# FRANCE OVERSEAS THE DOM-TOMS Benjour, my Maéna! Fol

Bonjour, my name is Maéna! Follow me on a tour of overseas France.

#### 1. French Guiana (DOM - French Overseas Department)

This French department is the only European holding in South America, and is covered almost entirely by tropical rainforest. Europe has launched its Ariane rockets from Guiana Space Center since 1964.

# 2. Guadeloupe (DOM - French Overseas Department)

Discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493, Guadeloupe includes a group of Caribbean islands whose main industry is tourism. Popular destinations include the islands of St. Martin and St. Barts, both of which boast excellent shopping, swimming, and sailing.

## 3. Martinique (DOM - French Overseas Department)

Located in the West Indies, Martinique was referred to by its native inhabitants as Madinina ("the island of flowers") due to its lush vegetation. The smallest of France's overseas departments, Martinique is quickly becoming a hotbed of tourism.

#### 4. Reunion Island (DOM - French Overseas Department)

Sitting 480 miles off the coast of Madagascar, Reunion Island is the most populated of France's overseas territories. Initially formed by two major volcanic eruptions, the island still has its own active volcano (Piton de la Fournaise, 8,635 feet).



#### 5. French Polynesia (Overseas Collectivity—formerly known as a TOM, or Overseas Territory)

As with many of France's overseas territories, tourism is crucial to this group of 118 islands. Among the most popular travel destinations in French Polynesia is Tahiti, a classic getaway for honeymooners and vacationers.

#### 6. Mayotte (Overseas Collectivity—formerly known as a TOM, or Overseas Territory)

In 1976, Mayotte became the only island in the Comoro archipelago (located in the Indian Ocean) to remain a French territory rather than opt for independence. As Mayotte remains isolated from extensive tourism, its beauty remains relatively unspoiled.

# 7. St. Pierre & Miquelon (Overseas Collectivity—formerly known as a TOM, or Overseas Territory)

This archipelago, located near Canada, consists of three major islands: St. Pierre, Miquelon, and Langlade. Many of the islands' inhabitants, descendants of Bretons and Normans, still rely on fishing for a living.

#### 8. Wallis & Futuna (Overseas Collectivity—formerly known as a TOM, or Overseas Territory)

Because these volcanic islands were not exposed to any European influences until the 19th century, their economies and way of life remain traditional. Although the island group is surrounded by beautiful coral reefs, its tourist industry remains undeveloped.

# 9. The French Southern and Antarctic Territories (TOM - Overseas Territory)

Because of the desolate climate of these territories, their population consists of only 180 scientists who perform research in this unique environment. The territories include several islands (Crozet, Kerguélen, Amsterdam-St. Paul) as well as a sliver of the Antarctic continent (Terre Adélie).

#### 10. New Caledonia (status currently being determined - sui generis Collectivity)

Since a 1998 referendum, New Caledonia has been moving toward full autonomy, but its inhabitants will not officially vote on independence until 2014. The island group is located 1,500 miles off the coast of Australia and offers a plethora of natural resources.

# **From Colonies to Jull-Fledged Partners**

# WHAT IS A DOM-TOMs?

**THE ABBREVIATION** DOM-TOM is used to indicate France's overseas Departments, Collectivities and Territories, which are in turn administrative designations given to French holdings overseas. DOM stands for *département d'outre-mer* and TOM for *territoire d'outre-mer*. Mostly these consist of former colonies that have chosen to continue their affiliation with France. On March 28, 2003, a constitutional revision was adopted that grants more



The French flag flies high at the mayor's office of Case-Pilote in Martinique.

autonomy to France's overseas territories and changes certain appellations (many *territoires d'outre-mer* are now referred to as *collectivités d'outre-mer*).

France's overseas departments are the most closely linked to France. They are subject to the same legislation as the departments of continental France, and have equal representation in the French Parliament. France's four overseas departments consist of French Guiana, Reunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique, all of which gained departmental status in 1946.

