

Three Cirques Trek, Reunion Island

A superb tropical trek on this small but delightful French volcanic island in the middle of the Indian Ocean.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Mountain gites
Grade	Vigorous / Strenuous
Duration	16 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 5 days Walks on: 5 days
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Local Leader Reunion
Land only	Joining in Roland Garros Airport, Reunion
Max altitude	3,069m/10,069ft, Piton des Neiges, Day 8

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2022 Dates:

Sat 18 Jun - Sun 03 Jul

Sat 03 Sep - Sun 18 Sep

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 5 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Our Reunion Island holiday is led by professional French guides who speak excellent English and are very knowledgeable about the history, flora and fauna of the Island.

Your trip highlights

- Discover France's best kept secret - a tropical island in the Indian Ocean with an appealing French flavour
- Summit both the Piton des Neiges, the highest point in the Indian Ocean, and the Piton de la Fournaise, one of the world's most active volcanoes.
- Trek through a huge variety of landscapes and microclimates - from cascading waterfalls and tropical rainforest to jagged lava.
- Wake up your taste buds with creole cuisine - gorge yourself on caris/curries, lentils, sweet potato cake and rum arrangé.
- Relax on the island's pristine beaches, and snorkel in a lagoon protected from sharks by a coral reef.

At a glance itinerary

Day 1 -2	Fly London to Roland Garros airport, Reunion. Group transfer to Saint Gilles les Bains.
Days 3-4	Traverse the Mafate cirque staying in Mountain Gites.
Days 5-6	Cross into the Cilaos cirque and hike the iconic 'La Chapelle'.
Days 7-8	Ascend and descend the Piton des Neiges. Transfer to the Salazie cirque.
Days 9-10	Rest day in Hell Bourg and Trou de Fer hike.
Day 11	Cultural exploration of the Wild South, via minibus.
Day 12	Ascent of the Piton de la Fournaise.
Day 13	Descend to Langevin valley. Transfer to Saint Gilles les Bains.
Days 14-16	Day at leisure. Overnight flight to London

Trip summary

Reunion Island is undoubtedly a hiker's paradise. This little-known French territory is the perfect destination for adventurous trekkers thanks to its rugged topography and unspoilt volcanic landscape. The island is ringed by sandy beaches whilst the interior is filled with waterfalls and dense tropical rainforest. Over a third of Reunion has been designated a UNESCO world heritage site and remains pristine.

The island itself was created roughly 3 million years ago when the Piton des Neiges burst out of the Indian Ocean. This now inactive volcano collapsed to form three awe-inspiring cirques, one of which is only accessible by foot or helicopter. Whilst the inactive remains of the Piton des Neiges make up the northern and western half of the island, the southern and eastern half is comprised of one of the world's most active volcanoes - the mighty Piton de la Fournaise, whose lava sometimes runs all the way into the sea.

It's not just the scenery which is diverse on Reunion, it is also a melting-pot of cultures. As its name suggests, the island literally unites a number of different ethnic groups. This merging of cultures has created Reunion's distinctive creole culture with its own language, music, architecture and delicious cuisine.

This holiday has been carefully designed to ensure you do not miss any of the must-see highlights of Reunion. The three cirques each have their own individual character. Waking up before dawn to trek to the summit of Piton des Neiges for a 360 degree sunrise over the entire island is truly unforgettable, whilst Piton de la Fournaise offers an entirely different view down into the smoking crater at its heart. Beyond the superb volcano trekking there is time to absorb the creole culture and relax on a palm-fringed beach.

Accommodation is equally diverse; there are some charming hotels in the towns whilst in the more remote places you stay in traditional mountain gites famed for their delicious creole curries.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly to Reunion

Depart the UK on your overnight flight to Reunion.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Roland Garros Airport. Transfer to hotel.

On arrival at the airport there will be a single group transfer to Saint Gilles les Bains. En route, look out for your first glimpse of a paille-en-queue, or white-tailed tropic bird. This large white seabird, with a long white tail is an emblem of the Indian Ocean.

