

A full-page background image of a lush, mountainous landscape in Reunion Island. The scene is dominated by steep, jagged mountains covered in dense green vegetation. In the foreground, a waterfall cascades down a rocky cliff into a dark pool of water. The sky is overcast with grey clouds, and some mist is visible in the valleys. The title 'Hikers' handbook' is written in white, and 'Reunion Island' is written in black on a light green banner.

Hikers' handbook

Reunion Island



An exceptional place, with an amazing range of natural spaces and breathtaking landscapes, Reunion Island is a paradise for hikers. Everyone is awestruck by the “Pitons, cirques and ramparts”. They have been listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO since 2010. The best way to explore them is by walking, following one of the many trails that pass through them. To enjoy these paths to the full, it is important to be aware of the special nature of this volcanic mountain planted in the Indian Ocean, with its tropical climate prone to sudden changes. Finally, to preserve this abundant nature, which is particularly fragile, we ask you to behave responsibly.



The special nature of the mountains on Reunion Island

High mountains in a tropical climate :

The trails on Reunion Island are generally quite challenging. The distinctive topography, the vertiginous sections, the many natural ladders, stairways and steps, sections which are sometimes muddy or very rocky, the altitude, the cold and/or heat can surprise even the most seasoned hikers.

Unspoilt nature and volcanic landscapes combined with exceptional rainfall :

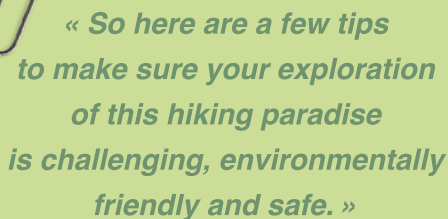
These ingredients make the mountains of Reunion Island susceptible to ad hoc landslides and significant erosion. These may make some areas dangerous and trails completely impassable. Cliff edges are liable to crumble, cracks and crevices sometimes appear at the edges of trails and some swimming pools, even though tempting, are exposed to falling rocks.

Staying safe near rivers and seashores :

in pools, rivers and ravines, good weather can be deceptive because it is sometimes impossible to tell lower down if it is raining in the island's highlands.

Some dry ravines can become veritable torrents in a few minutes and flash floods can occur in rivers and pools. On the coastal paths, it is the swell that can be dangerous!

Finally, the fragile ecosystems mean special precautions have to be taken to respect the natural environments you pass through.



*« So here are a few tips
to make sure your exploration
of this hiking paradise
is challenging, environmentally
friendly and safe. »*

It is everyone's duty to preserve the biodiversity and exceptional landscapes of Reunion Island

I will remember to thoroughly clean clothing, footwear and equipment before entering natural environments, and particularly if my equipment has been used off the island. I will thus avoid introducing and spreading new Invasive Alien Species which constitute a particularly significant threat to the island's ecosystem.

I will take all my rubbish, even biodegradable waste, home with me. It might encourage the spread of rats and cats, which are harmful to a large number of species from Reunion Island.

I will leave no trace as I pass through. To maintain the natural environment and the sense of place, I will not leave any marks, inscriptions, signs or drawings.

If I cannot wait and I have to answer the call of nature in the wild, I will bury everything wherever possible. I will walk away from trails and picnic areas (to be more discrete) and rivers (for less pollution) and I will pick up any paper that I will slip into the refuse bag brought to carry home all my rubbish.

I will take pictures of flowers and plants rather than picking them : they will wilt quickly and no longer provide pleasure for other hikers.

I am a citizen who respects both nature and other walkers. I will be inconspicuous at all times. Silence is key when observing nature.

I will try to take public transport or share cars, to reduce my ecological footprint.



Take rubbish home

Before setting off, good habits

I will plan my trip in advance and inform those around me of my itinerary.

I will adapt the planned route to the physical conditions of the least fit walkers.

I will get advice from Tourist Offices.

Walking with a professional state-qualified mountain guide is the best way to discover the treasures of the Highlands of Reunion Island in complete safety.

Climatic changes at altitude mean you have to take suitable equipment: lightweight and warm clothing,

waterproof, windbreaker, hat, gloves, cap, waterproof hiking shoes, head torch, multi-function knife, survival blanket, whistle, first-aid kit, mosquito repellent, sunglasses, sun cream, topo-guide, map, mobile phone, refuse bag, energy boosting food (cereal bars, dried fruit), water bottle and filter and/or purifying tablets.

I will remember to book my accommodation and meals in advance!

I will check...

► **the state of the trails with the ONF, Trail info section**

<http://www.onf.fr>

► **the weather**

www.meteofrance.re Phone number : 08 92 68 08 08

I will not attempt to go hiking if heavy rains are forecast.

I will not plan any trips in the ramparts in the days immediately following heavy rain.

► **the risk of flooding**

www.vigicrues-reunion.re

In the cyclone season, I will observe the safety guidelines and keep checking the warning levels. Once the warning is raised, I will wait until the sites affected are confirmed.



Your phone is part of your safety equipment

1 – My phone is charged

2 – I know the emergency numbers :

112 (European Emergency Number)

which works regardless of your operator

15 (Emergency Medical Service)

18 (Fire Service)

17 (Police) 02 62 930 930

(direct no. for the Mountain Rescue Police)

Mountain distress signals



3 – The emergency numbers are saved and known by everyone

4 – I know the numbers of my companions

5 – I know how my phone's features work (GPS, internet etc.)

During the hike

I will not set off alone, and I will not get separated from the group. I will stick to the route indicated to my family and friends.

I will set off early in the morning.

Please note : night falls quickly and early. I will make sure I'm not surprised by the risk of fog. The landscape disappears into the clouds from midday onwards.

I will stay on the chosen route, following the official signage.

I will not use «shortcuts»: they encourage soil erosion and make the trails more fragile.

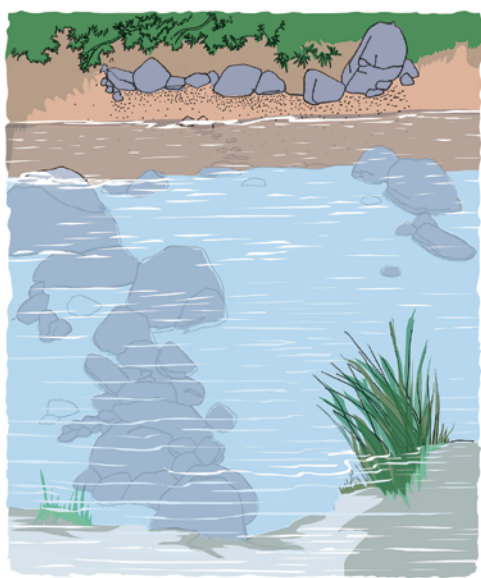
I will bear in mind the dangers indicated at the entrance of each route by safety «pictograms». **I will not try to cross a swollen river**, especially if I cannot turn back : I will get to a high place and alert the emergency services.

I will not swim in stagnant water : it can be infected by Leptospirosis spread by rat urine.

I will know when to give up due to unforeseen circumstances (bad weather, rising waters, problem within the group)






● NORMAL RIVER



▲ SWOLLEN RIVER

Reminder of the trail signage

There are 3 main types of signposting on the hiking trails of Reunion Island :

-  Long distance footpaths (Grande Randonnée or GR) recognised by their red and white signage.
-  Walking and hiking paths (Promenade et Randonnée or PR) with yellow signage.
-  The white signage for routes in the area managed by the ONF (signage from the state owned departmental charter)



The 8 pictograms illustrating the main difficulties likely to be encountered on the hiking trails.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Walking with your dog

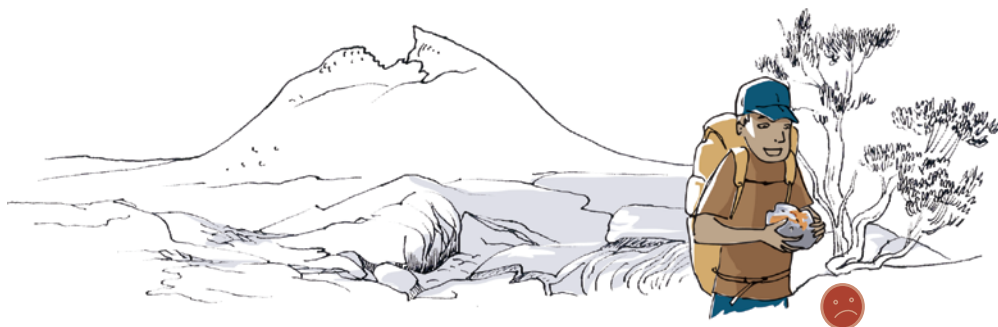
In the heart of the National Park, dogs are permitted on the hiking trails. They must be kept on a lead on the Roche Ecrite massif and are prohibited on a few trails through sensitive sites.



Keep dogs on leads

Collecting minerals or plants

Collecting minerals is strictly prohibited at many sensitive sites in the heart of the National Park. Do not pluck flowers from their natural environment... they are so much more beautiful where they are!



Don't collect plant or mineral



Respecting protected sites

Whether on the coast or in the highlands of Reunion Island, many remarkable natural sites (National Park, biological reserve, nature reserve, Sensitive Natural Areas, Coastal Protection Sites etc.) are protected by specific regulations. Check before you set off so you are aware of the current regulations.



Drinking water from rivers ?

You are advised not to drink water from rivers, to avoid any risk of contamination and discomfort! Purification tablets do not work on the toxoplasmosis found on Reunion Island. If you absolutely need water, it is better to filter it or boil your water for 5 minutes¹.

Never drink river water

1. OMS recommendation



Don't light fires outside of officially appointed places

Lighting

The use of fire is strictly forbidden outside of officially appointed places for fires. The use of stoves is permitted but you must exercise the utmost caution! Some forests are highly flammable and fire fighting methods available on the island are extremely limited. Observe the guidelines in the event of fire, call 18 or 112.

Camping in the natural environment ?

In the mountains, only bivouacs² are tolerated in the immediate vicinity of a hiking trail. Make sure that you don't disturb the native vegetation when you set them up. Apart from this, any temporary camp is subject to authorization (ONF, National Park, the owner of the site etc...). Specially appointed, public or private sites exist in some hamlets (ilets).



Camp on designated sites

² Rudimentary camp where you can spend the night in the countryside. Only light tents (restricted weight and size so you cannot stand up) can be used and they must be put up at the end of the day (after 4pm) and taken down the next day (before 8am).



After the hike Help to keep the hiking sites at their best!

Do not hesitate to report any problems encountered on the route (faulty signs, pollution, security issue) :

► Either by contacting the Reunion Island ONF (only for the island's Highlands) :

02 62 90 48 00

dr.reunion@onf.fr

► Or directly online with the Suricate application accessible from the following link :

<http://sentinelles.sportsdenature.fr/>



Implementation and management ONF Reunion

With the support of the Department of Reunion, the National Park
IRT (Reunion Island Tourism Board), CRPR 974 (Regional Hiking Committee)

DJSCS (Directorate of Youth, Sports and Social Cohesion)

PGHM (High Mountain Gendarmerie Platoon)

ASV (Volcano Security Association)

SNAM (National Union of Mountain Guides)

Météo France (Interregional Department for the Indian Ocean)

FRT (Reunion Island Tourism Federation).

Printed with the support of the DJSCS Reunion Island

Illustrations and layout: Solen Coeffic

Photo credits :

Front cover, Takamaka canyon (Rodolphe Godin) / P.1 Les Makes (Studio Lumière)

P.2 Amandine Esprit Randonnée / P. 5 Mafate (Emmanuel Virin, IRT) (Sébastien Conejero, IRT)

P.11 Scout Trail (Luc Reynaud, IRT) / P.12 Belouve (Anakao Press, IRT)

