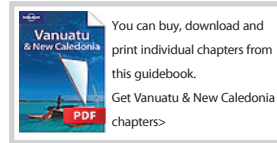


Getting Started



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If you're travelling to Vanuatu's outer islands, you'll need to start taking antimalaria tablets two weeks before you head out from Port Vila. There's no malaria in New Caledonia.

Book a flight on the Web, and grab your walking boots, reef shoes, snorkel gear, hat and, if you must, a spare set of clothes. That's it. You're ready. Off to paradise. The thing about these two exotic destinations is that everyone helps you with a smile, but nobody is hassling with 'Come to my hotel' or 'I'll give you the best deal'. It's all comfortably easy – everything you think'd be cool to do can be organised by any of the agents along the main streets of Vila and Noumea. They'll arrange tours, plus grand adventures to outer islands or away from the centres.

It's just a one-hour flight between New Caledonia and Vanuatu. If your timing is right, try a boat ride on *Havannah*, which sails north each month.

If you like to have things organised, it's still dead easy. Start your adventure by booking flights on the Web to both countries and to Vanuatu's outer islands. Choose your accommodation and book direct, with an email or phone call. Decide on tours, festivals, sights and activities and contact your chosen host or an agent to arrange them.

Prefer to have an agent arrange everything for you? Contact an agent mentioned in this book; listed on either the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO) website and the New Caledonia Tourism Point Sud (NCTPS) website; or your local agent. There are always package deals on offer, especially from Australia and New Zealand, so check all your options.

Many New Caledonia visitors come on package tours, which offer plenty of variety, such as island-hopping and do-it-yourself fly-drive packages (see entries under individual countries of origin, p332). But independent travellers only need to head out of Noumea to find unusual pristine landscapes, exciting activities, and small quaint islands suitable for a range of budgets – with few other tourists, and you'll meet the lovely locals too.

Cruise boats stop for a day or two in Noumea and stay overnight at more remote locations such as Lifou, in the Loyalty Islands. Then they continue north to idyllic Mystery Island, Port Vila and exotic spots around Vanuatu's northern islands.

A range of comfortable, protective footwear is the most important thing to pack. Reef shoes are not for thumping around on coral reefs, but for the sharp coral and volcanic-rock beaches. They're a must for children.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Snorkel gear, although you can buy it duty-free in Vila and Noumea.
- Earplugs, eye mask, and torch or anything heavy for whacking roosters at 4am.
- A sweater for boats, backs of 4WDs, volcano rims, and when the temperature drops.
- A wrap, to use as a bed sheet, blanket, dressing gown, towel, skirt, sunshade, or scarf.
- Mosquito net if you think you'll be staying in resthouses.
- Water canteen and water purifier for long treks.
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and insect repellent. Duh.
- Stout walking shoes for razor-sharp coral tracks and cliffs, and reef shoes for beaches.
- C-Card and logbook.
- Alcohol. It's the best thing for cleaning coral cuts and crocodile bites.
- Can-opener. Only one thing worse than canned food: canned food that you can't open.

WHEN TO GO

These two Pacific countries are at their glorious best in the dry season from May to October in Vanuatu, to mid-December in New Caledonia. All the festivals and sporting contests are held in these months too. For walking or trekking, narrow it down to the cold season, June to August, when water temperatures drop to 21°C and the air is cooler – not the best time to visit if you're hoping to laze around on a beach. School holiday periods are busy, so flights, especially to Vanuatu's outer islands, need to be booked as far in advance as possible.

The climate varies from wet tropical in Vanuatu's north (over 4000mm of rainfall a year) to subtropical in New Caledonia, with dry rain-shadow areas in between. The prevailing winds throughout the year are from the southeast (the famous Southeast Trade Winds of sailing ship days), bringing sunny days and cool nights. However, in the wet season the winds are more variable. Squalls can blow up in a few minutes, reaching 90km/h and presenting a real danger to any small sailing vessels.

