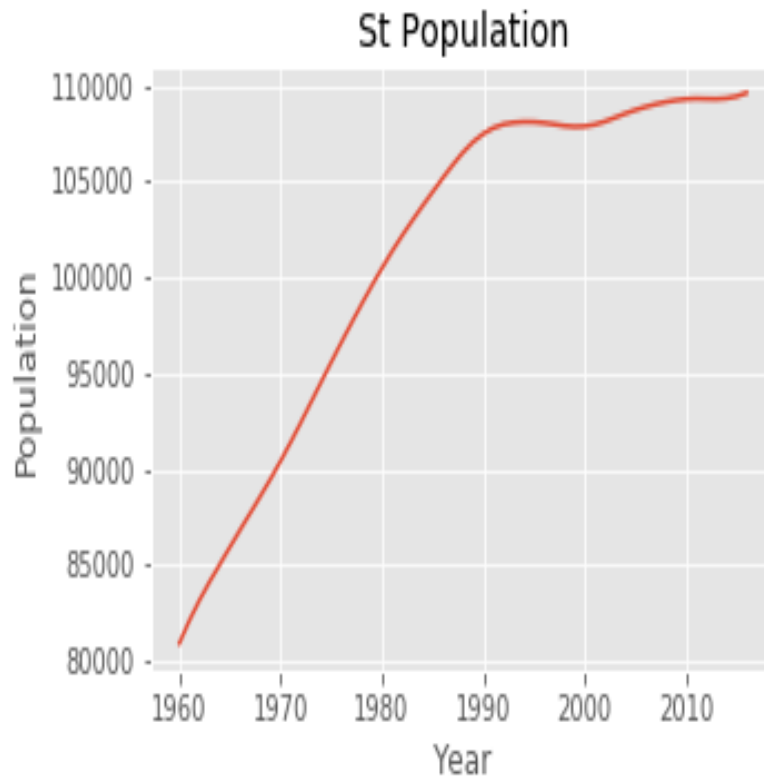


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Réunion (French: La Réunion, pronounced [la.■e.y.nj■■] (listen); previously Île Bourbon) is an island and region of France in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar and 175 kilometres (109 mi) southwest of Mauritius. As of January 2018, it had a population of 865,826. It is the most prosperous island in the Indian Ocean, having the highest GDP per capita in the region. The island has been inhabited since the 17th century when people from France and Madagascar settled there. Slavery was abolished on 20 December 1848 (a date celebrated yearly on the island), after which indentured workers were brought from Tamil Nadu, Southern India, among other places. The island became an overseas department of France in 1946. As elsewhere in France, the official language is French. In addition, the majority of the region's population speaks Réunion Creole. Administratively, Réunion is one of the overseas departments of France. Like the other four overseas departments, it is also one of the 18 regions of France, with the modified status of overseas region, and an integral part of the Republic with the same status as Metropolitan France. Réunion is an outermost region of the European Union and, as an overseas department of France, part of the Eurozone. == History == Not much is known of Réunion's history prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century. Arab traders were familiar with it by the name Dina Morgabin. The island is possibly featured on a map from 1153 AD by Al Sharif el-Edrisi. The island might also have been visited by Swahili or Austronesian (Ancient Indonesian-Malaysian) sailors on their journey to the west from the Malay Archipelago to Madagascar. The first European discovery of the area was made around 1507 by Portuguese explorer Diogo Fernandes Pereira, but the specifics are unclear. The uninhabited island might have been first sighted by the expedition led by Dom Pedro Mascarenhas, who gave his name to the island group around Réunion, the Mascarenes. Réunion itself was dubbed Santa Apolónia after a favourite saint, which suggests that the date of the Portuguese discovery could have been 9 February, her saint day. Diogo Lopes de Sequeira is said to have landed on the islands of Réunion and Rodrigues in 1509. Over a century later, nominal Portuguese rule had left Santa Apolónia virtually untouched. The island was then occupied by France and administered from Port Louis, Mauritius. Although the first French claims date

from 1638, when François Cauche and Salomon Goubert visited in June 1638, the island was officially claimed by Jacques Pronis of France in 1642, when he deported a dozen French mutineers to the island from Madagascar. The convicts were returned to France several years later, and in 1649, the island was named Île Bourbon after the French Royal House of Bourbon. Colonization started in 1665, when the French East India Company sent the first settlers. "Île de la Réunion" was the name given to the island in 1793 by a decree of the Convention nationale (elected revolutionary constituent assembly) with the fall of the House of Bourbon in France, and the name commemorates the union of revolutionaries from Marseille with the National Guard in Paris, which took place on 10 August 1792. In 1801, the island was renamed "Île Bonaparte", after First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte. The island was invaded by a Royal Navy squadron led by Commodore Josias Rowley in 1810, who used the old name of "Bourbon". When it was restored to France by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the island retained the name of "Bourbon" until the fall of the restored Bourbons during the French Revolution of 1848, when the island was once again given the name "Île de la Réunion". From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, French colonisation, supplemented by importing Africans, Chinese and Indians as workers, contributed to ethnic diversity in the population. From 1690, most of the non-Europeans were enslaved. The colony abolished slavery on 20 December 1848. Afterward, many of the foreign workers came as indentured workers. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the importance of the island as a stopover on the East Indies trade route. During the Second World War, Réunion was under the authority of the Vichy Regime until 30 November 1942, when Free French forces took over the island with the destroyer *Léopard*. Réunion became a département d'outre-mer (overseas département) of France on 19 March 1946. INSEE assigned to Reunion the department code 974, and the region code 04 when regional councils were created in 1982 in France, including in existing overseas departments which also became overseas regions. Over about two decades in the late twentieth century (1963–1982), 1,630 children from Réunion were relocated to rural areas of metropolitan France, particularly to Creuse, ostensibly for education and work opportunities. That programme was led by influential Gaullist politician Michel Debré, who was an MP for Réunion at the time. Many of these children were abused or disadvantaged by the families with whom they were placed. Known as Children of Creuse, they and their fate came to light in 2002 when one of them, Jean-Jacques Martial, filed suit