



# LA REUNION

THE ULTIMATE ISLAND

MY NEXT TRIP



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# REUNION ISLAND

## DID YOU SAY “THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE”?

Reunion Island is unique in the world: you can choose to spend your days stretching out under the sun’s gentle caress, facing its mountains like a seasoned trekker, letting yourself be hypnotised by its seabed or discovering the subtleties of the Creole language in the company of its friendly inhabitants. You can do all that, and more!



With its volcanic peaks, cirques and ramparts, listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, and its more than 200 microclimates, Reunion is a tropical island that defies the stereotypes. Postcard-perfect scenery, yes, but, above all, a combination of landscapes that can’t be found anywhere else! In just a few hours, you can go from the crystal-clear blue of the lagoon to the dazzling green of the breathtaking cirques. A real and imaginary world tour that you can take in just a few days is at your feet! Take advantage of this trip to quench your thirst for discovery and let yourself be carried away by new sensations: the feeling of walking on the Moon at La Plaine des Sables, entering the lush kingdom of Mafate and diving into *The World of Nemo* at the Hermitage.

Reunion Island is 2,500 km<sup>2</sup> of magnificent landscapes and just as many adventures to experience. It is also an incredible mosaic of cultures living in perfect harmony. After having discovered this little gem in the middle of the Indian Ocean, you will return home with a “*sourir en trans papay\**” and the desire to return as soon as possible!

Do you want to have a close look at a volcano that won’t bite? Do you dream of enjoying a party with a myriad of colourful fish? Do you want to awaken your taste buds? Are you burning to meditate far from the pressures of everyday life in the shelter of a magical cirque? Do you want a thrill? Then Reunion is for you!

Find all our activities and all our service providers in the Leisure activities section of our website: [www.reunion.fr](http://www.reunion.fr)

\*A smile from ear to ear





# ULTIMATE NATURE

With its contrasting landscapes formed by a multitude of microclimates and its incredible endemic species, Reunion Island's nature is an extraordinary spectacle.

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# THE ISLAND THAT'S 100% NATURE

*The figures are dizzying: nearly 2,000 species of plants, including 848 native species, diverse and carnivalesque fauna, 3,500 aquatic species, 2,512 km<sup>2</sup> of spectacular panoramic views, 100,000 hectares of National Parks, two volcanoes, 900 kilometres of marked trails, three Great Hiking trails, three spectacular cirques, including one that's only accessible on foot, one hyperactive volcano, numerous forests, more than 300 waterfalls including the three highest in France, about 20 climbing sites over a cumulative distance of more than 6,000 metres...*

Reunion Island is undoubtedly a place of extraordinary natural beauty! In addition, this jewel of the Indian Ocean, with its rare and fragile biodiversity, offers a myriad of preserved natural splendours. So many enchanting sights that you will never get tired of. Because everything must be done to protect them, ecotourism lends itself wonderfully to Reunion Island's biodiversity. And the icing on *the potato cake*: there are thousands of ways to enjoy this ultimate island's charms!

Do you dream of spending your holidays in Reunion lounging on the warm sand, a good thriller in one hand and a glass of *Ti Punch* in the other? That's possible, but you can also enjoy a whole host of activities, each more enjoyable than the last. On land, at sea, or in the air, a whirlwind of pleasures and distractions awaits you! There is everything you need to enjoy the island and admire it from every angle!

So, whether you are as nonchalant as a gecko or as energetic as a tuit-tuit, follow Buzz Lightyear's lead and go to infinity and beyond!

*Alcohol abuse is dangerous for your health.  
Consume in moderation.*



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# L'ÎLE DE BEAUTÉ DE L'OCÉAN INDIEN

*Thanks to its preserved ecosystem, the volcanic island of Reunion is a real beauty queen. What's more, it's 100% natural! Its impressive list of achievements is envious: it is regularly ranked among the most beautiful islands in the world, its remarkable biodiversity is recognised worldwide, 42% of its territory is included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites and it is home to one of the most active volcanoes in the world! Tormented landscapes, old-growth forests, nature reserves, heavenly beaches, a lively volcano... The island's landscapes are pure enchantment! So, open your eyes wide and discover the phenomenal natural treasures!*

## BREATHTAKING CIRQUES

The island's three cirques, set out in a cloverleaf pattern around the Piton des Neiges, are listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO and rival each other for their beauty. These spectacular sites are protected by ramparts of rock and greenery. A multitude of waterfalls hurtle down their slopes covered with tree ferns or old-growth forest.

Mystical Mafate is worth the trip: it is only accessible on foot. Salazie is home to some of the most beautiful waterfalls on the island, not to mention Hell-Bourg, the only overseas French municipality classed as one of the most beautiful villages in France!

Finally, don't hesitate to take the "road with 400 bends" to unwind in the heart of majestic Cilaos, taking advantage of its springs... Or to conquer the Piton des Neiges!



## LUNAR LANDSCAPES

Successive lava flows from the Piton de la Fournaise descended to the ocean and enlarged the island in a very lovely way. The scenery along the Wild South coast is a kind of visual happening between steep basalt cliffs, lush green vegetation and the deep blue Indian Ocean.

The Route des Laves alone is worth the trip with its flows that are frozen for eternity. But a visit to the Piton de la Fournaise is also highly recommended! Before arriving at the Pas de Bellecombe mountain pass, which is the starting point of the hike up to the volcano, you must cross the Plaine des Sables and its hardened lava and brown-orange scoria... You'll feel like you've landed on the moon!

Here, you can feel like you're almost 400,000 kilometres from the nearest human being without ever leaving the earth, as you pretend to be Neil Armstrong! And then, once in the mysterious dragon's pen, you can tread over the hardened lava and discover an almost entirely mineral landscape, contrasting with the lush vegetation on the rest of the island.



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## AN EXPLOSIVE VOLCANO

*"Le volcan la pété!"* [the volcano has blown!] If you hear this expression during your stay in Reunion, don't be afraid! On the contrary, it means that you are one of the lucky ones: the island's rock star has woken up to dazzle its many fans once again with an unforgettable sound and light show.

The Piton de La Fournaise is one of the most active volcanoes in the world! A bit vain, it likes to put on a show, to roar and remind us who is the boss on the island. This colossus, about 500,000 years old and rising to 2,631 metres, wakes up about every nine months. Non-explosive, it is harmless despite its incandescent lava and spectacular fireworks. In case of an eruption, access to the Fouqué enclosure is forbidden, but you can admire the devilish show from the Piton de Bert or the Piton Partage. At night, it's even more beautiful! To enjoy this force of nature even more and better understand it, you can play at being a speleologist in the lava tunnels and visit the Cité du Volcan, a real goldmine of knowledge located in La Plaine des Cafres.

## LAZE UNDER THE COCONUT TREES

An inexplicable phenomenon occurs on the island of a thousand faces: its irresistible beaches make you want to sing summer hits! Just picture this: your feet playing with the fine sand, a soft trade wind brushing your sun-drenched golden skin and, finally, you plunge into the lagoon's refreshing foam. Now you're there. Makes you want to hum, doesn't it?

With its 200 kilometres of coastline, Reunion Island has around 30 kilometres of sandy or black beaches, including 22 kilometres of lagoon, exceptionally preserved and protected by a coral reef.

Wide beaches with fine sand, the delicate shade of coconut trees and Australian pines, a turquoise water lagoon and clean sea beds guarantee you delightful moments of idleness and swimming in complete serenity! As the sun sets, plunge your gaze into the cornflower blue horizon and let yourself be swept away by the sky's metamorphoses!



# THE LUSH GARDEN

The mild temperatures make the island an extraordinary tropical garden: more than 1,600 plant species flourish here. More than 70% of them are of Afro-Malagasy origin, having arrived by their own means, as the crow flies or at the whim of the winds and sea currents.

However, the island is home to 237 native species. Flower and shrub lovers will be enchanted by the 120 species of orchids that bloom in the undergrowth or forests of the highlands. And what about the fabulous flamboyants and frangipani?



© RTT / Stéphanie Godin

No other tropical island can claim to have this kind of plant landscape. Its multitude of microclimates has made it extremely varied. Reunion's coastline and its sandy beaches are adorned with hardy shrubs such as *screw pines*, *Australian pines* or *velvetleaf soldier bushes*.

On the west coast, the savannahs cover vast areas and are essentially composed of grasses and thorny plants such as sweet *acacia* or *gorse*. The low-lying dry forests are home to singular hosts, which usually bear colourful Creole names: *drum wood*, *milk wood*, *sponge wood*, etc.

In the south-east part of the island, a humid tropical forest shelters the famous *barbel palms* and *bully trees* and a multitude of mosses, ferns and orchids. The *cloud forests* of the highlands are the most lush and best preserved on the island, like Bébouret Bélouve, which are still in their original state today.

Trees like the *bois magie* or the *tan rouge* intermingle there, and many tree ferns, called *fanjans*, erect their parasol above the canopy.

Beyond an altitude of 2,000 metres, the landscape is more mineral, and the lush green forests give way to small vegetation with "hard leaves" and tortured shapes, like the *Branles*. All in all, it seems



© RTT / Olivier Octobre

that all the flowers and plants on the planet have come together on the tiny island of Reunion!

A tour of these superb botanical gardens will give you a better understanding of the particularities of this incredible natural heritage.

# FLAMBOYANT WILDLIFE



## ZOOTOPIA

Reunion Island's wildlife is not lacking in originality and there are no poisonous or "dangerous" animals on the island. Here you may encounter microbats, some wild deer, hares, brown rats, musk shrews, giant snails and some peaceful reptiles in rainbow-coloured costumes.

