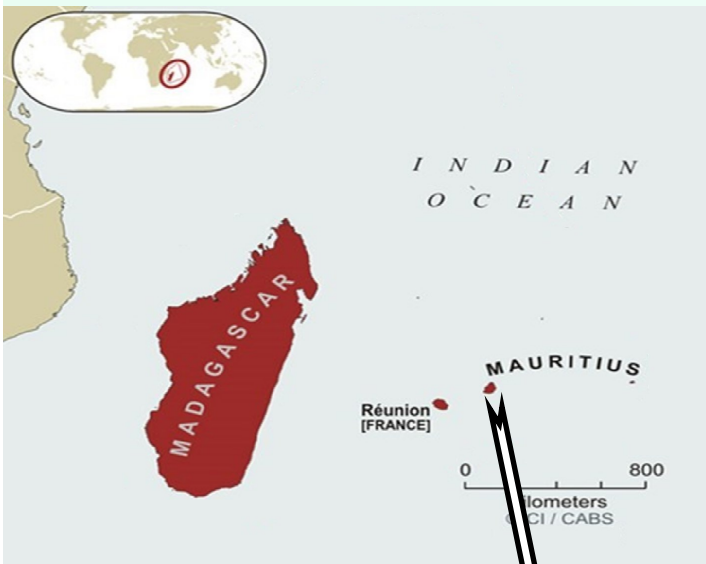
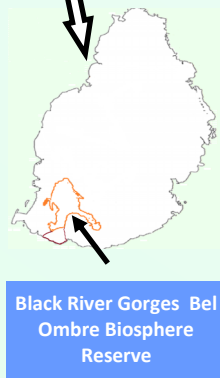


Black River Gorges Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve



The new Biosphere Reserve of Mauritius has increased the protected area coverage from 4.725 % to 5.025% . The Government of Mauritius is planning to extend the protected area further in respond to the Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Targets 2,11,18 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Black River Gorges Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve

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ME & THE BIOSPHERE

50th Anniversary of UNESCO's MAB Programme



BLACK RIVER GORGES BEL OMBRE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

MY BIOSPHERE RESERVE, MY FUTURE

Connecting people and nature for an inspiring future

**Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security
National Parks and Conservation Service**



UNESCO - Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB) Programme

The MAB Programme was launched by UNESCO in 1971. The MAB programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme that proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda and capacity building initiative aiming to improve the relationship of people with their environment globally.

Under the MAB Programme, Biosphere Reserves are designated aligning with the objectives of MAB. The Biosphere Reserves around the world are regrouped into networks mainly the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) and the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves. Mauritius is a full compliant member of both networks. Mauritius is also a member of AfriMAB.

The WNBR of the MAB Programme consists of a dynamic and interactive network of sites. It works to foster the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through international cooperation by the exchange of experiences and know-how, capacity-building and the promotion of best practices thereby safeguarding our planet's variety of life and ensuring sustainable and resilient societies.

Present in 129 countries



714



Biosphere Reserves



275 million people call biosphere reserves their home



5%

of the world's surface

Altogether 7,120,000 km², approximately the size of Australia



What is a Biosphere Reserve?

The Biosphere Reserve (BR) is a special environment for both people and the nature. It is a living example of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each others' needs.

Zonation of Biosphere



Functions of the 3 zones

Core Zone - It comprises a strictly protected zone that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.

Buffer Zone - It surrounds or adjoins the core area, and is used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.

Transition Zone - The transition area is where communities foster socio-culturally as well as allowing sound and sustainable economic and human activities.

Black River Gorges Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve (BRGBO BR)

Mauritius was among the first countries to designate a BR, namely the **Macchabée – Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve** back in 1977. Previously the main focus was on the conservation of biodiversity only with very limited involvement of the private sector and local community. Following the adoption of MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025 of the UNESCO MAB programme, new criteria were laid out which included the buffer zone and the transition zone. The objective was to enhance interaction between people and nature while ensuring the protection of the rich biodiversity of the core zone.

