



The Humpbacks off La Réunion

General information

La Réunion is a French overseas department and belongs to the European Union. The island in the Indian Ocean offers a wide variety of landscapes and activities. Like many isolated islands, La Réunion tells of a volcanic origin. The snow-free Piton des Neiges (snow peak) is considered one of the largest volcanoes in the world. In contrast to the still active volcano Piton de la Fournaise, the Piton des Neiges was extinct about 12,000 years ago. Those looking for a change from beach and sea will discover rugged valleys and grandiose waterfalls on their way up to the volcano. But there is also much to discover in the sea: On an underwater plateau off the west coast of the island, humpback whales with their calves and large schools of dolphins are among the animals we find during the south winter.

Climatically the island captivates with pleasant temperatures, which move between 24 and 28 degrees Celsius during the day in the whale season. The water temperature reaches about 23 degrees. Even for more temperature-sensitive guests this is quite pleasant with a thin wetsuit.

Our accommodation is located in the wind-protected west of the island directly at the sea. Set slightly in front of the surrounding buildings, there is a wonderful view of the beaches on both sides of the hotel. The marina, which we use as a starting point for our whale tours, is less than ten minutes away by car. With a bit of luck, you can catch a glimpse of the sea mammals already from the hotel. Always keep your eyes open.

Whales

The highlight of our trip to La Réunion is definitely the sighting of humpback whales. Every year during the Antarctic winter season (June to October), they swim from Antarctica to the warmer waters of the Indian Ocean to mate and give birth to their calves. During up to eight tours, we keep an eye out for the marine mammals. The encounter with mother and calf is particularly impressive. Curious and playful, the young approach the little strangers. But the eye of the huge mother is always on alert. You can find out how to enjoy a stress-free encounter under "The Experience".

In addition, we often discover large schools of dolphins (mostly spinner dolphins and bottlenose dolphins). More rarely we meet other whale species like pilot whales, southern right whales or false killer whales. Although the dolphins are not as massive as the humpback whales, this handicap is easily compensated by their playfulness and creates unforgettable experiences!

For the search of the sea creatures, we alternate between a luxurious catamaran or a faster, more agile motorboat.

Accommodation

During your time with us you will stay in the well-established Hotel Boucan Canot, directly on one of the most beautiful beaches of the island in the immediate vicinity of St. Gilles. The marina of St. Gilles also serves as a starting point for boat trips to the open sea. The hotel reminds of the style of the Florida Keys and impresses with excellent quality, friendly service and fantastic food. The stylishly furnished rooms are only a few meters away from the waves.

The hotel offers direct beach access. There is also a comfortable lawn with a pool and a small private beach. Within walking distance there is a car-free zone with some bars and restaurants where you can end the day with a cocktail and stories about the day on the ocean.



Meals

You can enjoy the rich breakfast buffet with a great view of the ocean. The menu of the hotel restaurant is rich and offers local Creole as well as international dishes. Of course, excellent fresh fish is offered, but meat and vegetarian dishes are also recommended. We also dine in some selected restaurants to complete the culinary experience.

Let us know about special requirements such as intolerances or allergies. We will do our best to cater for any wishes.

Other activities

In addition to whale watching, La Réunion offers an incredible range of activities. Most of the time we are busy interacting with the gigantic marine mammals, but there is enough time left for the beauties of the island. To explore the fascinating surroundings of the extinct volcano Piton des Neiges, you will take part in one of the world's most spectacular helicopter flights. The helicopter pilots are true masters of the air. The flight takes you along steep rock faces and narrow gorges, providing a perfect view of inaccessible natural beauty such as the Trou de Fer waterfalls. Discover how intense erosion over thousands of years has created a unique landscape around the mountains.

Other excursion destinations are the Piton de Maïdo with its spectacular view of one of the three Cirques (valley basins created by erosion), the Creole village Hell-Bourg - one of the "most beautiful villages in France" - the capital Saint Denis and the still active volcano Piton de la Fournaise. We are happy to advise you on individual excursions such as paragliding flights or exploring the lava caves and help you organizing.

Our weekly program

The week begins with your arrival on Sunday. We will be happy to welcome you at the airport or directly at your accommodation near St. Gilles. The accommodation offers you to check in from the early afternoon. Everyone who has already arrived will meet on Sunday evening for a relaxed dinner and to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

On Monday and Tuesday we go out to sea early in the morning. After some hours with the whales and hopefully many encounters in the water we go for a light lunch in a pleasant harbour restaurant. After another 3 hours on the ocean we return to land at about 5 pm. In the middle of the week we visit various sights on the island in order to provide a little change from the boat. On the remaining days we embark on a half-day search for the marine mammals. In the remaining free time there is the possibility to do something yourself or to participate in the offered group activities, for example a helicopter flight.

The official program is rounded off with a dinner together, during which we review our encounters and experiences. Our week ends with the check-out on Sunday morning and a possible transfer to the airport.

This is just an example itinerary. The weather has a big influence on our activities, which we adapt to the conditions.

Make the most of your time. Relax for a few days in another region of the island or explore nearby Mauritius. We are happy to help with the organisation!

Arrival

The airport Roland Garros (RUN) near Saint Denis offers direct connections to Paris (France), Bangkok (Thailand), Chennai (India), Johannesburg (South Africa) or Guangzhou (China). Further possibilities are available via Mauritius, which is served by various cities from all over the world.



Equipment

For our excursions we provide diving goggles, snorkels, fins and a wetsuit. If you prefer to bring your own equipment, this is of course also possible. Due to the pleasant water temperatures a thin wetsuit is sufficient. Even a short-sleeved suit "Shorty" may be sufficient.

Clothing

On the boats it can get a bit cooler depending on the wind, especially when we come out of the water. Therefore, it is advisable to bring a light windbreaker on board.

On land we usually encounter very pleasant temperatures, which invite us to wear short clothes. In the evenings we recommend a polo shirt or a light shirt. On our day trip we will probably drive into the mountains. Here it becomes much cooler (approx. 10-15 degrees), so that warmer clothes are appropriate.

Visa

La Réunion belongs to the Republic of France and is therefore EU territory. Guests from countries that belong to the Schengen area or whose states have concluded a visa-free agreement with the EU do therefore not require a visa.

For guests from China and India, La Réunion offers a simplified visa process. Information on this and other visa issues can be found here:

<https://en.reunion.fr/practical/travel-tips/visas>

Travel advice

Travel advice for La Réunion of the UK government can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/reunion>

Information on vaccination can be found on the website of the CDC:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/reunion>

Insurance

Travel, liability and health insurance are the responsibility of the participants.

Included:

- German and English speaking tour guide on site
- Airport transfers
- Boat tours
- Snorkeling gear
- Accommodation
- All meals and drinks consumed in the group
- Shore excursions in the group
- Helicopter flight
- Sim card incl. data volume
- Donation to the Whaleman Foundation & One Tree Planted
- CO2 tax for our emissions during the week



Excluded:

- Flights
- CO2 tax for your journey (recommended)
- Meals and drinks consumed on your own
- Independent activities
- Underwater camera (GoPro 6 or newer) rental for the week (CHF 100)
- Photos of the week

Dates

2023

Sunday, August 20th – Sunday, August 27th 2023

2024

Sunday, August 18th – Sunday, August 25th 2024

Tours will be held if there is a minimum of 4 participants.

Prices & Services

Price per Person per Week: CHF 4'950 (approx. 5'450 USD) in a double room

Single-Room surcharge: CHF 600

Room upgrades available upon requests

We are happy to receive your inquiry at info@experiencegiants.com or through our website.

