

welcome to Vanuatu & New Caledonia



Life in the Tropics

In Vanuatu and New Caledonia you'll find a touch of the exotic in the everyday. Life here is always entertaining, whether you're being surprised by turtles peeking out of the sea, sidestepping crabs at the market, or eyeing up unruly mounds of kava before it gets pounded up at a kava bar. Getting around the islands where these gnarly roots are grown may not be simple, but you're guaranteed a welcoming smile, basic lodgings and an insight into local life if you do visit. Wherever you go, take in the little pleasures that pop up each day, whether it's bright flowers strewn on your bed, fresh coconut milk

ready for drinking, or being in town during a harvest festival.

Take the kids to Vanuatu; the ni-Van children are a lot of fun, and there's always beachside hermit-crab action for entertainment. Letting the young 'uns peer into a live volcano will give a whole new meaning to future geography classes. There's plenty to do for adults, too. Party in Noumea and practise your French. Discover the world's second-biggest reef on a diving trip. Yachties flock to the Pacific, and the ni-Van in particular know how to extend a warm welcome. Sound like too much work? These countries are also ideal for anyone keen on doing nothing but relaxing.



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Tropical weather brings light and life to sandy beaches and azure waters. Throughout the islands, strong communities show off their country's attributes to a soundtrack of drumming and dance.

(left) Hog Harbour (p91), Santo, Vanuatu
(below) Girls with painted faces, Port Vila, Vanuatu



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Pacific Bliss with a French Twist

Noumea is decidedly French, with its food, language and architecture making you wonder exactly which hemisphere you're in. Port Vila crouches around a bay which, on cruise-ship days (and there are plenty of those), is a hive of adrenaline-boosting activity. It doesn't have the la-di-da factor of neighbouring Noumea; instead, it's a down-to-earth collection of dusty, low-rise buildings where carvings and boar tusks jostle for space with bright Mother Hubbard dresses, and fresh raspberries are lined up invitingly at the fruit and vegetable market.

Out of Town, the Islands Await

Finding island paradise is a frangipani-scented breeze in New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Less than half an hour after arriving in Vanuatu you could be chilling in your lagoon-facing room and settling into island life with an icy welcome cocktail. In New Caledonia, even the cheapest island bungalows are charming. Getting around is easy too, with reliable flights, ferries and roads making connections from coast to mountain to atoll simple. Off the main islands, Vanuatu's bungalows are basic affairs, but who needs electric lights when they just dull the stars?