



Parc national  
de la Guadeloupe



The National Park of Guadeloupe...  
**Discovery guide**

# Summary

The National Park of Guadeloupe : a preserved nature in a tropical environment .....	p. 3
The Soufrière Volcano .....	p. 6
The Carbet Waterfalls and the ponds .....	p. 10
The Route de la Traversée .....	p. 14
The Ilets Pigeon .....	p. 20
The Grand Cul-de-Sac-Marin, Îlets Kahouanne and Tête-à-l'Anglais .....	p. 24
Tips for the exploration of the National Park of Guadeloupe .....	p. 28
Useful informations .....	p. 30





# The National Park of Guadeloupe : a preserved nature in a tropical environment

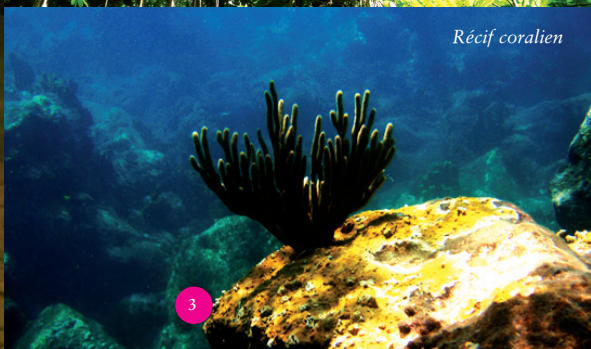
The National Park of Guadeloupe was created in 1989 in order to preserve special territories which are representative of tropical environments of a high heritage value. From the seabeds of the islets to the leeward side or North of Basse-Terre up to the highest summits of the mountains of the island, it ensures the conservation of ecosystems both rich and varied: coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, swamp forests, dense rain forests and cloud savannahs... •

An anthology of the most beautiful landscapes of Guadeloupe, the Park harbours the most prestigious sites on the island; Les Deux Mamelles, Les Chutes du Carbet (The Carbet Waterfalls) and above all, the Soufrière volcano. In addition to their distinctiveness, all these sites provide access to trails (or «traces"/paths as we call them here) which allow a total immersion into the heart of the lush forest.

This guidebook invites you to discover these points of interest of the National Park. It will help you to have a better knowledge of the main asset of Guadeloupe : its exceptional diversity. •



*Forêt dense humide*



*Récif coralien*

# GUADELOUPE NATIONAL PARK



*Le Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin,  
les Ilets Kahouanne et Tête-à-l'Anglais*



- ① Headquarters  
+ information point
- ② Forest house  
+ information point
- ③ Chutes du Carbet home
- ④ Field office of Baie-Mahault
- ⑤ Côte Sous-le-Vent home  
+ information point



- city
  - principal road
  - main river
- National Park :**
- 1 information point
  - core zone**  
*activities regulated by decree*
  - members area of the Park**  
*sustainable development strategy*
  - adjacent sea area**  
*sustainable development strategy*



# The Soufrière Volcano

« A grand show. Everything is imposing, calm, and roaring ...»  
(Henri Stehlé)

Colloquially known as «the Old Lady», the Soufrière Volcano is in reality a young girl. The present dome came about around 1530, and was not yet there when Christopher Columbus landed in Guadeloupe in 1493...



*Forêt dans la brume*

## An active volcano

it's probably one of the most hospitable in the world. But whether it disturbs or fascinates, it is a unique venue for unforgettable experiences. The volcano is under close and thorough scrutiny. The information is collected by the scientists of the Guadeloupe Volcano and seismic Observatory, in charge of forecasting and interpreting the volcano's behaviour.

## The cloud forest

The distinctive ecological conditions of Soufrière explain the development of a truly distinctive vegetation.

- First of all, **the rainfall** up to 10 meters per year, makes the Soufrière Volcano one of the rainiest places in the world;
- **The clouds** which cover the top around 300 days per year justify the name «the cloud forest» given to this stunted vegetation ;
- **The wind** from the East, often violent, which sweeps through the site throughout the year. The temperature, usually around 19 degrees C (66,2°F), also explains in part the difficult growth of certain plants.

