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It is published by Les Nouvelles Editions de l'Université

18, rue des Volontaires - 75015 Paris.

☎ 01 53 69 70 00 - Fax 01 42 73 15 24

Internet: www.petitfute.com

SAS with share capital of 1 000 000 € -

RC PARIS B 309 769 966

Cover: © cdwheatley

Printing: GROUPE CORLET IMPRIMEUR -

14110 Condé-sur-Noireau

Legal deposit: 01/04/2018

ISBN: 9791033178453

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WELCOME TO GUADELOUPE!

Of all the "Lesser Antilles", the Guadeloupean archipelago is the most surprising when it comes to the variety of landscapes. A seaside destination par excellence, Grande-Terre, with its crystal-clear water beaches and blue lagoons, delights lovers of sunbathing. In the coral funds, diving spots are multiple, and even beginners, with mask and snorkel, can enjoy the underwater spectacle. But Mother Nature reserves many other surprises. Large and small wild coves for adventurers, lush tropical forest, vertiginous waterfalls, rivers with refreshing waters, volcanic land, high limestone plateaus, steep cliffs, green and mysterious mangrove... A biodiversity promising unique sensations. The future of ecotourism in Guadeloupe lies in its preserved natural territory located mainly on Basse Terre, a true attraction for hikers and nature lovers! The authentic face of Guadeloupe can be discovered in museums, but also by going further into the inland, stopping in the quiet villages or in the Grands Fonds, to meet its people. We can also experience a moment in one of the small active cities, animated by a mosaic of cultures, with a lively Creolian spirit. As for the pleasure of eating well, you will be able to taste local products, or products reinventing French cuisine, and you will discover just how convivial it gets over a t-punch and acras in the Caribbean! To discover the archipelago, there is nothing like a boat. Les Saintes, Marie-Galante, and La Désirade are just a few hundred miles away but they do not look alike. According to the one you choose, you will discover an authentic atmosphere that will make you wish for one thing: coming back to discover even more!

The editorial team

► **THANKS.** Thanks to the various tourist offices that cooperate each year to provide the best information. We also thank all readers who participate in the writing of this guide by expressing their comments, or by bringing us to discover new places that might have escaped our attention.



 **PRINTED IN FRANCE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ AN INVITATION TO TRAVEL ■

Guadeloupe's assets	6
Technical data sheet	7
Stay ideas	9
How to go?	13
Going on a package tour	13
Travelling alone	13
Staying	16

■ DISCOVERING GUADELOUPE ■

Guadeloupe in 25 keywords	22
Survey of Guadeloupe	26
History	29
Politics and economy	36
Politics	36
Economy	36
Population and languages	39
Arts and culture	40
Guadeloupean cuisine	43
Games, leisure and sports	46

■ GRANDE-TERRE ■

The West	48
Pointe-à-Pitre	48
Transport	48
Moving around	51
Practical	51
Going out	52
Sightseeing	52
Shopping	54
Morne-à-l'Eau	55
Districts	55
Sightseeing	55
The South	56
Le Gosier	56
History	56
The city today	56
Touristic areas – Orientation	56
Moving around	57
Practical	58
Sleeping	59
Knife & fork	61
Going out	63
Sightseeing	64
Sports – Relaxation – Leisure	65

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Beach of Sainte-Anne.

Sainte-Anne	66
Saint-François	71
The East	84
Le Moule	84
The North	88
Petit-Canal	88
Port-Louis	88
Anse-Bertrand	90

■ BASSE-TERRE ■

The East	92
Baie-Mahault	92
Petit Bourg	94
Capesterre-Belle-Eau	96
The South	98
Trois-Rivières	98
Vieux-Fort	100
Gourbeyre	100
Saint-Claude	100
La Soufrière	103
Matouba	103
Basse-Terre	104
the Leeward coast	106
Baillif	106
Vieux-Habitants	107
Bouillante	109
Route de la traversée	113
Pointe-Noire	114
Deshaises	116
The North	118
Sainte-Rose	118
le Lamentin	118

■ MARIE-GALANTE ■

Marie-Galante	120
Grand-Bourg	120
Capesterre	123
Saint-Louis	124



*Lighthouse of Anse à la Barque,
in Bouillante.*

■ LES SAINTES ■

Les Saintes	126
Terre-de-Haut	126
Terre-de-Bas	129

■ LA DÉSIRADE ■

LA DÉSIRADE	132
La Désirade	132
Petite-Terre	134

■ DOMINICA ■

Discovering Dominica	136
Mabrika!	136
Dominica's assets	138
Technical data sheet	138
Visit Dominica	141
The West	141
Roseau	141
Salisbury	142
Morne Diablotins National Park	142
The North	143
Cabrits National Park	143
The East	143
Delices	143

FIND THE BEST VISITS

★ INTERESTING ★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ UNMISSABLE ★★★★★ UNFORGETTABLE



LES SAINTES



Guadeloupe

ATLANTIC OCEAN



THE LESSER ANTILLES



GUADELOUPE'S ASSETS

A safe destination

You will not be frightened of animals here: no sharks along the coasts, no snake or giant spider. Of course, centipedes (causing a painful sting) have to be avoided. At sea, be careful because the lionfish, with venomous spines, has been unfortunately present in the Caribbean for some years now. Its venom remains active even after its death. In terms of health, you benefit from the French system. Remember to bring your *carte vitale*.

A destination "open" all year round

It is customary to say that there are two annual tourist seasons: high season, from November to April and low season from May to October. But it is a sunny destination all year round, especially when it is cold in Europe! Of course, there is the hurricane season (from June to the end of November), when high depressions and sometimes memorable cyclones can retain travellers. But these phenomena are constantly being monitored and anticipated before they arrive. No doubt because of these climatic variations, the season is much calmer in terms of tourist attendance. However, if you stay on the islands during winter, the archipelago will seduce you anyway.

Sun, beaches and farniente

It is warm all year long, although heavy rains can fall in addition to the winter. You can choose between white, golden or grey sand if you are on a volcanic beach. It's perfectly possible to "take it easy" in Sainte-Anne or prefer aqua-hiking in tropical forest rivers, the ascent of the volcano or big-game fishing!

An island both distant and close

Both Region and French Overseas Department (971), Guadeloupe shares the same currency, the same language, and the same level of health and social benefits with continental France. However, the change of scenery is present when you arrive on the island for the first time. This dual Franco-Caribbean identity has created a diversity of faces, cultures, mentalities and a different lifestyle from that of the Hexagon.

A profusion of open-air activities

Swimming, sports and water sports, adventures at sea... Some of the activities revolve around the seaside. If you have never dived, it's time to

start! Indeed, the wealth of the Guadeloupean seabed invites you to discover the Grand Bleu. It is very easy to practice diving here, with mask and snorkel, bottles, apnea for the most experienced or with an adjustable helmet, especially in the nature reserve of Bouillante. You can also rent all kinds of boats, sailing with or without a team-mate, go on a cruise around the archipelago... Sportsmen will enjoy wholesale fishing, windsurfing, surfing, jet-skiing, kitesurfing. Open-air leisure (flying by plane, paragliding, helicopter, ULM...) is also an original way to discover the archipelago from another angle and to offer some new sensations. Also discover the world of traditional agriculture, with sugar cane plantations, banana plantations, bonifieries (coffee factories), cacaotières... Let us end up with an Ecomuseum and Heritage itinerary, which crosses the route of the rum distilleries, colonial houses and Creole villas.

An eco-tourism in full boom

Leading economic sector of Guadeloupe, in recent years, tourism is characterized by a real search for balance and greater diversity. In addition to the economy generated by seaside resorts more generally on the Grande-Terre, alternative accommodation systems have emerged in recent decades to develop considerably; ecotourism is now booming. The establishments focus on sustainable development and turn to solar power sources, the preservation of water resources and constructions made with ecological materials. This diversification of supply is beneficial for the islands, both for entrepreneurs who invest in the green economy and multiply ecotourism initiatives as well as for travellers seeking more rural and authentic stays.

The party spirit made in Guadeloupe

The sun-rum-coconut trilogy is well known! Clichés or basic ingredients for partying? During your walks and excursions, you will certainly notice this nice aspect of Guadeloupean character. The taste of party is not a simple formula here. There is always an opportunity to have fun, turn on music and learn dance steps. The patron saint fiestas calendar is also impressive, and there is also the Carnival period, festivals, outdoor zouks... It is obvious that the TI-punch (real anti-stress cure) helps maintain the atmosphere as well as champagne.

Money

Currency

Practical, the same currency as in France is used here, the euro!

Banks

Contact your agency or on the Internet for local branches. Payment cards are accepted everywhere. Beware, "off-site" cheques (issued on metropolitan branches) are often refused. Take your cheque book with you, because some hikers and traders accept them, which can help if you are short on cash.

Budget ideas

First of all, you must know that the destination Guadeloupe is much more accessible at certain times. For example, from September to mid-December and from May to the end of June, it is possible to find a round-trip ticket at less than €400 in economic flight. Conversely, during the year-end periods and school holidays, prices are high and reach €1,500, still in economic flight. It's the same for the accommodation and car rental prices.