During your walks, keep your eyes peeled for glimpses of shimmering lizards and unusual sleeping creatures that blend into the background and idle by. Marvel at the cry of the *margouillats*, which sounds like a communicative laughing madman, and rejoice at their presence.

Because they are a powerful ally in the fight against mosquitoes! This small nocturnal *gecko* with transparent skin is indeed a famous insect hunter.

The island is also home to "budding princes" to kiss: frogs and toads that you can hear croaking at nightfall! These amphibians can be found near rivers and coastal ponds as well as at high altitudes in the heart of forests. During your walks, other creatures plunge you into the imaginary world of Disney: 560 species of butterflies, 190 of which are endemic, that swirl gracefully around you and make their colours dance in the middle of the flowers!

Do you hear something stirring in the foliage? It's undoubtedly a *tenrec*! This small nocturnal animal, which looks like a hedgehog, is one of the most fertile mammals in the world!

Finally, if you suffer from arachnophobia, know that the big spiders of Reunion are as harmless as kittens! Some *bibes* weave their web in the shrubs or at the edge of the trails, and, during your stay, a *babouk* may decide to gaze with its eight eyes straight into yours, but have no fear! Despite.

Impressive in their size, these spiders are not dangerous. They are even particularly useful since they drive away harmful insects.

In short, you can explore the island without worrying about small creatures causing big problems because Reunion Island is *Into the Wild* but not too much!

## A RAINBOW OF FEATHERS

“My word! Sir Raven, you are a handsome bird. Such feathers! If you would only sing, The birds of these woods would call you King.”

Like Jean de La Fontaine’s fox, you will be tempted to sing the praises of the birds of Reunion! Carried by the winds, they made their home on the island long before the first sailor set foot on it. Today, there are less than a dozen endemic bird species remaining, some of which are, unfortunately, headed towards extinction.

Along the coast, you can catch the harmonious flight of a *white-tailed tropicbird*, a beautiful sea bird that is both endemic and emblematic of the island. This protected species with its white feathers, adorned with a few elegant black lines, nests mainly in cliffs.

Thanks to its aerodynamic shapes ending with two half-metre long feathers, it glides elegantly and often turns over our heads.

In the cirques, it is the majestic *Reunion harrier* who dominates the skies. Reunion Island’s only bird of prey can measure up to 1.20 metres and is one of the rarest birds in the world!

The Reunion cuckooshrike, or *tuit-tuit*, can also be found. This rare bird accompanies you along the forest paths of the Roche Écrite nature reserve.

As for the extremely rare *Barau’s petrel*, it nests at very high altitudes, notably in the foothills of the Piton des Neiges or the Grand Bénare.

Walking in the forests of Bébou-Bélouve, you can observe certain species that do not exist anywhere else: the Mascarene paradise *flycatcher*, with grey, red and blue tones, which readily comes to meet



© IRT / Yabalex

you, the Réunion *grey white-eye*, a small passerine that likes to explore the small bushy and flowery shrubs and the flamboyant *cardinal*, whose red plumage is reminiscent of the cassocks of Catholic cardinals.

During your outings, other colourful sparrows will catch your eye, such as the Réunion *stonechat* with its white eyebrows, the *village weaver*, as yellow as a buttercup, or the common waxbill, with its *red beak* and mask! Only the *dodo* is missing. Until the 17th century, Reunion Island was indeed the kingdom of this plump bird which, unfortunately, has since disappeared...



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## AN OCEAN OF COLOURS

All the shades of the rainbow are also found beneath the Indian Ocean, with 3,500 animal and plant species that inhabit its waters! The lagoon's transparent waves reveal a multitude of multicoloured fish.

While splashing around in the middle of the coral, only a few metres from the shore, you find yourself nose to nose with a *fanciful lagoon triggerfish*! You can watch out for little *Nemos* nestled in their anemones, or even greet a school of butterflyfish!

Parrotfish, celestial groupers, starry morays and blue tangs will march past you in their most beautiful attire.

Fish that look like guinea fowl, swollen like balloons, topped with a crest or dressed in a leopard's spots, look at you with curiosity. With 150 species of hard corals and 500 species of fish, Reunion's coral reef is one of the richest in the world!

In deep waters, the spectacle is even more striking with scorpion fish, boxfish, leopard morays, timid octopus as well as elegant rays and sea turtles that seem to fly in crystal clear waters. All these species are protected by the Marine Nature Reserve created in 2007, and, to discover them, you just have to dive! As a bonus, if you've always dreamed of swimming with *Flipper the Dolphin*, know that here, your dream is within reach! Several species roam the waters of Reunion Island: the long-beaked dolphin, the spotted dolphin, Fraser's dolphin, or the common bottlenose dolphin can be observed all year round.

And, if you don't see any mermaids, you can let yourself be bewitched by the song of the humpback whales!

The waters of Reunion are particularly appreciated by these cetaceans who come to give birth there from June to September. The calves dive in and out of the water, imitating their mother's movements to perfection, and perform acrobatics in front of the setting sun. Watching the incredible synchronised swimming shows of these majestic mammals is priceless!



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# THE BIRTHPLACE OF ECOTOURISM

## PRESERVED BIODIVERSITY

With hundreds of endemic species, Reunion's biodiversity is unique in the world. But it's just as vulnerable as a porcelain teacup under a coconut tree, during the cyclone season. This is why it is considered one of the 34 "hotspots" of global biodiversity. This name does not refer to its torrid volcano but to its natural wealth, which is quite considerable for such a small island and particularly threatened by human activity.

By settling on the island in the middle of the 17th century, Man introduced, deliberately or unintentionally, several thousand exotic species from all over the world, thus disturbing the natural environment of endemic specimens.

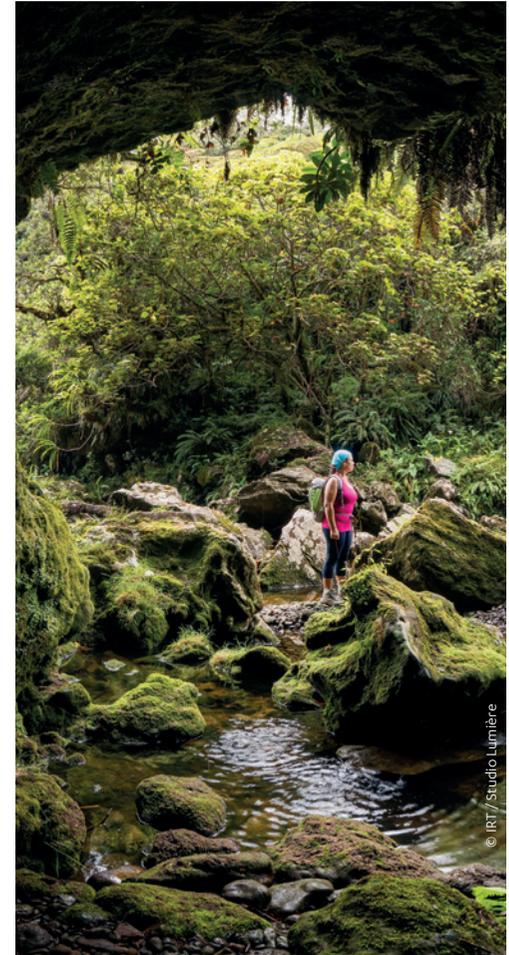
Several of them now represent a real threat to indigenous flora and fauna. In addition, there are other human disturbances that contribute to the alteration and destruction of certain habitats thereby endangering the island's biodiversity. The trees, flowers and birds are speaking but, for a long time, Man did not hear them... Fortunately that's changing!

## HIGHLY PROTECTED NATURE

The desire to protect Reunion's biodiversity and endemism, while promoting the island's highlands, gave rise to the creation of the Reunion National Park in 2007. This high-protection zone extends over more than of 100,000 hectares, or 42% of the island. But that's not all! Since 2010, the peaks, cirques and ramparts of the island have been listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO! This label distinguishes the most prestigious sites in the world and is also a guarantee of protection for Reunion's unique animal, plant and mineral heritage.

Many measures aim to preserve this extraordinary natural heritage, such as a formal ban on introducing exotic seeds or cuttings into the territory.

Similarly, the harvesting of endemic varieties on the island is prohibited within the National Park.



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## A N OCEAN OF ATTENTIONS

Because the island's natural treasures are also found at sea, a Marine Nature Reserve, was created in 2007. It stretches over 40 kilometres of coastline (including 20 km of coral reef) and is home to over 3,500 species. Regulations have, in particular been introduced to control water sports.

Likewise, dolphin, turtle and whale watching are subject to an approach charter.

It is, therefore, possible to observe the grandiose ballets of the giants of the seas, in the greatest

respect for the environment and the marine species.

To perfect this responsible approach, the O<sup>2</sup>CR (Observation Certifiée Responsable des Cétacés à La Réunion [Certified Responsible Observation of Cetaceans in Reunion Island]) label was created in July 2014. It is granted to professionals concerned with the well-being of majestic marine mammals. After all, the most beautiful divas deserve the best bodyguards!



## A SUSTAINABLE ISLAND

The pearl of the Indian Ocean is in ecological transition, and sustainable and responsible initiatives are flourishing throughout the island. In 2009, even before the Kyoto Protocol was ratified, Reunion Island was already implementing numerous projects to combat global warming.

The island is launching a major ecological challenge: to become energy-independent with renewable energy by 2030, while being at the forefront of preserving its biodiversity.

