



ILES DES SAINTES

GUADELOUPE

The Iles des Saintes are often simply referred to as “Les Saintes”. In November 1493, while on his second voyage to the New World, this little group of islands was discovered and named by Christopher Columbus. Today the islands are a dependency of Guadeloupe and part of the “département d’outre-mer” (DOM-overseas department) of France.

Located a few miles south of Guadeloupe, Les Saintes have a reputation for being out-of-the-way and rather laid back. This is meant as a compliment. If you are always in a rush and wish to slow down, then you’ve come to the right place. Life is a bit more leisurely here and that’s the way it should be.

There are about 3,000 people living on the seven islands which make up the group. Terre-de-Haut has the largest population of around 1,500 on an island only 3 miles long and a couple miles wide.

Terre-de-Haut has some nice beaches and friendly people. The pretty little town of Bourg is easy to walk. The restaurants and cafés are highly regarded for their good food. There is plenty of shopping in the galleries and boutiques along the waterfront.

The economic engine of the island, other than tourism, is fishing. It has been this way for a long time. The men and women who came to this island many years ago were primarily from western France, the coastal regions of Normandy and Brittany. In those early days Les Saintes may have looked pretty, but with little arable land for planting and rain the only source of fresh water, sustenance and livelihood was dependent upon the sea. Hardworking fishermen along with the wives and families who, over the generations, waited for the men to return with their catch from the sea ... this is the proud legacy of Les Saintes.