This vegetation, of great patrimonial and scientific interest because of its capacity to adapt to the harsh conditions of life, also suffers the onslaught of toxic fumes from the volcano. •





*Lycopodes*



*Thym montagne*



*Ananas montagne*



*La Soufrière*

### **To discover ...**

The easiest access, is the Bains-Jaunes location (off the D11 road), which takes its name from the pool of lukewarm water (formerly sulphur coloured) built there in the nineteenth century by the colonial army. To direct the visitor to the summit, fun and educational panels mark the route along a landscaped and well maintained trail. Climbing to the top, approximately two hours of walking, starts at the Pas du Roy trail, through the rain forest, up to the Savane-à-Mulets, at the foot of the dome, then up the Chemin des Dames.

On the slopes and at the top, the hiker will come upon ananas rouge et jaune montagne (Bromeliaceae), violette des hauts, and the fuschia-montagne. The most impressive tree is the (mangle-montagne) with its thick, tough leaves. The cloudiness promotes the proliferation of mosses, lichens, and sphagnum...

Wildlife remains very discreet. Throughout the hike, the visitor will be accompanied by the crystal singing of hylodes, tiny frogs to be found all over Guadeloupe. One will also meet several endemic invertebrates, including the tarantula of Soufrière, a spider endemic to our volcano about 3 to 4 cm long, and totally harmless.

On your way back, indulge in the warm pool, then give yourself a lunch break in the Beausoleil picnic area.

Other hiking trails connected to this itinerary lead to the Chute du Galion (The Galleon waterfall) or the Citerne peak, or to Matouba... •

### **For your information ...**

The Headquarters of the National Park of Guadeloupe, also an information center, open to visitors (see p. 31) •

# THE SOUFRIERE volcano

- ★ points of interest
- ! view
- P car park
- 🏠 shelter
- 🚫 closed road
- path
- main rivers
- secondary rivers







# The Carbet Waterfalls and the ponds

At the East of the Soufrière volcano, the Water Falls of the Grand Carbet river are among the most beautiful falls in the Caribbean. Three in total, they have contributed to Guadeloupe's fame, and there is no doubt why it has earned the name «the island of the beautiful waters» (Karukera) given by the Carib Indians.

The first waterfall is the highest of the three: there is a jump of 115 meters in two levels. The second fall is the best known. 110 meters high, it offers a magnificent scenery. The third fall, 20 meters high, is more modest. The first two of these famous waterfalls are located in the heart of the Guadeloupe National Park.

## Small mountain lakes

In the vicinity of the Carbet Waterfalls there are several expanses of water commonly called ponds. Equivalent to small mountain lakes, these water ways have been born out of the various volcanic eruptions which have formed the relief of the island, and created depressions in which water has accumulated. These lakes, colonized by aquatic vegetation, are in the process of being filled up. Some of them are not water tight and remain empty a good portion of the year. The deepest teem with crustaceans like the ouassous (fresh water shrimp), small fishes, and leeches. •



*1ere Chute du Carbet*





*Vue aérienne Grand Étang*



*Poules d'eau*

### **To discover ...**

#### **The Waterfalls**

Leaving the Carbet visitors parking area, (at the end of the department road D. 4), it takes about 1h45 min to reach the first fall. Dedicated to experienced walkers, this trail features a few difficult passages, particularly the crossing of a ravine which can prove very dangerous in rain. The second Waterfall remains dangerous to approach due to the possibility of falling rocks; it is visible from an observation platform which is accessible after a 15 to 20 minutes of secured walk.

#### **The ponds and lakes**

Access to the Grand-Étang is from the parking area located shortly after the small village of l'Habituée on the department road D4. Walking round this large expanse of water, a true bird sanctuary, takes about an hour, and gives you a first-hand experience of the most beautiful hygrophilous forest. (Caution: Mosquitoes are fond of these humid places: remember to protect yourselves). The trail leads to a floating observatory where many specimens of the local avian fauna can be observed. From this site, a trail (la Boucle des Étangs) connects to several other lakes (Étang Roche, Étang Madère, Étang As de Pique...) in a little less than 5 hours via a rather difficult and often slippery track.

