

Did you know? Île de la Réunion.....

Réunion Island is situated in the Indian Ocean, about 800 kilometres east of Madagascar and 220 kilometres south-west of Mauritius. The population is approximately 700 000 in an area of 2, 510 km². You will need to look closely in an atlas to find it!

The flight from Perth to Mauritius takes approximately 8 hours, with a further 45-minute flight to Réunion.



Réunion is volcanic in origin. There is an extinct volcano, *Piton de Neiges*, and an active one, *Piton de la Fournaise*, which erupts almost yearly. The area is not populated for obvious reasons, but may be viewed quite safely and is one of the highlights not to be missed!

Saint Denis, on the Island's north coast, is the capital. Many other towns are also named after saints. Popular beaches including Saint Paul, with its black volcanic sand; St Gilles, and St Leu are all located on the West Coast.

Réunion was discovered in the 16th century and claimed by France in 1642. The first inhabitants were mutineers who lived in a cave that can still be visited. The French boosted the Island's population with people from Africa, India and China, whose descendants now comprise the *Créole* population. Slavery came to an end in 1848, a date still celebrated today.

Réunion became an overseas *département* of France in 1946 and the people hold French passports. The official language is French although Créole is widely spoken. The *Tricolore* flies on flagpoles and the words *République Française* are seen everywhere. The inhabitants of Réunion refer to mainland France as *la Métropole* and fly there frequently for visits. They use the *Euro* and drive on the right.

Summer in Réunion (November to May) is wetter than the winter months. In coastal regions the weather is generally pleasantly warm, but in the mountains it can get quite cold.

With its diverse population, Réunion has a variety of religions, cultural events and cuisines. Rice is very popular and meal times are taken just as seriously as in mainland France. Sugar cane is an important crop, along with its by-product rum. Vanilla is also grown, most of it being sold to Coca Cola!



For more information try: www.reunion.fr/