

# Noumea



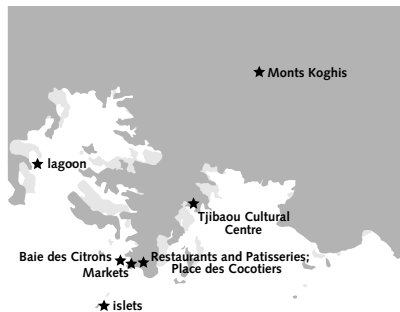
Noumea's peninsula setting makes it an attractive city with numerous bays surrounded by golden beaches, silent mangrove swamps and sparkling marinas.

Central Noumea is a fascinating combination of sophistication and simplicity where carefully groomed ladies in high heels trip smartly past gently strolling women in traditional brightly coloured dresses. It is a mixture of old and modern where delightful colonial buildings lie hidden amongst more contemporary architecture. The casual multi-ethnic atmosphere in the city centre counterbalances its uniform streets. And just when you need a rest the concrete gives way to refreshing patches of green and shade in inner-city squares.

There is so much to discover that you won't run out of things to do in Noumea. You can shop for top French labels, visit museums and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre, sample gourmet cuisine at the restaurants, or simply unwind on a beach. And should you want to leave the bustle of the city, you can easily retreat to the sunny, sandy solitude of one of its outlying islets.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Following the Kanak path to the **Tjibaou Cultural Centre** (p234), a magnificent work of architecture
- Wining and dining on French cuisine or tasting sweet treats in **Noumea's restaurants and patisseries** (p240)
- Picnicking with the locals in peaceful **Place des Cocotiers** (p232)
- Skimming across the lagoon on a powerful **jet ski** (p235)
- Escaping to one of the **outlying islets** (p245) to snorkel in clear waters teeming with fish and sunbathe on divine beaches
- Mingling with the colourful crowd at **Jeu du Centre Ville** (p233), Noumea's weekly street market
- Sleeping in a tree house at **Monts Koghis** (p247) among the towering tree ferns
- Sipping sundowners at the **Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons** (p241)
- Shopping for fresh produce or arts and crafts at Noumea's enticing waterfront **marché** (market; p234)



■ POPULATION: 92,000

## HISTORY

The English trader James Paddon was the first European to settle in the vicinity of Noumea. In 1851 he set up his trading headquarters as well as a cattle station on Île Nou, now the Nouville peninsula, which was an island at the time.

In 1854 a French naval officer, Tardy de Montravel, established the colony's administrative centre in Noumea, which was then called Port-de-France.

The French chose Île Nou as the site for a convict prison in the early 1860s. Paddon was given a large tract of land at Païta in exchange for the island and, in 1864, the first ship, *Iphigénie*, arrived from France with 248 convicts.

From that time, convict labour slowly developed this small military outpost. The peninsula of Ducos to the north was also established as a convict penitentiary. It was reserved for 'dangerous' political prisoners, and later became the home of the territory's leper colony.

The town's economy and lifestyle were transformed from 1875 when mining for gold and nickel began – the start of Noumea's industrial revolution.

During WWII, Noumea was a base for the USA's military. The presence of 40,000 American troops had a positive impact on the town and ushered in a new era of development and modernisation. Many Noumeans still feel a strong attachment to Americans, as the American Memorial on the corner of rue Duquesne and avenue du

Maréchal Foch attests. Incidentally, it's just across the street from a McDonald's outlet.

Noumea's population grew rapidly during the nickel boom of the 1960s and '70s. Then came Les Évènements (The Events) of the 1980s when violent confrontations erupted in Noumea. This difficult period ended with the signing of the Matignon Accords in 1988 followed, 10 years later, by the Noumea Accord. The Noumea Accord spans a 15- to 20-year period and emphasises the building of a 'common destiny' that aims to bring political stability and economic growth.

## ORIENTATION

Noumea sits on a large peninsula. The city centre is close to baie de la Moselle, a harbour where cruise liners, fishing boats and private yachts dock. The heart of the city is Place des Cocotiers (see p232). On its south side central Noumea is bordered by avenue de la Victoire/Henri Lafleur. The small Quartier Latin (Latin Quarter, after the Parisian suburb of the same name) – with its many examples of colonial architecture – is south of this road (see p237).

The main tourist beaches are at baie des Citrons and Anse Vata at the southern end of the peninsula (see p236).

On the eastern side of the peninsula is Magenta where the domestic airport is situated. The Tjibaou Cultural Centre (see p234) is on the Tina Peninsula near the airport.

From the beach at Anse Vata, Route de l'Anse Vata is an alternative, inland way to

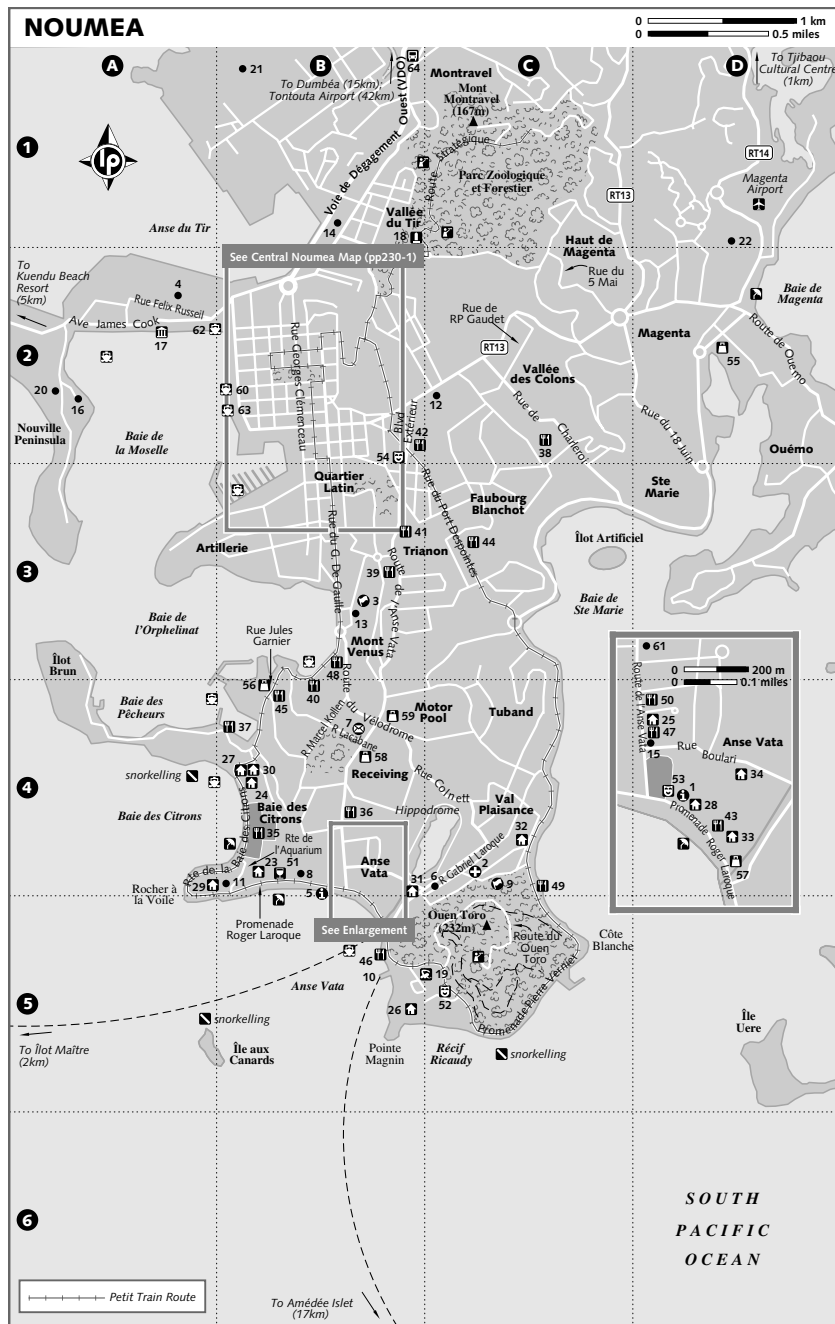
## NOUMEA IN...

### One Day

Put on a pair of comfortable shoes and do the Noumea walking tour (p236). If you aren't tired, do a bit of shopping in the fashionable shops along rue de Sebastopol, rue de l'Alma and rue Jean Jaurès. Buy a sandwich and have a leisurely picnic lunch at Place des Cocotiers. In the afternoon catch a taxi-boat from Anse Vata and head out to Île aux Canards for some snorkelling and relaxation. In the evening select one of the many excellent restaurants near Anse Vata.

### Two Days

On the first day follow the itinerary above. On the second day, rise early and head into town to have a look around the market. Order a *chocolat chaud* (hot chocolate) and croissant for breakfast at the market café. Then catch the bus to the Tjibaou Cultural Centre and spend the rest of the morning exploring there. Head to the shopping complex Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons for lunch and afterwards stroll along the waterfront to visit the aquarium. Later, return to your hotel and get dressed up for an evening of fine dining at one of Noumea's top gourmet restaurants.



the city. There is a more picturesque coastal route from Anse Vata around the bays past baie des Citrons and baie de l'Orphelinat. From Anse Vata going in the opposite direction this coastal road leads to promenade Pierre Vernier, which skirts baie de Sainte Marie. The promenade is popular with evening joggers.

West of the centre is the Nouville peninsula, the site of the colony's first convict prison (see p235).

North of central Noumea is the industrial zone where you'll spot the tall chimneys of the Société Le Nickel (SLN) smelter. The international airport is 42km further north at Tontouta.

There is more to see in the vicinity of the city, which expands outside its boundaries into three major towns: Mont-Dore (see p251) to the south, and Dumbéa (p247) and Païta (p248) to the north. There are no real boundaries to separate the towns; the entire area, with a collective population of 150,000, is often referred to as greater Noumea.