The wet season runs from November to the end of April in Vanuatu, from mid-December to mid-April in New Caledonia. These months give you higher temperatures, heavier rains, mosquitoes and cyclones. Cyclone time is no good in a yacht – in fact, any vessel caught in the open sea is in grave danger. Otherwise, just get a close-fitting hat. If you've booked a bungalow and it blows away, not to worry; your host will build another, pronto. They're used to cyclones.

An average of 2.5 cyclones strikes Vanuatu each year. They cause extensive damage, not only to the land but to the coral reefs. However they also clear a way through the jungle, taking out vines and overgrowth to allow new life to generate. Ni-Vans know instinctively when one is on its way – it's the talk of the town.

When a cyclone is heading towards New Caledonia, a rating-one warning is issued 24 hours before it is due to strike. Within four hours of crossing land, a cyclone warning two is announced. Shops and industries must close and some houses are evacuated. Any vessel should have sought shelter in Noumea's relatively protected harbour. The last major cyclones to hit New Caledonia were Drena (1997) and Franck (1999).

COSTS & MONEY

Both countries have boutique and luxury hotels and resorts where your delightful, spacious single or apartment might float out over the water, or your suite might hover high with stunning beach access. These cost anything between 6000Vt and 40,000Vt for a night in Vanuatu, and from 10,000CFP to 53,000CFP in New Caledonia.

Your time in Port Vila can cost as little or as much as you want. But when you hit Vanuatu's outer islands, it's difficult to spend too much, except on adventures – grand affairs costing a lot less than you'd pay back home. Transport anywhere is costly: fuel costs heaps and very expensive 4WD trucks fall apart in five years. Why? Super-rough roads, salt spray, and cyclones that ram coral dust, salt and acidic volcanic ash into every nook and crevice.

All Vanuatu's islands have cheerful, clean rooms available for as little as 1500Vt, so daily expenses might run from 3000Vt up to 7000Vt, depending on your activities. (Airfares from Port Vila cost between 7000Vt and 16,000Vt.) Camping in New Caledonia, or staying in a homestay or *gîte* (tourist bungalow) costs between 1500CFP per person and 5000CFP for a double.

There's no malaria on Aneityum and they want to keep it that way. So new arrivals (not tourists) go straight into the tiny tin-shed airport, where a pin-prick of their blood is checked under a microscope.

Fan-palm leaves and wild taro leaves make excellent umbrellas.

For cultural pursuits, time your visit to coincide with one of the major events, such as land diving (*naghol*) in April and May on Pentecost (p143).

HOW MUCH?

Trip to the national museum 500Vt/200CFP

The local paper 100Vt/120CFP

Car hire per day from 6500Vt/3000CFP

Litre of petrol 125Vt/120CFP

Litre of bottled water 120Vt/110CFP

Tusker beer 350–450Vt/Number One beer 100CFP

Souvenir T-shirt 350–950Vt/600–1200CFP

Quarter-chicken, fries & salad 520Vt/850CFP

Calling the seasons wet and dry implies rain and sun seasons. Not so. There can be long periods of calm, dry weather during the wet season, and days of low cloud and rain throughout the year.

Tropical cyclones are low-pressure systems that build up into highly devastating forces, with heavy seas, torrential rain, and winds rotating around an 'eye'. The ocean temperature must be around 28°C to generate a cyclone.

Vanuatu has surprisingly cheap beef and fish of great quality, as well as fruit and vegetables from local markets. You can eat fresh-cooked meals at Port Vila and Luganville markets or outer-island 'restaurants' for 200Vt. Self-cater for perhaps 800Vt a day. It's eating out at the irresistible restaurants that adds up: three restaurant meals a day could cost 5000Vt, especially if you're drinking wine.

Snack bars and cafés in New Caledonia offer substantial meals from about 350CFP, while a three-course set meal starts at around 1600CFP. On the islands, lobster or coconut crab is another speciality, costing from around 3000CFP.

