

TREK IN THE HEART OF CIRQUES : DES NEIGES À LA FOURNAISE !

A complete trek on the Intense Island. We go around the Piton des Neiges almost passing through the three Cirques during a walking tour with almost no transfer! Then we take advantage of the South of the island, its most prized corners and its best kept secrets. Hotspot and volcanic land lost in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the island offers incomparable landscapes for hiking. Going around the Piton des Neiges, we cross the 3 Cirques of Mafate, Salazie and Cilaos on foot. We meet all the landscape diversity of the island and climb on the roof of the Western Indian Ocean for sunrise. After this roaming direction the wild South to continue our trek. On the program, the essential Piton de la Fournaise of course. But also the not very well known site of Grand-Bassin, its village and its waterfalls. End of the adventure or almost ... We end at the edge of the lagoon of Saint-Gilles and take advantage of its market for a relaxing end to the trip!

 Region	Cilaos Mafate Piton de la Fournaise Piton des Neiges Salazie
 Activity	Hiking
 Duration	13 days
 Group	4 to 12 people
 Code	QREUPIT-EN
 Price	From €1,695
 Level	3/5
 Comfort	3/5
 Language(s)	English

ITINERARY

Day 1 Saint Denis - Hell-Bourg (Cirque de Salazie)

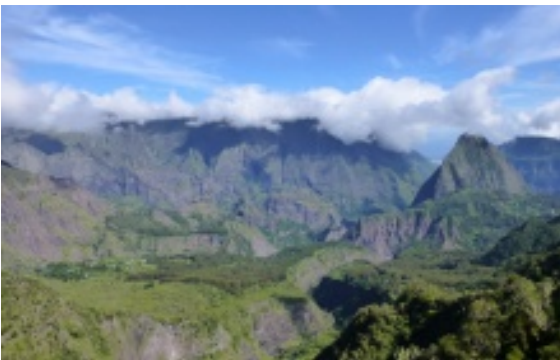


On arrival, we are greeted by our guide at the airport before joining the Cirque de Salazie and the village of Hell-Bourg. At the heart of the cirque, Hell-Bourg is an old spa resort perched at an altitude of 930 m. This picturesque village is renowned for its small pastel houses, the famous Creole huts. It is the only village outside mainland France to benefit from the label of "most beautiful villages in France". We walk there and take advantage of this timeless place where giant bamboos thrive in the heart of lush vegetation. We can then visit the famous Maison Folio. The visit of this beautiful colonial mansion and its renowned garden is a good introduction to the island. Free dinner and overnight in gîte.

Time of transport : 2 hours

Accommodation : Gîte

Day 2 Hell-Bourg - Ilet à Malheur (Cirque de Mafate)



We are taken to the starting point of the scout path to reach the isolated cirque of Mafate on foot. Isolated because no road crosses it and it is only accessible on foot. The scout trail is one of the most beautiful routes in the cirque because it is dotted with superb viewpoints and watchtowers. We enter in Mafate by foot and begin our descent in a beautiful tropical wet forest. Ilet à Malheur owes its name to the sad history of maroons(slaves) who were chased when they tried to hide in the cirque. If its history is sad, the site is however beautiful. Very typical and Creole dinner and night in a gîte this evening!

NB: As there is no vehicle access to Mafate, we carry our backpack for 5 days and 4 nights. We find our main bag on J7 in the evening in Cilaos.

Walking time: 3 to 4 hours

Elevation: + 150m / -950m

Accommodation: Gîte

Day 3 Ilet à Malheur - Aurère - Grand Place (Cirque de Mafate)



This hike takes us from Ilet to Ilet in Mafate. We discover these hilltop villages with exuberant gardens and welcoming people. After Ilet à Malheur we cross Aurère. We follow rivers and basins on this still wet slope east of Mafate. The paths are punctuated with sisal agave and bamboo that line the path and the forest. We rush into a dry ravine before reaching our place in the evening: Grand Place. The day ends with a good local specialty meal.

Walking time: 5 to 6 hours

Elevation: + 630m / -760m

Accommodation: Gîte

Day 4 Grand Place - Ilet des Orangers - Roche Plate (Cirque de Mafate)



Early departure for a dense and beautiful day of walking. The luxuriant vegetation has kept the charm of an exotic garden. We are in the heart of the Mafate cirque with a superb view of the surrounding peaks. We leave Grand Place by taking the path of the Rivière des Galets, but this time we head towards Ilet des Orangers and pass by Ilet des Lataniers. This stage is quite sporty in terms of slopes and elevations but you will be rewarded with exceptional panoramas. We join our gîte at Roche Plate where we spend the night.

