

Guadeloupe

Guadeloupe mixes the best of France – a fully modern infrastructure and fantastic food – with a local culture that people here are proud of and want to share. Guadeloupe's two main islands look like the wings of a butterfly and are joined together by a mangrove swamp.

Grande-Terre, the eastern wing of the island, has a string of beach towns that offer visitors every variety of fun in the sun known to humankind. From surfing schools to beach bars to long stretches of beautiful sand where azure water laps at the toes of French mademoiselles, it's all here.

Basse-Terre, the western wing, is home to the national park, crowned by La Soufrière volcano. Hiking trails and a Jacques Cousteau underwater reserve offer adventure for those who want more go than slow in their holidays. But for the gourmets and sun worshippers there are still plenty of places to recharge while everyone else tires themselves out.

This isn't to say that both sides don't have something for everyone. It's one of the more developed islands in the Caribbean – those arriving at the thoroughly modern airport might be in for a shock if they were expecting a rural airstrip – but there are still plenty of rural patches between villages and you won't want for choice.

South of the butterfly-shaped 'mainland' of Guadeloupe are a number of small archipelagos that give a taste of Guadeloupe's yesteryear. Ranging from sheer chill on La Désirade to the barely discovered restaurants in Les Saintes, the smaller islands each have their own character and round out the long list of ingredients that make Guadeloupe.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 1434 sq km
- **Capital** Basse-Terre
- **Country code** ☎ 590
- **Departure tax** None
- **Famous for** Its butterfly shape
- **Language** French, Creole
- **Money** euro (€); €1 = US\$1.56 = UK£0.79
- **Official name** La Guadeloupe
- **People** Guadeloupeans
- **Phrase** *Pas ni problem* (No problem, no worries)
- **Population** 451,000
- **Visa** None required for residents of the US, UK, Canada, the EU, Australia and New Zealand; see p576



HIGHLIGHTS

- **La Soufrière** (p564) Hike to the misty summit of the brooding volcano
- **Deshaies** (p562) Nourish your inner gourmet and encounter boaties from around the world
- **Ste-Anne** (p556) Soak up sun on the beautiful beach or the happening scene at a seaside café
- **Pigeon Island** (p565) Touch the underwater Jacques Cousteau statue at the reserve that bears his name
- **Terre-de-Haut** (p566) Walk across this tiny island, full of low-key sophistication

ITINERARIES

- **Three Days** Spend a morning roaming Pointe-à-Pitre before heading west, stopping at Cascade aux Écrevisses or hiking to La Soufrière, then on to the west coast. Dive at the Réserve Cousteau, then wander east to Grande-Terre, following a clockwise route that takes in the Porte d'Enfer, Le Moule and some well-earned R&R at the beach in Ste-Anne.
- **One Week** Follow the plan for three days, then catch a boat to Terre-de-Haut, and walk to the fort, followed by a day or two exploring Marie-Galante. Head back to the mainland for an excursion to Pointe des Châteaux before a satisfying meal in St-François.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

It's no accident that December to May is when most people visit Guadeloupe; the weather is warm and dry at this time.

Pointe-à-Pitre's average daily high temperature in January is 28°C (82°F) while the low average is 19°C (66°F). In July the average daily high temperature is 31°C (88°F) while the low average is 23°C (73°F).

The annual rainfall in Pointe-à-Pitre is 180cm. February to April is the driest period, when measurable rain falls an average of seven days a month and the average humidity is around 77%. The wettest months are July to November, when rain falls about 14 days a month and the average humidity reaches 85%.

Because of its height, the Basse-Terre side is both cooler and rainier than Grande-Terre. Its highest point, La Soufrière, averages 990cm of rain per year. The trade winds, called *alizés*, often temper the climate.

HISTORY

When sighted by Columbus on November 14, 1493, Guadeloupe was inhabited by Caribs, who called it Karukera (Island of Beautiful Waters). The Spanish made two attempts to settle Guadeloupe in the early 1500s but were repelled both times by fierce Carib resistance, and finally in 1604 they abandoned their claim to the island.

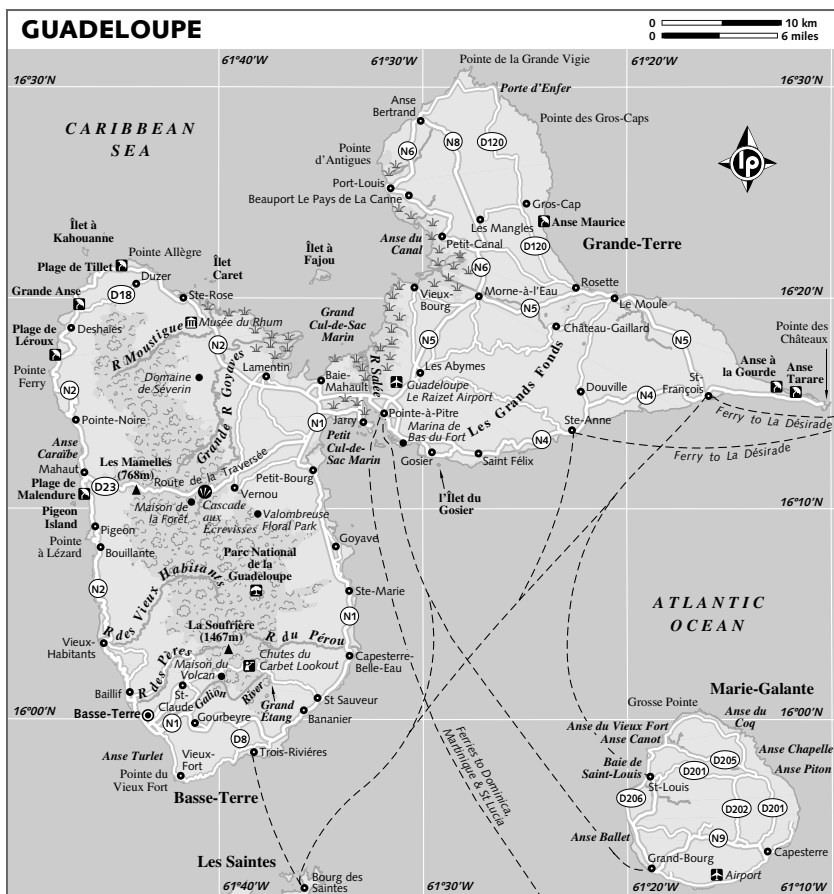
Three decades later, French colonists sponsored by the Compagnie des Îles d'Amérique, an association of French entrepreneurs, set sail to establish the first European settlement on Guadeloupe. On June 28, 1635, the party, led by Charles Liénard de l'Olive and Jean Duplessis d'Ossoville, landed on the south-eastern shore of Basse-Terre and claimed Guadeloupe for France. They drove the Caribs off the island, planted crops and within a decade had built the first sugar mill. By the time France officially annexed the island in 1674, a slavery-based plantation system had been well established.

The English invaded Guadeloupe several times and occupied it from 1759 to 1763. During this time, they developed Pointe-à-Pitre into a major harbor, opened profitable English and North American markets to Guadeloupean sugar and allowed the planters to import cheap American lumber and food. Many French colonists actually grew wealthier under the British occupation, and the economy expanded rapidly. In 1763 British occupation ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which relinquished French claims in Canada in exchange for the return of Guadeloupe.

Amid the chaos of the French Revolution, the British invaded Guadeloupe again in 1794. In response, the French sent a contingent of soldiers led by Victor Hugues, a black nationalist. Hugues freed and armed Guadeloupean slaves. On the day the British withdrew from

HOW MUCH?

- **Taxi from the airport to Pointe-à-Pitre center** €20
- **One-tank diving trip** €40
- **Comfortable hotel double room** €65
- **Museum ticket** €3.50
- **Local fish meal** €12



Guadeloupe, Hugues went on a rampage and killed 300 royalists, many of them plantation owners. It marked the start of a reign of terror. In all, Hugues was responsible for the deaths of more than 1000 colonists, and as a consequence of his attacks on US ships, the USA declared war on France.

In 1802 Napoléon Bonaparte, anxious to get the situation under control, sent General Antoine Richepance to Guadeloupe. Richepance put down the uprising, restored the pre-revolutionary government and reinstated slavery.

Guadeloupe was the most prosperous island in the French West Indies, and the British continued to covet it, invading and occupying the island for most of the period between 1810

and 1816. The Treaty of Vienna restored the island to France, which has maintained sovereignty over it continuously since 1816.

Slavery was abolished in 1848, following a campaign led by French politician Victor Schoelcher (see p553). In the years that followed, planters brought laborers from Pondicherry, a French colony in India, to work in the cane fields. Since 1871 Guadeloupe has had representation in the French parliament, and since 1946 it has been an overseas department of France.

Guadeloupe's economy is heavily dependent upon subsidies from the French government and upon its economic ties with mainland France, which absorbs the majority of Guadeloupe's exports and provides 75% of

its imports. Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the economy. The leading export crop is bananas, the bulk of which grow along the southern flanks of La Soufrière.

In August 2007 Hurricane Dean barreled through the Caribbean, destroying an estimated 80% of Guadeloupe's banana plantations with 160km/h winds that lifted the roofs right off buildings. Guadeloupe quickly recovered from the hurricane and concentrated on rebuilding its banana industry.

THE CULTURE

Guadeloupean culture draws from a pool of French, African, East Indian and West Indian influences.

The mix is visible in the architecture, which ranges from French colonial buildings to traditional Creole homes; in the food, which merges influences from all the cultures into a unique Creole cuisine; and in the widely spoken local Creole language.

There's much emphasis on the French rules of politeness; *bonjour* and *au revoir* are almost always heard when entering or leaving an establishment, and older Guadeloupeans usually give a collective *bonjour* to everyone in general when entering a crowded restaurant or bar. To start a conversation or ask a question without a greeting is rude.

Guadeloupe is one place in the Caribbean where you're likely to see women wearing traditional Creole dress, especially at festivals and cultural events.

The total population of Guadeloupe is about 451,000, with 32% of the population aged under 20.

About three-quarters of the population is of mixed ethnicity, a combination of African, European and East Indian descent. There's also a sizable population of white islanders who trace their ancestry to the early French settlers, as well as a number of more recently arrived French from the mainland.

The predominant religion is Roman Catholicism. There are also Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness and Evangelical denominations, and a sizable Hindu community.

ARTS

The island is fertile ground for the literary imagination, apparently. Guadeloupe's most renowned native son is St John Perse, the pseudonym of Alexis Léger, who was born

in Guadeloupe in 1887. Perse won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1960 for the evocative imagery of his poetry. One of his many noted works is *Anabase* (1925), which was translated into English by TS Eliot.

The leading contemporary novelist in the French West Indies is Guadeloupe native Maryse Condé. Two of her best-selling novels have been translated into English. The epic *Tree of Life* centers on the life of a Guadeloupean family, their roots and the identity of Guadeloupean society itself. *Crossing the Mangrove* (1995) is a perfect beach read. Set in Rivière au Sel near the Rivière Salée, it unravels the life, and untimely death, of a controversial villager.

ENVIRONMENT

Beaches line nearly every shore in Guadeloupe. Outside of the mountainous Parc National de la Guadeloupe, the interior is made for the most part of gently rolling fields of sugarcane. The beaches, hiking trails and picnic areas here are almost always completely litter-free.

The underwater life includes small sea horses, lobsters, lots of parrot fish, and crabs. Divers may occasionally spot a ray or barracuda, but for the most part the waters here support large schools of smaller fish.

Birds found on Guadeloupe include various members of the heron family, pelicans, hummingbirds and the endangered Guadeloupe wren. A common sighting is the bright yellow-bellied banana quit, a small nectar-feeding bird that's a frequent visitor at open-air restaurants, where it raids unattended sugar bowls.

You'll probably see drawings of raccoons on park brochures and in Guadeloupean advertising; it is the official symbol of Parc National de la Guadeloupe and its main habitat is in the forests of Basse-Terre.

Guadeloupe has mongooses aplenty, introduced long ago in a futile attempt to control rats in the sugarcane fields. Agoutis (short-haired, short-eared rabbitlike rodents that look a bit like guinea pigs) are found on La Désirade. There are iguanas on Les Saintes and La Désirade.

FOOD & DRINK

Island cuisine is made up of a well-matched mix of both Creole and French cultures. Locals will equally enjoy a *pain au chocolat*

REPORTING FROM GUADELOUPE

Hervé Pédurand, born in Guadeloupe, is the radio editor in chief of Guadeloupe Radio France Outre-Mer (RFO), the biggest and most influential news network on the island.

What are your responsibilities at RFO?

As the editor in chief of 17 journalists, I make sure that all the news in Guadeloupe gets covered on the radio. We work closely with Paris RFO. They report on all the important developments in France's overseas departments and use our stories – along with the RFO Caribbean network that includes Martinique and French Guiana – every day.

For English-speakers, what do you think is the most common misunderstanding when it comes to Guadeloupe's relations with mainland France?

Our situation intrigues Anglophones, especially our neighbors in the Caribbean. We're in the same region but we're not English or Spanish speakers, we're not independent and we call ourselves French! They don't understand this, even when they're still on good terms with their former governments. Also, sometimes we play the 'American' when we visit other Caribbean islands and tend to act superior, even if others don't take us as seriously as we take ourselves (we're always late for appointments, for example!).

After seeing the rest of the island, I was really surprised that Pointe-à-Pitre was so dead at night. Why is that?

After being a lively place for a long time, little by little Pointe-à-Pitre became a victim of a changing commercial landscape. The opening of big shopping centers just outside the city attracted shoppers who were tired of traffic jams and parking meters. The little shops that were downtown were forced to follow the shoppers outside the city. An urban renewal plan has just been approved by the state that will create a downtown business zone with tax breaks. We'll see soon how this works out.

(chocolate-filled croissant-like pastry) and *café crème* (espresso with steamed milk or cream) at 11am, followed by chicken *colombo* (curry) and ti-punch at lunchtime.

Guadeloupe is the second-largest consumer of fish per head worldwide so expect it on menus in many delicious guises. *Ouassous* (crayfish), *chatrou* (octopus) and more traditional fish such as *vivanneau* (red snapper) are generally served simply grilled, or marinated in aromatic Creole spices such as nutmeg, ginger, vanilla and fenugreek. *Lambi* (conch – the chewy meat of a large gastropod) is also prevalent, although overfishing has meant that conch is heading for the endangered species list and it's a good idea to avoid it.

Some typical Guadeloupean dishes include *accra* (a fried mixture of okra, black-eyed peas, pepper and salt), *crabes farci* (spicy stuffed land crabs), *colombo cabri* (curried goat), rice and beans, and breadfruit gratin. Another popular Creole dish is *blaff*, a seafood preparation poached in a spicy broth.

Markets are full of colorful exotic fruits and vegetables: small, sweet bananas and huge avocados, *christophines* (a common Caribbean vegetable shaped like a large pear), mangoes, pineapples and *maracudjas* (passion fruits).

For snacks, there are many *bokit* stands that serve a concoction that's a cross between a pita bread and panini. *Bokits* are filled with anything from ham to crab to grilled veggies. Another popular snack is sorbet coco, a coconut sorbet that's usually made on the spot in an old-fashioned ice-cream maker.