#### **The River**

Near the Carbet Waterfalls visitors parking lot, the Grosse Corde river features to the East a fresh water pool, and a waterfall (Cascade Paradise), and to the West a warm water pool. •









### **For your information...**

Interpretive area at the Chutes du Carbet reception area (see p. 31) •

# THE CARBET WATERFALLS AND THE PONDS

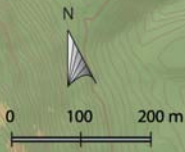


## Equipments :

-  Information point
-  Toilets
-  View
-  Picnic area
-  Car park
-  Shelter
-  Waterfall
-  Birds observatory



- Path
- Main river
- Secondary river
- National park : core zones
- Tropical rain forest
- Upland forest



Sources : BD Topo® - © IGN 2011 ; PNG



# The Route de la Traversée



*Cascade aux écrevisses*

Opened in 1967, La Route de la Traversée is the only roadway which links Petit-Bourg to Pointe-Noire through the imposing mountain range of Basse-Terre. It therefore plays a particularly important role for the inhabitants of the Leeward coast.

The Route de La Traversée is also called the Route des Mamelles, the two pitons with suggestive female breast forms, that are visible from Pointe-à-Pitre and around :

- The Mamelle de Petit-Bourg : 716 m high (2,349 ft)
- The Mamelle de Pigeon: 768 m high (2,519 ft)

Runaway Maroons would hide in the woodland there in the former days of slavery it still features natural wonders known only to forest Rangers for many years. It is now listed as part of the National Park.

This forest is a constituent of the world biodiversity hotspot that Guadeloupe is known to be.

Visitors may spot there birds like Brown tremblers, Prothonotary Warblers, Bridled Quail Doves, or the Guadeloupe Woodpecker, a bird endemic to our island. The rivers and streams are home to the ouassou (freshwater shrimp), the mullet (white and black fish) and Mountain crabs.

Several sites along this route are regularly maintained by the National Park teams to ensure a pleasurable, peaceful and safe experience of all amenities of the Park. •

## To discover ...

### The Trail to the Cascade aux Ecrevisses (crayfish pool and Waterfall)

This Waterfall is not very high, but the constant flow and the enchanting setting that surrounds the crystal clear lake, have made it one of the most popular visitors attractions of the island. The access path is fully equipped to accommodate wheelchairs and to facilitate visually impaired visitors. The site is a «Tourism and disability» listed area.

### The (Maison de la Forêt )

#### Forest House and its interpretive trail

The Forest House is a visitors center located on the side of route de la Traversée and is the only place for direct exposure to the manifold features of the rich Guadeloupe tropical forest. A free exhibition is presented to Visitors to help them to approach this rich and fragile environment, and to better understand the essential role that the forestland had in the lives of Guadeloupeans. The visit continues next with a discovery trail in total immersion into the heart of the « rain forest ».

#### The trails

All hikers will find their suitable kind of trail. In addition to the trails located in close proximity to the Forest interpretive center, several trails run through this area:

- Ruisseaux trail
- Rivière Quiock trail
- Mamelle de Pigeon trail
- Mamelle de Petit-Bourg trail
- Crêtes trail

All these trails provide an opportunity to discover the riches and sights of the Guadeloupe tropical rain forest, one of the best preserved forestland in the Lesser Antilles.

#### The picnic areas

Less than 20 minutes from Pointe-à-Pitre, the Route de La Traversée is somehow the big «full size botanical garden» for Guadeloupeans... The picnic areas of the Cascade aux Ecrevisses, of Corossol, Bras David, and Petit Bras David are all located at the water's edge and well kept. They offer much appreciated surroundings for day outings. Well maintained, they all feature car parks, sheltered tables and benches, as well as barbecue grills. The picnic areas at Corossol and Bras David, provide wheelchair access. •

## For your information ...

Visitors information center at the House of the Forest interpretive center (see p. 31) •