► **Small budget.** As a general rule, low-budget travellers will find accommodation (youth hostel, rentals with local resident, unclassified hotels, studios, bungalows...) for €30 per night (excluding low season promotions) throughout the island. Independent rental companies or some accommodations also offer car rentals at attractive prices. As for restaurants, you will find take away meals, trucks that sell sandwiches, *bokits*... for less than €10. Finally, many natural sites and hikes are available free of charge or at discounted rates.

► **Average budget.** Its is possible to stay in a charming hotel, in seasonal rentals, luxury gites for less than €100 per day for 2 people, breakfast included in low season. Allow about €150 in high season for the same type of services. If you can spend €25 per person and per meal, you will be spoilt for choice for your lunch and dinner.

► **Big budget.** Guadeloupe, of course, has 4-star hotels. You can find standard rooms around €200 in low season. For suites with view, allow from €400 in high season. These establishments offer quality services equal to the price. There are also beautiful luxury villas for rent by the week. Allow from €1,500 to €20,000 depending on the week (yes, the range is wide but the range of benefits is also available!).

Guadeloupe in short

The archipelago of Guadeloupe

- **Area of the Archipelago:** 1,703 km².
- **Status:** DROM (Overseas Department and Region) and European outermost region.
- **Prefecture:** Basse-Terre, 11,150 inhabitants.
- **Sub-prefecture:** Pointe-à-Pitre, 15,826 inhabitants.
- **The Grande-Terre** is 590 km² and houses the Pointe-à-Pitre sub-prefecture and its airport.
- **Basse-Terre** has 848 km² and is separated from Grande-Terre by a large sea. It hosts the Prefecture and the seats of the Regional Council and the County Council.
- **Marie-Galante.** With an area of 158 km² and about 60 km from Pointe-à-Pitre, it welcomes three communes (Grand-Bourg, Saint-Louis and Capesterre-Belle-Eau) and 13,000 inhabitants.
- **Les Saintes.** The Archipelago of Les Saintes consists of a chain of wild and protected islets and two inhabited islands: Terre-de-Haut (1,800 inhabitants over 6 km²) and Terre-de-Bas (1,100 inhabitants out of 6.8 km²).
- **La Désirade.** 1,649 inhabitants for an area of 22 km² (11 km long for 2 km wide).
- **Petite-Terre** (attached to La Désirade). No resident in Petite-Terre except the NFB guard staying in the "lighthouse of the edge of the world".

Population

- **Population Guadeloupe and archipelago:** approximately 402,119 inhabitants (January 1, 2013).
- **Density:** 248 inhab./km².
- **Average life expectancy:** 77 years old (men) and 84,1 years old (women).
- **Official Language:** French.
- **Spoken language:** Caribbean Creole.
- **Religions:** Catholicism, evangelism, adventism, Hinduism.

Economy

- **GDP/inhabitant:** €20,163.
- **GDP:** EUR 8,033 million.
- **Unemployment Rate (ILO):** 23,7% in 2014 and 2015. This is the highest rate of DFA (French departments of America).

56,3% of people under the 25 years old are unemployed. The situation of women is more precarious with a gap of 3,6% compared to men. *Source: INSEE figures (June 2016).*

Phone

Numbering

Fixed numbers begin with 05 90 for Guadeloupe, 05 96 for Martinique, 05 94 for Guyana.

- ▶ **West Indies to France.** Subscriber number (10 digits).
- ▶ **West Indies to other countries.** 00 + country code + subscriber number.
- ▶ **France to Guadeloupe.** Subscriber number (10 digits).
- ▶ **To call Guadeloupe from abroad,** from a landline, you have to dial the 590 and the number of your correspondent without the initial zero.

Mobile telephony

Guadeloupe islands are covered by three mobile phone networks (Orange Caribbean, Digicel and SFR). Metropolitan operators ensure the continuity of service (subject to optional special travel contract, to be asked before departure in general). Numbers start with 06 90 in Guadeloupe, by 06 96 in Martinique, and by 06 94 in Guyana.

- ▶ **Since May 2016,** *roaming* costs no longer exist. This means that your phone operator can no longer charge extra costs when you travel. You can thus call from the Hexagon to the overseas (and vice versa) at the normal call tariff.

Time difference

It is 5 hours earlier in Guadeloupe than in France during winter time, 6 hours earlier during summer time. In January, when it is 6pm in Paris, it is 1pm in Guadeloupe; in July, when it is 6pm in Paris, it is 12pm in Guadeloupe.

Formalities

Identity card required for French nationals and Europeans in general. Since January 2014, the identity card has been valid for 15 years instead of 10 for adults. This extension concerns cards issued as of this date but also those issued since January 2004, which are renewed for another 5 years without any action on your part. For minors, the card is valid for 10 years. A valid passport is required for travellers from countries outside Europe.

Climate

Guadeloupe enjoys a tropical and oceanic climate, with winds that usually blow from the east to the west (the famous trade winds), and which allow to withstand the heat. The sea temperature (Caribbean side) is on average 27°C and can reach 29°C in summer. Water temperatures are slightly lower on the Atlantic side.

There are two seasons:

- ▶ **Wintering** (June to December) that corresponds to the hottest period with frequent intense rains and weak trade winds. The thermometer can climb up to 35°C. From June to October, the weather is warmer and wetter: this is the so-called "cyclonic" period.
- ▶ **Lent** (January to May) is the dry and "fresher" season. The temperature ranges from 22 to 25°C during the day and may fall slightly below 20°C in the south of Basse-Terre from December to February. Depending on whether you live in Grande-Terre or Basse-Terre, you can see that everyone benefits from a micro-climate. The Basse-Terre is more humid, because of its reliefs, its tropical forest.
- ▶ **Weather watch on the archipelago:** www.meteofrance.gp. On this site, you will be aware of the detailed weather forecast for each day of the week depending on the area where you live. You are also aware of ongoing phenomena that might lead to the triggering of the vigilance procedure by the Prefecture.

Seasonality

There are several tourist seasons:

- ▶ **The high season,** from the end of December to the end of April, corresponds to the period during which airlines, accommodation, car rental, etc., have the highest rates with a peak for the New Year period.
- ▶ **The low season** corresponds to May, June, September, October, November and early December. At this time, rates are the most accessible and almost all establishments offer particularly interesting promotions.
- ▶ **July and August alone are the average season,** because even though there are fewer tourists, many locals come to join their family for the holidays. Prices are rising again.
- ▶ **The cyclone season runs from July to the end of November.**

STAY IDEAS

Short stay

Guadeloupe in a week

For a one-week stay, you will have to make a choice because you have a range of activities at your disposal. This type of circuit is designed, preferably, with an accommodation that allows you to easily visit the island, either on Sainte-Anne, Le Gosier or Petit-Bourg. You can also choose to stay a few days in Grande-Terre and the rest of the week in Basse-Terre to limit travel.

► **Day 1: arrival at Pointe-à-Pitre.** The temperature difference seizes you as soon as you leave the air-conditioned airport! After 7 to 8 hours of flight, you will still have to resist 5 or 6 additional hours because of the jet lag. Exhausted by the trip, you only have an idea: pick up your rental car and go to your accommodation! A tip for Independent travellers: Book your rental car in advance. You will be able to promote competition by comparing rates and saving time when you arrive. The national signs offer a welcome at the airport and transfer you by free shuttle to their premises located in a dedicated area. The other rental providers bring you to their deposit location.

► **Day 2: The south of Grande-Terre.** The next day, you are awake at dawn. At 6am, the sun is already shining in a blue sky and the brightness is strong. In the West Indies, you get up early and you go to bed early as well. The sun disappears around 6pm from October to March and 7pm from April to September. You can enjoy the cooler mornings! Start the day with a few landmarks (nearest beach, shops...) and swim in the swimming pool or the sea. Avoid too long exposure to the sun from the first day. Next, head south of the Grande-Terre with a view to the pointe des Châteaux in Saint-François via Sainte-Anne. A municipality ideal for the seaside pleasures with family, Sainte-Anne is very tourist with its postcard decoration with crystal clear waters protected by the coral barrier on the beach of the town. As for the pointe des Châteaux, tongue of land where huge frothy waves from the sea come to shatter, its wild landscape is worth the detour and its panorama on the surrounding islands is breathtaking. Don't miss the easy climbing to the calvary for the overview of the torn coast and the peak planted in the sea. Many beaches and panoramic restaurants are on your way. Return by the same road with a stop to the new artisan village of Saint-François

and then to the market of Sainte-Anne to taste local products.

► **Day 3: discovery of the east of Basse-Terre, from Petit-Bourg to the town of Basse-Terre.**

From Petit-Bourg, stop at the Valombreuse garden, the Montebello distillery or a few kilometres after, the Longuetau in Capesterre-Belle-Eau. The area is the starting point (Moreau Falls, Carbet Falls...) if the weather permits. In Trois-Rivières, the archaeological park of engraved rocks, remains of the presence of the first inhabitants of the island, the Amerindians. Then, Saint Claude, the only commune of the archipelago that has no coastline, is the starting point for the Soufrière, the island's highest point. You can go to the Volcano House and relax in the hot baths of Matouba. For those who are interested in climbing the volcano, you must plan half a day or a full day. You can also call on a mountain guide for an exciting tour off the beaten trails. Basse-Terre, capital of the department labeled City of Art and History, is interesting to visit. Recommended stop at Fort Louis-Delgrès, Botanical Garden, at the Bologna distillery.