New Caledonia is a relatively rich country with a high cost of labour, so some products such as fish, fruit and vegetables can be expensive. Noumea sadly has a reputation as an expensive city, partly because it has little budget accommodation. To find some, just leave the city and head for the country's other great destinations. Car-hire rates are very competitive and transport by ferry to the Loyalty Islands and Île des Pins is affordable.

Some accommodation in Vanuatu has peak-season rates from June to September. There are no peak-season prices in New Caledonia, but places can book out quickly. Prices everywhere vary if you book through an agent, stay a while, take a special package and so on.

READING UP**Books**

South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation by Subramani covers regional literature and includes work by ni-Vanuatu and Kanak writers.

Pacifica by Nadine Amadio is fascinating storytelling about local myths and traditions, along with superb photography to illustrate them. It covers all the Pacific islands.

Art in the New Pacific by Vilsoni Tausie explores Melanesian art, dance, sculpture and oral traditions.

Pacific by Judy Nunn is a tale of love, passion and sex that tracks the lives of two women in Vanuatu, one a WWII heroine, the other a young Australian actor. A fun read.

Try to find a copy of *Savage Civilization* by Tom Harrisson, who went 'native' in 1934. It is a fascinating first-hand account of cannibalism, sacrifice, rivalry and the reason behind many of Vanuatu's rituals. You won't be able to put it down.

The Lady and the President by Peter Stone has great photos of USS *President Coolidge* (luxury liner, troopship carrier, diveable wreck), which cover the tragedy of war and delights of scuba diving.

Vanuatu and New Caledonia by Carol Jones is a cheerful book about the region and its people, set out as postcards with lots of maps and photos. Perfect for children, and their parents, to read.

Lonely Planet publishes the *Pidgin* phrasebook, *Fast Talk French*, and many Pacific titles such as *South Pacific and Micronesia* and *Fiji*.

Websites

Start your Web explorations at the website of **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com). The Pacific Islands branch of the Thorn Tree bulletin board is where you can ask questions. Other useful sites include the following:

Adventure Centre (www.adventurevanuatu.com) Information and links to activities, accommodation etc.

Island-Hopping (www.vanuatu-adventure-travel.vu) An extensive range of images and suggested interisland itineraries to help you island-hop.

Jason's South Pacific Islands (www.pi-travel.co.nz) Interesting overview of the whole area.

New Caledonia Trio (www.kaori.nc, www.kaledonie.com, www.boomerang.nc) Informative websites with many links, but in French only.

South Pacific Tourism (www.spto.org) Pacific area information, with online accommodation booking service and links.

Tourism Point Sud (www.nctps.com) New Caledonia's excellent official sites in French, English and Japanese.

Vanuatu Tourism Office (www.vanuatutourism.com) Official website, with a full range of information including a calendar of events.

MUST-SEE MOVIES

Wan Smol Bag Theatre in Vila has produced several excellent videos that are for sale around Vila, or available for viewing at the museum. The theatre uses a light-handed approach to many sensitive issues, as in *Pacific Star*, a musical comedy about a remote Pacific island and the chaos when tourists arrive. A total romp. *On The Reef* is set guess where, with cartoon characters like triton shells and crabs. More serious is *Vanua-Tai of Land and Sea*, a film about turtle conservation in north Efate.

Little has been produced in English on Kanak culture, although the Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak (ADCK, Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture) sells a range of videos in French. Culture and the struggle for independence were the subjects of a 30-minute documentary entitled *Kanaky au Pouvoir* (Power to the Kanak People), made in 1988 by New Zealand filmmaker Kathy Dudding. You can view this film at the *médiathèque* (media library) at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Noumea.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Jedus du Centre Ville (Thursday evening street market) A wildly popular street market at Place des Cocotiers in central Noumea with traditional dances, arts and crafts and local produce.