Saint Gilles is famous for its pristine white sand beaches and spectacular coral reef. Although sharks are found all around Reunion, the beaches in this area are protected by a lagoon.

Overnight: Hotel Le Nautile or Similar, Saint Giles Les Bains

Day 3: Trek from Maido to Roche Plate - 1,200m descent, 3-4 hours.

Today you will meet your trek guide who will give you a briefing before your adventure begins. You then head directly to the most famous viewpoint on the island, Mado. Mado sits at the top of the Mafate cirque, and gives you the first of many breath-taking views into the mountains. If you're in luck, you will get a clear view of the Piton des Neiges and from here you can also spy many of the small creole hamlets that sit isolated from the rest of the island amongst jagged hills and rivers. You will trek down into the cirque to Roche Plate. The path is steep at times but gives you a magnificent view of Mafate and its many carved peaks. Utterly remote, it is the only cirque on the island that can only be reached by helicopter or foot.

Mafate was initially a place of refuge for escaped slaves during colonial times, and many of the people living there now are descendants of these brave fugitives. You may catch a glimpse of your first 'bibe', a large orange and black (and harmless) spider which builds its huge webs in the vegetation, as well as several of the island's endemic bird species.



Upon reaching Roche Plate, you will amble past banana trees and creole houses to reach your gite for the night. You have some time to relax in the afternoon and soak up the silence of this remote spot. In the evening you will be treated to your first creole meal, most likely a combination of a cari/curry, grains/beans and lentils, rice, and piment/chilli. Rum arrangé is almost bound to make an appearance too, such is its importance in creole life! There are many flavours of this infused rum to try, including vanilla, pineapple, and wild fern.

Overnight: Gite Lavita, Roche Plate (Meals: B D)

Day 4: Trek from Roche Plate to Marla - 640m ascent, 500m descent, 6-7½ hours. Afternoon: optional walk to Plateau de Kerval.

After a typical gite breakfast, most likely baguette, butter, jam and coffee/tea, you will begin your traverse of the southern half of Mafate. Panoramic views open themselves up to you as you journey through the cirque, feeling very much as if you're in an enormous crater. After a considerable ascent you arrive at Les Trois Roches, arguably one of the most spectacular sights in Reunion. You will picnic on this rocky plateau, which drops suddenly away to reveal an enormous waterfall that cascades into a gorge, often displaying a rainbow as the sun peeks down into the crevasse. From here the trek continues to Marla, Mafate's most southern village and where you will be spend the night. Behind Marla you will see the cirque edge that you will ascend tomorrow, topped by Les Trois Salazes, three remarkable pinnacles of rock that protrude from the top of the ridge. To their left the 'dog's head' is visible - you'll see!

In Marla you will find a snack, a bar/café typical of the island which sells snacks and dodos, the island's much loved beer. You may like to explore in the afternoon. There is a pleasant walk to Plateau de Kerval, a beautiful spot with a lake and a view of the Piton des Neiges, which takes you past the school and church.

If not, you can simply relax in the afternoon. Deer can sometimes be spotted in this area; these are not found anywhere else on the island and are a non-native species.

Overnight: Gite Ti Piton, Marla (Meals: B D)

Day 5: Trek from Marla to Cilaos - 1,250m ascent, 820m descent, 6-7 hours.

You start your day with a steep but fairly short ascent to leave Mafate and enter the cirque of Cilaos. You do this via the Col du Taibit pass, one of the few entrances into Mafate. The path zigs and zags up the side of the cirque, giving you a lovely view of Marla - see if you can spot your gite! Once at the top of the pass you may well spot a tec-tec, a small black, brown and white endemic bird that seems to enjoy watching hikers on the trail. You then descend the other side of the cirque edge, winding through forest to eventually catch your first glimpse of Cilaos. Around halfway down you come upon Ilet des Salazes, a small community hut which, when open, serves coffee and cake in the middle of the forest. This is a charming little spot and a good place to have a rest with the locals. It is another hour of walking from here until you reach the road where you continue your trek until you reach the main town via an old pathway.