As a consequence the Macchabée – Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve no longer adhered to the new guidelines as a buffer and transition zone were lacking. The private and community participation was negligible and most of the activities was simply geared towards conservation only. The UNESCO MAB therefore advised Mauritius to redesign and resubmit a nomination dossier for a new biosphere to avoid the risk of losing the UNESCO MAB BR label. The Government of Mauritius proposed to redesign and renominate the Macchabée – Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve to a new BRGBO BR which will comply to all the new requirements. The nomination dossier was prepared by the National Parks and Conservation Service and deposited to the UNSECO MAB Secretariat within the prescribed deadline. The application was successfully accepted by the UNESCO MAB International Coordinating Council and BRGBO was officially announced as BR on the 28th October 2020.

The redesigned BR would provide an opportunity to foster relationship with the various stakeholders to promote approaches for a sustainable development. The core principle of the planned BR remains the conservation of the natural ecosystem as it harbours the last remnants of the islands' endemic vegetation and the evergreen natural forests. The intended goal of the BR is to promote research, education and environmental awareness so as to contribute to safeguarding the rich biodiversity of Mauritius and ensuring sustainable development for the benefit of the Mauritian population. The BRGBO BR has been designed to nurture the participation of the public, private and local community.

Zonation of BRGBO BR

Total area of BRGBO BR is 8,582 ha



Core zone
6574 ha

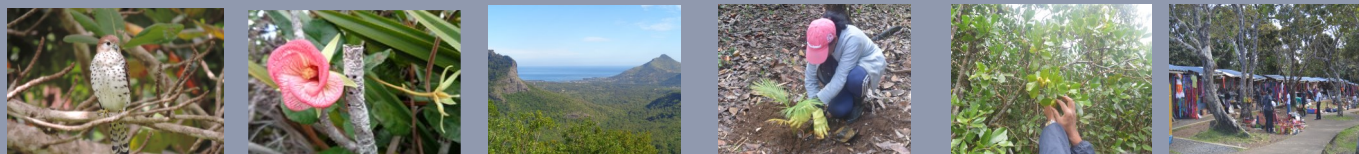
Buffer zone
497 ha

Transition zone
1511 ha

Interesting features of the BRGBO BR

Core Zone

The Black River Gorges National Park (BRGNP) in its entity is the core zone of the BR and is home to the last remnant of the Mauritian endemic flora and fauna species making it an ecosystem of a unique biodiversity. The natural heritage and breath-taking landscape and panoramic views have made this area exceptionally popular among visitors for its distinctive attributes. The main focus in this zone is conservation and restoration of the native biodiversity. Education, research and sustainable ecotourism activities are also promoted.



Buffer zone

The buffer zone has been designated according to the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Act 2015. This zone harbours important ecological features such as reservoir, rivers, native and planted forests. Various sustainable economic activities such as deer ranching and eco-friendly tourism practices also carried out.

Compagnie Sucrière de Bel Ombre is the first private sector to have designated part of its land as buffer zone along the core zone. The other buffer zones are state owned lands leased by the Forestry Service under the Fishing and Shooting Leases Act 1966.



Transition zone

The transition zone consists of Bel Ombre and St Martin village found in the district council of Savanne. Bel Ombre and St Martin village with a population of 2492, is now the first village in Mauritius to be part of the UNESCO MAB and BRGBO BR. In addition many tourists stay in hotels and lodges in that region. The transition zone is known for its sugar cane plantation together with other agricultural activities such as cultivation of crops and fruits, deer farming among others. The economic activities previously dominated by agricultural sector is now geared towards the tourism industry. Sustainable ecotourism activities will be promoted.



The mangrove forests in this zone play important ecological functions in preventing soil erosion and protects the shoreline from strong winds, waves, and floods. They also maintain water quality and clarity by filtering pollutants and trapping sediments originating from land.

What is the need of a Biosphere Reserve?

Biodiversity is the living fabric of our planet. It underpins human wellbeing in the present and in the future, and its rapid decline threatens nature and people alike. Biodiversity loss implies the reduction and disappearance of species and genetic diversity and the degradation of ecosystems. It jeopardizes nature's vital contributions to humanity, endangering economies, livelihoods, food security, cultural diversity and quality of life, and constitutes a major threat to global peace and security.