► **Day 4: the crossing road and the Leeward Coast.** The crossing road takes you inland, in Guadeloupe's large national park where the term lush vegetation makes perfect sense. This road serves very beautiful sites: the cascade aux Écrevisses, the Guadeloupe Zoo, or further in Pointe Noire, the Côte-sous-le-Vent house or the cocoa house... Then you reach Bouillante, a true golden triangle of scuba diving. The Malendure site and its black sand beach houses the underwater reserve called Réserve Cousteau. Many nautical activities are offered (big-game fishing, glass bottom boat, classical diving or with helmet, swimming, aquarando...). Its is better to have booked beforehand. For the return, two routes are possible: take over the route of the Crossing or take the road along the Leeward coast to reach Deshaies, then Sainte-Rose north of Basse-Terre. The panoramic, along the route, is all the more superb at the time of sunset. If you have time, stop at the Deshaies Botanical Garden or at the Sainte-Rose ecomuseum.

► **Day 5: sea getaway.** Several options for this day: opt for relaxation and sail for the day to Petite-Terre, Marie-Galante or Les Saintes: On the programme, swimming, meals on board and visit of the island for a few hours. Departure at 7:30pm and return to 6pm for a busy day.

Another solution: sea trip in the famous natural reserve of the Grand Cul-de-Sac marin, to the Caret islet, with a visit to the mangrove, and a diving with masks and snorkeling in the coral reef with the *King Papyrus* bateau-mouche (from Gosier) or with a smaller structure aboard a saintoise, a traditional boat. The departures are then from Petit-Canal or Port-Louis. The visit of the islands of the archipelago (La Désirade, Marie-Galante and Les Saintes) can be performed by shuttle from Pointe-à-Pitre for Marie-Galante, from Trois-Rivières for Les Saintes or from Saint-François depending on your destination and the shipping company. There is a need to rent a car for Marie-Galante. La Désirade can be visited by car, bike and hiking trails. Les Saintes can be visited on foot, by scooter, bicycle or electric car (all vehicle traffic is prohibited during the August 15 celebrations).

► **Day 6: North of Grande-Terre.** Go to Saint-François with a dynamic marina (many restaurants and shops), a golf course and a pier for the islands (Marie-Galante, La Désirade). Then, take the direction to Le Moule, one of the oldest municipalities of Grande-Terre, with yet modernized infrastructure. On the road, several stops possible; the Bellevue distillery, the Edgard-Clerc museum, the house of Zevallos, which is said to be haunted and deserves a stop for its special architecture (it comes from the Eiffel workshops). Towards Anse-Bertrand, spot of surfers, the pleasant road runs along the bay and allows you to discover the magnificent natural sites: the lagoon of the Porte d'Enfer and the Pointe de la Grande-Vigie. To do absolutely, a little hike on the trail of the ridges, one of the wildest in the Antilles. Descent to Port-Louis, a small quiet port and then to Petit-Canal from where you leave the seaside to reach Morne-à-l'Eau. The cemetery, monumental and in the middle of the village, impresses. Then, return to Gosier.

► **Day 7: prepare the departure!** Flights to the metropolis are fixed in the late afternoon or in the evening. Some accommodation facilities allow you to change before the airport by providing a luggage storage and showers. So, you can take full advantage of the activities until the last moments. If you are not too exhausted, why don't you enjoy a last sport activity on the beach (sea scooter ride, canoe-kayak...) before departure. As for the shopping, for the omissions, the floor of the airport dedicated to the departures is filled with shops, a pharmacy, a snack...

Long stays

Stay of 2 weeks

► **Day 1.** To limit fatigue and especially if your flight arrives late in the evening, choose an accommodation in Grande-Terre because the

southern area, the economic and tourist area, is subject to traffic jams during peak hours. Relax calmly.

► **Day 2.** You're going to wake up at dawn, because of the time lag. Take the time to bath in the swimming pool or in the sea without too much exposure to the sun. Over two weeks, you have time to acquire a nice safe suntanning for your skin or the tanning in crayfish version. Spot the places to situate the shops, restaurants, beaches nearby and using a map, visualize your future journey to optimize it.

► **Day 3.** Heading to South Grande-Terre with the Pointe des Châteaux in Saint-François. You will first pass through Sainte-Anne, renowned for its beaches with fine sand bordered by coconut trees. The municipal beach, with very calm waters, is ideal for families because it is protected by a coral barrier. You will find many restaurants there and a market every morning on the beach shore. Then you arrive at Saint-François. Follow the direction to Pointe des Châteaux. This stretch of land is worth a detour for its landscapes and small coves on your right. The climb to the monumental cross is a must, where you will have a panoramic view of the surrounding islands! There you will find plenty of restaurants if you want to lunch on site. Back to the centre of Saint-François to go to Le Moule. On your right, after the roundabout, the statue of Martin Luther King, the house of Zévallos, built by Gustave Eiffel and which can be visited some afternoons (it is better to inquire by calling in advance).

You can also stop at the Damoiseau distillery, the only distillery in Grande-Terre. Finally, go towards North Grande-Terre for Anse-Bertrand. It is in this commune where are located Pointe de la Grande-Vigie and Porte d'Enfer, the main natural sites of which the famous cliffs stand, imposing and even frightening, hence their name.

► **Day 4.** It would be a shame to have a stay in Guadeloupe without having a look at the special mangrove ecosystem. This trip can take place departing from the Le Gosier marina with the Bateau Mouche *King Papyrus*, the port of Vieux Bourg in Morne-à-l'Eau or Petit-Canal. Whatever the means of locomotion (fisherman's boat, electric boat, sea mountain bike, kayak), the outing is as enriching as relaxing.

As an alternative to the mangrove visit, you can also dive in North Grande-Terre. The dive spots enjoy a variety of impressive landscapes. The underwater architecture is completely different from that of the Réserve de Bouillante, especially thanks to caves, arches, ruins, cols, coral gardens, plane wreckage...

► **Day 5.** A day of relaxation towards one of the many beaches of South Grande-Terre or more sportive if you wish. Water activities (sea

scooter, paddling, towed buoy, flyboard...) are available on the beaches of Pointe de la Verdure de Gosier, Sainte-Anne or Saint-François. For the fans of strong sensations, an aerial flight by plane, ULM, helicopter, a free fall jump are other ways to discover the archipelago from the sky.

► **Day 6.** A day that combines heritage and shopping with the visit of Pointe-à-Pitre (its market, shopping streets, museums...). Ask for information at the tourist office if you want to participate in a commented tour of the city that requires prior registration. The heritage department organises fascinating guided tours on various themes (20th-century architecture, places, edge of quays, cemetery, traditional houses...).

► **Day 7.** Explore one of the archipelago's outbuildings. If La Désirade can possibly visit in one day, it is advisable to spend at least two days in Marie-Galante but also in Les Saintes. Les Saintes consist of several islets, only two of them of them are inhabited; Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas. Each of these islands has in a very different atmosphere. Terre-de-Haut is the drop-off point of most tourists. It can be visited by bicycle, scooter, electric car or on foot. More serene, Terre-de-Bas is recommended for beautiful hikes and for its authenticity. As for Marie-Galante, it has managed to keep her rurality as well as La Désirade.

► **Day 8.** Return to Guadeloupe main island if you chose to stay one night on the island of your choice to enjoy a two-day stay. Plan an accommodation around Capesterre-Belle-Eau or Trois-Rivières, which are close to sites to visit because the pace of the days will be accelerated. Make sure to prepare for future hikes by being sure of having all the necessary equipment (rain clothing, walking shoes, hat or cap, water, dried fruit, charged phone...). Inform your host about your destination. Heavy rains can quickly make the route impassable or transform a small river into a violent stream, so remain vigilant and cautious.

► **Day 9.** The Grand-Carbet river takes its source on the eastern side of the Soufrière. Its sulphur waters brighten up after the three falls to 11 km lower in the Atlantic Ocean. Thanks to the aquatic power of these falls, the vegetation, regularly watered by tropical rain, is particularly lush.

► **Day 10.** Visit of the town of Basse-Terre with Maison de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine. Visits and discoveries around town planning and history, military and administrative architecture with the buildings of the architect Ali Tur, religious buildings, Cours Nolvos and the urban facilities of the 18th century, the typology of the traditional Creole house, the public and private cemeteries... Reservations required. Continue your walk to the Bologna distillery, located at the foot of the volcano. Created around 1665, it was one of the

most important in Basse-Terre in the 19th century. Next, stop at the Fort Louis Delgrès Museum.

► **Day 11.** Hiking at the Soufrière. Same precautions as for the Carbet falls. At the top, the view is extraordinary. You see all the Lesser Antilles in a single glance. You have a wide view of Marie-Galante, Les Saintes and La Désirade. With binoculars, it is often possible to distinguish La Dominique and even La Martinique.

► **Day 12.** Heading towards Bouillante via the Route de la Traversée. This transversal departmental road in Basse-Terre (D23) serves some of the most beautiful sites of the national park of Guadeloupe and offers many hikes. It steeply and narrowly goes forward in the middle of lush vegetation. Easy walking tours are managed by the Forest Office. Stop at the Cascade aux Ecrevisses (accessible to people with reduced mobility, at the zoo of Guadeloupe, at the Maison de la Forêt... Next, Bouillante, the capital of the dive, welcomes you between hot springs and breathtaking dive spots. These sites can be enjoyed by scuba diving, kayaking, on glass-bottom boat, water hike (you walk under water at 4-5 m deep with a full-face helmet). The discovery of cetaceans is a fascinating alternative that must be booked in advance.