The French overseas territories of **Wallis** 

**and Futuna**, and the **Southern and Antarctic territories** enjoy a special status in accordance with their specificities, although they con-

tinue to be closely associated with France and subject to its laws. The central government in this case retains full authority in matters of defense, foreign relations, justice and currency. Other policy areas fall either under dual jurisdiction or are exclusive to the Collectivity. As with the overseas departments, all Collectivities have elected deputies in the Senate and National Assembly.

The Territorial Collectivities of **Mayotte** and **Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon** have a more ambiguous status than either the Collectivities or Departments, lying somewhere in between in terms of autonomy.

In 1998, a new status, "overseas country," was created which gives a territory additional autonomy. **French Polynesia** was the first to accede to this new status.

The status of **New Caledonia** is currently under negotiation; in 1998, a referendum was held opening the way for the option of independence. Another will be held in the year 2014 to settle the question.

# **HISTORY**

With the exception of the Antarctic base, which is used exclusively as a research station, all of the overseas departments and territories were originally French colonies, most established in the 17th or 19th centuries. Most of the newly founded colonies were not settled for some time, apart from the presence of small Catholic missions or, in some cases, penal colonies to which polit-



Sugar cane is harvested in Martinique.

ical prisoners or criminals were exiled. Either way, settlement by the French remained limited for years, largely due to the difficulties in adjusting to different, harsher climates (some of them cold and barren, others tropical, many plaguing settlers with rains, storms and illnesses). These colonies were nonetheless valuable for the resources they provided to the mainland: exotic fruits,

popular crops such as sugarcane, and the all-important cotton.

The early mix of native, European and African populations was later supplemented by waves of immigration from nearby lands, contributing to a large ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity for most of the territories. Diverse as they are, all of the overseas departments, territories and collectivities have chosen to remain affiliated with France in their various ways. Referendums have shown overwhelming support by the residents for the preservation and deepening of ties with the mainland. France's current departments



A storm looms over one of Guadeloupe's picturesque shores.

chose to affirm their relationship with France in 1946, as did the Territories of **New Caledonia** and **French Polynesia**.

Today, remote and different as they are, the territories and departments are now considered by the metropolitan French government as

full-fledged partners and their inhabitants as fellow citizens. Together, the French government and local governments collaborate to enhance the well-being of overseas inhabitants, as well as to create hospitable environments for business and travel.



St. Pierre and Miguelon.

# Volcanoes, Palm Trees and Pearls

these lands, uniting Catholics.

Protestants, Hindus, and

even adherents of animist

African religions under the

French flag. The ethnic

compositions of the vari-

Guadeloupe archipelago dif-

fer greatly; the several thou-

sand inhabitants of St. Barthelemy, for example,

are nearly 100% white and

between the descendants

of the first settlers and

more recent arrivals from

France). With a population

of roughly 400,000, the

main island (Grand-Terre

& Basse-Terre), however,

is primarily black and

mulatto, with smaller

numbers of East Indian.

Roman Catholic

οf

(split

islands

**Guadeloupe** in particular is one of the most diverse of

OUS

**ALL OF FRANCE'S** overseas possessions, with the exception

of French Guiana and a small slice of the Antarctic continent, are islands, which are themselves mostly part of larger groupings called archipelagos. Their climates and topography vary as greatly as their populations. The tropical islands of **Guadeloupe** and **Reunion**, for example, are volcanic in origin, and



A fisherman brings in the day's catch; Guadeloupe's volcano, La Soufrière, is in the background.

claim among their many attractions the imposing figures of two active volcanoes.

Reunion's topography is particularly impressive, with its steep hills and mountains that rise sharply from the coasts—not #

to mention the occasional volcanic eruptions that send lava flowing down the side of Piton de la Fournaise. Reunion is also the most populous of France's Overseas Departments.

By contrast, **French Guiana**, despite being much larger in size (indeed, French Guiana is the largest of the French territories, roughly equivalent to 16% of continental France), reached a total estimated population of only 190,000 in 2004, while Rougion topped 720,000 in that same

190,000 in 2004, while Reunion topped 720,000 in that same year. Nearly all of the department's inhabitants are clustered around the coast, as 90% of it is covered in dense forest that is virtually inaccessible except by plane or boat (along the various rivers that cut through the forest). French Guiana remains a largely unsettled, but impressive, wilderness.