Tap water is safe to drink. There are lots of excellent local rums, and almost all distilleries have tasting rooms. Homemade flavored rums (that have fruit added) are also popular; in bars and restaurants you'll commonly see these in large glass jars behind the counter. Men, beware the *bois bandé*. It's an aphrodisiac; ask a trusted French-speaking friend for the literal translation.

A common restaurant drink (and the locals' beverage of choice) is ti-punch, where you're brought white rum, cane sugar and a fresh lime to mix to your own proportions. When serving ti-punch to friends, it's considered rude not to let guests pour their own dose. Locally brewed Corsaire beer goes well with Creole food and lazy days on the beach.

Good French wines are served at most restaurants, and can also be picked up (for reasonable prices) at supermarkets.

GRANDE-TERRE

The southern coast of Grande-Terre, with its reef-protected waters, is Guadeloupe's main resort area. The eastern side of the island is largely open Atlantic, with crashing surf, and in comparison to the southern coast is barely touched by tourism. Northern Grande-Terre doesn't have much in the way of accommodations but it's probably the best place to spend a day driving around – sea cliffs on one side and swaying fields of sugarcane on the other. Pointe-à-Pitre, the island's biggest city, is in the southeastern corner of Grande-Terre.

Getting There & Away

AIR

For information on air travel to and from Grande-Terre, see p576.

BOAT

For information on ferry travel to other Caribbean islands, see p577.

Ferries to Terre-de-Haut, Marie-Galante and La Désirade leave from Pointe-à-Pitre, Ste-Anne and St-François; see p577 for further information.

In Pointe-à-Pitre, all ferries leave from the Gare Maritime de Bergevin, 1km northwest of St-John Hotel.

BUS

Buses to places in Basse-Terre leave from the northwest side of town near the Gare Maritime de Bergevin. It costs €3.70 to travel from Pointe-à-Pitre to the administrative capital of Basse-Terre, and €2.80 to Pointe-Noire (via Route de la Traversée).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Taxis are easy to find at the airport; it costs about €20 into Pointe-à-Pitre center or you

could rent a car on arrival. Thanks to the taxi union, there's no bus shuttle to town from the airport.

BUS

Buses to Gosier, Ste-Anne and St-François leave from Rue Dubouchage at the east side of the harbor in Pointe-à-Pitre.

The bus from Pointe-à-Pitre to Gosier costs €1.30 (pay the driver) and takes about 15 minutes. If you're going to the Bas du Fort marina, you can take this bus and get off just past the university. Other fares from Pointe-à-Pitre are €1.90 to Ste-Anne and €2.40 to St-François.

CAR

Car-rental information is covered on p578.

On weekdays, traffic in the center of Pointe-à-Pitre is congested and parking can be tight. There are parking meters (€1 per hour) along the east side of Place de la Victoire and on many of the side streets throughout the city.

TAXI

You can call for a taxi by dialing ☎ 82-00-00 or ☎ 83-99-99 in the Pointe-à-Pitre area.

POINTE-À-PITRE

pop 21,000

The main population center of Guadeloupe (more than 170,000 live in greater Pointe-à-Pitre) doesn't rank very high on an island must-see list – as a matter of fact, those who miss it haven't missed much. But as a hub of transportation and the location of a few decent museums, Pointe-à-Pitre can be a worthwhile stop for a day.

History

In 1654 a merchant named Peter, a Dutch Jew who settled in Guadeloupe after being exiled from Brazil, began a fish market on an undeveloped harborside jut of land. The area

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

At first glance, the names given to the twin islands that make up Guadeloupe proper are perplexing. The eastern island, which is smaller and flatter, is named Grande-Terre, which means 'big land,' while the larger, more mountainous western island is named Basse-Terre, meaning 'flat land.'

The names were not meant to describe the terrain, however, but the winds that blow over them. The trade winds, which come from the northeast, blow *grande* (big) over the flat plains of Grande-Terre but are stopped by the mountains to the west, ending up *basse* (flat) on Basse-Terre.

became known as Peter's Point and eventually grew into the settlement of Pointe-à-Pitre, located in the southwest of Grande-Terre.

Guadeloupe's largest municipality, Pointe-à-Pitre is a conglomerate of old and new and is largely commercial in appearance. There are a couple of small museums, but other than that the most interesting sight is the bustling harborside market.

Orientation

From the outskirts, Pointe-à-Pitre looks pretty uninviting – a concrete jungle of high-rises and sprawling traffic. Venture into the center, though, and you'll find a much more attractive old town with peeling colonial architecture and palm-fringed streets.

The town hub is Place de la Victoire, an open space punctuated with tall royal palms that extends north a few blocks from the inner harbor. There are sidewalk cafés opposite its west side, a line of big old mango trees to the north and some older buildings along with the *sous-préfecture* (sub-prefecture) office at the park's east side.

While Pointe-à-Pitre is not a major tourist destination, visitors to Guadeloupe can expect to at least pass through the town, as it is the main port for ferries to Guadeloupe's outer islands and it also shelters the central bus terminal.

Central Pointe-à-Pitre is quite compact, and nothing is more than a five- or 10-minute stroll from Place de la Victoire.

Information

BOOKSTORES

Boutique de la Presse (Centre St-John Perse) Sells Institut Géographique National (IGN) maps of Guadeloupe.

Espace St-John Perse (☎ 82-93-26; 11 Rue de Nozières; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1:30pm Sat) The largest and best-stocked bookstore in town has a small English-language section, and also sells computers and digital cameras.

Le Presse Papier (Place de la Victoire; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Next to Délifrance, also sells the *International Herald Tribune* (€2) and a few English-language news magazines.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 89-77-17)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cyber Ka (Place de la Victoire; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-8pm Sat, per 30min €3) A lively place to check emails.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU; ☎ 89-10-10; Rte de Chauvel) The main hospital is north of the post office in a not-so-good area; take a cab at night.

MONEY

Banque Populaire (Rue Achille René-Boisneuf; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri)

BDAF bank (Sq de la Banque; ☎ 7:45am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) Next to the tourist office.

BNP bank (Rue Achille René-Boisneuf; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri)

Change Caraïbe s (21 Rue Frebault; ☎ 8am-4:45pm Mon-Fri) A money exchange; it doesn't take coins.

POST

Post office (Blvd Hanne; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) A block north of the cathedral.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 82-09-30; www.lesilesdeguaeloupe.com; 5 Sq de la Banque; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Near Place de la Victoire; the friendly staff speaks good English.

Dangers & Annoyances

Locals say that drug abuse – especially crack cocaine – is a problem here. The Place de la Victoire area has enough people until late at night to feel safe, but other parts of the city are downright spooky, and prostitutes and drug dealers are not uncommon sights.

The area around the Centre Hospitalier is especially dangerous and visitors should take a cab there at night if need be. Whereas the rest of the island is friendly, at times there's an aggressive mood here.

Sights & Activities

MUSÉE ST-JOHN PERSE

This three-level **municipal museum** (9 Rue de Nozières; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-12:30pm Sat) occupies an attractive 19th-century colonial building. The museum is dedicated to the renowned poet and Nobel laureate Alexis Léger (1887–1975), better known as St John Perse. The house offers both a glimpse of a period Creole home and displays on Perse's life and work. Almost all of the exhibits are in French, but there are some newspaper illustrations and photographs from the city's past that make the admission price worth it.

4pm), another large public market, is just a few blocks to the west and has a good collection of handicrafts and spices.

CENTRE ST-JOHN PERSE

The large **port complex** is on the west side of the harbor, less than a five-minute walk from Place de la Victoire. Things seem closed most of the time, but there are usually at least one or two small restaurants open.

Festivals & Events

Carnival Starts warming up in January with roving groups of steel-band musicians and dancers, but officially runs between the traditional week-long Mardi Gras period that ends on Ash Wednesday.

Fête des Cuisinières (Festival of Women Cooks) A colorful event held in early August. Women in Creole dress, carrying baskets of traditional foods, parade through the streets to the cathedral, where they are blessed by the bishop.

Sleeping

Pointe-à-Pitre has few places to stay and even fewer reasons to spend the night. If you're looking for island culture or a cozy beachside getaway, keep moving. The only reason to stay here is if you're catching an international ferry the next morning.

Hôtel Saint John Perse (☎ 82-51-57; www.saint-john-perse.com; s/d incl breakfast €85/100; ♿) In the Centre St-John Perse, this two-star member of the Anchorage chain is centrally located and extremely convenient if you're catching an early-morning boat. It has 44 compact but otherwise comfortable rooms with small shared balconies overlooking the harbor. Staff can arrange taxis to the nearby marina and a shuttle (€3) to the ferries. There is wi-fi, plus free luggage storage for guests who want to travel light to the outlying islands.

Eating & Drinking

DOWNTOWN

Bella Vita (☎ 89-00-54; Place de la Victoire; mains €6.50-14; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The decor is very basic – it looks like it used to be a sub sandwich shop, in fact, but the people who work here are warm and welcoming. The pizzas are solid and range from tuna to the delicious *mafioso*. One of the best bets for a later evening meal.

Paella Grill (☎ 82-12-34; cnr Rues Frébault & St-John Perse; mains €7-10; ☺ 7am-4pm Mon-Sat) The signature paella at this indoor-outdoor eatery is quite the deal considering you get mussels, shrimp,

chicken and pork mixed into a big steaming plate of saffron rice. The house white wine (small bottle €3) goes down quite well with the paella.

Chacha Café (☎ 89-61-94; cnr Rues St-John Perse & Quai Layrle; mains €8-14; ☺ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat) A hip place with outdoor seating and a big selection of salads, omelets and delicious specials such as coconut chicken, and a special *cythère* (ambarella, tasting like tart mango) fruit juice.

New Shalimar (Centre St-John Perse; mains from €8; ☺ lunch & dinner) Don't be fooled by the lackluster outdoor dining, the food here is good and the location at the base of the St-John Hotel is a godsend for those sick of the city's seamy side.

Café Caraïbe (Place de la Victoire; mains €10-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) On the west side of the square, this big place has outdoor tables and a French café feel. The kebab plate is quite tasty, as is the vanilla crème brûlée. A good choice of coffee and tea drinks, beer, wine and cocktails.

Super U Chanzy (☎ 90-83-77; Blvd Chanzy) is the biggest supermarket close to the center of town. It's well-stocked and has good prices. Nearby are a number of clothing and shoe stores where the locals shop.

MARINA DE BAS DU FORT

A welcome respite from Pointe-à-Pitre at night, where it seems like the extras from the *Thriller* music video got lost and discovered the joys of crack cocaine. Here a number of lively restaurants and places to grab a drink surround a harbor full of sailboats and yachts.

Le Pampam (☎ 90-83-22; snacks €5-12; ☺ 8am-2am) A good place to grab a beverage and chill out, it has a range of nonalcoholic fruit drinks and shakes and a full page on the menu dedicated to specialty drinks. For an ostentatious aperitif, the *chouchou* (€20), made for two people, is a mix of rum, cointreau, passion and other fruit juices.

La Fregates (mains from €12; ☺ 11am-midnight) It's the restaurant here with the best balance between price and quality, and the crowds to prove it. After ordering the lobster dinner (€30) a server brings out the unlucky crustacean in a bucket, alive, and shows it like a bottle of wine.

Shopping

The **Marché Couvert** (cnr Rues Peynier & Schoelcher; ☺ 6am-4pm) in Pointe-à-Pitre is a good place

to buy island handicrafts, including straw dolls, straw hats and primitive African-style wood carvings. It's also a good spot to pick up locally grown coffee and a wide array of fragrant spices.

GOSIER

pop 26,000

Set 8km southeast of Pointe-à-Pitre, Gosier is really two towns: a cluster of high-rise hotels full of French families on one side and a growing Caribbean village next door.

It's the biggest tourist spot in Guadeloupe, and that's not necessarily a good thing. The hotels are packed one after the other and the lobbies can be madhouses in high season. But the series of scalloped coves gives almost every property a good beachside location.

The village center, about a 15-minute walk away from hotel central, feels a little run-down and lacks the fine beaches found in the main hotel area, but it is more local in character. It also has a small but swimmable beach and a good view across the water to l'Îlet du Gosier.

Many of Guadeloupe's most popular nightspots, attracting a young and fashionable French crowd until early morning, are clustered together on the outskirts of Gosier on the road to Pointe-à-Pitre.

Information

La Gazette (Ave Général de Gaulle) Sells the IGN map of Guadeloupe and international newspapers.

Post office (☎; 8am-5pm Mon-Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am-noon Wed & Sat) In the Gosier village center.

Sights

Just 600m off Gosier village is lovely l'Îlet du Gosier, a little undeveloped island surrounded by calm turquoise waters that have some nice snorkeling areas.

Motorboats (one way €4) shuttle beachgoers between Gosier and the island, departing from the little dock at the end of Rue Félix Éboué.

Activities

Beach huts in front of the resort hotels rent out snorkeling gear for €12 a day, windsurfing equipment, Sunfish sailboats and larger Hobie Cat boats. Also available are fun boards, pedal boats and other water-activities gear.

Sleeping

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

La Formule Économique (☎ 84-54-91; www.laformuleeconomique.com; 112-120 Lot Gisors, 97190 Gosier; d/studio from €45/54; ☎) Offering *hotellerie à la carte*, it calculates rates based on the amenities you select. The hotel's terrace bar and downstairs restaurant attract a younger clientele and some Paris Hilton look-alikes. Follow the signs in the village to find this place at the end of a dilapidated alley.

Karaiibes Hotel (☎ 84-51-51; www.karaiibeshotel.com; 97190 Gosier; s/d €54/66; ☎) A two-star, brightly colored budget place in the main cluster of hotels, it has an ATM-like machine outside that takes a credit card and spits out keys for people with a reservation. Small but bright rooms and beach access make this the best bargain on the hotel strip. Offers wi-fi access.

Canella Beach Residence (☎ 90-44-00; www.canella.beach.com; Pointe de la Verdure, 97190 Gosier; r from €81; ☎) Don't be put off by the surrounding ratty-looking marsh. Studios have rattan furniture, a queen or two twin beds, a little sitting area with sofa bed, TV, phone, a balcony and a kitchenette. Some studios on the ground level are wheelchair-accessible. There are also suites and duplex apartments. Rates include use of the pool, tennis courts, paddleboats and canoes.

TOP END

The following are modern beachside resorts with standard top-notch amenities, including swimming pools, activity centers, restaurants and well-appointed rooms with balconies.

La Créole Beach Hotel & Spa (☎ 90-46-46; www.creolebeach.com; 97190 Gosier; r from €160; ☎) A snazzy 218-room complex, set in exotic gardens, right on the beach. Contemporary rooms have two double beds and French colonial-style furnishings. There are a number of water sports available. Although an attractive place, the big crowds in the public areas might be a damper on some vacations.

Sofitel Auberge de la Vieille Tour (☎ 84-23-23; www.sofitel.com; Montauban, 97190 Gosier; r from €190; ☎) This gorgeous 180-room inn incorporates an 18th-century windmill in the lobby, but most of the rooms are in more ordinary buildings. The friendliness of the staff, however, is underwhelming.