**Maps**

The Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud (p232) has free maps of Noumea and New Caledonia. They're in both English and French and are full of interesting details for travellers.

**INFORMATION**

**Bookshops**

**Librairie Calédo Livres** (Map p230; ☎ 27 38 11; 21 ter rue Jean Jaurès; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon & 2.30-5.30pm Sat) Specialises in books on New Caledonia and the Pacific. The owner is very knowledgeable about the local and regional literature scene. The shop also has books in English.

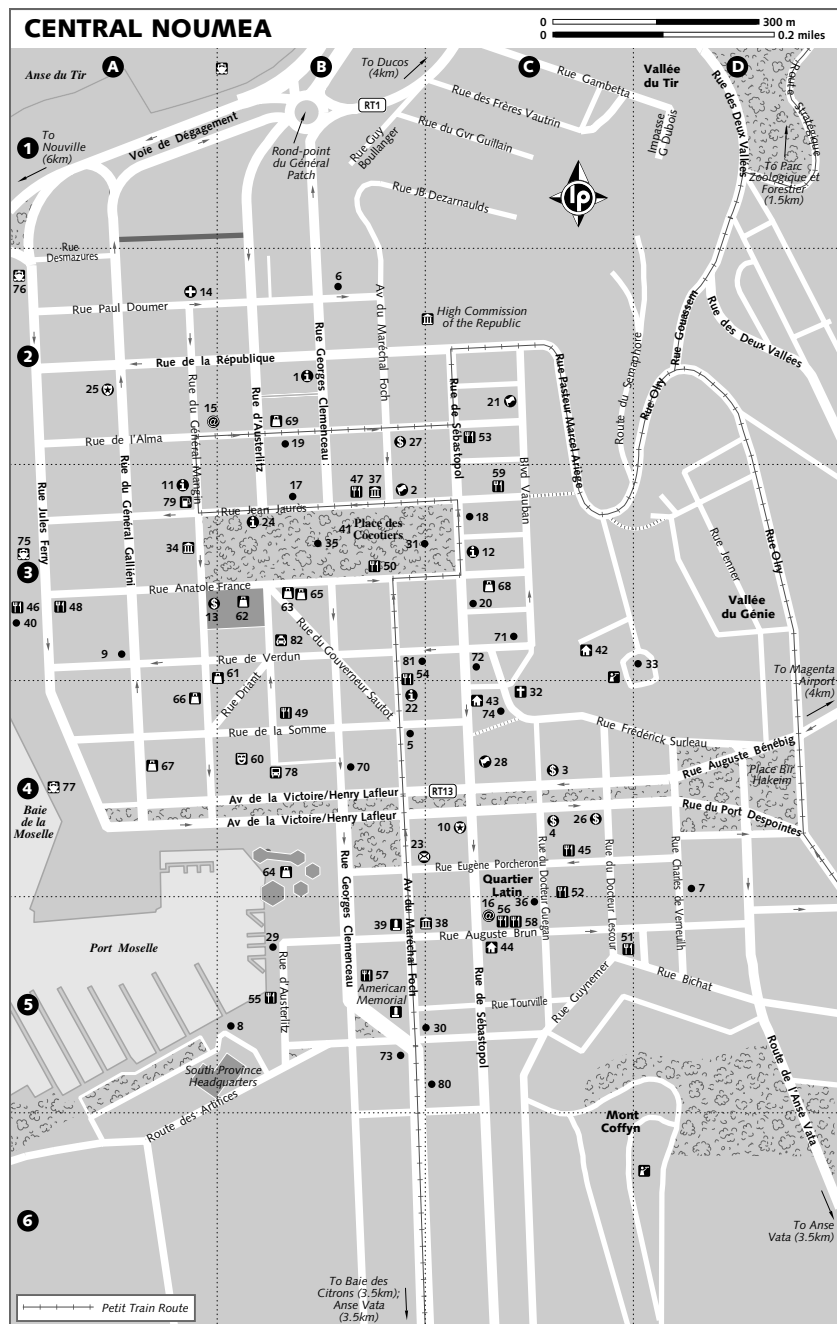
**Librairie Montaigne** (Map p230; ☎ 27 34 88; 23 rue de Sébastopol) At the top of Place des Cocotier; has a selection of books and travel guides in English.

**Librairie Pentecost** (Map p230; ☎ 28 88 82; 34 rue de l'Alma) A large bookshop that has a range of international magazines and newspapers in English.

**Emergency**

To report lost or stolen items call **Commissariat Central** (main police station; Map p230; ☎ 24 33

<b>INFORMATION</b>	<b>SLEEPING</b> 🛏	<b>DRINKING</b> 🍷
BNP Paribas Bank.....(see 53)	Casa del Sol.....23 B4	Bodega Del Mar.....(see 46)
Centre d'Initiation à l'Environnement (CIE).....(see 8)	Hôtel Beurivage.....24 B4	Ethnic.....(see 35)
Destination Îles Loyauté.....1 D4	Hôtel le Lagon.....25 D4	L'Acropole.....(see 43)
Drs Bourgeois & Faget.....2 C4	Hôtel Le Méridien.....26 B5	Les 3 Brasseurs.....(see 35)
Indonesian Consulate.....3 B3	Hôtel Mocambo.....27 B4	Malecon Café.....(see 35)
New Wash.....(see 56)	Lantana Beach Hôtel.....28 D4	Startruck.....51 B4
Office des Douanes.....4 A2	Le Surf Novotel.....29 A4	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 🎪
Office de Tourisme de Nouméa	Marina Beach Hôtel.....30 B4	Casino Royal.....(see 29)
Province Sud Point.....5 B4	Motel Anse Vata.....31 B4	Cort'o Maltese.....(see 46)
Pharmacie de Val Plaisance.....6 C4	Motel Le Bambou.....32 C4	Grand Casino.....52 C5
Post Office Anse Vata.....7 B4	Nouvata Park Hôtel.....33 D4	Jet 7.....(see 35)
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).....8 B4	Ramada Plaza.....34 D4	La Guinguette.....(see 51)
Swiss Consulate.....9 C4	<b>EATING</b> 🍴	Mister Swing.....53 D4
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Baie des Citrons Shopping Complex.....35 B4	Théâtre de Poche.....54 B2
Anse Vata Jetty.....10 B5	Casa Italia.....36 B4	<b>SHOPPING</b> 🛍
Aquarium.....11 B4	Cercle Nautique Calédonien (CNC).....37 B4	Artifact.....55 D2
Aventure Pulsion.....12 C2	Géant Supermarket.....38 C2	Galerie Commercial Port
Children Playground.....13 B3	La Bastide.....39 B3	Plaisance.....56 B4
Children Playground.....(see 19)	La Case à Café.....40 B4	Photo Discount.....58 B4
Crickit Ground.....14 B1	La Crêperie Bretonne.....41 B3	Super U Michel-Ange.....59 B4
Glisse Attitude.....15 D4	La Fiesta Chez Alban.....(see 24)	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Locat jet Nouville.....16 A2	La Pointe des Antilles.....42 B2	Alpha International.....(see 25)
Musée de L'Histoire Maritime ..17 A2	La Sorbettièrre.....43 D4	Budget.....(see 35)
Notre Dame du Pacifique	La Sorbettièrre.....43 D4	Le Bistrot du Boucher.....44 C3
Statue.....18 B1	Le Faré.....(see 26)	Le Galapagos.....45 B4
Piscine de Ouen Toro.....19 C5	Le Galapagos.....45 B4	Ferry Terminal (Bético).....62 A2
Plages Loisirs Kiosk.....(see 5)	Le Roof.....46 B5	Ferry Terminal (Havannah).....63 B2
Prison.....20 A2	L'Amédée.....47 D4	Gare de Montravel.....64 B1
Société le Nickel (SLN).....21 B1	Mr Bœuf.....48 B3	Mary D.....(see 57)
Squash Court.....(see 45)	Oceania.....(see 50)	Nouméa Fun Ride.....(see 35)
Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.....22 D1	On the Beach.....49 C4	Snack Ulysse.....50 D4



00; 36 rue de Sébastopol) or **Police Municipal** (☎ 25 23 33; 10 rue du Général Gallieni).

The emergency medical service is at **Hôpital Gaston Bourret** (Map p230; ☎ 25 66 66, emergencies ☎ 25 67 67; 7 rue Paul Doumer) near the city centre.

You can call the following emergency numbers from anywhere in the country:

- Fire** (☎ 18)
- Police** (☎ 17)
- SAMU** (☎ 15) Medical aid and ambulance.

**Internet Access**

- Cyber BD Citron** (Map p228; ☎ 24 11 69; cyberbd citron@hotmail.com; 35 prom Roger Laroque; per 30min 480CFP; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-7.30pm Sun) In the Baie des Citrons complex.
- Cyber Noumea Centre** (Map p230; ☎ 26 26 98; tettet@mls.nc; 20 rue Anatole France; per 30min 450CFP; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Sat) In the Galerie Noumea Centre.
- Lagoon Center** (Map p230; ☎ 28 88 99; admin@offratel.nc; Lagoon Micropolis, 21 rue de l'Alma; per 30min

400CFP; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-11am Sat) In the Micropolis shop.

**Le Cyber Point NC** (Map p230; ☎ 24 15 41; www.lcyber-point.nc 75 rue de Sébastopol; per 30min 500CFP; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) Behind the Musée de Nouvelle Calédonie.

**Laundry**

Most places to stay have a laundry service. **New Wash** (Map p228; ☎ 26 24 74; Galerie Commerciale Port Plaisance; per 5kg 1100CFP; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) In baie de l'Orphelinat.

**Libraries**

- Bibliothèque Bernheim** (Map p230; ☎ 24 20 90; 41 ave du Maréchal Foch; ☎ 1-5.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am-5.30pm Wed, to 4pm Sat) The public library has an English section.
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community library** (SPC library; Map p228; ☎ 26 01 37; prom Roger Laroque, Anse Vata; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Thu) Has technical and scientific publications specialising in the Pacific region as well as more general publications.

