



13-DAY ADVENTURE

THE GREAT TRAVERSE

Reunion Island

The rugged Reunion Island, emerged from the Indian Ocean in a volcanic eruption around 3 million years ago. The island offers hikers sublime landscapes to enjoy and crossing Reunion Island is without a doubt one of the most beautiful treks in the world. Water has carved the volcanic rock into pitons, cirques and gorges, all set within steep ramparts. From St Denis to Piton de la Fournaise, crossing the cirques of Salazie, Mafate and Cilaos, witness day after day, the beauty of Réunion as you conquer the Great Traverse. 11 days of hiking a mythical trail in the tropics - a trip designed to challenge and inspire adventure lovers.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch the sunrise from the summit of Piton des Neiges
- Climb one of the most active volcanoes on Earth
- Experience the unique culture and cuisine of Réunion



ITINERARY

DAY 1

WELCOME TO RÉUNION ISLAND!

Welcome to Réunion Island! Transfer to the hotel in St Denis and meet your group and guide. Depending on your arrival time you may have some time to explore the town a little. This evening you will have your pre-trek briefing.

Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 2

LE BRULE TO PLAINE DES CHICOTS

This morning our minibus will meet us at the hotel and we transfer to Le Brule where our trek begins. Here on les Hauts de Saint Denis (the heights of St Denis) we are surrounded by lush green vegetation and the views are outstanding. We follow a narrow path through the rainforest, raising steadily to the Plaine des Chicots Gite at 1800m.

Hiking time: **2 - 3 hours**
Ascent: **660 m**
Descent: **35 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Note: Today we leave our main bags in the vehicle and start trekking carrying only what we need. We will be able to access our luggage again on day 4.

DAY 3

ROCHE ECRITE TO GRAND ILET

Today begins with a climb to the Roche Ecrute viewpoint, a rugged peak at 2277m which dominates the surrounding valleys. From here we will have a spectacular view of the Cirque de Mafate, the Cirque de Salazie and the Piton des Neiges. Next, we have a long and steep descent to the village of Grand Ilet. The steep path is equipped with handrails and the views are stunning.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Ascent: **580 m**
Descent: **1260 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 4

GRAND ILET TO GRAND PLACE

We begin with a short transfer by bus to the Scout footpath. From here we enter the Cirque de Mafate. The Cirque de Mafate is entirely enclosed by mountains and vertical cliffs except for the exit of the Riviere des Galets (river of the pebbles). The valley has no roads and supplies for the few inhabitants often have to be transported in by helicopter. It was first inhabited by escaped slaves in the 19th century. We travel through thick vegetation rich with native, endemic flora and fauna and cross multiple rivers and bridges. We end our day at the village of Grand Place and settle into our gite for the night.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Ascent: **570 m**
Descent: **1460 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Note: Today we will meet the vehicle and have access to our luggage again temporarily. The next time we see our luggage will be on day 7.

DAY 5

GRAND PLACE TO ROCHE PLATE

Today we set off early for a long day of trekking with a lot of ascent. We continue into the heart of the Cirque de Mafate, enjoying shelter from the high cliffs and superb views of the surrounding peaks. We pass several "Ilets", small hamlets, which give us an insight into what it is like to live in these remote and roadless parts of Reunion. We end our day on Roche Plate, one of the many raised flat sections (plate means flat) of the valley where the Ilets are established.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**
Ascent: **1100 m**
Descent: **770 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 6

TROIS ROCHE TO MARLA

Today we leave Roche Plate and head towards the Ilet of Marla. On the way we will explore Trois Roches (three rocks) where hard and polished lava rock covers the basalt riverbed of Riviere des Galets. The river cascades over a beautiful waterfall, in front of which sit three huge blocks of basalt. We explore volcanic features at the base of a 1000m high cliff which forms the edge of the cirque and follow the riverbed up to the delightful settlement of Marla at 1630m. This route involves crossing the river two or three more times.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Ascent: **860 m**
Descent: **330 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 7

COL DU TAIBIT TO CILAOS

Today we hike up to the Col du Taïbit at 2083m, the passage which links the Cirque de Mafate to the Cirque de Cilaos. The views from up here do not disappoint, on a clear day you can expect spectacular views of the surrounding valleys, the south coast and Grand Bénare volcanic peak. The route continues down through the thick vegetation of the 'Bois des Couleurs' (the wood of colours) to Cilaos. From here, it is a 15 minute local bus ride to our hotel accommodation.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Ascent: **500 m**
Descent: **880 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Note: Your luggage will be waiting for you at your accommodation.

