QSL Front Side – 3B9SP Rodrigues Island 2025 DXpedition.

With minimal, perfectly tuned equipment and with the aim of modern, efficient DX operations, DK6SP activated the rare island of Rodrigues under **3B9SP** in the summer of 2025. The short DXpedition offered excellent propagation conditions, intense pileups, full QO-100 presence, and impressive nature experiences. This article highlights preparation, operation, and the role of local supporters that contributed significantly to making the activity a special success.

3B9SP – Rodrigues Island 2025

A Next Generation DX Club e.V. inspired Adventure in the Indian Ocean

by Philipp Springer, DK6SP

Rodrigues Island, the most remote island of the Mascarene archipelago and located several hundred kilometers east of Mauritius, is one of the most fascinating places I have visited so far – both in terms of landscape and amateur radio. Its geographical isolation, its very rare activation, and the exceptionally low noise level have made it a highly desirable but logistically demanding DXCC destination for many years.

In summer 2025, I had the opportunity to activate Rodrigues Island under the callsign 3B9SP.

Originally, I had traveled to Mauritius to attend the wedding of close friends. Given the proximity to Rodrigues and the radio rarity of the island, it quickly became clear to me that extending the stay and personally experiencing this outer island on the bands would be a unique opportunity.

Background and Licensing

In 2022, I gained valuable experience on Mauritius during the **3B8M CQWW CW** team effort organized by Olof G0CKV and subsequently operated several bands as **3B8/DK6SP** outside the contest. Import and export of my equipment had gone smoothly at that time thanks to a German customs identification certificate as well as German and local license documents. This prior experience greatly simplified the planning for Rodrigues, as all administrative procedures were already familiar.

The operating license for Rodrigues Island was requested early from **ICTA**, the regulatory authority responsible for Mauritius and its outer islands. For a fee of approximately 20 EUR, the license was issued within about two months. In parallel, I applied for the **LoTW certificate** with the ARRL, which was confirmed quickly. With this, all regulatory prerequisites were fulfilled well ahead of the trip.

Travel and Logistics

The journey began with Emirates from Munich via Dubai to Mauritius. Two checked bags of 23 kg each allowed me to transport the majority of the equipment. The onward flight to Rodrigues was operated by Air Mauritius. Although previously approved excess baggage was briefly questioned during check-in, the situation was resolved quickly and all luggage was accepted without further issues.

Entry into Mauritius as well as Rodrigues was smooth and without any technical or customs-related inquiries.

A special thanks goes to **Markus, DG8MG**, who – as with many previous DXpeditions – provided the logistics HQ. His QTH regularly serves as a location for test setups, equipment verification, and packing preparations of the **Next Generation DX Club e.V.** (next-generation-dx.com) and is therefore an indispensable part of my operational preparation.

Local Support

A central role throughout the entire activity was played by **Rocky, 3B9FR**, who has been the only permanently active radio amateur on Rodrigues Island for decades.

Even before my trip, Rocky offered his full support and provided a complete **QO-100** setup, including dish, helix antenna, and LNB. In addition, he supplied a **DXPatrol uplink converter** as a backup to safeguard

satellite operation. His technical expertise, extraordinary helpfulness, and long-standing dedication to amateur radio shaped the entire activity and made smooth implementation possible.

3B9SP (DK6SP) and Rocky 3B9FR on Rodrigues Island.

Another special thanks goes to **Pat, 3B8FA**, who at short notice provided his portable QO-100 equipment for the planned activation. Although the configuration brought to Rodrigues did not result in a functional uplink on site, his engagement and willingness to help were an important part of the preparation. The combined support from both Mauritius and Rodrigues ultimately formed the foundation for the later full satellite activation.

Support Beyond the Activation

During my stay on Rodrigues Island, I also had the opportunity to visit **Rocky, 3B9FR**, at his home station. During this visit, he showed me **both of his radios, which had suffered damage over time and were only partially operational**. Given that Rocky has been the only permanently active radio amateur on Rodrigues for decades, this immediately highlighted how fragile the on-air presence of **3B9** effectively is.