<b>INFORMATION</b>	Société Générale Bank.....26 C4	Snack Loan.....58 C5
Agence Brock.....1 B2	Société Générale Bank.....27 B2	Zanzibar.....59 C3
Australian Consulate.....2 B3	Vanuatu Consulate.....28 C4	
Axxess Travel.....(see 73)		
<b>BANQUE CALÉDONIENNE</b>	<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	
d'Investissement (BCI bank) ..(see 13)	Air Mer Loisirs.....29 B5	
Banque de Nouvelle Calédonie (BNC bank).....3 C4	Amédée Diving Club.....(see 66)	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☎
Banque de Nouvelle Calédonie (BNC bank).....4 C4	Arc en Ciel.....30 B5	Ciné City.....60 B4
Bibliothèque Bernheim.....5 B4	Band Rotunda.....31 B3	
Bureau des Étrangers (Passport Office).....6 B2	Cathédrale St Joseph.....32 C4	<b>SHOPPING</b> ☎
Caltours.....7 D4	Fédération des Œuvres Laïques (FOL).....33 D3	Compact Mégastore.....(see 62)
Capitainerie.....8 B5	Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall).....34 A3	Galerie 11½.....61 A3
CMA-CGM.....9 A3	La Fontaine Céleste.....35 B3	Galerie Noumea Centre.....62 B3
Commissariat Central.....10 C4	Maison Vernier.....36 C5	La Maison de l'Artisanat Calédonien.....(see 65)
Cyber Noumea Centre.....(see 13)	Musée de la Ville de Nouméa.....37 B3	L'Atelier des Femmes de Nouvelle-Calédonie.....63 B3
Destination Ile des Pins.....11 A3	Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie.....38 B5	Le Marché.....64 B4
Destination Iles Loyauté.....12 C3	Mwä Ka.....39 B5	Le Village Shopping Centre.....(see 54)
Direction des Ressources Naturelles.....(see 2)	Nouméa Fun Ride.....40 A3	Pacific Charter.....(see 29)
Dr Gourand.....(see 62)	Place de Cocotiers.....41 B3	L'Association des Sculpteurs de Nouvelle-Calédonie.....65 B3
Dr Oberti.....(see 62)	<b>SLEEPING</b> ☎	Marine Corail.....66 A4
Galerie Nouméa Center.....13 A3	Auberge de Jeunesse.....42 C3	Ship Shop Service.....67 A4
Hôpital Gaston Bourret.....14 A2	Best Western Hôtel Le Paris.....43 C4	Teprint Boutique.....68 C3
Lagoon Micropolis.....15 A2	Hôtel Calédonia.....44 C5	Tourist.....69 B2
Le Cyber Point NC.....16 C5	<b>EATING</b> ☎	
Librairie Calédo Livres.....17 B3	Boulangerie Marais.....45 C4	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Librairie Montaigne.....18 C3	Café de la Gare.....46 A3	ADA.....70 B4
Librairie Pentecost.....19 B2	Café Shop.....47 B3	Air Calédonie.....71 C3
Netherlands Consulate.....20 C3	Casino Johnstons Supermarket.....48 A3	Air France.....72 C3
New Zealand Consulate.....21 C2	Chinatown Mall.....49 B4	Air New Zealand.....73 B5
Office de Tourisme de la Province Nord.....22 B4	Coco Glacé.....50 B3	Air Vanuatu.....(see 73)
Office des Postes et Télécommunications (Main Post Office).....23 B4	Huong-Xua Express.....51 C5	Aircalin.....74 C4
Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud.....24 B3	La Chaumière.....52 C4	Cruise Ship Terminal.....75 A3
Pharmacie Centrale.....(see 62)	La Kasbah.....53 C2	Ferry Terminal (Bético).....76 A2
Police Municipale.....25 A2	Le Bilboquet Village.....54 B3	Ferry Terminal (Havannah).....77 A4
	Le Bout du Monde.....55 B5	Gare Routière (Bus station).....78 B4
	Le Salvatore.....56 C5	Mobil Station.....79 A3
	Roulottes.....57 B5	Point Rouge.....80 C5
		Qantas.....81 B3
		Taxi Rank.....82 B3

**Tjibou Cultural Centre médiathèque** (multimedia library) Has resources specialising in culture in New Caledonia and the Pacific. See the boxed text, p234.

### Medical Services

Pharmacies are generally open between 7.30am and 7pm weekdays, and Saturday mornings. In central Noumea they stay open over lunch; elsewhere they close. Weekend after hours doctors and pharmacies are scheduled on a rotating basis. Those on duty are listed in the Saturday paper.

**Dr Gourand** (☎ 27 53 00; 20 rue Austerlitz) Upstairs in Galerie Noumea Centre in central Noumea.

**Dr Oberti** (☎ 24 10 22; 20 rue Austerlitz) This dentist is also upstairs in Galerie Noumea Centre.

**Drs Bourgeois & Faget** (☎ 26 10 16; 42 rue Gabriel Laroque, Val Plaisance) These doctors are close if you're in Anse Vata or Baie des Citrons.

**Hôpital Gaston Bourret** (Map p230; ☎ 25 67 67; 7 rue Paul Doumer) The main hospital near the city centre.

**Pharmacie Centrale** (Map p230; ☎ 27 34 63; 18 rue d'Austerlitz) In Galerie Noumea Centre.

**Pharmacie du Val Plaisance** (Map p228; ☎ 26 16 91; 28 rue Gabriel Laroque) Near Anse Vata.

### Money

There are ATMs outside most banks. A handy one in the centre is on the corner of rue Anatole France and rue du Général Mangin. There are several banks along avenue de la Victoire/Henry Lafleur. Most banks in Noumea are open between 7.30am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

**BNP Paribas** (Map p228; ☎ 26 21 03; 111 prom Roger Laroque) At the Anse Vata shops.

**Société Générale** (Map p230; ☎ 25 63 00; 44 rue de l'Alma) A Western Union representative. There's another branch at 56 avenue de la Victoire/Henry Lafleur.

### Post

**Office des Postes et Télécommunications** (post office; OPT; Map p230; ☎ 26 84 00; 7 Rue Eugène Porcheron; ☎ 7.45am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-11am Sat) Has a poste restante and fax service. There's an ATM outside the building.

### Tourist Information

If you are heading to the north, the Loyalty Islands or Île des Pins, make sure you visit their respective tourist information offices in Noumea because there is little available once you get there.

**Destination Île des Pins** (Map p230; ☎ 24 92 80; info@canl.nc; 12 bis rue Général Mangin; ☎ 8am-

12.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) In the small mall next to the Mobil station; does bookings for Île des Pins. **Destination Îles Loyauté** (Map p230; ☎ 27 66 27; fax 27 48 27; www.iles-loyaute.com; Immeuble Central 1, 2nd fl, 27 rue de Sébastopol; ☎ 8-11.30am & 12.30-5pm Mon-Fri) East of Place des Cocotiers; has information on the Loyalty Islands including good tourist maps and pamphlets listing accommodation options and activities.

**Destination Îles Loyauté Anse Vata office** (Map p228; ☎ 28 93 60; 117 prom Roger Laroque; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 9-11.30am & 1-4.30pm Sat)

**Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud** (Map p230; ☎ 28 75 80; free call 05 75 80; office-tourisme@canl.nc; Place des Cocotiers; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, morning Sat) The main Noumea and Southern Province tourist information office. It's well organised and has English-speaking staff and pamphlets, brochures and good (free) maps in English. Also has information on the Northern and Loyalty Islands provinces. *NC Pocket*, its monthly entertainment guide, lists festivals, exhibitions, concerts, Jeudi du Centre Ville themes (opposite), and market days in the Southern Province.

**Office du Tourisme Nouméa et Province Sud Point I** (Map p228; ☎ 28 75 80; prom Roger Laroque; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) Small information centre in the *faré* (shelter) on the beach at Anse Vata.

**Tourisme Province Nord** (Northern Province Tourist Office; ☎ 27 78 05; www.tourismeprovincenord.nc; 35 ave du Maréchal Foch, Le Village shopping centre; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) The office distributes useful maps & brochures about the Northern Province. Staff members are friendly.

### Travel Agencies

For major airline offices, see p327. Travel agencies include the following:

**CMA-CGM** (☎ 27 01 80; nma.scristofoli@cma-cgm.com; cnr rue de Verdun & rue du Général Gallieni)

**Agence Brock** (☎ 28 34 39; 14 rue Georges Clemenceau)

### SIGHTS

Many of Noumea's sights are within walking distance of the city centre.

### Place des Cocotiers

The central city square at Place des Cocotiers (Map p230) is the heart of the city centre. It has lawns, trees, water features, and outdoor concert and market areas. It can be tranquil and relaxed on a sunny weekday lunchtime or throbbing with the energy of a crowd gathered for an outdoor concert. In December when the flamboyant trees are in flower it's a profusion of scarlet.

The square slopes gently down from east to west. A red-roofed rotunda where concerts are held sits at the top of the square. Heading west there is a *pétanque* pitch and a giant chessboard. When the chessboard is not in use teenagers take over the smooth surface to outdo each other in hip-hop contests. There are also lawns with shady patches where you can sit and have lunch and where picnickers often indulge in a quick postlunch siesta. Below the lawns is la fontaine Céleste, an old fountain that dates back to 1892, and below that a large paved area where the popular Jeudi du Centre Ville street market is held. Several inner-city red and white Karuia buses stop next to the market where there is a ticket kiosk. The western (lower) end of the square has the feel of a small botanical garden with its wide variety of palms, large spreading trees and lush foliage.

