Nout Péi

The guide to

Réunion Island

2026 – 2027 EDITION · HYPER-LOCAL · FACT-CHECKED



- The 7 regions and their gems
- 15 hikes and their trail status
- Local food, markets, fruit seasons
- Useful Creole, festivals, history
- Safety, without the drama

THIS GUIDE IS OFFERED BY

Nout Péi

and its partners

Oté, and welcome *dann nout péi*

An island of 2,512 km², three cirques, one of the world's most active volcanoes, a lagoon, primary forests and, above all, a people born from every shore of the Indian Ocean. This guide is not a catalogue: it's what a Réunionese friend would tell you before you set off.

It was written from the Nout Péi app's guide pages, each checked against official sources (ONF forestry office, National Park, Prefecture, Météo-France, the volcano observatory, tourist offices). Trail statuses date from the **25 September 2026** update (ONF order no. 2026-1657 of 22 September 2026).

> **The golden rule:** on Réunion, nature decides. A trail, a road or a pool can close overnight after rain. Always check on the day (sources at the end of this guide).

Réunion is a French overseas department: French is the official language, Creole the everyday one. Place names are kept in French in this guide, as on road signs.

The Nout Péi app
Interactive map, 200+ guide pages, nearby alerts, Quiz Péi. Free on iPhone, in English and French.

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CHAPTER 1

Practical *essentials*

✈️ Getting there

Two airports: **Roland-Garros** (Sainte-Marie, in the north), the international gateway with direct flights from Paris-Orly and Paris-CDG and regional links (Mauritius, Mayotte, Madagascar…); and **Pierrefonds** (Saint-Pierre, in the south), mainly regional. Many international visitors connect via Paris or Mauritius. Schedules vary by season: check *reunion.aeroport.fr*.

A direct flight from Paris takes about **11 hours**. Arriving at night? Book your transfer or car in advance: buses don't run all night.

🚙 Getting around

A car gives you the most freedom for the Highlands and trailheads. Driving is on the right; the roads into the cirques are very winding, so allow plenty of time.

Buses: the regional **Car Jaune** network links the main towns, alongside 5 local networks (Citalis in the North, Kar'Ouest, Alternéo, Carsud, Estival). Up-to-date times and fares at *iledelareunion-mobilites.re*. The **Réuni'PASS** card works on all six.

Taxis: handy for the airport; agree the fare before you get in.

🩺 Health

No specific vaccination is required for a holiday from mainland France (2026 health advice): just make sure your routine vaccinations are up to date. Other visitors should follow their own country's travel-health advice.

Dengue and chikungunya circulate in some years: repellent, long sleeves at dusk, no standing water. Fever or severe aches: see a doctor quickly, and no aspirin or anti-inflammatories without medical advice.

Tropical sun: sunscreen, hat and water, even when it feels cool at altitude.

Fact file

CURRENCY	Euro (€). Cards widely accepted; keep cash for markets, food trucks and the hamlets of Mafate.
ENTRY	Réunion is part of the EU but outside the Schengen area: check the entry rules for your nationality before you travel.
TIME	UTC+4, all year round. Sunset is early: around 5.50 pm in June, 7 pm in January.
PHONE	Dialling code +262. Roaming: check whether your plan covers the French overseas departments. No signal in Mafate and on many trails.
ELECTRICITY	230 V, 50 Hz, European two-pin sockets (type E).
TAP WATER	Monitored by the health authority (ARS), but temporary restrictions can follow heavy rain in some towns: follow local advice.

Emergency numbers

112 — European emergency number

15 — Ambulance (SAMU)

18 — Fire service, mountain rescue

17 — Police

196 — Emergency at sea (CROSS)

114 — By text (deaf and hard of hearing)

Before a hike, leave your route with someone. In the mountains, rescue is handled by the PGHM gendarmerie unit and the fire service: call 112 or 18.

Beach information line run by the lifeguards: **+262 262 45 46 46** (as listed by the island's tourist board, IRT).

CHAPTER 2

The weather *month by month*

Two seasons: the **southern summer** (November to April), hot and humid, with the official cyclone season from 1 November to 30 April; and the **southern winter** (May to October), cooler and drier. Above all, two islands in one: the **windward** coast (East, North-East), which gets the rain, and the **leeward** coast (West, South-West), which gets the sun. There can be a 15 °C difference between the beach at Saint-Gilles and the top of the Piton des Neiges on the same day.

	THE WEATHER	OUR TIP
Jan	Hot, humid	Cyclone season: keep some spare days
Feb	Heavy rain possible	Avoid ravines and pools after rain
Mar	Rainy, very green	Waterfalls at their peak, admire from a distance
Apr	Changeable	End of cyclone season (30 April)
May	Cooler and drier	Excellent hiking season
Jun	Southern winter	Humpback whales arrive
Jul	Cool, often dry	Summits at sunrise; frost possible at the top
Aug	Cool, windy	Whale-watching peak, clear morning skies
Sep	Mild and dry	Whales, flowers in bloom, hiking
Oct	Warming up	Grand Raid; the last whales
Nov	Hot	Lychees and mangoes arrive; cyclone season begins
Dec	Hot, stormy	20 December, Fèt Kaf; lychees everywhere

🌊 The sea, with confidence

Since 2017, a prefectural order has regulated swimming: within 300 m of the shore it is only allowed **in the lagoon** and in the **supervised areas** set up by the towns. Elsewhere it is banned, even with a mask and snorkel, because of the shark risk and the currents.

- **Green** supervised swimming
- **Yellow-orange** dangerous but supervised
- **Red** swimming banned
- **Red pennant with a shark** shark reported

- Never alone, never at night, never after heavy rain (murky water).
- Don’t cross the coral reef; beware of the **passes** (channels with strong currents).
- Ask the lifeguards: they know today’s sea.