*Aire de pique-nique de Bras David*



*Trace en forêt*



*Grive trembleuse*





*Epiphyte*



*Contreforts*

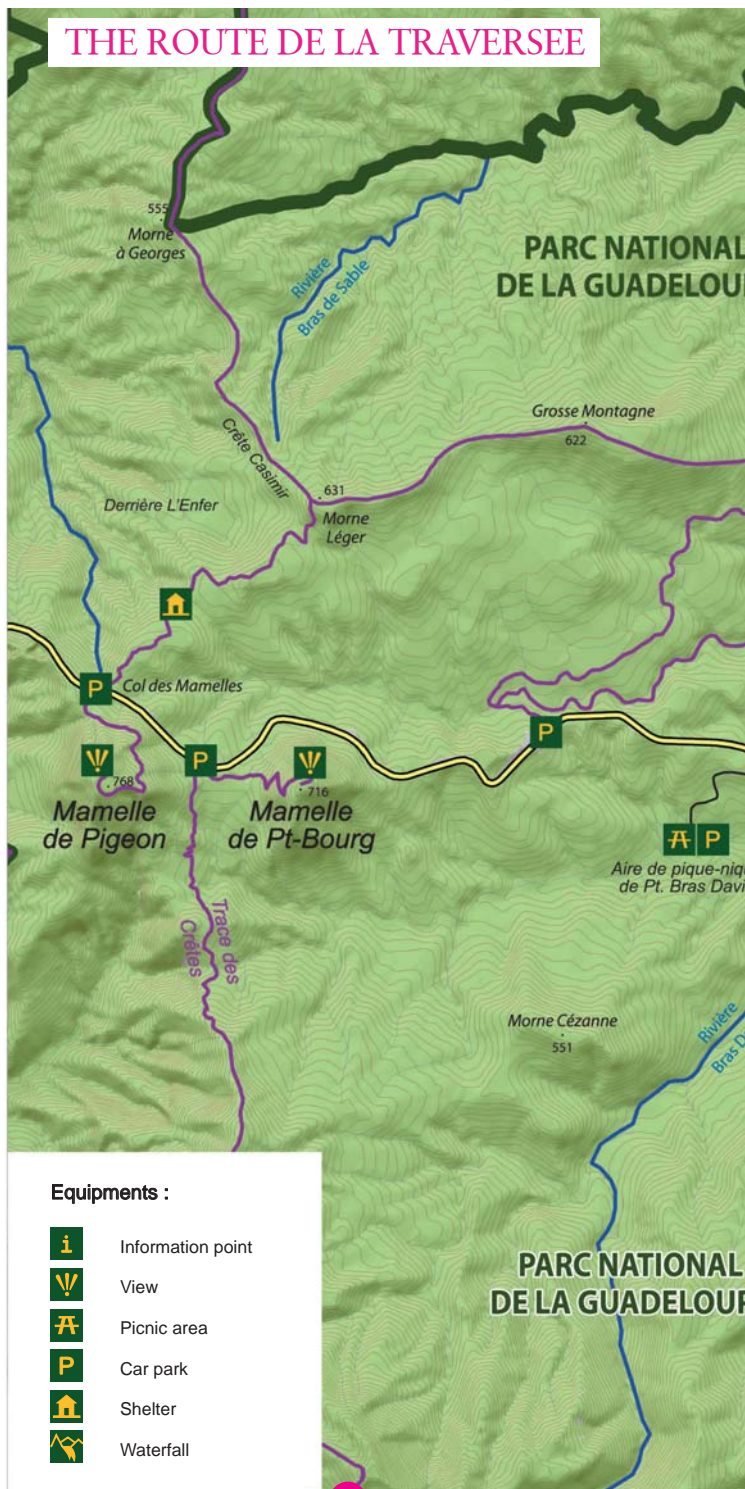


*Maison de la forêt*









*Dynaste*

## THE ROUTE DE LA TRAVERSEE



### Equipments :

-  Information point
-  View
-  Picnic area
-  Car park
-  Shelter
-  Waterfall







# The Îlets Pigeon

Originally called «Islet à Goyave», in the XVII century these islets were named after Mr Pigeon, a major plantation owner and land developer of facilities for the emerging sugar industry at the time.

Located approximately 1 km from the coastline of Bouillante, just off the Malendure beach, the îlets Pigeon comprise two islets totaling approximately 8 hectares (7 and 1 hectares respectively) separated by a sandy channel some 30 meters wide.

The islets are covered with a dry vegetation, prominently the Beach apple tree (Manchineel tree) the White Cider and the Frangipani. On the rocks, the most noticeable species is the Cochineal Cactus.

The Îlets Pigeon and their surroundings represent a unique area that brings together original and diversified marine and terrestrial communities. They are composed of rocks, volcanic in origin, and nursing grounds to a wealth of coral communities.

The Îlets Pigeon receive large numbers of visitors, particularly scuba-divers. The growing success of the site multiplies the heavy threats to the ecosystems. In order to ensure the protection of this fragile heritage, they got classified as «the heart of the National Park» in 2009, for marine and coastal protected areas •



*Îlets Pigeon*

### **To discover ...**

The beauty of the underwater riches of the islets has caused them to be amongst the most frequented sites of the island. In addition to scuba-diving, numerous boating activities are on offer to visitors: canoe-kayak, glass-bottomed boat, whale watching, snorkeling, ...