For the next two nights you will stay in Le Vieux Cep (The Old Vine), a thoroughly charming 3* hotel that is full of character and comfort. With rooms and a swimming pool that have gorgeous views of the Piton des Neiges, this is the ideal spot for you to rest up after your first few days of trekking. Cilaos itself is home to several nice restaurants, a lake with hireable pedalos, museums, and a beautiful church, and is a stunning mountain town.

Overnight: Hotel Le Vieux Cep or Similar, Cilaos (Meals: B)

Day 6: Day walk, La Chapelle - 800m ascent and descent, 5-6 hours.

You are in for a real treat today. La Chapelle is an enthralling hike, and arguably one of the most popular and well-known on the island. You set off on foot from your hotel, and begin with a steep descent through a forest. You will cross several little clear-water streams, and follow a path that skirts around a hill, giving you magnificent views of the side of the cirque that you descended the previous day. Cilaos is home to plenty of interesting plant life, including the beautiful, if invasive, wild ginger that grows abundantly everywhere and bears an unusual orange fruit. There are also succulents everywhere, some reaching human height.

Eventually you will reach the river bed that leads to La Chapelle. When Mountain Kingdoms rec'd this trip we hadn't realised that the hike didn't lead to an actual chapel, but instead to a staggeringly tall gorge which, when the sunlight shines above and through it, resembles a small church. Looking up this black and white striped rock formation really does take your breath away, particularly with the boulder has become stuck in the gorge above.

Thousands of birds abide here, and seeing them fly about in the shafts of light is magical. If river-height permits, you can walk right into the gorge, under the boulder, and discover the waterfall at the end of the rock formation.

You return to Cilaos via the same path, and have the afternoon at leisure. There is plenty to see in this town, including an embroidery museum and thermal baths.

Overnight: Hotel Le Vieux Cep or Similar, Cilaos (Meals: B)

Day 7: Begin ascending the Piton des Neiges - 1,100m ascent. 3-4 hours.

And so it begins, the start of your ascent of the Piton des Neiges, perhaps the toughest but most impressive hike of the holiday. After a relaxed breakfast and lunch in Cilaos, you transfer to Le Bloc, the starting point for the trek. From here it is all up for about four hours as you zig and zag up the cirque wall. If the weather is on your side you will be rewarded with a superb view of Cilaos with a distant glimpse of the sea behind from various different viewpoints as you ascend. However if the cloud has descended, a common occurrence on Reunion in the afternoons, you will be walking through an atmospheric, misty, and densely green forest.

Although sustained, once into a rhythm this is a nice steady ascent. That's not to say you won't be relieved to find your gite not far from the summit! The gite du Caverne Dufour is the only gite that serves the Piton des Neiges and although certainly not a luxurious gite it has comfortable dorm beds, a pleasant dining room and beautiful views from the outside terrace. After dinner you retire early in preparation for your pre-dawn start tomorrow.

Overnight: Gite Du Caverne, Dufour (Meals: B D)

Day 8: Summit the Piton des Neiges and descend to Plaine des Cafres - 600m ascent, 1,540m descent, 8-9 hours. Transfer to Hell Bourg, Salazie Cirque, 3,069m/10,069ft.

It may feel painful at the time, but we can guarantee you won't regret getting up before dawn to walk to the top of the Piton des Neiges. The path leaves from right beside the gite, and geared up in your layers and wearing your head torch, you follow the white marks on rocks (and your guide!) that illuminate your final ascent. Head torch lights bob their way up the volcanic landscape as the sun begins to rise, scoring an orange line on the starry horizon. After around two hours of non-stop ascent you reach, probably with some relief, the summit at 3,070m. Nothing can prepare you for the view that awaits you here. From the top of this dormant volcano you are granted a view of all three cirques, enormous expanses of the Indian Ocean, and even your first glimpse of the Piton de la Fournaise. Watching the sun come up from the crown of the Indian Ocean is an unforgettable experience.



Once you've drunk in all you can of the 360 degree views, it's time to leave the summit behind and descend back down to reality. You head down to the gite and have breakfast there before following a different path to the Plaine des Cafres, a flat expanse of land spread between the Piton des Neiges and the Piton de la Fournaise. Cattle are reared here, it being one of the cooler and flatter parts of the island. The path will be muddy in places, but not too steep.