# **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

France's Overseas Departments and Territories can be found in all corners of the globe: the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, the Pacific, and even Antarctica. They therefore encompass a wide range of ethnicities.



Volleyball players have some fun in the sun on a Martinican beach.

mix of the native populations of these islands with European settlers (including in many cases colonists from the British, Dutch, Portuguese or Spanish empires) and African slaves, as well as more recent immigrants from nearby islands and countries (including Haiti, Surinam, Brazil,

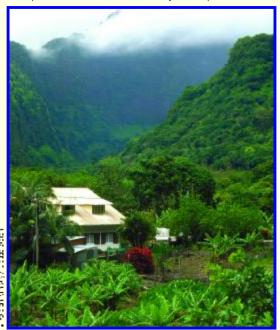
Even more striking, however, is the lin-

guistic, ethnic and religious blend that has

resulted from such diversity. Due to the early

India, Indonesia, and China), these societies have become some of

the most heterogeneous in the world.



French Guiana's vast natural wilderness remains mostly unsettled and largely unexplored.

Lebanese and Chinese immigrants.

In all cases, French is the official language of administration and instruction, and thus dominates the public sphere, despite the frequent prevalence of other languages and dialects such as Créole. However, according to French law, all local languages, customs and religions must be protected; thus local or privately

owned medias often cater to a more popular, non-French-speaking market.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Given that the tropical marine locations of many of France's overseas holdings have remained relatively untouched until recently, they constitute excellent sources for several unique natural resources.



An exquisite Tahitian black pearl.

Ninety percent of the territory of **French Guiana** is covered by



The best of both worlds: a swimming pool overlooks a Caribbean lagoon in Guadeloupe.

rainforests, for instance, giving it large tropical hardwood reserves. As for New Caledonia, it boasts 25 percent of the world's known nickel resources. Black pearls are, famously, French Polynesia's most precious resource. Both French Polynesia, and especially St. Pierre and Miquelon, have wellestablished fishing economies that represent a substantial percentage of their GDP.

# **Tourist-Driven Economies With Some Twists**

THE ECONOMIES of France's overseas departments and territories are just as varied as their locations, histories, and populations. While some of the territories rely heavily on tourism, others remain relatively untouched by travel and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Some of the products of France's overseas holdings have attained international fame, such as Martinique's rum and Tahiti's vacation getaways. Although it is nearly impossible to make generalizations regarding the economies of these territories, the following overviews help to provide a guick glance of the French overseas way of life.



View of a peaceful Réunion beach.

ST MARTIN DUTY-FREE SINCE '39

islands, St. Martin, a dependency

of France's Guadeloupe, once relied

on the production of sugarcane to

drive its economy. But the island

entered a period of economic

lasted roughly 90 years. In an

attempt to curb the effects of the

economic downturn, St. Martin was

declared a duty-free port in 1939,

and has carried this status ever

cost between 20 and 50 percent

less in St. Martin than in France or

the United States. These attractive

ideal hotspot for shoppers!

Like many other Caribbean

#### TOURISM...

For some of France's overseas departments and territories, remote locations make the development of tourism difficult. Others, however, have enjoyed international fame for their attractiveness to tourists, including French Polynesia's Tahiti, Guadeloupe's St. Martin, Martinique, and New Caledonia. These French DOM-TOMs boast white sandy beaches, world-class rum, and an opportunity to take a break from the rush of daily life.

# ... and FUN ACTIVITIES

A wide range of activities in the land, sea, and sky are available for visitors to enjoy. The sports and leisure activities open to tourists include, but are hardly limited to: sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, duty-free shopping, horseback riding, hiking, paragliding, surfing, deep-sea fishing, helicopter flying, kayaking, nature walking, swimming, caving, cycling, canyoning, golfing, hang-gliding, and windsurfing. For more information on some of these activities, explore the tourism websites listed on the back of this brochure.