Naghol (land diving) Every April and May the men of South Pentecost make spectacular jumps from towers in a ritual to bless the yam harvest.

Independence Day Vanuatu's most important celebration is on 30 July with fun stalls, sporting events and *kastom* (ancient ancestral) dancing everywhere. Port Vila has a military parade, canoe and yacht races and string-band competitions.

Around-Island Relay Efate is the stage for a unique 138km relay through rainforest, villages, plantations and rivers at the end of July.

Live en Août A week-long live festival in August with musical performances in restaurants, bars and nightclubs around Noumea.

Equinox Every two years in October Noumea sees street and indoor theatre, music and dance.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

There is debate worldwide about the sustainability of the ocean's fish species. You may want to avoid eating fish that are known to be at risk of being depleted, although the main problem around the Pacific is the illegal fishing by large Asian nations, who come in with longlines.

CONDUCT IN VANUATU & NEW CALEDONIA

Don't try to touch or ride on a turtle, even though such antics might be possible at theme parks. Just enjoy swimming near these shy creatures, who are easily terrified.

All hikers know about carrying their rubbish away with them. It'd also be good to take your plastic wrappings and drink containers away from your outer-island bungalow. Many islands don't have the means to dispose of non-organic rubbish.

Be mindful, when you meet someone, that you may be talking to a chief, even though he looks 15.

Vanuatu's vatu (Vt) and New Caledonia's CFP have a similar value (CFP is around 10% higher).

Packaged foods, which we depend on in the West, are imported and therefore expensive. Then again, you get gourmet foods from France for no more than you'd pay anywhere outside France. Indulge.

ECOTOURISM

Vanuatu and New Caledonia are perfect places for ecotourism. Power is used minimally and friendly energy sources like solar, thermal and mini-hydro are common. It makes a difference, but it's a lot of hard work too – sheets hand-washed and hung to dry; rooms swept not vacuumed etc.

Ecotourism is a great way to learn about how connected the islanders are to the rhythm of their sea and land. In Vanuatu, look out for the poles sticking out of the sand to indicate that fishing is *tabu* (forbidden) along certain parts of the shore. Ask about the restrictions on spear fishing, and the cycle of vegetable plantings. Visit the marine reserves, turtle sanctuaries and giant clam gardens.

One of the very positive aspects of ecotourism is that special features or species become an attraction. The sea and the forest are kept in their pristine state ready for the next tourist. Come and swim through the wonderland of coral reefs or walk through rainforests and marvel at nature.

Bungalows, guesthouses and homestays on Vanuatu's outer islands and in rural New Caledonia make it possible for you to visit these remote places, and witness their cultural ceremonies and dances. If you are asked to pay to walk through, swim in, or look at parts of their country, know it's a payment towards the future, because they believe in, and practise, nurturing the environment for the next generation.

When buying art, pay the price the artist asks. Don't buy objects that incorporate rare shells, coral or turtle shells. Buying whole turtle shells simply encourages further trade.

Snorkellers and divers should see the boxed text, p222.

Bushwalking places great pressure on the environment:

- use minimal packaging and carry out all your rubbish (don't bury it)
- when there are no toilets, bury your waste, including toilet paper
- use detergents or toothpaste at least 50m (55yd) from a watercourse, even if they are biodegradable
- if you use a fire, ensure that it is fully extinguished and cold, before covering it over.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

