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Five, No Make That Six Reasons to Visit Guadeloupe Islands

by Paloma Villaverde De Rico • 3 min read • [original](#)



Le Saintes.

Amidst the Lesser Antilles, bracketed by the [Caribbean](#) Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, lies the French overseas region of **Guadeloupe Islands**, five naturally stunning islands brimming with activities and strung together by crystal clear waters, French savoir faire, [Caribbean](#) joie de vivre, delicious cuisine and sun-drenched beaches. A longtime favorite vacation destination for the French, the Guadeloupe Islands are now more accessible than before for North American travelers, a mere three hours from [Miami](#) via American Airlines weekly service. If you haven't yet visited this memorable source of travel experiences, here are five—scratch that—six reasons Guadeloupe Islands should be your next vacation getaway.

1. 5 Islands, 5 Unique Experiences in One Paradisiacal Destination— Basse-Terre, Grande-Terre, Marie-Galante, Les Saintes and La Desirade are the names of the five unique islands making up the French-Caribbean pearl of

Guadeloupe Islands. These five gems, unique in personality, landscape and memorable moments, offer an island-hopping experience that will transport you across cultural flair and time. Discover **Basse-Terre**—a lush mountainous isle with a mildly active volcano, **France**'s seventh largest park and golden and black sand beaches; **Grande-Terre**, a limestone plateau with turquoise lagoons, pristine white-sand beaches and the characteristic city of Pointe-a-Pitre, the Caribbean cousin of New Orleans; **Les Saintes**—a mini-archipelago evoking the St. Barth of 15 years ago; **Marie-Galante**—an authentic Caribbean island that takes you 30 years back in time with traditions and unspoiled beauty; and **La Desirade**—a secluded haven of tranquility that is a natural reserve rimmed by white- and pink-sand beaches.

2. Superb Bon APPETITing—The Guadeloupe archipelago has a rich culinary heritage that expresses its French, African and Indian cultural influences. Your gastronomic experience is deliciously flavored with French, Creole and Nouvelle-Creole cuisine in addition to other international cuisines. There are over 200 restaurants in Guadeloupe Islands and the emphasis on fresh ingredients mean the lobster in your Creole lobster fricassee or the tuna in your tuna tartare was freshly caught just that morning, and your vegetables, herbs and fruits were perhaps harvest from the many local farms the day before. Paired with your meals are the best of the best French imported wines and champagnes, as well as award-winning pure sugar cane local rum, or *rhum* as the locals call it.

3. Breathtakingly Beautiful Waters—When the Arawak, the first settlers, set eyes on the archipelago, they were instantly inspired to call it, *Karukera*, “Islands of Beautiful Waters,” and the destination not only lives up to its christened name but has strict regulations to protect its marine ecosystem. If you are seeking an aquatic paradise, with crystal-clear waters ranging in shades of blue and turquoise, nature reserve marines and underwater parks, world-class diving, tranquil lagoons, and over 270 beaches of white, golden, pink and black sand, then Guadeloupe Islands is your destination.

4. Lands of Adventure—The Guadeloupe Archipelago's diverse landscape allows for a wealth of activities and adventures. From hiking through numerous trails of a tropical rainforest to the summit of an active (very mild) volcano, to mountain biking, canyoning, horseback riding, oxcart driving, parachuting, diving, surfing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, stand-up paddling, kayaking, golfing and, of course, sailing. The destination is quite popular with sailors and yachters, so popular that it has been the finishing line for the international renowned sailing race *Route-du-Rhum* since 1978. The 14th edition of *Route-du-Rhum* will set off from Saint Malo, **France**, on Oct. 24 and

finish in Pointe-a-Pitre on Nov. 2, 2014. The celebration at the end of the race, like previous editions, will be a sensational experience—from the colors to the food and the music.

5. Sumptuous Accommodations—Accommodations in Guadeloupe Islands are true to their sense of place with an exquisite selection of intimate, chic boutique hotels, exotic eco-lodges, luxury and deluxe resorts, and bed & breakfasts. Don't be surprised if you find yourself sleeping where presidents, models, designers and actors have slept. Former French President Nicholas Sarkozy and wife Carla Bruni both stayed at the luxurious **La Toubana Hotel & Spa** (toubana.com) and Jean Paul-Gaultier stayed at the exceptionally fabulous **Villa Gaidic** (available through **Prestige Villa Rental**, prestigevillarental.com). Also, if you are a fan of the BBC/PBS series "Death in Paradise," then you will perhaps want to stay at charmingly beautiful **Langley Fort Royal** (fortroyal.eu/en), which has been a recurring "star" in the very popular dramedy.

6. Shoppers Delight—This list should be five, but a list that doesn't include shopping in Guadeloupe Islands is an incomplete list. The shopping experience in Guadeloupe Islands mirrors the cultural blend of the archipelago. If you are a Francophile then you will be excited to know many of the French stores from the mainland can be found in the archipelago. There are luxury items from mainland France, including those coveted beauty products, perfumes, designer fashion and champagne. (Prepare to drink the best champagne labels in Guadeloupe Islands as the archipelago is the number one importer, per-capita, of champagne in the world.) Equally wonderful are the beautiful locally made items in the craft villages showcasing the Creole culture and, of course, the rum. True rum connoisseurs will be delighted as many multi-awarded *rhum agricole* labels, distilled from pure sugar cane, are made on the islands. Visitors can tour active distilleries and learn how the rum is made, as well as enjoy tastings at the end of the tour.

Here are a few images that will inspire you:

For more information on Guadeloupe Islands, visit myguadeloupeislands.com.

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