### Jeudis du Centre Ville

On Thursday evenings Place des Cocotiers comes alive with Jeudis du Centre Ville (Thursday evenings in the city centre), a wildly popular street market. There's a different theme every Thursday. The schedule is outlined in *NC Pocket* which you can pick up at Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud (see opposite). Some favourite annual themes are Loyalty Islands Thursday, Northern Province Thursday and Tahiti Thursday when there are numerous traditional dances, fresh produce, arts and crafts, and cakes and local dishes.

### Musée de la Ville de Nouméa

The **Noumea Museum** (Map p230; ☎ 26 28 05; rue Jean Jaurès; adult 100CFP; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Sat) is housed in the city's beautiful old colonial-style town hall surrounded by towering palms. It has both temporary and permanent displays on the penitentiary and early settler history of Noumea.

### Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie

The **Museum of New Caledonia** (Map p230; ☎ 27 23 42; smp@gouv.nc; 42 ave du Maréchal Foch; adult/child or student 200/50CFP; ☎ 9-11.30am & 12.15-4.30pm, closed Tue) gives a fascinating introduction to traditional Kanak and regional Pacific culture. Local exhibits are displayed on the ground floor and there are regional artefacts on the mezzanine level. Brochures and explanations are in French and English.

The ground-floor exhibition begins in a dimly lit area where a magnificent collection of *flèche faitière* (wooden roof-top spears) and other esoteric carvings exude a mystical aura. Behind this area is a *case* (hut), which you can step inside, filled with the distinctive smell of dried straw and woven coconut fronds. Other displays include traditional Kanak musical instruments, clothing, fishing tools, hunting and war weapons, bamboo engravings, and both miniature and life-sized models of watercraft.

It's easy to overlook the collection of petroglyphs in the museum's courtyard if you're not aware of their historical significance (see the boxed text, p190). In a grassy area off the courtyard there's a *case*. Its smoky smell comes from the smoky fires that are lit inside it to preserve the thatch and keep it waterproof.

### Musée de L'Histoire Maritime

The **Maritime History Museum** (Map p228; ☎ 26 34 43; 11 ave James Cook; adult/child 400/200CFP; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) has interesting exhibitions on the early seafaring days in New Caledonia. There is also an ever-increasing collection of objects salvaged from the wrecks of *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*, two ships commanded by French navigator Jean-François de la Pérouse on his ill-fated voyage in 1788. The ships sank in a cyclone off Vanikoro in the Solomon Islands. For several years, Association Salomon, a local association, has organised several expeditions to Vanikoro to try and solve the mystery of the shipwreck. The museum is on the way to Nouville, near the Gare Maritime des Îles where the *Betico* docks.

### Mwâ Ka

The Mwâ Ka (Map p230), a superb 12m **totem pole** topped by a *grande case* (chief's hut) complete with *flèche faitière*, stands in a landscaped square opposite Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie. Mwâ Ka means the house of mankind – in other words, a house where discussions are held. Its carvings are divided into eight cylindrical sections representing the eight customary regions of New Caledonia. Mounted on a concrete double-hulled pirogue, the Mwâ Ka symbolises the mast but also the central post of a *case*. At the back of the pirogue a wooden helmsman steers the Mwâ Ka ever forwards. The flowerbed arrangements on

the square depicting stars and moons are symbolic of navigation.

The Mwâ Ka was conceived by the Kanak community to commemorate 24 September, the anniversary of the French annexation of New Caledonia in 1853. Initially a day of mourning, the creation of the Mwâ Ka (inaugurated in 2005) symbolised the end of the mourning period thus giving the date a new significance. The erection of the Mwâ Ka was a way of burying past suffering related to French colonisation and turning what was a painful anniversary into a day for celebrating Kanak identity and the new multi-ethnic identity of New Caledonia.

### Cathédrale St Joseph

The **Cathédrale St Joseph** (Map p230; ☎ 273 288; 3 rue Frédéric Surleau) sits on a slope just above the city centre. Its construction, by convicts, began in 1888. It has beautifully colourful stained-glass windows and elaborate carvings on the pulpit, altar panels and confessional. There's more carved panelling behind the altars in the side chapels. The main entrance is generally locked, but you should find the side doors open.

### Marché

The **market** (Map p230; ☎ 5am-11am) sits beside the marina at Port Moselle in a cluster of round buildings with blue roofs. It has a lively multi-ethnic atmosphere and is an interesting place to wander. It sells a wide range of arts and crafts, and fresh produce including flowers, fruit and vegies, bread, cakes, olives, meat and fish. The fascinating fish market, set apart from the other buildings, sells seafood of all shapes and sizes – fish, lobsters, crabs, prawns and squid. On Saturday and Sunday a group of local musicians playing ukuleles and other string instruments keeps shoppers entertained. The market is at its busiest early in the morning.

### Tjibaou Cultural Centre

This wonderful **cultural centre** (☎ 41 45 45; www.adck.nc; adult/child 500CFP/free, guided tours adult 1500CFP; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) should be at the top of your list of places to visit. It is built on the secluded Tina peninsula on the site of the 'Melanesia 2000' festival organised in 1975 by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, a cultural festival which, for the first time, brought together Kanaks from throughout New Caledonia. A statue

of Jean-Marie Tjibaou (see the boxed text, p278), after whom the centre was named, stands on the hill overlooking the centre.

The harmony between the contemporary architecture and the surrounding nature is striking and gives the cultural centre the air of a futuristic religious shrine. The main buildings rise from the bush in a series of tall curved wooden structures that evoke the shape of tall traditional Kanak *cases*. Their traditional equivalents, in the form of three *cases*, stand behind the main structure.

Its fascinating architecture aside, the centre has permanent and temporary exhibition rooms showing art from New Caledonia and the Pacific region as a whole. Its multimedia library holds a wealth of information on Kanak culture. There is also a souvenir shop, a book shop and a café. The Kanak path that meanders through the grounds tells the Kanak creation myth. A local dance troupe reenacts this myth along the path every Thursday at 2.30pm (2500CFP). Guided tours in English and French are held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2.30pm. Open-air concerts are often held in the grounds. Enquire at the entrance to find out what is scheduled.

Blue-line Karuia and Noumea Explorer buses run regularly to the centre of the city. On Wednesday and Thursday *le petit train* (return 1300/700CFP; see opposite) runs here from baie des Citron, going via l'Anse Vata around the waterfront. For taxi fares see p245.

### Parc Zoologique et Forestier

These **botanical and zoological gardens** (☎ 27 89 51; route de Laubarede; adult/child 400/200CFP; ☎ 10.15am-5.45pm Tue-Sun, to 5pm 1 May-31 Aug) are a great spot to spend a morning or afternoon with the kids. You'll be able to see native species such as the *cagou*, *roussette* (fruit bat), *notou* and various parakeets. Nonnative species include birds, monkeys and baboons. Peacocks strut around the grounds showing off their beautiful feathers. Small children can pet tame donkeys, goats and deer, or feed the ducks and geese. There's a children's playground and lawns where you can picnic or a café at the entrance that does lunch and snacks. A geological museum is housed in the building by the entrance.

The park is about 4km northeast of the city centre. There are no public buses to

the park but *le petit train* (adult/child return 1300/700CFP; see right) and Noumea Explorer buses (p245) run here from Anse Vata. To get here follow route Stratégique to the statue of Notre Dame du Pacifique by the roundabout and turn onto route de Laubarede.

### Aquarium

The **Aquarium** (Map p228; ☎ 26 27 31; Route de l'Aquarium; adult/child/student/senior 650/115/210/300CFP; ☎ 10am-4.45pm Tue-Sun) is at Anse Vata. A large new aquarium was under construction right next door at the time of writing. It is expected to open in late 2006 and should be a major highlight since it will be bigger and better than the old, which was pretty good. All the species from the old aquarium will be transferred to the new one.

The aquarium houses species found in New Caledonian waters including nautilus (see the boxed text, p209). It is a good place to see sea snakes, stonefish, turtles and stingrays. The aquarium is also famous for its living coral display. The new aquarium will pump sea water directly into its tanks as did the old.

Green-line Karuia and Noumea Explorer buses stop out the front.

### Nouvelle

Ruins and old buildings from the penitentiary era are dotted all over the Nouvelle peninsula (Map p228) including around the old part of the university campus and the Centre de Rencontres et d'Échange du Pacifique (Creipac; Map p228). Nearby, the Théâtre de l'Île (Map p228) is another former penitentiary building. It has been renovated and is now used as a theatre for staging dramatic works. At the end of the road behind the theatre is the CHS mental hospital, which was the old penitentiary hospital. **Alain Fort** (☎ 26 48 13; fortdomi@lagoon.nc) runs informative guided tours in the area.

At the western end of the peninsula is Kuendu beach. The water is shallow and you have to wade quite a way out to swim. Around the small headland is a marine reserve that is a great spot for snorkelling. You can either swim there from the beach or continue up the dirt road past the beach. From the top of the small rise there is a path leading down to the headland.

### JET SKI TOUR

**Loca Jet** (Map p228; ☎ 77 79 79; www.locajet.info; per 1/3hr 7000/12,000CFP) This company, situated in Nouville on the western side of baie de la Moselle, rents jet skis. Jet skiing across the lagoon is fantastic fun – anyone who likes a bit of excitement should give this tour a go. Leave early in the morning when the sea is calm. There is a great circuit that leaves from baie de la Moselle and heads to Île aux Canards then Îlot Maître and continues in a clockwise direction to a few more islets before heading back to baie de la Moselle around the northern side of Nouville peninsula.

The green-line Karuia bus goes to the CHS hospital from where you can continue on foot around the coast.

### ACTIVITIES

Many Noumeans are very sporty. Every weekend apart from during the hot summer months from December to March, there is usually a triathlon, marathon, cycling race, *va'a* (outrigger canoe) race or some such similar event every weekend. Most of these events take place at Anse Vata or baie des Citrons. Anyone can participate, although a doctor's certificate is usually required.