► **Day 13.** Last step of this journey, the North Basse-Terre via Sainte-Rose and Deshaies. The ideal is to take accommodation in this area to avoid long journeys. The coast road and beaches are superb. Stop at the Creole Art Ecomuseum in Sofaïa – Sainte-Rose, conservatory medicinal plants, arboretum and museum with several spaces, the musée du Rhum and Domaine de Dios, part of which done by train. In Deshaies, don't miss the Botanical Garden, an exceptional site, both botanical and animal park on an area of 7 hectares that belonged to Coluche.

► **Day 14.** This is the day of return. Enjoy a last swim, make your last purchases and plan enough time to arrive at the airport without risking being late because there are always traffic jams at peak hours on the road to go there during the school period.

Thematic stays

Nautical activities and diving

Diving fans, whether beginner or experienced, will be able to explore exceptional seabeds along the rocks of the great coves, and by ascending along the rocky coast. Water sports enthusiasts know that the Caribbean is great for sailing. Far from the seaside resorts of Grande-Terre, the coasts bordering the sandy beaches of Basse-Terre and the offshore coral formations are wonderful marine observation grounds.

Surrounded by virgin landscapes, Guadeloupe is a world-renowned "diving" destination. Fragile corals still shelter aquatic gardens to preserve. You can also take a boat, then shut off the engine to anchor near the coral reef. Hotels, hotel residences, cottages... all have partnerships with a diving club, which usually allows to benefit from a preferential rate. In some, a swimming pool initiation is offered to become familiar with the equipment. Local diving clubs, located in seaside villages and towns, as well as independent divers (more or less qualified), offer baptisms and sea trips. Along the leeward coastline, there are many panoramas on the Pigeon islets (nicknamed the Cousteau Reserve and the High place of scuba diving), and Bouillante (geothermal city, hot springs) around Montserrat Island or from Pointe-Noire. For budding adventurers, take the fishing boats from Bouillante to the Pigeon Îlets, or those from Sainte-Rose to the Caret islet. Mask and snorkel are enough to see big fish! If you want to have the chance to see cetaceans, you need to go off Deshaies or Anse-Bertrand.

Hiking

If most tourists prefer the blue of the Caribbean Sea, opt for stays focused on walking, and spending exciting weeks in the heart of various Guadeloupean landscapes is quite possible, while getting into the eastern lands and mountains. In Guadeloupe, there are no fewer than 200 km of trails and hiking trails called traces. You can also get organized with a good map, and the helpful information of the Tourism committee and local offices. However, it is important to follow the recommendations of the receptionists before a hike: never go alone, prevent one third of your journey, bring water and food, etc.). All these tips are specified on the National Park site (www.guadeloupe-parcnational.com). The status of the traces is regularly updated. Professionals offer escorted outings for all levels.

► **Many trails on Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre.** The durations of the walks listed varies from 15 minutes walk to a good day. In Grande-Terre, the coastal road and the road of the Traversée road houses several ridge paths that offer spectacular views, such as at Pointe du

Château, after Saint-François, or to the immense cliffs of the North, to the aptly named sites of the Porte de l'Enfer or Pointe de la vigie.

► **Basse-Terre, a paradise for hikers.** Contrary to what the name might suggest, the East Wing's relief is steep, volcanic. Irrigated by wild rivers ending in torrents, waterfalls and freshwater basins, it offers refreshing bathing as a reward for the small efforts. The ascent of the Soufrière (1467 m, the archipelago's peak) is essential, as the more demanding steps around Morne Michot (with stops in its Creole gardens), the discovery of the authorized areas of the Carbet Falls (the jewel of Guadeloupe National park) or a trip through the exuberant primary forest. The water hikes in the river, in the heart of the forest, invite the more adventurous to the joys of canyoning between the playful slides on rocks slides and high jumps in the basins, to bivouacs in the rainforest...

► **The most adventurous option.** Follow along the entire length of Basse-Terre the former GR G1, formerly a long-distance hiking trail, decommissioned because too difficult to maintain. A feasible hike in 7 or 8 steps, well prepared (with or without guide), while having taken care to check the state of the trails and sites. Hikes are defined in 4 levels (level 1 or 2: very easy, family, on well-marked paths with less easy passages; then level 3 or 4, means, used for hiking with sporting passages to difficult for experienced hikers).

Follow and understand the "Traces-Mémoires"

Heritage sites linked to the memory of slavery and the colonial period in the Caribbean mark out the landscape of the archipelago and can be a thematic of stay. These circuits of Guadeloupean history are dedicated to make you discover the places of memory connected to this painful past. Historical sites (the slave steps of Petit-Canal, Fort Delgrès of Basse-Terre... houses transformed into ecomuseums, agricultural estates, distilleries abandoned or still in operation. So many economic and social testimonies, old and contemporary, which are often visited with great emotion.

HOW TO GO?

GOING ON A PACKAGE TOUR

Tour operators

Specialists

■ PASSION DES ILES

France

☎ +590 (0)8 25 16 15 02

www.tui.fr

Specialist in organised trips for over 40 years, Tourinter offers to make you live a dream holiday on a heavenly island, and particularly for your honeymoon: Maldives, the Seychelles, Reunion... The most beautiful beaches are offered, and the Resorts where comfort is at its best.

■ TERRE ET NATURE VOYAGES

23, rue d'Ouessant (15^e)

Paris (France) ☎ +590 (0)1 45 67 60 60

www.terreetnature.com

contact@terreetnature.com

Open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 7pm. On appointment beside these hours.

Terre et Nature Voyages offers mostly sporting or cultural stays in the most beautiful countries of the world.

Generalists

Here, you will find the so-called "generalist" operators. If they deliver less specialized advice

than specialists, they generally offer more attractive rates.

Incoming travel agencies

These are tour operators present in the country. Indeed, they know the area extremely well.

Price-comparison websites and auction

Several sites make it possible to compare travel offers (packages, dry flights, etc.) and thus have a panel of possibilities and therefore the prices. They then send the user directly to the site where the selected offer is proposed.

Travel agencies

■ PASSION DES ILES

France

☎ +590 (0)8 25 16 15 02

See page 13.

■ TERRE ET NATURE VOYAGES

23, rue d'Ouessant (15^e)

Paris (France)

☎ +590 (0)1 45 67 60 60

See page 13.

TRAVELLING ALONE

By plane

Average price for a flight Paris-Pointe-à-Pitre: in high season, from € 500 to € 1 200 in economy class and, in low season, from € 350 to € 850. Note that the price change depends on the company borrowed but, especially the booking deadline. To obtain interesting rates, it is essential to get there very early. Remember to buy your tickets six months before departure and do simulations with different dates, so you can see that the rate varies significantly within days! The airlines also offer very attractive rates during periods of lower affluence (May, June, September). It's generally during these months that you will find a round trip ticket around €350.

Main companies serving the destination

■ AIR ANTILLES

France ☎ 0 890 648 648

www.airantilles.com

■ XL AIRWAYS

☎ +590 (0)892 692 123 – www.xl.com

The round trip is proposed from €455 including all taxes, luggage, meal and wireless entertainment system, XL Cloud included.

The French airline links Roissy Charles de Gaulle to Miami 3 times a week from June to September. Round-trip is available from 479 € including, baggage, meals and wireless entertainment system, XL Cloud included.

Marie-Galante served by Air Caraïbes from Paris

Since November 2015, the local Airline Air Caraïbes has entered into a partnership with the shipping company L'Express des Îles. The navigAIR offer allows you to benefit from an exceptional extension: you can now join Marie-Galante with a single ticket for only an extra €1! When you arrive at the airport, you are picked up by a minibus that takes you to the ferry terminal. In case of flight delay, you benefit from a support and a priority for the next boat departure, or even a lodging if needed. This offer (which may be subject to change without notice) is valid for a Sun class trip and under certain conditions.

► **For more information**, contact Air Caraïbes ☎ +590 (0)8 20 835 835.

Airports

■ BEAUVAIS

☎ +590 (0)8 92 68 20 66
www.aeroportbeauvais.com
service.clients@aeroportbeauvais.com

Price-comparison websites

These sites will help you find airline tickets at the best price. Some of them compare the prices of regular and *low cost* companies. You will find the cheapest dry flights (air transport sold alone, without other benefits).

By car

Travelling by sea offers you the possibility to leave with your vehicle.

Car rental

The service stations are numerous and well distributed over the island. They serve as shops

(snacks, cigarettes, fresh drinks, alcohol, etc.). They help the consumer with opening hours longer than usual shops. Let us note this service which tends to disappear in metropolitan areas: here, "you" will be satisfied.

All stations have the same rates, which fluctuate every month according to an elaborate calculation, the result of which is announced by the prefecture.