LOST IN ANOTHER REALITY

One Month

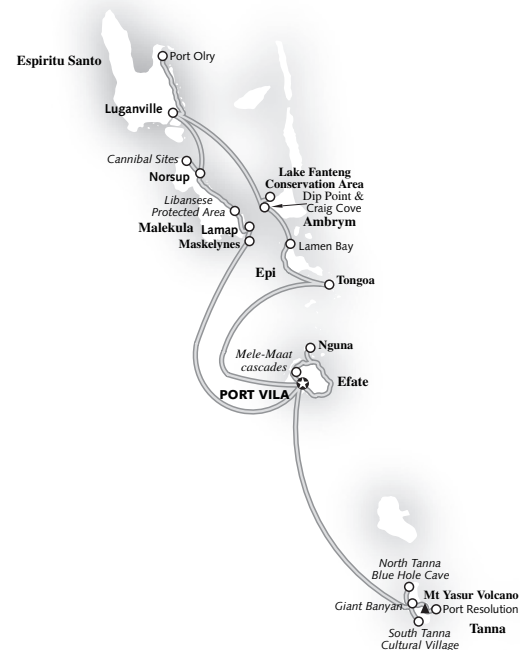
This will be fun, but there's so much to do. You need a week in Vila to plunge into tours, a Melanesian feast and a night on **Nguna** (p81). Sorry you can't stay; you must get the luxury trimaran, *Diepsea*, to **Tanna** (p89).

There are just five days here to see the mighty **volcano** (p98), the North Tanna Blue Hole Cave, wild horses, giant banyan, South Tanna Cultural Village and Port Resolution. Breathless? Fly back to Vila for a night.

It's time for a relaxed trip to **Tongoa** (p87) to see the dancing, and on to **Epi** (p85) to swim with Bondas the dugong. Vanair now takes you to **Ambrym** (p119). There's four days to do one of the excellent **West Ambrym Eco-Cultural Tours** (p123) and see the Lake Fanteng Conservation Area.

Fly to **Santo** (p127) for two magic days' diving, and to see Millenium Cave and Lonnoc Beach or **Port Olry** (p137). Then it's south to **Malekula** (p108), to watch *kastom* dances, visit cannibal sites and take the bus to gorgeous **Libanese Protected Area** (p116). Now it's a bus and boat to three days in the idyllic **Maskelynes** (p116), then a plane to Vila.

Spend your last day abseiling at **Mele-Maat cascades** (p77). This is Vanuatu – one giant adventure and you never see it all.



Many of Vanuatu's hidden secrets are revealed to you in this adventure holiday. It will be a wrench to move onto each new leg, but there are always more delights to unfold. You find the tourist core, the earth's hot centre, glorious jungles, azure beaches, a hint of the mysteries in the basically stone-age, living culture and some of the extraordinary activities.

JOURNEY THROUGH PARADISE

Three Weeks

Start exploring in Noumea – set aside four days. Go shopping at the craft stalls in its colourful market and purchase your presents to take home. Now you're free to enjoy yourself. Head off on a **walking tour** (p236) of the city, take an exhilarating jet-ski ride across the lagoon, go on a shopping spree at Noumea's fabulous designer wear **outlets** (p243) and treat yourself to an evening or four of fine wining and dining. Do a day trip to **Amédée islet** (p246), snorkel in its clear waters and sunbathe on its dazzling white beach. Squeeze in a trip to the **Far South** (p250) for a day of kayaking, mountain biking or abseiling. And when all that's done, relax and catch your breath at Anse Vata or baie des Citrons beaches.

Purchase an Air Calédonie pass and choose two destinations. **Maré** (p301), with its great coastal walks and welcoming *gîtes*, is a good choice. Sample the seafood, admire the sea views, look out for whales, lie back on the beaches and peer into the *trous bleues* (deep rock pools). Before you know it, three days have come and gone. Catch a flight back to Noumea and head straight to **Ouvéa** (p313) for a couple of days lazing on its soft beach and a boat trip to its southern islets.

Back in Noumea, visit the spectacular **Tjibaou Cultural Centre** (p234). The next day rise early and catch the ferry to magical **Île des Pins** (p291). Spend four fantastic days sailing in a traditional pirogue, swimming in its exquisite *piscine naturelle*, exploring dark caves and old convict prison ruins, and lazing on the heavenly beaches.

