



## Tourist for a Day

At one point during the school holidays, the wife and I decided that we were going to be tourists for the day. We **booked** a guided tour of St Denis, we also booked my mother-in-law so that she could look after the kids. **Bright and early** on a Tuesday morning, off we went!

The guided tour was of the main street in St Denis, Rue de Paris. If you're not familiar with St Denis, it's the road leading from the coast, all the way to the national park in the centre of St Denis.

Let me tell you that there is there a lot to see there. The tour started off at the **town hall** in St Denis, which is an **outstanding building**. High **ceilings**, **twisting** traditional **staircases** created using rare, local wood. Upstairs is a **lavish** meeting room; in which you could fit hundreds of people. The **courtyard surrounds** an ancient fountain, and there are dozens of paintings of the man himself, Denis de Paris (who only seemed to appear in his '**headless**' state - surely he is known for the things he did before his head and his body parted ways...).

Out of the town hall we **carried on** up the street. We visited several town houses that each had interesting stories, famous inhabitants or both! Take for example the story of the rich man with four young daughters. One day the father discovered that his youngest was **pregnant** with the **grounds man's** child! Well, the father did what any other father would do: he forced the four girls to wear white and to remain virgins for the rest of their lives, thus saving the family name! Quite a different world it was back then...

**Aside from** the historical **gossip**, the beautiful houses and their grounds, the guide also showed us a «Palme à citron» It's true! We also discovered various trees, plants and leaves that grow in the gardens, houses tiled with tamarind, the features of the famous Reunionese porches whose design is important to keeping social traditions. You'll have to take the visit to see what I mean exactly, but it's all about showing where a guest **stands** on the **social ladder** compared to the host. A guest would be invited for a drink on the porch (which is one **step** up from the garden), and if that goes well the next time they would be invited inside the house (which is one step up from the porch).

All in all, an excellent morning. I did regret not wearing my sports shoes though!





## Vocabulary

to book – réserver

bright and early – très tôt

town hall – mairie

outstanding – exceptionnel

ceiling – plafond

twisting – sinueux

staircase – escalier

lavish – luxueux

courtyard – cour

to surround - entourer

headless – sans tête

to carry on – continuer

pregnant - enceinte

grounds man – jardinier

aside from – à part

gossip – commérages

porch - varangue

to stand – situer

social ladder – l'échelle sociale

step - étape