DAY 8

CILAOS TO REFUGE DU PITON DES NEIGES

Today is a short day of walking, but a tough one. The shaded path up to our refuge is steep. Thankfully, there are many beautiful view points along the way to stop and admire. The climb takes us up to 2500m of altitude where our accommodation awaits in a truly spectacular location perched above the Indian Ocean.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Ascent: **1100 m**
Descent: **50 m**
Accommodation: **Gite**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Note: Tonight, you will not have access to your luggage. Your bag will be waiting at your accommodation tomorrow.

DAY 9

PITON DES NEIGES TO PLAINE DES CAFRES

This morning we leave the refuge early, before the sun comes up and climb up to the summit of Piton des Neiges at 3070m. Witnessing the sunrise from the summit of the highest peak in the Indian Ocean is an experience that will stay with you for a lifetime. As your surroundings are illuminated by the first glow of the morning sun, you will agree that this is a very special place indeed. We return to the refuge for breakfast and then continue down to the Mare à Boue (muddy pond). Continuing along the GR route we pass by the caves of Bras Chansons to reach the enchanting Piton Tortue and the lush, green meadows below. Finally, we reach the road at Bourg Murat and a short transfer takes us to our accommodation in Plaine des Cafres.

Note: Your bag will be waiting at your accommodation.

Hiking time: **8 - 9 hours**
Ascent: **730 m**
Descent: **1800 m**
Accommodation: **Gîte**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 10

PLAINE DES CAFRES TO GITE DU VOLCAN

Today we leave the pleasant pastures of the Plaine des Cafres and head to a totally different natural environment via the Plaine des Sables. This plateau was formed by a volcanic eruption roughly 1000 years ago and has an alien, desert-like feel to it. Journey into a volcanic world of red ochre tephra as we head to the Gîte du Volcan (Volcano Lodge).

Hiking time: **4 - 5 hours**
Ascent: **350 m**
Descent: **250 m**
Accommodation: **Gîte**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 11

PITON DE LA FOURNAISE

Today we are in for a treat, exploring one of the most active volcanoes in the world, the Piton de la Fournaise. We climb the main crater (2632m) and discover a world of strange colours and surprising rock formations with fumaroles and sulphur revealing glimpses of the intense activity of this highly active volcano. Our last few steps to the summit mark the climax of this epic traverse. Gaze out over the island and the Indian Ocean and take a moment to contemplate what we have achieved! After taking some time at the top, we descend again to Volcano Lodge.

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**
Ascent: **600 m**
Descent: **600 m**
Accommodation: **Gîte**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 12

GITE DU VOLCAN TO ST GILLES

On our last day we hike around the volcano and down to the coast through thick rainforest. Passing along the caldera with its numerous volcanic viewpoints and contrasting bright blue ocean before dropping suddenly into the jungle below. From rocky ridges to the dense flora and fauna of the tropical forest, this is a fantastic way to end our adventure, showcasing Réunion Island's striking contrasts. When our long descent to the south coast is complete, we transfer to our hotel in Saint-Gilles.

Hiking time: **8 - 9 hours**
Ascent: **200 m**
Descent: **1780 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 13

DEPARTURE

Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the airport for your journey home.

Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

PLEASE NOTE

The details in this programme are regularly updated but unforeseeable and unpredictable circumstances may result in inaccuracies. In order to provide the adventure which is best suited to your demands, the weather and the operational conditions, changes to the itinerary may be made. For safety reasons, we reserve the rights to interrupt your participation at any time if your technical level or fitness is deemed unsuitable or if you are seen as a danger to yourself or to those around you. Under no circumstances would this give rise to a refund or compensation.

TRIP INFORMATION

DIFFICULTY

This adventure is classed as **difficult**. It is 11 days of continuous trekking with long and steep ascents and descents. The weather could be hot and humid which makes the trekking more demanding and we will be reaching altitudes over 3000m. Crumbly volcanic terrain can be difficult to walk on and care should be taken to avoid slips and trips.

You should be in **good physical condition with recent experience of hiking** for several days in row with over 1000m of ascent and descent.

To ask about your suitability for this trip and what you can do to prepare please feel free to give us a call.

FOOD & DRINK

Continental style breakfasts are served at your accommodation each morning. You can expect tea, coffee, fruit juice, bread, butter, jam and maybe meats and cheeses.

Picnic lunches will be provided each day. These will include fresh seasonal produce, cheese, meat, salad and fruit. Please be aware that you will be expected to carry your lunch and water with you each day.

For dinner, hot home cooked meals of local cuisine are served at your accommodation. Supplies in this remote area are delivered by helicopter so evening meals may not vary greatly but you are sure to love the mix of French, Indian, Chinese and African flavours that is Creole cuisine. The traditional dish is a curry with tomatoes, onions, garlic, ginger and spices served with either chicken, duck or fish and accompanied by rice, grains (beans or lentils) and rougail, a spicy condiment flavoured with tomato, lemon and pistachio.