You are picked up by minibus after around eight hours of hiking, and driven an hour and a half to your final cirque. The following three nights will be spent in Hell Bourg in the cirque of Salazie, the first overseas village to be granted the 'Most Beautiful Village in France' award. Indeed, it is exceptionally charming, creole houses surrounded by luscious vegetation and pretty waterfalls.

Overnight: Hotel Relais Des Cimes or Similar, Hell Bourg (Meals: B D)

Day 9: Rest day Hell Bourg.

A well-deserved rest day after the mammoth task of ascending and descending the Piton des Neiges. You can spend your time simply relaxing in your accommodation, or exploring the village. There are a number of tourist shops, and several bakeries. Maison Folio is an old creole house that is still run by Madame Folio, which houses a number of interesting historical artefacts from the island, giving you an inkling of how life used to be here day-to-day. But even more stunning is its botanical garden, which really does make you feel as if you've walked into a film set with towering fern trees, masses of orchids and even a carnivorous plants section. There is also a musical instruments museum, and you can take a 15 minute stroll down to the now out-of-use thermal baths, the village's old epicentre and now surrounded by a well-kept garden with benches to read on.

Overnight: Hotel Relais Des Cimes or Similar, Hell Bourg (Meals: B)

Day 10: Trou de Fer day walk, 700m ascent, 700m descent, 6-7 hours.

Yet another iconic hike makes up today's venture. Setting off on foot from the village, you walk past enormous thickets of giant bamboo and walls of chou chou to ascend the cirque wall, with lovely views of Hell Bourg below. This is a fairly steep ascent, and will take around two to three hours. The path eventually leads into the Forest of Belouve and Bebour, a tropical rainforest that is well loved by the people of the island. Its twisting trunks and towering fern trees are a delight to walk through. The path is frequently constructed of wooden boards covered with mesh wire to make it less slippery, as this is one of the wetter parts of the island. If you're lucky you may spot a tanguie/tenrec, a sort of furry hedgehog that has made its way across from Madagascar and is now a local delicacy. After crossing through the forest you will reach the viewpoint over the Trou de Fer or 'Iron Hole'. The actual waterfalls are inaccessible unless you are a canyoner, but you can admire the

spectacle from afar. The 300m gorge was only explored for the first time in 1989, and the waterfalls seemingly drop to nowhere. You picnic on the viewing platform here and return to Hell Bourg via the same path.

Overnight: Hotel Relais Des Cimes or Similar, Hell Bourg (Meals: B)

Day 11: Exploration of the Sud Sauvage or 'Wild South'.

Today you will explore the south coast of the island. This part of the island is a lot less built up as the Reunion's active volcano looms above, making various areas inhabitable. The south makes for a great road trip, with lots of hidden gems just waiting to be viewed en route. First you visit Le Colosse in Saint Andre, one of the biggest Hindu temples of the island and an impressive sight. From here you continue south past fields of sugar cane and vanilla plantations until you reach the Notre Dame des Laves in Sainte Rose. This church is unlike any other church in the world, as it has survived a lava flow. The church is still surrounded by hardened lava today; at the time of the eruption, the lava flowed right the way to the altar before stopping. Although there may be a scientific explanation for this 'miracle', it is still an interesting site to see. Shortly after Sainte Rose you will stop to visit Anse des Cascades, a spectacular site by the sea with several waterfalls that cascade down the cliffs. There is an optional short walk here via the coast.

And now for one of Reunion's real showpieces - Le Grand Brûlé. The volcanic plains creep up on you; one minute you are driving through dense greenery, the next you are cruising over blackened lava. In 2007 the Piton de la Fournaise erupted in a spectacular manner, with the lava flowing all the way down to the sea, creating huge pillars of smoke. The road could only be rebuilt after a considerable amount of time, due to the fact that this new land needed to cool down! It is this road that you take, and there is an opportunity to stop at the viewing point to get a closer glimpse of the lava and admire the Indian Ocean stretching away into the distance.