Just one week to go and it's time to head north. Experience life in a traditional **tribu** (p277) at Hienghène and a **Caldoché farm** (p289) at Koné or Pouembout before heading back to Noumea and the end of your trip.

This holiday gives you a taste of New Caledonia's diverse landscapes and island destinations. You will discover superb beaches and magnificent coastal scenery, sample renowned French cuisine and experience a warm Kanak welcome at a rural homestay.



ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

UNDERWATER WORLD

This is another frontier, barely touched by humans. Start in Luganville on Espiritu Santo, dive capital of the world, to get your open-water certificate and start exploring **USS President Coolidge** (p52). You'll never finish, so tear yourself away for a couple of days out at Bokissa Island (p53), where the reefs are sparkling bright and there's an artist's frenzy of fish.

Next stop Port Vila, where **Nautilus Scuba Diving** (p57) has diver accommodation. The wrecks are fascinating. Try Anchor Reef, an anchor-turned-whitetip-shark-nursery, or *Star of Russia*, a romantic sailing ship.

Finally, organise a live-aboard dive boat (try Sailaway Cruises; p57) to sail up to **Tongoa Wall** (p88), a wonderful advanced dive.

Then it's off to New Caledonia, heading straight to **Ouvéa** (p313). Take a boat across the tranquil lagoon to the Pléiades du Sud and dive off these small exquisite islets.

Next head to **Lifou** (p306) for underwater caves and fantastic coral.

Make sure you visit **Île des Pins** (p291), where you will discover abundant marine life including sharks and rays. For a true adventure, explore the secret tunnels of Grotte de la Troisième. In the evening struggle back into your wet suit and head across the dark lagoon for a night dive.

On Grande Terre there are magnificent sites all over the lagoon. Each dive club will reveal its favourite sites. Go to **Hienghène** (p220) to see what the area's fantastic rock formations look like underwater.



There are not many unexplored places left on the planet. But you don't need to set out in a tall ship. Go underwater, where it's untouched and you are alone with nature's most brilliant, colourful displays. It's fantastic to have so many glorious reliefs, fabulous wrecks, mysterious volcanic drop-offs and magic night vistas all in crystal-clear, warm water with visibility often to 40m.

DEVILS' & ANGELS' PLAYGROUNDS

Walk to beautiful Lake Letas on **Gaua** (p166), Vanuatu, and take an out-rigger across to Mt Garek, which will fume and burble sulphurous goo. Return past Siri Falls, for a challenging conclusion.

Fly back to Santo and on to **Ambrym** (p122) Motorboat to Ranvetlam, then trek through jungle and ash plains. Nature is the biggest drawcard of all. Tear yourself away from the Mt Marum and Mt Benbow volcanoes and continue down to Ulei through wild cane forests

Fly to **Paama** (p126) to grab a boat and head out to the perfect cone of Lopevi. Hope she behaves while you trek up past the wilderness she created in 2003. Catch a plane back to Vila and on to Tanna.

Old man Yasur on **Tanna** (p99) really communicates, grounds you – a blast of nature's best fireworks displays, just an easy walk from the car park. Fly out of Vila to New Caledonia.

Stay at Le Méridien, Coral Palms Island Resort, Hotel Kuendu Beach, Ramada Plaza or Nouvata Park Hôtel in **Noumea** (p238). Get pampered at the Ramada Plaza's spa and admire the panoramic views as you lunch at its revolving restaurant. Go shopping at the central-city designer-wear boutiques and have a romantic dinner over the water at **Le Roof** (p242) or **Le 1881** (p242).

Around Noumea, take a **helicopter tour** (p328) over the azure lagoon or jet-ski to some of the **off-shore islets** (p235). Dine at the cosy Auberge du Mont Koghi then pick your way through the forest for a night in a **treetop room** (p247) and wake up with the birds.

Book an island tour and explore Île des Pins' caves and prison ruins, or simply relax in the idyllic settings of **Ouré Lodge** (p296).