One-third of its electricity is already produced by recycling sugar cane waste! Most travel experiences are now evaluated in terms of sustainable development. All the more reason to call Reunion a "quality holiday destination".

This small natural paradise is indeed dedicated to sustainable development and offers a whole host of environmentally friendly activities making it possible to observe and learn more about its biodiversity. It's not for nothing that Reunion Island is among the most beautiful eco-responsible destinations in the world!

The "eco-friendly" actions of everyone in Reunion also contribute to environmentally friendly tourism development: grab your solar torches, kraft bags and eco-bottles! And if you think you're too small to change anything, think of the mosquito that ruined your sleep last night...

# AN XXL PLAYGROUND

*Here it's simple, your playground is limitless: it begins on land, spreads out at sea and extends into the skies. The island's scenery of dreams makes you want to replay scenes from anthologies and follow in the footsteps of mythical characters. Do you have a little Indiana Jones side? Canyoning, climbing, rafting, kayaking and lava tunnel exploration await you!*

You can test your adventuring skills on one of our fantastic mountain hikes. Are you more like James Bond? Segway rides, flyboarding, jet skiing, diving, free falling, flying over the island in a microlight or helicopter: you can easily find something to satisfy your love of thrills and all kinds of fast vehicles!

However, if you are an epicurean and spiritual being right out of a Woody Allen comedy, and you prefer walking nonchalantly through the streets of unknown cities, the island's botanical gardens are made for you!

You can also choose to glide on a stand-up paddle board, lost in your daydreams while gazing into the horizon.

Finally, if you have the spirit of a Jacques Mayol, there is more than enough to make your gills quiver in our magical lagoons or in the depths of the Indian Ocean.



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## EARTHLY PLEASURES

Reunion Island is bursting with activities: sumptuous golf courses, treetop adventure courses and climbing, picturesque horseback rides, more or less vigorous hikes and other distractions for enthusiastic visitors are waiting to be discovered on exceptional itineraries!

With its flora, landscape and breathtaking views, the island is well deserving of its reputation as a hiker's paradise. Family walks to roam with *the brood* or sports raids for the most daring, there is something for all levels and all tastes!

Are you an astronomy enthusiast? At nightfall, take a ride to a fairy tale clearing to contemplate the starry sky. If it's volcanoes that fascinate you, rush into the bowels of the earth and explore the lava tunnels with a speleology expert. You can also choose trekking, Nordic walking, eco-walks, sports hikes or excursions with a bivouac.

The mountain can also be explored by canyoning, with natural vertical slides that will give you a real adrenaline rush, with about twenty climbing sites, or on horseback, as close to nature as possible.

Cavalcades under the Australian pine and tamarinds trees, walks in the savannah at sunset, strolls in the volcanic massif: the bridle paths of Reunion Island cross the island's most beautiful landscapes. If riding on a distant cousin of Jolly Jumper isn't your thing, you can also discover the island by



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freewheeling. Mountain bikes, recumbent bikes, Segways, elliptical bikes, quad bikes, buggies and 4x4s await you! Accompanied by professionals or on your own, on foot, in the saddle or swinging down the trails, tread your way around Reunion Island and discover all its riches!



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## BUBBLES OF JOY

Experiences off the coast of Reunion Island are a must! So, have a good time on a cruise, diving, paddling or on other equally fun floating craft and discover the incredible marine creatures that have taken up residence here. Snorkelling, day or night diving and aquatic excursions allow you to discover the coral reef and observe beings with fins and gills, in warm, clear water 365 days a year!

If you prefer to stay dry, a varied fleet offers sensational excursions off the coast. Comfortably seated in a glass-bottom boat, you can watch the underwater parade without getting wet. Lying in the nets of a catamaran, you can contemplate the horizon, rocked by the trade winds, with a glass of punch in your hand. In a glass-bottom boat, you will enjoy an exquisite underwater safari. You can also take an introduction to coastal sailing on a monohulled sailing boat, go for a ride on a stand-up paddle board, dominating the lagoon's swells with a gentle feeling of serenity, or strengthen your biceps by paddling a kayak or a pirogue.

Finally, don't hesitate to enjoy the thrill of jet skiing, water skiing, wakeboarding or kitesurfing! Those who are more daring can tease the barracuda...

Reunion Island is a prime destination for sport fishing enthusiasts! On Reunion's waves, you can definitely count the distractions by the shovelful and enjoy some wonderful moments alone, as a couple or as a family!



## HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

How beautiful Reunion is from above! Reunion's sky is filled with thrills and breathtaking views of a strikingly beautiful island. To get off the beaten track, don't hesitate to take advantage of the trendy, hair-raising activities that Reunion is a specialist in: helicopters, microlights, paragliding, paraplaning or skydiving.

Exceptional flying sites, nature as far as the eye can see and optimal weather conditions year-

round make Reunion an internationally acclaimed territory for all those who love to fly like *Reunion harriers*. In the mountains or above the lagoon, you are the new knights of the sky! Like Jasmine and Aladdin on their flying carpet, in the Reunion Island firmament, you'll discover a new world of colours, you'll feel light in the clear blue sky and your heart will crumble. There's no doubt about it, in Reunion, you're on top of the world!

## REAL PROS TO ACCOMPANY HEROES

Do you want to try your hand at big game fishing without the risk of being skewered by a swordfish? Go horse riding without taking a tumble? Go paragliding without flying straight into a wall? Learn to play golf without ending up with backache? Are you as active as the Piton de la Fournaise and want to test all the island's activities but don't know

where to start? Professionals are there to make your wishes come true and save you the sorrows. Experienced and bedecked with qualifications, they will help you safely discover their discipline and accompany you to unknown lands, giving you the benefit of their sympathy and know-how.





# ULTIMATE CULTURE

*Inhabited for only 350 years, the island has welcomed people from all over the world. It has been coloured by Africa, Europe and Asia. A land of exemplary blending of cultures that embodies the universal values of respect, kindness and sharing. Here, different cultures and religions mix and mingle in perfect harmony. A warm welcome, smiling faces, colourful architecture, fascinating museums, spirited dances, captivating shows and music on every street corner, that's what Reunion offers. Welcome to the land of living in harmony!*

# THE REUNION ISLAND OF CULTURES

## A HARMONIOUS PALETTE OF TRADITIONS AND RELIGIONS

Marked by its colonial history, Reunion Island is rich with African, Indian, Indonesian, Chinese, Malagasy and European immigration. This French department, which denies neither its past nor its culture, proudly claims its ethnic diversity. During your wanderings, admire the Christian churches, the Tamil, Buddhist and Taoist temples, the mosques and the Chinese pagodas built across the territory.

The different religions and traditions present on the island flourish in this so special land where respect and tolerance are king. In the town centres of Saint-Denis or Saint-Pierre, it is not uncommon to hear the muezzin, church bells and Malbar drums sound at the same time, in perfect communion.

Here, you will also have the opportunity to participate in the various colourful festive celebrations that punctuate the year! In February, the spectacular Chinese New Year is celebrated all over the island, with its famous dragon dance and multiple shows.

The Hindu religion is also in the spotlight with the Tamil New Year in April and the impressive fire marches from December to January. As for Diwali,

the Tamil festival of light, it gives rise to an incredible parade of floats in November. During Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, it is common to pray outdoors!

Finally, don't miss the celebrations for the abolition of slavery that take place just before Christmas, on 20 December. Parades, songs, dances and percussion are in the spotlight on this festive day. What could be more beautiful than celebrating freedom?



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## FLAMBOYANT ARCHITECTURE

You can discover the origins of Creole culture by visiting the island's magnificent colonial mansions or small multicoloured buildings. In Reunion, houses are called "huts" and second homes are called "fresh air"! And yes, on the island, poetry is everywhere!

The island's Creole huts evoke Caribbean houses as well as some residences in New Orleans. They inherited the neoclassical tradition of the 18th century, to which were added architectural influences from the Indian trading posts and then Victorian building elements in the 19th century.

They often have pretty colours and are decorated with *lambrequins*, made of Indian-inspired sheet metal or wood friezes that run around the roof. The first houses, usually rectangular or square, were built like ships, with wooden frames and walls covered with tamarind cladding. The entrance is through the veranda, an exterior extension of the central living room.

Massive in appearance, the master houses are impressive with their colonnades and superb gardens, a bit like *Gone with the Wind*. In the old Creole society, you had to see without being seen... For that, the *guetali* ("look out for him"), a small open gazebo, was perfect! In the corner of the garden, it allowed the ladies to *moucat* (gossip) in complete discretion. It was also a place worthy of a Jane Austen novel, where you could watch for your lover and exchange sweet nothings...

You can still see them in some gardens. In Hell-Bourg or Entre-Deux, the old Creole huts conceal an entire piece of Reunion Island's history behind their lambrequins.

It is a pleasure to stroll through the streets of these charming villages and take pictures of some of these huts that look like fairy tale houses! What's more, in Saint-Denis, the Rue de Paris is an open-air museum with its distinctive Creole houses! Some

are even listed as "Historic Monuments" or have been transformed into beautiful museums. Others remain mysterious, protected behind large wrought iron gates.

All, in any case, contain architectural treasures and make you want to enter them. The Martin-Valliamé house in Saint-André, the Villèle museum (former Desbassayns house) in Saint-Gilles or the Tourelles estate in La Plaine-des-Palmistes are worth a visit.





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## A GALLERY OF MUSEUMS

Fortunate is the one who wants to discover the island while becoming more erudite than Mac Lesggy or Jamy! Reunion has four regional museums that allow visitors to learn about the social or industrial history, culture, tradition or heritage of Reunion Island. The Cité du Volcan allows you to learn more about the island's rock star, the Piton de la Fournaise.