against the French state for kidnapping and deportation of a minor. Other similar lawsuits were filed over the following years, but all were dismissed by French courts and finally by the European Court of Human Rights in 2011. In 2005 and 2006, Réunion was hit by a crippling epidemic of chikungunya, a disease spread by mosquitoes. According to the BBC News, 255,000 people on Réunion had contracted the disease as of 26 April 2006. The neighbouring islands of Mauritius and Madagascar also suffered epidemics of this disease during the same year. A few cases also appeared in mainland France, carried by people travelling by airline. The French government of Dominique de Villepin sent an emergency aid package worth 36 million Euro and deployed approximately five hundred troops in an effort to eradicate mosquitoes on the island. == Politics == Réunion sends seven deputies to the French National Assembly and three senators to the Senate. == Administrative divisions == Administratively, Réunion is divided into 24 communes (municipalities) grouped into four arrondissements. It is also subdivided into 49 cantons, meaningful only for electoral purposes at the departmental or regional level. It is a French overseas department and hence a French overseas region. The low number of communes, compared with French metropolitan departments of similar size and population, is unique: most of its communes encompass several localities, sometimes separated by significant distances. === Municipalities (communes) === The communes voluntarily grouped themselves into five intercommunalities for cooperating in some domains, apart from the four arrondissements to which they belong for purposes of applying national laws and executive regulation. After some changes in the composition, name and status of intercommunalities, all of them operate with the status of agglomeration communities, and apply their own local taxation (in addition to national, regional, departmental and municipal taxes) and have an autonomous budget decided by the assembly representing all member communes. This budget is also partly funded by the state, the region, the department, and by the European Union for some development and investment programs. Every commune in Réunion is now a member of an intercommunality with its own taxation, to which member communes have delegated their authority in various areas. == Foreign relations == Although diplomacy, military and French government matters are handled by Paris, Réunion is a member of La Francophonie, the Indian Ocean Commission, the International Trade Union Confederation, the Universal Postal Union, the Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa, and the World Federation of Trade Unions in its own right.

== Geography == The island is 63 kilometres (39 mi) long; 45 kilometres (28 mi) wide; and covers 2,512 square kilometres (970 sq mi). It is above a hotspot in the Earth's crust. The Piton de la Fournaise, a shield volcano on the eastern end of Réunion Island, rises more than 2,631 metres (8,632 ft) above sea level and is sometimes called a sister to Hawaiian volcanoes because of the similarity of climate and volcanic nature. It has erupted more than 100 times since 1640 and is under constant monitoring, most recently erupting on 14 July 2017. During another eruption in April 2007, the lava flow was estimated at 3,000,000 cubic metres (3,900,000 cu yd) per day. The Piton de la Fournaise is created by a hotspot volcano, which also created the Piton des Neiges and the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Piton des Neiges volcano, the highest point on the island at 3,070 metres (10,070 ft) above sea level, is north west of the Piton de la Fournaise. Collapsed calderas and canyons are south west of the mountain. Like Kohala on the Big Island of Hawaii, the Piton des Neiges is extinct. Despite its name, snow (French: neige) practically never falls on the summit. The slopes of both volcanoes are heavily forested. Cultivated land and cities like the capital city of Saint-Denis are concentrated on the surrounding coastal lowlands. Offshore, part of the west coast is characterised by a coral reef system. Réunion also has three calderas: the Cirque de Salazie, the Cirque de Cilaos and the Cirque de Mafate. The last is accessible only on foot or by helicopter. === Climate === The climate in Réunion is tropical, but temperature moderates with elevation. The weather is cool and dry from May to November, but hot and rainy from November to April. Precipitation levels vary greatly within the island, with the east being much wetter than the west. There is more than 6 m of rain a year on some parts of the east and less than 1 m a year on the west coast. Réunion holds the world records for the most rainfall in 12-, 24-, 72- and 96-hour periods. === Beaches === Réunion hosts many tropical and unique beaches. These beaches are often equipped with barbecues, amenities, and parking spaces. Hermitage Beach is the most extensive and best preserved lagoon in Réunion Island and a popular snorkelling location. It is a white sand beach that's lined with casuarina trees under which the locals often organise picnics. La Plage des Brisants is a well-known surfing spot, with many athletic and leisurely activities taking place. Each November, a film festival is also organised in La Plage des Brisants. Movies are projected on a large screen