In 1974, Commandant Jacques Cousteau, well acquainted with the islets, included a few images of them in his movie «The World of Silence», and had expressed the desire to have the site protected because of its exceptional features. As a matter of fact a bronze bust of the famous navigator is sunk there 12 meters underwater...

Moorings are provided for boating tours stakeholders and yachtsmen to ensure the preservation of the site.

To ensure a nature friendly exploration of the site, many dive clubs have signed the charter of best manners initiated by the National Park. •

### **For your information...**

Visitors center **in the Maison du Parc en Côte Sous-le-Vent** (interpretive information center, on the leeward side) (see p. 31) •



*Tortue verte*





*Cachalots*



*Gorgone*



*Etoile de mer*



*Poisson perroquet*






*Coraux corne d'élan*



-  wreck
-  anchorage
-  municipal boundaries
-  principal roads
-  principal rivers
-  300 meters strip  
(navigation regulated)
-  fishing reserve

National park :

-  core zones
-  members area of the park
-  adjacent sea area



Mer  
des  
Caraïbes

Pointe Mahault

Ilets  
Pigeon

Pointe à Lézard

BOUILLANTE

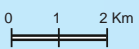
DESHAIES

POINTE-NOIRE

Anse à la Barque

maison de la  
Côte-Sous-Le-Vent

VIEUX-  
HABITANTS



Sources : PNG ; BD Topo © - IGN 2011

Ilets Pigeon



# The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin, Îlets Kahouanne and Tête-à-l'Anglais

**The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin** is a vast array of 24,500 hectares off Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre, and closed in by the longest coral reef of the Lesser Antilles (29 km long) bounded by the largest mangrove area of the Lesser Antilles. This huge lagoon, houses the main ecosystems of the shoreline and the sea (swamp forests, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs ...).

The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin thus constitutes a reservoir of exceptional biodiversity. It houses the majority of the species of the coral fauna and 60 per cent of the gorgonians of the French West Indies.

- **The coral reefs** are an important barrier, breaking the swells of the tide.
- **Seagrass beds** of marine phanerogams thrive in shallow waters. These seagrass beds are ecologically important and vital for the bay.
- **The mangrove** is made up of mangrove trees (*Rhizophora* sp) which the main feature is to be able to develop in an flooded environment with salt or brackish water. This environment plays a buffering role to coastal erosion, a filter, and shelter for the avian fauna.
- **The swamp forest/wetlands** wetlands are found after the mangrove in the flood plains out of the reach of the tides, along the rivers and along the flat shores. The vegetation is dominated by the manatee bush (*Avicennia germinans* *Avicennia schaueriana*) (*Laguncularia racemosa*) (*Conocarpus erectus*).
- **The herbaceous marshes :**
  - > the brackish marshes
  - > the freshwater marshes
  - > the wetlands

Wildlife is represented by a particularly rich avifauna (sea birds, freshwater and land birds..) who find in these shallow wetlands an abundance of food: shellfish, soft shells, small fishes ... The West Indian manatee thrived in the waters of the Grand Cul-de-Sac until the beginning of the 20th century, but now extinct by over hunting. The National Park has plans for its reintroduction.

Since 1992, the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin has been included in the Ramsar List of «wetland of international importance for wetland birds» (RAMSAR Convention) and since 2009, 3,500 hectares, both terrestrial and marine, have been classified as a National Park supervised area.

**The îlet Kahouanne** (20 hectares) offers landscapes of cliffs, hills and beaches. It is made up of a wide variety, well preserved dry forest, a mangrove forest and a rocky coastal zone and sandy places for turtle nesting.

**The îlet Tête-à-l'Anglais** (1.5 hectares) is of volcanic origin. It's a specific dry forest environment dominated by the Pipe organ cactus, endemic to the West Indies but rare in Guadeloupe, with candle cactus (*Pilosocereus royeri*) and Spanish Lady (*Opuntia triacantha*). The island also hosts birds such as the brown noddies, Tidal terns, Roseate terns and other sooty tern sp). It is a place of rest for the boobies, and the magnificent frigatebirds (*Albatross* sp). •

#### To discover ...

Several recreational operators offer various tours inside this amazing natural heritage, by kayaking, pedalboat or by boat, ... •