Others spend most of their free time out on the water. Boating, fishing, jet skiing, windsurfing and kite surfing are all easily available. For visitors there are lots of fun tours in and around the city.

### Kite-surfing

Kite-surfing has become very popular in New Caledonia over the past few years. World-championship competitions attended by international kite-surfers are held in November. If you want to learn, **Glisse Attitude** (Map p228; ☎ 78 27 69; glisseattitude@lagoon.nc; per hr/half-day 4500/9000CFP) runs kite surf courses with a qualified instructor.

### Le Petit Train

These miniature **trains** (☎ 77 80 51; adult/child 1300/700CFP) are a fun way to discover Noumea. They run a circular tour from Anse Vata to the city centre and on to Parc Zoologique et Forestier before heading back to Anse Vata.



pushchair might want to omit this climb to the lookout. At the top of the steps continue up the hill and shortly turn right into the Fédération des Oeuvres Laiques (FOL) car park. Go past the youth hostel driveway to the front of the **FOL (12)**, a concert and drama hall). Catch your breath here as you admire the view over central Noumea, its marinas and surrounding bays.

Head back to the pedestrian steps and straight on down rue Jean Jaurès to Place des Cocotiers. Cross over diagonally at the red-roofed band ronduda to **Coco Glacé (13)**; p240) and end your tour with a well-earned refreshing sorbet, triple-flavoured ice cream or chocolate crêpe.

## COURSES

The **Centre de Rencontres et d'Échanges Internationaux du Pacifique** (Creipac; ☎ 25 41 24) is a language school in Nouville that runs French courses for foreigners.

## NOUMEA FOR CHILDREN

Noumea is a great place for children. Aside from the beaches where you can spend hours, there are a host of sights and activities for children. There are shady playgrounds at **Baie de l'Orphelinat** (Map p228) off rue du Générale de Gaulle, and next to the swimming pool at **Ouen Toro** (Map p228) near Anse Vata. A ride on the **le petit train** (p235) is great fun and a brand new aquarium (see p235) will have opened by the time you visit. **Parc Zoologique et Forestier** (see p234), the zoological and botanical gardens, is a must with children. There are children's **rides** (200CFP; ☎ from 3pm Mon-Sun) in the car park opposite the **marché** (market; Map p230). There are rides every day but there is more choice at the weekend. If you pop by the **Jeudis du Centre Ville** (see p233) there is traditional dancing to watch, candyfloss to eat and a face-painting stall run by an Australian woman.

## TOURS

One of the most popular tours of Noumea is on **le petit train** (see p235 for details). You can also admire Noumea from the air on a scenic flight (p236).

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Jedi du Centre Ville** (Thursday street market in Place des Cocotiers; see p233) A weekly street market in the city centre.

### GAY & LESBIAN NOUMEA

Noumea's gay scene is reserved. **Homo-sphère** (☎ 94 01 44; www.homosphere.asso.nc) is a gay and lesbian association in Noumea. Log onto its website for upcoming events. The bar at **Hôtel Mocambo** (see opposite) is gay-friendly. **Femmes Funk** (see below) is a groovy, gay-friendly event.

**La Foa Film Festival** (☎ 43 16 67; see p261) Held every year in June/July at **Ciné City** (☎ 29 20 20) in Noumea.

**14th July** (Bastille Day) The French national day. There are fireworks and a military parade. For more information see p323.

**Live en Août** A week-long live music festival held in August with performances by local and international musicians. Performances are held in restaurants, bars and nightclubs around Noumea.

**Femmes Funk** (☎ 27 51 15; towanda@lagoon.nc) An annual world music festival held the last weekend in September at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre (see p234). It features both local and international artists. There's an admission fee for some concerts and a large choice of free concerts.

**Equinoxe** Held every two years in October, Equinoxe has both street and indoor performances that include theatre, music and dance.

## SLEEPING

There are a lot of midrange places to choose from but Noumea is short of budget places. Most accommodation providers can arrange airport transfers for around 2500CFP per person.

## City Centre

### BUDGET

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 27 58 79; yha.noumea@lagoon.nc; 51 bis rue Pasteur Marcel Ariège; dm/d 1400/3300CFP) This backpackers is a member of the Hostelling International network. It's the same price for doubles or twins. Accommodation is 200CFP extra for nonmembers. It has a great view over the city centre to the sea and is squeaky clean. There's a laundry, kitchen and luggage lockers. The rooms are spartan. It's on the hill above the cathedral, only a few minutes' walk to the centre of town – the quickest way there from the centre on foot is up the steps at the top of rue Jean Jaurès. Advance bookings are recommended.

## MIDRANGE

**Hôtel Caledonia** (☎ 26 18 26; www.hotel-new-caledonia.nc; 10 rue Auguste Brun; d 8850CFP; ☎) Recently renovated, this central hotel has spacious rooms. The hotel serves breakfast only (680CFP) but rooms have fully equipped kitchenettes.

**Best Western Hôtel Le Paris** (☎ 28 17 00; www.bestwestern-leparishotel.com; 47 Rue de Sébastopol; s/d 8200/10,200CFP) There's a bar and restaurant downstairs providing Internet access (per 30 minutes 450CFP). Rooms have fridges and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

## Baie des Citrons

### MIDRANGE

**Hôtel Beurivage** (☎ 26 20 55; www.beurivage.grands-hotels.cc; 7 prom Roger Laroque; d 6050CFP; ☎) This hotel at the northern end of baie des Citrons is just across the road from the beach. There is a restaurant and a small swimming pool. It has clean rooms with fridges. Sea-view rooms cost an extra 1000CFP.

**Hôtel Mocambo** (☎ 26 27 01; mocambo@canl.nc; 49 rue Jules Garnier; d from 8000CFP; ☎) The Mocambo has spacious rooms and a relaxed bar. It's 100m from the beach and is close to baie des Citron's restaurants.

**Marina Beach Hôtel** (☎ 28 76 33; fax 26 28 81; marinab@canl.nc; 4 rue Auguste Page; d from 8000CFP; ☎) This hotel has a small swimming pool and a spa. Rooms have kitchenettes. It's geared towards long-stay guests and there are discounts for weekly and monthly rentals.

**Casa del Sol** (☎ 25 87 00; www.newcaledoniahotels.resorts.com; 10 route de l'Aquarium; r 10,600CFP) These spacious apartments have kitchenettes, a lounge area and separate bedrooms. Apartments on the upper floors are more expensive. They are just behind the Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons and a couple of minutes' walk from the beach.

## Anse Vata

### MIDRANGE

**Motel Le Bambou** (☎ 26 12 90; bambou@lagoon.nc; 44 rue Spahr; d 6150CFP) This motel in Val Plaisance about 1km from the beach at Anse Vata is clean and quiet although the rooms are small. Rooms have kitchenettes and open onto balconies or verandas.

**Motel Anse Vata** (☎ 26 26 12; 19 rue Gabriel Laroque; d 6450CFP) This motel 200m from the beach has clean rooms with kitchenettes. It's by a busy road that is noisy during the day.

**Lantana Beach Hôtel** (☎ 26 22 12; lantana@canl.nc; 133 prom Roger Laroque; s/d from 7750/8750CFP) This hotel is across the road from the beach at Anse Vata. Rooms have fridges and tea- and coffee-making facilities. It has more comfortable rooms that are more expensive.

**Hôtel Le Lagon** (☎ 26 12 55; lelagon@offratel.nc; 143 route de l'Anse Vata; d/4-person studio 10,350/13,350CFP) It's a five-storey hotel set back from the main road. Orchids fill the lobby and rooms are adorned with Gauguin-style paintings. There are 59 rooms, all with kitchenette. The spacious one-bedroom apartments are big enough for four. Breakfast costs 900CFP. The hotel has a bar and popular restaurant, but no swimming pool. Orange-line buses stop out the front or you can get a blue-line bus from central Noumea to the beach at Anse Vata and then walk two minutes.

## TOP END

**Le Surf Novotel** (☎ 28 66 88; resa.novotel@grands-hotels.cc; 55 prom Roger Laroque; r with/without view 15,600/13,000CFP, st 26,000-31,000CFP) This hotel was temporarily closed because of industrial action at the time of writing. Hopefully, it will reopen again soon as it has an ideal setting across the street from the beach.

**Nouvata Park Hôtel** (☎ 26 22 00; resa@nchotels.com; 123 prom Roger Laroque; d with garden/beach view from 27,900/22,900CFP; Le Pacifique r from 15,350CFP; ☎) This four-star hotel offers a wide range of accommodation options. It is just across the street from the beach and has a couple of restaurants and a large swimming pool area. It also has an attached very comfortable two-star hotel, Le Pacifique.

**Ramada Plaza** (☎ 23 90 00; www.ramadaplaza-noumea.nc; superior r 16,900CFP, ste junior/premium executive 30,900/54,900CFP) This place with twin towers has a wide range of rooms to choose from, all tastefully decorated in a contemporary Pacific style. Rooms have views over a race-course or over the sea. The more expensive rooms have both views. Other facilities include a kids club, a spa and restaurants. There is a revolving restaurant on the top floor serving gastronomic cuisine (dishes from 2500CFP).

**Hôtel Le Méridien** (☎ 26 50 00; le.meridien@meridienn.nc; Pointe Magnin; d 20,900-24,900CFP, ste 53,000CFP; ☎) This five-star hotel is situated at the southern end of Anse Vata beach. It has beautiful grounds and a relaxing pool area. It also has a number of restaurants that

offer French gastronomic cuisine, Japanese cuisine and international cuisine.

### Other Areas

For those wanting greater serenity than can be found in the busy tourist areas, there are several luxury hotel options around Noumea's outskirts.