Time permitting, you may also stop in Saint Philippe. This lovely little town showcases plenty of colourful creole houses and several nice restaurants. It is also home to some excellent botanical gardens, which, if there is time, you may be able to visit in the afternoon. Please note that entry to the gardens is not included. From Saint Philippe it is an hour's drive to Saint Pierre, where you will spend your night in a comfortable hotel. Dubbed 'the capital of the South', Saint Pierre is a vibrant city with a lagoon-protected beach, colonial town hall, and plenty of places to shop and to eat out. You will enjoy getting to know this dynamic city for a night - it has a much more creole feel to it than the real capital of Saint Denis.

Overnight: Hotel Battant Des Lames or Similar, Saint Pierre (Meals: B)

Day 12: Ascent of the Piton de la Fournaise, 2,632m/8,635ft - 6-7 hours, 500m ascent, 500m descent.

In the morning you drive to the Piton de la Fournaise. The road takes you through Le Tampon (which also means buffer in French, and this town is the buffer between the Plaine des Cafres and Saint Pierre - always a laughing point for tourists!). Upon reaching the Plaine des Cafres you head right and begin the ascent up the Route du Volcan. On a clear day you will enjoy breath-taking views of the Piton des Neiges, and both sides of the island. After half an hour or so you turn a corner and are met with the Plaine des Sables and the moon-like landscape of the volcano. You descend on hairpin bends until you are on the plain, and off-road, all part of the adventure. The track is expected to be tarmacked by 2021, much to the locals' dismay.



The hike today is completely different from those you have already experienced on Reunion, as you ascend the island's active volcano. Fear not - La Fournaise is a shield volcano that does not erupt explosively. When it does erupt, it forms small lava fountains which conclude in lava flows. If by chance it is erupting when you are there you will not be allowed in the enclosure, but may be able to hike to a viewing point to admire the spectacle.

Assuming the volcano is behaving, you will hike to the top of the Dolomieu crater. You begin by a short descent to enter the enclosure, with the seemingly tiny red Formica Leo crater at your feet. You have the opportunity to walk on this crater (which is in fact very large), and you then cross the frozen lava, following white dots that lead you across the flatter part of the walk. You will pass the Chapelle de Rosemont, a hollow lava formation that towers over human height and remains from past eruptions. Shortly after you begin the serious ascent of the volcano, going up and then skirting around the side of the volcano until eventually you are facing east. On the way you will see a crazy twisted landscape, with all kinds of lava formations laying themselves literally at

your feet. Once at the top you can peer down into the smoking crater, and in good weather see the Le Grand Brûlé that stretches right down to the Indian Ocean. Be warned that the winds can sometimes be glacial at the top, as you are at 2,632m/8,635ft, so bring warm layers.

You descend by the same path. On a clear day the views on the way back are across to the Piton des Neiges and countless old craters of La Fournaise. Tonight you stay at the Gîte du Volcan, a simple but pleasant gîte with dormitory accommodation.

Overnight: Gîte Du Volcan (Meals: B D)

Day 13: Hike from the Plaine des Sables to Grand Galet - 1,850m descent, 5-6 hours.

One final hike to conclude your trip. Today's venture takes you from the Plaine des Sables down to the Langevin valley, via a big descent. This is one of the lesser known hikes on the island, but one of our favourites. The trail is likely to be very quiet and takes you through a variety of different landscapes - from a volcanic mini-cirque and through several different types of forest until eventually you reach Cap Blanc. From the viewing point here you can see an enormous waterfall tumbling into a turquoise pool. People sometimes fish for trout here. Around an hour and a half later, after walking through banana plantations and scrambling over a dry river bed, you will reach the village of Grand Galet. This remote place lies at the top of the Langevin valley.

