

Understanding the Port

Guadeloupe is shaped like a butterfly, and the two wings could not be more different: flat, beachy Grande-Terre on one side, mountainous rainforest and a live volcano on the other. This is France too — euros, French, and very good food. Pick a wing before you step off the ship.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Ships dock alongside at the Centre Saint-John Perse terminal in downtown Pointe-à-Pitre. Place de la Victoire and both markets are a five to ten minute walk.

Cash & Currency

This is France: the currency is the EURO, not the dollar. US dollars are not accepted. Visa and Mastercard work almost everywhere; Amex and Discover often do not.

Getting Around

Taxis wait outside the terminal — agree the fare first, and know they thin out on Sundays. Beaches lie east; rainforest lies west. Choose one direction.

GOOD

Pointe-à-Pitre on Foot

Best for: Short stops, easy days, minimal logistics

- ✓ Two markets, both minutes from the ship
- ✓ Place de la Victoire and the old streets
- ✓ Back at the ship whenever you want

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

The Beach Wing

Best for: Couples, families, beach lovers

- ✓ Le Gosier's sand, twenty minutes out
- ✓ Sainte-Anne's calm, shallow, postcard water
- ✓ The little ferry out to Îlet du Gosier

Arrange your return taxi before you settle in.

BEST

The Wild Wing

Best for: Nature lovers, adventurers, photographers

- ✓ The rainforest road across Basse-Terre
- ✓ Carbet Falls, the island's great waterfall
- ✓ Snorkel the Cousteau reserve off Pigeon Island

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Two Markets

The open-air Marché de la Darse sits on the water by Place de la Victoire; the covered Marché Saint-Antoine, the spice hall, is a few minutes further in. Both run Monday to Saturday and wrap up by early afternoon. Bring euros.

BETTER

Grande-Terre Beaches

Le Gosier is the closest sand, fifteen to twenty-five minutes out; Sainte-Anne's reef-sheltered shallows are worth the extra half hour. From Gosier a small boat shuttles across to Îlet du Gosier — a quiet islet beach and grilled fish, and the local favorite.

BEST

Basse-Terre's Rainforest

The Traversée road climbs into the national park about half an hour from the port. Further on lie the Carbet waterfalls — a short walk to a viewing platform, though no longer a swim — and the Cousteau reserve, an hour or more each way.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Sainte-Anne & Caravelle Beach

The consensus beach pick: shallow, calm, protected water with the sand to match. Easy to love, and easy on children.

The Cousteau Reserve

Jacques Cousteau dived and filmed these waters in the 1950s and pushed to have them protected. Snorkel and glass-bottom boats run out from Malendure beach.



La Darse, the harbor basin in the heart of Pointe-à-Pitre



Plage de la Caravelle, Sainte-Anne

Key Considerations

Money first. Guadeloupe is French soil and runs on euros — US dollars are simply not accepted here. Bring a card with no foreign transaction fee and draw a small amount of euros for the markets and small vendors. Visa and Mastercard are fine; Amex and Discover are often refused. Expect French prices, not Caribbean ones.

Then pick a wing and commit. Grande-Terre in the east is flat, dry, and full of beaches, all within forty-five minutes. Basse-Terre in the west is mountains and rainforest, rising to La Soufrière, the highest peak in the Lesser Antilles — but it is an hour or more each way, all of it funneling over one bridge. A good day here does one side well rather than both badly.

Watch the calendar. Both markets run Monday to Saturday and are done by early afternoon; shops close for a long lunch, shut around one o'clock on Saturday, and close entirely on Sunday, when taxis are scarce too. A Sunday call is a beach or excursion day, not a shopping day.

One stop deserves its own note. The Mémorial ACTe, a fifteen minute walk along the waterfront, is France's national memorial to the transatlantic slave trade, built on the grounds of the old Darboussier sugar works. It is a serious visit that takes a couple of hours and is not aimed at young children. It is closed Mondays.



Chutes du Carbet, Guadeloupe National Park



The spice stalls at the Marché de la Darse



La Soufrière, the highest peak in the Lesser Antilles

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Port Orientation

FROM THE PORT (POINTE-À-PITRE)

● Both markets & Place de la Victoire	5–10 min walk
● Mémorial ACTe	~15 min walk; closed Mondays
~ 15–25 min by taxi	
● Le Gosier & the Îlet ferry	Closest sand, east
~ 30 min by taxi	
● Route de la Traversée	The rainforest road, west
~ 35–45 min by taxi	
● Sainte-Anne & Caravelle Beach	Grande-Terre classic
~ 1 hour or more	
● Cousteau Reserve (Malendure)	Snorkel boats, west coast
● Chutes du Carbet	Rainforest waterfalls, west

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Guadeloupe is two islands in one, joined at the middle. Beaches east, rainforest and volcano west.

Choose your wing, carry a card and a few euros, and this butterfly delivers one of the Caribbean's most varied port days.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

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Did You Know?

Actually France. Guadeloupe is an overseas department of France and part of the European Union — which is why you pay in euros and the bakeries are outstanding.

A Butterfly Island. The two wings are split by the Rivière Salée which, despite the name, is not a river at all but a narrow saltwater channel. Two bridges carry the traffic across.

Confusing by Design. Basse-Terre names both the mountainous western wing and the island's capital — while Pointe-à-Pitre, where you dock, is the busiest city but not the capital at all.

Cousteau on the Seabed. Jacques Cousteau filmed off the Îlets Pigeon in the 1950s and campaigned to protect the reef. A bronze bust of him now sits on the bottom there, red bonnet and all, for divers to visit.

Karukera. The island's Amerindian name is usually translated as the island of beautiful waters — a fair description of the rainforest side.