



# Vanuatu

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Rocky Ridge Bungalows (p73)
- » Havannah (p65)
- » Oyster Island Restaurant and Resort(p91)
- » Le Motel Hibiscus (p88)

## Best Places to Eat

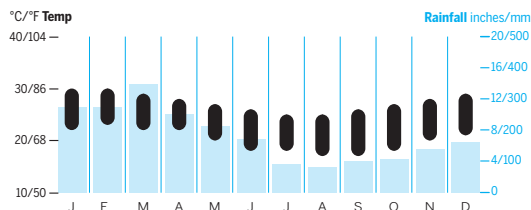
- » Mangoes Restaurant (p62)
- » Deco Stop Restaurant (p90)
- » Jill's Cafe (p62)
- » Kelsorn's Exotic Thai Kitchen (p63)

## Why Go?

Where else can you jump from a tropical fish- and coral-filled blue hole into a 4WD truck to watch an active volcano spit out lava high above you? Contrasts like these make Vanuatu a country well worth taking the time to explore. The ni-Van take life in smiling strides, and as you adjust to their early mornings and dark evenings, you'll wonder why you've ever lived life in a rush. It's all thatched-roof accommodation in the outer islands but glitzy resorts abound on Efate and Santo. These islands also boast great roads, giving you round-island access on Efate and smooth access to stunning beaches and blue holes on Santo. Add to that scented balmy breezes and several best-in-the-world experiences that few people know about: a luxury liner shipwrecked in clear waters, gigantic banyan trees, pounding waterfalls, an ancient living culture with extraordinary ceremonies and picture-perfect beaches.

## When to Go

### Port Vila



**Late Sep–Oct**  
Avoid Australian school holidays and enjoy warm weather without the rain.

**Apr–Jun** Cyclone season is over. Pentecost's land diving is in full swing.

**Nov–Dec**  
Christmas time; accommodation is plentiful.

## Connections

Regular passenger ferries head north weekly from Port Vila and cost two-thirds the price of an airfare. Cargo ships stop at most villages on their route, and are often more comfortable and cheaper than truck travel along rutted roads. Most villages have speedboats, and inter-island travel is possible (for example between Ambae, Maewo and Pentecost). Air Vanuatu flies to 26 airports and Air Safaris and Air Taxi fly charters (see p126).

## ITINERARIES

### One week

Take the morning flight from Port Vila to Tanna. Cross the incredible ash plain by 4WD truck and find your tree-house haven beneath rumbling Mt Yasur. Climb the active volcano before dusk then witness the fireworks. Back at Port Vila, explore the Cascades then head to northern Efate to Pele or Nguna for some rustic island time. Return to Vila and visit one of its three islands for lunch, dinner and snorkelling. Fly north to Santo to explore Million Dollar Point and relax at Oyster Island, taking a day trip to stunning Champagne Beach.

### Two weeks

As above, with more time to enjoy Port Vila's organised activities. Fly to Ambrym to hike its two volcanoes, witness a Rom dance and stock up on local carvings. Between April and June, head to Pentecost and witness the famous land diving. Enjoy the isolation and beauty of the Maskelynes, off Malekula, before heading up north of Norsup to see original cannibal sites.

## Keeping Costs Down

Flexibility is the key to travelling Vanuatu's islands cheaply. Catch passenger ferries and the odd cargo ship and always go with the regular transport (both speedboat and truck) instead of expensive charters. Shop for fresh food at local markets and self-cater in Port Vila and Luganville.

## AT A GLANCE

**Currency** ni-Vanuatu Vatu (VT)

**Language** Bislama, French

**Mobile Phones** Local SIMs can be used in unlocked European and Australian phones.

**Money** Only Luganville and Port Vila have ATMS. Travellers cheques can be cashed on some islands; cash is preferred.

**Visas** 30-day visas are issued at the border for most nationalities. Extensions are available.

## Fast Facts

- » **Capital** Port Vila (Efate)
- » **Country code** 2678
- » **Emergency** ambulance 25566; police 22222
- » **Land area** 12,200 sq km
- » **Population** 234,000

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	93VT
Canada	C\$1	89VT
Europe	€1	112VT
Japan	¥100	116VT
New Zealand	NZ\$1	73VT
UK	UK£1	141VT
USA	US\$1	91VT

For current exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 3500–8000VT
- » **Two-course dinner** 4500VT
- » **Museum entrance** 700VT
- » **Bottle of beer** 500VT
- » **Transport ticket** 150VT