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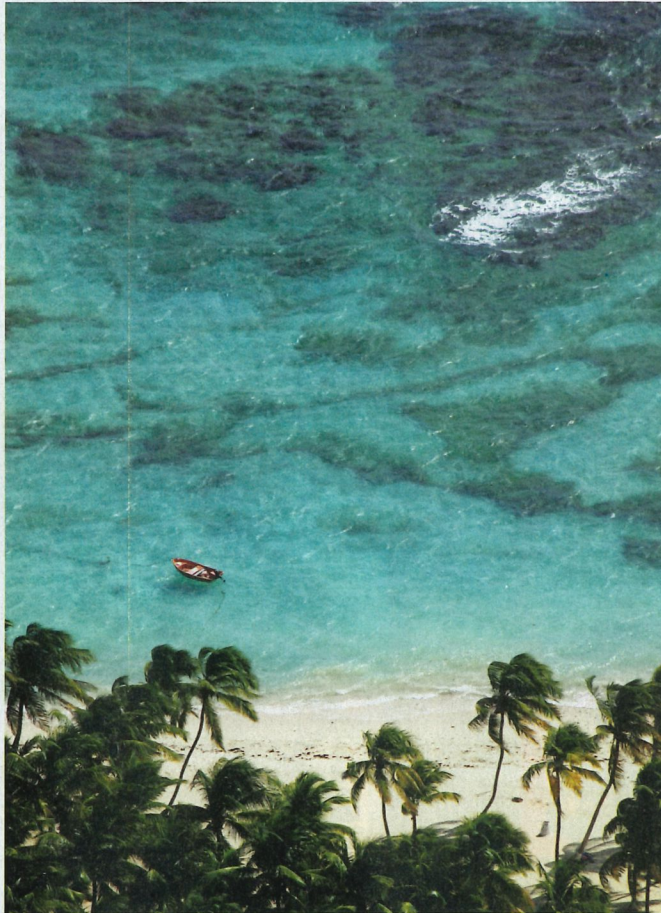


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FROM A CHEVALIER TO SLAVE STEPS

DISCOVERING BLACK HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN GUADELOUPE

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Souffleur Beach, La Desirade

BOASTING SPARKLING WATERFALLS, GOLDEN BEACHES and welcoming locals, the archipelago of Guadeloupe is noted for *la belle vie*, or the good life. Indeed, as a French overseas region, Guadeloupe attracts European beach lovers, foodies and eco travelers interested in an under-the-radar tropical experience. Located in the Eastern Caribbean, between Antigua and Dominica and composed of five islands, Guadeloupe also offers significant Black history. Visitors can trace the breadth of the Transatlantic slave trade at the landmark Memorial ACTe cultural institution, stroll through a fort that was the site of courageous resistance battles, walk up staircases and through cemeteries dedicated to enslaved ancestors and discover unsung Black brilliance in the form of Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, a virtuoso violinist and composer who rivaled Mozart.

You won't find a better introduction to Guadeloupe and its complex history than at the Memorial ACTe (Caribbean Centre of Expressions and Memory of Slavery and the Slave Trade). It is a spectacular monument that promotes the understanding of not only the origins of slavery and the high stakes involved but also the importance of the fight for freedom of all people, regardless of where they come from or where they live. The museum traces the legacy and history of slavery from antiquity to present day. The Memorial ACTe is such an important experience because it incorporates many elements to tell the story of slavery and does so from the point of view of the enslaved. There are live-action videos, a re-creation of a pirate ship, art installations from Black artists from around the world, audio commentary in four languages, an interactive Code Noir, or Black Code, book, and even an enclosed garden representing the essential herbs and plants used by the enslaved.



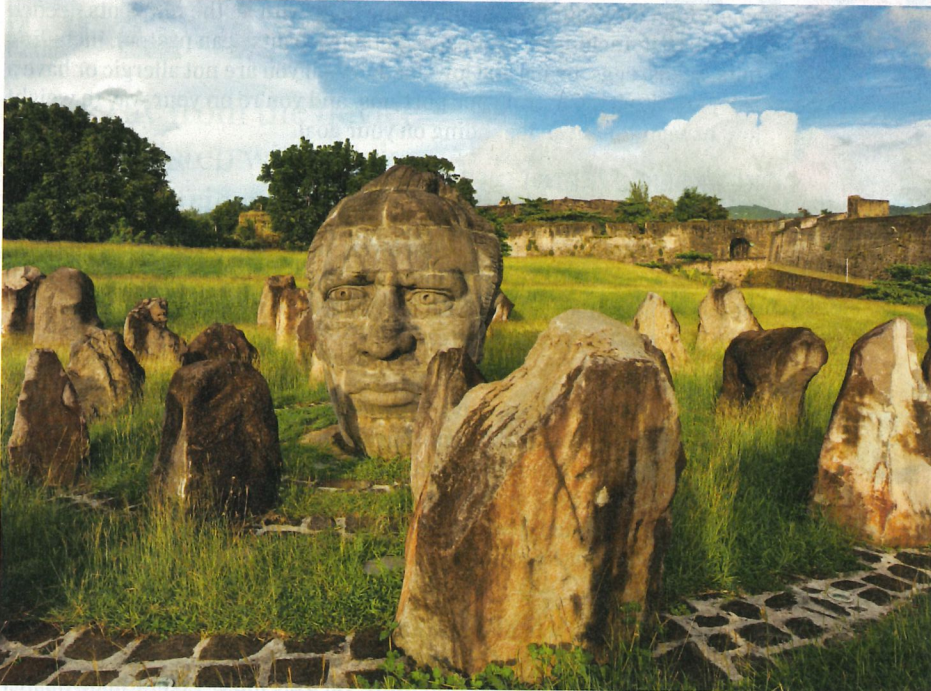
The Memorial ACTe (Caribbean Centre of Expression and Memory of Slavery and the Slave Trade) in Pointe-a-Pitre

