

HIKING RÉUNION ISLAND

Discover Réunion Islands most beautiful landscapes and delve into Créole history through a series of varied hikes. This original self-guided adventure, complete with a lava tube visit, is sure to delight couples and families alike. A truly rewarding holiday which showcases the highlights of Réunion Island.

 Region	Cilaos Mafate Piton de la Fournaise Piton des Neiges Salazie
 Activity	Hiking
 Duration	10 days
 Code	QRUNINFITALT
 Price	From €1,360
 Level	3/5
 Comfort	3/5

ITINERARY

📍 Day 1 Saint Denis - Hell Bourg

Welcome to Réunion Island! Transfer from St-Dennis to the small village of Hell Bourg. Found at 930m in Le cirque du Salazie, this charming village is littered with colourful Créole houses, each more beautiful than the last, and surrounded by the lush vegetation of the calm Salazie commune.

Accommodation: Gîte

Journey time: 1 1/2 hours

📍 Day 2 Hell Bourg - Bélouve

Immerse yourself in the primary forest of Bélouve. This enchanting world is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna including 'fanjans', tree ferns and famous giant tamarins. As you approach your accommodation, be sure to enjoy the fabulous viewpoint with its grand panorama of the Cirque de Salazie and please be aware that our support vehicles cannot reach you in the heart of this dense rainforest so remember to carry and drink lots of water.

2 to 3 hours of walking

Elevation: +580m / -60m

Accommodation: Gîte

Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags tomorrow evening.

📍 Day 3 Trou de Fer Canyon & the Forest of Bébou

Early morning departure for the Trou de Fer (Iron Hole) Canyon, an impressive chasm in the heart of the tropical forest of Bébou where waterfalls tumble to impossible depths of 300m... To venture into Bébou forest is to venture into a world of legends, let your imagination to go wild in this enchanting world of tortuous trees. Tonight we return to our accommodation in Hell Bourg.

3 to 5 hours of walking

Elevation: +350m / -870m

Accommodation: Gîte

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

📍 Day 4 Hell Bourg - Col des Boeufs - La nouvelle

After a relaxed morning in Hell Bourg in preparation for the upcoming two day trek, we will escort you to the start along an aptly named forest road, the 'Hauts de Mafate' or the 'heights of Mafate'. Today's walk begins by passing through the Col des Boeufs pass from the Cirque de Salazie to the Cirque de Mafate. From here it is a gentle descent via la Plaine des Tamarins plateau to your accommodation in La Nouvelle, the most accessible settlement in Mafate.

3 hours of walking

Elevation: +190 / -610

Accommodation: Gîte

Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags in Cilaos on Day 6.

📍 Day 5 La nouvelle - Marla

Today begins with a stroll to Trois Roches for a surprising waterfall top view of the river Galets. With this angle overlooking the riverbed it is easy to imagine how the stream can transform into a torrent during cyclonic floods. Follow the riverbed up to one of Mafates delightful settlements, Marla (1630m).

4 hours of walking

Elevation: +660/-460

Accommodation: Gîte

Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags in Cilaos tomorrow.

📍 Day 6 **Marla - Col de Taibit - Cilaos**

Since the beginning of this two day trek you have been approaching the col du Taïbit (2083m), the passage which links the Cirque de Mafate to the Cirque de Cilaos. Today you reach the col; with a spectacular display of the surrounding cirques, the south coast and Grand Bénare volcanic peak, its views do not disappoint. The route continues down through the thick vegetation of the 'Bois des Couleurs' to Cilaos. From here, it is a 15 minute local bus or a 2 hour walk via the Bras Rouge (Red Arms) waterfall to your accommodation.

4 hours of walking (or 6 if you choose not to take the bus)

Elevation: +490m / -850m (or 680+ / 1020-)

Accommodation: Gîte

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

📍 Day 7 **Cilaos - Piton des Neiges Refuge**

This morning, you can take a 15 minute bus to the beginning of your hike to avoid around 45 minutes of walking along the road. The shaded path up to tonight's refuge is steep. Along the way there are many beautiful view points to admire Cilaos from. You should find shelter and water halfway up but beware, this water point is not always refilled in times of drought. The climb continues up to rewarding views and around 2500m of altitude.

3 to 4 hours of walking

Elevation: +1140m / -50m

Accommodation: Gîte

Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags tomorrow evening.

📍 Day 8 **The Piton des Neiges - Cilaos**

Nighttime departure for the summit of the Piton des Neiges. You should reach the top as the sun rises around you. From the refuge, it is approximately a two hour hike to the pinnacle of the island - 3070m above sea level, the highest point in the Indian Ocean. The views from here are truly amazing - even more so as your surroundings are illuminated by the first glow of the morning sun. Return to the refuge for breakfast and the long descent down to Cilaos. After this challenging trek, it may be advisable to take the bus to once again avoid walking along the road Cilaos.