Hotel Arawak (☎ 84-24-24; www.hotelarawak.com; 97162 Pointe-à-Pitre; r from €205; ☎) An impressive airy lobby area belies the decent but unexceptional rooms. The mellow ambience and

relative lack of big groups set this 200-room place apart from nearby hotels.

Eating

The center of Gosier has a number of inexpensive eating options, and in the main beach hotel area, the Créole Village shopping center has half a dozen places to eat. Down the hill toward the beach is an Ecomax supermarket, and there's a daytime produce stand next to the post office.

Le Bord du Mer (☎ 84-25-23; mains €8-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) Right on the water in the center of the village, it has the broad choice of seafood one would expect of the location. If nothing else, it's a great place to soak up a coffee and the seaside view.

Quatre Epice (☎ 84-76-01; 25 Blvd Charles de Gaulle; mains €16-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) A brightly decorated old house converted into a restaurant with eclectic decorations throughout – including a lawn jockey and funky lamps. The food at this village restaurant is divine; start with *le tour d'île*, a sampler plate with stuffed crab curry, fish pâté, *accra* and *boudin* (blood sausage). The dessert and drinks menu lists no less than 11 aged rums (€5 to €7).

Restaurant de l'Auberge (☎ 84-23-23; Montauban, 97190 Gosier; dinner mains €18-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Auberge de la Vieille Tour has Gosier's most upmarket fine-dining restaurant, serving traditional French and Creole cuisine.

Drinking

Gosier is easily the most hopping nightlife spot on the island. Most of the fancy hotels have live music and poolside barbecues on a regular basis.

La Route de la Bière (Delirium Café; ☎ 88-17-94; 6 Rue Simon Radegonde; ☎ 6pm-1am Tue-Sat) In the village near the Ecomax, this is the place to go if you like good times of the sudsy variety. There are 60 different beers here, nine of them on draft. It also has pizza, Friday-night karaoke, Saturday-night dancing and a pool table.

Amazon (☎ 42-74-21; 20 Blvd Charles de Gaulle; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Sat) A village bar that hosts salsa dancing on Tuesday nights, it also has the occasional concert. For those who want to make French friends, Anglophones are encouraged to come to the English conversation meetings organized by the club.

La Cheyenne (122 Ave de Montauban; ☎ Fri & Sat) If bachelor- or beach-themed nights are your thing, you'll enjoy this massive disco, with big

screens and thumping beats. It's just outside of town; look for the big wooden head of a Native American.

STE-ANNE

pop 20,000

The busy town of Ste-Anne sees a lot of tourists but the big resorts are well hidden and there's a good balance of amenities for tourists and authentic modern village life. It has a seaside promenade along the west side of town, a lively market and a fine white-sand beach stretching along the east side. The beach, which offers good swimming and is shaded by sea-grape trees, is particularly popular with islanders.

Ste-Anne is a good base for those who want to visit the islands of Les Saintes and, if flexible on time, Marie-Galante and La Désirade (in high season).

Sights & Activities

In addition to the beach on the east side of town, another white-sand beach, **Caravelle Beach**, stretches along the east side of the Caravelle Peninsula, about 2km west of the town center. Its main tenant is Club Med, but the entire beach is public. There is a guarded gate to get to the beach, but anyone is free to walk right in. The unmarked road to Caravelle Beach is off N4, opposite Motel l'Accra Ste-Anne.

Sleeping

TOWN CENTER

Our pick: Ti Village Creole (☎ 85-45-68; www.tivillagecreole.fr; Dupré, 97180 Ste-Anne; studio/bungalow from €52/80; ☎ ☎ ☎) A little slice of paradise: you're a 10-minute walk from the hustle-bustle of central Ste-Anne in a tranquil hillside setting run by the well-traveled and informative Vincent. The modern bungalows all have big porches outside, and spacious living rooms and comfortable bedrooms within. Check out the ruins you can see from most balconies – it used to be an old windmill until a 2007 earthquake knocked most of it down. Offers wi-fi access.

Auberge le Grand Large (☎ 85-48-28; www.aubergelegrandlarge.com; Chemin de la Plage, 97180 Ste-Anne; r from €63; ☎ ☎) There are eight one-bedroom bungalows with kitchenettes and two deluxe bungalows with spacious kitchens and two bedrooms. The property completed a renovation in 2008, and the owner says that this grand dame of Ste-Anne hotels

is 50 years young. Just a few steps from the beach and a row of restaurants and bars, the location is prime and rooms fill up far in advance. Offers wi-fi access.

Hotel le Diwali (☎ 85-39-70, www.lediwali.com; Plage de Ste-Anne; r from €220; 🏠 📺) This airy oasis at the end of Ste-Anne Beach is a class act with its colonial flair and generous use of dark wood and rattan. Guests can use the kayaks for free. The on-site restaurant is open to all and serves dinner every evening (mains €15 to €35) and sometimes serves lunch (mains €13 to €20), depending on demand.

Au Verger de Ste-Anne (☎ 88-27-56; www.guadeloupe-hebergement.com; 5 Lot Marguerite, 97180; 2-person cottage per week €450; 🏠 📺) Five blocks north of the beach in a very quiet section of town, this charming group of pastel-colored wooden chalets with garden decks and fully equipped kitchens is a good option.

AROUND TOWN

La Toubana (☎ 88-25-78; www.toubana.com; 97180 Ste-Anne; r from €160; 🏠 📺) About 2km west of central Ste-Anne, on a quiet coastal cliff overlooking the Caravelle Peninsula, this place doesn't look like much from the road but from the moment you step inside on wooden walkways that skirt small, almost Japanese-looking ponds, you know this is something special. The 32 rooms are all stylishly decorated and the on-site restaurant (meals from €18) has a cigar bar.

ourpick Casa Boubou (☎ 85-10-13; www.casaboubou.fr; 2-person cottage per week €595; 🏠 📺) The 10 cottages here all have satellite TV, a DVD player that accepts memory cards, free wi-fi, a hammock and a BBQ grill. Guests enjoy free use of snorkeling equipment and three canoes just a few minutes (150m) away on Caravelle Beach. Book far in advance.

Eating

Opposite Ste-Anne Beach is a row of simple open-air restaurants with tables in the sand and barbecue grills at the side.

Kouleur Kreole (Chemin de la Plage; salads €7-11, grills €11-19; 🕒 11am-10pm Tue-Sun) A popular spot that serves big tasty seafood grills or a variety of fresh salads; it also has a live band on Friday evenings. The food delivers. There's a small parking lot for clients.

L'Americano (☎ 88-38-99; mains €7-15; 🕒 6:30am-2am) Next to the market, this big, friendly

restaurant-bar shows football on large screens and serves great pizzas and savory crepes. Sweet-tooths might be happy to know that the restaurant makes its own chocolate. With dinner reservations, it has a free shuttle bus for area hotels; call for a pickup.

Koté Mer Resto (mains €7-18; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Meaning 'Restaurant Near the Sea,' the name doesn't lie. A strong wave will tickle toes and a rogue wave may just drink your ti-punch. The menu spans the range from economical chicken or fish plates to the more expensive salad and lobster. At the height of lunch and dinner a two-man band often plays rock standards with an island sound.

Shopping

Village Artisanal (🕒 8am-8pm) A bit west of the beach at the end of the promenade, it may look tacky at first glance but it's a good place to go for the bigger souvenirs (hammocks, sculptures) that are hard to find at the souvenir market in town.

Géograines (☎ 88-38-74; Durivage 97180) Just west of the Village Artisanal, this quirky place specializes in making things out of seeds – and it all looks good. It has seed wall hangings (from €30) and even a coffee table where black and white seeds are arranged to make a chess board set under glass (€600). The shop only uses Guadeloupean artisans and materials.

ST-FRANÇOIS

pop 10,000

St-François is a town with two distinct identities. The west side of town is a sleepy provincial backwater that's quite spread out, while the east side feels a lot like the small upscale marina that it is. The center of the action is the deep U-shaped harbor, which is lined with a handful of restaurants, hotels, car-rental offices, boutiques and marina facilities. Parts of it are pretty and others parts are torn up as there are plans for a massive renovation to make the area a huge pedestrian mall. Just north of the marina there's a golf course.

An undistinguished strand runs along the south side of the town center, but the best beaches in the area are just a 10-minute drive east of town in the direction of Pointe des Châteaux.

St-François is a major jumping-off point for trips to Guadeloupe's smaller islands; see p578 for details. The dock for boats to

La Désirade, Marie-Galante, and Terre-de-Haut on Les Saintes is at the south side of the marina, as is free parking.

Information

Banque Populaire (☎ 7:45am-noon & 2-4:45pm Mon-Fri, 7:45am-12:30pm Sat) On the north side of the marina; has an exchange office.

BNP bank (☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am-noon Wed) Next to the post office, it has an ATM.

Cyber Creation (30min €3, printed page €0.20;

☎ 9:30am-1pm & 3:30-7pm Mon-Sat) An internet place where you can print boarding passes or just check emails. Located near the fishing port in the Galerie Commerciale, which also has snack shops, boutiques and a book store.

L@robas Café (per 15min/hr €1.90/6.50; ☎ 7am-2am Mon-Sat, 4pm-2am Sun) At the marina.

Post office (☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Sat) A block west of the harbor. Phone cards can be purchased at the Match supermarket.

Tourist office (☎ 88-88-74; www.ot-saintfrancois.com; Ave de l'Europe, 97118 St-François; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Sat & 2-5pm most weekdays, to 12:30pm Wed)

Activities

Ar awak Surf Action (☎ 31-88-28; www.surfantilles.com; Base Nautique; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) The place for surfing, windsurfing or stand-up paddle boarding.

Tropicalys (☎ 54-49-26; www.tropicalys.com; Plage du Bourg de Ste-Anne; 1-tank dive €34) At the marina, this small and friendly outfit takes divers to the nearby reef at 8am and 2pm every day.

St-François has Guadeloupe's only golf course, the 18-hole, par 71, **Golf Municipal de St François** (☎ 88-41-87), designed by Robert Trent Jones.

Sleeping

Near the harbor and fishing port are a load of residences that advertise solely by small signs and a phone number; rooms are somewhere in the €50 per night range, depending on the length of stay.

Nise & Hector (☎ 88-40-19; Rue Paul Tilby; r from €40) Run by the kind folks at Jerco Chez Nise, these little apartments in the center of town don't have any sort of scenery to recommend them, but they are a good budget option.

Le Golf Marine (☎ 88-60-60; www.deshotelsetdesiles.com; Ave de L'Europe, s/d incl breakfast €80/95; ☎ ☎) Across from the 18-hole municipal golf course, not surprisingly the decor is very golf-centric. The 61 pleasant but unexciting rooms feature lots of white wicker and look

out either on the golf course or on the manicured garden paths behind the hotel. Be sure to check out the neat mosaics at the souvenir shop next door.

Our pick La Métisse (☎ 88-70-00; www.im-caraibes.com/metisse; 66 Les Hauts de Saint François; r from €157; ☎ ☎ ☎) Tucked away in a complex of residential hotels above St-François, this pretty place sports a pool in the abstracted shape of Guadeloupe, an owner who used to be a pilot and bought the hotel after only a few hours on the island, and nine rooms named after the different ways to tie a Creole-style madras hat. It's relaxed and private – rooms that look out on the pool have a curtain on the front patio.

Eating

Café de la Marina (mains €6-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Tucked away in the southeast corner of the marina under the out-of-business Hotel Kayé La. The friendly proprietor serves calzones and pizzas in this fun place to hang out – it has one of the only pool tables in the city.

Jerco Chez Nise (☎ 88-40-19; Rue Paul-Tilby; meals €9-20; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) This tiny, recommended local favorite is a no-frills neighborhood restaurant behind the *mairie* (mayor's building). What it may lack in atmosphere with its strip lighting and tiled floor it more than makes up for with its delicious Creole cooking.

Le Restaurant du Lagon (☎ 88-75-44; mains €17-24; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) At this jetty restaurant, south of the marina that shelters a big lagoon, the setting is ideal for a plate of freshly caught fish, and there's a gently buzzing ambience. Those who don't want to shell out for the fish can grab a ti-punch or juice (€3 to €5) and drink in the view.

On the southwest corner of the marina, there's a line of inexpensive harborside eateries that sell pastries, sandwiches, ice cream and grilled foods.

At the northwest side of the marina, west of Le Golf Marine, there's a large **Match supermarket** (☎ 8:30am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun); the **fruit and vegetable market** (Place du Marché) runs every day except Monday.

POINTE DES CHÂTEAUX

Just a 20-minute drive from St-François is windswept Pointe des Châteaux, the eastern-most point of Grande-Terre. This dramatic coastal area has white-sand beaches, limestone

cliffs and fine views of the jagged near-shore islets and the island of La Désirade.

Sometimes surfers set up on the small beach here to catch the rough, short-lived waves. A walk up a sandy path to the large cross takes about 10 minutes and is a good place to look back at Guadeloupe.

A snack stand sells coco sorbet (€2) and soft drinks here, and it makes it a point to ask people to properly throw away trash – as many visitors have apparently not done before.

Sights

There are some more-protected white-sand beaches further to the northwest of Pointe des Châteaux. **Anse Tarare** is a popular nudist beach situated in a sheltered cove 2km west of the road's end. The dirt road north of the main road is marked by a sign reading 'Plage Tarare.'

A few minutes' drive to the west, a side road (follow the 'Chez Honoré' signs) leads about 1km north to **Anse à la Gourde**, a gorgeous sweep of white coral sands. The waters are good for swimming and snorkeling, but be careful of near-shore coral shelves.

For clothing-mandatory fun away from the beach, **La Maison de la Noix de Coco** (☎ 85-00-92; www.maison-de-la-noix-de-coco.com; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) is a souvenir shop dedicated to all things coconut. There's the usual kitschy Caribbean mementos here (see the Rastaman ashtray, fake hair and all) but many of the items, like polished coconut-husk lamps (from €70) are surprisingly classy. Visitors get a free sample of coconut milk on arrival.

Sleeping & Eating

Hostellerie des Châteaux (☎ 85-54-08; www.hostellerie-des-chateaux.com, s/d incl breakfast €85/110; ☎ ☎ ☎) Set on a spacious lawn inland from the road to Pointe des Châteaux, there are four bungalows and four rooms here, with daily housekeeping included with both types of accommodations. Michel, the owner, is a friendly guy and says that anyone is welcome to drop in at the on-site restaurant and bar (mains €16 to €30; open lunch and dinner Tuesday to Saturday, lunch Sun). Offers wi-fi access.

LE MOULE

pop 21,000

The town of Le Moule served as an early French capital of Guadeloupe, and was an important Native American settlement in

precolonial times. Consequently, major archaeological excavations have taken place in the area, and Guadeloupe's archaeological museum – under renovation at the time of writing – is on the outskirts of town. Unless you're a surfer or want a quiet base to explore the busier coastal towns or northern Grande-Terre, Le Moule is worth a visit but not a stay.