Get your hiking boots on and grab your gas mask. Yikes. That's right, you're off to Vanuatu's playground, where the mountains talk, yell, stink, smoke and shoot wild fireworks high in the sky for fun. Then swap the boots for diamond-soled shoes while you enjoy another playground, fit for angels, of azure lagoons and designer boutiques down in New Caledonia.

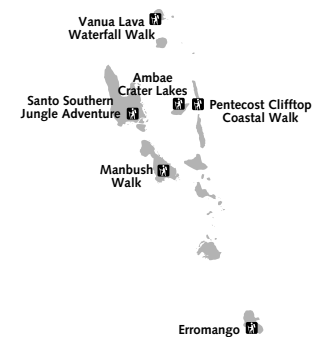


TAILORED TRIPS

FABULOUS WALKS

You can walk your socks off around Vanuatu. Hack through jungle and follow tracks wiped out by pigs and cyclones through rivers, waterfalls and tall forests and along rugged coasts and deep ravines. Add to your experience with guides who have that wicked local sense of humour, warm welcomes at the villages you pass, fun nights drinking kava so you won't feel the hard bed or hear the pre-dawn roosters call, and soaks in hot pools that are there just when you need them. In addition to the following walks, don't forget the volcano trails (opposite).

- **Vanua Lava Waterfall Walk** (one day; p167) Motor boat from Sola to Waterfall Bay for culture and waterfall fun, then walk back through copra plantations and water taro gardens.
- **Manaro Crater Lakes** (one to two days; p148) The track is kept clear so vulcanologists can get to the lakes in a hurry. It's tough but manageable, with those colourful lakes for a thrilling end.
- **Malekula Manbush Walk** (three days; p115) A challenging walk with stunning rewards and a wild boat trip back.
- **Santo Southern Jungle Adventure** (four days; p128) Stay in isolated villages where the Mal-Mal people live.
- **Pentecost clifftop coastal walk** (½ day; p146) There's more to Pentecost than the *naghol*. Try this spectacular cliff-hanging walk around the southern coast.
- **Erromango** (two to three days; p103) Walking the Walk takes you past cannibal sites, through giant kauri forests and along stunning coastal cliffs.





ACTIVE ADVENTURES

Tourists to New Caledonia mainly stay in the capital. With its relaxing beaches, wide range of sights and activities and renowned gastronomy, who can blame them for not venturing further? So if you're searching for untrodden paths, just head out of Noumea where Grande Terre is waiting to be discovered.

Get active: drive to **Dumbéa river** (p248) on the city's northern outskirts for an energetic walk to some rock pools.

Then do the circular tour of the Far South. Walk the **GR1** (p251), pop in to **Chutes de la Madeleine** (p255), and kayak through Parc Pro-

vincial de la Rivière Bleue's **drowned forest** (p255).

Back in Noumea, kayak to **Île aux Canards** (p245) for some snorkelling before heading off around central and northern Grande Terre. Abseil down **Cascade de Ciu** (p269) and continue to Ponérihouen. The Tchamba valley is all yours to explore. Kayak beneath Hienghène's magnificent **rock formations** (p277), stay at a Kanak homestay and walk up to Cascade de Tao. Stay overnight at Col d'Amos then head across to the west coast and Voh for a scenic microlight flight over **Coeur de Voh** (p287), its famous heart. Do the scenic coastal walk in **Bourail** (p265) and a horse trek in tribu de **Oui Poin** (p261).

Back in Noumea once again, buy a ticket to **Maré** (p301). Finish your New Caledonian tour with the wonderful coastal walk to **Shabadran** (p305).

