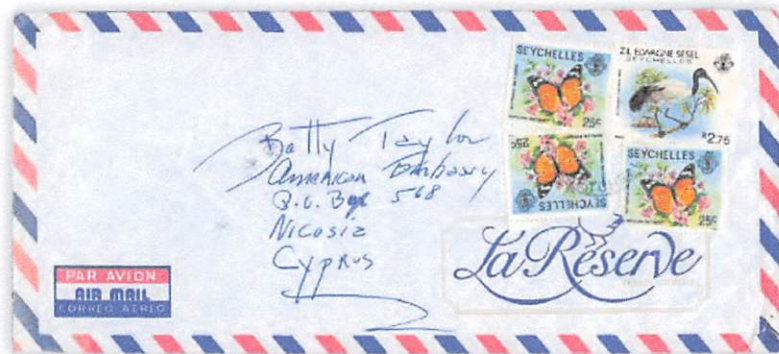
December 11, 1861, a branch post office was opened at Victoria. When Mauritius issued its postage stamps, they were valid in the Seychelles. It is believed that the Britannia issue of 1859 was the first actually placed on sale in Victoria. In the late 1880s, Seychelles ordered its own stamps. Eight stamps produced by De La Rue & Co. were placed on sale in Victoria on April 5, 1890. Philatelists find these stamps interesting because they were the first use of the De La Rue Queen Victoria key plate design. Stamps from a new plate were introduced in 1892 (Die II), but variations in the new



Independence in 1976 was greeted by a stamp of the island nation's flag with an inset of James Mancham, the nation's first president, Scott 350.

die went unnoticed by philatelists for a number of years. The Mauritius rupee was used until 1914, when it was replaced by the Seychellois Rupee.

In 1965, three groups of islands in the remote south were taken by Britain to form the British Indian Ocean Territory for largely military purposes. They were later returned to Seychelles. In 1980, special stamps were issued for these islands inscribed Zil Eilwanyen Sesel (Creole for "the Outer Islands" and with variant spellings of "Eilwanyen." These stamps were also valid elsewhere in the Seychelles as well. They were discontinued in 1992.



An airmail cover includes three 1988 Seychelles Butterfly stamps, Scott 392d, and a 1983 stamp inscribed Zil Elwanyen Sesel, Scott 61.