History buffs will enjoy the wide town square with a few historic buildings, including the town hall and a neoclassical Catholic church. Along the river are some discernible waterfront ruins from an old customs building and a fortress dating back to the original French settlement.

Baie du Moule, on the west side of town, is popular with kayakers and surfers, and has its own surf school. The world surf championships have taken place in Le Moule.

There's a rum distillery nearby, too.

Information

Cyber Box Call Shop (44 Rue Duschassing; internet per hr €6; ☎ 8am-10pm) If staying in Le Moule, it might be worth becoming a member (€10) for reduced prices. International phone service averages €0.20 per minute.

Tourist office (☎ 23-89-03; www.ot-lemoule.com; Blvd Maritime Damencourt, 97160 Le Moule; ☎ 8:30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-noon Sat) Lots of maps and free booklets (in French) on the area.

Sights

The modern **Edgar Clerc Archeological Museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Sep-Mar, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Aug), on a coastal cliff in the Rosette area, has Native American petroglyphs, pottery shards, tools made of shells and stone and an exhibition on local excavations. The museum is about 1km north on La Rosette road (D123), on the western outskirts of Le Moule. Museum staff say that the renovation has been going on for more than a year with no end in sight. The downside is that there are not too many exhibits open, and the ones that have stayed are all in French. On the upside, entry is now free.

For those who don't speak French but know how distilleries work, **Distillery Damoiseau** (www.damoiseau.com; admission free; ☎ self-guided tour 7am-2:30pm Mon-Sat, gift shop 8am-5:30pm Mon-Sat) is a nice chance to wander around at will. For those who don't know their fermentation from their distillation, the Musée du Rhum (p563) is a more educational option. The gift shop has a

good selection of rums made on the premises and offers free tastings. To get to the distillery, look for the sign for Hotel Caraïbe after heading east out of town and take the first right. At the crossroads, take another right and look for the signs.

Sleeping & Eating

The tourist office can provide a list of vacation rentals, including *gîtes* (small family-run facilities) and apartments in the area. There are a few small grocery stores in downtown Le Moule.

Cottage Hotel (☎ 23-78-38; www.cottage-residence.net; Rte de la Plage des Alizés; r per night/week €62/330; ♿) The studios are the best bet with outdoor kitchens, a fridge and balconies that face the water. The beach here is not stellar, but close, and you definitely feel a bit out of the action, which can be a good thing.

Le Spot (☎ 85-66-02; Blvd Maritime Damencourt; mains €7; ☺ lunch & dinner) Sporting a surf school, this is the place to hang out and watch the waves crash on the shore. It's a nice place to decipher the pamphlets from the tourism office next door and get a feel for what Le Moule has on tap.

NORTHERN GRANDE-TERRE

A good place for a leisurely day of exploring, with plenty of sunbathing on quiet beaches included. The northern half of Grande-Terre is a rural area of grazing cattle and cane fields; the roads are gently winding but easy to drive.

From Le Moule, drive up past the archaeological museum in Rosette, then turn right on the D120 and follow that road north. As you get closer to Porte d'Enfer the route will be signposted.

Anse Maurice

The first sight on the D120 coming from Le Moule, the nearly empty beach of Anse Maurice is accessed via a small road with concrete tracks and grazing goats. The water is clear and very shallow until you walk out a bit, partly why it's a favorite with families with small children. There's a bar-restaurant here if you want to take a break from the sun.

Porte d'Enfer

After soaking up Anse Maurice go north on the D120 and follow the signs to Vigier. On your right, keep your eyes peeled for the Chez Coco restaurant; at the time of research this

was the only way to find Port d'Enfer. The 'Port of Hell,' as it's called, is actually a long and narrow lagoon that could be mistaken for a river from the viewpoint further down the road. It's a great place to picnic, swim, or snorkel, but bring your own gear. The water crashing at the mouth of the lagoon would be the gates of hell for anyone foolish enough to venture beyond the calm waters.

Pointe de la Grande Vigie

The island's northernmost point, Pointe de la Grande Vigie offers scenic views from its high sea cliffs. A rocky path – walkable in flip-flops but better in tennis shoes – makes a loop from the parking lot to the cliffs and has some fantastic views. Mind the cliffs – signs in French warn that there are sometimes rock slides and that people can fall off and die.

On a clear day you can see Antigua to the north and Montserrat to the northwest, both about 75km away.

Anse Bertrand

Anse Bertrand, where the D120 starts to loop back south, has more of a rocky, crashing coast than a beach, but a few restaurants facing the local church and friendly locals make it worth a pit stop.

South of Anse Bertrand, near Port-Louis, is **Beauport Le Pays de La Canne** (☎ 22-44-70; www.lepaysdelacanne.com; adult/child €9/6; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), a shut-down sugarcane factory that's been turned into a learning center. Taking the 50-minute train ride through the old sugar plantation is worthwhile.

Petit-Canal

South of Le Pays de La Canne, this is the place to go for a trip into the nearby mangroves.

Clarisma Tours (☎ 22-51-15; www.clarismatour.com; tours €15-50; ☺ departures 9am & 4pm) offers a short sunset tour or a full-day outing with lunch and snorkeling included.

Petit-Canal was a major landing point for slaves kidnapped from Africa to work on the nearby sugar plantations. Near the church in the center of town are steps that lead to a stele that reads 'liberty.' The steps were built by slaves themselves and have the names of African tribes carved into them.

South to Morne-à-l'Eau

Besides a **crab festival** every April, what brings tourists is the city-within-a-city at the **cem-**

etry, where N6 meets the N5. There's parking near the police station (*gendarmeries*) but be careful crossing the road. Terraced with raised vaults and tombs, many decorated in checkered black and white tiles, this is Guadeloupe's most elaborate burial ground. Locals are getting a little fed up with tour buses full of strangers gawking and taking photos of the resting places of relatives; a little courtesy and discretion is a good idea.

BASSE-TERRE

Shortly after entering the island of Basse-Terre from Pointe-à-Pitre, you have a choice of three main routes: north along the coast, south along the coast, or across the interior along the Route de la Traversée, through the national park. Most of the destinations in Basse-Terre offer a nice balance between nature – including the national park and plentiful diving – and amenities for visitors.

Getting There & Around

For information on buses from Grande-Terre and through the area, see p551.

Ferries run between Trois-Rivières and Terre-de-Haut in Les Saintes; for details see p578.

ROUTE DE LA TRAVERSÉE

The road that heads across the center of the island, the Route de la Traversée (D23), slices through the Parc National de la Guadeloupe, a 17,300-hectare forest reserve that occupies the interior of Basse-Terre. It's a lovely mountain drive that passes fern-covered hillsides, thick bamboo stands and enormous mahogany and gum trees. Other rainforest vegetation en route includes orchids, heliconia and ginger.

The road begins off the N1 about 15 minutes west of Pointe-à-Pitre and is well signposted. There are a few switchbacks, but driving is not tricky if you don't rush, and it's a good two-lane road all the way. Although the road could easily be driven in an hour, give yourself double that to stop and enjoy the scenery – more if you want to do any hiking or to break for lunch.

There are 200km of hiking trails here, and the many signs with pull-offs on the side of the road are the beginning of trails. Start before 3pm or so, as night falls quickly here.

The trails are well marked and the longer the hike, the better your chances of seeing very few people. Trails can be very muddy and rocky with lots of slippery tree roots; at least wear tennis shoes, if not hiking boots.

Don't miss the **Cascade aux Écrevisses**, an idyllic little jungle waterfall that drops into a broad pool. From the parking area the waterfall is just a three-minute walk on a semipaved trail. The roadside pull-off is clearly marked on the D23, 2km after you enter the park's eastern boundary. Try to go early; busloads of tourists arrive in the late afternoon. On the other side of the road from the parking lot is a trail to a picnic area with covered tables right near the river.

At **Maison de la Forêt**, 2km further west, there's a staffed **exhibit center** (www.guadeloupe-parcnational.com; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm) with a few simple displays on the forest in French and pamphlets in English, including a basic map that shows the parking areas for trailheads and picnic areas. A map board and the beginning of an enjoyable 20-minute **loop trail** are at the back of the center. The trail crosses a bridge over the Bras David river and then proceeds through a jungle of *gommier* trees, tall ferns and squawking tropical birds. The **Bras David trail** (go left instead of right at the first fork) takes an hour, and is an enjoyable if muddy way to get deeper into the jungle.

NORTHERN BASSE-TERRE

The northern half of Basse-Terre offers interesting contrasts. Starting from the west side of Route de la Traversée, most of the west coast is rocky and many of the drives snake along the tops of towering sea cliffs. There are a couple of attractive swimming beaches – Grande Anse is the most popular.

Once you reach the northern tip of the island the terrain becomes gentler and the vegetation dry and scrubby. Continuing down the east coast, the countryside turns into sugarcane fields and the towns become larger and more suburban as you approach Pointe-à-Pitre.

Pointe-Noire

Pointe-Noire, between Plage de Malendure and Deshaies, is the epicenter of places that each specialize in one thing – chocolate, coffee etc. Most of these establishments are just north of the D23 (Route de la Traversée) on the N2, and signs abound for all of them.

At **Maison Du Cacao** (☎ 98-25-23; adult/child €5/2.50; 🕒 9:30am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round & 9:30am-5pm Sun Dec-Feb), treat yourself to a cup of hot chocolate (€3) that's closer to the Mayan's sacrament of divinity than any powdered drink.

Set high on a hill off the D16, **Caféiere Beausejour** (☎ 98-10-09; www.cafierebeausejour.com; adult/child €7/3.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sat) is an old colonial house and working plantation that tells the history of coffee (in French), explains the traditional processing of the bean, and lets people sample their product at tour's end. On the way down, beware of taking the wrong way. Some dead-end drives are so steep that it's a dicey proposition to turn a car around.

With an outdoor park to show off different species of trees and indoor exhibits showing all the different ways to work with wood and products made out of wood, **Maison du Bois** (☎ 98-16-90; ilesauboisvivants@wanadoo.fr; adult/child €9/4.50; 🕒 9:30am-5pm Tue-Sat) is an arborophile's dream. It has an on-site seashell museum (extra €2) and restaurant.

Visitors must make reservations to get a guided tour of the private orchid garden **Le Parc aux Orchidées** (☎ 98-02-85; www.parcauxorchidees.com; adult/child €16/12; 🕒 10am-5pm Fri-Sun). The owners say that with more than 3000 orchids (400 species), this is the largest outdoor collection in the Caribbean.

Deshaies

pop 4200

A nice harborside village surrounded by green hills, Deshaies (day-ey) is filled with plenty of eateries, ranging from tapas bars to small sandwich shops.

INFORMATION

Le Pélican Cyber Café (☎ 28-44-27; per hr €5, all-day wi-fi €5; 🕒 8:30am-12:30pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri) It also sells a variety of colorful hammocks and hanging chairs. For an internet café, it's an unusually lively place.

Tropical Sub (☎ 28-52-67; www.tropical-sub.com; dive €38; 🕒 daily dives 9:30am & 2:30pm) On the main strip in Deshaies, it take divers and snorkelers to the Cousteau Reserve.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Thanks to its sheltered bay, the village is a popular stop with yachters and sailors and has an international feeling. The local seafaring traditions have carried on into the tourist trade, with several dive shops and deep-sea fishing boats operating from the pier.

Grande Anse, 2km north of Deshaies, is a nice beach with no hotel development in sight. The waves break right near the shore and aren't terribly large, but are perfect for young body surfers who don't mind the sandy backwash that waves like this make. There are a number of beachside restaurants, some of which have their ocean views obstructed by the parking lot that's jam-packed during high season. **Les Hibiscus** (☎ 28-22-50; mains €6-13; 🕒 lunch), however, is closest to the beach and has some of the best food and prices here.

SLEEPING

Fanelie (☎ 28-45-48; www.fanelie.fr; Ferry Leroux; r from €45; 🕒) On a small alley just a few hundred meters after Plage de Léroux, just south of Deshaies, the cottages here are immense, with big porches and individual BBQs. The decor is a bit old-fashioned and there's a baby crib in the bedroom; some may find it spooky. You can do laundry at reception for €4.50. Late risers, beware: roosters prowl the grounds and crow at the crack of dawn.

Au Ti Sucrier (☎ 28-91-29; www.autisucrier.com; Pointe Ferry; r from €100; 🕒 🚗) Set 40m from Plage de Léroux, this place has 14 modern bungalows with outdoor kitchens and ocean views. The friendly owners have two big dogs, one of which is pure white and cuts quite the figure as he runs around the on-site aviary following the flight of the birds inside.

Rayon Vert (☎ 28-43-23; hotel.lerayonvert.free.fr; Pointe Ferry; r from €138; 🕒 🚗) Highly recommended by travelers for the helpful staff, this place is named after the band of green that seafaring folk from around the world wait to see right at sunset. The 22 rooms all have a porch that opens up to sea views, a minibar and big bathrooms. It has one wheelchair-accessible room and an on-site restaurant.

Domaine de la Pointe Batterie (☎ 28-57-03; www.pointe-batterie.com; Chemin de la Batterie; studios/villas €125/275; 🕒 🚗) A terraced property just outside of Deshaies, every luxurious room here has a sea view and the villas each have a small private pool. On-site spa services include flower baths (€45), chocolate wraps (€60) and a three-day regimen of sauna, massage and reflexology (€380).

EATING & DRINKING

You'll find some of the best food around in the village and its hinterland.

Barbuto (☎ 89-87-28; www.barbutonyc.com; Blvd De Poissonniers; tapas plate €5-7, mains €13-21; 🕒 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) This snazzy but warm tapas restaurant and bar is a good place to grab a drink and some snacks at the tables near the water. As well as tapas, the joint offers a mélange of French, Italian and Creole food. Barbuto also has another location in New York City.

Le Coin des Pêcheurs (☎ 28-47-75; mains €14-34; 🕒 lunch & dinner) An excellent little restaurant with vaguely nautical decor and a seaside terrace. At the northern entrance to the village on the main drag, this place serves Creole starters of *christophine farcie* (stuffed vegetable), and entrecôtes or grilled fish for mains.

La Note Bleue (mains €18; 🕒 9am-11pm Mon-Sat) At the south end of town, La Note Bleue has a big bar that's popular with the sailing set as well as landlubbers, and a French restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating.

L'Amer (☎ 28-50-43; mains €19-40; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) Almost next door to Le Coin des Pêcheurs, this chic, upmarket restaurant with a stylish blue and white interior and terrace is renowned for its salads and seafood such as delicious king prawns, flambéed in aged rum.

There's a Spar supermarket just south of town to stock up on food, snacks and drinks.

Ste-Rose

pop 19,000

In days of yore, Ste-Rose was a major agricultural town. While sugar production has declined on Guadeloupe and a number of mills have closed, sugarcane is still an important crop on this northeastern tip of Basse-Terre, and there are a few rum-related tourist sights on the outskirts of town.

Visitors who follow the signs from the N2 to 'Bord de Mer' will find a row of restaurants, souvenir stalls, and places to take excursions to the nearby **Îlet Caret**, which one can see from the Bord de Mer. Reserve in advance.

