

Module 4

ALONG THE COAST



The mountains of Réunion Island are surrounded by a 210 kilometres long coastline, including 30 km of beaches. The white sand beaches are derived from coral reefs and the swimming zones are mainly concentrated on the west coast with its lagoons and reefs, while the remaining coastline comprises black sand beaches (Étang-Salé), pebble beaches, cliffs or even lava flows, thus presenting a wild and unspoilt landscape. The heavenly beaches with their warm and white sand are ideal for relaxation. 22 km of crystal clear lagoons along the west coast bask under the balmy sunshine of the southern hemisphere. The turquoise waters at 27°C are exceptionally well-preserved by a coral barrier and are ideal for swimming and water sports such as paddling, sailing, kayaking, water-skiing, jet-skiing, kite-surfing, etc.

What could be the must-have accessory for your holiday? 'Savates deux doigts' (traditional slippers from Réunion)! In your trendy savates, you can stroll around at sunset on the black or white sandy beaches, show off your beach volley ball skills, relax on your beach towel, or saunter from the shade of a filao tree to the glorious waters of the Réunion lagoon.

Go around the island and explore its coastal regions. Highlights:

The west is without a doubt the place for beach resorts, with 30 km of beaches supervised by professional lifeguards, and proper regulations in force (signboards, flags) for practicing water sports.

West coast: superb protected beaches

- Beach resorts : Saint-Gilles, Saint-Leu and Saint-Pierre
- Protective coral reef barrier against currents
- Protected natural marine reserve: go for your masks, flippers and snorkels!



Kite Surfing

© Jean Luc Allegre

The island's best beaches are located on the west/southwest coast. Saint-Gilles-Les-Bains, Saint-Leu and Saint-Pierre are the major beach resorts. A coral reef barrier near the coast protects the white sand beaches from the strong currents of the Indian Ocean. The barrier also forms a part of a protected natural marine reserve. You can safely swim in the lagoon. It is just paradise for those who are passionate about diving, snorkelling, unspoilt natural flora and fauna or for those just looking for tranquillity.

Saint-Gilles and its beach resort: Do not miss the Saint-Gilles Aquarium (a variety of multi-coloured fish), a boat trip to watch the sunset on the ocean, whale and dolphin watching in the austral winter, or snorkelling in the Ermitage Natural Marine Reserve (the Natural Marine Reserve extends for 40 km from Cap La Houssaye to the Étang-Salé over an area of 35 sq km, and was created in 2007 to safeguard the fragile equilibrium of this natural treasure). The beach resort boasts of many hotels, gourmet restaurants, snack-shops, ice cream parlours and nightclubs. For a culinary cultural experience, why not join local families from La Réunion in a Créole picnic? It's the must-do outing on weekends with warm and friendly families on the seashore.



Plage Lagon

© Emmanuel Virin

The seaside at Saint-Leu is very pleasant. A world-famous location for paragliding, this is where an international paragliding competition is held every year. Do visit Kélonia, a centre for sea turtles, the salt museum and the 'souffleur' - a maritime geyser.



© Stephane Godin

The south: Spectacular scenery, the Saint-Pierre beach on the outskirts of the city, the Grand-Anse beach lined with coconut palms, the Étang-Salé beach and its vast expanse of black sand.

The rugged south

- Pristine nature
- Black lava fields
- The Indian Ocean and the rocky coastline

The southern coastline of La Réunion is where you can see nature in an unspoilt state. Just what you need to get away from mundane life! Pristine nature, the Indian Ocean's waves crashing against rocks, long stretches of lava fields and black sand beaches interspersed with

forests that drop down into the ocean now and again...You will see Cap Méchant, the region's iconic landmark protrudes into the ocean. Discover the Mare Longue botanical forest at Saint-Philippe. Visit the aromatics and spice garden. The lava flows are also visible. Visit Sainte-Rose, Anse des cascades with the quaint fishing port and stopover at the Notre-dame des Laves church.

In the East, the landscape changes, there is lush greenery, many beautiful waterfalls and rivers, sugarcane fields along the way, colourful Tamil temples and vanilla plantations worth a visit.



Saint Pierre Temple



Plage Etang Sale

© DroneCopters

Laze under a palm tree

For moments of rest and relaxation, make way towards the west and south of the island. Stop by the beaches at either Boucan Canot, Ermitage, Roches Noires, Saline-les-Bains, Saint-Leu, Saint-Pierre or Étang-Salé (black volcanic sand). So many outstanding choices where you can unwind! You may watch a concert at one of the lively rondavels in the west, sipping your cocktail and glancing at the ocean waves from the corner of your eye; or you may join a local family from La Réunion for a Sunday picnic and share the fun and friendship typical of the art de vivre in La Réunion

An underwater festival

If you put on a snorkelling mask, you will discover a rainbow of multi-coloured fish in the clear waters of the lagoon only a few metres from the shore! In deeper waters, you will be treated to a mindboggling spectacle: a clownfish snuggled in its anemone, a leopard moray eel sheltered under a rock and elegant rays and sea turtles which seem to be flying in the crystalline waters. All these species are protected by the Natural Marine Reserve created in 2007 and to see them, all you have to do is go diving! You may also hop onto a glass bottom boat or enjoy this tropical aquatic world from aboard a transparent kayak. If you would like to witness a dolphin ballet, get onto a catamaran and keep a lookout on the horizon! From June to October, you may even have the good fortune to admire humpback whales that come to calve along the coast of La Réunion.