The Stella Matutina Museum invites you to immerse yourself in the history of sugar cane cultivation, deeply linked to that of Reunion Island society. The Kélonia centre will introduce you to marine turtles. And finally, the Museum of Decorative Arts of the Indian Ocean (MADOI) showcases works, fine art and furniture from Reunion Island through its beautiful collections.

And that's not all! A plethora of other high-quality museums await you, as well as large old estates or residences, which allow you to discover Reunion's history and cultural heritage. Botanical gardens, an aquarium, modern and contemporary art collections, an astronomical observatory, insectarium, old colonial houses, distilleries, chocolate factories, coffee, vanilla or turmeric sanctuaries... There is something for everyone!

## WHEN THE MUSIC IS GOOD

"*Ti fleur fanée, Ti fleur aimée, Di a mwin toujours, Kouak c'est qu'l'amour?*" That's the chorus of one of the island's cult songs. Reunion Island is a unique, diverse destination in terms of language, heritage, folklore and music. It has a strong musical identity with *Sega* and *Maloya*, listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Two legacies of the ancestors of Reunion, two major musical genres whose originality and authenticity are now recognised throughout the world.

*Sega* is similar to the *beguine* of the West Indies. It was once a romantic prelude. A combination of music, song and dance originally practised by African and Malagasy slaves from the Bourbon Island plantations, *Maloya* was still banned from the cities not long ago... It is only since 1982 that it has been allowed to freely ring out! A true song of pain, melancholy and hope, *Maloya* has origins comparable to the "blues" of American slaves. It is, however, quite different from a musical standpoint. Based on a ternary rhythm, it uses the traditional instruments of the music of Afro-Malagasy slaves.

Some songs are especially etched in the hearts of Reunion Islanders, such as Jacqueline Farreyrol's "*Ça sent la banane*"; which evokes a little Creole boy painting a portrait of Reunion Island for his friend Métropolitain (or Kaskavel) and talks about the Voile de la Mariée waterfall. Danyèl Waro, the Léo Ferré of the highlands, Davy Sicard, who makes Reunion Islanders dance to the sounds of his "*Maloya Kabosé*", or Meddy Gerville and his *Maloya*-infused jazz, are among the great names on the Reunion Island scene.

The latter has been enriched and reinvented over the years with the convergence of *Péji*, European and Indian Ocean musicians. It has blended with French variety, jazz, electro-fusion, rock, and reggae.

Here, music is everywhere: on stage in concert halls, stadiums, *rondavelles* and *kabars* (folk festivals), and small outdoor concerts.

In the street, it can be found in improvised shows and neighbourhood celebrations and at the heart of festivals such as *Sakifo* in Saint-Pierre, where national and international stars flock, the *Kaloo Bang* festival and *Electropicales* in Saint-Denis, the *Grand Boucan* in Saint-Gilles, the *Indian Ocean Jazz Festival* or the *Liberté Métisse Festival* in l'Étang-Salé, among many others!

So, lend an ear and feel the beat of the *roulèr*, *kayamb*, *djembé* and *pikèr*!



© DR / R. Fonlupt

## TAKE MY HAND AND COME DANCE!

In Reunion, bodies often express themselves through music. Most of the time, to the beat of *Maloya* and *Sega*.

*Sega* originated at the beginning of the 18th century, around the fires of slave camps on agricultural properties. It is, therefore, described as “an expression of a brutal and violent desire”. It is indeed a sensual dance where dance partners perform a kind of amorous courtship ritual. Hips swing, and the man turns around the woman, who goes wherever she likes.

The dancers turn around each other and synchronise by slowly descending into the most sensual face off! As for the *Maloya*, it’s performed with legs slightly bent, undulations of the pelvis and directional leg movements or steps striking the ground.

The traditional costumes of these dances are always sparkling! The female dancer usually wears a small top knotted at the front and a skirt, close to her hips and flared at the bottom, which she grabs to shake in time with the beat. Shirt and cropped trousers are a must for her partner.

In addition to traditional dances, dance in Reunion today has a notable creative dynamic with several professional dance companies and modern and urban dances that are experiencing a real boom.





© IRT / Studio Lumière

## REUNION IS A POEM, OR A NOVEL, IT DEPENDS

*“Lost on the mountain, between two high walls, it is a savage place, with a hospitable dream, which, from the first day, has known only few guests; the noise does not rise from the sea on the coasts, nor the murmur of man: one can forget there.”*

This is how René Leconte de Lisle spoke of Bernica, a place in the west of Reunion Island. The Island of Poets had its heyday in the 19th-century. The great writers of Reunion found the words to express their melancholy and depict the exquisite pleasure of their island. Baudelaire, who passed through, even dedicated several poems to the Bourbon Island. Reunion Island’s literature first spread through

poetry and tales before moving into the world of novels with the 1844 publication of *Marrons* by Louis Timagène Houat.

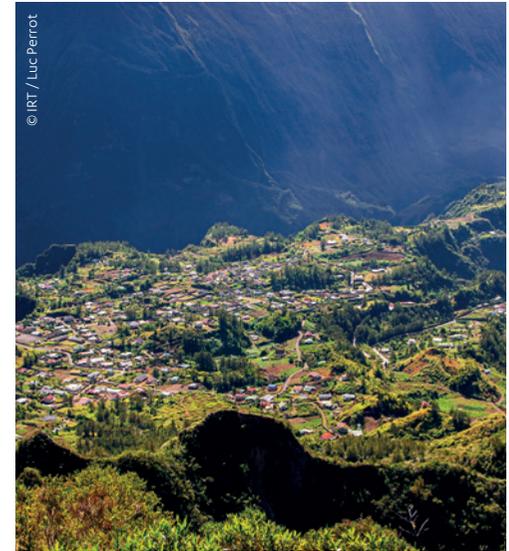
It experienced a period of significant development in the 1980s and early 1990s. Charles Marie, Auguste Lacaussade, Jean Albany and Jean-François Samlong, pillars of the new Reunion Island novel... Reunion seems to be home to many talented authors.

Today, young authors are taking part in its rise, with local publishing houses very much alive, and are expressing themselves in both French and Reunionese Creole.

## THE SEVENTH ART IN SEVENTH HEAVEN

The spectacular landscapes of Reunion Island have been used as a backdrop for films and television series more than once. The island is idyllic, what could be more normal than filming stars in paradise?

This is what François Truffaut must have told himself when he filmed Jean-Paul Belmondo and Catherine Deneuve in *Mississippi Mermaid* in 1969. Moreover, Réunion Islanders have reason to rejoice because Reunion is fertile ground for film festivals whose number and scale never cease to grow. Lights... Camera... Action!



© IRT / Luc Perrot



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## ARTISTIC PROFESSIONS IN REUNION

Art is highly present on this vibrant island. Take the time to discover it as you visit the many shops, museums and galleries where it is exhibited. Reunion Island strives to develop its local resources and traditions in a resolutely creative and contemporary approach.

Contemporary art is also honoured at the Art Library and in many galleries. At the Léon-Dierx Museum, you can admire works by Picasso, Gauguin, Cézanne, Renoir or Caillebotte, as well as paintings by local artists (Arthur Grimaud, Adolphe

Le Roy, Antoine-Louis Roussin, etc.). Photographs are also on show, allowing visitors to discover Reunion Island's 19th-century landscapes.

What's more, *peñ* handicrafts are also very prolific. The island is particularly well known for its basket weavers, who weave screwpine leaves, and its volcanic stone, lava, tortoiseshell, wood, ceramic and embroidery creations. It has 420 jewellery, treenware and marquetry professionals. So, you can take home some wonderful souvenirs!



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## URBAN CULTURE

During your strolls on the island, you probably noticed funny little orange characters painted on dilapidated buildings, dead trees, school walls or even on cliffs... They are the *gouzous* by Jace, the most famous graffiti artist on the island and acclaimed all over the world!

This artist from Le Havre, who has been living in Reunion since 1982, has greatly contributed to restoring the image of Street Art in the eyes of the general public, as well as the authorities. From Reunion to New York, by way of Tokyo, Paris, Lisbon and Madrid, there are now thousands of *gouzous* around the world!

But Reunion's urban culture doesn't stop at graph': hip hop dance, break dance, slam, rap, *fonnkèr*, human beatbox, and choreographic battles also make the island's cities pulsate! Every year in July, the *Big Up Festival* raises public awareness of these art forms over a weekend and provides a prime opportunity for local talent to express itself!

Visiting Reunion is also about discovering its cultural identity. Well, that's perfect, because the island is rich in influences from all over the world! Here, *péi* arts and *lontan* poetry rub shoulders with slam, graffiti artists and electro music! One thing is certain: in Reunion, entertainment and cultural celebrations abound! Keep your eyes and ears peeled and let your curiosity speak for itself.



A vibrant still life of Creole cuisine. In the foreground, a white plate is filled with bright yellow rice and several succulent meatballs in a rich, reddish-brown sauce. To the left, a small metal tray holds fresh ingredients: a whole red onion, ginger, garlic, and green chilies. In the background, a large metal pot with a lid sits on a woven bamboo tray, accompanied by a glass of amber-colored liquid. To the right, a dark stone mortar and pestle is visible, with some ingredients inside. The scene is set against a warm, textured background of woven bamboo and green palm fronds, creating a rustic and inviting atmosphere.