BleuBlancVert (☎ 28-38-49; www.bleublancvert.com; adult/child €25/12) runs half-day trips to the island on a motorized raft. The trip includes a waterproof container, snorkeling gear and *planteurs* punch, a libation with rum, fruit juice and a little spice to make everything nice.

With a maximum of 12 people and snorkeling gear provided, the trip run by **Nico Excursions** (☎ 28-72-47; www.nicoexcursions.com; half-/full day €35/60) is also a good way to see the island.

Those who want to understand how the ambrosia called rum starts in the sugarcane fields and ends on their palates should really come to the **Musée du Rhum** (Rum Museum; ☎ 28-70-04; musee-du-rhum.fr; adult/child incl tasting €7/3.50; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), which has thorough explanations in English. It's at the site of the Reimonenq Distillery, about 500m inland from the N2 in the village of Bellevue, just southeast of Ste-Rose. Exhibits include an old distillery, cane-extraction gears and a vapor machine dating from 1707. Check out the collection of butterflies, model boats (including Noah's Ark) and *coiffes* (madrass head wraps).

Guadeloupeans say **Chez Franko** (☎ 28-86-51; Blvd St Charles, Bord de Mer; mains €13-20; 🕒 lunch & dinner) is the best eating choice. The grilled fish is good, if a bit boney; the seafood stews are a better way to go if you don't want to work for your meal. Ring the cow bell at the counter if there's not a server in sight.

SOUTH TO CAPESTERRE-BELLE-EAU

The N1, the road that runs along the east coast of Basse-Terre, travels through cattle pastures and sugarcane fields. For the most part it's pleasantly rural, but unless you're driving it may not be an area in which to spend much precious vacation time.

Valombreuse Floral Park (☎ 95-50-50; www.valombreuse.com; adult/child €5/2.50; 🕒 8am-6pm), nestled in the hills west of Petit-Bourg, is a pleasant 14-hectare botanical garden with lots of activities for kids. There's also a path to a waterfall that spills into a swimming hole. The road leading off the N1 to the park, 5km inland, is well signposted.

In the center of the village of **Ste-Marie**, a bust of Columbus and two huge anchors comprise a modest roadside monument honoring the explorer who landed on this shore in 1493.

The road is lined with flamboyant trees on the north side of **Capesterre-Belle-Eau**, a good-sized town that has a supermarket, some local eateries and a gas station.

CHUTES DU CARBET

Unless it's overcast, the drive up to the Chutes du Carbet lookout gives a view of two magnificent waterfalls plunging down a sheer mountain face.

Starting from St Sauveur on the N1, the road runs 8.5km inland, making for a nice 15-minute drive up through a rainforest. It's a

good hard-surfaced road all the way, although it's a bit narrow and twisting. Nearly 3km before the end of the road is a marked stop at the trailhead to **Grand Étang**, a placid lake circled by a loop trail. It's just a five-minute walk from the roadside parking area down to the edge of the lake, and it takes about an hour more to stroll the lake's perimeter. Due to the danger of bilharzia (schistosomiasis) infection, this is not a place for a swim.

The road ends at the Chutes du Carbet lookout. You can see the two highest waterfalls from the upper parking lot, where a signboard marks the trailhead to the base of the falls. The well-trodden walk to the second-highest waterfall (110m) takes 30 minutes; it's about a two-hour hike to the highest waterfall (115m). It's also possible to hike from the lookout to the summit of La Soufrière (see right), a hardy three-hour walk with some wonderfully varied scenery.

There are picnic facilities at the lookout, along with a few food stalls selling plate lunches of simple barbecue fare. This is a very popular spot for outings and can get quite crowded on weekends and holidays.

TROIS-RIVIÈRES

pop 9000

Most often visited as a jumping-off point to Les Saintes, this sleepy town has sharply curving streets, is surrounded by lush vegetation and has fine views of Les Saintes, just 10km offshore to the south.

For those who get seasick easily, Trois-Rivières has the shortest ferry ride and reputedly the calmest waters to Terre-de-Haut in Les Saintes. See p578 for details.

Don't miss the **Parc Archéologique des Roches Gravées** (☎ 92-91-88; admission €1.50; 🕒 9am-5pm), featuring rocks carved with petroglyphs of human, animal and abstract forms. Some of the rocks were found on the site; others were brought from around Basse-Terre. The visitor center at the entrance has informative displays and pamphlets on island history and there's an adventurous boulder-filled trail through the park. The park is on the road to the ferry dock 200m north of the waterfront.

There are a number of places to stay scattered in and around town and a few places to eat; very few stay open once the working day ends.

There are four rooms in the beautiful old house of **Le Paradis Vert** (☎ 92-61-61; paradis-vert@wanadoo.fr; Le Petit Carbet, 97114 Trois-Rivières; r from €60),

which at one time was the center of a coffee and cocoa plantation. It's 1.6km north of the town center; look for the signs.

There are five slick, brightly colored bungalows at **Coco Zabrico** (☎ 92-83-50; cocozabrico.monsite.wanadoo.fr; Route de Gaigneron, 97114 Trois-Rivières; r from €70) outside of town. With a BBQ pit and a small play area for kids, it's a good base for the family.

The pizzas at **Pizzeria Total Végétal** (pizzas €7-15; 🍴 lunch & dinner) are available in the evenings only and you should be prepared to wait – this build-your-own-pie place is very popular. During the day hungry visitors have a choice of a few simple dishes like couscous and chicken or beef stew and rice. Order at the counter.

Signs at the west side of the town center point the way from the N1 to the dock, 1km away, where the ferry leaves for Terre-de-Haut. La Roche Gravée restaurant, a few minutes' walk from the dock, provides parking for ferry passengers.

LA SOUFRIÈRE

From Trois-Rivières there are a couple of ways to get to La Soufrière, the active 1467m volcano that looms above the southern half of the island.

The most direct route to La Soufrière is to follow the D8 northwest from Trois-Rivières, turn west on the N1 for a few kilometers and then follow the signs north to St-Claude. This is a nice jungle drive into the mountains; you'll cross some small streams and pass banana plantations before reaching the village of St-Claude, just south of the national-park boundaries. There's no food available in the park, but St-Claude has a few local restaurants and small grocers.

From St-Claude, signs point to La Soufrière, 6km to the northeast on the D11. The steep road up into the park has a few beep-as-you-go hairpin turns, and it narrows in places to almost one lane, but it's a good solid road all the way. If it's fogged in, proceed slowly, as visibility can drop to just a few meters.

The closed Maison du Volcan is the trailhead for a couple of hour-long walks, including one to Chute de Galleon, a scenic 40m waterfall on the Galion River.

There are a couple of viewpoints and picnic areas as the road continues up the mountain for the 15-minute drive to La Savane à Mulet, a parking area at an elevation of 1142m. From here, there's a clear view straight up La

Soufrière (when it's not covered in clouds or mist), and you can see and smell vapors rising from nearby fumaroles.

For an adventurous 1½-hour hike to La Soufrière's sulfurous, moonscapelike summit, a well-beaten trail starts at the end of the parking lot. It travels along a gravel bed and continues steeply up the mountain through a cover of low shrubs and thick ferns. In addition to a close-up view of the steaming volcano, the hike offers some fine vistas of the island. It's also possible to make a four-hour trek from La Savane à Mulet to the Chutes du Carbet lookout (p563).

The road continues further east another 1.75km, taking in a lookout and views of sulfur vents before it dead-ends at a relay station.

BASSE-TERRE

pop 13,000

The rather grim administrative capital of Guadeloupe, Basse-Terre is somewhat active on weekdays during work hours, but almost deserted after dark and on weekends, with most shops and restaurants closed. The traffic getting in or out of the city moves at a snail's pace during daylight hours.

As an old colonial port town, there is some local character, but not much. The south side of town, along Blvd Gouverneur Général Félix Eboué, has a couple of rather imposing government buildings, including the Palais de Justice and the sprawling Conseil Général, the latter flanked by fountains. **Fort Louis Delgrès**, which dates from 1643, is on this side of town as well, as is the Rivière Sens Marina.

At the north side of town, opposite the commercial dock, is the old town square. It's bordered by the aging Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall), the tourist office, customs and some older two- and three-story buildings that are, overall, more run-down than quaint. There's an unadorned **cathedral** near the river, about five minutes' walk south of the square.

The bus station is on the shoreline at the western end of Blvd Gouverneur Général Félix Eboué. Opposite the north end of the station is the public market.

PLAGE DE MALENDURE & PIGEON ISLAND

The road up the west coast from Basse-Terre (N2) follows the shoreline, passing fishing villages, small towns and a few black-sand

beaches. The landscape gets drier as you continue north into the lee of the mountains. There's not much of interest for visitors until Plage de Malendure (Malendure Beach), a popular dark-sand beach that's the departure point for snorkeling and diving tours to nearby Pigeon Island (Îlet Pigeon).

Activities

Jacques Cousteau brought Pigeon Island to international attention a few decades ago by declaring it to be one of the world's top dive sites. The waters surrounding the island are now protected as the **Réserve Cousteau**, an underwater park. There's an underwater statue of Mr Cousteau near the Jardins de Corail (Coral Gardens) dive site. Divers who touch the statue's head are supposed to have good luck, and good diving, for the rest of their underwater lives.

The majority of the dive sites around Pigeon Island are very scenic, with big schools of fish, coral walls and coral reefs that are shallow enough for good snorkeling. It's only a 10- to 15-minute boat ride to the dive sites, and almost all the shops have morning, noon and mid-afternoon outings.

There is a tourist information booth and a number of dive shops on Plage de Malendure; single-tank dives hover around €40. These shops are also the place to go to arrange snorkeling trips.

Archipel Plongée (☎ 98-93-93; www.archipel-plongee.fr; Pigeon; ☎ 9am-5:30pm) Some of the friendly dive masters here can make jokes in English, French, and can even make people laugh underwater.

Centre National de Plongée (☎ 98-16-23; www.cip-guadeloupe.com; Bouillante; ☎ 9am-5:30pm) Another respected dive shop on the beach.

Les Heures Saines (☎ 98-86-63; www.heures-saines.gp; Le Rocher de Malendure; ☎ 8:30am-5pm) This dive shop is hidden under the Le Rocher de Malendure restaurant. In addition to the standard dive offerings, it rents underwater cameras and offers Soufrière hikes, canyoning and can help arrange deep-sea fishing trips.

Sleeping

In the center of the village of Pigeon, just south of Plage de Malendure, there are several private room-for-rent and *gîte* signs.

ourpick Ti Gli Gli (☎ 98-73-49; www.tigliigli.com; Rue de Poirier; r from €50) At the very end of Rue de Poirier, this place provides fishing poles for the use of guests and an open-air grill

to cook the catch. It also organizes hikes to La Soufrière and elsewhere. Even though the five bungalows are rustic and rely on natural ventilation, they have microwaves and toasters that run on solar power and have solar hot water. André Exartier, the owner, invites his musician friends to come by for music nights a few times per month and fires up the brick oven to make pizza. There's also a bird garden on the property. To get here, follow the signs that have a little bird wearing a scuba tank (André used to be a dive instructor).

Le Jardin Tropical (☎ 98-77-23; www.au-jardin-tropical.com; Rue de Poirier; r from €64; ♿ 📺 📶) On steep street full of similar places, most with stellar views, Le Jardin Tropical stands out because of its friendly owners, a pool that feels nearly private and a little bar that opens up every night where the owner makes a wicked tip-punch. The bungalow rooms are sparkling clean, simply furnished but comfortable, and all have outdoor patios, kitchens and sea views. Offers wi-fi access.

Eating

There are huts on Plage de Malendure selling cheap sandwiches and snacks, and a couple of simple open-air beachside restaurants with more substantial meals.

Le Rocher de Malendure (☎ 98-70-84; www.rocher-de-malendure.gp; Malendure, 97125 Bouillante; mains €16-40; 🍷 lunch & dinner) For something more upscale, this is the place to go. It has sushi plates and keeps its lobsters extra fresh in a small pool. The restaurant also rents simple studios from €61; a demi-pension (breakfast and dinner) per person is €30. The same folks run Le Jardin Tropical.

For supermarkets, you'll find a Leader Price and a Match on the southern outskirts of Plage de Malendure.

TERRE-DE-HAUT

pop 1800

Lying 10km off Guadeloupe is Terre-de-Haut, the largest of the eight small islands that make up Les Saintes. Since the island was too hilly and dry for sugar plantations, slavery never took hold here. Consequently, the older islanders still trace their roots to the early seafaring Norman and Breton colonists and

many of the locals have light skin and blond or red hair.

Terre-de-Haut is unhurried and feels like a small slice of southern France transported to the Caribbean. Lots of English is spoken here thanks to a big international sailing scene, and it's definitely the most cosmopolitan of Guadeloupe's outlying islands.

Terre-de-Haut is only 5km long and about half as wide. Ferries dock right in the center of Bourg des Saintes, the island's only village. The airstrip is to the east, a 10-minute walk from the village center.

Getting There & Away

This is the easiest island to visit in terms of choice. By sea you can get here from four cities on the southern coast of mainland Guadeloupe and by air from Pointe-à-Pitre.

AIR

Air Caraïbes (☎ 82-47-00; www.aircaraibes.com) flies to Terre-de-Haut from Pointe-à-Pitre three or four times per week at 3:15pm, quickly turning around for the return trip at 3:40pm. The fare is roughly €142 return but check the company's website for special offers.

BOAT

There are ferries between Terre-de-Haut and Pointe-à-Pitre, Ste-Anne and St-François (on Grande-Terre), and Trois-Rivières (on Basse-Terre); a ferry also runs between Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas. See p577 for details.

Getting Around

If you just want to eat and make the steep walk to Fort Napoléon (more than a few seniors do it; youngsters have no excuse), there's no need to rent a motorbike.

MINIBUS

Air-conditioned minibuses provide two-hour tours of the island for around €15 per person, if there are enough people. Drivers canvass arriving ferry passengers, or you can look for vans parked along the street between the pier and the town hall.

MOTORCYCLE

Motorbikes are a great way to tour the island. Although roads are narrow, there are only a few dozen cars on Terre-de-Haut, so you won't encounter much traffic. With a motorbike you can zip up to the top of Le Chameau

and Fort Napoléon, get out to the beaches and explore the island pretty thoroughly in a day. The motorbikes are capable of carrying two people, but because the roads are so windy, it's not advisable to carry a passenger unless you're an accomplished rider.

There are lots of rental locations on the main road leading south from the pier, but the ones that set up docks seem as good as any. Try **Localisé** (☎ 99-51-99) or **Archipel Rent Services** (☎ 99-52-63) if you want to book in advance. If you arrive on a busy day, it's wise to grab a bike as soon as possible, as they sometimes sell out. Most charge €20 to €25 for day visitors and require a €200 deposit or an imprint of a major credit card. Motorbikes come with gas but not damage insurance, so if you get in an accident or spill the bike, the repairs will be charged to your credit card.

Motorbike riding is prohibited in the center of Bourg des Saintes and helmets are obligatory. You'll see people ignoring the law, but if you're not wearing a helmet and you run into police, you can expect to be stopped.

