

# THE 'GRANDE TRAVERSÉE'

The rugged island of la Réunion emerged from the Indian Ocean in a volcanic eruption around 3 million years ago. The erosion-battered island offers hikers sublime landscapes to enjoy and crossing Réunion Island is without a doubt one of the most beautiful treks in the world. Water carved the volcanic rock into pitons, cirques and gorges, all set in steep ramparts. From 'Brûlé' to 'Basse Vallée', crossing the cirques of Salazie, Mafate and Cilaos, witness day after day, the beauty of Réunion Island as you conquer the 'Grande Traversée'. 11 days of hiking a mythical trail in the tropics - a trip designed to delight trekking fans.

 Region	Cilaos Mafate Piton de la Fournaise Piton des Neiges Salazie
 Activity	Hiking
 Duration	13 days
 Group	4 to 12 people
 Code	QREU-EN
 Price	From €1,725
 Level	4/5
 Comfort	3/5
 Language(s)	English

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 St-Denis



Welcome to Réunion Island! Meet your group and guide at St-Denis. Evening meal at leisure.

*Accommodation: Hôtel*

### Day 2 Le Brûlé - Plaine des chicots



Morning transfer by private minibus to Le Brûlé and preparation time. Departure to the starting point of our hike, les Hauts de Saint Denis (1180 m). We are soon surrounded by lush vegetation and follow a small path through the rainforest to the Plaine des Chicots gîte (1800m).

*2 - 3 hours of walking*

*Elevation: +660m/-35m*

*Accommodation: Gîte*

*Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags on day 3.*

### Day 3 Sommet de la Roche Ecrive - Dos d'âne



Ascent to the summit of La Roche Ecrive at 2277 meters, from where we enjoy a splendid view of the cirques of Salazie and Mafate and the summit of Piton des Neiges. La Roche Ecrive is also a nature reserve for the protection of the Tuit Tuit, endemic bird of the island in danger of extinction. We continue the trek towards Dos d'Âne. The path takes us through a beautiful tropical forest before passing very close to the Mafate cirque that we overlook. We continue our progression through the ridges before reaching the Roche Vert Bouteille, a vertical rock more than 6 meters high. We end our hike at the Dos D'âne gîte where we spend the night.

*7 hours of walking*

*Elevation: +600m/-1400m*

*Accommodation: Local gite (you are reunited with your bags)*

### Day 4 Mafate : Dos d'âne - Grand Place



Direction the Mafate cirque, an historic place linked to the marronnage. Our guide tells us the stories of the past that have shaped the character of the islanders. We hike in the heart of a tropical vegetation and cross footbridges and rivers by taking a path which follows the Rivière des Galets. We stop near the river for our picnic as well as for a refreshing swim. We go up slowly and the exuberant vegetation has kept the charm of an exotic garden. We finally arrive at Grand Place for installation at the gîte. No baggage claim.

6 hours of walking

Elevation: +950m/-1100m

Accommodation: Gîte

You will be reunited with bags today and then part with them once again. You will next be reunited with your bags in Cilaos on day 7.

#### 📍 Day 5 Mafate: Grand Place - Roche Plate



Early morning departure for a long day of walking. Today we progress into the heart of the Cirque de Mafate. Enjoy shelter from the high cliffs and superb views of the surrounding peaks. Today we pass several iletts, small hamlets, which give us insight as to what it is like to live in the nature here in the roadless part of Réunion Island.

7 hours of walking

Elevation: +1100m/-770m

Accommodation: Gîte

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

#### 📍 Day 6 Mafate: Trois Roche - Marla



Discover Trois Roches and a surprising waterfall top view of the river and its distant, inaccessible waterfalls. With this angle overlooking the riverbed it is easy to imagine how the stream can transform into a torrent during cyclonic flood. Explore volcanic features at the base of a 1000m cliff which forms the cirque and follow the riverbed up to the delightful settlement of Marla (1630m). This route involves crossing the river two or three more times.

6 hours of walking

Elevation: +900m/-350m

Accommodation: Gîte

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

#### 📍 Day 7 Col de Taibit - Cirque de Cilaos



Today we hike through the col du Taïbit (2083m), the passage which links the Cirque de Mafate to the Cirque de Cilaos. The views from up here do not disappoint, on a clear day you can expect a spectacular display of the surrounding cirques, the south coast and Grand Bénare volcanic peak. The route continues down through the thick vegetation of the 'Bois des Couleurs' to Cilaos. From here, it is a 15 minute local bus to our hotel accommodation.

3 - 4 hours of walking  
Elevation: +450m/-820m  
Accommodation: Gîte  
Your bags will be waiting for you.

#### 📍 Day 8 Cilaos - Refuge du Piton des Neiges



The shaded path up to tonight's refuge is steep. Along the way there are many beautiful view points to admire Cilaos from. The climb continues up to rewarding views and around 2500m of altitude where our accommodation awaits...

3 to 4 hours of walking  
Elevation: +1100m/-50m  
Accommodation: Refuge  
Night without luggage - you will be reunited with your bags tomorrow.