5 to 6 hours of walking

Elevation: +630m / -1720m

Accommodation: Gîte

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

📍 Day 9 **Cilaos- St Pierre - Piton de la Fournaise**

Transfer to Piton de la Fournaise via the coastal arrondissement of St-Pierre with its marina, white sand-beaches and lagoon. A delightful place and a striking contrast to the rugged mountainous terrain of the last few days. On the way to the Piton de la Fournaise volcano we can also visit the Volcano House museum (payable locally; approx. 1 1/4 hours) before joining our accommodation, the Gîte du Volcan (Volcano Lodge).

Accommodation: Gîte

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

📍 Day 10 **The Piton de la Fournaise**

Short morning transfer to the start of today's spectacular hike on one of the most active volcanoes in the world. A rich world of strange colours, surprising minerals and warped shapes awaits. Fumaroles and sulphur reveal glimpses of the intense activity of this unique shield volcano. Afternoon transfer to the Southwest coast.

5 hours of walking

Elevation: +630m / -630m

Accommodation possible upon request.

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

PERIOD & BUDGET

When to travel?

The best period for travelling is during the following months:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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Price

From 1090 € per person (price based on 2 participants)

The budget is an indication of the price per person, subject to availability. Your local agent will send you a customized quote with the exact price. The price can vary according to availability, level of services, period of travel, number of participants, booking time frame and other items.

Included

- Gîte accommodation with shared facilities
- Half-board from dinner Day 1 to breakfast Day 10
- All in-country transfers by private vehicle as detailed in the itinerary
- Luggage transportation as detailed in itinerary
- Secure baggage storage
- A detailed roadbook including, local tips, vouchers and your comprehensive itinerary
- 24/7 phone support during your trip

Not included

- International flights
- Lunches (approx. 8 to 10€/pers. for picnic lunches or 15 to 20€/pers. for restaurant meals)
- Dinner on Day 10 (approx. 20 to 25€/pers.)
- Accommodation for the last night (Day 10)
- Repatriation insurance
- Bus tickets

Additional options

- Private double room upgrade (3 to 5€/pers./night. Subject to availability)
- Hotel accommodation in Hell Bourg and Cilaos (Prices vary. Subject to availability)
- Accompaniment by a qualified Mountain Guide for one day, several days or for the whole trip

Terms and conditions

Booking conditions

Booking a trip with Altaï Réunion implies acceptance of the terms and conditions of sale. Each customer is required to complete a registration form and, subject to availability at the time of registration, travellers are expected to pay a deposit of 35% of the total price to complete their booking. Payments can be made online or by bank transfer. You will receive an e-mail with your booking confirmation.

Invoice procedure

Once your booking is confirmed you will receive an invoice by e-mail. The full balance of the trip must be received at least 35 days before your departure date. Altaï Réunion reserve the right to cancel your booking, free of charge, if this deadline is not respected.

Cancellation policy

If for any reason you have to cancel your trip, we require written confirmation of your decision. The money you have paid will then be refunded according to the following deductions:

- Cancellation received more than 30 days prior to the departure date: a sum of €50 per person will be retained
- Cancellation received 30 to 21 days before the departure date: your deposit, 30% of the total trip price will be retained
- Cancellation received 20 to 14 days before the departure date: 50% of the total trip price will be retained
- Cancellation received 13 to 7 days before the departure date: 75% of the total trip price will be retained
- Cancellation received less than 7 days before the departure date: 100% of the total trip price will be retained

Special cases:

Please note that, regardless of the date of cancellation or modification if you have agreed to pay for services such as hotel reservations, flights or additional activities, these services are usually non-refundable so additional fees may apply.

- Fixed airfares: if your airline ticket was issued in advance, often done to avoid significant surcharges, you will be charged 100% of any non-refundable fees if you wish to change or cancel your flight plan.
- Fixed in-country costs: early charges for firm bookings will be charged if you cancel or modify your trip.
- Insurance costs: if you have taken out comprehensive or cancellation insurance, the cost of insurance is due and cannot be refunded.

Please note that fees apply according to the date we receive your cancellation or modification request in writing.

If we have to cancel a departure due to an insufficient number of participants, you will be informed no later than 21 days before departure and a full refund will be issued, you will not be entitled to further compensation. Altaï Réunion reserve the rights to cancel departures due to exceptional circumstances which may impact the safety of participants. Such circumstances include those amounting to 'force majeure' in which case participants will receive a full refund but they will not be entitled to any compensation.