#### AGRICULTURE...

The DOM-TOMs produce a wide range of agricultural products for export. The Caribbean islands are especially strong in sugarcane production, some of which is used to produce their famous rum. In addition, several types of exotic spices are native to the Caribbean territories, as well as to other French holdings such as **Mayotte**. Other key exports include bananas, eggplant, exotic

# **HIGHLIGHT: New Caledonia**

Boasting one of the largest coral reefs in the world, New Caledonia is the scuba diver's ultimate dream. With temperature ranging from 70 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (21-28 degrees Celsius), the reef is home to more than 2.000 species of fish. Other varieties of marine life that attract divers to the area are whales (from July-September), and sea turtles. The pristine conditions of the island's lagoon have created an ideal environment for avid surfers as well.

flowers, coconuts, various vegetables, and pigs. French **Polynesia** also has a well-developed pearl-farming industry.



A rum distillery in Guadeloupe.

# FEELIN' RUMMY?

Martinique's rum is the only rum which bears France's prestigious AOC label (Appellation d'Origine Controlée).

Unlike other rums produced in the Caribbean, Martinique's rum is produced directly from fresh sugarcane juice, rather than from

molasses. The worldwide renown of this syrupy liquor serves the Martinican economy not only as an export but also as a tourist attraction; every year, rum distilleries and production plants remain popular points of interests for out-of-towners.



Rockets Ariane 4 and 5, both of which are launched from Kourou.

#### ... and TECHNOLOGY

Science and technology play a key role for two of France's overseas holdings. An important part of French Guiana's livelihood is the Guiana Space Center, located in Kourou. The space center is used by the European launch company Arianespace to sends its Ariane rockets (Ariane 5 is the largest rocket in the world).

Meanwhile, the only inhabitants of

the French Southern and Antarctic territories are hardy scientists. who conduct research on dimate change and polar wildlife, such as Emperor Penguins (see photo on right).



# Delicious Food, Jun Music, Wonderful Wildlife

**FROM FRENCH** Polynesian oyster beds to the Hmong gardens of French Guiana to Saint Pierre and Miquelon's fishing fleets, unique cultures flourish in France's ten different overseas departments and territories. While many aspects of their lifestyles hail from traditional French influences, they also manifest local twists. This mixed lifestyle provides a one-of-a-kind experience for any tourist or visitor wishing to learn more about French overseas culture.

## **GASTRONOMY**

Because of the wide variety in locations and peoples, the cuisine in France's DOM-TOMs is eclectic. Even in individual territories, the tastes of several continents are blended together to create unique flavors and exotic treats. The territories' and departments' coastal locations have resulted in the incorporation of a wide variety of fish and seafood into local diets. Additionally, territories located near the equator boast many tropical fruits and vegetables that are difficult to find elsewhere.



Fruit and rum punch—a colorful mix!

#### MAKE YOUR OWN TI'PUNCH

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 LIME, ZESTED
- 1 OZ CARIBBEAN RUM (FROM GUADELOUPE OR MARTINIQUE!!)
- · 1/4 TSP. SUGAR CANE SYRUP

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

- · MIX INGREDIENTS IN A TUMBLER
- ADD ICE IF DESIRED.

The importance of gastronomy to French overseas departments and territories is especially evident in places like **Guadeloupe**, where the highlight of the calendar year is La Fête des Cuisinières (see "EVENTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS" for more information). Staple dishes for this fête include boudin (blood sausage), matété de crabes (rice and crabs), lobster and various salads. Also popular in the Caribbean and in French Guiana is ti'punch, a strong mixed drink of lime, sugar cane syrup and rum.

# FLORA AND FAUNA OF DOM-TOMS

While many of the water sports and other activities that are popular in DOM-TOMs can also be enjoyed elsewhere, certain exotic animals and plants can only be discovered by exploring these pristine natural enclaves.

Located near the equator, **French Guiana** enjoys several nature reserves in its abundant rainforests. Tropical



The sweetwater crayfish is one of the many examples of aquatic life in Guadeloupe.

fauna include iguanas, the scarlet ibis and the rare orange-breasted falcon.

Also known for its diversity in plants and animals is the small island of **Mayotte**, which is home to more than thirty-five native species of birds and fifty species of orchids.