# ULTIMATE CREOLE

*In Reunion, cultural diversity is also found on plates! The local cuisine has strong European, Chinese, Indian and Malagasy influences. Your taste buds will be in ecstasy and you will find yourself using and abusing many superlatives such as succulent, delicious, tasty or divine when you taste the island's dishes. Authentic, generous and colourful, Reunion's cuisine is sure to satisfy you! Notice to all passengers: don't tighten your belt too much. You have embarked on an incredible culinary journey!*

# A FEAST FOR YOUR TASTE BUDS

## COSMOPOLITAN GASTRONOMY

Take a little French stock, add a pinch of Malagasy spices, a zest of Chinese know-how, a touch of Indian flavours, bring to the boil and you'll get a truly unique menu! Rice, grain, rougail: the trilogy of traditional Reunionese cuisine is a real masterpiece! Curry, the reference dish in Reunion, is a good example.

Brown meat, fish or vegetables, add finely chopped onions, tomatoes, garlic, ginger, turmeric, salt, pepper and thyme and simmer. Serve with rice and some greens and you'll have a delicious traditional Reunionese dish to enjoy as much as you want!

If you are a fan of Indian cuisine, choose a biani, tandoori or coq massalé, a dish in sauce made with coriander, cumin, chilli, curry leaves and tamarind pulp. Are you dreaming of a good stew? Stewed rooster, stewed *zourites* (octopus), stewed duck, stewed deer... you are spoiled for choice! Plus, with shrimp avocados, green papaya salads or smoked fish (swordfish, blue marlin, tuna, mahi-mahi, etc.), all the delicious products from the Indian Ocean are on your plate!





## A FARANDOLE OF SPECIALITIES

Reunion Island boasts a true local culture with many regional specialities: lentils and Cilaos wine, Bourbon vanilla, Salazie chouchou, Mont Bébou cheese, Takamaka goat cheese, rum from the Rivière du Mât Distillery... Every corner of the island contains a culinary nugget!

As for Creole pâté, it is to Reunion Islanders what turkey with chestnuts is to the mainlanders: a dish for special occasions! It comes in the form of a

pie, topped with a spicy chicken or pork filling, tomatoes, onion, garlic... and a drop of vermouth. These local products are particularly appreciated at table d'hôtes, as part of a real feast. Imagine...

You are in the heart of Salazie and, between two hikes, you enjoy a refreshing palm kernel salad and a chouchou gratin to die for. The products grown in the open air go directly from the field to your plate, and, in the small dishes cooked over a wood fire, you will discover new and unusual flavours!

## MARKETS FULL OF COLOUR

With its Queen Victoria pineapples, bananas and coconuts that grow year-round, Reunion is not short of tasty fruit! What's more, each season brings its share of vitamins: lychees, mangoes and papayas in December and January, passion fruit in March and April, and in May: it's the guava harvest! Don't miss the island's most unusual fruits: *jackfruit*, *bread fruit*, *longanis*, *tamarind*, *tangors*, *starfruit* and *pitayas*.

But the island is also the paradise of "lontan" vegetables. To discover them, head to the markets! Windows into the everyday life of Reunion Islanders, the island's markets are also an excellent introduction to local cuisine. The stalls reveal incredible diversity! As you stroll through the colourful alleyways, let yourself be dazzled by the shimmering citrus fruits and aubergines which, as in the song, seem to shout "*Eat me! Eat me! Eat me!*". Soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the thousands of scents that will tantalise your nostrils in the aisles: spices, fruits, vanilla, geranium, turmeric... all your senses will be in awe!



## SPICES, SPICES, IN WONDERLAND

For those who love culinary curiosities: Reunion Islanders are fond of chillies! In *rougails*, under the skin of grilled black pudding or in the middle of *achar*, it is found in many dishes.

The most explosive of Reunion's chillies is the tiny *piment-zoiseau*. But many other varieties volunteer to awaken your taste buds: green chilli peppers, habaneros, cherry peppers, and large chilli peppers! More delicate palates may, of course, request less

spicy dishes. Ginger, garlic and turmeric are also on the menu!

As for pink peppercorn, it delivers flavours that are both aniseed, peppery and sweet, to the absolute delight of gourmets!

Lastly, foodies can rejoice: Bourbon vanilla is one of the best in the world! By visiting one of its plantations, you can discover the exceptional craftsmanship of Reunion Island.



## COFFEE OR TEA?

Bourbon Pointu is a variety of coffee which only exists in Reunion. Characterised by its low-caffeine content, it is among the best coffees in the world and is considered a *Premium Coffee*. This high-end coffee, roasted over a wood fire, is an absolute must!

In Reunion, tea lovers are not to be outdone. An excellent white tea is produced at Grand Coude, where you can visit a plantation in a magical setting and walk through a maze made of tea plants!

At breakfast, as a pudding or at snack time, have your tea or coffee with a piece of *potato cake* or *ti'son cake*, two of the island's sweet delicacies.



© IRT / Sébastien Conéjéro

## FROM SUGAR CANE TO RUM, LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE

In Reunion, sugar is not just used to flavour plain yoghurt. It's a culture, a history, a heritage.

Sugar cane has shaped the island's destiny by shaping its economy. What's more, a significant part of the electricity used on the island comes from the cane! As you visit the island's distilleries and its two gigantic sugar factories, which are still active, you will learn all about the production of cane sugar and local rum.

In Reunion, this rum is often enjoyed "arrangé". In fact, it is mixed with wonderful fruits that are left to macerate for a period of six months to two years with, for example, *faham*, a wild orchid, or other plants and spices. In this way, all of Reunion's tropical fruits are used to make flavoured rums that bear their name well: rum-coco, rum-vanilla, rum pineapple, etc.

To finish a good Creole meal, rum is a must that you surely can't refuse to taste!



## THE ART OF THE APERITIF

In the Reunionese culinary tradition, the aperitif has its own importance. It must be said that the summer atmosphere, 365 days a year, particularly lends itself to this.

Indeed, nothing beats admiring a beautiful sunset on the beach while savouring local specialities: samosas are triangle-shaped fritters stuffed with cheese, meat, fish or vegetables; bouchons are a pork-based Chinese speciality with steamed rice paste; and, lastly, "bonbons piments", of Indian origin, are made with peas, spices and chilli peppers.

And for a bit of refreshment and to toast the holidays, you can enjoy a local beer or sip a delicious cocktail, concocted from "charrette" rum. *The Entre-Deux, The Fournaise, The Punch Coco, The Tropical Kiss, The Nirvana, The Flamboyant...*

Here, even the names of these exquisite beverages take you on a journey! So, as we say here, "Anou!", or "To your health!". And to keep it, don't forget to drink in moderation...

*Alcohol abuse is dangerous for your health.  
Consume in moderation.*

## COMPETITIVE PICNICS

In Reunion, picnics are an institution! Single-handedly, they represent the entire Reunionese way of life and are a time of sharing and conviviality. All year round, at weekends or during school holidays, Reunion Islanders meet with family or friends at one of the many picnic and leisure areas on the island or on the beach.

Here, on the sand, they recreate the decor of their living room with the help of tables, chairs, drapes, pots full of rice, smoked meat and other succulent food! In the highlands, in the lowlands, in the undergrowth, near a waterfall, a river or facing the ocean, every corner of the island serves as the perfect setting for these festive outdoor meals! It's also an opportunity to enjoy nearby outdoor activities: cycle paths, hiking trails, playgrounds, boules, the lagoon... After a gargantuan lunch, don't worry, you'll have something to burn up!

Reunion is an intensely food-loving island, and, at mealtime, Reunion Islanders' sense of sharing takes on its full meaning! Don't hesitate to interact with the islanders.

Who knows, you may be lucky enough to be invited to a traditional family picnic at the weekend! For the flavours of the old Bourbon Island, as well as for the encounters you could have there, only one piece of advice: don't hesitate to take a leap into the unknown!





# ULTIMATE WELLNESS

*Our island is a real oasis of peace where it feels good to unwind. The soothing virtues of its heavenly beaches and peaceful cirques are well proven. It is also home to many wellness spots where you can recharge your batteries and pamper yourself. Beauty salons, spas, fitness centres and thermal baths in Cilaos welcome you for unparalleled moments of relaxation. So, indulge yourself with a peaceful little break! After all, as the saying goes, there's nothing wrong with treating yourself...*

# A COCOON OF SOFTNESS FOR BRAVE ADVENTURERS

## LUXURY, CALM AND EXQUISITE PLEASURE

After having trudged to the top of the island's peaks, you ignore your legs that feel like jelly and rush to the ultimate reward: a moment of pure relaxation! You step into a temple of Zen and all your little aches and pains fly away as if by magic thanks to the expert hands of a masseur with an almost supernatural gentleness. And yes, Reunion is a land of adventures, but it is also the ideal place to nurture your body and mind! It's important because, as Khalil Gibran says, *"The body is a matrix for the soul"* and the soul needs a cosy and safe home to radiate happiness.

So, head straight for one of the many establishments waiting for you in idyllic surroundings! Even slightly battered bodies can be "repaired" and come out as a cosy cocoon for radiant souls! Here you can enjoy high-end services in green settings, sumptuous hotels and even in the middle of lush tropical gardens. In these refined settings, let yourself be tempted by relaxing or energetic massages and special facial and body treatments, jacuzzis

or even alternative therapies. Slip into one of the island's divine cocooning spaces, inhale, exhale and let yourself be carried away.

## THE CHOICE OF KINGS

For your enchanted escapades, you are spoilt for choice: you can relax with your other half in a private jacuzzi, flush out toxins and tensions in a hammam, invigorate yourself under a hydromassage shower or awaken your senses with the help of aromatherapy. Vanilla, vetiver, ylang-ylang, coconut... the natural treasures of the Indian Ocean are there to lavish you with their benefits and take your senses on a journey! A passion fruit wrap, pineapple and papaya scrub, massage with coconut, bamboo or argan oil or spice mask will transport you to a parallel universe where the softest sensations will glide across your skin!