In the months following the expedition, I made repeated attempts to source suitable replacement parts and explore repair options. I consulted friends, searched flea markets, and checked various secondary sources. However, due to the age of the equipment and the nature of the faults – in particular an unresolved display issue – no viable solution could be found. Owing to the island's extreme isolation, there is no realistic access to technical support, professional repair services, or a reliable spare-parts supply, which ultimately made any repair attempt impractical.

Fortunately, as so often in the past, my friends **Tim, K3LR, and Teri, K8MNJ**, at **DXEngineering** had an open ear for the situation. Rocky has supported countless DX operations over many decades – both on Rodrigues and beyond – without ever expecting anything in return. Considering that the entire amateur radio presence of 3B9 depends on a single operator, enabling him to continue operating is of real and lasting impact to the worldwide amateur radio community. **DXEngineering therefore decided to step in and support Rocky with a brand new ICOM IC-7300.**

At the time of writing, the radio is on its way to Rodrigues Island. I will report back once the transceiver has safely arrived and is fully operational in **3B9FR's shack**.

Station Setup and Technical Implementation

For HF operation, I used a **YAESU FT-DX10** feeding a compact multiband vertical antenna. The antenna was erected at the family-run **Le Refuge** resort close to the shoreline, providing excellent radiation conditions.

The mast and guying came from **Spiderbeam** and **Mastrant**, which proved reliable under the constant winds typical of the Mascarene Islands.

A special thanks also goes to **Bernie, DJ5MN**, who for many years has tirelessly optimized, tested, and provided antennas and technical accessories for my DXpeditions. His well-engineered, robust, and operationally dependable designs continue to contribute significantly to successful radio operations.

3B9SP operating in the kitchen shack of the apartment.

A major focus of the activity was **QO-100** satellite operation. While the equipment brought from Mauritius provided reliable reception, no uplink could initially be achieved despite extensive trouble-shooting. Thanks to components provided in advance by **3B9FR**, a complete TX replacement setup was assembled during my stay. The FT-DX10 ultimately served as the driver for the uplink converter, which – together with a compact WiFi power amplifier – generated the required transmit power.

This solution enabled stable and fully functional satellite operation, resulting in nearly **400 QSOs** on CW, SSB, and FT4 via QO-100.

QO-100 dish on the left; 10 m travel Spiderpole (40–10 m) by Spiderbeam on the right.

On-Air Activity

Propagation conditions were exceptional throughout the entire stay. Bands from **40 m to 10 m** opened reliably each day,

supported by the island's extremely low noise floor. Despite the limited transmit power of 100 W, signals reached impressive worldwide strength. CW and SSB pileups at times reached levels comparable to significantly larger DXpeditions, clearly reflecting the high demand for **3B9**.

In total, approximately **3,300 QSOs** were logged with stations on all continents. Several remarkable openings on the higher bands allowed reliable contacts even with very distant regions.

The parallel satellite activity via **QO-100** offered many amateurs the rare opportunity to work Rodrigues Island for the first time through a geostationary satellite.

QSL Service, OQRS and LoTW

After the operation, professional QSL cards were produced and made available through the **ClubLog OQRS** system. All QSOs were also fully confirmed via the bureau, meaning that each contacted station will automatically receive a bureau card without requiring a return QSL.

In addition, all QSOs were uploaded **daily and free of charge** to **LoTW**, ensuring timely confirmation and meeting the standards of a modern, transparent, and easily accessible DX activity.

Life on Rodrigues Island

Daily life on Rodrigues runs at a much slower pace than on Mauritius. The island is extremely decelerating – there are, for example, **no official car rental agencies**. Visitors use taxis or borrow vehicles directly from their hosts. Rodrigues is often described as **"Mauritius before tourism"**: endless untouched beaches, few visitors, pristine nature, and an atmosphere of unique serenity.