**Attention : No access to Ilet Blanc from May 1 st to August 31st, due to the Terns nesting period. •**

*Paysage de mangrove, Ilet à Fajou*





# THE GRAND CUL-DE-SAC MARIN



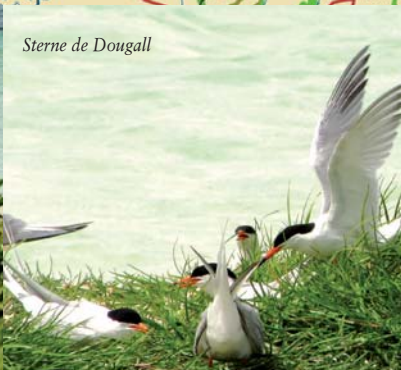
## Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin



*Pélican*



*Sterne de Dougall*



*Etang Bois sec, Ilet à Fajou*





*Etang bois sec, Ilet à Fajou*



*îlet Tête-à-l'Anglais*



*Palétuvier rouge*

# Tips for the exploration of the National Park of Guadeloupe

Whether at sea or in our forest, the natural wealth of our heritage is freely accessible to the visitor who respects them. One should be aware that the natural setting in Guadeloupe features certain dangers that visitors may be unaware of. To have the full benefit of your visit in the best conditions of comfort and safety, please follow these guidelines :

## 1 - For scuba diving and marine environment exploration

### Before jumping in

- Do not anchor on the coral reefs or seagrass beds
- Do not throw anything overboard
- Check the pressure gauge
- Do not use long scuba fins nor gloves which may cause major damage to the flora and fauna

### while you are in the water

- While scuba diving, do not cling to anything from the seabed.
- Check your ballast and adapt your «buoyancy», particularly when you take photos
- Swim cautiously to avoid breaking the corals
- Do not remove any animals or plants whether dead or alive
- Do not feed the animals, respect their serenity. Do not touch anything living whether it is moving or stationary;
- Do not swim too close to the shores or the coastline. Avoid all contact with the seabed
- Avoid entering under the rocky and other hard crevices in order to protect wildlife sticking underneath
- Take your rubbish home with you

### Afterwards

- Do not waste freshwater
- Do not buy souvenirs stolen from the sea (turtle shells, dried fish, coral, shells). Most species are protected and there is a ban on their sale and transportation

## 2 - Hiking and trekking

### Before leaving :

- **Choose a trail suited to your capabilities.** Hiking is more difficult in a tropical environment. A large part of the paths are trails for those who are fit and experienced walkers. If in doubt go with a tour guide. The level of difficulty and duration are indicated at the start of the trail.
- **Check the weather report and find out the condition of the trails ;** beware of information circulating on unofficial internet sites.
- **Have good hiking shoes/boots.**
- **Take warm clothing, a rain coat and a change of clothing.**
- **Never start hiking after 3.30pm.** Sunset is early (between 5.30pm in December and 7 pm in June).
- **Never go alone.** Always inform someone of the trail that you plan to follow, and the likely duration of your absence. Make sure your mobile



phone is charged.

- **Do not walk without having eaten** and plan to take some high energy food. Take a sufficient quantity of water: 1 to 2 liters per person for outings longer than 2 hours.

### During the hike

- **Stick to the chosen track and follow the official signage**; do not take shortcuts because they can take you far away from your destination;
- **Check the weather forecast.** When it is raining heavily, you will see leaves fast floating down the water. These are signs of a violent flash flood coming.

**If the water rises, wait until the floodwaters recede.**

- **Beware of the slippery environment.** Due to the high humidity an inexperienced hiker may find it difficult since the hike is often through water and mud.
- **Leave nothing behind** and take your rubbish with you ;
- **Touch only with your eyes, do not pick anything.** It is strictly prohibited within the heart of the National Park to pick any plant or animal. Some plants or berries of the forest can be irritants: it is best not to touch anything.
- Do not disturb other hikers and the wildlife **avoid yelling. No Dogs allowed** on the trails of the National Park, even on a leash.
- **Do not light any fires** outside permitted areas and portable camping stoves.

### After hiking

- **Contact us** and send us your comments on your hike experience, including discrepancies (ex: fallen trees). This will be greatly contribute to our work [www.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr](http://www.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr) or leave a message at our visitors centers.