BOURG DES SAINTES

Home to most of the island's residents, Bourg des Saintes is a picturesque village with a decidedly Norman accent. Its narrow streets are lined with whitewashed, red-roofed houses with shuttered windows and yards of flowering hibiscus.

At the end of the pier is a small courtyard with a gilded column commemorating the French Revolution; it's a bustling place at ferry times, quiet at others. Turn right and in a minute you'll be at the central town square, flanked by the *mairie* (town hall) and an old stone church.

It's a fun town in which to kick around. There are restaurants, ice-cream shops, scooter rentals, galleries and gift shops clustered along the main road, which is pedestrian-only during the day. Most shops close around 1pm; some reopen in the evening, but in the low season many places stay closed.

Information

There are card phones at the pier. Most of the following points of interest are marked on blue and white signs in town. Hotels here usually don't have signs on the street.

Crédit Agricole (☎ 9am-2:30pm Tue, Thu & Fri) The island's sole bank. There's an ATM on Rue de la Grande Anse, next to the tourist office.

Dr Ballabriga (☎ 99-50-66) If you're sick, look for the blue-and-white house shaped like a boat (many people think it really is a boat) to your left as you enter the town. The doctor is in the house.

L'Étage Cybercafé (Upstairs Cybercafé; ☎ 81-53-57; per hr €5) It also sells memory cards and small computer accessories. On the main street near the pier.

Post office On the main road a few minutes' walk south of the town hall.

Tourist office (☎ 99-58-60; www.omtlessaintes.fr; 39 Rue de la Grande Anse; ☎ 8am-noon & 1:30-4:30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) Its website has a useful English-language section.

Activities

Aquatic Park is set behind the Ti Saintois restaurant and sandwich shop. The four swimming lanes in the harbor are a tad shorter than an Olympic-sized pool. Just show up and jump in.

Pisquettes dive shop (☎ 99-88-80 www.pisquettes.com) does morning and afternoon dives. **La Dive Bouteille** (☎ 49-80-91; www.dive-bouteille.com) offers certification courses, night dives, and kid-friendly dives in addition to the usual underwater outings.

Sleeping

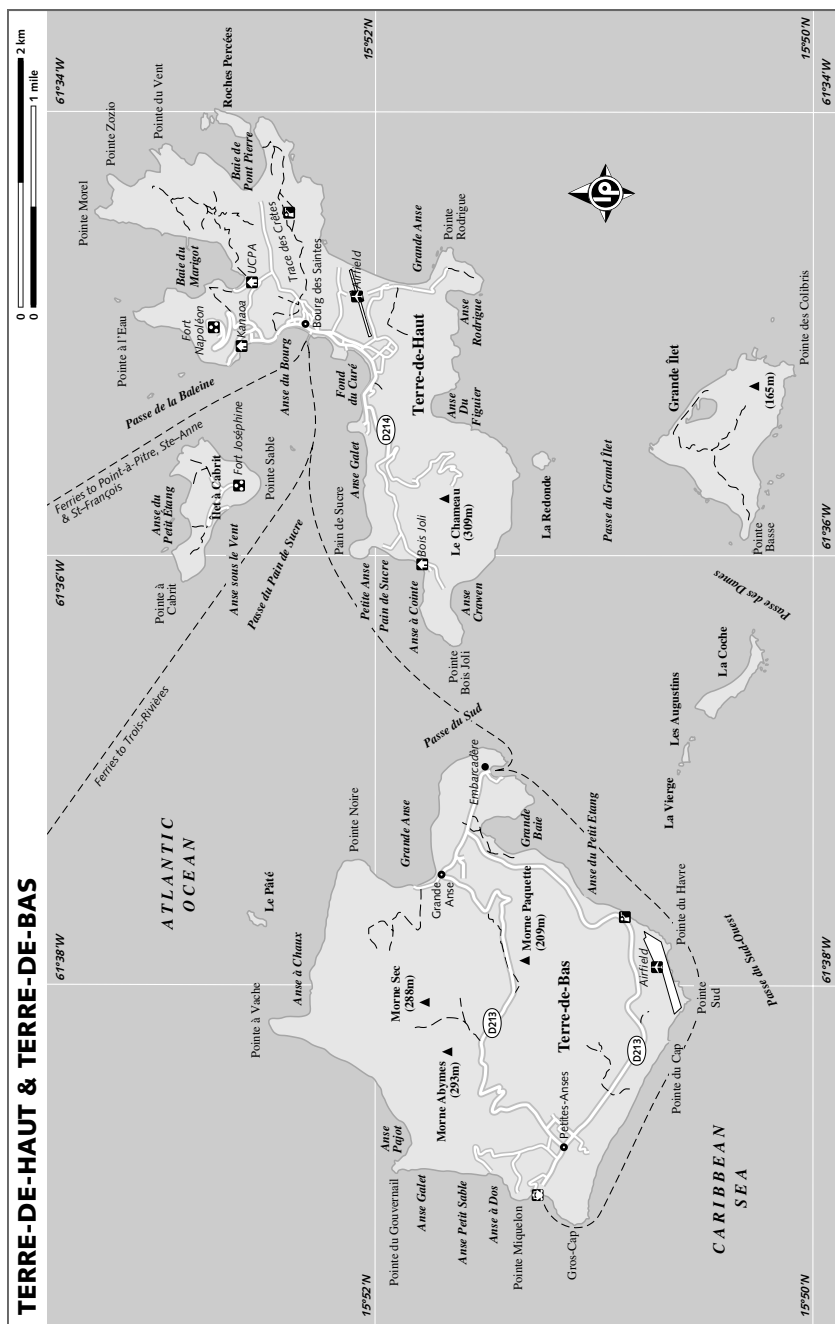
There are room-for-rent signs around the island. During high season the competition for rooms can be stiff so book ahead.

Kanaoa (☎ 99-51-36; www.hotelkanaoa.com; 97137 Les Saintes; s/d incl breakfast €90/115, bungalows from €120; ♿ ♿) Outside the village in the direction of Fort Napoléon, this two-star hotel sits on the beach and has a private pier and restaurant. The hotel runs a shuttle bus around the island during daylight hours for guests to visit the main sights and beaches. In addition to the 19 hotel rooms, there are four duplex bungalows with kitchenettes.

Auberge Les Petits Saints (☎ 99-50-99; www.petitssaints.com; La Savane; studios €90-110, r €110-140; ♿ ♿) This former mayor's residence is set in an opulent villa. Each room is decorated with objets d'art, well-chosen antiques, a big canopy bed and plenty of TLC. The decked swimming pool has fabulous views over the bay. There are two studios 100m away from the main building; they don't have the satellite TV and phones that the other rooms do. There's a small gym tucked behind the massive 200-year-old intricately carved wooden wall in the restaurant.

LoBleu Hotel (☎ 92-40-00; www.lobleuhotel.com; Fond de Curé, 97137 Les Saintes; s/d incl breakfast €91/93;

TERRE-DE-HAUT & TERRE-DE-BAS



☞) Right in the center of town, each of the 10 rooms in this stylish hotel is decorated in a different motif – Spanish, Asian, nautical. The ground-level restaurant (mains €12 to €17; open dinner) has a number of Lebanese dishes. With solar lamps that soak up the sun by day and glow at night, this is definitely the coolest place to be in the evenings.

Eating

There are many casual restaurants around town that cater to day-trippers and offer a meal of the day in the €10 to €16 range.

La Saladerie (☎ 99-53-43; Anse Mirre; mains €10-17; ☞ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) A popular spot hidden down some steps, it has a make-your-own salad menu and serves a number of fish dishes. It's a few minutes' walk north of the pier on the main road.

Sole Mio (☎ 99-56-46; <http://solemio.monsite.wana.doo.fr>; mains €10-18; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A restaurant and small art gallery overlooking the water, Sole Mio has nice views both inside and out. Try the *espado*n (swordfish) tartare and the traditional Sautoise dessert *tourment d'amour* (love's torment), a cake-like concoction with melted chocolate in the middle, historically made by local women to provide solace while their sailor husbands were at sea.

Auberge Les Petits Saints (☎ 99-50-99; La Savane; mains €20-30; ☞ dinner Tue-Sun) The open-air terraced restaurant at this hotel specializes in fresh fish and seafood finely teamed with local produce.

FORT NAPOLÉON

As destinations go, **Fort Napoléon** (adult/child €4/2; ☞ 9:30am-12:30pm) is worth seeing for something to do while here. You can walk through on your own or join an informative 30-minute guided tour conducted in French. There's a cactus garden where iguanas often frolic, but the naval museum inside is only of interest to hard-core naval historians – the battle of Les Saintes is documented in exacting detail.

TWIST MY ARM: THE SPOTS THE AUTHORS WANTED TO KEEP SECRET

Terre-de-Haut in Les Saintes. Selfishly, I'd love to have it all to myself!

Built in the mid-19th century but never used in battle, the fort affords a fine hilltop view of Bourg des Saintes, and you can look across the channel to Fort Josephine, a small fortification on Îlet à Cabrit. On a clear day you can also see Marie-Galante and La Désirade.

Fort Napoléon is 1.6km north of the center of Bourg des Saintes; simply turn left as you come off the pier and follow the road uphill.

BAIE DU MARIGOT

Baie du Marigot is a pleasant little bay with a calm protected beach about 1km north of Bourg des Saintes. It's fairly close to Fort Napoléon, so you could combine a visit to the two; after visiting the fort, turn left at the bottom of the winding fort road and bear left again a few minutes later as you near the bay.

BAIE DE PONT PIERRE

The horseshoe-shaped Baie de Pont Pierre is a lovely reef-protected beach with light brown sand and a splendid setting; there are even tame goats that mosey onto the beach and lie down next to sunbathers. The beach is an easy 1.6km walk northeast of Bourg des Saintes.

EAST-COAST BEACHES

The long, sandy **Grande Anse**, immediately east of the airport runway, has rough seas and water conditions, and swimming is not allowed. The north side of this windy beach is backed by clay cliffs.

South of Grande Anse and about 2km from town is **Anse Rodrigue**, a nice beach on a protected cove that usually has good swimming conditions.

SOUTHWEST BEACHES

Two kilometers southwest of Bourg des Saintes is **Anse à Cointe**, a good beach for combining swimming and snorkeling. The snorkeling is best on the north side. You'll also find good snorkeling and a sandy beach at **Pain de Sucre** (Sugarloaf), the basalt peninsula that's about 700m to the north.

Anse Crawen, 500m south of Bois Joli, is a secluded, clothing-optional beach just a couple of minutes' walk down a dirt path that starts where the coastal road ends. It's a perfect spot for **nude snorkeling**; bring plenty of water and sunscreen.

LE CHAMEAU

A winding cement road leads to the summit of Le Chameau, which at 309m is the island's highest point.

To get to Le Chameau, turn south from the Bourg des Saintes pier and continue 1km on the coastal road. At Restaurant Plongée turn inland on the D214; 500m later, turn left on the cement road and follow it up 1.75km to where it ends at the tower.

From town it's a moderately difficult hour-long walk to the top. A more fun alternative is to ride a motorbike, which takes five minutes.

TERRE-DE-BAS

pop 1200

Lying just 1km to the west of Terre-de-Haut, Terre-de-Bas is the only other inhabited island in Les Saintes. A bit less craggy than Terre-de-Haut, Terre-de-Bas once had small sugar and coffee plantations and is populated largely by the descendants of African slaves. It's a quiet rural island, and tourism has yet to take root, but there is a regular ferry service between the islands, making it possible for visitors to poke around on a day excursion.

The main village, Petites-Anses, is on the west coast. It has hilly streets lined with trim houses, a small fishing harbor, and a quaint church with a graveyard of tombs decorated with conch shells and plastic flowers. Grande Anse, diagonally across the island on the east coast, is a small village with a little 17th-century church and a nice beach.

One-lane roads link the island's two villages; one of the roads cuts across the center of the island, passing between two peaks – Morne Abymes and Morne Paquette – and the other goes along the south coast. If you enjoy long country walks, it's possible to make a loop walk between the two villages (about 9km round-trip) by going out on one road and returning on the other. Otherwise, there's sometimes an inexpensive *jitney* (private minibuses) that runs between the villages.

Petites-Anses has a good bakery and pastry shop, and both Petites-Anses and Grande Anse have a couple of reasonably priced local restaurants.

A ferry travels between Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas; see p578 for details.

MARIE-GALANTE

pop 16,300

Marie-Galante, 25km southeast of Guadeloupe proper, is the largest of Guadeloupe's outer islands. Compared with the archipelago's other islands, Marie-Galante is relatively flat, its dual limestone plateaus rising only 150m. It is roughly round in shape with a total land area of 158 sq km. Because of its shape, the island is often referred to as 'La Grande Galette,' which means 'the Big Crêpe.'

The island is rural in character; it's pretty much sugarcane, manioc fields and cows outside of Grand-Bourg, the surprisingly large main city. There are some lovely, uncrowded beaches and pleasant country scenery.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Caraïbes (☎ 82-47-00; www.aircaraibes.com) has three to four weekly flights to Marie-Galante from Pointe-à-Pitre (20 minutes) for €150, round-trip. The airport is midway between Grand-Bourg and Capesterre, 5km from either.

BOAT

The interisland crossing to Marie-Galante can be a bit rough, so if you're not used to bouncy seas it's best to travel on a light stomach and sit in the middle of the boat. One saving grace is that the boats leaving from Pointe-à-Pitre are very big (and more stable) and quite comfortable. See p577 for details of ferry services.

Getting Around

BUS

During the day, except for Sunday, inexpensive minibuses make regular runs between the three villages.

CAR & SCOOTER

There are car- and motorbike-rental places facing the ferry pier. Cars generally start at €25 per day and motorbikes at €15 to €20.

Be sure to inspect your vehicle closely as some of them, especially scooters, are haggard. The stiff competition has kept the quality and prices about equal, but **Auto Moto Location** (☎ 97-19-42; www.automoto-location.com) rents mountain bikes for €12 per day. **Hertz** (☎ 97-59-80; www.hertz.com; 3 Rue de La République) only rents out cars but is an international, Anglophone-friendly chain.

MINIBUS

Minibus tour drivers are usually waiting for arriving ferry passengers at the ferry port. A four-hour guided tour that makes a nearly complete circle around the island costs between €12 and €15. Stops on the tour usually include a distillery, the Ste-Marie Hospital parking lot (best view on the island), a shop where people make manioc flour, and an abandoned slave plantation.

The buses will sometimes leave you on the beach in St-Louis for a few hours and pick you up in time to make the boat back to the mainland. Some of the tour guides don't speak much standard French, let alone English, so be sure to converse a bit to make sure they can explain everything clearly.

GRAND-BOURG

Grand-Bourg is the commercial and administrative center of the island. The town was leveled by fire in 1901, and its architecture is a mix of early-20th-century buildings and more recent, drab concrete structures.

The ferry dock is at the center of town. The post office, customs office and town hall are all within a few blocks of the waterfront.

The **tourist office** (☎ 97-56-51; www.ot-marie-galante.com; Rue du Fort) can provide you with information on local rental houses, *gîtes* and guesthouses. Its website has a comprehensive English-language section.