■ ALAMO

☎ +590 (0)8 05 54 25 10
www.alamo.fr

With over 40 years of experience, Alamo currently has over 1 million vehicles to serve 15 million travelers every year, spread across 1 248 agencies located in 43 countries. Special rates like Alamo Gold in the United States and Canada are offered, an all inclusive car rental package consisting of GPS, insurances, taxes, airport fees, refueling and additional drivers are at your disposal. Alamo puts everything in place to make car renting easier.



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■ AVIS

☎ +590 (0)8 21 23 07 60

☎ +590 (0)9 77 40 32 32

www.avis.fr

Avis is a car rental company. Moreover, the team offers advice and information on the choice of vehicle, services and accessories. From a simple reservation for a day to a week, Avis is committed to several criteria, probably the most important. Insurance offers, large choice of vehicles from the economic to the prestigious (compact cars, berlines, 4x4, convertibles, minibus, prestige...) with a simple and efficient reservation system.

■ BSP AUTO

☎ +590 (0)1 43 46 20 74

www.bsp-auto.com

Open from Monday to Friday from 9am to 9.30pm, week-ends from 9am to 8pm.

It is a provider who ensures you the best rates of car rental with big renters in the train stations, airports and downtown areas. The price always include unlimited mileage and insurance. The BSP bonuses: book now and pay only 5 days

before taking your vehicle, no application or cancellation fee (until the eve of the first day), the cheapest of the zero franchise options.

■ AVIS BUDGET

☎ +590 (0)8 25 00 35 64

www.budget.fr

Budget has multiple agencies throughout the world. The bookings can be done on their site, which also proposes temporary offers. In agency, you will find the selected category car (town, ludospace economic or family minivan...) with a weak mileage and equipped with the reserved options (baby seats, ski rack, GPS...).

■ CARIGAMI

☎ +590 (0)1 73 79 33 33

www.carigami.fr

This website allows you to compare the several brokers' offers and to rent a car whatever your destination. A wide choice of town cars, minivans, convertibles, 4x4... The evaluation of the insurance and the customers' opinions are displayed for each offer. Free cancellation is possible up to 24 hours in advance.

STAYING

Sleeping

The various tour operators who officiate in the Caribbean offer more and more accessible packages, attracting more customers. The arrival of the Norwegian airline, which attracts a highly demanding American public, should lead to an evolution of the accommodation offer. The Antilles have become, especially for the winter period, the favourite islands of the metropolitans. Be aware that the Christmas and New Year season is the very high season, at the highest rates (both in terms of flight and accommodation or vehicle rental). In this guide, we present you many private structures offering seasonal rentals. All types of accommodation and all budgets are concerned, from the standard studio to the beautiful villa with swimming pool without forgetting the cottages and independent dwellings (villa or apartment), furnished and equipped. Please note that some cottages offer benefits in excess of hotels and residences that are still outstanding. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism are on the rise in Guadeloupe, particularly on Basse-Terre.

■ AUX-ANTILLES.FR

France

www.aux-antilles.fr

The site is a mine of information on the islands: history and heritage, geography and climate, monuments and sites to visit... It is also a hotel

reservation centre that covers the "Petites Antilles" area, the Grenadines to the islands of north Saint-Martin. The principle is simple: the user can choose his destination from a range of proposals, make his reservation immediately, according to actual availability, and confirm his stay by simply communicating the number of his blue card in a completely secure manner. Interesting, promotions in low season!

■ VAOLO

France

☎ +1 418 317 6466

www.vaolo.com – info@villagemonde.com

VAOLO is an online booking platform for sustainable and responsible accommodation set up by the sustainable tourism NGO, Village Monde. This recent collaborative site allows you to discover villages outside the beaten trails, communities far from mass tourist circuits, and go home without any intermediaries. A good way to genuinely meet locals!

Hotels

Many hotels on the island have just benefited from renovation work, via European funds, allowing a rise in range of their services with more modern equipment. A large part of these establishments have accommodation with kitchenette. You will also find offers in hotel residence. The rental offers



of studio, apartment, villa, standard accommodation with high-end services, are expanding on Guadeloupe and its outbuildings. Écogîtes accommodation, focused on sustainable development, has also exploded, especially in Basse-Terre. These independent establishments or integrated into a hotel group are present in the brochures of the various tour operators. They benefit from trade agreements with airlines, and can therefore offer you a plane + hotel package at negotiated rates, sometimes more interesting than if you make the booking for flight and accommodation. For those who can decide at the last moment, travel discounters offer very interesting packages, to eight days from the departure! The vast majority of establishments have online booking portals and offer attractive rates in low season. They are also generally referenced on the platforms (Booking, Expedia, Tripadvisor, etc.). It is always interesting to compare the rates on these different sites so as not to miss the regular promotions offered there.

■ PIERRE & VACANCES

Le Village de Sainte-Anne
SAINTE-ANNE (Guadeloupe)

☎ +590 (0)5 90 47 00 00

☎ +590 (0)8 92 70 21 80

www.pierre-vacances.fr

Since 1999, this group has built two beautiful residences in Sainte-Luce, Martinique and Sainte-Anne, Guadeloupe.

Guestrooms

The alternative to hotels and hotel residences does exist in Guadeloupe, and is growing from year to year. You will find well-equipped seasonal rentals that meet the growing demand of holidaymakers and visiting tourists. This type of housing does not necessarily cost less, because the quality of services has increased. This is an opportunity to discover a family environment, a typical atmosphere, and to talk with the owners or managers. But beware of the sometimes uneven quality of services, the misleading photos or the disappointment that can be a newly constructed detached villa. Also beware of bad surprises: some unscrupulous owners sometimes rent apartments on the ground floor of their own homes without any comfort, at high prices and imposing constraints to

preserve the serenity of the inhabitants! For more safety, make the word of mouth work. There are quality networks and labels that guarantee you the benefit (mark of confidence of Guadeloupe National Park, Welcome to the farm for green tourism, key holidays, Gîtes de France...). The guest room is located in the house of the owner who provides you "overnight stay", that is, accommodation or breakfast. Bungalows, apartments or villas owned by individuals are generally of a good level of benefits. As everywhere, the coastline costs more expensive than the countryside. This is a calculation to make because by choosing to move away from the coastline, you will have the obligation to rent a vehicle to travel.

■ CLÉVACANCES

Square de la Banque
POINTE-À-PITRE (Guadeloupe)

☎ +590 (0)5 90 82 09 30

www.clevacances.com – 971@clevacances.com

The variety of the Clevacances accommodation range is their strength, while their label guarantees the quality of the services through a network of tourism professionals (Tourism departmental committee, tourist offices, information centres...). The label includes guest rooms, cottages, villas, apartments, residences... You can search your future place of holidays on their site or download their catalogue. The requirement is in order (only one accommodation out of 10 is accepted). The listed accommodations are inspected every 3 years.

Campsites

Campsite is not popular in the Caribbean (wild camping is forbidden). In Guadeloupe and Martinique, to pitch your tent is not really a tradition, except for the Easter weekend, in which we are witnessing, on the contrary, a real mass movement, with the environmental impact that this affluence implies. The whole island meets on the beaches! Associations and the NFO work together to raise public awareness of eco-citizen actions. This extended Easter weekend (and only at this time of the year), the tradition is to get together with family or friends on the coast, or even near the rivers, to spend good time together and sleep a few nights on the spot. If you are looking for tranquility, avoid the beach and the river at this time!

18 destinations from Guadeloupe and Martinique

Barbados
Dominica
Dutch Sint Maarten
French St Martin
Guadeloupe
Martinique
Miami
Port au Prince
Puerto Rico
Punta Cana
Saint Lucia
Santo Domingo
St Barth
Cayenne
Grand Santi
Maripasoula
Saül
St Laurent

0 890 648 648 Service fee: 0,25 € /min + call charge

airantilles.com
and approved agencies



Moving around

Plane

■ AIR ANTILLES

Aéroport Pôle Caraïbes
ABYMES ☎ +590 (0)8 90 64 86 48
www.airantilles.com
contact@airantilles.com

The company is mainly equipped with ATR 42-500/600 devices.

The company positions itself in the price niche. Its performs regular rotations from Guadeloupe to Martinique, Saint-Martin and Sint Maarten, Saint-Barthélemy, Cayenne, Saint-Domingue, Puerto Rico, Miami, Barbade. The destinations of Antigua and the Dominican Republic (La Romana and Punta Cana) are subject to rotations only during season. You can book on line with just a few clicks in real time and 24 hours a day your airline ticket with direct and immediate access to all of the offers and at competitive rates, especially with "flash" sales. The company carries out the regional continuity in partnership with Air France.

Boat

For sea lovers, the ideal solution in the Caribbean remains the boat. A tip: regular maritime shuttles sometimes set up discounted rates if you reserve in advance or on the Internet. Do not hesitate to contact them from the metropolis to make an inter-island reservation sufficiently in advance. If you are planning your trip in high season, also pay attention to available places! Remember that the local population travels a lot. On weekends, public holidays dates are busy days. The Pointe-à-Pitre ferry terminal, located in Bergevin, offers many amenities. The huge car park, certainly fee-paying, is monitored: no problem as in the city centre, even though it's obviously a little farther away. It is best to check the schedules before the day of departure to avoid last-minute bad surprises. If you choose to combine the useful and the pleasant, you can choose to visit the islands and islets of the Guadeloupean archipelago during a day cruise on board a catamaran.