Dolphin and humpback whale watching

Réunion Island is one of the best places in the world to watch whales, especially humpback whales, classified as a protected species. However, access to these cetaceans is highly regulated and awareness, the right attitude and discipline are recommended. It is compulsory for the many observers and users of the sea to follow the charter guidelines on approaching whales, drafted by tourism professionals, associations and government departments in 2009 and expanded in 2017 to include dolphins and sea turtles. This charter on whale watching will change this year and become a prefectural ordinance, applicable from 1st July 2019.

Scuba diving

The underwater carnival is a year-long affair! Look at the parrot fish, celestial groupers, starry morays and blue surgeonfish strutting around in their ravishing best! There go the fish that look like guinea fowl, puffed up like balloons, resplendent in their crests or leopard gowns, peering at you with curiosity. Several scuba diving centres will be happy to take you on a discovery of marine flora and fauna. Beginner, advanced and training programmes will help you get to know these protected tropical species. With its 150 species of hard coral and 500 species of fish, the coral reef of Réunion island never ceases to amaze! You may also enjoy scuba diving at night, aquatic hiking, exploring the coral barrier, visiting shipwrecks or swimming in the company of dolphins! Just a few metres

from the shore, in waters that remain warm and clear 365 days of the year,

why not make friends with little Nemo and bashful octopus!



Plongée Fonds Marins Murene

© Laurent Beche



Whale Watching

© Eric Lamblin

Boat excursions

With its diverse fleet of boats, La Réunion offers stunning excursions along the coasts. Comfortably settled in your transparent bottom boat, you can watch a procession of underwater life without even getting wet. Put your feet up a catamaran net, gaze into the horizon with a glass of punch in your hand and relax with the gentle swaying of the trade winds. If you take a 'bubble' boat you can revel in an exquisite underwater safari as you sail on the vast blue ocean and watch the sun go down. A few meters away, a turtle peeps out of the water and flying fish waltz over the waves. The crew is at your service and will guide you to the best spots for watching cetaceans. There is a large choice of cruises to help you create your magical moments and professional guides well-versed in local marine flora and fauna will share their knowledge

with you. Although we do not unfortunately have mermaids, you cannot help but be bewitched by the songs of the whales from June to October! The waters of La Réunion, especially attract cetaceans and a special access charter was established in 2009 so that they may be watched respectfully. Approaching them responsibly also enables us to admire them safely. To watch these gentle giants, you can even hire a boat, in groups or privately.

Glide on the waves

Why not learn coastal navigation on a monohull yacht, saunter about on a stand-up paddle to get a hang of the lagoon waves or paddle a kayak or a canoe? Get your adrenelines pumping with jet skiing, water skiing, wakeboarding or kite surfing! Leap into the future with fly boarding? In La Réunion, water sport buffs have plenty of exciting moments to enjoy either alone, as couples or with families!

Deep-sea fishing

Marlin, swordfish, wahoos, tuna, barracuda... Deep sea fishing is practised throughout the year off the coast of the ultimate island. Réunion Island is a destination of choice for enthusiasts of recreational fishing. Accompanied by professionals, with your eyes set on the vast blue expanse, you are up



Grand Bleu Dauphins

© Stéphane Michel

against some really gigantic fish! Knowledgeable amateurs and beginners alike can participate in full day or half-day outings and pit their wits against these sea creatures or simply enjoy watching them.

Experiences off the coast of La Réunion are just not to be missed! So take time off to enjoy a cruise boat, or go snorkelling or paddling or any other fun pleasure craft and discover the incredible marine creatures that have made this island their home.

The Natural Marine Reserve of La Réunion

Located on the west and south western coasts of the island, the Natural Marine Reserve of La Réunion (RNMR) is spread out over 3,500 hectares and surrounds five counties from Saint-Paul to Étang-Sale over a 45 km linear coastal distance.

The GIP (Public Interest Group) is the management body for this Natural Marine Reserve and is responsible for conservation of the coral reefs through awareness campaigns, monitoring, maintenance of facilities and scientific follow-up. The guides of the Marine Reserve invite you to come and discover the underwater pathway of the Hermitage lagoon

Underwater trail of the Hermitage lagoon

The coral reef off the west coast of La Réunion shows extraordinary biodiversity. More than 3500 living organisms help in maintaining equilibrium within this complex ecosystem. The purpose of the underwater trail is to make people aware of environmental degradation and highlight the necessity for adopting environmentally responsible behaviour.



Plage Lagon

© Stéphane Michel

A guide will show you the beauty and fragility of the coral reef on a marked route free of charge. Equipped with flippers, masks and snorkels, visitors will discover the distinctive underwater landscapes of La Réunion's coral reef.

La Réunion, a cruise destination

'La Réunion, the ultimate island' is delighted to welcome cruise passengers at the 'Gare Maritime du Port Est' cruise terminal after completing arrival formalities. Make the most of your day, get away from it all and enjoy grand adventures and discoveries. (visit the cirques, take a helicopter flight over the island, go to the beach, shop at the street market, visit the Eden garden, the Saga du Rhum, Stella Matutina museum and enjoy several other discoveries such as Saint-Denis town and its Créole houses, the Grand Marché market with its handicrafts) You will savour original and unique experiences. You will be hosted by the FRT- Tourism Federation of La Réunion, a federation of all the Tourist offices of La Réunion and by the IRT - Réunion Island Tourism Board. Several tour operators are also available. Depending on the excursion, you will also have the opportunity to try out seasonal fruits and the flavours of La Réunion's cuisine.



Plage Lagon Boucan Canot

© Bruno Tandiya