
Pitons, cirques and remparts of Reunion Island (France) No 1317

1. BASIC DATA

Official name as proposed by the State Party:

Pitons, cirques and remparts of Reunion Island

Location:

La Réunion, France

Brief description:

This nomination proposes inscription of the protected high area of L'île de la Réunion, a *département* or overseas region of France located 700km east of Madagascar, in the southwest Indian Ocean. The nominated area focuses on the peaks, cirques and ramparts of the two volcanic massifs that make up the island: le Piton des Neiges, a dormant volcano to the northwest, and le Piton de la Fournaise, an active volcano to the southeast. Interior areas zoned as urban and cultivated and an external surround constitute the buffer zone. The nominated area and buffer zone together comprise the Parc national de La Réunion (2007). Through the dynamics of volcanism, erosion and living form, the island is in permanent and rapid transformation.

Background information:

This is a new nomination. The property is nominated on the basis of criteria (vii), (viii), (ix) and (x).

Literature consulted (selection):

Gilles Pignon, "Écomusée-Salazie: un outil pédagogique de l'interculturalité", in Raoul Lucas, dir., *Sociétés plurielles dans l'océan Indien: enjeux culturels et scientifiques* (Paris, éditions Karthala), 195-206, 2002.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 17 March 2010

2. THE PROPERTY

Known to the Arabs as early as the 11th century, the island became an important place of call on European voyages to the Indies from the 16th to the mid-19th centuries; it became a French colony in the mid-17th century. The 18th-century coffee plantations, with slave labour from Africa and Madagascar, and the sugar cane enterprises that succeeded them in the 19th century

centred on slopes and lowlands outside the nominated area.

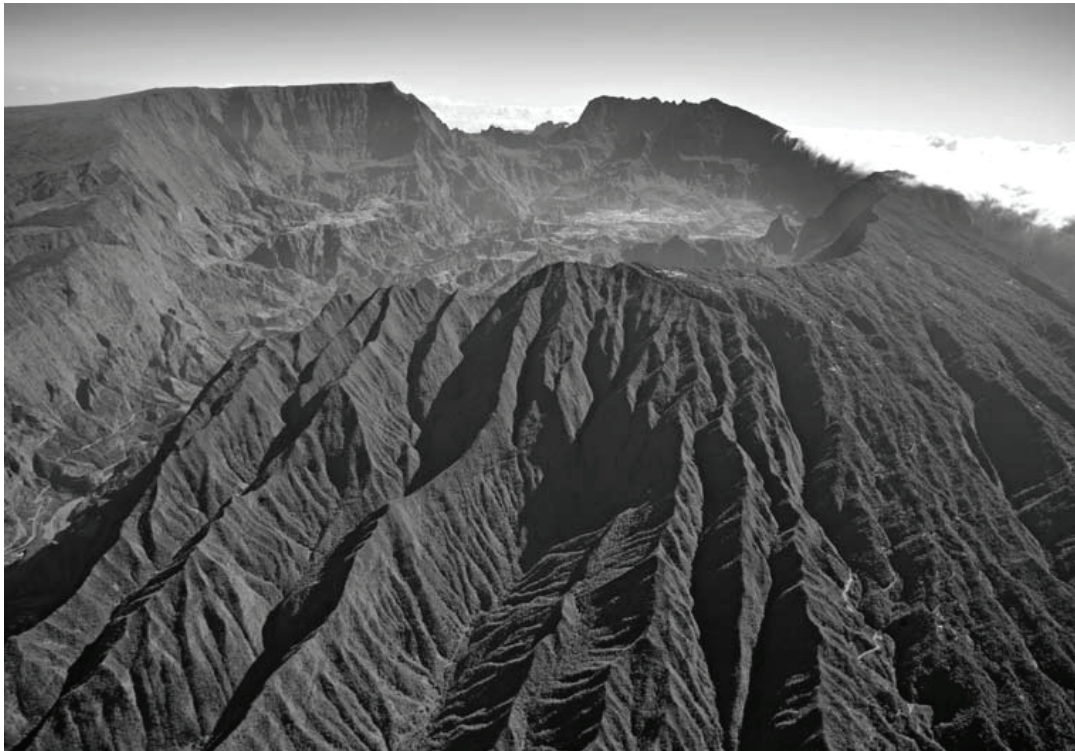
From the early 18th century until the abolition of slavery in 1848 and after, runaway slaves (Maroons Noirs) took refuge in the inaccessible cirques (Cilaos, Salazie and Mafate), revitalizing there the cultural traditions of their Madagasy homeland for over a century. Cultural values are embodied in place names, plant names and oral tradition (P. Eve; cf. pp.105, 107, 111, 241-44, 246) that reflect the history and human associations of the cirques. Later, villages formed within them, particularly around the hot-springs at Cilaos that led to development of colonial thermal spas. These centres, now used for tourism, comprise nodes of buffer zone within the nominated area.