CHAPTER 3

Safety, *without the drama*

🌀 Cyclones

The official season runs from 1 November to 30 April. The ORSEC emergency plan (updated in 2026) has these stages:

Pre-alert: get ready and follow the bulletins. Since November 2024 it no longer has a yellow colour.

Orange alert: danger within 24 h; take shelter, cut outings short.

Red alert: stay indoors, all travel banned.

Safeguard phase: danger over but damage done; stay careful.

Follow *meteofrance.re* and the Prefecture. Never go and "look at the sea" or a ford during an event.

🌋 The volcano

Piton de la Fournaise is monitored around the clock by the **OVPF** observatory (IPGP). Access to the Enclos Fouqué caldera (summit and Dolomieu crater) is decided by **prefectural order** and can close at any time, even without a visible eruption.

On the day: check the OVPF bulletin and the Prefecture, set off early (clouds from 11 am), take 2 L of water, a windproof and a fleece. The path crosses sharp lava flows: stay on the white markings.

🥾 Trails

Cyclone **Garance** (February 2025) damaged many trails. They are reopening in stages: the ONF forestry office publishes the list of trails closed by order, updated several times a year (*onf.fr*, Réunion section, closed trails).

- Start at dawn: the sky often clouds over by late morning.
- Sturdy shoes, 2 L of water, head torch, windproof, offline GPS track.
- A closed trail is closed for a reason: rockfalls, destroyed footbridges.

🏞️ Roads and fords

A **radier** is a road that fords a ravine. When it is under water it can kill: **never cross**, even if others do.

The roads to Cilaos (400 bends), Salazie, the Maïdo and the volcano can close because of rockfalls: check *inforoute.re*. Between Saint-Denis and La Possession, the **New Coastal Road** (NRL), built out over the sea, is gradually replacing the cliff road; check which sections are open and any traffic switches before you go.

📲 The on-the-day reflex: sites to check

meteofrance.re weather warnings and forecasts by area	**onf.fr** closed trails (order in force)	**reunion.gouv.fr** volcano, cyclones, swimming
inforoute.re closed roads, NRL traffic switches	**ipgp.fr (OVPF)** volcano bulletin	**nout-pei.app/en** up-to-date pages, weather by town



REGION · NORTH

The North, *the capital and the windward coast*

Saint-Denis, with its Creole villas, its places of worship side by side and the Barachois seafront: the North is best explored on foot, then on to the waterfalls of Sainte-Suzanne.



SAINT-DENIS

Le Barachois

The historic seafront of central Saint-Denis, with its row of cannons facing the ocean. The capital's signature promenade.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-DENIS

Jardin de l'État

A botanical garden in the heart of Saint-Denis, a green haven right in the town centre.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-DENIS

Saint-Denis Cathedral

The foundation stone of this neoclassical cathedral was laid on 4 November 1829; it was completed in 1832 and became a cathedral in 1850...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-DENIS

Noor-e-Islam mosque

Founded in 1905 by merchants from Gujarat, it is one of the oldest mosques in France, predating the Paris mosque by 21 years.

Full guide page ›



SAINTE-SUZANNE

Niagara waterfall

Formed by the Sainte-Suzanne river, this fall of about 25 metres plunges into a wide pool amid sugar cane fields: one of the island's few beautiful waterfalls you can drive right up to.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-DENIS

Notre-Dame-de-la-Délivrance church

Built of rubble stone between 1893 and 1897 in the Petite-Île district, on the left bank of the Saint-Denis river, this Tuscan Gothic-style church has been listed as a historic monument since 1996.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Rue de Paris on foot Saint-Denis' finest Creole villas, with their verandas and lace-like lambrequins, line the street between the Jardin de l'État and the Barachois.

Cascade Délices Five minutes from the car park along the Sentier des Délices (Quartier Français, Sainte-Suzanne): a little 4 m waterfall away from the crowds.

Bassin Bœuf Waterfall and pool on the Sainte-Suzanne river, an easy one-hour walk from the Bagatelle car park. Unsupervised: never after rain.



REGION · WEST

The West, *lagoon and sunshine*

The leeward coast is home to the coral beaches, the seaside life of Saint-Gilles and the great Maïdo viewpoints over Mafate. It is also where the island's history began, in Saint-Paul.



SAINT-GILLES-LES-BAINS

L'Hermitage

A lagoon protected by the coral reef, ideal for snorkelling and calm family swimming. It is part of the protected west coast lagoon, which stretches for 22 kilometres along the shore...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-GILLES-LES-BAINS

Boucan Canot

One of the island's busiest beaches, known for its lively atmosphere and its seafront promenade. Réunion has 207 km of coastline, but only 22 kilometres, mostly on this west coast...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PAUL

Le Maïdo

At 2,190 metres above sea level, this natural viewpoint towers more than 1,000 metres above the Cirque de Mafate: one of the only viewpoints over this cirque that you can reach by car.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PAUL

Saint-Paul market

Considered one of the island's most iconic and largest markets, it is held on the Saint-Paul seafront on Fridays and Saturdays: fruit, vegetables, spices, crafts and Creole specialities to take away.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PAUL

Saint-Paul seaside cemetery

Facing the ocean, this cemetery holds the grave traditionally attributed to the pirate Olivier Levasseur, known as La Buse, who was hanged in Saint-Paul in 1730.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-LEU

Saint-Leu

An internationally renowned surf spot with a long wave.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Bassin Cormoran The quietest of the three pools in the Saint-Gilles ravine, beneath the bamboo. Check the swimming rules in force.