#### **MUSIC**

No discussion of French DOM-TOM culture would be complete without explaining the phenomenon of zouk: the new pop music of the Caribbean. Popularized in the mid-

1980s, this new musical genre was influenced by African, European, as well as other types of Caribbean music. Zouk music has been classified

as extremely high energy and has been said to exude pure joy from its harmonious chords and beats. It is therefore little surprise that listening to zouk music has been likened to experiencing a dance party.



A zouk music CD cover

Although zouk has gained a following all over the world, it remains especially popular in the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

# **EVENTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS**

#### **CARNAVAL - French Guiana**

**Dates:** Lasts two months before the beginning of Lent

**Features:** Parades take to the streets every Sunday during Carnaval, and performers greet the crowds with festive costumes and music. In the days before Lent, the Carnaval celebrations reach their height, marked by weddings on Monday, a wild parade on Mardi Gras, and closing ceremonies on Ash Wednesday.

#### **HEIVI I TAHITI - Tahiti (French Polynesia)**

Dates: Month-long festival in July

**Features:** One highlight of this festival is the culmination of the year-round Tahitian beauty contests, with the crowning of Miss Heiva i Tahiti during the celebrations. Also featured during the festival is France's Bastille Day (July 14th), marking Tahitians' European ties.

# FÊTE DES CUISINIÈRES - Guadeloupe

**Dates:** Early August

**Features:** This festival to honor St. Laurent, translated as "Festival of Women Cooks," features a street parade of women in creole dress, carrying traditional Guadeloupe foods. The parade is then followed by a dance and delicious banquet.



The welcome fleet at the end of the Route du Rhum, in Pointe à Pitre, Guadeloupe (2002). This famous solo sailboat race takes place every four years. Both multihulls and monohulls (never more than 60 in all) depart from St Malo, France, and make their way across the Atlantic, following the route that rhum merchants used to take.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION ...



What better place to relax than one of Guadeloupe's beaches?

#### Guadeloupe

Comité du Tourisme des Iles de la Guadeloupe 5, square de la Banque, BP 422 97163 Pointe-à-Pitre Cedex

**Tel:** +590 82.09.30 **Fax:** +590 83.89.22

www.lesilesdeguadeloupe.com

Antilles Info Tourism InterMédia Caraïbes Carrefour Dunoyer, Route de Pliane 97190 Gosier - Guadeloupe - F.W.I.

Tel: +590 84.95.34 Fax: +590 84.71.22 Email: imc@im-caraibes.com

www.antilles-info-tourisme.com/guadeloupe

Office Municipal du Tourisme de St. Barthélemy Quai du Général de Gaulle Gustavia, BP 113 97113 St. Barthélemy **Tel:** +590 27.87.27

Fax: +590 27.87.27 Fax: +590 27.74.47 Email: odtsb@wanadoo.fr www.st-barths.com

St. Martin Tourist Office 675 Third Avenue, Suite 1807 New York, NY 10017 Tel: +1 212-475-8970

Tel: +1 212-475-8970 Email: <u>sxmtony@msn.com</u>

Office du Tourisme de St. Martin Boulevard France Port de Marigot 97150 St. Martin **Tel:** +590 87.57.21

Fax: +590 87.56.43
Email: sxmto@aol.com
www.st-martin.org

#### French Guiana

Comité du Tourisme de la Guyane 12, rue Lalouette, BP 801 97300 Cayenne, French Guiana

**Tel:** +594 29.65.00 **Fax:** +594 29.65.01

Email: guayanaparis@wanadoo.fr

www.tourisme-guyane.com

www.tourisme-guyane.com/en/ (English)

#### St. Pierre et Miquelon

www.st-pierre-et-miguelon.com

#### **New Caledonia**

New Caledonia

New Caledonia South Tourism 20, rue Anatole France Nouméa Centre BP 688 - 98845 Noumea Cedex

**Tel:** +687 24.20.80 **Fax:** +687 24.20.70 **Email:** info@nctps.com

www.newcaledoniatourism-south.com

#### **Wallis and Futuna**

www.outre-mer.gouv.fr www.wallis.co.nc

#### **Reunion Island**

Comité du Tourisme de la Reunion Place du 20 Décembre 1848 - BP 615 97472 St-Denis, Reunion Island