In Reunion, the areas dedicated to wellness combine ancestral traditions with modern techniques and are inspired by thousand-year-old body care products from all over the world. The best rituals on the planet can be found on the island: Balinese treatments,



ayurvedic or even four-handed massages. Your legendary curiosity may even push you to try a hot stone massage, reflexology or aquatic osteopathy! And don't hesitate to take advantage of these moments of tranquillity in pairs, thanks to the many couples treatments that are available to you.

This way, you can share special moments as a couple, open your chakras and let yourselves be swept away by pleasure and harmony together. The treatments provided by wellness professionals will lull you, your knots will be unravelled one after the next and your worries will fade away. They will clearly feel that they are out of place in this space where gentleness rubs shoulders with magic. When you leave, you will feel light, light, light... Even if the caress of the sun, the melody of the waves, the purity of the air of the cirques and the benevolent smiles of the Reunion Islanders are already beginning to have an effect on your zenitude rate, there is nothing better than a wellness break after a day of hiking or even after hours of lazing around... So, do not hesitate to step into one of our havens of peace, you won't regret it!



# ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

- Local stories
- Time stands still
- A touch of fantasy
- Off the beaten track

# LOCAL STORIES

## REAL BOURBON VANILLA

In the heart of the Sainte-Rose highland forest, there is a vanilla plantation unlike any other: *Bourbon vanilla*. As you enter the lush undergrowth, you discover a world full of life where orchids grow alongside ferns, coffee trees and kaffir lime trees. In the company of Maryse, you spend two fascinating hours on this protected site where everything is done by hand, with the greatest respect for nature. The secrets of cultivating this 100% natural vanilla are revealed and you learn how, in 1841, the destinies of this delicate plant and a young slave from Sainte-Suzanne were intimately linked. Let yourself be amazed by this visit full of authentic flavours!



© DR / plantation Vanilla Bourbon



© IRT / Miles & Love

## TOUR OF A TEA FIELD

In Grand-Coude, in the highlands of Saint-Joseph, you will discover a plantation as beautiful as it is rare: Johnny and Emmanuelle are the only tea producers in France.

Here you will enter a real maze of plants and re-discover your inner child in the shade of giant tea plants. Then, in a garden of yesteryear, you will be intoxicated by delicious perfumes.

In a small wooden fairy tale-like hut, you will finish the tour in style with a cup of this deliciously scented beverage.

As a bonus, you can take home some delicacies from the shop: syrups, jellies, honey, essential oils and of course... tea!

## STROLL ALONG THE RIVERSIDE

In the East of Reunion Island, the exuberance of the tropical landscape really comes into its own. Let Geoffrey guide you through the hamlet Béthléem, from river to endemic plants and lychee orchards.

During this walk, which is accessible to everyone, you get to spend some time observing the surrounding nature, which is particularly abundant, learn about many endemic plants, come face to face with an old 19th-century chapel and contemplate the nests of the weaver birds, which your friendly guide will point out to you. Afterwards, you can relax in the shade by the river, for a moment of sharing in an enchanting setting.

## THE SECRETS OF THE COCONUT

All is well in the coconut tree! A visit to *La Maison du Coco* will be enough to convince you. On their Saint-Leu agricultural estate, Mireille and Didier invite you to learn all about the 1,000 possible uses for the “tree of life”.

You will learn how to pick the nut, crack it with a machete, collect its refreshing water and grate its flesh to make delicious sweets. You will taste fresh coconut, coconut water, virgin oil (a one-of-a-kind product in Europe), molasses, coconut sugar and craft sorbet. Avid connoisseurs can even choose to have an all coconut lunch. As a bonus, after your introduction to palm weaving, you can take your creation home with you!



© IRT / La Vie en Mauve

## THE SUGAR CANE AND AN OXCART

On the edge of Saint-Pierre, you will climb aboard an oxcart and be transported back in time, through the sugar cane fields. Comfortably seated in the cart as it bounces down a stony track in Ravine Blanche, Sandy will help you learn all about the history of sugar cane. At the edge of a field, machete in hand, you will learn how to cut the cane. During a break at the family property, you will enjoy a delicious péi cake. Then you will head to *Saga du Rhum!* A return to modernity in this museum run by Isautier, the oldest local distillers. After the visit and a tasting of flavoured rums, Sandy will invite you to sit down for a typical Creole picnic! *This experience is only offered from July to December.*

*Alcohol abuse is dangerous for your health.  
Consume in moderation.*

## BOURBON POINTU COFFEE

Grand-Coude is undeniably a great spot for exceptional delicacies: this is where one of the best coffees in the world is grown!

At the dawn of the new millennium, Jacques and Marie-Claude revived Laurina coffee, also known as Bourbon Pointu.

The charming couple retrace the unique history of the plant in a small museum with typical Creole architecture and then take you through the coffee trees to tell you about their artisan production methods. You don't need to know how to read coffee grounds to predict a bouquet of emotions at the *Maison du Laurina*.



© IRT / La Vie en Mauve

## CREOLE COOKERY WORKSHOP

You join the friendly Jacky and a handful of other apprentice cooks at the Chaudron market for a fun, foodie day out. You fill up with fresh produce, before learning about Reunion Island cuisine at *Far Far Créol*.

You crush the chilli pepper in a mortar while one of your fellow students sorts the greens and Jacky lights a wood fire. Pots heat up, frying pans spit, laughter fills the air: a real moment of sharing *made in Reunion!*

Then you sit at the table and taste the marvellous spread you prepared together: “bois de songe” gratin or pork curry and “chou de coco”. From market to table, you now have all the ingredients to successfully make a good, traditional Creole dish!

## MUSICAL CABARET FROM THE HIGHLANDS

Head to Plaine-des-Cafres for a joyous dinner and show! With a good dose of humour, the *Pat Jaune* cabaret tell anecdotes about daily life in the island's highlands in song. You will spend a memorable evening with a group of musicians with unmistakable style.

The three Gonthier brothers and their accomplice Claudine will take you on a flavourful, musical journey back in time into the history of Reunion Island. With this flamboyant quartet, you will have a truly fun evening with the skits and songs, Creole dishes and crazy laughter.

## THE UNIQUE BLUE VANILLA

We have flushed out pods that are unique in the world at the foot of the volcano in Saint-Philippe!

Nicole and Aimé's blue vanilla is not subject to any cooking and, after two years of ripening, the pods are still alive and 100% edible. Like a good wine, they continue to improve over time and their aromatic qualities make them an exceptional, multi-award-winning product appreciated by the greatest chefs.

During the tour of the workshop, the ripeners reveal the secrets of their excellent craftsmanship and invite you to taste some homemade flavoured rums.

*Alcohol abuse is dangerous for your health.  
Consume in moderation.*

## THE MYSTERIES OF THE VETIVER

In the expert hands of Didier, one of the island's last vetiver growers, the woody grass can be transformed into a real treasure, prized by the greatest perfumers, parasols and even.... bundles of moth repellent! How? To learn all about it, head to Far-Far de Bézaves, in the highlands of Saint-Joseph, where you will make use of your green thumb, from planting to harvesting, cut through swathes with a sword and dive into the history of a culture that is centuries old. At the heart of this farm, which also grows sugar cane, 'Bourbon Pointu' coffee and turmeric, vetiver will reveal all its secrets to you. Finally, you will enjoy cassava cake and arrow root crème caramel, followed by genuine Bourbon Pointu coffee. A perfect way to wind up this authentic, fragrant visit!



## VISIT A HINDU TEMPLE

When you enter the small community and family temple Maryen Péroumal in Saint-André, you will discover Ganesh, Vishnu and many other Hindu deities, who are just some of the 330 million that exist! From the very first minutes, the smell of incense and necklaces of fresh flowers adorning the coloured statues will delight your nose and plunge you into a world of its own. Mythology, rites, sacrifices to the goddess Karli, fire walking... your guide will reveal all the distinctive characteristics of Hinduism in Reunion Island. An opportunity to share and discover another culture, and another religion, in one of the few temples on the island open to visitors!



## CREOLE FLAVOURS, FROM FIELD TO FORK

In the highlands of Sainte-Anne, dive into 'lontan' cuisine with Philippe, a farmer who lovingly watches over the traditions of Reunion Island. In the warm atmosphere of a wood fire kitchen, you will participate in a culinary workshop unlike any other. 'Risofé', 'ti jacques boucané', 'massalé la corée', and green papaya fritters come to life in the expert hands of Philippe and his commis chefs. While the pots are simmering, head to the farm! You will learn to cut the cane and discover some of the wonders of Reunion Island: pineapple, fig baba, vangasaye, bourbon coffee, oranges, screwpines, zembrozade, limes, etc. A walk interspersed with tastings and anecdotes that will make your mouth water.

That works out nicely because, with Philippe, your taste buds will be pampered! After a tasty Creole meal, served in banana leaves, it's time to sample some honey directly from the hive! To summarise this experience of a thousand flavours, just quote Philippe: "the simplest things are the best!"

# TIME STANDS STILL

## SUNSET ON THE BEACH

What's the best way to spend the last hour of daylight on the ultimate island? By enjoying the moment, in front of the setting sun. The last rays draw a golden trail across the lagoon, the water sparkles, and the waves murmur delicately.