**Kuendu Beach Resort** (☎ 24 30 30; kuendubeach@lagoon.nc; Kuendu Beach; bungalows garden/beach/overwater 12,150/18,150/35,000CFP; 🍷 🍷) This hotel at Nouville, 6.5km west of central Noumea, has attractive thatched bungalows and a massive thatched restaurant and bar. It has romantic bungalows over the water with sunset views.

**Coral Palms Island Resort** (Map p246; ☎ 26 05 12; resa@newcaledoniahotels.nc; Îlot Maître; bungalows with garden/beach view 40,500/45,500CFP, overwater 60,500CFP; 🍷 🍷) This hotel has luxurious bungalows over the water. It's on Îlot Maître about 3km offshore from Anse Vata. The resort offers a wide range of water activities, and transport to and from the island is provided from Port Moselle.

### EATING

Diners looking for a restaurant are spoilt for choice in Noumea. Aside from widely available French cuisine and seafood restaurants you can also find places serving Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese and West Indian cuisine. Many restaurants are closed on Sunday or Monday. Many of the hotels in the Sleeping section have attached restaurants.

### City Centre

There are a lot of cheap eateries around Chinatown.

**Coco Glacé** (☎ 24 99 89; Place des Cocotiers; lunch 350-500CFP; 🍷 7am-6pm Mon-Sat) At Coco Glacé are ice creams and sorbets, and also crepes and waffles. You can relax at a table on the deck area under the trees and watch people coming and going in Place des Cocotiers.

**Café Shop** (☎ 24 99 89; 37 rue Jean Jaurès; lunch 350-500CFP; 🍷 lunch Mon-Fri) This takeaway shop near Musée de la Ville has a salad bar for salads or filled sandwiches. It has fresh white or wholemeal bread for sandwiches and also does *panini* and burgers.

**Café de la Gare** (rue Jules Ferry; dishes 1000CFP; 🍷 7am-4pm Mon-Sat) This café is at the Gare Maritime where cruise ships dock. It serves quiche and salad-type dishes for lunch and makes excellent coffees. In good weather,

### AUTHORS' CHOICE

**La Chaumière** (☎ 27 24 62; 13 rue du Dr Guégan; dishes 2000CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) La Chaumière is a spacious restaurant serving gastronomic French cuisine including foie gras and beef and fish dishes. Its traditionally French dishes have a hint of the Pacific flavour. Part of the restaurant is in an old colonial building, with interior steps leading down to an adjacent room. The décor is warm and uncluttered.

tables are set outside the restaurant on a paved terrace surrounded by flowers and greenery.

**Le Bilboquet Village** (☎ 26 43 30; 35 ave du Maréchal Foch; dishes 1300CFP; 🍷 9am-10pm Mon-Sat) This popular choice for lunch is in Le Village complex. It does salads and French cuisine.

**Zanzibar** (☎ 25 28 00; 51 rue Jean Jaurès; dishes 1500CFP; 🍷 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Zanzibar is tastefully decorated and has an exotic charm. It does international cuisine.

**La Kasbah** (☎ 27 88 61; 15 rue de Sébastopol; dishes 1700CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This restaurant serves generous helpings of spicy Moroccan dishes. The Moroccan décor gives it a warm atmosphere.

### Quartier Latin

**Boulangerie Marais** (☎ 27 25 24; 21 rue Eugène Porcheron; pâtisseries from 120CFP; 🍷 6am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat, morning Sun) This bakery sells scrumptious croissants, chocolate squares, éclairs, fruit tarts and much more.

**Huong-Xua Express** (☎ 27 47 68; 1 rue Bichat; dishes 800CFP; 🍷 lunch Mon-Sat) This extremely popular takeaway specialises in Vietnamese cuisine. Dishes are priced by weight so what you pay depends on how hungry you are. The Huong-Xua restaurant next door is open for both lunch and dinner.

**Snack Loan** (☎ 27 13 51; rue August Brun; dishes 550CFP; 🍷 lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Mon-Fri) This takeaway place specialises in Asian food – try the mouth-watering samosas. Spring rolls, wontons and samosas cost 50CFP to 200CFP. It's in a colonial house with a red roof.

**Le Salvatore** (☎ 27 11 36; 15 rue Auguste Brun; dishes 1800CFP; 🍷 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Wed-Sat) A small, cosy restaurant serving French and Italian cuisine.

### AUTHORS' CHOICE

**Le Galapagos** (☎ 26 22 18; 21 rue Jules Garnier; dishes 1600-1800CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The Galapagos does a scrumptious cheese buffet (1900CFP) on Thursday evenings. The buffet includes a dozen or so French cheeses, a variety of fresh breads, a tossed green salad and grapes. Help yourself to as much as you like, select a good French red from the wine list and *'bon appétit'*. The buffet opens at 8pm. The restaurant often has live music as well. It's upstairs at the squash courts in baie de l'Orphelinat – look for the building with a turtle on the green wall. It's wise to book in advance.

### Baie de la Moselle

The café in the *marché* (market; Map p230) serves croissants, toasted sandwiches, and coffee, tea or hot chocolate for breakfast. It also does freshly squeezed orange juice. There is no seating but you can lean against the counter or stand around the high bars in the café area.

In the car park diagonally across from the market, *roulottes* (food vans, open for dinner) serve takeaway meals that are great value for money. A punnet of rice and meat or chicken and chips costs around 600CFP. There is a wide choice of international dishes.

**Le Bout du Monde** (☎ 27 77 28; 4 rue de la Frégate Nivôse; dishes 1500-2500CFP; 🍷 7am-11pm) This relaxed restaurant and bar has a large wooden deck overlooking Port Moselle marina. On weekdays it does a lunch salad buffet.

### Faubourg Blanchot

**Le Bistrot du Boucher** (☎ 27 85 75; 67 route du Port Despointes; dishes 1800CFP; 🍷 closed Sun & lunch Sat) This restaurant specialises in 'Caledonian' cuisine. It serves venison, pork and seafood dishes.

**La Pointe des Antilles** (☎ 25 90 21; 13 route du Port Despointes; dishes 1900CFP; 🍷 lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat) This restaurant specialises in tasty West Indian cuisine. The atmosphere is authentic and helpings are generous.

### Baie de l'Orphelinat

**Couleur Café** (10 rue Jules Garnier; dishes 700CFP; 🍷 7am-6pm) This café in Galerie Commerciale Port Plaisance isn't cheap but its *panini*, quiches and salads are excellent. It also makes freshly squeezed fruit cocktails (650CFP).

**La Case** (☎ 28 24 24; 15 rue Jules Garnier; dishes 1300CFP; 🍷 7am-8.30pm) This café has tables arranged on a covered deck surrounded by leafy plants. It is situated across from baie de l'Orphelinat. It is one of the few places you can get a good cappuccino. It does quiche, salads and *panini* as well as larger meat and prawn dishes for lunch and dinner.

**Mr Boeuf** (☎ 27 27 68; 5 rue Jules Garnier; dishes 1900CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This restaurant specialises in steak and beef dishes. It also serves fish.

### Mont Venus & Trianon

**La Bastide** (☎ 27 63 70; 3 rue René Coty; dishes 2000CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) This hill-top restaurant on Mont Venus has views over baie de l'Orphelinat and tables set around a swimming pool. It specialises in seafood.

### Baie des Citrons

There are a dozen or so places to choose from at the Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons. Here you will find seafood, salad, French, Chinese, Portuguese and other international cuisine on offer.

For ice creams or sorbets go to **La Sorbetière** (☎ 26 20 23; 33 prom Roger Laroque; ice cream from 230CFP; 🍷 noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), which also does toasted sandwiches, crepes and waffles.

**La Fiesta Chez Alban** (☎ 26 21 33; 5 prom Roger Laroque; dishes 1500CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Chez Alban has a warm Basque atmosphere from the French-Spanish border region and a touch of rugby mania. It does good pizzas (small/large 950CFP/1250CFP).

### Anse Vata

You'll find a wide choice of restaurants at the Anse Vata shops including pizza, and Vietnamese and French cuisine.

### AUTHORS' CHOICE

**La Crêperie Bretonne** (☎ 27 37 14; 5 rue Ange Berlioz; crêpes 600-900CFP; 🍷 lunch Tue-Sat & dinner) This cosy family restaurant in Trianon is decorated in typical Breton style. It serves *galettes* (thin, savoury pancakes) and crepes. You can sit outdoors on a covered veranda but if you sit indoors you can watch the chef preparing the crepes. Service is fast and friendly and the crepes are deliciously filling. It's just off route de l'Anse Vata.



**La Sorbatière** (☎ 26 28 03; 125 prom Roger Laroque; 2-6.30pm Mon, 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; ice cream from 230CFP) serves the same food as the baie de Citron shop, does ice creams and sorbets. For details on the revolving restaurant at Ramada Plaza see p239.

**Oceania** (☎ 26 17 33; route de l'Anse Vata; ☎ 6am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm & 3-7.30pm Sat & Sun) This small shop sells groceries, fruit and vegies, and wine. It is handy if you are staying in the area but is pricey compared to supermarkets.

**Snack Ulysse** (☎ 28 69 28; route de l'Anse Vata; sandwiches 400-650CFP) This *snack* is popular, unpretentious and relaxed. You can eat in or take away. It has seating on a veranda off the pavement. It serves generously filled hot or cold sandwiches, rice or chips, and meat or fish dishes. Attached to the *snack* is a café serving quiche, salad and cooked meals that are slightly more expensive than at the *snack*.

**L'Amédée** (☎ 26 10 35; 153 route de l'Anse Vata; dishes 1000CFP; ☎ closed Sun & lunch Sat) This restaurant specialises in seafood. It's a popular choice.

**On the Beach** (☎ 24 09 02; prom Pierre Vernier; dishes 1500CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The name of this place describes its attractive setting. It's at the Côte Blanche sailing club about 2km from Anse Vata and serves up international cuisine.