Daily view of the Indian Ocean.

German-speaking visitors are rare; according to local accounts, only one German has lived on the island for decades, though no encounter took place. The population primarily speaks French, but many locals speak excellent English, so there are no language barriers.

Especially impressive are the tortoise reserves with their giant Aldabra tortoises, as well as the mountainous landscapes, lagoons, and original villages. A full-day tour with a local guide offered deep insights, including traditional fishing and freshly prepared seafood straight from the ocean.

Rodrigues Island is therefore among the most remarkable destinations visited – out of nearly 70 countries – and leaves the strong desire to return one day.

Amateur Radio Community and Local Exchange

During my stay on Mauritius, I had the pleasure of spending time with several local radio amateurs: **Mary, 3B8HN; François, 3B8HI; Pat, 3B8FA; and Ashwin, 3B8GL**. Most of them I already knew from my visit in 2022, and it was great to reconnect in person. Pat and François in particular made a significant effort by organizing a full-day trip around Mauritius, followed by excellent local food and long, engaging conversations.

Pat 3B8FA, Ashwin 3B8GL, Philipp DK6SP and François, 3B8HI at MRU airport on Mauritius.

Meeting like-minded radio amateurs around the world is always one of the most rewarding aspects of my international travels. The exchange with local operators, their perspectives, experiences, and everyday realities, consistently enriches each trip. Over the years, I have never been disappointed by these encounters – they are always characterized by openness, hospitality, and a shared passion for amateur radio.

During this stay, I also supported **Rocky** and several amateurs in Mauritius by providing a broad selection of small but essential hardware, including radial plates, radials, masts, coax connectors, basic electrical tools, soldering materials, and general station consumables. These items are difficult to obtain locally and were therefore highly appreciated, as they directly contribute to keeping stations operational under challenging conditions. **It is always important to give back to the community so that these DXCCs can remain QRV and therefore reachable for the amateur radio community worldwide.**

Conclusion

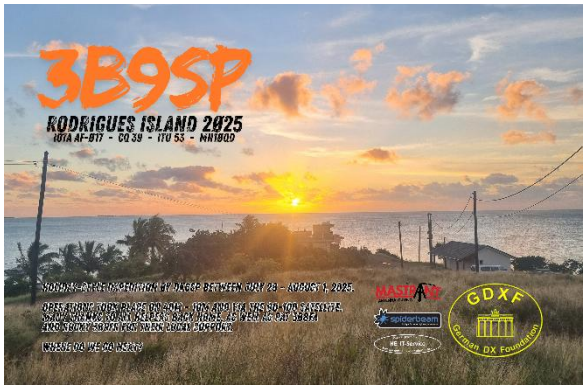
3B9SP – Rodrigues Island 2025 was a strong example of how effective a compact DX operation in the spirit of the **Next Generation DX Club e.V.** can be.

Thorough preparation, solid technical execution, an excellent operating location, extraordinary support from **Rocky 3B9FR, Pat 3B8FA, Bernie DJ5MN, Markus DG8MG**, and others, combined with outstanding propagation conditions, resulted in an activity that received wide recognition worldwide.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the **German DX Foundation (GDXF)** for their sponsorship, as well as to **DXEngineering** for their continued support of DX worldwide – they are making a real difference. My thanks also goes to **Patrick, DC9PA, at HE-IT Service**, for his

continued support of my DXpeditions with reliable and mission-critical IT infrastructure.

With around 3,300 QSOs, intense pileups, complete satellite activation, and exemplary QSL and LoTW service, the operation remains memorable both technically and personally. Rodrigues Island proved to be not only an exceptional travel destination, but a place whose nature, people, and radio conditions strongly inspire future DX adventures.



3B9SP QSL back side with a view near the QTH on the north side of the island.

Big kudos to all individual supporters and sponsors:

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