

THE ISLANDS OF GUADELOUPE: BASSE TERRE AND GRANDE TERRE, MARIE-GALANTE, LES SAINTES...

Set in the heart of the Lesser Antilles archipelago, Guadeloupe is washed by the Atlantic to the east and the Caribbean to the west. It is made up of two main islands: Grande-Terre, flat and calcareous (585 km²) and Basse-Terre, volcanic and hilly (943 km²), which is the site of the national park. Administratively, the French département of Guadeloupe comprises eight islands and numerous small islets : Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre make up Guadeloupe proper, around which lie the islands of Marie-Galante, Les Saintes (Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas), La Désirade, and, further north, Saint-Barthélemy and the French part of Saint-Martin. Like the rest of the West Indies, Guadeloupe is the emerged part of a submarine range of mountains which arose from the clash of the Atlantic and Caribbean tectonic plates 55 million years ago.

The island has a varied relief, dominated by Soufrière with moon-like landscapes culminating at a height of 1,467 metres and still volcanically active. A striking testimony of this igneous activity are the many hot springs spread throughout the mountainous massif. Further to the north are the equally spectacular, though less accessible, Mounts of Matélie (1,298 m) and Sans-Toucher (1,354 m). Located in the centre of a cyclonic area, Guadeloupe has a humid tropical climate. The mean annual temperature of 26°C is constant from one season to the next. The easterly winds bring heavy rainfall which feeds the many torrents and rivers that flow in the dense hillside vegetation. Thus the famous Carbet falls and the Ecrevisses cascade are a fine illustration of the name Karukera (Island of Beautiful Waters) given to Guadeloupe by its original inhabitants, the Amerindians.

"Continental" Guadeloupe

Basse-Terre

Dominated by the imposing silhouette of La Soufrière, Basse -Terre is covered by a magnificent tropical rain forest at its center (42000 acres). It has been classified as a National Park since 1989. The Park is crisscrossed by numerous, marked hiking trails of varying difficulty, The luxuriant vegetation of the forest (there are more than 3,000 species of trees) is home to exotic fauna (but no poisonous or dangerous animals), waterfalls, cascades and natural basins. Nature lovers will be thrilled : in addition to the forest, Basse-Terre also offers a botanical garden, a floral park and a fabulous underwater reserve renowned the world over. Basse-terre is also a place of great cultural diversity with cathedrals, a Hindu temple, archeological remains of the island's first inhabitants, a military fort from the 17th century, and a museum dedicated to Ecology. . .

Grande-Terre

Flatter than Basse-Terre, Grande-Terre offers countryside perfectly adapted to the production of sugar cane whose fields cover a major portion of the island. Visiting a distillery (sampling included) or the Rum Museum will give you a good idea of the importance of the sugar cane industry to the island. But the principal wealth of Grande-Terre is found along its coast. Indeed, the island is surrounded by magnificent, white sand beaches, peaceful lagoons and "spots" that will delight surfers. A variety of hotels and restaurants are located on Grande-Terre, guaranteeing a wide range of nocturnal activities to choose from: dancing, shows, casinos... During the day, Pointe-à-Pitre unfolds the charms of its diverse

architecture and market. Filled with the scents of spices and flowers, while the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea clash in a perpetual, grandiose battle at the Pointe des Châteaux.

Islands

The Guadeloupe itself, which is composed of 2 separate islands, separated by a narrow arm of the sea called the Salt River but interconnected by 2 bridges. These islands are 2 Basse-Terre (848 sq. km) the largest is the most mountainous of which is 2 volcanic culminating in the active volcano in the Soufriere (1467 m) and second, Grande-Terre (588 sq. km), including the substrate is limestone and consists of a plain raked by the mangrove southwest, a succession of irregular mornes called deep in the centre and north, an arid plateau jagged rocky coasts and wild.

It is on the southern coast of Grande-earth that located the areas most tourist hotels and white sand beaches to protect coral reefs.

This coastline is known as the "Riviera".

- La Désirade
- Marie-Galante
- Les Saintes: 9 islets whose 2 inhabited, Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas
- Early Earth

The island of Saint Barthelemy, as well as the northern part (French) from the island of Saint-Martin, who depend administratively of Guadeloupe are located more to the north and separated from the rest of Guadeloupe by St. Christopher St Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda.