

British tourists overlook this French Caribbean jewel – here’s why you should go

 telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/caribbean/guadeloupe-british-tourists

Mirva Lempiäinen

February 24, 2025



Terre-de-Haut offers a sense of laid-back glamour unique to Guadeloupe Credit: Nancy Pauwels/iStockphoto

With hundreds of beaches, an active volcano, hot springs and some of the region’s tallest waterfalls, Guadeloupe just may be the most gorgeous and diverse [Caribbean](#) destination you have never heard of – unless you’re a fan of the TV show [Death in Paradise](#).

Filmed in Guadeloupe and on air since 2011, the hugely successful British-French crime drama series has hooked British viewers on its quintessentially Caribbean scenery: lush green rainforests, long golden beaches and colourful wooden houses. These picture-perfect images have even enticed some fans of the show to travel to Guadeloupe.

But what tends to surprise real-life visitors is its French flair. While [Death in Paradise](#) takes place on a fictional British-Caribbean island with a distant French past, Guadeloupe has been an integral part of France since 1635, now classed as a French overseas department and region.



Shantol Jackson and Ralf Little in Season 13 of *Death in Paradise*, which is filmed on Guadeloupe

Many areas of Guadeloupe feel like a tropical [France](#) – where palm trees meet pain au chocolat. You could also call it the Caribbean for beginners, a mix of European familiarity and colourful Antillean Creole culture. And Guadeloupe is a particularly intriguing destination to visit because it is not just a singular island – it is an archipelago of six inhabited islands and a dozen uninhabited ones. However, few British travellers visit this paradisaical destination; here's our insider guide to what to do, see and eat in Guadeloupe.

What to do in Guadeloupe

Go island hopping

Two main islands, Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre, make up the “continent” of Guadeloupe and island hopping between the two landmasses could not be easier, as they are connected by two short bridges that run over La Rivière Salée – a thin river that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean Sea. The islands of Grande-Terre (also called the Butterfly Island due to its shape) and Basse-Terre are completely different in their topography: the former is a relatively flat limestone plateau surrounded by white sand beaches and rocky cliffs, and the latter is mountainous, covered in thick rainforest.

The other islands within the Guadeloupe archipelago can be reached by short boat trips. Just a 20-minute boat ride away from Basse-Terre's Trois-Rivières, find the sophisticated but laid back former fishing island of Terre-de-Haut. It's known as a mini-St. Barts, but it is rather more reminiscent of a visit to the glamorous island 30 years ago.



Guadeloupe, once a French colony, is today an overseas department of France Credit: getty

An hour-long boat trip from Grande-Terre's Pointe-a-Pitre, the flat island of Marie Galante, known as the Big Pancake, represents the slow-paced Caribbean of yesteryear with its pristine beaches, top rum distilleries and the occasional ox-pulled cart. Those interested in seeing a wild, natural Caribbean island should take the 45-minute boat ride to the island of La Désirade from Grande-Terre's Saint-François. At 145 million years old, La Désirade is the oldest island in the Lesser Antilles, with a dramatic mountain ridge and plateau.

Get hiking

Two-thirds of the rainforest island of Basse-Terre belongs to the 43,000-acre Guadeloupe National Park. Hiking enthusiasts can trek to the top of the volcano La Grande Soufrière, which is also the highest peak in Guadeloupe at 1467 metres, or make their way to some of the park's more than 50 waterfalls. Don't miss the two tallest Carbet falls, known as La Première and La [Deuxième Chute du Carbet](#). At 115 metres and 110 metres, they are known to be the tallest waterfalls in the Lesser Antilles and look quite impressive as they flow down the cliffside, one on top of another.



The Guadeloupe national park was until 2007 the only French national park outside of the mainland
Credit: Jan Wehnert/iStockphoto

These spectacular natural points do require some hiking stamina. If you are in search of something simpler, the national park's easiest waterfall to reach is Cascade aux Écrevisses, only a five-minute stroll from the parking lot.

After a strenuous hike (or lovely amble) it's time to relax in the island's hot springs, which are plentiful in Basse-Terre. Visit the heart-shaped Bain des Amours, a concrete pool built into the rainforest, filled with warm volcanic water. Or, head to Ravine Thomas, a natural hot spring by the sea, where the cooler water from the Caribbean Sea mixes with the boiling spring water in a shallow rocky bath.

Head to the beach

Guadeloupe has 270 beaches to explore. Those looking for classic Caribbean white sand beaches should stick to Grande-Terre, where you have long options like Plage de la Caravelle and Plage de Bois Jolan in Sainte Anne. Or, hop a five-minute boat ride to the little sandy stretches of Ilet du Gosier, a Robinson Crusoe-style tropical island.

To see more variety in sand colour, head to Basse-Terre where the volcanic southern part of the island has striking black sand beaches, such as the Plage de Grande Anse of Trois-Rivières. The sand gets lighter as you move towards the north, from the grey sands of Plage de Malendure (which is also home to turtles living in the protected bay) to the golden-orange hues of the Deshaies area beaches.



Grand Terre's Plage de Bois Jolan is a classically Caribbean beach Credit: Westend61

Enjoy French-Caribbean cuisine

Guadeloupe's cuisine is known for its diversity of flavours and spices, as the food has been impacted by people of African, European and Indian heritage. Across the islands, you might find local fish served with passion fruit sauce or the curcuma- and coriander-laden *colombo* curry.

To follow the foodie path across Grande-Terre, start your morning with croissants and other French delicacies from artisanal bakery [Boulangerie Gahagnon](#) in Le Gosier. Then drive to Saint-François to see the scenic cliffside viewpoint of Pointe des Chateaux before enjoying a waterfront lunch at [Le Rhumarin](#). Here you can have *accras* (spicy cod fritters), followed by sea bream with chili peppers or foie gras cooked in rum.

For dinner head to [Le Zagaya](#) for lobster grilled with creole spices and pineapple tarte tatin for dessert. And be sure to sample typical local rum drinks such as Ti' punch – literally translated as small punch, made with rum agricole, lime and sugar cane syrup.

When to go

The temperature is always pretty steady, hovering around 30C. The driest and the most pleasant months to visit are from November to April as there are some refreshing winds. June to October is hurricane season, but major storms are rare in Guadeloupe. Quick rain showers are common throughout the year.



Temperatures on Guadeloupe remain balmy throughout the year, with storms a rarity Credit: getty

How to get there

Paris is the only city in Europe that has direct flights to Guadeloupe's Pointe-a-Pitre, from both Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport and Paris Orly Airport, but British travellers can add a connecting flight from London or elsewhere in the UK with Air France. From Paris, the flight time is around 8 hours, nearer to 10 hours of total flying time from the UK.

How to get around

A rental car is a must in Guadeloupe as public transport options are very limited. Distances can be surprisingly long and traffic jams are common – to minimise time spent in the car, consider splitting your stay between Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre. If you prefer staying in one location, Grande-Terre's Le Gosier is the most central beach town in Guadeloupe – it's about an hour's drive from everywhere. For a car-free holiday, take a boat to the little island of Terre-de-Haut where walking, electric bicycles and golf carts are popular modes of transport.

Where to stay

Those looking for a luxury experience should check out [La Toubana Hotel & Spa](#), Guadeloupe's only five-star hotel, near the beach town of Sainte-Anne in Grande-Terre. The hotel's highlights are its beautiful cliffside infinity pool overlooking the sea and its legendary free-flowing champagne buffet that takes place on Sundays. Bungalows from £280 in the low season and £500 in the high season.

For Death in Paradise fans, there is only one possible accommodation option: the [Langley Resort Fort Royal](#) near Deshaies in Basse-Terre. It's a fairly large resort by Guadeloupe standards, with a selection of beach bungalows and a tall white waterfront building with several floors of rooms. This is also where the Death in Paradise crew stays during the filming, and the hotel has appeared in many episodes as well – the most famous being one where a bride fell to her death from the balcony of the hotel. Rooms from £140.