



La Villa Soalic  
Maison d'hôtes de Charme

# Hiking in Cilao



*Les Anciens Thermes*



## **Elevation of less than 300 meters:**

- **SENTIER BOTANIQUE (1hour & 30min loop):**

This trail allows you to discover the flora of Reunion Island and Cilaos. The start is at the Roche Merveilleuse site. Take the road to Bras Sec (D241), the second forest road on your left. The start of the trail is a few meters after the parking lot.

- **PLATEAU DES CHÊNES (30 minutes round trip):**

On the Plateau des Chênes site, you will also find the start of the fitness trail (1.5 hour loop). You will walk in the forest. You have to take the direction of Bras Sac by the D241. Behind the church, continue to the thermal establishment where the start of the trail is.

- **LES ANCIENS THERMES (40 min round trip):**

To access the Anciens Thermes, join Cilaos by the RN5, from St-Louis. Cross the village, and turn left towards "Ilet à Cordes". After a few very tight bends and crossing a bridge, park on the left side. Go down towards the building with the red roof to reach the small pools and the three waterfalls. You can also reach the thermal baths via the "carriers' path" which begins just below the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges church, at the level of the multimedia room.

- **SENTIER DES SOURCES (1hour loop in the forest):**

Take the direction of Bras Sec by the D241. Drive about 5km by car to the cryptomeria forest. On the left, take the direction of the Kervéguen trail. After the barrier, take an immediate right. The arrival is next to the football field in Bras Sec. Very steep climb.



*Les  
Anciens  
Thermes*





- **SENTIER FOUQUET (1hour & 10 min round trip):**

You will walk in the forest until you reach a pretty little waterfall below. You can even swim there during good times. You will just have to cross the river in order to be able to descend on the left side of the waterfall. To get there, follow the direction of Ile à Cordes about 6km from Cilaos. After the Bras Rouge bridge, continue by car to the "Bois Rouge" bus stop where the start of the trail is just before on your right. It is located a little before the Col du Taibit.

- **ROCHE MERVEILLEUSE (2hours round trip):**

You will walk in the forest and you will arrive at the viewpoint overlooking the town of Cilaos. (To be done in the morning preferably because the weather is clearer). Take the direction of Bras Sec by the D241. Behind the church, continue to the thermal establishment where the start of the trail is. Arrived at the oak plateau, turn left and after a few meters the path turns right. The arrival is in a car park, continue a few meters and climb the stairs. You can also get there by car by following the D241.

- **CASCADE BRAS ROUGE (2hours & 30min round trip):**

You will be able to see the waterfall when you arrive below on the left. To get there, you have to go downtown and take the road between the restaurant "Le Petit Randonneur" and the restaurant "Les Sentiers". At the end of the car park on the left, take the porters' path. After the first small bridge, go up the stairs, on the road, take a left and about 200 meters away is the start of the trail.

- **BRAS DE BENJOIN (2hours & 30min round trip):**

Cross the town center and after the town hall, turn right on Rue des Écoles towards Mare à Joncs. At the roundabout, take the second exit and turn left at the stop sign. Keep right when arriving at the pond then keep left at the next crossing. Then turn on the second right. Stay on the same road until the start of the trail.



*Sentier Fouquet*



## **Elevation of less than 800 meters:**

- **SENTIER GUEULE ROUGE (2 hour loop in the forest):**

You must cross the village of Bras Sec, the path starts at the end and to the left of the Bonnet du Prêtre. This trail climbs steeply along the Bonnet de Prêtre mountain. Continue to the first fork. Take the left path. This beautiful trail passes through beautiful flower-filled vegetation and is mostly flat. Continue this Sentier des Calumets for quite a long time, bypassing the Bonnet de Prêtre. Leave the meadow to descend into a more forest atmosphere following the Ravine des Calumets. Cross a few easy fords on a well marked path. The path always descends into the ravine to the Sentier Gueule Rouge cross marker. Turn right to take the path that goes up the side of the Bonnet de Prêtre. The climb is quite steep but perfectly well traced up to the Gueule Rouge beacon. Turn right on this small country road surrounded by beautiful vegetation. Continue a few bends to come to Saul Road. Turn right on the small Chemin Saul road to reach the crossroads on the way out. Take the outward route back to the departure car park.

- **SENTIER PLATE FORME (2Hours & 30min round trip):**

The route of the Plate Forme path follows a concrete track between houses. At the intersection, leave the path on the right and stay on the track. The trail begins just below and crosses lentil fields. The harvest takes place in September, but you can come across farmers sowing or transplanting the plants.

The landscape is magnificent with the Gros Morne de Gueule Rouge in the background. In 15 min, you arrive at a small area, the path continues on the left (direction Peter Both). After a narrow ledge, you enter the canyon via a succession of switchbacks. The panorama is grandiose but be careful of the vertiginous and slippery passages. The path dominates then reaches the Bras de Benzoin. A remnant of a bridge overlooks the waterfall. It allowed porters to cross the river in all seasons.

Do not approach the edge of the waterfall: the rocks are slippery and unstable.



*Col du Taibit*



• **LA CHAPELLE (4hours round trip):**

Located in the cirque of Cilaos, this enormous cavity that is the Chapel is made up of huge rocks that meet at their summit and under which flows a waterfall creating a basin. To access the start of the trail, head towards the entrance to Cilaos and take Rue de la Chapelle, which is opposite the bakery (pink). Go straight down to a fork where you have to turn right, then park below, in the bend. The hike begins with a few stretches of road and stairs but you quickly find the path on the left. Walk for a long time under the casuarina trees along the Ravine Henri Dijoux on a path that is usually sandy, sometimes rocky and with high steps.