Tour des Roches A walk through bamboo and market gardens to an 1820 water mill, the only one still standing. Restoration work since July 2026: ask before you go.

Pointe au Sel A lava headland where the white sand ends, with traces of old salt works.



REGION · SOUTH

The South, *market, harbour and the wild south*

Saint-Pierre, capital of the South, lives to the rhythm of its seafront and its big Saturday market. Further on, the "wild south" strings together basalt cliffs, waterfalls and lava flows all the way to Saint-Philippe.



SAINT-PIERRE

Saint-Pierre market

The largest market in the south of the island, every Saturday from 5h to 12h on the Ravine Blanche seafront: around 500 stalls of fresh produce, Creole specialities to take away...

Full guide page ›

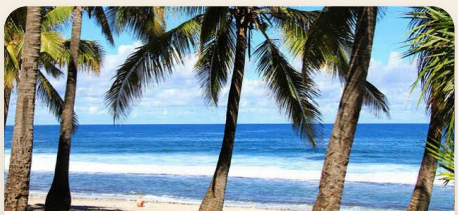


SAINT-PIERRE

Terre-Sainte

A former fishing village east of central Saint-Pierre, Terre-Sainte has kept its soul: Creole houses, narrow lanes, great banyan trees and small boats hauled up on the shore.

Full guide page ›



PETITE-ÎLE

Grande Anse

Considered one of the most beautiful beaches of the wild south, with a natural pool.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-JOSEPH

Grand Galet waterfall

Also known as the Langevin waterfall, this is one of the must-see sites of the wild south: several falls spread across the same plant-covered rock face before plunging into a wide pool of clear...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PIERRE

Karly Tamil temple

A Tamil temple dedicated to the goddess Karli, in the Ravine Blanche district of Saint-Pierre. Built as a thatched hut in the 1950s...

Full guide page ›



L'ÉTANG-SALÉ

Étang-Salé blowhole

A coastal geological formation created by the collapse of a lava tube, into which the ocean surges with force. A natural phenomenon typical of the basalt shoreline of Réunion's west coast.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Cap Méchant A coast of black lava and natural pools along the Saint-Philippe shore, shaped by eruptions.

Route des Laves Between Saint-Philippe and Bois-Blanc, the RN2 crosses recent lava flows: black rock, pioneer plants, ocean.

Entre-Deux viewpoint A plunging view over the Rivière des Remparts from a village with the "Village de charme" label.



REGION · EAST

The East, *the green and sacred island*

Windward coast, generous rain and lush vegetation: the East is the land of waterfalls, sugar cane, vanilla and the great Tamil temples of Saint-André.



SAINT-ANDRÉ

Colosse temple

Réunion's largest Tamil temple, dedicated to the goddess Pandialé. Built by Indian indentured labourers in the 19th century near the former Colosse sugar factory...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-BENOÎT

Sainte-Anne church

Built in 1857 at the instigation of Monseigneur Desprez, this Baroque-style church is famous for its façade richly decorated with cement garlands, cherubs, mascarons and gargoyles...

Full guide page ›



SAINTE-ROSE

Anse des Cascades

A small sheltered bay where several freshwater waterfalls tumble down the cliff into the ocean, amid a large coconut grove and screw pines (vacoas)...

Full guide page ›



SAINTE-ROSE

Notre-Dame-des-Laves

In April 1977, a lava flow from the Piton de la Fournaise surrounded this small church without destroying it: the lava came only three metres into the nave.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-BENOÎT

Takamaka waterfall

On the road running alongside the Rivière des Marsouins in the east of the island, this waterfall is nestled in lush tropical vegetation.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-ANDRÉ

Petit Bazar kovil

A Hindu temple built in 1900, dedicated to Sri Muruga, in the Petit Bazar district of Saint-André.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Bassin Bleu, Sainte-Anne Crystal-clear water and shallow areas for children. The site is monitored by the ARS health authority: check it is open.

Bras-Panon vanilla The cooperative explains hand pollination, a technique invented in 1841 by Edmond Albius, a 12-year-old enslaved boy.

Bassin La Paix and Bassin La Mer Two freshwater pools on the Rivière du Mât, to be avoided after rain.



REGION · CIRQUES

The Cirques, *the heart of the island*

Three vast natural amphitheatres formed by the collapse of the ancient Piton des Neiges volcano: **Cilaos** (the driest, with its lentils and thermal baths), **Salazie** (the greenest, with its waterfalls and chayotes), **Mafate** (no roads, reached only on foot or by helicopter). A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2010 as the "Pitons, cirques and remparts".



SALAZIE

Hell-Bourg

The only overseas village to be listed among "Les Plus Beaux Villages de France" (the Most Beautiful Villages of France, since 1998).

Full guide page ›



SALAZIE

Voile de la Mariée (Bridal Veil falls)

An iconic waterfall in the Cirque de Salazie, visible from the road leading to Hell-Bourg.

Full guide page ›



CILAOS

Trois Salazes

Three rocky peaks rising above the hamlet of Bras-Sec, in the Cirque de Cilaos: one of the most photographed viewpoints in the cirque.

Full guide page ›



CILAOS · EASY

La Roche Merveilleuse

A short hike above Cilaos village to a viewpoint with a 360° panorama over the cirque, the Grand Bénare and the Piton des Neiges.

Full guide page ›



CILAOS · EASY

Bassin Bleu

A small pool and its waterfall, family-friendly

Full guide page ›



MAFATE · EASY

La Nouvelle

The most developed and most visited îlet (hamlet) in the Cirque de Mafate, on a plateau offering the widest choice of gîtes and tables d'hôte in the cirque.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Bras-Sec A Cilaos hamlet at the foot of the Trois Salazes, a starting point for climbing and walks.