© IRT / Stéphane Codin

You contemplate the changing sky. It goes from orange yellow to flamboyant pink in an instant, and then the golden sun slips into the ocean. Sitting on the still warm sand, you can sip a nice cocktail and commune with space and time. After dusk, the music, laughter and clinking of glasses announce the start to a great evening!



© IRT / Emmanuel Viron

## HIKE TO PITON DES NEIGES

Newsflash: it can snow on Reunion Island! But not just anywhere: at an altitude of 3,071 metres above sea level, on the roof of the Indian Ocean. The route to the Piton des Neiges alternates between forest, frost and volcanic scoria.

At an altitude of 2,400 metres, you can take a break at the *Refuge de la Caverne Dufour* before the final ascent!

And what a surprise it is when the sun shines its spotlight on the exceptional landscapes of Reunion and the ocean as far as the eye can see!

Perched above the clouds, you feel like you're witnessing the world's very first morning.

## BÉLOUVE, THE HIGHLAND'S OLD-GROWTH FOREST

At 1,300 m above sea level, you will discover the most magical tropical forest: Bélouve.

Before the start of the path, an incredible panoramic view of the cirque of Salazie is laid out before you.

Then you gradually advance through the exuberant undergrowth, with a magical atmosphere. The sunlight filters through the high branches and plays with the patches of mist.

The highland tamarind trees with tortuous shapes, tree ferns, trunks of wood covered in moss and wild orchids...

The trail leads to a breathtaking viewpoint over the Trou de Fer and its spectacular waterfalls. On the Bébou-Bélouve forest trail, magic is everywhere!



© IRT / Miles & Love

## PLAINE DES SABLES

Before you can play paparazzi in front of the Piton de la Fournaise, you must first cross the Plaine des Sables. On this trail at over 2,000 meters above sea level, you are Neil Armstrong! A lunar landscape dotted with scoria in changing shades, sand and volcanic rocks stretches for miles. Then you arrive at the Pas de Bellecombe mountain pass, which opens the way to the Piton de la Fournaise and reveals its rampart, a wonderful garden of natural sculptures.

On the trail, the magma flows frozen under your feet never cease to amaze you. Then, at the edge of the smoking crater, emotion overwhelms you. One of the most active volcanoes in the world is standing right in front of you!

## SUNRISE AT MAÏDO

Before the first light of day, by car you will reach the Piton Maïdo viewpoint, 2,200 metres above the Saint-Paul highlands.

When the first light of dawn appears, the curtain slowly rises over a grandiose setting, the line of peaks and ridges reveal themselves and the massive silhouettes of the Piton des Neiges and the Gros Morne enter the scene.

What a sight! Below, the harmonious contours of Mafate take shape. This place that is cut off from the world seems to invite you to discover it. To win over its heart, you will have to walk: no roads lead to this secret treasure.



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## OBSERVE THE MILKY WAY

Enjoy the unique experience of a night under the stars in Reunion Island! Reunion's highlands are a great observation point to discover the wonders of the southern skies. At two thousand metres above sea level, far from the hustle and bustle and lights of the city, in the profound silence of nature, you slip into a sleeping bag and enjoy the show. Your mind will wander under the crystal-clear sky and get lost in the Milky Way and its long luminous trail. As the minutes pass, your eyes will make out a growing number of stars and galaxies, when they're not distracted by the flash of a shooting star. The night progresses and leaves you with stars in your eyes...

# A TOUCH OF FANTASY

## DRAWING UNDERWATER, IN THE LAGOON

In Reunion, even the wildest dreams come true. Today, you will draw underwater! Accompanied by Fred, a passionate illustrator, you will immerse yourself in the La Saline lagoon with a mask, a snorkel, a drawing board and waterproof chalk in magical colours.

As a great connoisseur of corals and tropical fish, Fred will introduce you to the inhabitants of the lagoon: butterflyfish, damselfish, wrasse... Then your small group of budding artists will return to the beach to give your aquatic works a final touch. A lovely moment of bonding to experience with friends or your children!



## ÉTANG DE SAINT-PAUL IN A KAYAK

On Reunion Island, there is an unexpected haven of peace: Étang de Saint-Paul. Just a stone's throw from the city, you will discover this labyrinthine water course while paddling alongside passionate eco-guards. Your kayak will glide through the calm water where shy moorhens paddle.

You will see chameleons (*endormis*) clinging to papyrus stems, or striated herons flying majestically.

You will then reach the Tour des Roches and its pool. Next time, you can explore this National Nature Reserve area on land, on foot or by bike!



## A NIGHT UNDER THE STARS

At Les Makes, in a coniferous forest 1,500 m above sea level, you will spend the most unusual night in... a bubble! Bathroom, living room, heating and cosy bed: a five-star night awaits you. Or even a 10,000-star night, because an iPad and a dedicated application are at your disposal so you can immerse yourself in the cosmos. Before taking advantage of your private astronomical observatory, you will enjoy a meal that stands out: fondue or raclette!

You will awaken with your head full of stars and, in the daylight, the beauty of the site will overwhelm you. When you leave your *Kaz Insolite*, you will feel as light as a soap bubble!

## HIKING AND HELICOPTER IN MAFATE

Now you can combine hiking with a helicopter flight on Reunion Island! Departing from Deux-Bras, you will begin with a two-hour walk, from the Galets river to the hamlet of Cayenne, by way of the Bras d'Oussy pool.

The imposing silhouettes of Piton Cabris and then Piton des Calumets will rear up before you.

In Cayenne, you share a succulent chicken curry cooked on a wood fire in a lodge with a multicoloured metal roof. Then you will board a helicopter and discover new sensations!

From the sky, you can contemplate the depth of the gorges of Mafate and its little hamlets and you will be able and really take in the rarity of this timeless place away from the hustle and bustle of the world.

## ONE NIGHT IN A BOUTIQUE HOTEL

In Saint-Leu, you can enjoy the serenity of a 5-star “Relais & Châteaux” hotel that is as refined as it is discreet: *the Blue Margouillat*. This establishment stands out for its cosy atmosphere, subdued lighting and panoramic view of the Indian Ocean.

From the balcony overlooking the sea, even whales passing through can't escape your gaze! Lounging on a deckchair, you'll enjoy the sun beside the heated swimming pool. Then, you can savour beautifully prepared Creole delicacies at the hotel's gourmet restaurant, one of the best on the island.

With your eyes and taste buds satisfied, you will dive into your cocoon for a night of softness and gilded dreams!

## EDEN IN A HELICOPTER

Early in the morning, Patrice will take you on the Petite Ravine trail, near the town of Le Tampon. Hugging the side of the rampart, it descends to the bottom of one of the deepest gorges on Reunion Island: Bras de la Plaine. After walking for two hours, you will arrive at your destination: *Hikers' Eden*.

Created by “Tonton” and his sons in a little corner of paradise, this house built of wood and volcanic stone looks a bit like Robinson Crusoe's cabin.

Over a good meal cooked over a wood fire, your hosts will tell you hundreds of Creole stories. The next day, you'll leave this truly authentic mountain lodge by helicopter!



## L'ÉTANG-SALÉ FOREST ON A SEGWAY

Fancy a ride on an all-terrain Segway in the Etang-Salé forest? Your guide, starts with an introduction to steering this lively and very manoeuvrable machine, which is perfect for discovering Reunion Island's nature up close. Then, on the sandy trails, Fred's voice sounds in your earpiece: he tells you all about the local history and the vegetation.

At the end of the afternoon, you ride along a magnificent black, sandy beach under the coconut trees. Fruit juices, samosas and other Creole delicacies await you. You raise your glasses to this exceptional day in front of a superb setting.





© RT / La Petite Créole

## A SUSPENDED TUNNEL

Gloves, knee pads, helmets, headlamps and harnesses: you are now ready to dive, or rather to hoist yourself, into one of the largest lava tunnels on the island, created by an eruption of the Piton des Neiges tens of thousands of years ago. At a height of six metres, you can experience silence and darkness by following the footsteps of Sébastien, your guide, through the 'tunnel' or the 'breakfast room', with its lava benches. In this mineral world, sensations are tenfold. Tea tasting in the dark and a zip line descent complete this extraordinary experience. While some people may still search the tunnel hoping to find the booty of the pirate La Buse, it is undoubtedly on its walls, with its reflections of precious stones and gold leaves, that the real treasure is to be found!

## MEDITATION HIKE

Feel like a different kind of hike? Not far from the Maïdo, in the sublime Tamarind Forest, Claire offers you a unique sensory experience that combines the benefits of walking with those of meditation.

Tips, postural advice and time for discussion allow you to (re)discover your 5 senses and fully enjoy the present moment. The feeling of the ground under your feet, the sound of the wind blowing through the small highland tamarinds, the scent of the volcanic earth heated by the sun... After alternating walking, breathing and meditation exercises, you will share a picnic at the Piton Rouge, enjoy the panoramic view over the Tamarind forest, visit the caves of the 'Maroons', and meet the legendary King Phaonce... A dream programme for your Chakras!



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## SPIRULINA AND ITS MYRIAD BENEFITS

Do you want to get your energy, sleep, serenity and concentration back, or are you simply curious about nature's treasures? Come and discover "the food of the century" in the highlands of Sainte-Marie! Come and meet the dynamic Catherine for a unique tour of a place often kept secret: the Run Spirit aquaculture farm. A unique, 100% péi product with almost magical nutritional properties is grown there: Spirulina. From the culture basins to the laboratory, you will learn the different steps of the transformation of this blue micro-algae and its many virtues. Then comes the time for tasting! In a shot glass, in butter, or with fresh lemon juice, Spirulina has some nice surprises in store for you. After this fun visit, you won't be able to live without it!