Lying next to Saint Joseph, Langevin is a favourite spot for locals and tourists alike, as the river flows through a series of dozens of waterfalls, little and large. In particular the Reunionaise like to come here to have their Sunday picnics, an integral part of the culture here. It is exactly what it sounds like - on Sundays, huge numbers of Reunionaise families gather at the various gazebos placed around the islands, or at the beaches, to enjoy a picnic together. However there are no sausage rolls or boiled eggs here - the locals bring caris cooked in huge marmites (aluminium cooking pots), tables, chairs, bunting, games, baby cots, and all other things imaginable to have a party at the end of each week. After walking through the village, you will see Grand Galet, one of Reunion's most spectacular waterfalls. You can then explore some of the other waterfalls of the valley should you wish, since they are all close to one another. After your long descent from the volcano you may even wish to take a dip in the cold water.

A short minibus transfer takes you to Le Nautile in Saint Gilles les Bains. You have come full circle, and will no doubt feel nostalgic about all the different landscapes and natural phenomena that you have explored in such a short space of time. Such is the nature of Reunion.

Overnight: Hotel Le Nautile or Similar, Saint Giles Les Bains (Meals: B)

Day 14: Day of leisure at the beach. Optional activities.

A day of relaxation after nearly two weeks on l'île intense (the intense island), as Reunion is called by all those who experience it. And the reason for this will be clear to you by now! There are a number of optional activities available in and around Saint Gilles. Transparent kayaking and paddle-boarding are both popular activities at La Saline les Bains, the closest beach to your hotel. If you want to really blow your mind one last time, the hotel offers a deal on helicopter rides. With much of the island being inaccessible, this is one of the best ways to see both everything that you have explored from a bird's eye view. Trou de Fer is particularly spectacular from above. Depending on the season you may also be able to go on a humpback whale watching tour. These enormous cetaceans come to Reunion to breed from June - October, and seeing them breach out of the water is truly unforgettable.

You may like to enjoy a final creole curry for dinner in one of the many beach-side restaurants at L'Ermitage.

Overnight: Hotel Le Nautile or Similar, Saint Giles Les Bains (Meals: B)

Day 15: Transfer to airport. Fly to UK.

That's it - it's over! Today you will be transferred to Roland Garfos Airport near Saint Denis to catch your overnight flight home. **(Meals: B)**

Day 16: Arrive UK.

Our grading system

Three Cirques Trek, Reunion Island is graded as a Vigorous/Strenuous walking holiday, as described below.

Vigorous

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

These holidays would suit enthusiastic hill/mountain walkers.

Strenuous

Our strenuous trekking holidays can involve anything from 10 to 30 days on trek and are often in remote areas, far from 'civilisation'. Rest days are interspersed but there may be up to 7 consecutive days of hard walking. Most treks reach altitudes of at least 4,900m/16,000ft and there will be a great deal of ascent and descent. The majority of our strenuous treks utilise camping, tea house or mountain lodge accommodation.

These holidays are suitable for fit individuals who have regular experience of mountain walking.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ English-speaking French guide.
- ✓ 9 nights in hotels.
- ✓ 4 nights in mountain gites - accommodation will be dormitories with the exception of one gite where we will endeavour to get twin-share rooms depending on availability.
- ✓ 13 breakfasts and 5 dinners.
- ✓ Your luggage transported each day by vehicle except on Mafate and the Piton des Neiges ascent.
- ✓ Vehicle support in case of injury, illness, etc.
- ✓ Road transfers by private vehicle.
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK
- (flight inclusive option).
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers on arrival and departure.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle.
- ✓ The option of joining one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds.

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance.
- ✗ All lunches and dinners on 8 nights
- ✗ Tips.
- ✗ Optional activities where stated.

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Hotel Le Nautille or Similar, Saint Giles Les Bains

This hotel is right on its own private beach, and offers a tranquil place to relax both before and after your trek. It features a pool-side bar and rooms that look out onto the ocean over a protected marine reserve. Snorkel gear, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards are available as well as private sun-loungers and parasols. It has a homely feel, with large rooms and pretty decor. Each room is equipped with air-conditioning, a TV, safe, minibar, and balcony. The hotel has a restaurant serving creole food.