Hell-Bourg early in the morning The only overseas village among "The Most Beautiful Villages of France" (1998): Creole houses, old thermal baths, gardens.

Sleep in an îlet In Mafate, gîtes (guesthouses) must be booked well ahead; bring cash, there are no cash machines.



REGION · VOLCANO & HIGHLANDS

Volcano & Highlands, *another world*

The volcano road climbs from Bourg-Murat to 2,300 m, through the pastures of the Plaine des Cafres and the lunar Plaine des Sables, to the Pas de Bellecombe facing the Enclos Fouqué. In the Highlands (the "Hauts") the air is cool, there are local cheeses, cows grazing and tamarind forests.



LE TAMPON

Cité du Volcan

The regional museum of volcanism in Bourg-Murat, on the road leading to the Piton de la Fournaise. Interactive displays tell the story of the volcano and of Réunion's geology...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-JOSEPH

Plaine des Sables

A plateau of volcanic origin with a lunar landscape, crossed by the volcano road between Bourg-Murat and the Pas de Bellecombe. One of the most spectacular stretches on the island.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-JOSEPH

Nez de Bœuf

A summit at 2,136 metres above sea level on the volcano road, with a panorama over the deep valley of the Rivière des Remparts.

Full guide page ›

SAINT-LOUIS

Fenêtre des Makes

A natural viewpoint in the uplands above Saint-Louis, offering a window onto the Cirque de Cilaos on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other on a clear day.

Full guide page ›



SAINTE-ROSE · EASY

Pas de Bellecombe → Formica Leo

A short walk from the Pas de Bellecombe viewpoint to the small red volcanic cone of Formica Leo, at the bottom of the Enclos Fouqué (the volcano's main caldera).

Full guide page ›



EST · EASY

Grand Étang

A forest loop in Saint-Benoît leading to a natural lake nestled in the greenery — a family hike on the island's east coast.

Full guide page ›

LOCAL SECRETS

Bébour forest Mid-altitude primary forest, a sanctuary for endemic birds; access depends on the barrier opening times.

Fenêtre des Makes Above Saint-Louis, a window onto Cilaos on one side and the ocean on the other; often clear in the afternoon in the dry season.

Bélouve forest A walk through primary forest to the viewpoint over the Trou de Fer (the trail down to the bottom is still closed).

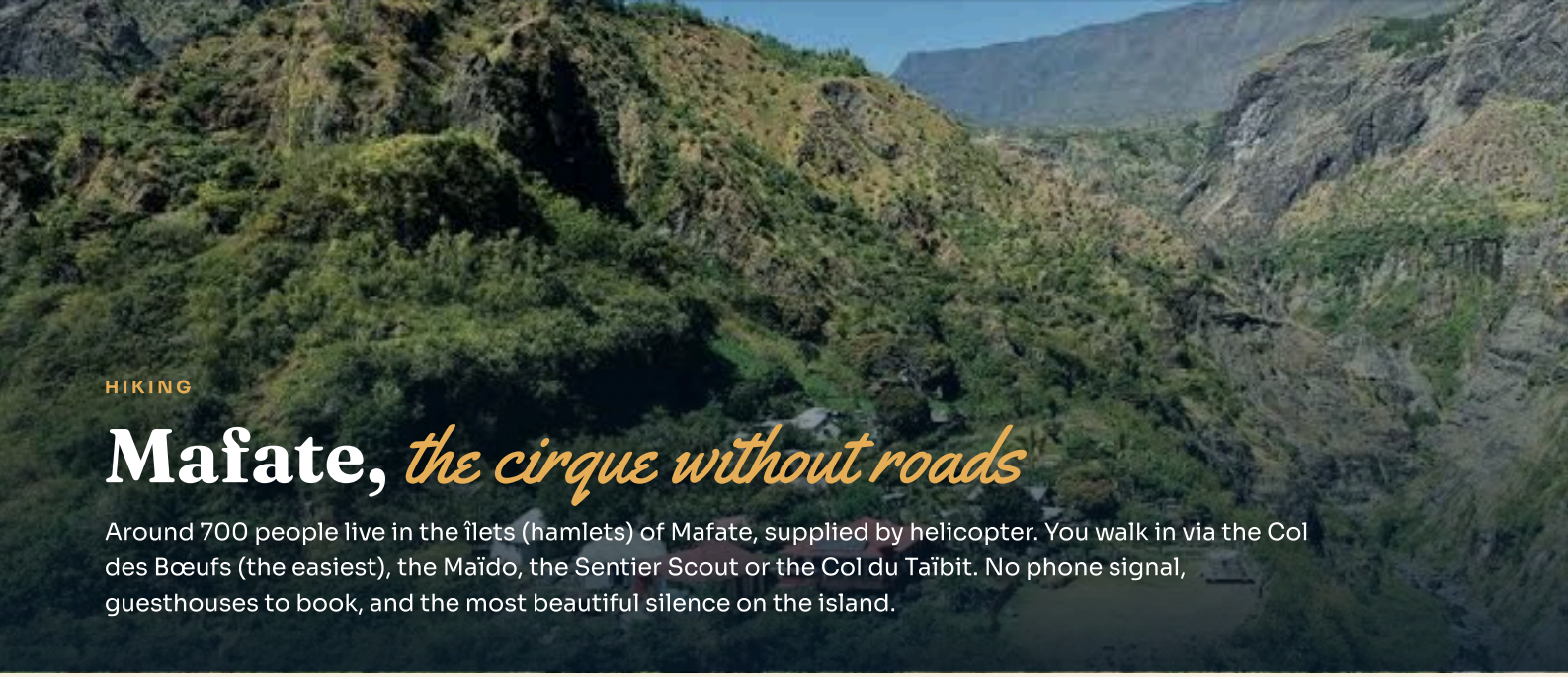
CHAPTER 10

15 hikes, *from easy strolls to summits*

Ranked from easiest to most demanding. Trail status as of 25 September 2026, under ONF order no. 2026-1657 of 22 September 2026. Closures change: check *onf.fr* the day before. 🟢 easy 🟠 moderate 🔴 hard