Bus

Buses generally run from 5:30am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. However, you should be wary when you take public transport to reach the Pointe-à-Pitre market on Saturday morning (the liveliest). For the return, it is better to leave the city centre before 2pm. No buses on Sundays or public holidays, except in the north of Grande-Terre (towards Morne-à-l'Eau and Le Moule) where the network is more successful. Grande-Terre is better served than Basse-Terre. The Mixed Urban Transport Syndicate of Petit

Cul-de-Sac Marin, responsible for organizing urban transport on the territory of Les Abymes, Baie-Mahault, Pointe-à-Pitre and Gosier, has set up the Karu'Lis network whose lines serve these various cities. These buses are easily identifiable with their orange colour. Travel rates vary from €1,40 to €2 depending on the area. The single tickets are sold on the buses. The Pass Voyages 5 (10 tickets) can be purchased at the Pointe-à-Pitre commercial agency, located at the Cités Unies stop, served by the lines U3, U5, A10, A30, A40, A50, A57, A70, A80, A91, A94, A98 and A99. Please note, the Karu'Lis network rotations also stop in the early afternoon on Saturday and do not exist on Sundays.

► **How to recognize the lines?** 7 urban lines (Pointe-à-Pitre) recognizable by the letter U. The line U2 starts from Place de la Victoire and takes you to the village of Gosier. 11 peri-urban lines (Les Abymes): Letter A. 7 peri-urban lines (Baie-Mahault): Letter B. 6 peri-urban lines (Gosier): Letter G.

Car

► **Road conditions and bad weather.** Guadeloupe has generally a good road network. National roads are numbered and well maintained. Thanks to the development of departmental and national roads, only a few departmental and secondary roads appear to be winding or steep in the image of Grands-Fonds in Grande-Terre, the route de la Traversée. But the weather is tough for bitumen, and the highways department often have a lot of work. Some private roads which are subject to a right of way and allow access to accommodation are the subject of disputes between the various owners. In this way, you can take a way with holes whose condition may worsen after a heavy tropical rain.

► **The Region Guadeloupe and the General Council have created Routes de Guadeloupe,** a unique public establishment in France which manages, under the tutelage of the two communities, the 416 km of national roads and the 619 km of departmental roads. In particular, it allows to inform users of an accident on a road, works, traffic jam... in order to use an alternative route if possible. This information, in real time, is also available on their website: www.trafikera.fr

► **Markings.** Tourist marks around the beaches, to inform, for example, the various leisure possibilities (diving, sailing, jet-ski, etc.), are now well detailed. Don't hesitate to seek clarification from people who are always ready to inform you. Around Pointe-à-Pitre, when you want to leave the ring road, pay attention to the vehicles arriving on your right and which join the ring road! It is very dangerous when you are not accustomed... When overtaking and before turning, do as everyone else, honk to your attention!

► **Speed limit.** The most striking is undoubtedly the no respect of the speed limits. At the first intersection, you will realise that speed plays an important role in Guadeloupean drivers, a parameter that should not be overlooked. For your part, respect these limitations and open your eyes. The driver's hand coming out of the door often replaces the flashing light and the unexpected stops to greet an acquaintance are common. Buses too often tend to stop on the side of the road at the request of a passenger without respecting the stops provided for this purpose. So, respect the safety distances.

► **Slowdown, traffic jams and controls.** Every day of the week from 6: 30am to 9 am and from 4: 30pm to 6pm (from 12pm to 3pm on Wednesday, Friday and the eve of public holidays), traffic jams on national roads are legion. The only coastal road on every part of the island is regularly congested, even during the day. The traffics are amplified by the climatic conditions, especially at the time of the rains. As for the police checks, they are multiplying mainly to measure your blood alcohol level... Take care of the number of ti-punch swallowed during the day! With two glasses, you are already positive, and after four glasses, you are good to spend the night in a drunk tank! Guadeloupe has automatic radars. Their numbers are growing. Mobile or twin radars are also common on the main axes.

► **Animals on the roads!** Goats, cows, stray dogs or iguanas can walk around the roads, without really worrying about traffic, and have the unfortunate habit of crossing without looking. Very numerous stray dogs go out especially at night. Constant attention is needed on the road.



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■ AUTO DISCOUNT LOCATION

Aéroport Pôle Caraïbes

Allée 15

POINTE-À-PITRE

☎ +590 (0)6 90 858 824

www.auto-discount.fr

autodiscount@wanadoo.fr

From €13/day (see conditions in agency). Consult the site to obtain the best price. Open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 6pm Sunday and public holidays from 9am to 11am.

Auto Discount Location has been one of the cheap leading car rental companies in Guadeloupe since 1999. From the model adapted to people with reduced mobility to 4X4, through the 9-seat minibus, you can be sure of finding the means of transport adapted to your stay. From one week of rental, free shuttle to the airport, the ferry terminal, the marina and the hotels of Gosier, Sainte-Anne and Saint-François. Their dynamic and friendly team will use all their know-how to embellish your stay. The sign also offers a wide range of utilities for your most original needs. From January 2018 they also have licence-free cars and vehicles for people with reduced mobility.

■ EUROPCAR

Aéroport Pôle Caraïbes, comptoir n° 10

ABYMES

☎ +590 (0)5 90 93 18 15 / 05 90 38 73 95

www.europcar-guadeloupe.com

info@europcar-gpe.com

Agency open Monday to Saturday from 7.15am to 9pm, Sunday and public holidays from 8am to 9pm. Europcar has been present in Guadeloupe for many years and has several agencies on the island. Vehicles of all categories and all brands, petrol or diesel, possibility of GPS

or car seat. All vehicles are, of course, air-conditioned.

■ VOITURES DES ÎLES

☎ +590 (0)5 90 89 22 10

www.voituresdesiles.com

info@voituresdesiles.com

This reservation centre offers all types of vehicles in great rental companies, at the best prices. Quality of the service, 24 hours a day assistance, unlimited mileage, insurance included. Easy booking on line or by phone. Immediate confirmation. Cancellation free of charge. Special offers in low season.

Taxi

Taxi stations are located at the airport, at the maritime station, at the terminals, near the road stations, in the centre of Pointe-à-Pitre (near the shopping area of rue Frébault). Many drivers are alert when a potential customer arrives and the choice will be up to you. They are now all equipped with a taximeter. The rate varies depending on whether it is a day (7 am to 7 pm) or night course. Here are some examples of fares for a trip with 2/3 people departing from the airport: Le Gosier €30 – Saint-François €70 – Capesterre-Belle-Eau €60.

■ FRENCH CARIBBEAN TAXIS

☎ +590 (0)5 90 38 40 40

☎ +590 (0)6 90 16 19 20

Taxi reservation centre open 7 days a week and 24 hours a day on the entire island.

The structure includes forty taxis and has its own reservation platform available on Smartphone and tablet. The French Caribbean Taxis application is freely downloadable on Google Play.

DISCOVERING GUADELOUPE

Guadeloupean cooks, Pointe-à-Pitre.

© GILLES MOREL



GUADELOUPE IN 25 KEYWORDS

Welcome

The casual style of islanders should not be taken for lack of consideration. On the contrary, it is a way of life! On a daily basis, kind words exchange easily with the local population, on the street or at the markets. The awareness of a major tourist economy for the island values the work of the employees and contributes to making the service more rewarding and therefore to a more smiling welcome. And what about the pseudo-relaxation of municipal employees in public institutions? Taken by the constant stress of daily life, many metropolitan people find it difficult to abandon themselves to the islands' more relaxed atmosphere. Why not adopt the same relaxed attitude? In any case, you won't achieve anything useful by behaving nervously. "Slowlife", as the English speaking call it, has its perks, especially when you are on holiday!

Addresses

Municipalities do a tremendous work by assigning names to each street, each alley, and numbers to each house. Even if it becomes rarer, it can still be useful, to place an address by saying "next to the stadium, after the gendarmerie..." This is especially the case for the Jarry area where, even if all streets are named, the best way to locate yourself is to obtain indications about the nearby signs. As for tourist sites, they are now well marked by signposts on the roads.

Rain showers

From July-August, we are in the winter interval. The season becomes moist, even very wet. The level of precipitation is high and regular. Little or heavy rain showers, it can rain every day in the forest areas and the morne, and often at the same time. Then the sun returns quickly: it is the magic of tropical climate, which is conducive to lush vegetation. The hydrometric rate remains constant, which compensates for the dryness of the dry season (Lent) from January to June. For sea walks and outings, always bring light and waterproof clothing in addition to those you wear and check the trails you are going to take. Stay vigilant also when walking near the rivers because heavy rains can quickly swell the bed of a river.

Gold jewelry

Great speciality of the islands, especially represented in Pointe-à-Pitre jewellery, these local jewels in Antillean gold are the result of a beautiful blend of ancient forms, inherited from both African, Indian and European cultures. Creole earrings are the most known. Let's also note the so-called slave's chains that are now loved by rappers, as well as the necklace, rings and thin earrings that accompany the Creole costume. Contemporary elegant women love them!

Sugar cane

Its fields wind along the roads, in the valleys or on the morne height. Traditionally, sugar cane remains attached to the fate of the Caribbean and today covers 13 750 ha on the island of Guadeloupe, while it covered more than 26 000 ha in the 1980s. Amazing stories are told about its culture: intrigues for farmer-owners, pain for farm workers, struggles and fighting to control and humanize one's technique... Today, the ecomuseums distributed throughout the island, reveal the history of this industry and its manufacture. The distilleries can be visited the whole year but production takes place only during the harvest period of the cane.