The cultural value of biological and botanical discoveries is well-documented through historical floras, collections, names of places and plants, and oral traditions. The impact of human activity on indigenous flora and fauna of the island includes both losses from exploitation of natural resources and regeneration under protection from damaging land uses.

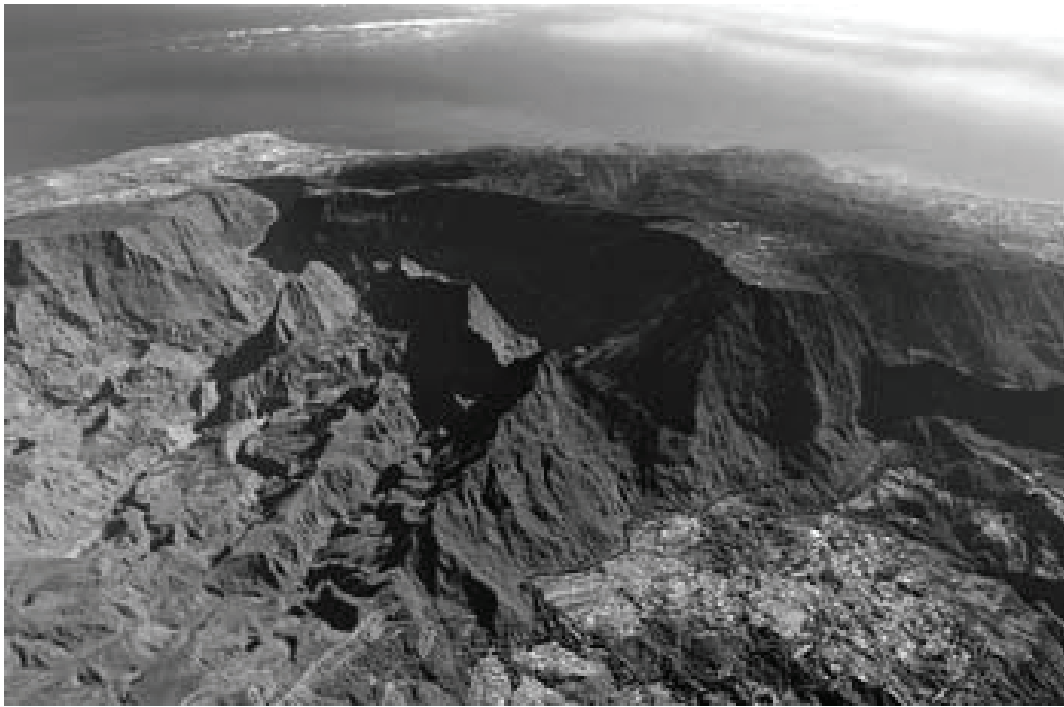
3. ICOMOS CONCLUSIONS

With a history of plantations and of the use of slaves and particularly of maroons, sheltering in remote areas, the property has similarities with the inscribed property of Le Morne Cultural Landscape, Mauritius. However, ICOMOS does not consider that the association of the property with maroons is sufficiently significant to justify consideration of cultural criteria.

Nevertheless, ICOMOS encourages the State Party to continue to respect the human histories of the park area, including the cultural value of the cirques, in the management of the property and to support activities such as the Écomusée-Salazie and the Maison du Peuplement des Hauts in Cilaos that valorize Creole heritage.



Aerial view of Cilaos cirque



View of the Mafate (left) and Salazie (right) cirques