TRAIL AND START	DISTANCE	TIME	CLIMB	WATER	SIGNAL	STATUS
🟢 **Pas de Bellecombe → Formica Leo** Start from the Pas de Bellecombe car park	~1 km	20 min (one way)	+30 m	No water point	Weak to none	Depends on the volcano
🟢 **Bassin Bleu** From the Cilaos thermal baths, follow the trail towards Plateau des…	~1 km	20 min	—	No water point — bring your own bottle	Partial	No closure reported
🟢 **Anse des Cascades** Anse des Cascades car park, Sainte-Rose	~2 km	30 min to 1h	—	No guaranteed water point	Fair	No closure reported
🟢 **Cap Noir** From La Possession, head towards Dos d'Âne…	2.8 km	3h	+300 m	No water point along the route…	Weak to none	Check (ONF order)
🟢 **La Roche Merveilleuse** Start from Cilaos village, towards Bras-Sec	~5 km	1h10 (one way)	+270 m	No water point along the route	Partial	Check (ONF order)
🟠 **Cascade Blanche** Park after the bridge over the Rivière du Mât, towards Salazie…	3 km (out-and-back)	1 h 30	+306 m	No drinking water — the river is crossed at…	Weak	No closure reported
🟢 **Col des Bœufs → La Nouvelle** Start from the Col des Bœufs car park, above Salazie	~7 km	3h	-600 m	No guaranteed water point…	None once inside the cirque	Check (ONF order)
🟠 **Roche Vert Bouteille** Start from the Cap Noir car park, in Dos d'Âne (La Possession)	3.5 km	2h30	+300 m	No water point along the route	Weak to none	Check (ONF order)
🟠 **Maïdo → Mafate** Start from the Maïdo viewpoint, Ti Col area	Varies	2h30 to 3h30	approx. -900 m	No guaranteed water point on the descent	Weak, then none	Check (ONF order)
🟠 **Grand Bassin** From Bras-de-la-Plaine or Bois Court	8 km	4h	600 m	Water point in Grand Bassin village	Partial	Check (ONF order)
🟠 **Piton de la Fournaise** Start from the Pas de Bellecombe car park…	10 km	4h30	+640 m	No water point along the route	Weak to none	Depends on the volcano
🟠 **Dimitile** From L'Entre-Deux, the Chapelle trail (most accessible) or the…	13 km	5h	+700 m	No water point along the route	Weak to none	Check (ONF order)
🔴 **Col du Taïbit** Start from Cilaos, "sentier Marla" bus stop	~9 km	3h to 4h	+900 m	No guaranteed water point on the climb	Weak to none	No closure reported
🔴 **Grand Bénare loop** Start from the Maïdo viewpoint	~16 km	7 h (loop)	+700 m	No water point along the route	Weak to none	No closure reported
🔴 **Piton des Neiges** From Cilaos (road + trail)	12 km	6h30	1 200 m	No — carry enough water	Partial	Check (ONF order)

The **Trou de Fer** trail from Bélouve is still **closed** as of 25 September 2026 (section from the Bélouve gîte to the Fleurs Jaunes forest road): admire it from the Bélouve viewpoint. Every guide page, map and route is at nout-pei.app/en/hikes.



HIKING

Mafate, *the cirque without roads*

Around 700 people live in the îlets (hamlets) of Mafate, supplied by helicopter. You walk in via the Col des Bœufs (the easiest), the Maïdo, the Sentier Scout or the Col du Taïbit. No phone signal, guesthouses to book, and the most beautiful silence on the island.



EASY · 3H

Col des Bœufs → La Nouvelle

The easiest and most popular way into the Cirque de Mafate, mostly downhill, to the most populated and most visited îlet (hamlet) in the cirque.

Full guide page ›



MODERATE · DEPENDS ON ROUTE

Aurère

Often considered the most beautiful village in Mafate, set on a flower-filled plateau with magnificent viewpoints...

Full guide page ›



MODERATE · DEPENDS ON ROUTE

Marla

The highest and most remote of Mafate's îlets (hamlets), a crossroads of trails towards Cilaos (Col du Taïbit), La Nouvelle and Roche Plate.

Full guide page ›



MODERATE · DEPENDS ON ROUTE

Roche Plate

Lying at the foot of the Maïdo rampart (cliff wall), this îlet (hamlet) is a key stage on the GR R2, which crosses the whole island...

Full guide page ›



MODERATE · DEPENDS ON ROUTE

Îlet à Malheur

A small îlet (hamlet) in eastern Mafate, whose name is marked by the history of marronage...

Full guide page ›



HARD · 1 DAY (8–9 H)

Trois Roches waterfall

A waterfall ringed by three huge rocks, in the heart of the UNESCO-listed Cirque de Mafate, where the Rivière des Galets rushes into a basalt crevice.

Full guide page ›

La Nouvelle is the most accessible and liveliest îlet; Marla the highest and most remote; Îlet à Malheur keeps the memory of marronnage, the enslaved people who escaped into the cirques.



CHAPTER 11

Beaches, lagoon *and pools*

Of 207 km of coastline, only about twenty kilometres are fringed by a lagoon protected by the coral reef, mostly in the West. It belongs to the Réunion Marine Nature Reserve, created in 2007.