A pharmacy and a couple of banks with ATMs are on the square in front of the **Eglise Ste Marie**, which is worth a peek inside for its stained-glassed windows.

The **market** (🕒 7am-2pm), near the church, sells island trinkets and the usual assortment of flavored rums. There's a little snack shop, **Tizong La** (mains €6-11), open whenever the market is.

Habitation Murat, about 2km from Grand-Bourg on the north side of the road to Capesterre, is a partially restored 18th-century sugar estate built stone by stone by more than 300 slaves. Check out the walled garden in the back corner of the sprawling estate – there's a gate but it's hard to find.

Offering eight bungalows and an apartment, the gardened group of Creole-style homes at **Village de Canada** (☎ 97-86-11; www.village-decanada.com; Section Canada, 97112 Grand Bourg; r from €70) is halfway between Grand-Bourg and St Louis. There are a few signs on the main road between the two cities that point the way.

Each of the three apartments at **L'Oasis** (☎ 97-59-55; oasis.mg@wanadoo.fr; Rue Sony Rupaire; r €70-90) has something special to recommend it – a small tropical garden, a Jacuzzi or a terrace. It's located in the city center, 1km from the beach; to find this friendly and clean place, head toward the Grand-Savane area and watch out for the signs.

L'Ornata (☎ 97-54-16; Place Félix Éboué; snacks from €5; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) is a good place near the ferry port to kill some time. It's in a nice old Creole house and most of the tables are on the front porch.

Owned by a former soccer player, the pork chops at **Footy** (☎ 97-99-19; 97112 Grand Bourg; mains from €8; 🕒 lunch & dinner) – notice all the giant black pigs on the island – are divine. It has live music in the club area in the back most Friday and Saturday nights. Make a right from the ferry dock on the main pier and head down the main road for a few minutes.

ST-LOUIS

This fishing village is the island's main anchorage for yachters as well as a secondary port for ferries from Guadeloupe. There's a little market at the end of the dock, and a couple of restaurants and the post office are just east of that.

Although there are beaches along the outskirts of St-Louis, some of the island's most beautiful strands lie a few kilometers to the north. There's a great photo opportunity at the north tip of the island at Gueule Grande Grouffre, a dramatic stone maw that lets out into electric-blue waters.

Village de Ménard (☎ 97-09-45; www.villagede-menard.com; Section Vieux Fort; bungalows from €70; 🕒 🍷 🍷) is a small complex of 11 comfy bungalows on a cliff overlooking the bay. It's 2km from the beach in a quiet country setting. The poolside restaurant *Océanite* will prepare picnic baskets for day-trippers.

Just south of town, at the lovely beach Folle Anse, the three-star **La Hotel Cohoba** (☎ 97-50-50; www.deshotelsetdesiles.com; Folle Anse Cocoyer; r from €194; 🕒 🍷 🍷) has 100 Creole-style bungalows in landscaped gardens. It's a family-friendly place that includes activities like beach volleyball and has a few interesting extras, like ox-cart rides and sailing, for a fee. On-site restaurant.

A beachside place with instruments inside for the live jazz nights and tables in the back that look out on the water, **Chez**

CANE JUICE

Rum distilleries are among the island's main sights. The **Distillerie Poisson** (☎ 97-03-79; Habitation Edouard, Rameau, Grand-Bourg; tastings free; 🕒 7am-1pm Mon-Sat), midway between St-Louis and Grand-Bourg, bottles the island's best-known rum under the Père Labat label. **Distillerie Bielle** (☎ 97-93-62; Section Bielle, Grand-Bourg; tastings free), between Grand-Bourg and Capesterre, offers tours of its age-old distillery operation. Worth a visit for its historic setting, as well as its rum, is **Domaine de Bellevue** (☎ 97-26-50; Section Bellevue, Capesterre; tastings free; 🕒 9:30am-1pm).

All of the distilleries have gift shops.

Henri (☎ 97-04-57; www.chezhenri.net; mains from €11; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) is the archetypal cool little Caribbean bar.

CAPESTERRE

Capesterre, on the southeast coast, is a sea-side town with a little fish market on the main road near **Feuillère beach**, one of the nicest strands on an island full of them. From the village you can explore sea cliffs and hiking trails to the north.

Another attractive beach, **Petite Anse**, is about 1km to the southwest.

Le Soleil Levant (☎ 97-31-55; www.im-caraibes.com/soleil-levant; d from €45; 🍷 🍷) actually has three locations; the main building is perched above the center of Capesterre and the two smaller buildings are in town. The main structure has a nice big sundeck with great sea view, and a downstairs bar-restaurant where locals gather. **Résidence Marine** (r from €130), one of the in-town buildings, dedicates a floor to each of its three large apartments.

Set right on the sand on Petite Anse, the bungalows at **Le Touloulou** (☎ 97-32-63; www.letouloulou.com; r from €50 🍷 🍷) – some with and some without kitchenettes – all have spacious terraces for watching the waves roll in. It has an on-site **restaurant** (mains €16-28; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) and a nightclub that opens up most weekend nights.

LA DÉSIRADE

pop 1700

About 10km off Grande-Terre, La Désirade is the archipelago's least-developed and least-visited island. Even the nicest beaches are nearly deserted; for the ultimate do-nothing vacation it's a place that's hard to beat.

Looking somewhat like an overturned boat when viewed from Guadeloupe, La Désirade is only 11km long and 2km wide,

with a central plateau that rises 273m at its highest point, Grand Montagne.

The uninhabited north side of the island has a rocky coastline with rough open seas, while the south side has sandy beaches and reef-protected waters. There are no dive shops on the island or places to rent snorkeling equipment, so those who want to get below the surface of La Désirade should bring their own gear.

La Désirade's harbor and airport are on the southwest side of the island in **Beauséjour**, the main village. The island's town hall, post office and library are also in Beauséjour. There are smaller settlements at **Le Souffleur** and **Baie Mahault**.

In 1725 Guadeloupe established a leper colony on La Désirade, and for more than two centuries victims of the disease were forced to make a one-way trip to the island. The **leprosarium**, which was run by the Catholic Sisters of Charity, closed in the mid-1950s. Its remains, a chapel and a cemetery are just to the east of Baie Mahault.

La Désirade's main road runs along the southern coast and ends at an art deco-style **weather station** on the eastern tip of the island. Nearby is a **lighthouse**. The trip is worthwhile for the scenery, if nothing else. Gangs of goats that apparently don't see many cars wander the windswept fields here – it's an area of desolate beauty that feels a lot like Brittany in northern France.

SLEEPING & EATING

Oasis Hotel (☎ 20-01-00; www.oasisladesirade.com; s/d €40/48, q studio €60; 🍷 🍷) About 250m from the beach, this pleasant hotel is set in a white two-level Creole-style building. Nearby it has a brightly colored restaurant, Lagranlag (mains €8 to €15; open lunch and dinner Tuesday to Sunday), which specializes in gratins and seafood stews. Meal plans are available for an additional €12 to €22 per day.

ourpick Qualiri Beach Hotel (☎ 20-20-08; www.rendezvouskarukera.com; Beausejour 97127; s/d €74/80; 🚶 🚿) It has six hotel rooms and two bungalows set on a private beach. You'll find an on-site restaurant (mains €14 to €20; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) and a small playground in plain sight so the kiddies can wear themselves out. There's a free 4pm snack time for the kids and an outdoor shower for the wee ones. It has music nights every few weeks, and a brunch party every Sunday. Théodore Comper, the owner, tells us he designed his hotel to give adults a real vacation without leaving the children at home.

La Payotte (☎ 20-01-29; mains from €8; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right on Grande Anse, it serves a tasty variety of daytime dishes and has a limited breakfast menu – but the coffee is strong and the bread is fresh from the oven. A two-minute walk away it has six rooms for rent (double/quad €50/90) in a nice old house shrouded by bougainvilleas.

La Roulotte (☎ 20-02-33; Plage du Souffler; mains from €10; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) With plastic tables in the sand, the food is good but not great. What is great is the sign that asks diners to order before swimming at the beach, and the view of fishing boats bobbing with the tiny waves. It has a patrons-only bathroom near the outdoor wood stove that can come in handy. It's 2.5km east of Beausejour on the main road.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are ferries to St-François and Ste-Anne, both on Grande-Terre; see p578 for details.

GETTING AROUND

Scooter rentals are available at the ferry dock for €10 to €20 a day. The coastal road is a lot hillier than it appears from the boat, making bicycling a sweaty workout. Most locals and visitors prefer the scooters. Just be sure to double-check your scooter – some of them barely roll straight.

DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATIONS

By Caribbean standards, nightly rates are moderate, with budget-end hotels averaging about €45, midrange €75 and upper-end about €180. The prices listed are for high season (December to May), when the majority of

people visit the island; prices can be up to 40% lower during August and September, though some hotels close in September.

Some of the best-value places to stay are not hotels but comfortable family-run facilities known as *gîtes*. **Gîtes de France Guadeloupe** (☎ 82-09-30; www.gitesdefrance-guadeloupe.com; 97171 Pointe-à-Pitre) is an association of homeowners who rent out private rooms and apartments. This is how many French tourists can afford to spend their long vacations here. There's also **Gîtes de France** (☎ 73-74-74, in Paris 01-49-70-75-75; www.gites-de-france.fr; 97209 Fort-de-France), with a convenient website that has an English option. Disabled travelers can search for accessible accommodation.

There are nearly 8000 hotel rooms in Guadeloupe, most in small to mid-size hotels. The bulk of the accommodations are along the south coast of Grande-Terre, between Pointe-à-Pitre and St-François. Rooms on the outlying islands of Les Saintes, Marie-Galante and La Désirade are limited. By Caribbean standards, rates are reasonable and, as in France, taxes and service charges are included in the quoted rate; many hotels also include breakfast.

ACTIVITIES

Beaches & Swimming

White-sand beaches fringe Gosier, Ste-Anne and St-François on Grande-Terre. At the north side of the peninsula leading to Pointe des Châteaux lie two remote beaches: Anse à la Gourde, a gorgeous sweep of white coral sands, and Anse Tarare, the adjacent nudist beach. While most of Grande-Terre's east coast has rough surf, there is a swimmable beach at Le Moule and a little protected cove at Porte d'Enfer. On the west side of Grande-Terre, Port-Louis is the most popular swimming spot, especially on weekends.

The beaches along Basse-Terre's rugged northwest coast are wilder and less crowded, with long, empty stretches of golden sands and views of Montserrat smoldering in the distance. There are also a handful of black-sand beaches along Basse-Terre's southern shore.

Diving & Snorkeling

Guadeloupe's top diving site is the Réserve Cousteau, at Pigeon Island off the west coast of Basse-Terre. Spearfishing has long been banned in this underwater reserve, and consequently the waters surrounding Pigeon Island,

only 1km offshore, are teeming with colorful tropical fish, sponges, sea fans and coral.

There are numerous dive shops in Guadeloupe, especially in the Réserve Cousteau area (p565); the shops here drop snorkelers off in the very scenic shallower waters. Single-dive rates average €40, with discounts on multiple-dive packages.

Golf

The only golf course on Guadeloupe is in St-François (see p558).

Hiking

Guadeloupe has wonderful trails that take in waterfalls, primordial rainforest and botanical gardens. A number of them are simple 10- to 30-minute walks that can be enjoyed as part of a tour around the island.

Serious hikers will find many longer, more rigorous trails in the national park on Basse-Terre. The most popular are those leading to the volcanic summit of La Soufrière, the island's highest point, and to the base of Chutes du Carbet, the Eastern Caribbean's highest waterfalls. Both make for scenic half-day treks. Keep in mind that this is serious rainforest hiking, so be prepared for wet conditions and wear good hiking shoes.

The website of the **Guadeloupe Parc National** (www.guadeloupe-parcnational.com) has maps and hiking information.

Surfing

Le Moule, Port-Louis and Anse Bertrand commonly have good surfing conditions from around October to May. In summer, Ste-Anne and St-François can have good wave action.

PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers & Magazines** *France-Antilles* is the local daily newspaper.
- **Radio & TV** Tune into Radio France Outre-Mer (RFO) for public radio and TV.
- **Video systems** Use the Secam video system.
- **Electricity** The current used is 220V, 50 cycles; plugs use two circular prongs. Plug adapters are a good idea.
- **Weights & Measures** Guadeloupe uses the metric system and the 24-hour clock.

Windsurfing

Windsurfing is quite popular on Guadeloupe. Much of the activity is near the resorts on the south side of Grande-Terre and on Terre-de-Haut. Windsurfing gear can be rented from beach huts for about €20 an hour.

Union des Centres Sportifs de Plein Air (UCPA; ☎ 88-64-80; www.ucpa.com; 97118 St-François) has week-long windsurfing/hotel packages in both St-François and Terre-de-Haut.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses are open Monday to Friday, 8am to noon, close for lunch, and then reopen from 2pm to 5pm. Banks follow a similar pattern, but usually don't reopen after lunch one day per week.

Unless otherwise noted, meal hours used in this chapter are as follows: breakfast 7am to 9am, lunch noon to 2pm, dinner 7pm to 9pm.

CHILDREN

Because of all the French families that come here, there are a number of kid-friendly hotels and activities. Many hotels have activities just for kids and a special children's menu. Medical care and sanitation is of the same high quality as in mainland France.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is found throughout Grande-Terre and in much of Basse-Terre, including Grand Étang lake. The main method of prevention is to avoid swimming or wading in fresh water.

There have been recent outbreaks of dengue fever, aka breakbone fever because of the joint and muscle pain it inflicts. It's potentially fatal. Health professionals advise using insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin on exposed skin. Dengue outbreaks tend to occur wherever there's standing water – more frequent in cities than in the countryside.

Occasional islandwide strikes can grind tourism services to a screeching halt.

For the lowdown on the shady side of Pointe-à-Pitre, see p552.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Guadeloupe is represented in your home country by the embassy or consulate of France. There are no consulates or embassies on the island – you'll need to head to Dominica (p599) or Martinique (p624) – although there are a

number of consular agents who may be able to help. These agents are listed under Practical Information on the website of the **Guadeloupe Islands Tourism Board** (www.lesilesdegadeloupe.com).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Carnival Celebrations are held during the traditional week-long Mardi Gras period that ends on Ash Wednesday. They feature costume parades, dancing, music and other festivities.

Tour Cycliste de la Guadeloupe A 10-day international cycling race held in early August.

La Route du Rhum A solo sailing competition that starts in northern France and ends in Pointe-à-Pitre. It takes place every four years in November; 2010 and 2014 are the next two.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Guadeloupe usually earns OK marks from gay travel organizations. Homosexuality is legally protected under French law, but islander attitudes tend to be less tolerant. Gay couples usually do not publicly express affection or advertise their sexual orientation. Hoteliers don't seem to care who shares a bed.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays in Guadeloupe:

New Year's Day January 1

Easter Sunday Late March/early April

Easter Monday Late March/early April

Labor Day May 1

Victory Day May 8

Ascension Thursday 40th day after Easter

Pentecost Monday Eighth Monday after Easter

Slavery Abolition Day May 27

Bastille Day July 14

Schoelcher Day July 21

Assumption Day August 15

All Saints Day November 1

Armistice Day November 11

Christmas Day December 25

INTERNET ACCESS

Most towns and villages have at least one internet café. In many places, the public library has one or two computers for free web access. Wi-fi at hotels is becoming more common.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Guadeloupe Radio France (<http://guadeloupe.rfo.fr> in French) Video and radio reports on island news and culture.