in front of a crowd. Beaches at Boucan Canot are surrounded by a stretch of restaurants that particularly cater to tourists. L'Etang-Salé on the west coast is a particularly unique beach as it's covered in black sand consisting of tiny fragments of basalt. This occurs when lava contacts water, it cools rapidly and shatters into sand and fragmented debris of various size. Much of the debris is small enough to be considered sand. Grand Anse is a tropical white sand beach lined with coconut trees in the south of Réunion, with a rock pool built for swimmers, a pétanque playground, and a picnic area. == Environment == Since 2010, Réunion is home to a UNESCO World Heritage Site that covers about 40% of the island's area and coincides with the central zone of the Réunion National Park. === Wildlife === Réunion is home to a variety of birds such as the white-tailed tropicbird (French: paille en queue). Its largest land animal is the panther chameleon, *Furcifer pardalis*. Much of the West coast is ringed by coral reef which harbours, among other animals, sea urchins, conger eels and parrot fish. Sea turtles and dolphins also inhabit the coastal waters. Humpback whales migrate north to the island from the Antarctic waters annually during the Southern Hemisphere winter (June–September) to breed and feed, and can be routinely observed from the shores of Réunion during this season. At least 19 species formerly endemic to Réunion have become extinct following human colonisation. Between 2011 and 2015, there were 17 shark attacks in the waters of Réunion of which seven were fatal. In July 2013 the Prefect of Réunion Michel Lalande announced a ban on swimming, surfing and bodyboarding off more than half of the coast. Lalande also said 45 bull sharks and 45 tiger sharks would be culled, in addition to the 20 already killed as part of scientific research into the illness ciguatera. Migrations of humpback whales contributed to a bloom of whale watching industries on Réunion, and watching rules have been governed by the OMAR (Observatoire Marin de la Réunion) and Globice (Groupe local d'observation et d'identification des cétacés). === Gardening - Bourbon roses === The first members of the "Bourbon" group of garden roses originated on this island (then still Île Bourbon, hence the name) from a spontaneous hybridisation between Damask roses and *Rosa chinensis*, which had been brought there by the colonists. The first Bourbon roses were discovered on the island in 1817. == Demographics == Ethnic groups present include people of African, Indian, European, Malagasy and Chinese origin. Local names for these are Yabs, Cafres, Malbars, and Chinois. All of the ethnic groups comprising the island are immigrant populations that have come to Réunion from Europe, Asia, and Africa over the centuries. There are no indigenous people on the island, as it was originally deserted. These populations have mixed from the earliest days of the island's colonial history (the first settlers married women from

Madagascar and of Indo-Portuguese heritage) resulting in a majority population of mixed race and of "Creole" culture. It is not known exactly how many people there are of each ethnicity since the French census does not ask questions there about ethnic origin, which applies in Réunion because it is a part of the 1958 constitution, and also because of the extent of racial mixing on the island. According to estimates, whites (petits blancs and gros blancs) make up approximately one-quarter of the population, Malbars make up more than 25% of the population and people of Chinese ancestry form roughly 3%. The percentages for mixed race people and those of Afro-Malagasy origins vary widely in estimates. There are also some people of Vietnamese ancestry on the island, though they are very few in number. Tamils are the largest group among the Indian community. The island's community of Muslims from North Western India, particularly Gujarat, and elsewhere is commonly referred to as Zarabes. Creoles (a name given to those born on the island, regardless of ethnic origins), make up the majority of the population. Groups that are not creole include people recently arrived from Metropolitan France (known as zoreils) and those from Mayotte and the Comoros. === Historical demographics ===

Religion === The predominant religion is Christianity, notably Roman Catholicism, with a single (Latin Rite) jurisdiction, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saint-Denis-de-La Réunion. Religious Intelligence estimates Christians to be 84.9% of the population, followed by Hindus (6.7%) and Muslims (2.2%). Chinese folk religion and Buddhism are also represented, among others. Most large towns have a Hindu temple and a mosque. == Culture == Réunionese culture is a blend (métissage) of European, African, Indian, Chinese and insular traditions. The most widely spoken language, Réunion Creole, derives from French. === Language === French is the only official language of Réunion. Although not official, Réunion Creole is the native language of a large part of the population and is spoken alongside French. Creole is used informally and orally in some administration offices whereas the official language of any administration office as well as education is French. Because of the diverse population, other languages are also spoken such as Comorian language varieties (especially