Hotel Le Vieux Cep or Similar, Cilaos

This hotel is situated in a nice, quiet location but within easy walk of the shops and restaurants of Cilaos. It offers a swimming pool and rooms that look out onto the Piton des Neiges giving it an authentic mountain feel. It also has a sauna, gym, restaurant, and is decorated with paintings of Reunion. Its rooms are cosy with a warm feel and have a balcony with traditional wooden furniture. They come fully-equipped with a TV, safe and Wi-fi.



Hotel Relais Des Cimes or Similar, Hell Bourg

Situated at the foot of the Piton des Neiges and in the heart of Hell Bourg, the buildings of the Relais des Cimes date from the 19th century and have been refurbished to give an authentic creole feel. Rooms are simple but feature a TV and telephone, and are pleasantly decorated. The restaurant serves traditional food created by renowned local chef, Mamie Javel.



Hotel Battant Des Lames or Similar, Saint Pierre

This beachfront hotel is in a quiet location, allowing you to avoid the hustle and bustle of the lively city centre (15 minutes on foot). Between mountains and sea, Battant des Lames is the ideal place to spend a night before heading up to the volcano. It boasts a swimming pool with a lagoon view, a fitness room, and a spa. The standard rooms are light and spacious, and come with air-conditioning, Wi-Fi and a minibar.



Gite accommodation

A typical gite is dormitory accommodation, although we endeavor to give you double rooms wherever possible - this is not possible in 3 of the gites due to their extremely remote locations. Typically a gite will consist of wood and sheet metal cases (cottages), and there will be communal dining rooms and bathrooms. Local food will be served, including a basic breakfast. They are often supplied by solar power, so charging phones may not always be possible due to limited electricity. The views in general are stunning, as they are nestled in the mountains.

Meal arrangements

13 breakfasts and 5 dinners are included.

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

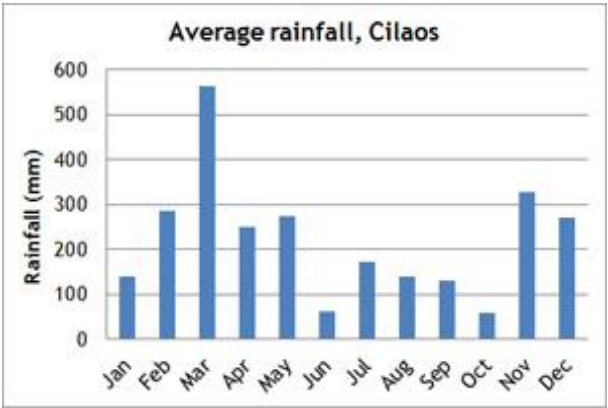
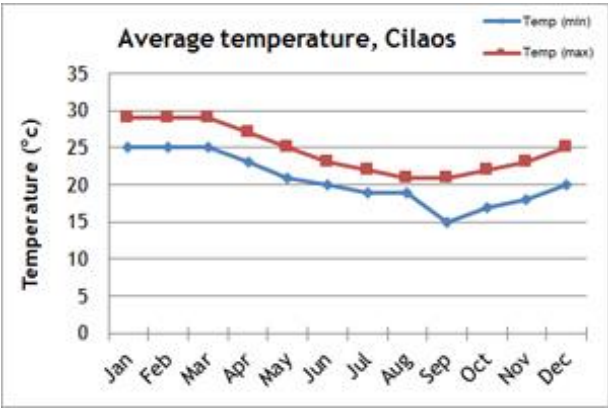
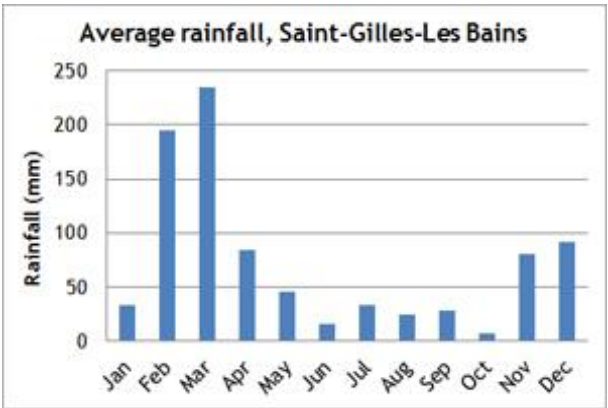
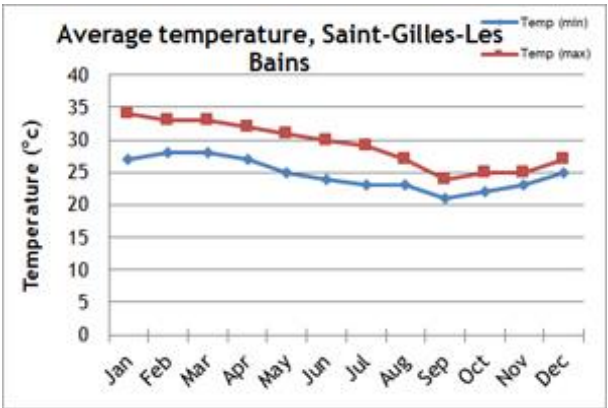
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- Steve and Seraphina Berry have both visited the island, and Ellie, their daughter, spent nine months working on Reunion. This holiday was developed from their combined first-hand knowledge of the island which has ensured that all the very best bits of Reunion are included in this holiday. Please call Steve or Seraphina on +44 (0)1453 844400 if you would like to know more about Reunion.
- The holiday is well-paced so that trekking is interspersed with rest days to allow your legs to recover from some of the more strenuous hikes. This also provides time for you to discover the charming creole towns and villages that you'll be staying in.
- We include a visit to the island's most famous viewpoint, Mado, and fully explore the 'wild south' of the island. We also stay in Hell Bourg for three nights, a village voted one of France's prettiest.
- Your luggage is transported for you on most days meaning you only need to walk with a light day sack. The exceptions are on days 3, 4 & 7 where you will be staying in remote, inaccessible gites and will need to carry basic necessities with you.
- We use a combination of the best available mountain gites and small hotels, including the utterly charming Le Vieux Cep in Cilaos. We strive to provide twin share rooms wherever possible but on occasion in the mountain gites accommodation may be in dormitories.
- In Saint Gilles we use a hotel that has its own private beach, complete with sun loungers, snorkels, fins, and paddle boards.
- A fixed group transfer to/from the airport is included at the start and end of the trip.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects often associated with larger trekking groups.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