SAINT-GILLES-LES-BAINS

L'Hermitage

A lagoon protected by the coral reef, ideal for snorkelling and calm family swimming. It is part of the protected west coast lagoon...

Full guide page ›



SAINT-GILLES-LES-BAINS

Boucan Canot

One of the island's busiest beaches, known for its lively atmosphere and its seafront promenade.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-LEU

Saint-Leu

An internationally renowned surf spot with a long wave.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PIERRE

Saint-Pierre beach

A Blue Flag beach right next to the town centre and the harbour. Swimming here is supervised, in an area protected by nets.

Full guide page ›



ÉTANG-SALÉ

Étang-Salé

A beach of black volcanic sand lined by a forest of filao trees.

Full guide page ›



SAINT-PAUL

Bassin Cormoran

One of the three pools of the Saint-Gilles ravine, fed by a waterfall nestled in the heart of a bamboo thicket.

Full guide page ›

🐠 Snorkelling and the Marine Reserve

- Don’t stand on or touch the coral: it dies.
- Don’t feed the fish, don’t take anything (shells, coral).
- Strictly protected zones are marked: fishing is banned there.
- Sunscreen: apply it 20 minutes before, or wear a rash vest.

💧 Freshwater pools

The pools are **not supervised**. A flash flood can come from a blue sky if it is raining upstream. Water rising, turning murky, branches floating down: get out immediately. Never after heavy rain. Some pools are closed by the ARS for water quality: check first.

CHAPTER 12

Eating *péi*

Réunion cooking tells the story of how the island was settled: the **cari** (a slow-cooked stew with turmeric, garlic, onion, thyme and ginger) comes from the meeting of French, Malagasy and Indian cooking; **rougail** is a spicy relish or dish; **massalés** come from the Tamil indentured workers; **rougail saucisse**, **bouchons** (steamed dumplings) and **samoussas** are everywhere. Always served with rice, grains (Cilaos lentils, beans) and brèdes (leafy greens).



CURRIES

Beef cari

A family-style version of carri (Creole curry) made with beef.



ROUGAILS

Salt cod rougail

Desalted salt cod, flaked and cooked in a rougail tomato sauce flavoured with ginger and chilli.



SEAFOOD

Octopus cari (zourite)

A slow-simmered dish of octopus (zourite in Réunion Creole), typical of the island's seafood cooking.



MASSALÉS

Coq massalé

Free-range rooster cooked with massalé spice blend and simmered for a long time to tenderise the meat.



CURRIES

Chayote cari (chouchou)

A vegetable carri (Creole curry) made with chayote (chouchou), the flagship vegetable of the Cirque de Salazie in...



ROUGAILS

Aubergine rougail

Grilled or cooked aubergines, mashed with a spicy tomato sauce. A melting texture and a distinctive smoky taste.



SEAFOOD

Prawn cari

Prawns cooked with tomato, onion, garlic, turmeric, thyme and combava (kaffir lime) or ginger.



SWEETS

Banana fritters

Sweet banana fritters, a popular treat of Réunion cooking.

🧺 The big markets

Saint-Paul: on the seafront, on Fridays (all day) and Saturday mornings. Fruit, spices, crafts, takeaway specialities.

Saint-Pierre: Ravine Blanche seafront, **Saturdays from 5 am to noon**, around 500 stalls.

Plus the **Grand Marché** and **Petit Marché** in Saint-Denis, on weekdays. Go early!

🥭 Fruit in season

Lychees November → January

Mangoes November → February

Longans February → March

Strawberry guavas April → June (festival at La Plaine-des-Palmistes)

Victoria pineapple all year, best in summer

Passion fruit, bananas all year

🍛 Eat like a local

The **food trucks** (camions-bars: "American" sandwiches, bouchons, samoussas) by the roads and beaches; the **tables d'hôtes** (farmhouse dining) in the Highlands for a wood-fired cari; and the sacred **Sunday picnic** with the family, on the coast and in the forests.

Our checked addresses are at nout-pei.app/en/restaurants.



CHAPTER 13

Culture *and history*

An uninhabited island until the 17th century, which in three centuries became a society where churches, Tamil temples, mosques and pagodas stand side by side, often in the same street.

1663

The first permanent settlers: two Frenchmen and around ten Malagasy people settle in Saint-Paul.

18th c.

Île Bourbon becomes a coffee, then clove, colony built on **slavery** (East Africa, Madagascar, India). Escaped slaves (marrons) flee into the cirques.

1793

Île Bourbon is renamed “La Réunion”.

20 Dec 1848

Sarda Garriga proclaims the **abolition of slavery**. Every 20 December is **Fèt Kaf**, a public holiday.

1848-1930

Indenture: contract workers arrive from India (mainly Tamil Nadu), Madagascar, Africa and China to work the sugar cane. Later come merchants from Gujarat and China.

1946

Réunion becomes a French department.

2009-2010

Maloya joins UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list (2009), the “Pitons, cirques and remparts” the World Heritage list (2010).

🪘 Maloya and séga

Maloya, born from the songs of enslaved people, is played on the roulèr (big drum), the kayamb (a flat rattle) and the bob (musical bow). Long sidelined, it has become the emblem of Réunion identity. **Séga** is lighter and more festive. To hear them: **kabars**, concerts and neighbourhood parties.

🙏 Visiting a place of worship

Tamil temples: shoes off, no leather, shoulders covered. Mosques: modest dress, outside prayer times. Churches: discretion during services. Everywhere: ask before photographing a ceremony.

Zarabes (Muslims of Indian origin), **Malbars** (Tamils), **Sinwa** (Chinese), **Kaf** (descendants of Africans and Malagasy), **Yab** and **Zorey**: everyday words, to be used with respect.