Changes to travel contract

If you wish to make a change to your booking please contact Altaï Réunion in writing; you will be expected to pay any fee which might arise from this change. In the event of unforeseen external events, Altaï Réunion may change some aspects of the travel contract. If any changes are necessary you will be informed as quickly as possible.

Pricing

The prices on our website are updated regularly and all of the prices we advertise are accurate when published. Altaï Réunion reserve the rights to make changes to any of these prices. Before you make a booking we will give you the up-to-date price of your chosen holiday including any supplements, upgrades or additional activities you may have requested. If the number of travellers is fewer than the indicated number of participants on the website, a small group surcharge may be applied. For all of our trips we include details of services, prices and what is/is not included but please be aware that changes to the prices may be necessary in accordance with exchange rates or price changes of various components of the journey.

Contract transfer

If you are unable to travel with Altaï Réunion for any reason, you can transfer your booking to another person in which case our modification conditions apply. Both the transferor and transferee will be jointly and severally liable for payment of the total holiday price and other associated expenses. Some airline carriers treat name changes as cancellations and you may be required to pay for the cost of a new ticket.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out personal travel insurance for your trip with Altaï Réunion as soon as your booking is confirmed. We advise you to purchase a travel insurance policy which covers flight cancellations, luggage loss and emergency health care. Please look carefully at which activities are covered by your insurer and do not forget to bring all necessary documents and information with you (name of the company, name of the contract, insurance policy number, telephone number...)

PRACTICAL INFO

Staff

This trip is not necessarily a guided adventure. You will be assisted by one of Altaï Réunions' trustworthy drivers, responsible for your transfers and luggage transportation.

Food

Breakfasts:

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

Lunches:

Not included in the trip price. You can purchase pre-prepared picnic lunches from your accommodation during your stay to carry with you each day. These meals include fresh seasonal produce, cheese, meat, salad and fruit. Please be aware that, due to the inaccessibility of the Réunion's remote communes, grocery stores are not always well stocked. We recommend purchasing snacks to carry with you whenever you can.

Dinners:

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

Drinks:

Drinks, including mineral water, can be purchased at your own expense. Options include local rums, beer or fruit juice. The rum is made by soaking fruits, aromatic herbs and spices in white rum and are served as an aperitif before dinner or as a digestive after a hearty meal. A beer called Dodo is brewed by the same local company and you will have the chance to try succulent fruit juice, freshly made from seasonal fruit.

We recommend purchasing an adequate supply of suitable snacks before your trip to bring with you to avoid being hungry on hikes during the day. We also advise that you bring a good water bottle which can be refilled at your accommodation reducing our collective plastic waste. Please let us know about any dietary requirements when you book this trip and we will work with you to cater for your needs.

Accommodation

Usually our travellers sleep in mountain accommodation with shared bathroom facilities and dormitories of 4 to 10 people (with the exception of one dorm. in a refuge at the Piton des Neiges which sleeps 8 to 16 people). Hot showers are not always free, notably in the Piton de la Fournaise area where water is a rare commodity or in the refuge at the Piton des Neiges where there is no running water.

On certain trips you will be accommodated in bed and breakfasts or 2* and 3* hotels for some nights, including in Cilaos, to maximise your comfort.

Transportation

In-country travel and baggage transfer by private minibus.

On certain trips, due to the absence of roads on Réunion Island, you may not see your larger bags and have to keep your important personal belongings on you for one or more days. This is notably the case when crossing the cirque de Mafate or climbing the Piton des Neiges.

Budget & exchange

The currency is the Euro, € (EUR)

Visit <http://www.xe.com> for the latest currency converter and exchange rates. You can withdraw euros from in-country ATMs and credit cards are widely accepted except in isolated areas like small villages or mountain refuges which are generally cash only. Please budget for lunches, drinks, tips, bus tickets, museum entry fees and other personal expenses. Please be aware that hot showers are not always free.

Tips

Although the custom is not widespread here, tipping is always appreciated - it is not obligatory and should be left to the discretion of each individual.