## MASSAGE ON THE LAGOON

Get a massage on a paddle board, rocked by the sound of the waves... A dream? That can become a reality with Didier! The latter welcomes you to La Saline beach for a moment of relaxation, to be experienced in pairs. Under the shade of a parasol, beach mats, deckchairs, cushions and detox cocktails await you. To reconnect with your senses, Didier has concocted an E-X-H-A-U-S-T-I-N-G programme...

- 1) You close your eyes, and Didier's voice guides you towards calmer, deeper, more relaxing breathing.
- 2) You are introduced to self-massage, by identifying acupressure points to stimulate. Fatigue, stress, migraines, muscle tension... now, none of these ailments will be able to withstand your expert fingers!
- 3) Your wellness specialist will then invite you to take turns sitting on a real floating massage table, with ergonomic cushions and a structure fitted with curtains. Splash! All your worries are dead in the water!

## 5-STAR WELLNESS

At Petite Île, you can enjoy an exceptional moment at the Palm Hotel & Spa\*\*\*\*\*, the first hotel in the Indian Ocean to obtain the 'European Ecolabel', just above the mythical Grande Anse beach. After a massage at the Akéa Spa, an aquatic massage in the pool or relaxing in the Jacuzzi, you can admire the sunset over the ocean, lying on a canopy bed placed directly on the sand, sipping a delicious fresh fruit cocktail. Then in Le Makassar, you can enjoy dishes combining products from afar with local ingredients for a real explosion of flavours. An idyllic break in the heart of a tropical garden!



## ROAD TRIP IN A CAMPER VAN

For three days, aboard a camper van, you will roam the island's roads in search of its wonders. Kitchen, royal bed and solar shower, nothing is missing! You will test the ocean's temperature all along your trip, try out paddle boarding or riding in a transparent kayak, admire the paragliders of Saint-Leu, the ancient lava flows, spectacular geysers, sugar cane fields, waterfalls and black sand beaches. You will visit exceptional places of worship, traditional Creole huts, enjoy 'pain bouchons' on the go or gargantuan meals in unusual spots. You will spend your nights on



the coast or in the Highlands, with the sunset, shooting stars and the sound of waves or wind to lull you to sleep. On arrival, you will have just over 400 kilometres on the clock and just as many unforgettable moments!

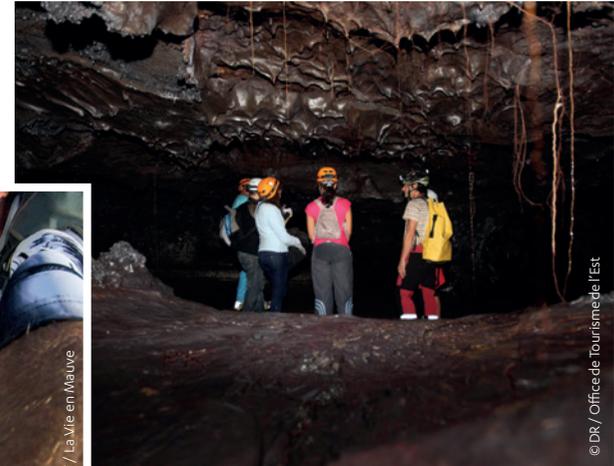
# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## PARACHUTE JUMPING

Meet at Pierrefonds Airport in Saint-Pierre. The excitement takes over when you are welcomed and briefed by your instructor before climbing in the helicopter! At 3,000 m above sea level, the side door opens. Harnessed to your carrier, you let go. Literally. In tandem, you plunge through the air in free fall, with the Piton des Neiges, the Grand Bénare and the Indian Ocean as witnesses. Then, the parachute unfurls, your speed stabilises, and you take in the incredible view. Back on the ground, you let yourself be overwhelmed by a feeling of bliss. You have just enjoyed one of the most intense experiences of your life!



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© DR / Office de Tourisme de l'Est



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## TROU BLANC CANYON

On the heights of the Salazie cirque, you will find Simon, your canyoning guide for the day. After a 40-minute walk, you begin descending the Trou Blanc canyon, a must for white water thrill seekers! Walking, sliding down natural water slides, swimming and jumping several metres down into pools of clear water: six hours of thrills await you in magnificent settings. Thanks to a sumptuous combination of water and stone, canyoning means adrenaline rushes and a total change of scenery!

## BLUE LAVA TUNNELS

Today, you will rediscover your inner child with an expedition into the volcanic depths of Reunion Island. Like Indiana Jones, you will explore one of the most beautiful lava tunnels on the island... and the most secret! Located on private land, the entrance to the *Blue Tunnel*, which is a young 22,000 years old, is reserved for a handful of lucky people! Bluish, orange or red rocks, sparkling grey surfaces and stalactites that look like melted chocolate: the light of your headlamp reveals authentic natural wonders with every step. In the profound silence of the depths, you'll feel as if you are alone in the world. Long live intimate potholing!

## WHITE-WATER RAFTING

In the East of the island, you will reach the banks of la Rivière des Marsouins by crossing a lychee plantation. Once you're fully equipped, you climb into a kayak-raft. Crystal clear water in a little corner of paradise. Surrounded by peaceful countryside, you reach the first rapids. You stay on course and control your trajectory in the middle of the outcropping rocks. Hervé, your rafting instructor, suggests you take a break. You plunge into the water and play with the turbulent current while a Reunion harrier flies across the sky. You share a punch with your team at the end of the trip and promise to come back soon!

## MUSICAL POTHOLING

A night of the full moon. You'll meet on the volcanic lava flow from 2004 for a speleological excursion like no other! Accompanied by Julien, your guide, and a quartet laden with traditional instruments, you travel through a surprising lava tunnel dotted with almost organic shapes.

When you reach a small cave, you turn off your lamps, and there, the first notes erupt in the dark and Creole rhythms fill the space. You let yourself be enveloped by the bewitching music, truly at one with nature and the elements. There, under the volcano, time stops and your heart pounds!

As you return to the entrance of the tunnel, the magic keeps working: the reflection of the moon on the dark flows and the sea below create a mysterious atmosphere. A unique and unforgettable moment!



© IRT / Stéphane Fournet

## THE SAVANNAH ON HORSE BACK

Manou looks like he's come straight out of a western. For several years, he has been sharing his passion for horses out in the savannah on the West Coast. This evening, it's your turn to ride alongside him!

After an impressive demonstration of handling a lasso at full gallop, the cowboy says let's go.

Perched on a *Quarter Horse* or *Appaloosa*, you will ride along a stretch of wilderness worthy of the Far-West. The setting sun paints these rolling hills covered in tall grass in gold.

Back at the ranch, with a lasso, portrait of an Indian chief, country music and a wood fire, the scene is set! This trip within your trip will be a day you'll remember forever.



© IRT / Miles & Love



© IRT / La Vie en Mauve



© IRT / La Vie en Mauve

## ENCOUNTER WITH DOLPHINS

This morning, you have an appointment with Manu, a diving instructor, and Jo, a boat pilot at the port of Saint-Gilles. After a thorough briefing, together, you head out to sea! After about ten minutes or so, you approach a pod of dolphins. There they are, playing around the boat, jumping and spinning out of the water. It's time to go get a closer look at them... underwater!

You find yourself surrounded by joyous dolphins and can even hear their whistles. No, you're not dreaming. Manu's camera has caught every bit of this exceptional encounter.

On the way back, your eyes sparkle and you're smiling from ear to ear! Next time, you'll try swimming with the whales...

## FLYING A PARAGLIDER

The time for your paragliding taster flight has come! With Rémi, several times crowned champion of Reunion Island, you will head to Les Colimaçons, in the Saint-Leu highlands.

At 800 metres above sea level, you arrive at the special take-off area. The view is stunning. After the usual checks, the signal is given. You run straight ahead on the grassy slope, towards the sea. The paraglider's canopy fills with wind and your feet lift off the ground.

In the middle of the sky, Rémi hands you the controls. Turning to the right and then the left, like a tropicbird you search for updrafts. Up there, in the tranquillity of the Reunion sky, your eyes probe Saint-Leu and its surroundings. A few moments later, you gently land on the sand, your head still in the clouds.

## RIDE IN A TRANSPARENT KAYAK

At Trou d'Eau, on the west coast, you board a transparent kayak for an aquatic excursion in the lagoon.

On his stand-up paddle board, Sébastien accompanies you and makes the introductions: triggerfish, morays and other hermit crabs, each coral of Trou d'Eau is home to many inhabitants.

Under your transparent kayak, life in the lagoon is revealed. After this original discovery of the lagoon, you return to the beach for an vibrant show: that of the setting sun!

Comfortably settled in a deckchair, you contemplate the fiery sky before the sun makes its daily plunge into the Indian Ocean!

## CARI-CANYON IN CILAO

Luciano awaits you in the heart of the Cilaos cirque, one of the jewels of Reunion Island, for cari-canyoning in the Bras Rouge river. The source of this aquatic pearl is located directly at the foot of the Piton des Neiges, at an altitude of 2,500 metres. After a half-hour walk in the lush nature, it's time for nearly 3 hours of aerial and aquatic activities! Natural slides, jumps, zip lines, white-water swimming, abseiling... There is something for everyone. After all this exertion, it's time for some comfort at Luciano's. Between two Creole huts with authentic lambrequins, in a lush green setting with a beautiful view of the cirque, you will share an expertly prepared Creole lunch. An unusual activity, combining friendliness and intense emotions, to be consumed without moderation!

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