Walking time: 6 hours

Elevation: + 1050m / -700m

Accommodation: Gîte

📍 Day 5 **Roche Plate - Cascade des Trois Roches - Marla (Cirque de Mafate)**



We go for a pique-nique on the pretty site of Trois Roches. Exceptional look at the falls of the Rivière des Galets. It descends here in the form of a waterfall of more than 50 meters dug in a basalt fault. Swimming on the polished slabs by the waters, above the so-called waterfall. To reach Marla afterwards, we pass by a path encased in a maze of rocks between the ramparts. We arrive in Marla (1600 m), a small and isolated îlet where we spend the night.

Walking time: 5 to 6 hours

Elevation: + 850m / -350m

Accommodation: Gîte

📍 Day 6 **Marla - Col du Taïbit - Cilaos (Cirques de Mafate et Cilaos)**



We leave the Mafate cirque via the Taïbit pass and its 2080 meters. It is the obligatory passage between the cirque of Cilaos and Mafate. We find ourselves at the foot of Grand Bénare and enjoy the view of the green cirques of Mafate and Cilaos on one side and on the south coast on the other. We continue with a nice descent through the "Bois de Couleurs" with some panoramas according to the clearings. We settle in our cottage where we find our luggage and take a rest before the climb towards Piton des Neiges the next day! Free time to discover this beautiful Creole village before dinner.

Walking time: 3 to 4 hours

Elevation: + 450m / -820m

Accommodation: Gîte

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



We prepare our backpack for one night (we will collect our luggage the next day at Bélouve). Depending on the weather conditions, the ascent to the refuge is scheduled for late morning or early afternoon. In both cases, we take the time to visit the village of Cilaos. This small town surrounded by high peaks is full of life with its small white Creole houses surrounded by flowered gardens. Departure from the place called "the block", at 1400 meters. The ascent to the refuge at altitude allows you to better immerse yourself in the dimension of the Cilaos cirque. During the climb, we pass from the dampness of the canopy to a more sparse vegetation called tropical mountain. The main species on the ground is then the Green Brangle,

a tree heather of the Ericaceae family. After about 4 hours of effort, we arrive at the refuge planted in the middle of this superb setting, at the foot of the Piton des Neiges.

Walking time: 4 hours

Elevation: + 1150m / -50m

Accommodation: Refuge

📍 Day 8 **Ascent of Piton des Neiges - Forêt de Bélouve**



Today we wake up early to go to the top of the Piton des Neiges, highest peak of the Indian Ocean (3070 m) to admire the sunrise. This volcano asleep for 12,000 years is located in the center of the "ace of clubs" formed by the 3 cirques of Cilaos, Salazie and Mafate. From the promontory, we also admire the South and East coasts as well as the Piton de la Fournaise. Return to the for a breakfast before taking the direction of Cirque des Marsouins. A Circus forgotten because it was covered by the ashes of Piton des Neiges when it was an explosive volcano. After a long descent in the beautiful tropical wet forest we reach the Gîte de Bélouve which offers us a very beautiful view of the Cirque de Salazie.

Walking time: 8 to 9 hours

Elevation: + 600m / -1700m

Accommodation: Gîte

📍 Day 9 **Forêt de Bélouve - Trou de Fer - Plaine des Cafres**



Early departure for the primary forest of Bélouve. We cross this forest and immerse ourselves in a humid area of island vegetation of medium altitude. The fern tree and endemic plants are everywhere. The density of the environment and its liveliness give free rein to our imagination. So many tortuous trees, so many subdued and solitary spaces, all these places seem to be drawn from a marvelous tale. At the end of the path, we arrive at a belvedere on the highest waterfalls of France which compose the impressive Trou de Fer. Return to the gîte before being taken thereafter to the Plaine des Cafres. More than a plain, it is actually an altitude plateau between the two main volcanic massifs of the island.