## 3 - Useful Addresses:

For a mountain tour guide and tailored advice, contact any of the followings :

### Association Guadeloupe Autrement

Email : [info@guadeloupe-autrement.fr](mailto:info@guadeloupe-autrement.fr)

Internet : <http://www.guadeloupe-ecotourisme.fr>

### Comité Guadeloupéen de Randonnée Pédestre

Tél.: 0590 20 98 31 / Email : [cgrp971@orange.fr](mailto:cgrp971@orange.fr)

Internet : <http://guadeloupe.ffrandonnee.fr>

### Syndicat Guadeloupéen des Accompagnateurs en Montagne

Internet : <http://sgam.unblog.fr/>

### Comité régional Guadeloupe de plongée COREGUA

Tél.: 0690 47 11 61 / Email : [coreguaffesm@orange.fr](mailto:coreguaffesm@orange.fr)

Internet : <http://coregua.free.fr/>

### Comité du Tourisme des Îles de Guadeloupe

Tél.: 0590 82 09 30 • Fax : 0590 83 89 22

Email : [info@lesilesdeguadeloupe.com](mailto:info@lesilesdeguadeloupe.com)

Internet : <http://www.lesilesdeguadeloupe.com> •

# Useful informations

To know more about the Guadeloupe National Park, to explore its natural and cultural heritage, contact the National Park visitors centers :

## Maison de la Forêt

Route de la Traversée, 97170 Petit-Bourg

### Opening hours:

Off season (May 1st to June30th, and September 1st to October 31st) : Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 9h00 to 13h00 and 13h30 to 16h30

High season (1 November to 30 April and 1 July to 31 August) Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday: 8.30am to 1.pm and from 1. 30 pm to 4.30pm  
Sunday 9.am to 1.15pm

### Services

- > Permanent Exhibition
- > Recreational activities
- > Picnic facilities
- > No restrooms
- > No telephone network
- > Wheelchair access

## Accueil de Chutes du Carbet

Route de l'Habitée, 97130 Capesterre Belle-Eau  
Phone : 06 90 59 66 36

**Opening hours:** Every day from 8.30am to 4.30pm

Access fee (1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016) :

- 2,20 € Adult
- 1,00 € Child (from 12 years)
- 4,40 € Per family (2 adults and 2 children)
- 1,50 € a group of 8 persons
- 5,00 € Annual Pass/person

### Services

- > Recreational activities
- > Picnic area
- > Restrooms
- > Souvenir shop
- > Wheelchair access

### Maison de la Côte Sous-le-Vent

47, bd Arnould Nicolas (RN 2), Marigot,  
97119 Vieux-Habitants  
Phone : 0590 94 89 12

**Opening hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday :  
from 8h00am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5pm.  
Wednesday, Friday : from 8:00am to 1:30 pm

### Services

- > Recreational activities
- > Restrooms
- > Souvenir shop
- > Wheelchair access

### Siège administratif du Parc national de la Guadeloupe

Montéran, 97120 Saint-Claude  
Phone : 0590 41 55 55

**Opening hours:** Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 8.am to  
12.30pm and 2pm to 5pm. Wednesday 8am to 1pm.  
Friday : 8am to 12.30 pm.

### Services

- > Frequent Exhibitions
- > Shop
- > Restrooms
- > Wheelchair access

Website dedicated to hiking :  
Rando Guadeloupe : <http://rando.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr>

Have the centers stamp your visit to each of our sites, La Traversée,  
Chutes du Carbet , Soufrière volcano and Côte Sous-le-Vent, and at the  
end you will receive a souvenir from the Park :

Traversée, la Maison de la Forêt

*visa*

Chutes du Carbet

*visa*

Îlets Pigeon, la Maison du Parc

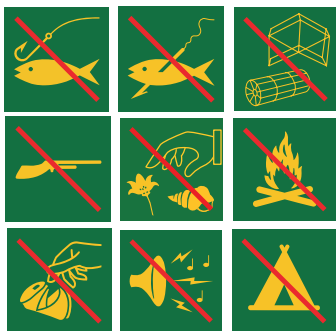
*visa*

Soufrière, PNG Headquarters

*visa*



## Conservancy Rules and Regulations for wise eco-citizenship



Access to Ilet Blanc is prohibited from May 1st to August 31st (nesting period for marine birds)

The detailed contents of applicable land and marine regulations is available at the National Park visitors centers.



This guidebook is published with the participation of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe



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[www.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr](http://www.guadeloupe-parcnational.fr)