KOZÉ KRÉOL

40 words to *kozé ek nou*

Réunion Creole is the everyday language. Nobody will mind if you speak French or English, but an “oté” or a “mersi” always brings a smile. Pronunciation: read it as you would French; a final **r** is often silent and **z** often replaces the French **j** (manzé, zordi).

Oté! Hey! (friendly hello)	**Koman i lé?** How are you?	**Lé bon, lé gayar!** All good, great!	**Mi lé bien.** I’m fine.
N’artrouv! See you!	**Mersi bonpé** Thank you very much	**Alon!** Let’s go!	**Mi koné pa.** I don’t know.
Mi konpran pa. I don’t understand.	**Néna / néna poin** There is / there isn’t	**Koté?** Where?	**Kosa?** What?
Kisa? Who?	**Astèr** Now	**Zordi** Today	**Domin** Tomorrow
Longtan In the old days	**Dalon** Friend, mate	**Marmay** Child(ren)	**Granmoun** Elderly person
Matante Auntie	**Mon gaté** My darling	**Kaz** House	**Boutik** Corner shop
Bazar Market	**Larzan** Money	**Dilo** Water	**Soley** Sun
Manzé To eat, food	**Piman** Chilli	**Brèd** Cooked leafy greens	**Kari** Local slow-cooked stew
Kozé To talk, chat	**Tansyon!** Watch out!	**Inkièt pa** Don’t worry	**Kontan** Happy
Ti pa ti pa Little by little	**Péi** Local, from here	**Zorey** Person from mainland France	**Kabar** Party, maloya gathering

🗣️ Handy phrases

- **Koman i apèl sa?** What’s this called?
- **Konbien i fé?** How much is it?
- **Koté néna in boutik?** Where is there a shop?
- **Lé gou!** It’s delicious!

😄 Did you know?

Réunion Creole emerged in the 18th century from the French of the settlers, enriched with Malagasy words (*fanjan*, *zourit*), Tamil ones (*karî*), and Portuguese and Indian borrowings. Over 80 more expressions in the app. It varies by area: the Creole of the Highlands is not quite the same as on the coast.



CHAPTER 14

The Réunion *year*

Religious festivals from four continents, fruit seasons, whales: every month has its reason to visit.

January – February

Chinese New Year (6 February 2027), celebrated by the Sinwa community in Saint-Denis and Saint-Pierre. **Cavadee** (Thaipusam), a Tamil procession of penance, in January or February depending on the Tamil calendar.

March – April

End of the cyclone season (30 April). Easter: picnics in the forests and the Highlands.

May – June

Strawberry guava festival at La Plaine-des-Palmistes (June). Humpback whales arrive off the west coast.

July – September

Whale season (peak July to September): supervised watching from approved boats, at least 100 m away. Ideal hiking season.

October

The **Grand Raid**, the “Diagonale des Fous” (Madmen’s Diagonal): an ultra-trail across the island, mid to late October. Official dates at grandraid-reunion.com.

October – November

Dipavali, the Tamil festival of light: parade and illuminations in Saint-André.

November – December

Lychees and mangoes on every stall. On **20 December**, Fèt Kaf: kabars, maloya and commemorations of abolition all over the island.

All year round

Town festivals (vacoa, chayote, lentil, honey…), night markets and kabars. The up-to-date events listing is at nout-pei.app/en/events.

Religious festival dates follow lunar calendars and are confirmed by the organising associations a few weeks ahead: always check before planning your trip around them.

CHAPTER 15

Ready-made *itineraries*

Approximate driving times, excluding traffic jams (frequent at rush hour around Saint-Denis and Saint-Paul). Saint-Denis → Saint-Pierre: about 1 h 15 via the Route des Tamarins. Saint-Pierre → Cilaos: 1 h 30 (400 bends). Saint-André → Hell-Bourg: 45 min. Saint-Pierre → Pas de Bellecombe: 1 h 15.

3 days · the essentials

1. **Day 1** Sunrise at the Maïdo, the Hermitage lagoon in the afternoon, sunset at Boucan Canot.
2. **Day 2** The volcano road at dawn: Plaine des Sables, Pas de Bellecombe, Formica Leo. Back via the Cité du Volcan.
3. **Day 3** Saint-Pierre market (Saturday) or Saint-Paul (Friday), then Grand Galet and Grande Anse.

7 days · the grand tour

1. **Days 1–2** West: Maïdo, lagoon, historic Saint-Paul.
2. **Day 3** Saint-Denis on foot (Rue de Paris, Barachois), Niagara waterfall.
3. **Day 4** East: Colosse temple, Sainte-Anne, Anse des Cascades, Notre-Dame-des-Laves.
4. **Day 5** The volcano, a night in the Highlands (Plaine des Cafres).
5. **Day 6** The wild south and Saint-Pierre.
6. **Day 7** Cilaos: Roche Merveilleuse, Bassin Bleu.

14 days · the island in depth

1. **Days 1–3** West and lagoon, Cap Noir.
2. **Days 4–5** Salazie, Hell-Bourg, Cascade Blanche.
3. **Days 6–8** Mafate on foot: Col des Bœufs → La Nouvelle → Marla, nights in gîtes.
4. **Days 9–10** Cilaos via the Col du Taïbit, thermal baths.
5. **Days 11–12** Volcano and Highlands, Grand Bassin.
6. **Days 13–14** Wild south, East, Saint-Denis.

Car-free

1. Base yourself in **Saint-Gilles** or **Saint-Pierre**: beaches, markets and town centres within walking distance.
2. Car Jaune buses between the main coastal towns.
3. Cilaos and Salazie (Hell-Bourg) have bus services: set off early, the last buses back leave in the late afternoon.
4. Mafate: on foot from the Col des Bœufs (taxi from Salazie).
5. Volcano: take an organised trip; there is no bus to the Pas de Bellecombe.