Shimaore), Malagasy by recent immigrants from Mayotte and Madagascar, Mandarin, Hakka and Cantonese by members of the Chinese community, but fewer people speak these languages as younger generations start to converse in French and Réunion Creole. There are significant number of speakers of Indian languages mostly Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu. Arabic is taught in mosques and spoken by a small community of Muslims. English is a compulsory second language as part of the French school curriculum, but as in mainland France, English fluency is rare. German and Spanish are offered as a third language. Cantonese, Arabic, Tamil is also taught as an optional language in some schools. === Music === There are two music genres which originated in Réunion: sega, which originated earlier and is also traditional in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles and maloya, which originated in the 19th century and is only found in Réunion. === Sport === Moringue is a popular combat/dance sport similar to capoeira. There are several famous Réunionese sportsmen and women like the handballer Jackson Richardson, as well as the karateka Lucie Ignace. Professional footballers include Dimitri Payet, Florent Sinama Pongolle and Guillaume Hoarau. Laurent Robert and ex-Hibernian and Celtic player Didier Agathe have also featured in movies. Agathe appeared in A Shot at Glory, whilst Robert was in Goal!. Réunion has a number of contributions to worldwide professional surfing. It has been home to notable pro surfers including Jeremy Flores, Johanne Defay and Justine Mauvin. Famous break St Leu has been host to several world surfing championship competitions. == Media == === Broadcasting === Réunion has a local public television channel, Réunion 1ère, which now forms part of France Télévision, and also receives France 2, France 3, France 4, France 5 and France 24 from metropolitan France, as well as France Ô, which shows programming from all of the overseas departments and territories. There are also two local private channels, Télé Kréol and Antenne Réunion. It has a local public radio station, formerly Radio Réunion, but now known as Réunion 1ère, like its television counterpart. It also receives the Radio France networks France Inter, France Musique and France Culture. The first private local radio station, Radio Freedom, was introduced in 1981. They broadcast daily content about weather and local services. === Newspapers === Two main newspapers: Journal de l'île de La Réunion Le Quotidien (Réunionese newspaper) === Film === Adama (animated there) Mississippi Mermaid (1969) (filmed there) === Blogs === Visit Reunion (English language blog and instagram page) Reunion Island Tourism blog (English/French tourism blog) == Economy == In 2016, the GDP of Réunion was estimated at 19.2 billion euros (US\$21.3 bn) and the GDP per capita was 22,400 euros (US\$24,800). Sugar was traditionally the chief agricultural product and export. Tourism is now an important source of income. The island's remote location combined with its stable political alignment with Europe makes it a key location for satellite receiving stations and naval navigation. GDP sector composition in 2013 (contribution of each sector to

the total gross value added): Unemployment is a major problem on Réunion, although the situation has improved markedly since the beginning of the 2000s: the unemployment rate, which stood above 30% from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, declined to 24.1% in 2007, then rebounded to 29.6% in 2011 due to the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent Great Recession, but has since 2011 again declined, reaching 22.4% in 2016, its lowest level in 40 years. In 2014, 40% of the population lived below the poverty line (defined by INSEE as 60% of Metropolitan France's median income; in 2014 the poverty line for a family of 2 parents and 2 young children was €2,064 (US\$ 2,743) per month). Rum distillation is a sugar-based process that contributes to the island's economy. A "Product of France", it is shipped to Europe for bottling, then shipped to consumers around the world. == Public services ==
=== Health === In 2005–2006, Réunion experienced an epidemic of chikungunya, a viral disease similar to dengue fever brought in from East Africa, which infected almost a third of the population because of its transmission through mosquitoes. The epidemic has since been eradicated. See the History section for more details. === Transport === Roland Garros Airport serves the island, handling flights to mainland France, India, Madagascar, Mauritius, Tanzania, Comoros, Seychelles, South Africa, China and Thailand. Pierrefonds Airport, a smaller airport, has some flights to Mauritius and Madagascar. == See also ==
== References ==
== Bibliography == James Rogers and Luis Simón. The Status and Location of the Military Installations of the Member States of the European Union and Their Potential Role for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Brussels: European Parliament, 2009. 25 pp. == External links == Government Réunion - The severe island - Official French website (in English) Departmental Council website Régional council website General information Official tourism website Réunion at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Wikimedia Atlas of Réunion UNESCO World Heritage Site datasheet