**Le Faré** (lunch 1800CFP; ☎ lunch) By the beach at Hôtel Le Meridien, the Faré serves barbecue lunches. It looks out over Anse Vata and is a relaxing spot for lunch.

## Nouvelle

**Le 1881** (☎ 24 00 42; 98 ave James Cook; dishes 2500CFP; ☎ closed Sun) This restaurant at Nouvelle is housed in a building that dates to the peni-

## AUTHORS' CHOICE

**Le Roof** (☎ 25 07 00; 134 prom Roger Laroque; dishes 2500CFP; ☎ closed Tue) Everything about this top-notch gastronomic restaurant is impeccable: the food, service and setting. It's on the jetty over the water at Anse Vata. Don't be too disappointed if you can't have a table by the deck as you can watch the tropical fish in the two large aquariums inside the restaurant. The only drawback is the loud music from the neighbouring bar and nightclub, which sometimes disturbs the otherwise perfect atmosphere. But then again, it may put you in the mood to go nightclubbing after dinner.

tentiary days. There is an outdoor marquee-covered dining area over the water. Le 1881 specialises in seafood. At lunch the restaurant serves standard French cuisine; the dinner menu is gourmet.

## Supermarkets

Noumea has several supermarkets. They are open from 8am to 8pm daily except Sunday when they are open in the morning only. The most handy one to the city centre is **Casino Johnston** (☎ 24 30 60; rue Jules Ferry), which accepts payment in foreign currency including US, Australian and New Zealand dollars, and euros. **Géant** (☎ 28 55 25; rue Taragnat) is in Ste Marie about 2km east of the city centre. **Carrefour** (☎ 41 28 27) is on the Voie Express north of Noumea before the tollgates. **Super U Michel-Ange** (☎ 26 19 48; 93 route de l'Anse Vata) is 2km from Anse Vata beach and handy to Anse Vata and baie des Citrons areas.

## DRINKING

**Bodega Del Mar** (☎ 26 11 53; 134 prom Roger Laroque) A trendy bar on the jetty at Anse Vata. There is often live music.

**L'Acropole** (☎ 24 19 38; 119 prom Roger Laroque) It hosts salsa dance classes on weekday evenings.

**Best Café** (Map p230; ☎ 28 17 00; 45/47 rue de Sébastopol) Has a restaurant-bar, as well as billiards and Internet access on a mezzanine area. Often there is live music.

**Le Bout du Monde** (Map p230; ☎ 27 77 28; 4 rue de la Frégate Nivôse; ☎ 7am-11pm) by Port Moselle marina is also a pleasant place to stop for have a drink. It sometimes has live music.

There are a handful of relaxed bars at the Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons including **Malecon Café** (☎ 28 28 05), **Les 3 Brasseurs** (☎ 24 15 16) and **Ethnic** (☎ 27 20 20). At the weekend they often have live music.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Most of Noumea's nightlife happens at baie des Citrons and Anse Vata. The Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud (p232) publishes upcoming events in its entertainment guide *NC Pocket*.

## Nightclubs

Most nightclubs are closed from Sunday to Tuesday. They usually open around 10pm and really get going after midnight.

**Cort'o Maltese** (Map p228; ☎ 26 27 25; 134 prom Roger Laroque; admission free) This nightclub is one of the places on the jetty at Anse Vata. It attracts a crowd in their 30s and 40s.

At the Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons you will find **Jet 7** (Map p228), which attracts a young crowd in their late teens and early 20s.

For discos or cabaret at Anse Vata, head to promenade Roger Laroque where you'll find **Mister Swing** (☎ 24 03 93; 115 prom Roger Laroque) beneath Lantana Beach Hôtel, **L'Acropole** (☎ 24 19 38; 119 prom Roger Laroque) next to the Nouvata Park Hôtel or **Startruck/La Guinguette** (☎ 26 17 54; prom Roger Laroque) near Le Surf Noumea. They all attract people in their 30s and over.

## Cinemas

**Giné City** (☎ 29 20 20; 18 rue de la Somme; adult/child 950/550CFP) has 12 movie theatres. Non-French movies are usually dubbed in French. During the La Foa film festival (see p261) movies are screened in their original language.

## Theatre & Concerts

**Théâtre de l'Île** (Map p246; ☎ 25 50 50) This theatre housed in a renovated old convict building is at Nouville.

Other venues are **Théâtre de Poche** (Map p246; ☎ 27 07 90; 6 blvd Extérieur), in Faubourg Blanchot, and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre (p234). The tourist office Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud (p232) will have details of their programmes.

## Casinos

**Casino Royal** (☎ 26 00 15; 55 prom Roger Laroque; ☎ 2pm-2am), in Le Surf Novotel, and the **Grand**

**Casino** (☎ 24 20 20; 5 prom Pierre Vernier; ☎ 2pm-2am) are Noumea's main casinos.

## Sport PÉTANQUE

Watching a game or two of *pétanque* (also known as *boules*) is an easy and enjoyable way to pass an hour. Matches are played most afternoons at Place des Cocotiers, and opposite Lantana Beach Hôtel at Anse Vata.

## CRICKET

Women's cricket (New Caledonia-style) is played Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday (in season from March to November) at the cricket pitch about 500m north of the city, on RT1 in Vallée du Tir, north of Rond-point du Général Patch. Yellow-line buses pass nearby.

## SHOPPING Art

Noumea has a good sprinkling of small art galleries.

**Artifac** (☎ 24 13 85; 18 rue de l'Espérance; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Offers a selection of New Caledonian and Melanesian art from around the Pacific. It's in Ouemo about 5km east of central Noumea.

**11&½** (☎ 28 12 78; btwn 11 & 13 rue du Général Mangin; ☎ 8-11.30am & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Has both New Caledonian and international exhibitions.

## Clothing

**Tricot Rayé** (☎ 25 40 21; 27 rue de l'Alma) A popular local brand with a trademark embroidered sea snake. It does men's, women's and children's clothing.

**Teprint Boutique** (☎ 28 46 70; 48 rue Anatole France) Another local brand selling T-shirts with New Caledonian motifs.

Shops selling French prêt-à-porter and designer labels for both women and men are dotted along rue de Sébastopol, rue George Clémenceau, rue Jean Jaurès and rue de l'Alma.

## Crafts & Curios

**L'Atelier des Femmes de Nouvelle-Calédonie** (☎ 88 87 81; cnr rue du Gouverneur Sautot & Rue Anatole France) This women's craft workshop sells handwoven products and other arts and crafts.

**L'Association des Sculpteurs de Nouvelle-Calédonie** (☎ 77 51 24; rue Anatole France) This

## AUTHORS' CHOICE

**Casa Italia** (☎ 25 92 58; 113 route de l'Anse Vata; pizzas small/large 1400/2000CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This Italian restaurant run by an Italian lady is tucked away in a small shopping centre. It opens onto a courtyard surrounded by plants. The pizzas and pasta dishes are simply delicious. It also serves Italian wine. Bookings are recommended as it is often full. It's about 1km from the beach at Anse Vata, on the right just after the Shell station, which is on the left as you head away from the beach. It's off a car park.

sculpture association next to the women's craft workshop sells wooden and soapstone sculptures produced by various sculptors around New Caledonia.

Chinatown, south of Place des Cocotiers, is a good place to shop for bargains. It has Asian shops selling clothes, bags, souvenirs and many other products.

### Duty-Free

You will find shops specialising in expensive duty-free French goods, such as handbags, lingerie, clothes, shoes and perfumes along rue de Sébastopol, rue George Clémenceau, rue Jean Jaurès and rue de l'Alma. You will need to produce your plane ticket to purchase goods duty-free then pick them up from the duty-free counter in the departures lounge at the airport when you leave.

### Music

The best place to buy CDs of local bands is **Compact Mégastore** (☎ 24 35 35; 18 rue d'Austerlitz) in Galerie Noumea Center. You can also buy them at supermarkets. A few bands to look out for include the following:

**Dick and Natr Buama** Both have produced solo albums in recent years.

**Edou** Leads the band Mexem from Lifou. Continues to produce CDs both solo and with his band.

**Gulaan** Former lead singer of OK! Ryos. Sings beautiful melodies in his clear mellow voice.

**Tim Semeke** He and his dance troupe We Ce Ca have produced several albums. We Ce Ca performs at hotels, events and official functions around Noumea and there's a good chance you will catch one of its performances during your visit. Tim, the group's dynamic leader, mixes Kaneka with styles from around the Pacific as well as techno music.

### Shopping Malls

There are several shopping malls around Noumea including the following:

**Centre Commercial Baie des Citrons** Has a lot of restaurants and bars, and a cybercafé.

**Galerie Commerciale Port Plaisance** In baie de l'Orphelinat. Has a supermarket, bank and laundry service.

**Galerie Noumea Centre** In the city centre. Has a bank and Internet café.

**Galerie Palm Beach** At Anse Vata. Has shops and a couple of restaurants. There is a bank nearby.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

All international flights arrive at Tontouta airport, where passengers must pass through

customs and immigration. For more information see p322.

For information on air travel within New Caledonia see p327.

### Boat

Ocean-cruise liners dock at the Gare Maritime on rue Jules Ferry (for more information see p335).

Most yachts anchor at Port Moselle (for yachting information see p335).

A high-speed catamaran, the *Betico*, and the cargo boat *Havannah* connect Noumea with Île des Pins and the Loyalty Islands – for more information see p328.

### Bus

Buses bound for destinations around Grande Terre depart from the **gare routière** (bus station; ☎ 48 43 12; btwn rue de la Somme & ave de la Victoire/Henry Lafleur) opposite the city market. There's a kiosk here where you can get bus schedules and buy tickets. See p329 for more information on bus travel around Grande Terre.

### Car & Motorcycle

Cars and motorcycles can be hired from the various rental companies in Noumea. For details see p330.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport TONTOUTA AIRPORT

Tontouta international airport is 45km, or 45 minutes by car, northwest of Noumea. It is serviced by public and private buses and taxis.