But the museum doesn't focus only on the past. There are installations of a carnival masquerade, Rastafarianism and Santeria, with explanations of how they all connect to Africa. There's also a genealogical research area, a media library and a panoramic park with a view of the island's mountains. The museum supplies 500 objects and 25 contemporary works in a permanent collection that's divided into six sections. Expect to spend an entire afternoon at the museum and have your perception of slavery transformed.

Perhaps the most legendary citizen from Guadeloupe is Boulogne. He earned the title of Chevalier de Saint-Georges and became one of the top composers in 18th-century Europe. Born in Guadeloupe's capital, Basse Terre, to a wealthy plantation owner and his enslaved mistress, Anne Nanon, Boulogne moved

to France with his parents in 1748. He was educated like French nobility and excelled at fencing and the violin. By 1773, he was conducting an orchestra, composing concertos and operas and playing for Queen Marie Antoinette. Boulogne was a musical sensation in Paris, billed as the “Black Mozart.”

During the French Revolution, Boulogne joined the anti-slavery movement and led Europe’s first all-Black military regiment as a colonel. Every March, Guadeloupe honors the legacy of Chevalier de Saint-Georges via the Saint-Georges International Music Festival in his hometown with three days of classical concerts and lectures. Travelers can explore more of the family legacy at the Bologne Distillery in Basse Terre. Perched on the slopes of the Soufriere Volcano, this sprawling estate was once a sugar plantation owned by Chevalier de Saint-Georges’ father, and you can still view 18th-century creole houses on the property. The family sold the plantation in 1830 to Jean-Antoine Ame-Noel, and he became the first



Memorial at Fort Delgrès on Basse Terre

man of color to own a plantation in the French Caribbean. You can see his grave in the distillery garden. The plantation was converted into a distillery in 1887, making it the oldest on the island. Take a tour and learn about the rum distillery process, including samples of raw sugar cane and a selection of Bologne rhums.

Climb up the hill of Fort Delgrès for striking views of Guadeloupe and the equally striking memorial to Guadeloupean freedom fighter Louis Delgrès. A stone bust of him sits in the rocks carved with the words “liberte” and “justice.” In 1802, Delgrès, who was a free man of color, led a rebellion against Napoleon’s general Antoine Richepanse to stop the reinstatement of slavery. The rebels were forced out of the fort by the French army and Delgrès led his troop of 400 to a neighboring plantation, where they continued to fight. When it was clear that they were surrounded, Delgrès instructed his troop to blow up the plantation rather than surrender. His motto was “live free or die.”

On Grand Terre, the eastern wing of Guadeloupe’s main island, a crumbling flight of stairs rises from the sea to the foot of the Church of St. Philip and St. James. These 54 stone steps represent the path that the enslaved took from the ships to the slave market, which stood in front of the church. The steps were constructed in 1848, when the abolition of slavery was announced. Each landing bears the name of the African ethnic groups—including Yoruba, Igbo, Fula and Wolof—who were enslaved. At the foot of the staircase, another bust of Delgrès, this one in bronze, keeps watch.

Dipping your toes into the crystalline waters of a beach is a Guadeloupe essential, but the sands of Anse Sainte-Marguerite provide a whole other experience. Archaeologists uncovered a burial ground for hundreds of enslaved bodies from nearby sugar plantations. The areas where bones were discovered are roped off, but you can walk along the beach and offer a prayer for those who rest there.

GUADELOUPE CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

Don’t miss these experiences during your travels to Guadeloupe:

- **Sample a bokit.** These flaky, deep-fried sandwiches are a local specialty that you can find in cafés, food trucks or stands. Sometimes called a creole burger, bokits come with dozens of fillings, including lamb, conch, mutton and saltfish.

- **Dance to zouk.** Jamaica has reggae, Trinidad has calypso and the French Caribbean has zouk. Creole for “party,” the upbeat rhythms of zouk inspire just that. Head to a dance club or bar and prepare for nonstop hip shaking.

- **Listen to gwo-ka.** A protected cultural heritage music, gwo-ka combines call-and-response singing in Creole, with improvised dancing and rhythms played on the ka drums. You can experience gwo-ka on Saturday mornings near the Pointe-a-Pitre market or at galas such as the annual Gwo-Ka Festival in July.