⏱ Tips that make all the difference

- Get up early: the light and clear skies are in the morning; clouds rise around 11 am in the Highlands.
- Don’t combine Cilaos and the volcano on the same day: two mountain roads is too much.
- Spend at least one night in the Highlands or a cirque: that’s where the island reveals itself.
- Keep a spare day for the weather, especially in the southern summer.



CHAPTER 16

Doing it *right*

The core of the National Park, created in 2007, covers more than 40% of the island. A unique natural world, with species found nowhere else.

🐢 Protected wildlife

Sea turtles: don't touch them, don't follow them. Kélonia, in Saint-Leu, is dedicated to them. **Whales**: keep the legal minimum distance; get in the water only with an approved operator. **Birds**: the Réunion cuckooshrike (tuit-tuit), Barau's petrel and the Réunion harrier (papangue) are endemic. Avoid bright lights at night in April-May: young petrels are drawn to them and crash-land (report them to the SEOR bird society).

🌿 In the Park

- Stay on marked trails.
- No picking plants, no fires outside designated areas.
- Camp only in authorised areas.
- Dogs on a lead, and banned in some zones.
- Drones: banned over the core of the Park without authorisation, and regulated everywhere.

♻️ Leave no trace

- Take all your rubbish back down, even food scraps.
- Don't spread invasive plants: clean your soles between massifs.
- Mineral sunscreen, or a rash vest, in the lagoon.
- Buy local: markets, producers, Réunion craftspeople.

OUR PARTNERS

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Your guests get this guide for free by scanning your QR code, and you appear in the app and on the website. Write to us: **support@nout-pei.app**

SOURCES

Where this information *comes from*

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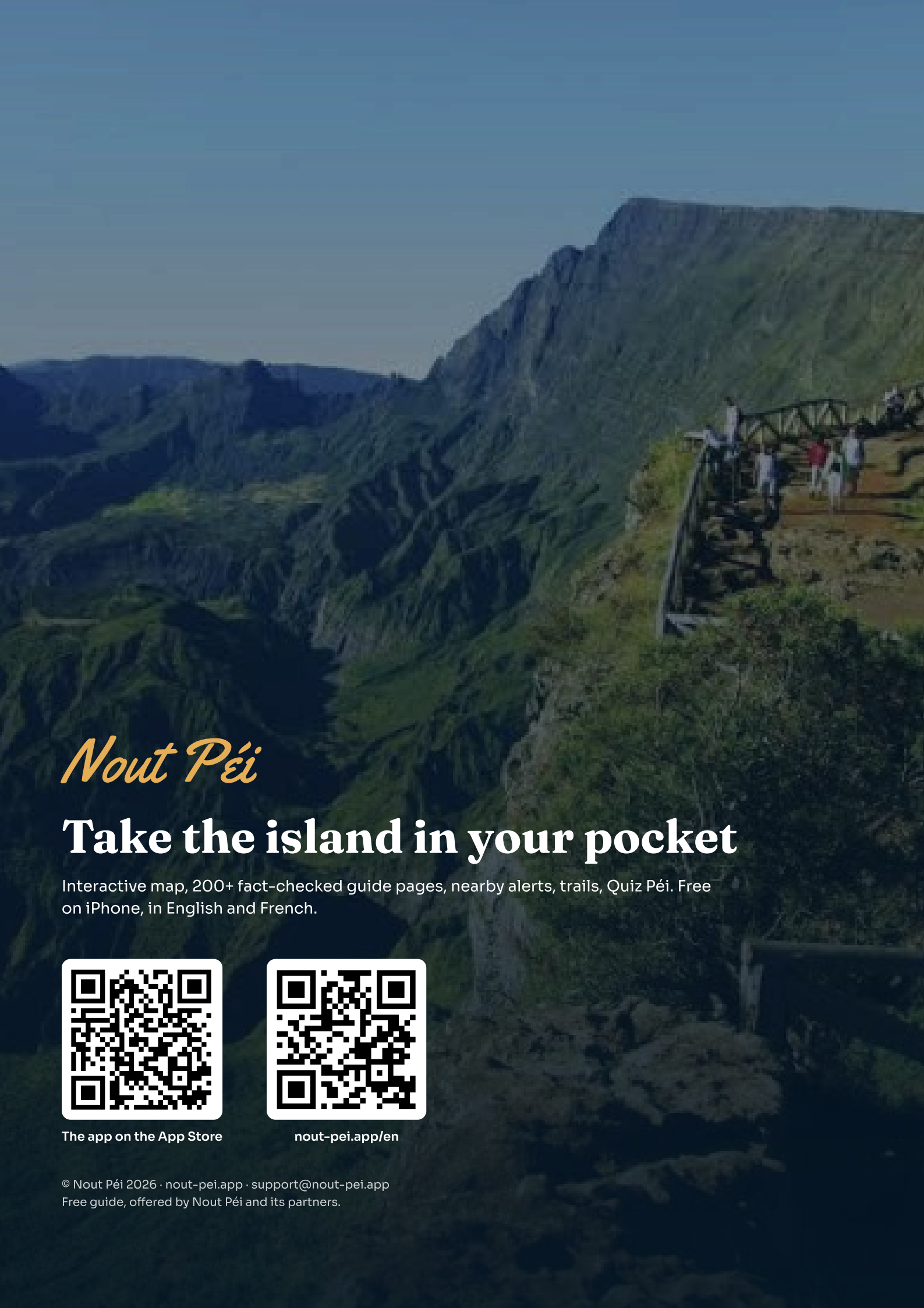
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The app on the App Store

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