**Tel:** +262 21.00.41 **Fax:** +262 21.00.21

www.la-reunion-tourisme.com

#### Mayotte

Comité du Tourisme de Mayotte Rue de la Pompe - BP 1169 97600 Mamoudzou, Mayotte

**Tel:** +269 61.09.09 **Fax:** +269 61.03.46

**Email:** <a href="mailto:ctm@mayotte-tourisme.com">ctm@mayotte-tourisme.com</a> <a href="mailto:www.mayotte-tourisme.com">www.mayotte-tourisme.com</a>

#### Martinique

Martinique Promotion Bureau 444 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10022 **Tel:** +1 410-286-8310 **Fax:** +1 212-838-7855

Email: info@martinique.org www.martiniquetourism.com www.martinique.org (In English)



An idyllic beach in French Polynesia

#### French Polynesia

Tahiti Tourisme North America 300 Continental Boulevard, Suite 160 El Segundo, CA 90245

**Tel:** +1 310-414-8484 **Fax:** +1 310-414-8490

Email: info@tahiti-tourisme.com www.tahiti-tourisme.com

#### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR DOM-TOMS?

#### 1) This DOM-TOM is famous for its unique black pearls:

- a) French Polynesia
- b) Reunion Island
- c) Mayotte
- d) Guadeloupe

#### 2) This holding is France's last in North America:

- a) Wallis and Futuna
- b) Mayotte
- c) Reunion Island
- d) St. Pierre and Miquelon

# 3) Ti'punch is made from:

- a) Molasses, rum, and pineapple juice
- b) Sugar cane syrup, lime juice, and rum
- c) Rum and coconut milk
- d) Rum, coconut milk, and lime juice

## 4) This DOM-TOM boasts one of the world's largest coral reefs:

- a) French Polynesia
- b) Reunion Island
- c) Mayotte
- d) New Caledonia

#### 5) The active volcano Piton de la Fournaise can be found in:

- a) Reunion
- b) Guadeloupe
- c) Mayotte
- d) Martinique

Solutions can be found at the bottom of this page (upside down!).

#### **DID YOU KNOW ... ?**

•St. Martin, a dependency of Guadeloupe, is the smallest island in the world to have ever been divided between two nations, France and the Netherlands (they signed what would be the first of many border agreements in 1648).

•Prior to the French Revolution, the French holding off the coast of Madagascar was not yet known as **Reunion Island**; it became known by this name in 1790 in honor of that year's meeting of revolutionary troops in Paris.

- •The French Southern and Antarctic Territories have no indigenous inhabitants.
- •The population of **Wallis and Futuna** is very young: more than 60 percent of the population is less than 20 years of age.
- •Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon, was from **Martinique**. According to local legend, it was prophesied soon after her birth in 1763 that she would one day become a queen.
- •New Caledonia earned its name when English explorer Captain James Cook arrived at the islands in 1774. The island's landscape reminded him of the Scottish highlands, which had previously been dubbed "Caledonia" by Roman explorers.
- •The area covered by **French Polynesia**'s 118 islands is roughly equivalent to the total area covered by the whole of Europe.
- •The island of **Mayotte**, part of the Comoro archipelago in the Indian Ocean, is 97 percent Muslim.
- •Indeed, **Mayotte** was originally discovered and founded by Arab explorers. Its name is derived from the Arab word maouti, or death, due to the numerous ships that were destroyed by the coral reef that surrounds and protects the island.
- •Among the many prisoners held at the Devil's Island penal colony in **French Guiana** was Captain Dreyfus (of the Dreyfus Affair), wrongly accused of treason following the Franco-Prussian War.
  - •St. Pierre and Miquelon is France's last territorial holding in North America.
- •Soufrière de Guadeloupe, Mount Pelée, and Piton de la Fournaise are active volcanoes on **Guadeloupe**, **Martinique** and **Reunion** respectively. Piton de la Fournaise is one of the most active in the world, with 5 eruptions in the last 2 years alone.



August 2005

