

Two species of sea turtles nest on Denis Island:
the **Hawksbill Turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and the **Green Turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*).



Hawksbill Turtle



Green Turtle



Hawksbill Turtle



Green Turtle

Denis hosts one of the three largest nesting populations of Green Turtles remaining in the inner islands of Seychelles. It appears that the large sea grass beds surrounding the island are important foraging areas for this species, and the undisturbed beaches provide plenty of opportunity for females to come on land to nest.

Turtle Sightings



The turtles do not only come to Denis Island to nest, the surrounding sea also serves as an important foraging ground for immature turtles of both species. The turtles come very close to shore, particularly along the east coast in the vicinity of Belle Etoile. When snorkeling at Belle Etoile, a turtle sighting is highly likely, but a snorkeling trip at House Reef just in front of the hotel is also often rewarded with a turtle sighting.

Denis is also known for its beautiful dive sites inhabited by both species of turtle. Hotel guests who snorkel and dive are very likely to encounter one, or both, species underwater. Guests are also encouraged to keep an eye out for turtle track, or new nests, when walking on the beach. Please report any findings to the front desk, so that we can monitor these nests. And even for guests who do not like to stick their head under the water it is easy to spot the turtles, as they often poke their head above the water to breathe. It is very likely to spot a turtle even if you are strolling just on the beach!

Nesting Seasons




It is possible for guests to see turtles all year round. The young foraging turtles are present all throughout the year.

The nesting season for **Green turtle** is from ca.
May until September
but they do nest in lower numbers year-round.

The **Hawksbill** nesting season is more
confined, between ca.
October and February

The newborn turtles (ca. 120 per nest) hatch two months after the eggs are laid, so even when the actual nesting season has ended, there's still a chance to see the little hatchlings coming out. The hatchlings usually come out all at once, between sunset and early morning. When a nest comes close to its due date, it is checked daily by our conservation team for signs of hatching. As there are no non-native predators the team does not need to interfere by digging out nests before they hatch, so all nests come out naturally. If a nest has come out, the team does dig out the pit to check for un-hatched eggs and turtles that might be stuck under roots and need some help to emerge. Any little turtle found by the conservation team is shown to the hotel guests, so that they can have a closer look, take photos and afterwards release them on the beach.



Releasing baby turtles by the sea is an unforgettable moment!

Not all turtle emergences do result in a nest, as the females are very picky and easily disturbed. If the turtle has in fact nested, we make a note and keep track of the estimated date of emergence - this way we all can keep an eye out for the little turtles to hatch!

How many turtles have hatched on Denis?

During the average breeding season, we record around **250 Hawksbill emergences**, of which an average of 50 result in nests (ca 6,000 eggs) and **500 Green turtle emergences**, of which an average of 170 successfully nest (ca. 20,000 eggs)

Interesting Facts



Worldwide, the Hawksbill Turtle is more endangered than the Green Turtle. The green turtle however, is very rare in the inner islands of Seychelles due to over-exploitation for meat in the past.



Green turtles are often shy, whilst the hawksbill turtles are often very inquisitive and approachable.



The average life span of turtles is between 80-100 years.



Green turtles are herbivorous and feed on algae, sea-grasses, and seaweed.



Hawksbills are carnivorous and feed primarily on sponges, anemones, squid and shrimp



Green turtles nest at night and the Hawksbill turtles during the day



Green Islands
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The sex of the baby turtles is determined by the temperature of the sand. Average nest temperatures **above 30 C result in mostly females** and lower **temperatures 24-28 C result in males**.



Females



Males