Before Reunion I had no idea that you could get an adrenaline rush just from walking up a hill - it's safe to say that the island made me fall in love with hiking! It is truly an adventure island, and I will treasure the memories I made there for the rest of my life. There were times when the views were so awe-inspiring that I had goose bumps and my eyes filled with tears - dramatic I know, but such is the nature of the landscapes there. The trekking was at times hard, but you know that you will always be rewarded with a phenomenal feat of nature at the end. Go and discover the intense island - now!
- Ellie Berry, Bristol



Our youngest daughter, Ellie, designed this itinerary having spent a year living on La Réunion. My wife and I and our eldest daughter visited over Christmas 2017. Ellie showed us many of her favourite places on the island and we undertook some of the trails that you see described here.



The island is amazing; a volcanic lozenge in the Indian Ocean off the East Coast of Africa. Its beaches and protected lagoons are stunning and the circumference of the island is well-populated and developed to French standards, but spiced with a Creole culture. The mountains are high and sparsely populated and are incredibly dramatic with impressive cliffs, waterfalls and extinct volcano craters that are now luxuriant in trees, vegetation and simple farming. I would highly recommend a walking holiday here and Ellie's itinerary has been long and carefully thought through and has significant advantages over other offerings along the same lines.

- Steve Berry, MD Mountain Kingdoms

We loved our holiday on this small but extraordinary island. The combination of towering mountains, a live volcano, excellent walking paths, numerous waterfalls and long sandy beaches with a coral reef and shady palm trees make it a holiday paradise. I enjoyed being on a tropical island in the Indian ocean that also felt like France - the food is a wonderful combination of French staples and local creole dishes!
- Seraphina Berry, Reservations Manager, Mountain Kingdoms

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