The junction of the Sentier de la Chapelle is easy to find on the right. It begins with steep climbs on wooden steps before crossing eucalyptus woods. In the descent, enjoy the views of the Chapel and the Piton de Sucre which dominates it. The end is made by a few laces in a parched vegetation before joining the large pebbles at the bottom of the Bras Rouge. La Chapelle being upstream, you have to find the best passage between or on the big rocks that make up the bottom. Visit the interior of the cave to admire the pretty waterfall upstream, taking into account the level of the water in the basin.

• **CILAOS – ILET À CORDES (3hours one way):**

Same start as the Sentier de la Chapelle and at the intersection go straight ahead. Locate the path opposite before crossing the river, the climb is very steep. Possibility to take a bus for the return (on arrival on the road, turn left Terre Fine).

• **PALMISTE ROUGE – ILET HAUT – PAVILLON (3hours & 30min one way):**

The start of the trail is at the entrance to Palmiste Rouge, after the bends, take the first path on the right. Vertiginous and slippery passages. Before and after the Petit Bras river, steep climbs. The trail is exposed before arriving at Ilet Haute. Along the route, possibility of climbing to Peter Both (1h00). Plan two cars or take the bus services.



*La Chapelle*



- **REPOSOIR TRAIL (3 hours & 30 minutes one way):**

This hike offers magnificent views of the Cirque de Cilaos. By leaving in this direction, you will climb much more than a departure from Cilaos to reach the Pavilion. To find the start of the trail, go up the RN5 and continue after the Pavilion to the Burel bus stop. The start is on the left in a hairpin bend. The hike begins with a descent then follows the level curve dominating the river, which can cause vertigo to some hikers. The sandy path in places can be slippery when it is not invaded by earth brought by small scree. The descent leads to the Bras de Cilaos near a small waterfall. You can cross it to follow the path on the right bank or go off-trail in the sandy pebbles on the left bank. At Trois Bras, do not miss the path that goes up to Îlet à Cordes and which begins with chocas on each side. Despite its name of Reposoir, there is nothing restful about this climb because you encounter very steep slopes halfway on short bends protected from the void by cables. This long climb ends in the small stony fields of Îlet à Cordes, which you cross completely to head towards the village school and the town hall. 200 m before the school, look for the path that dips in the direction of Bras Rouge. The trail is often narrow and has a few high steps. Enjoy the very wild landscapes in the old scree surrounding the Bras Rouge and the Ravine des Aigrettes towards Mare Sèche. The long, slightly dizzying descent ends at the Bras Rouge ford, which is easily crossed if the water level is low. We follow the Bras Rouge on the left bank in a rather poor vegetation and we find the casuarinas from the start of the climb to Cilaos. The next crossing allows, starting on the left, to reach the Chapel. Continue straight on a steady climb that often runs along or crosses the Ravine Henri Dijoux, lined with very tall casuarina trees. The trail ends at a concrete road that climbs steeply towards Cilaos. Several roads lead to the city.



*Le Piton des Neiges*



## **Elevation of more than 800 meters:**

### **• COL DU TAIBIT (4hours & 30min Round trip):**

The Taibit pass, just over 2,000 meters above sea level, is located on the ridge line between the Cilaos and Mafate cirques. It is also surrounded by two other famous peaks of the island: Trois Salazes and Grand Bénare. Start of the trail on the road to Ilet à Cordes about 6km from Cilaos. After the Bras Rouge bridge, continue by car to the picnic kiosk on the left. The start of the trail is 200 meters further on the right. Possibility to go down to Marla (Mafate 1h00 one way) or to continue towards La Nouvelle (2h00 one way).

### **• CAP BOUTEILLE (4hours & 30min Round trip):**

Cap Bouteille is the ideal viewpoint over the Salazes, satellite chain of the Piton des Neiges at over 2900m altitude, with cliffs dropping over 1000m into the Ravine du Bras Rouge, at the Cirque de Cilaos.

Same start as the Col du Taibit. After about 1h15 of walking, the path is on the right.

### **• LE KERVEGUEN (5hours Round Trip):**

Take the direction of Bras Sec by the D241. Drive about 5kms by car to the cryptomeria forest. On the right is a picnic area, take the direction of the trail opposite. Possibility to walk along the ridge to the refuge of the Caverne Dufour (1h30) or to descend towards the Plaine des Cafres (4h30).

### **• PITON DES NEIGES (10hours Round trip):**

This quite physical hike due to the elevation takes you to the highest point of the Indian Ocean with these 3070 meters of altitude. You can sleep at the refuge of the Caverne Dufour which is located at 2478 meters or at the top by bringing a tent and something to warm you up or even do it during the day. From the top, you will have views of Cilaos, Salazie, Marla, the Plains, Gros Morne, the rampart of Grand Bénard and depending on the time you go there, sunrise and/or sunset. To get there, take the direction of Bras Sec by the D241, i.e. 3 kilometers to go to the place called "Le Bloc". Allow about 3 hours of walking to the refuge and 2 hours to the summit. Possibility also to go down to Bélouve (5h00) or to Hell Bourg (5h00).