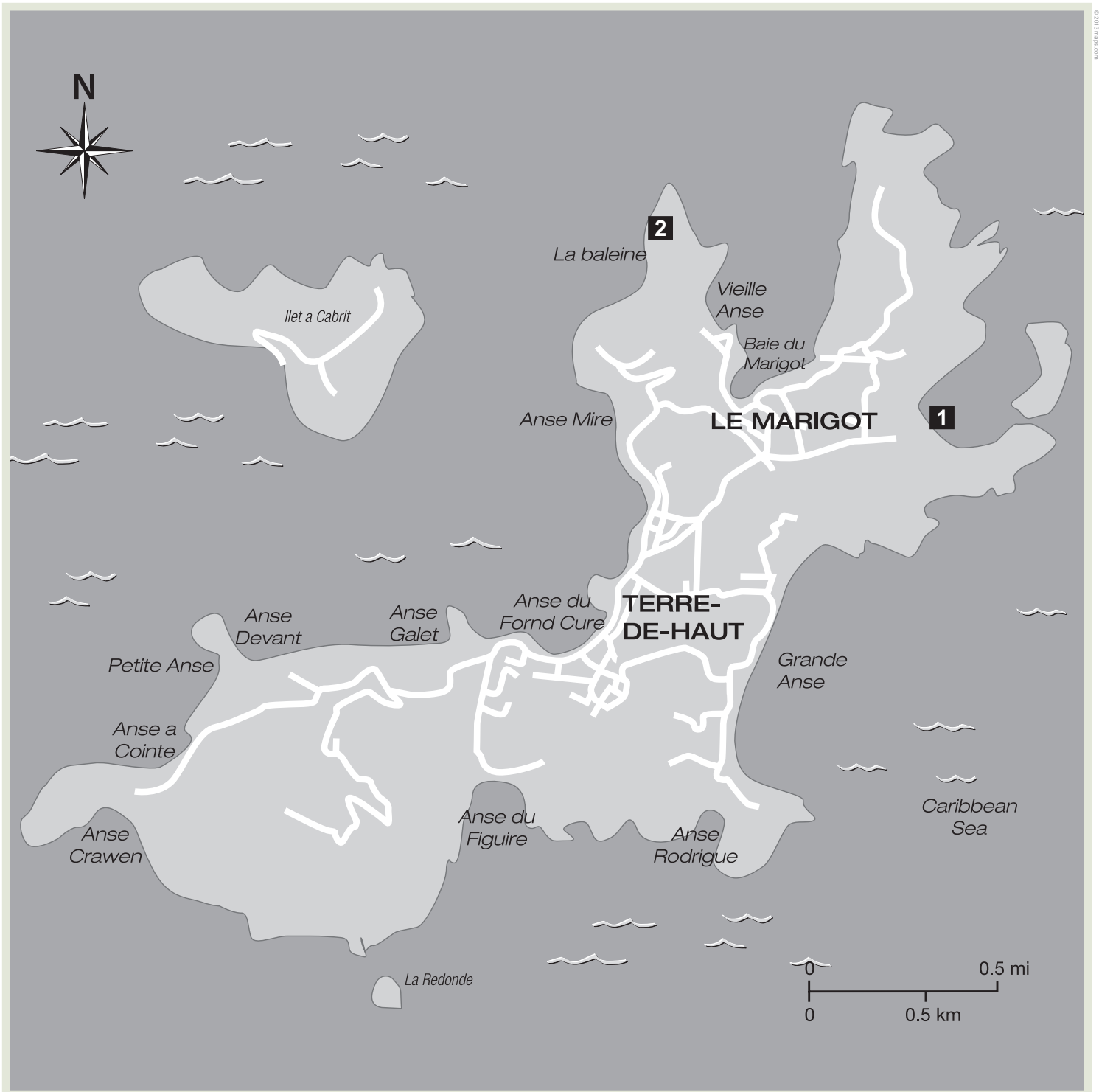


HISTORY

Around the turn of the first millennium Arawak Indians began to come to Les Saintes to fish and hunt. Due to the lack of fresh water on the island, there seems to have been no permanent settlement. Five centuries later, while on his second voyage to the New World in 1493, Christopher Columbus became the first European to see the islands.

By the mid-1600s the French West India Company was trying to develop commercial agriculture on Terre-de-Haut. Once again the key was water, or the lack thereof. Over the following decades, as they did throughout much of the Caribbean, the British and French battled back and forth for control of the islands.

If you happen to have been standing on the south shore of Terre-de-Haut on April 12, 1782 you would have been able to watch the French fleet of Rear Admiral Comte de Grasse suffer a terrible defeat at the hands of a British fleet commanded by Baron George Rodney. Thousands of French were killed, wounded and captured. England gained control of the islands until the 1815 Treaty of Paris.



PLACES OF INTEREST

1 Plage Pompierre is the most popular beach on the island. It is located on the northeast corner of Terre-de-Haut. The water is clear and clean, the snorkeling is very good and there is plenty of shade if you need to escape the Caribbean sun.

2 Fort Napoléon dates to the mid-1800s. Its construction began under Napoleon I and completed under Napoleon III. It was never used as a fort. The site provides a wonderful view of the bay and surrounding countryside. A small museum tells the history of the island.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Terre-de-Haut we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For more information, please consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed.

Tipping: Some restaurants may add a 10-15% service charge.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

The good people of Les Saintes may live on land but their livelihood, as it has for many generations, comes from the sea. Though the Caribbean may look calm and placid, like any large body of water, the weather can and does change quickly. To put it simply, fishing is a challenging, difficult and often dangerous way to make a living. Every year on Terre-de-Haut, in mid-August those men who were lost at sea are remembered during the island's religious festival for their patron saints.

As is common throughout the many islands of the Caribbean, the cuisine of Terre-de-Haut and Guadeloupe is a combination of traditional Indian, French and West African. Fresh fish and seafood dominate the menus of the island's cafés and restaurants. If seafood is rarely found on your dinner table back home then here is your chance to try something new and absolutely delicious.

Another recommend item is a freshly made baguette from one of the local bakeries. Please do not confuse a real French baguette with the so-called "French Bread" sold in many supermarkets. There is no comparison.

Saving perhaps the best for last, remember these words; "Tourment d'Amour". The phrase translates into English as; "Torment of Love". How wonderfully French it is to combine heartbreak and passion with the pleasure of pastry. Keep a lookout for street vendors, the wonderful ladies who offer the little coconut cakes, "Tourment d'Amour", filled with fruit jam of the island (coconut, guava, banana, pineapple).

Keep in mind that despite the swaying palms and sweet coconuts, you are, after all, in France. Two words...French wine. Thus is poured "la joie de vivre".

SHOPPING

There are shops, galleries and boutiques near the waterfront pier. Visitors can browse a wide selection of merchandise, gifts and souvenirs.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The official currency on Guadeloupe is the Euro (€ - EUR). Major credit cards are widely accepted and a few ATMs are available.

POST OFFICE

There is a Post Box near the pier.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There is a Tourist Office also located near the pier.

TRANSPORTATION

The island has a few vans and motor-scooters available for hire.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

French is the official language of Guadeloupe. Most people also speak créole. Many people who work in tourist related businesses speak English.

English - French

Hello - Bonjour

Do you speak English? - Parlez-vous anglais?

Please - S'il vous plaît

Thank you - Merci

You're welcome - De rien

Good-by - Au revoir