Guadeloupe Islands Tourism Board (www.lesilesdegadeloupe.com) Has a good English-language section with a nice overview of everything on tap here.

LANGUAGE

In the tourist towns near the capital (Gosier, Ste-Anne) and anyplace there's a large sailing community (Deshaies, St-François) a visitor can get by with just some basic French expressions. For exploration further afield a good command of basic French is very helpful. A phrase book is a great idea.

MAPS

The best map of Guadeloupe is the Guadeloupe map published by the Institut Géographique National (IGN), sold at bookstores around the island for €9.70. There are free town maps in many of the highly visited destinations.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical care is equivalent to mainland France: very good. The biggest hospital is the Centre Hospitalier in Pointe-à-Pitre, though there are smaller hospitals in almost every region. There are plenty of pharmacies everywhere; look for the green cross, often flashing in neon.

MONEY

The euro is the island currency. Hotels, larger restaurants and car-rental agencies accept Visa, American Express and MasterCard.

Avoid changing money at hotel lobbies, where the rates are worse than at exchange offices or banks. Currency exchange offices, called *bureaux de change*, are scattered around Pointe-à-Pitre, and ATMs (called ABMs, *distributeurs de billets* or *distributeurs automatiques*) will usually give good rates.

POST

There are post offices in all major towns. You can also buy postage stamps at some *tabacs* (tobacco shops), hotels and souvenir shops.

Mailing addresses given in this chapter should be followed by 'Guadeloupe, French West Indies.'

TELEPHONE

The French West Indies country code is ☎ 590, but you just dial the six-digit local number in the islands. The area code for Guadeloupe is also ☎ 590, so to call from abroad dial your country's international access code plus ☎ 590-590 + the local six-digit number. To call from within the French phone system, omit the country code and add a '0': ☎ 0590 + the local number. We have

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- **Ambulance** ☎ 18
- **Fire** ☎ 18
- **Police** ☎ 17

included only the six-digit local number for the Guadeloupe listings in this chapter. To dial a cell phone, call ☎ 0690 + the number.

Cell Phones

Before leaving home, check with your home cell-phone service provider to see if they have a roaming agreement with one of the GSM networks in Guadeloupe – if it does, ask how much calls will cost; one network may be cheaper than others.

SIM cards (starting at €25) are available for unlocked cell phones and usually include some talk time before recharging. Digicel and Orange are the two main SIM card vendors.

Phone Cards

Public phones in Guadeloupe accept French *télécartes* (phone cards) and, less often, coins. The cards cost €5, €10 or €15, depending on the calling time, and are sold at post offices and at shops marked *télécartes en vente ici*. For directory assistance, dial ☎ 12.

The cards that have users dial a toll-free number to place their calls are usually the best deal; they have to be activated on private phones but will then work fine on public phones.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Many towns have at least a small tourism office where the staff is proficient in English. Pamphlets, mainly in French but with enough pictures and maps to get the gist, are available at airports and many hotels. Also check out the **Guadeloupe Islands Tourism Board** (www.lesilesdeguadeloupe.com).

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Stairs are a common difficulty for disabled travelers and many sidewalks have high curbs. Some hotels, however, have disabled-accessible rooms.

VISAS

Citizens of the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand can stay for up to 90 days

without a visa by showing a valid passport (US citizens see the boxed text, p830). EU citizens need an official identity card, passport or valid French *carte de séjour* (visitor card). Citizens of most other countries need a valid passport and a visa from a French consulate valid for admission to the Overseas French Department of Guadeloupe.

TRANSPORTATION

GETTING THERE & AWAY**Entering Guadeloupe**

You'll be required to fill out a simple immigration slip on arrival, outlining details of your stay and the purpose of your visit. All visitors officially require a return or onward ticket.

Air

Guadeloupe Le Raizet Airport (PTP; Pole Caraïbes; ☎ 21-14-72) is north of Pointe-à-Pitre, 6km from the city center on N5. The terminal has a tourist information booth, car-rental booths, a couple of restaurants, ATMs and money-change bureaus. Immigration officers here are relatively fast and professional.

Air Antilles Express (☎ 21-14-47; www.airantilles.com) St-Barthélemy, St-Martin/Sint Maarten

Air Canada (☎ 21-12-77; www.aircanada.com) Montreal

Air Caraïbes (☎ 82-47-00; www.aircaraibes.com) Cayenne, Fort-de-France, Panama City, Paris, Santo Domingo, St-Barthélemy, St-Martin/Sint Maarten

Air France (☎ 82-61-61; www.airfrance.com) Cayenne, Fort-de-France, Miami, Paris

American Airlines (www.aa.com) San Juan

Corsairfly (☎ 21-12-11; www.corsairfly.com) Brest, Lyon, Nantes, Paris

LIAT (☎ 82-13-93; www.liat.com) Antigua

Sea

Popular with yachties and sailors, there is mooring in Deshaies and St-François, and at the marina near Pointe-à-Pitre. Cruise ships regularly call on the island. There are a number of ferries to the outlying islands of Guadeloupe and other Caribbean destinations.

CRUISE SHIP

Cruise ships dock right in the city at Centre St-John Perse, Pointe-à-Pitre's old port complex, and at the spiffy new cruise ship terminal.

For more information on cruise lines servicing the region, see p830.

FERRY

There are two companies providing regular ferry service between Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica and St Lucia. For information on services between Guadeloupe and its outlying islands, see the relevant sections in this chapter. All the ferries listed leave from the Gare Maritime de Bergevin in Pointe-à-Pitre.

L'Express des Îles (☎ harbor office 91-69-68, admin office 83-72-27; www.express-des-iles.com) operates large, modern catamarans between Guadeloupe, Martinique and Dominica. The boats have air-conditioned cabins with TV entertainment and a snack bar.

There are three weekly crossings to Fort-de-France, Martinique, from Pointe-à-Pitre (one way/round-trip €67/100). Ferries leave on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, and the journey takes three hours.

Boats leave Pointe-à-Pitre for Roseau in Dominica, and Castries, St Lucia, on Friday, Wednesday and Sunday (one way/round-trip €67/100). It's nearly a seven-hour journey, usually with stops in Martinique and Dominica on the way.

Departure days and times for these services change frequently and often bear no relation to the printed schedule. The only way to be sure is to call L'Express des Îles or check with a local travel agent.

There are discounts of 50% for children aged two to 11, and 10% for passengers aged under 26, or aged 60 and older.

Brudey Frères (☎ 90-04-48; www.brudey-freres.fr) has a 350-passenger catamaran with a daily service between Pointe-à-Pitre and Fort-de-France (one way/round-trip €57/87). In season, there's an extra boat on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

It also has a regular service (every day in high season) between Guadeloupe and Dominica for €55/80 one way/round-trip and a once- or twice-a-week service to St Lucia (one way/round-trip €80/115).

Brudey offers discounts for youths and elders. Schedules change, so check current timetables.

YACHT

Guadeloupe has three marinas:

Marina de Bas du Fort (☎ 90-84-85; www.caribbean-marinas.com/basdufort), between Pointe-à-Pitre and Gosier, has 700 berths, 55 of which are available for visiting boats.

Marina de St-François (☎ 88-47-28), in the center of St-François, has about 250 moorings, as well as fuel, water, ice and electricity.

Marina de Rivière-Sens (☎ 81-77-61), on the southern outskirts of the town of Basse-Terre, has 220 moorings, fuel, water and ice.

Customs and immigration offices are located in Pointe-à-Pitre, Basse-Terre and Deshaies.

The yacht charter companies **Antilles Sail** (☎ 90-16-81; www.antilles-sail.com) and **Dream Yacht Charter** (☎ 74-81-68; www.dreamyachtcharter.com) are based at Marina de Bas du Fort.

GETTING AROUND

For travelers visiting more than one city, a car rental is almost a necessity. The main tourist spots on the southern coast of Grande-Terre are navigable without a car, but for the most part a vehicle comes in handy. Many hotels can arrange airport pickup and car rental.

Air

Air Caraïbes (☎ 82-47-00; www.aircaraibes.com) has daily flights between Pointe-à-Pitre and Marie-Galante and Terre-de-Haut. See those island sections for details.

Bicycle

Bicycles are an adventurous, somewhat strenuous way to see Terre-de-Haut and Marie-Galante. Rentals start at €10 per day.

Boat

Ferries run between Grande-Terre and Terre-de-Haut, Marie-Galante and La Désirade. There are also ferries from Trois-Rivières on Basse-Terre to Terre-de-Haut.

POINTE-À-PITRE TO TERRE-DE-HAUT

A one-way trip takes about 50 minutes.

Brudey Frères (☎ 90-04-48; www.brudey-freres.fr) leaves Pointe-à-Pitre every day at 7:50am for Terre-de-Haut, departing Terre-de-Haut at 3:45pm (one way/round-trip €24/40).

L'Express des Îles (☎ 91-69-58; www.express-des-iles.com) leaves Pointe-à-Pitre for Terre-de-Haut at 8am Monday to Thursday, departing from Terre-de-Haut at 4:30pm (one way/round-trip €24/39).

POINTE-À-PITRE TO MARIE-GALANTE

A one-way trip takes about 40 minutes.

Brudey Frères (☎ 90-04-48; www.brudey-freres.fr) leaves Pointe-à-Pitre for Marie-Galante every day of the week two to three times per day starting at 7:45am (one way/round-trip €24/39).

L'Express des Îles (☎ 91-69-58; www.express-des-iles.com) goes to Marie-Galante every day, three times per day, starting at 8:15am (one way/round-trip €24/40). On Sundays there's a 6:15pm departure from Grand Bourg – a nice way to spend a long day at the beach.

ST-FRANÇOIS TO TERRE-DE-HAUT

From St-François, **Iguana** (☎ 22-26-31) ferries to Terre-de-Haut leave on Monday and Thursday at 7:30am and depart Terre-de-Haut at 3:30pm (one way/round-trip €20/30). In good weather, a one-way trip takes an hour and 10 minutes.

ST-FRANÇOIS TO MARIE-GALANTE

The voyage takes 35 minutes each way.

Colibri (☎ 35-79-47; Port de Pêche) leaves St-François for Marie-Galante every day of the week two to three times per day starting at 7:45am (one way/round-trip €24/39).

From St-François, **Iguana** (☎ 22-26-31) has a ferry to St-Louis every day (in high season) starting at 7:30am and returning at 3:30pm (one way/round-trip €22/30).

ST-FRANÇOIS TO LA DÉSIRADE

A one-way voyage takes 25 minutes.

Colibri (☎ 35-79-47; Port de Pêche) boats leave from St-François every day, twice per day, starting at 8am with the return trip at 3:30pm (one way/round-trip €16/22).

Iguana (☎ 22-26-31) has a ferry to La Désirade every day at 4:45pm with an additional 8am service on weekends (one way/round-trip €16/22).

STE-ANNE TO TERRE-DE-HAUT

Iguana (☎ 22-26-31) leaves from Ste-Anne for Les Saintes every day at 7:30am, returning at 3:30pm (one way/round-trip €24/35). The trip takes about an hour.

STE-ANNE TO MARIE-GALANTE

In high season **Iguana** (☎ 22-26-31) usually has one or two midweek round-trips from Ste-Anne (one way/round-trip €23/38). Check the handwritten sign in front of the ticket kiosk at the western end of the Village Artisanal in Ste-Anne for the week's schedule. The one-way crossing takes 30 minutes.

STE-ANNE TO LA DÉSIRADE

In high season, **Iguana** (☎ 22-26-31) usually has weekend service from Ste-Anne (one way/round-trip €23/38). Check the handwritten sign in front of the ticket kiosk at the western end of the Village Artisanal in Ste-Anne for the week's schedule. The trip takes about 35 minutes one way.

TERRE-DE-HAUT TO TERRE-DE-BAS

A Brudey Frères boat makes the 10-minute trip between Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas (€6 round-trip) four to six times daily, depending on the season, between 8am and 4pm.

TROIS-RIVIÈRES TO TERRE-DE-HAUT

A one-way journey only takes 20 minutes.

Brudey Frères (☎ 90-04-48; www.brudey-freres.fr) leaves Trois-Rivières for Terre-de-Haut every day, twice per day, at 8:45am, departing Terre-de-Haut at 4:30pm (one way/round-trip €16/22).

CTM Deher (☎ 92-06-39; www.ctmdeher.com; Bord de Mer 97114, Trois-Rivières) heads to Terre-de-Haut from Trois-Rivières every day, twice per day, at 9am, departing at 4:30pm (one way/round-trip €14/21).

Bus

Guadeloupe has a good public bus system that operates from about 5:30am to 6:30pm, with fairly frequent service on main routes. On Saturday afternoon service is much lighter, and there are almost no buses on Sunday.

Many bus routes start and end in Pointe-à-Pitre; see p551 for details.

Destinations are written on the buses. Bus stops have blue signs picturing a bus; in less developed areas you can wave buses down along their routes.

Car

DRIVER'S LICENSE

A driver's license from your home country is necessary to drive here.

RENTAL

Several car-rental companies have offices at the airport and in major resort areas. Some agents will let you rent a car near your hotel and drop it off free of charge at the airport, which can save a hefty taxi fare.

Companies generally drop their rates the longer you keep the car, with the weekly rate

working out to be about 15% cheaper, overall, than the daily rate. Nearly all companies use an unlimited-kilometers rate.

Rates for small cars are advertised from around €35 per day, although the rates offered on a walk-in basis and availability of cars can vary greatly with the season. It's a good idea to reserve ahead from December to May.

Car-rental companies:

Avis (☎ 21-13-49; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 21-13-49; www.budget.com)

Europcar (☎ 21-13-52; www.europcar.com)

Hertz (☎ 84-20-23; www.hertz.com)

ROAD CONDITIONS

Roads are excellent by Caribbean standards and almost invariably hard-surfaced, although secondary and mountain roads are often narrow.

Around Pointe-à-Pitre there are multilane highways, with cars zipping along at 110km/h. Outside the Pointe-à-Pitre area, most high-

ways have a single lane in each direction and an 80km/h speed limit.

ROAD RULES

In Guadeloupe, drive on the right. Traffic regulations and road signs are of European standards. Exits and intersections are clearly marked, and speed limits are posted.

Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking is fairly common on Guadeloupe, particularly when the bus drivers decide to go on strike. The proper stance is to hold out an open palm at a slightly downward angle. All the usual safety precautions apply.

Taxi

Taxis are plentiful but expensive. There are taxi stands at the airport in Pointe-à-Pitre.

Fares are 40% higher from 9pm to 7am nightly, as well as all day on Sunday and holidays. You can call for a taxi by dialing ☎ 82-00-00 or ☎ 83-99-99 in the Pointe-à-Pitre area.

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