Carnival

The biggest celebration of the year and one of the most famous carnivals in the world! It starts in early January, on Friday following the Sunday of Kings (Epiphany), and ends on Ash Wednesday. From day to night, we are witnessing a month of frenzy and joy in the streets: parades of splendid costumes, music, bands, drums and jubilation throughout Guadeloupe.

Cemeteries

The West Indies have preserved certain traditions of funeral rites inherited from their European past. Mixed with the local culture, customs and traditions around death gave rise to different practices of graves' beautification. Creole cemeteries are not a dismal space apart. On the contrary, these places inseparable from the lives of families have over time become a common heritage, maintained and visited with respect. Some are distinguished by their beautiful location in natural sites, others by their architectures. The best known, that of Morne-à-l'Eau, is like a

large arena of tombs in black and white, between steep walking trails whose plan is designed by the inhabitants themselves, highlighted by night lighting. The Port Louis marine cemetery is just as picturesque with its tub-shaped tombs, surrounded by lambi shells.

Mourning

The cult of the dead still occupies a considerable place in the West Indies, where beliefs and traditions are still alive. Shops even specialize in clothing to wear after a death. Women, above all, continue to follow the custom. At night, if you cross a property that is illuminated by countless candles, it means the people in the house are mourning someone. The tradition of exposing the deceased in the house is still practised today, while others opt for a funeral vigil in a funeral company.

DROM

Guadeloupe is an overseas department, but also a region with its satellite islands. There is therefore a general council and a regional council in Guadeloupe. Until 2003, the acronym DOM-TOM was used to designate the whole of Overseas France. Since then, we have been talking about DROM-COM (Department and Overseas Region – Overseas Community). In the European Union, Guadeloupe has the status of Overseas Ultra-Peripheral Region,

a term encompassing remote European territories. Since 2015, Ary Chalus is President of the Regional Council and Josette Borel-Lincertin is President of the Departmental Council.

Crayfish

Dish of choice in Caribbean cuisine, these fresh-water crustaceans are named "ouassous" in Guadeloupe (meaning "king of the springs") and "z'habitants" in Martinique. They have long blue pincers, a shell of a blue-grey tone and live in fresh water. On the restaurant menus, they are as popular as lobster. The term *crayfish* is unsuitable to name them because all *ouassous* belong to the family of false shrimp. You should visit: the aquaculture park in Pointe-Noire sur Basse-Terre. Beware, the frozen copies found in supermarkets usually come from Asia and not from Guadeloupe.

Do it for me...

With the essential "pa ni pwoblem" as a response, it is the common expression that sums up one of the features of Guadeloupean character, the spirit of mutual assistance. Sharp convivial discussions can demonstrate it. French Creole, a coloured language, free from the city's formalities is spoken. Moreover, those who return often regret this more spontaneous way of life they have learned on the island...



Children's carnival in Gosier.

Fruit and vegetables

"Fruit or vegetable? ": the typical question that one ask when at the market! For example, the bread fruit, which is eaten like a starch but grows on a tree, or the banana, born of a plant, that you eat salty or sweet... You will discover the various flavours of Victoria, Bottle-shaped or Cayenne pineapple recognizable by their shapes. The root vegetables (sweet potatoes, yams), the giraumon (resembling a squash), christophines... these foods are abundant on the producer's shelves and always accompany traditional dishes.

Gardens

The generous nature in the Antilles does not lack sunshine or water, especially in areas close to the wetlands (Massifs of Basse-Terre, Côte au Vent, Côte sous-le-Vent, Caraïbes Mountains). The most modest houses have their own greenery space, where beautiful specimens of plants and flowers grow at great speed. Legend says: "plant a seed the day before, it will have already pointed out a leaf the next day."

Games

The cumulated turnover of this activity is, in the departments of the Antilles and Guyana, several hundred million euros. At the top of the list, the PMU, which has its experts here as in the metropolis (a hippodrome at Anse-Bertrand), the French games, but also the sometimes impressive cockfighting. The casinos of Le Gosier and Saint-François.

Karukera

Karukera is the name given to the island by its first inhabitants, the Caribbean Indians, meaning "the island of beautiful waters" referring to its rivers, waterfalls and basins.

Spiny lobster

King of crustaceans in Guadeloupe, the lobster with thorny carapace attracts tourist by making it as an unreachable delight in metropolitan areas. Affordable here because still abundant in the fishermen's nets, it is also farmed in fish beds. Offered in all sauces, this marine invertebrate with succulent flesh was previously regarded as a "dish of the poor": they ate it when there were no fish!

Markets

They usually start very early in the morning, and each village has its own. Often in small size, they are usually family and rural. Not everyone can install their own stalls; boards and trestles are sometimes enough for fruit and vegetables. Tourism markets are folkloric, but this is not where people do the best business. They are all very colourful. The fruit and vegetable markets are located in the city centre, sometimes under a hall or in the heart of the village. The fish markets are more located on the sea side. Weekly night markets are very popular, usually from 4 pm. The most typical markets are Le Gosier, Sainte-Anne, Saint-François, Le Moule and Basse-Terre.

Music

Tea dance, *sound systems*, zouk, *lewwoz*, outdoors or in a room, in concert or in disco: West Indian music irrigates the society like water on the cane fields. Whether it is orchestral or digital, zouk love is well known, but there are many other styles commonly heard on the radio. Examples include the gwoka (typical form of traditional expression of Guadeloupe which allowed slaves to communicate among themselves), the former biguine (born in the 1930s), the mazurka, the Haitian kompa or the Jazz-ka. Reggae, the raggamuffin and the dancehall, imported from Jamaica, have made



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a great breakthrough over the last years, with the establishment of the rasta movement in Guadeloupe; idem for soca music coming from Trinidad or the merengue from the Dominican Republic.

Night

The night quickly falls in the Caribbean, around 6 pm in winter and around 7 pm in summer. For a long time, in the villages, the only enlightened places were churches and cemeteries, which created many legends and occult beliefs. In town, nightlife in bars and discos is quite limited, and people prefer to spend the evenings between friends in their houses. The weekends and the July-August periods are more animated.

Fishing

It is a major activity that determines a large number of restaurants' menus. In many coastal villages, professionals and individuals, locals and tourists, come after boat return to find their happiness there. In small ports, we always see the boats in the shade of coconut trees and the traps with wriggling fish. Clients are there: the rates are more interesting than in shops! But how can we talk about fishing in Guadeloupe without approaching first the ecological disaster in the French Antilles? After having polluted soils and rivers, the pesticide Chlordecone continues to cause damage at sea. Contamination of water has made fish and seafood unfit for consumption. Since 2013, the areas where fishing is banned are regularly extended, and now fishing must be selective. The invasion of the lionfish also called flying scorpionfish also deteriorated the local ecosystem.

Beaches

With the 70 kilometres of fine sand that border the well-named Karukera ("the island of beautiful waters"), Guadeloupe has a large stretch of blond or grey sand in Basse-Terre (between Sainte-Rose and Pointe-Noire), wild and volcanic sandy beaches of grey or black sand (from Guava to Trois-Rivières), white sand shorelines (from Le Gosier to Le Moule)... Bathing corners abound! In Les Saintes, every creek houses a small beach. Marie-Galante is bordered by 12 of them; including one of 12 km long (Folle-Anse). La Désirade offers "only" its southern coast to bathers (beaches of Baie-Mahault, Souffleur, Fifi). Unlike holidaymakers, islanders bathe very early in the morning or lay down their towels only for a small hour late in the afternoon, the time of a bath and the fast

drying, before doing other activities. On the other hand, during weekends and very popular holidays, the beaches are crowded!

Fish

Where to find fresh fish? On the stalls on the roadside or the markets.

Large tropical carnivorous fish are the most common sources of intoxication, including barracuda, amberjack, snapper and grouper. This poisoning called *ciguatera* is caused by the accumulation of toxins produced by microscopic algae. The best solution is to know a trustworthy fisherman. They are indeed familiar with the problem, just like that of Chlordecone.

If you like diving in the sea, you will enjoy swimming surrounded by colourful fish and even turtles with any luck. Watch out for the lionfish! It doesn't attack man, but it is very toxic to the touch.

Rum

Which is the best rum of Guadeloupe? Bologna, Montebello, Séverin, Longuetreau, Père Labat, Damoiseau... the 50° or 55°? It is impossible to answer this question, since each Guadeloupe an inhabitant will tell you that the nearest rum distillery to their home village makes the best farm one... To form your opinion, taste different plantation names, without adding too much cane sugar, just spotted with a stroke of green lemon. To respect tradition, avoid adding ice cubes in your Ti-punch! Between Ti-punch, rum-based cocktails, home-arranged rum, via the awesome Bois Bande rum, you have many occasions to enjoy them...

If God wills it

You will often hear this kind expression, which may make you smile the first time. In everyday conversation, it's a way of delaying, of doing things without haste. For example if you ask someone a service, he or she can answer "yes, we'll see about it tomorrow... if God wills it".