The cheapest way of getting to and from the airport is by the blue and white Carsud bus. At Tontouta, these buses wait outside the arrivals hall, to the left as you exit the building or at the bus stop on the main road 500m from the terminal. In Noumea, they depart from the corner of rue George Clémenceau and rue de la République. The journey takes 1¼ hours each way. The one-way fare is 400CFP.

From Noumea, these buses run on average hourly on weekdays between 5.30am and 5.30pm. They are less frequent at the weekend. From Tontouta, they run roughly from 6am to 6pm.

For details on taxis see opposite.

A number of companies run airport shuttle services including the following:

**Arc en Ciel** (☎ 27 19 80; reservation@arcenciel.nc; 2500CFP)

**Philo Tours** (☎ 28 99 57; philo@canl.nc; full/reduced fare 2500/1000CFP) Has a reduced fare for certain flights. Fares are based on a minimum of two passengers.

### MAGENTA AIRPORT

The domestic airport is at Magenta 5km east of the city centre. Blue-line Karuia buses and taxis run there.

### Bicycle, Scooter & Scootcar

**Nouméa Fun Ride** (☎ 26 96 26; noumeafunride.org@canl.nc), at the Gare Maritime where the cruise ships dock, rents bicycles (per hour/half-day 1100/1300CFP), scooters (2300/2700CFP), and scooters (miniature cars; 2700/3800CFP).

**Plages Loisirs** (☎ 24 90 00; prom Roger Laroque) beneath the tourist information *faré* at Anse Vata rents bicycles for 1250/1800CFP for a half-/full day.

### Bus

Noumea's public bus service is operated by a fleet of red and white Karuia buses. You can purchase tickets (160CFP) from the ticket kiosk at Place des Cocotiers, Gare de Montravel (Montravel bus terminal) north of town, at ticket dispensers available at some bus stops, and at some shops near bus stops. You can also purchase your ticket from the driver (200CFP) but it's more expensive.

Karuia has colour-coded bus lines servicing different routes. Buses run between 6am and 6pm. Following are lines to the major tourist sights:

**Bleue (Blue)** St Quentin–Magenta & Tjibaou Cultural Centre–City Centre

**Jaune (Yellow)** Faubourg Blanchot–City Centre–Gare de Montravel–Rivière Salée

**Marron (Brown)** Ducos–Ste Marie–Magenta

**Orange (Orange)** Val Plaisance–City Centre–Rivière Salée

**Verte (Green)** Anse Kuendu–City Centre–Baie des Citrons–Anse Vata

**Violette (Purple)** Ouemo–Magenta–Vallée des Colons–City Centre–Ducos

**Noumea Explorer** (☎ 27 19 80; adult/child 1000/500CFP)

This bus runs a transport service around Noumea. It starts at Hôtel Le Méridien at Anse Vata and goes into the city via baie des Citrons, stopping at the main tourist sights. From the Musée de la Ville in the city centre it goes to the maritime museum in Nou-

ville, Parc Zoologique et Forestier and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre before returning to Anse Vata. You buy an all-day pass that lets you hop on or off wherever you like.

### Car & Motorcycle

For information on renting a car or motorcycle see p330.

Parking in central Noumea during business hours costs around 150CFP per hour. You buy a ticket from a green ticket dispenser on the street and display the ticket on your dashboard. There's also a large free car park opposite the *marché* (market; Map p230).

### Taxi

The main taxi rank is on rue d'Austerlitz opposite Galerie Noumea Center. You can also hail one of the green **Radio Taxis de Noumea** (☎ 28 35 12) from virtually anywhere around Noumea. Taxis operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Below is a list of fares from Anse Vata based on a maximum of four passengers:

- To City Centre around 1100CFP
- To Parc Zoologique et Forestier 1400CFP
- To Tjibaou Cultural Centre 1800CFP
- To Mont Koghis 4200CFP
- To Tontouta airport 8600CFP

## AROUND NOUMEA

There are many diverse and beautiful places just a short trip from Noumea – ideal to visit if you are only in New Caledonia for a few days. They can all be visited in a day or you can spend a night or two there. As there are no organised tours to the places around Noumea on the main island, the best way to get there is with a hired car (see p329).

## ISLETS AROUND NOUMEA Island Escapes

The lagoon around Noumea is sprinkled with beautiful islets surrounded by white-sand beaches and turquoise waters including Île aux Canards, Îlot Maître, Îlot Larégnère, Amédée Islet, Îlot Signal and more. Most of these islets are marine reserves and the clear waters surrounding them are teeming with colourful fish.

There are a number of transport options to choose from to get to the islets including speedboats, taxi-boats, jet skis or yachts.



but are equally appealing. Both have wood stoves for cold nights.

The cabins are all a 20-minute walk into the forest – you must carry in your own provisions and luggage. They all have tiny kitchenettes, but bring drinking water and food. Warm showers are provided by solar camping showers and there's 12V solar-powered lighting.

Alternatively, there are four spacious chalets at the *auberge*. One of them has basic cooking facilities.

With its fireplace and timber interior, the cosy restaurant has a real mountain chalet atmosphere. It serves Savoyard lunches and dinners; that is, specialities from the Savoy region in the French Alps. Typical of this cuisine is *raclette* (a round of cheese that is grilled and then eaten with nibbles; 3900CFP), and *fondue* (3300CFP).

At any time of the day you can stop in at the *auberge* for a tea, coffee or ice cream, or something more fortifying such as an alcoholic apple cider from Brittany.

## DUMBÉA RIVER

Dumbéa river is a popular spot to cool off during the summer months. There are also easy, flat walking tracks along the river. To get there turn right off the RT1 just before the bridge (15km north of Noumea) at Parc Fayard. Follow the sealed road for 10km. About halfway, a small sealed road leads off to the left to **Trou des Nurses**, a popular swimming hole.

From the car park at the end of the sealed road, you can continue on foot. You can either hike straight along the unsealed road (with the river on your left) to the dam or, better still, wade across the river just after the car park. This track leads along the northern tributary of the Dumbéa river to some rock pools. This walk takes around 1½ hours one way.

Canoes and kayaks can be hired from **Terra Incognita** (☎ 78 94 46; [terincognita@canl.nc](mailto:terincognita@canl.nc); per person 2/4hr 3000/3500CFP, full moon trips 3950CFP). A popular kayaking trip is to start at the Trou des Nurses and then descend 7km (two hours) to Parc Fayard (2950CFP). For the adventurous there are also night outings (2½ hours) on the Dumbéa River (3950CFP).

Golf enthusiasts can try Dumbéa's 18-hole (par 72) **golf course** (☎ 41 80 00). It's 1km off the RT1.

**Auberge de la Rhumerie** (☎ 43 30 52, 43 23 51; 9 route de Koé; d 5500CFP) Set in a beautiful old building on the road to the Dumbéa river which was once a rum distillery, this place is well known for its restaurant which specialises in cuisine from the southwest of France (homemade foie gras) and escargots (snails; 2000CFP) Three-course meals cost 3000CFP to 5000CFP. There are five spacious rooms with private bathrooms.

**Gaia Pacific** (☎ 41 61 19, 78 94 46; [gaia.pacific@canl.nc](mailto:gaia.pacific@canl.nc); meals 1500 to 3000CFP) This *table d'hôte* is by the river at the end of the sealed road to the Dumbéa river. It serves New Caledonian specialities including meat and oyster dishes. Reservations are essential.

**Nakamal du Col** (shell 100CFP; ☎ 3.30-10pm Mon-Fri, to midnight Sat & Sun) To relax after the hiking, you can stop at this *nakamal* (kava house) on the Col de Tonghoué which has a panoramic view over Noumea and its bays. At sunset it's fantastic. It has small *farés* built on a terraced hillside and clean toilets.

## PAÏTA

pop 12,000

Païta, also part of greater Noumea, is a small town 26km northwest of Noumea on the RT1. It has a relaxed Broussard atmosphere and is famous for its annual agricultural fair, la Fête du Bœuf, held in October.

## Sights & Activities

About 3km southeast of Païta, at the hamlet of Katiramona on the RT1, there's a group of **petroglyphs** on the rocks down by the creek. The site is not signposted but it's easily identified by the wooden viewing platform that overhangs the creek (on the right as you're heading north). Although there are many petroglyph sites in New Caledonia, it's rare to see them 'in the wild' like this and the site is well worth a visit.

## MONT MOU

Mont Mou (1211m) is situated between Païta and Tontouta airport. Although part of the mountain is a designated botanical reserve, it is possible to climb to the peak from a track near the sanatorium. It's a steep climb up bare slopes and through bracken but at the summit there is a magnificent moss-covered rainforest. Through the forest on the other side of the mountain, there's a US Air Force plane that crashed

there during WWII. The huge towering trees are all covered in a thick blanket of moss. The track starts 100m before a little wooden bridge; there's an obvious parking area and a signpost. You'll need to allow a day for this trek. Pick up a brochure from Direction des Ressources Naturelles (p320).

The turn-off to the sanatorium from the RT1 is opposite a bus shelter at Col de la Pirogue, 10km northwest of Païta. Any northbound bus from Noumea will drop you off at the Col de la Pirogue turn-off. From here, a narrow road winds for 2.5km through lush vegetation to the sanatorium.

## TONTOUTA

Tontouta, 40km north of Noumea, is the site of New Caledonia's international airport. A couple of kilometres north of the airport is the Tontouta river, a great river to kayak. There are a few small rapids that make the course a little bit technical. It may be too hard for beginners when the water level is high. **Terra Incognita** (☎ 78 94 46; [terincognita@canl.nc](mailto:terincognita@canl.nc); per person 2/4hr 3000/3500CFP, full moon trips 3950CFP) runs kayak excursions here for 3750CFP.

The river starts in the Massif du Humboldt (1618m), one of New Caledonia's highest peaks.

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