Drinks, including mineral water, can be purchased at your own expense. Options include local rums, beer or fruit juice. The rum is made by soaking fruits, aromatic herbs and spices in white rum and are served as an aperitif before dinner. A beer called Dodo is brewed by the same local company.

Please let us know about any dietary requirements when you book the trip and we will work with you to cater for your needs.

ACCOMMODATION

During the traverse, we will be staying in **mountain refuges** that in French speaking countries, are referred to as Gites. You will sleep in **dormitory accommodation with shared bathroom facilities**. Dormitories will normally sleep between 4 and 12 people and all your bedding is provided with the exception of one night. Whilst at Refuge du Piton des Nieves, you will be provided with a mattress and blankets only, we recommend you bring a sleeping bag liner for this night.

LUGGAGE

Your luggage will need to be divided into two bags, a daypack which is 30 - 40 litres and a larger 60 - 80 litre bag for the bulk of your luggage (see equipment). Whilst trekking you should carry everything you need in your daypack as your larger bag will be transported by vehicle and, as detailed in your itinerary, you may not see this bag for up to two nights. Your larger bag should be a flexible duffle bag or backpack and not a rigid suitcase.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

You will need to fly to Reunion's Roland Garros Airport (RUN) which is located just outside the city of Saint Denis. As Reunion Island is a department of the French Republic, there are direct flights departing from Paris every day of the week. Airlines that offer a direct flight from Paris include Air France, Air Austral and Corsair. There are options departing in the morning and the evening and the flight time is roughly 11 hours.

Direct flights to Paris are available from most UK airports including Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Bristol, Edinburgh and all London airports. The flight time is usually less than 90 mins. Remember Paris has two main airports, Charles de Gaulle (CDG) and Orly (ORY), check that your flight to Paris and your flight to Reunion are using the same one. There are direct flights to Reunion from both Paris airports.

If you would prefer to fly direct to the Indian Ocean from the UK, you can travel to Mauritius (MRU) and then take a short hop to Reunion from there. Air Mauritius offer direct flights from Heathrow and British Airways have direct flights from Gatwick. Flight time is just under 12 hours. From Port Luis in Mauritius, the flight to Reunion Island is only 45mins. Air France, Air Mauritius and Air Austral all provide flights between the two islands, so you are sure to find a departure time that works for you.

From the USA, if you prefer to have just one stop on the way, it is best to fly to Paris and then take a direct flight to Reunion. There are numerous direct flights to Paris from New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Washington and many more. Please remember that Paris has two main airports, CDG and ORY. If you need to transfer between the two airports you should allow time for this.

On arrival, after clearing immigration and collecting your luggage, please look out for a member of our team in the arrivals area. They will be holding a large "KANDOO" sign.

BUDGET & CHANGE

The currency is the **Euro** (EUR).

You can withdraw euros from in-country ATMs and credit cards are widely accepted. Isolated areas like small villages or mountain refuges are generally cash only.

Please budget for drinks, tips and other personal expenses and please be aware that hot showers are not always free.

TIPS

Although the custom is practiced here, it is not expected. If you are satisfied with the services of your guide and local team, tipping is always appreciated. It is not obligatory and should be left to the discretion of each individual.

FORMALITIES & HEALTH

MEDICATION

Your guide carries a first aid kit at all times but we recommend you carry the following items: - Painkillers - Sunscreen for lips and skin - Moisturising cream (for sunburn) - Elastic bandage, regular bandages and Blister bandages - Sanitary products

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

CLOTHING TO BRING

We prefer that you do not wear cotton clothing, including underwear, when participating in activities. When cotton gets wet from water or sweat it ceases to insulate and does not dry quickly. The best materials for outdoor activities are fast drying materials like polyester or materials which are warm when wet like wool. The most powerful materials against the wind and rain are 'breathable' materials like Gore-Tex or Nikwax.

- Warm hat (beanie)
- Sun hat with wide brim for protection
- Sunglasses
- Neck gaiter or scarf
- Suitable quick drying underwear
- Light gloves
- Walking boots (with ankle support and sturdy soles)
- Socks (quick drying and not too warm)
- T-shirts and warm jumper
- Fleece or soft shell jacket
- Waterproof and windproof hard shell jacket
- Waterproof and windproof hard shell trousers
- Walking trousers and/or shorts
- Pajamas and toiletries
- Comfortable shoes for the evenings

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- Water bottle / thermos
- Head torch with spare batteries
- Daypack 30L to 40L
- Duffel bag 80L to 100L or similar flexible bag for your main luggage. Not a suitcase.
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Sleeping bag liner
- Walking poles
- Wet wipes
- Toilet paper and lighter to burn it
- Plastic bags for wet/dirty clothing

HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

1 CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

2 CONTACT US

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

3 COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.