Creolian villas

These traditional homes are once again flourishing in Guadeloupe. Indeed, West Indians have long neglected this traditional habitat mode for the concrete house. The large houses, to symbolize social success, had to be massive and built in concrete (to better withstand cyclones). They often belonged to officials. Today, you can admire traditional houses in the old quarters of Pointe-à-Pitre, on Basse-Terre.

SURVEY OF GUADELOUPE

Geography

► **Grande-Terre**, to the east, and its "capital" Pointe-à-Pitre extends over 590 km². The Grande-Terre is home to fine sandy beaches, sublime landscapes (Pointe des Châteaux, Porte d'Enfer, Pointe de la Vigie...). The hotel structures are almost all located there. The northern part, dominated by the volcanic plateau and almost occupied by the cultivation of sugar cane, is bordered by a coastline and high cliffs. In the south, the relief goes down into hills on huge white sandy beaches lined with palm trees. Les Grands Fonds, more rural and a topographical rarity, offer a view over many hills and gullies. Their south coast, bordered by a quieter coastline, houses the most touristic part.

► **Basse-Terre**, to the west, extends over 848 km². Wilder and steeper, it is dominated by the living presence of the Soufrière, volcano and peak of the archipelago (1467 m above sea level). In the centre, Guadeloupe's national park, a true paradise for hikers, contains hundreds of kilometres of trails and paths (called traces in Guadeloupe), punctuated by waterfalls, basins, springs (sometimes warm).

► **Marie-Galante** (nicknamed La grande galette or the île aux cent moulins), about 60 km from Pointe-à-Pitre, has a low relief, peaking at only 204 metres above sea level. On an area of 158 km², the Marie-Galante territory alternates sugar cane fields and beaches and hosts three cities (Grand-Bourg, Saint-Louis and Capesterre-Belle-Eau). There is a rural atmosphere.

► **La Désirade**, a real natural reserve, the island of 22 km², with 1,649 inhabitants, counts only a narrow strip of inhabited land in its southern part. The inhabitants of La Désirade are particularly welcoming.

► **The Islets of Petite-terre**, 12 km south of La Désirade, are inhabited only by a colony of a thousand Caribbean iguanas, crabs and seabirds.

► **Les Saintes**, a string of nine volcanic islets in the southwest of Grande-Terre, stretches over 13 km² and houses wild hills, rocks and deserted coves. Only two islands are inhabited: Terre-de-Haut, very prized by tourists, and Terre-de-Bas, wilder and calmer.

Environment – Ecology

Water management

This is a question that is being debated more than ever in Guadeloupe and is currently a major issue. Although it has a substantial rainfall, water is very poorly distributed. Les Saintes and La Désirade are supplied by submarine pipe. The pipeline network is so outdated that more than 50% of the vital liquid escapes in the wild. Between 2014 and 2016, more than EUR 15 billion were invested in a rescue plan. The creation of a new sewage treatment plant at Le Moule, the capacity building Sainte-Anne's plants and water crane, as well as the renewal of part of the pipes allowed to prevent the cuts of rotating water which had become necessary during the dry season. Many establishments (bed and breakfasts, hotel residences, hotels...) reacted by equipping themselves with devices allowing temporary autonomy.

The Geothermal in Bouillante

Located near the Soufrière, the geothermal plant is a unique case in France. Guadeloupe has a natural reservoir of hot water (about 250 °C). Since 1969, it has exploited hot springs to produce electricity. This natural energy source is available 365 days a year, thus contributing to the stability of the network.

The gulfweed issue

Since 2011, floating brown algae invade a large part of the archipelago's coastline, causing considerable inconvenience. Hydrogen sulphide, the gas released by gulfweed, can have effects on the health of individuals, and therefore constitutes a serious obstacle to bathing. Communities are trying to do their best by clearing beaches, but it takes only a few days for these algae to regain their place and stagnate along the coasts of the island.

The Chlordecone, a health and environmental issue

Used from 1972 to 1993, this pesticide is a persistent pollutant considered to be biodegradable that was used to fight the banana weevil. Since 2008, three action plans have successively been launched for Guadeloupe and Martinique in order to experiment with ways of remedying this pollution...

National parks

■ PARC NATIONAL DE LA GUADELOUPE



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www.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr

Created by the National park, the application Rando-Guadeloupe (rando.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr), intended for the general public, offers detailed hiking itineraries, their level of difficulty, the itinerary to follow and many sound pieces of advice, a dynamic cartography, GPS tracks and offer a 3D navigation.

In a relatively small area, an exceptional biodiversity characterizes this natural park founded in 1989, which stretches over 21,850 ha. Its involves 21 communes.

► **From the humid forest**, known as the "rain forest", to the cloud forest, drier and close to the savannah which we find higher, there are 816 species identified, including 300 species of trees, 100 species of orchids, 270 species of ferns; the most impressive ones are found in the rain forest with tangled vegetation. As a still unknown botanical survey field, an enchanting constantly evolving landscape, the park is not only of a scientific or tourist interest; it is also

an invaluable reserve of fresh water, which the island increasingly needs. Among the many wood species now protected, there are precious wood used as lumber until the 1970s. Over 30 m high, the tops of the largest trees, at the canopy level, form a real green roof. On a lower part, at about 20 meters, smaller trees are trying to capture sunlight. On the ground, young shoots, shrubs, ferns and this root tangle that supports the giants of the forest.

► **The fauna of the park**, less spectacular than the vegetation, less rich than that of the neighbouring continent, has suffered from hunting – even if the activity has always been regulated. 17 mammal species are listed there: you can find mongoose, predators of other animals such as reptiles, turtles and birds, but also racoon of Guadeloupe. Eleven species of bats also inhabit the forest and contribute to its regeneration. The tropical forest, the kingdom of birds, houses 33 specific species, including the only sedentary woodpecker of the Lesser Antilles, which exists only in that part of the world, as well as several varieties of thrush, or cuckoo.

► **Some of Guadeloupe's most beautiful sites**, such as the Soufrière or Carbet Falls, are located in the heart of the park, protected by the regulation of national parks, despite the great tourist attendance.



© AUTHOR'S IMAGE

The sugar loaf in Terre-de-Haut.

► **The area of the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin and the Pigeon islands**, a formidable marine area, were integrated into the national park in 2009. This is how the mooring have been immersed for the anchoring of pleasure boats or diving boats. In doing so, serious damage of coral benches is avoided.

► **Municipalities adjacent to the park** are trying to reconcile sustainable development, particularly for tourism infrastructure and the preservation of the environment. This concern stretches to agriculture, with the attempts to reimplantation of traditional crops which is currently underway (coffee, cocoa or vanilla). All these efforts are part of the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) by UNESCO. Guadeloupe National Park has chosen to federate green tourism actors through the new National green spirit brand launched in December 2015.

Fauna and flora

Fauna

► **On land.** The undisputed star of the national park is the raccoon. It is the symbol of the zoo of Guadeloupe, in Parc des Mamelles. Very sought by poachers, it found refuge in the heart of the island of Basse-Terre. You will also notice terrestrial turtles, lizards, agoutis and mongooses. The avifauna is particularly interesting in the natural reserve. You can find there the pond heron, but also blue or red partridge as well as seabirds, fresh water or

terrestrial birds, be they sedentary or migratory. The forest has a large number of insectivorous, including the black woodpecker or "tapeur".

► **In marine environments**, apart from the very many species of fish (diodon, mombin, lionfish, fish-parrot, threadfin bream, angel fish, sergeant major, boxfish) and invertebrates (sea urchins, lambis, starfish), the most notable animals are still the very rare marine turtles. Hunting and poaching led to the disappearance of the pink flamingo and the manatee, an endangered marine mammal throughout the Caribbean, which is the subject of a reintroduction project.

► **Different turtle varieties:** the loggerhead turtle, the Olive Ridley turtle, the green turtle and the beautiful leatherback turtle which eat jellyfish.

► **Mosquitoes**, the *Aedes aegypti* can transmit dengue and chikungunya that originated in the Antilles at the end of 2013. In 2016, it was the zika, already seen in Brazil, which appeared in the West Indies.

► **Other insects.** Beware of the millipede or centipede, the bite of which is painful or even dangerous.

Location of the flora

► **On Côte sous-le-Vent**, a peripheral zone of the Natural Park, develops a forest of shrubs, thorny and cactus bush. More than 300 species of trees with roots sometimes in foothills, liana and epiphyte plants.

► **In altitude.** Water flows everywhere, soaking the soil and digging ditches. On the island, some 100 rivers in deep waters erode the harshest rocks. Rivers eventually disperse in marine coves or swamps. Be cautious during rainy weather, the level of a swollen river can go up fast, transporting debris.

► **Around La Soufrière**, wild mosses, distichophytum and wild pineapple line the ground. The zoological and botanical park offers a representative range of the island's flora, with many ferns, palm nuts, small-leave chestnut tree, white mahogany, white gum tree, mountain laurels... In the marshy forest, the vegetation is dominated by the "mangle-médaille".

► **Near the shoreline**, where the mangrove is evolving, a typical vegetation of tropical wetlands, where mangroves, red mangle and white mangle grow. There are other tropical species near the coastline, such as coconut trees. Finally, manchineels, dangerous because very corrosive; they are usually indicated by a red marking.

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Hummingbird.

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