



The rooms, especially the newish ones, feature dramatic, contemporary decor – splashes of bright, island-inspired colour against a mainly neutral background – and fittings such as DVD players, flat-screen TVs, espresso machines (the first I'd ever come across in a hotel room six years ago) and vast, egg-shaped baths.

The resort has retained the same trio of standout restaurants: 350-seater Three Nine Eight, which offers an array of themed food from grills to Asian and Italian; Safran, an Indian restaurant with oodles of atmosphere and modernised, subtly spiced food; and beach-side bar and restaurant Barlen's, where seafood,

including sushi and sashimi, is served.

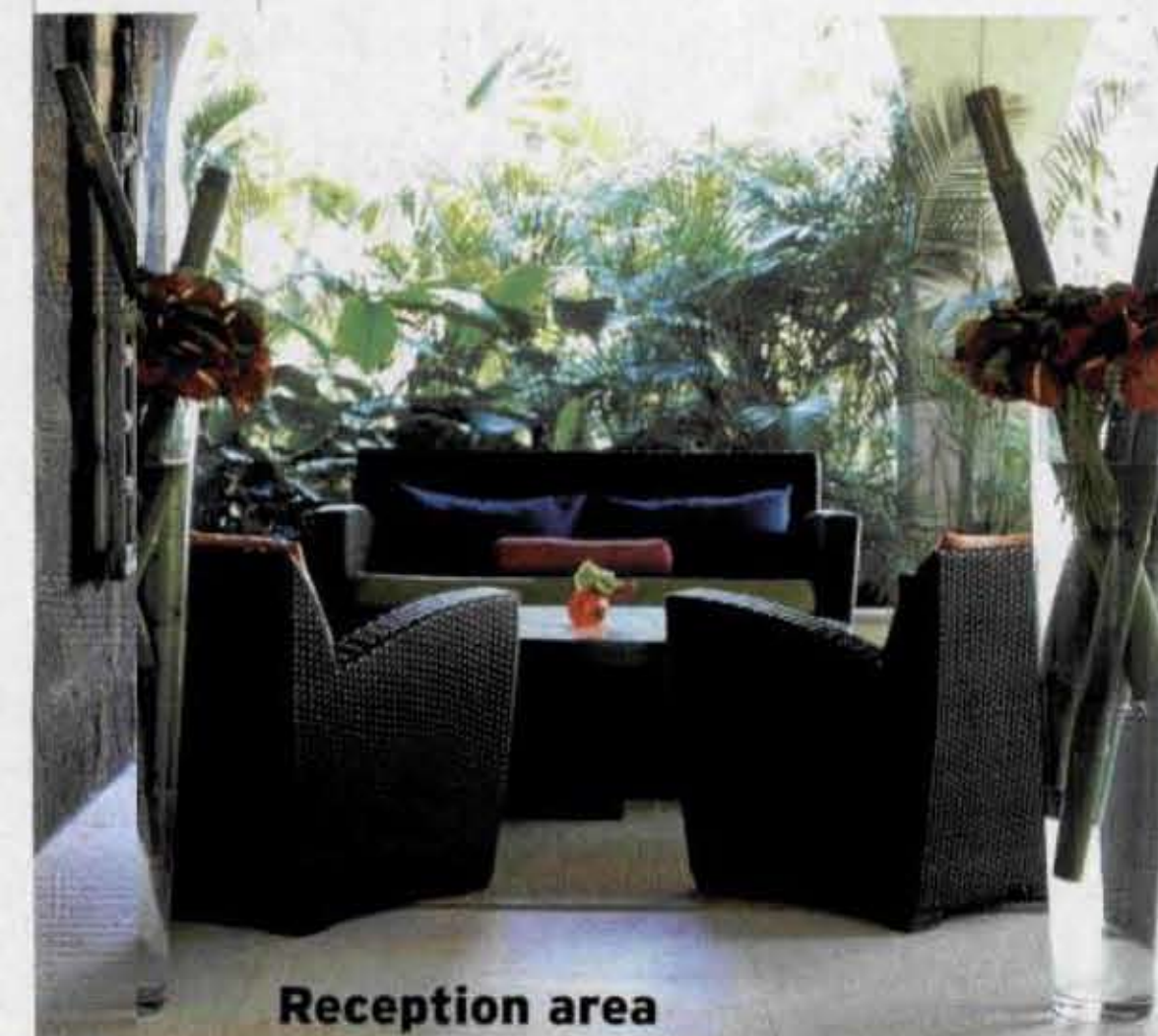
Barlen's was where we had the stellar meal of our three-night stay: a selection of tasting-size dishes, including sautéed duck foie gras with apple-lemon confit; seared scallops with palm heart salad; Chinese lacquered pork belly skewers with hoisin sauce; and prawn ravioli with apple and cucumber in a sea urchin bisque. Wow, food at top Mauritian hotels has certainly become seductively edgy. If you are on a package, you'd have to pay extra for a dinner like this, but it's well worth it.

We were also treated to a meal in one of three

gigantic villas with private beaches, which were created after 2002's big bash.

You can also have lunch at Ile aux Cerfs and a smaller island not far from it, Ilot Mangénie, where we had a beach barbecue, including crab soup, enormous grilled prawns and lamb on the spit.

Unfortunately, we had to wrap ourselves in giant towels to keep out the ferociously icy sea breeze.



Since there was no way of catching even a hint of a tan, a nap or a whole lot of pampering in the hushed, sweet-smelling Givenchy Spa (it adjoins a fitness centre) were the best after-lunch options.

You're mad enough to want to take your children? Le Touessrok has a Robin Hood-themed children's club, tucked away among trees with its own play area, pool, computer room, outdoor restaurant and supervisory staff.

□ Rates for a seven-night package at Le Touessrok range from R21 500/person, sharing, including airfares, transfers, breakfast, dinner and water sports. Valid until December 22.

Linda Stafford

□ The writer was a guest of Le Touessrok, Air Mauritius and Avis Point to Point

LE TOUESSROK

Go to: www.sunresorts-hotels.com

Booking info: World Leisure Holidays on tel: 0860-954-954; or: www.wlh.co.za



Despite its manifest positives, this account of a brief re-acquaintance with one of Mauritius's icon hotels must begin with a negative. Midwinter is a dodgy time to travel to the Indian Ocean island – and Le Touessrok is not at its best when palm trees are bending to snap-point in the wind.

Le Touessrok is a landmark property for a number of reasons, but it resonates for me because it was where, six years ago and after a US\$50m makeover, Sol Kerzner launched his worldwide One&Only brand. What a party! Bryan Ferry crooned; fabulous flower arrangements and food were created by flown-in celebrity florists and chefs; and Kerzner's A-list London friends frolicked in the free-form swimming pools.

But the party at Le Touessrok is not over, despite the fact that a few years ago Kerzner cut ties with his Mauritian partner, Sun Resorts, in respect not only of this resort but of La Pirogue, Sugar Beach and Le Coco Beach.

Le Touessrok, which has been revamped three times in 30-odd years, is located on the east coast, mostly on a rocky outcrop. It has to be said, therefore, that it has always been impoverished in terms of beaches, swimming (in the sea, that is) and water sports. You have always had to make a short trip by boat to Ile aux Cerfs, where you can swim, ski and sail.

But in terms of glamour, Le Touessrok shines.