#### 📍 Day 9 The Piton des Neiges - Plaine des Cafres



Nighttime departure for the summit of the Piton des Neiges at 3070m above sea level, the highest point in the Indian Ocean. The views from here are truly amazing and, as your surroundings are illuminated by the first glow of the morning sun, we are sure you will agree that this is a very special place. Return to the refuge for breakfast. The route continues down to the muddy Mare à Boue, along the passage of the eery la Caverne Bras Chansons to the enchanting Piton Tortue and lush green pastures below (amazing for these latitudes). Short transfer from Bourg Murat to our accommodation in la Plaine des Cafres.

8 to 9 hours of walking  
Elevation: +700m/-1600m  
Accommodation: Gîte  
Your luggage will be waiting for you.

#### 📍 Day 10 Plaine des Cafres - Gîte du Volcan



Today we leave the lush green pastures of the Plaine des Cafres and head to a totally different natural environment via the Plaine des Sables. This plateau was formed by a volcanic eruption roughly 1000 years ago and has an alien, desert-like feel to it. Journey into a volcanic world of red ochre tephra as we head to the Gîte du Volcan (Volcano Lodge).

4 hours of walking

Elevation: +350m/-250m

Accommodation: Gîte

Journey time: 30 minutes

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

#### 📍 Day 11 The Piton de la Fournaise



Today we are in for a treat exploring one of the most active volcanoes in the world, the Piton de la Fournaise. Climb the main crater and discover a rich world of strange colours, surprising minerals and warped shapes with fumaroles and sulphur revealing glimpses of the intense activity of this unique shield volcano.

5 to 6 hours of walking

Elevation: +600m/-600m

Accommodation: Gîte

Your luggage will be waiting for you.

#### 📍 Day 12 Gîte du volcan - Grand Galet - Saint Gilles



Last day of walking to end in style towards the Indian Ocean. Our route follows the caldera and we admire new views of the volcano and the ocean. We discover other small craters which are outside the enclosure and our path then follows the road and crosses the Plaine des Sables, this is where the show begins! We rediscover the evolution of the island by going from the mineral to the first plants until we bury ourselves in a dense tropical forest. The final arrival will be at the foot of magnificent waterfalls. From mineral to vegetal it's a magnificent end of trek according to the previous days. Transfer to Saint-Gilles to relax in our hotel with swimming pool and near the lagoon. Diner at leisure

8 hours of walking

Elevation: +200m/-1800m

Transport: Minibus

Accommodation: Hôtel

#### 📍 Day 13 St-Gilles



End of trip.

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.

## DATES & PRICES

### ***International departures:***

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No departure for now

Trip code: QREU-EN

### ***Included***

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- Full supervision by an expert qualified guide
- 10 nights gîte accommodation with shared facilities
- 2 nights hotel accommodation
- Full board from breakfast Day 2 to lunch Day 12
- All in-country transfers as detailed in the itinerary
- Luggage transportation as detailed in itinerary
- Secure baggage storage

### ***Not included***

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- Meals on Day 1 & dinner on Day 12
- International flights
- Repatriation insurance

### **Additional Options**

Small group option for 2-3 participants: prices vary

### ***Terms and conditions***

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#### ***Inscription***

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 30% 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.

#### ***Facturation***

Once your booking is confirmed you will receive an invoice by e-mail. The full balance of the trip must be received at least 30 days before your departure date. Altaï Réunion reserve the right to cancel your booking, free of charge, if this deadline is not respected.

#### ***Annulation***

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.

### ***Modification du contrat***

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.

### ***Prix et révision des prix***

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.

### ***Cession du contrat***

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***

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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**

Armed with an abundance of experience and a wealth of knowledge, our professional guides are all experts in their domaine. Our qualified leaders are all English speaking, all practicing outdoor practitioners and they are all besotted the magnificent Réunion Island. Your guide will be assisted by one of Altaï Réunions trusty drivers, responsible for 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:**

Picnic lunches will be provided each day. These will include fresh seasonal produce, cheese, meat, salad and fruit. Please be aware that you will be expected to carry your lunch and water with you each day.

#### **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 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.

Please let us know about any dietary requirements when you book the 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.

This trip also includes 2\* and 3\* hotels for some nights to maximise your comfort.

### **Transportation**

In-country travel and baggage transfer by private minibus.

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 drinks, tips 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 (or appropriate trail running shoes)
- 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***

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- 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. 2 litres, 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***

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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.
- A larger bag (60-80L) containing the rest of your belongings, those which you do not need with you in the day. 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***

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Your guide is a trained first-aider and will carry a full first aid kit at all times during the trip. 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***

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To go to Réunion Island travellers may need a passport which is vaild 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***

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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***

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

### ***Health information & recommendations***

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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**

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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 Mars, 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 Mars** - the hurricane season which brings heavy rainfall and trekking is disrupted.

## **Electricity**

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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**

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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**

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**Surface area:** 2,512 km<sup>2</sup>

**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**

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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.

MAP



— VÉHICULE    ····· MARCHE