Vital equipment

From head to toe:

- A cap or sunhat
- 1 or 2 sets of thermals: long-sleeved thermal tops and full-length long johns
- Long sleeved and short sleeved t-shirts, preferably in quick-drying technical material
- 1 light fleece or equivalent (plus extra warm layers for austral winter months)
- A breathable wind proof, waterproof jacket (Gore-Tex...)
- Lightweight waterproof over trousers
- 1 pair of long suitable shorts
- 1 pair of walking trousers (detachable legs ideal)
- A pair of high-rise walking boots with vibram soles - Réunions trails can be rocky and muddy
- A pair of trainers or equivalent casual shoes for the evenings
- Thick walking socks
- Warm gloves, hat and scarf (for June - September trips and those which climb up to the cirques or high mountains)
- A swimsuit

Helpful equipment

- Sleeping bag liner. Sheets and blankets are provided except in the refuge at Piton des Neiges where there are only blankets
- A tupperware box or bowl and cutlery for picnics
- Your personal toiletries - think to use as many biodegradable products as possible.
- Fast-drying microfibre towel
- Water bottle(s). Min. 2litres, light and isothermal
- A good pair of sunglasses (think min. category 3)
- Sun-cream, face and lips
- Head torch and spare batteries
- A pocket knife
- A pair of hiking poles
- A waterproof bag cover (or plastic bags) to protect your belongings

Luggage

Your luggage must be divided into two bags:

- A rucksack (35-40L or 45-50L) for use as a day bag. This will contain your (vital) personal belongings for the day, or sometimes for several days. If you buy food on the way and carry only the bare essentials you can carry a small, light bag.
- A larger bag (60-80L) containing the rest of your belongings, those which you do not need with you in the daytime. This bag will be transported by our driver to your accommodation each day. Sometimes, as detailed in your itinerary, you will not see this bag for one or more nights. Please bring is a soft bag like a ruckack or holdall rather than a hard cased suitcase because it is more practical for our drivers.

Medicine

We recommend that you bring a small personal first aid kit containing any medication you may need such as inhalers, plasters, antiseptic and painkillers.

Passport

To go to Réunion Island travellers may need a passport which is valid for at least three months after the last day of their stay, EU travellers may use passports/ID cards valid only for the duration of their stay. It is your responsibility to confirm your specific passport requirements and please be aware that proof of onwards travel may be required.

Visa

Most travellers staying less than 3 months in Réunion Island do not need to obtain a visa. It is your responsibility to confirm your specific visa requirements.

Mandatory vaccines

No mandatory vaccinations are required. Recommended vaccines include Hepatitis and Typhoid.

Health information & recommendations

It is your responsibility to check that your personal health insurance covers everything in this trip. A consultation with your doctor is a prerequisite for any trip.

Weather

Réunion Island has a tropical climate with two different seasons: The cool, dry austral winter from April to September and the austral summer from October to March, the hot, humid season.

April to June - temperatures remain a comfortable average of 20°C during the day and 10°C at night. It is at this time that the flora and fruits are at their most bountiful.

July to September - temperatures are cooler and perfect for hikers who suffer in the heat. It is on average 16-20°C during the day and at night, temperatures drop much lower, often below 0°C. It is not uncommon to see snow on the Piton des Neiges.

October to December - average temperatures are around 25°C in the day and 18°C at night.

January to March - the hurricane season which brings heavy rainfall and trekking is disrupted.

Electricity

European-style plugs with two round pins. Voltage is normally 220/240 V, 50 Hz. Please be aware that some mountain huts use solar electricity which is only 24V and very limited when it comes to charging batteries.

Local time

Réunion Island uses the Réunion time zone (RET). Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)/ Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) +4. Daylight Saving Time (DST) is not observed here.

Topography

Surface area: 2,512 km²

Population: Nearly 850,000 inhabitants

Currency: The Euro

Status: French overseas region and Special Member of the European Union

Religions: 72% Catholic. Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist religions are also popular.

Language: French and Créole

Fun fact: More than 40% of Réunion Island is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Sustainable tourism

Altaï always aims to have as little impact on the environment as possible. As adventure and wilderness travel experts who run trips to some of the most remote parts of the world, we take responsible tourism very seriously.

Since the beginning, we have advocated for responsible tourism and the importance of equitable and sustainable principles. Harmonising these fundamentals ensures a fair distribution of economic benefits, improved working conditions for local teams and an increased awareness of the importance and practice of environmental protection.

We kindly request that you adopt the following simple actions when travelling with Altaï Réunion in order to support our ethical, sustainable and responsible tourism policies:

- Avoid dropping litter - use bins or carry your rubbish with you.
- Use drinking water sparingly - avoid wasting water, take showers not baths, report leaks, etc..
- Support the preservation of cultural sites - resist the temptation to touch statues, move stones etc..
- Exchanges are preferable to donations - generations gifts can destabilize the local economic balance.
- When walking, be aware of fragile ecosystems, observe wildlife from a distance, stick to trails, limit trampling and do not steal from the nature - resist the temptation to pick flowers, collect fossils or stones...
- Some hotels have air conditioning - to avoid excessive energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, please use sparingly and remember to cut the aircon when you are not in the room.