Walking time: 3 hours

Transport time: 1 hour

Elevation: + 160m / -160m

Accommodation: Gîte

📍 Day 10 **Plaine des Cafres - Grand Bassin**



We are leaving again for two days in a place accessible only by foot, just like Mafate! (baggage claim the next day). A short transfer takes us to Bois Court, overlooking the isolated village of Grand-Bassin. If the village has been deserted by a large part of its inhabitants in search of a more comfortable city life, a cachet of Creole authenticity remains in this heaven of peace which has become one of the most beautiful pedestrian escapades on the island. Descent to Grand Bassin. We discover superb landscapes and take advantage of the surrounding tranquility of the rivers and waterfalls at the bottom of the valley which we will admire and where it is also possible to swim. Night in a gîte in Grand-Bassin.

Walking time: 2 to 3 hours

Elevation: +150 / -850m

Accommodation: Gîte

♥ Day 11 **Grand Bassin - Plaine des Cafres - Massif du Piton de la Fournaise**



We take the way back on a different path if the conditions allow it. Accompanied by the sound of the surrounding waterfalls. The gardens are full of flowers and fruits of all kinds: bibasses, jackfruits, papayas, anthuriums, fangeans ... Return to the Plaine des Cafres before reaching the volcanic massif of Piton de la Fournaise. On the way, we cross a number of stunning sites such as the Rivière des Remparts and the Plaine des Sables. The universe becomes mineral in the extreme as it approaches one of the most active volcanoes in the World. Night in a refuge near the Caldeira de la Fournaise.

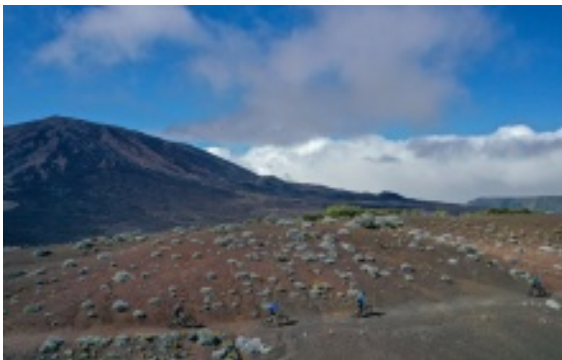
Walking time: 4 hours

Transport time: 1 hour

Elevation: + 1000m

Accommodation: Gîte

♥ Day 12 **Ascent of Piton de la Fournaise - Saint Gilles les Bains et son lagon**



Day dedicated to hiking in the heart of Piton de la Fournaise. We take the Pas de Bellecombe, which gives us a superb panorama on the Volcano. Descent into the Fouqué enclosure, the last caldeira formed which leads to the volcano. According to the regulations in force, possibility of climbing the main crater, the Dolomieu. It completely changed shape following the 2007 eruption, having created a depression several hundred meters in its center. We discover different types of rocks resulting from successive lava flows. We walk in a mineral world of fumaroles and lava in various shapes and colors. This hike reminds us that this island lives to the rhythm of the vibrations of this still active volcano. In the afternoon, we take the direction

of Saint-Gilles and its lagoon to relax by the water at the end of the trip.

Walking time: 5 to 6 hours

Transport time: 2.5 hours

Elevation: + 600m / -600m

Accommodation: Hotel with swimming pool

♥ Day 13 **Saint Gilles les Bains - Journée libre**



Free day. End of your trip.

Notes on the trip:

The program was established according to the last elements known at the time of writing; imponderables are always possible and situations beyond our control can modify the route. Depending on the weather and operational conditions, your management team reserves the right to modify this itinerary in order to best ensure the progress of the stay and your safety. Always for security reasons, the management and the organization reserve the right to interrupt your participation if your technical level and / or your physical form do not correspond to those required. In no case this interruption give rise to a reimbursement or payment of compensation.

DATES & PRICES

International departures:

No departure for now

Trip code: QREUPIT-EN

Included

- Full supervision by an expert qualified guide
- 11 nights gîte accommodation with shared facilities
- 1 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

- Meals on Day 1 & dinner on Day 12
- International flights
- Repatriation insurance
- Tips, all expenses & personal equipment, drinks and everything that is not in "INCLUDED"

Additional Options

Small group option for 2-3 participants: prices vary

Notes

For many years, we have put our experience at the service of travelers from different backgrounds. You can therefore find in your groups participants from our different partners.

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

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

- 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

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

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

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

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.

MAP