The Authors



JOCELYN HAREWOOD

Coordinating Author, Vanuatu

Back on those bumpy roads exploring more of her favourite places, Jocelyn was fascinated to see the latest changes. When she first came to Vanuatu, in the 1970s, downtown Port Vila was one dusty street with a few equally dusty shops. These days it's a hive of activity, yet some original places are still there and better than ever, like Le Meridien, where she first windsurfed, and L'Houstalet, where she tried to eat flying fox for the first and only time.

Vanuatu means adventure to Jocelyn. Three years ago she honed her skills at yachting, fishing and drinking kava. This time she improved her scuba diving and abseiling, and made sure the local beer still tasted great.

My Favourite Trip

I'd spend several days in Vila (p65), doing things that are too expensive and difficult back home: game fishing, scuba diving, jet-boating. I'd do the Pele tour for a hit of local culture, then head to Mystery Island (p106) to laze on the beaches. The locals are repairing ancient irrigation systems, so I'd poke around there too.

Tanna (p94) is always a must, snorkelling, horse riding, and rumbling with old man Yasur. Then up to Espiritu Santo for dining (p52) and dining (p135).

In the mood, I'd fly to Maewo (p152) to play in Big Water cascades, and on to Torres Islands (p171), to an idyllic tropical setting with walks, snorkelling, canoeing and eating lobsters. If you're out of touch with life, Vanuatu brings back all the connections.



TIONE CHINULA

New Caledonia

Tione was born in Malawi and moved to New Zealand as a teenager. She developed a taste for island life in the mid-'90s when she lived in Tahiti for a year. She now lives in New Caledonia where her hobbies include spending long lazy days at the beach, mountain biking through the vast landscapes of the Far South, camping on remote beaches, hiking in the central mountain ranges and spotting special holiday deals to Vanuatu, another of her favourite Pacific destinations. While researching this book with her husband Vincent, she rediscovered old haunts, explored new ones, and consumed generous helpings of *bougna* (a traditional Kanak meal) and seafood at friendly Kanak homestays.

LOVELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the Internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.



VINCENT TALBOT

New Caledonia

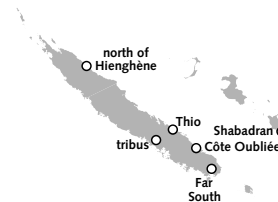
At the age of 15, Vincent left the shores of his native France for the tropical islands of the South Pacific where he has lived ever since. In 1998, after several years of surfing and exploring deserted atolls in French Polynesia, he moved to New Caledonia. He frequently disappears for a few days to explore the country's remote valleys, mountains and coastline with his wife Tione and his little daughter Moorea, or to go kayaking on the vast and beautiful lagoon.

Our Favourite Trip

We love the bush and the solitude of the northeast coast. North of Hienghène (p281) the scenery takes our breath away every time. And of course there is the constant temptation of the beautiful lagoon. At the weekend we'll go camping on a remote beach in Thio (p268) or on tiny desert islands. As for scenic coastal walks, we're spoiled for choice but our favourite is off the beaten track to Shabadran (p305).

When we need a change we go hiking in the Far South (p251) or head inland to mountain *tribus* and go horse trekking (p260).

We've lived here for eight years and there are still places left to discover. Our next adventure is to disappear for four days to kayak the Côte Oubliée (Forgotten Coast; p268).



CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Jean-Bernard Carillet wrote the two Diving chapters. Born with restless feet and fins, his journeys have led him to the best dive destinations in the world, including the lagoons of French Polynesia, the wrecks of the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Caribbean and, lately, New Caledonia and Vanuatu. As a dive instructor and incorrigible traveller, Jean-Bernard has written widely for various French publications, including *Plongeurs International* magazine. He has also coordinated and co-authored two Lonely Planet diving guides: *Tahiti & French Polynesia* and *The Red Sea*.

Dr Michael Sorokin wrote the Health chapter using his extensive experience as a physician and GP in the Pacific islands. He has special interests in rheumatology, infectious diseases and preventative medicine. He was recently awarded the Order of Fiji in recognition of his services to health care in Fiji.

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