



Vanuatu & New Caledonia



Vanuatu
p46

**New
Caledonia**
p128

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

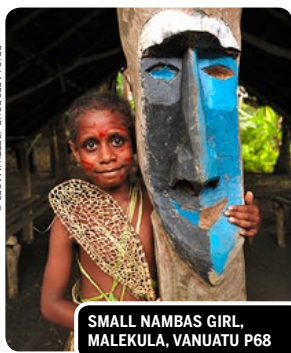
Paul Harding, Craig McLachlan

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Itineraries

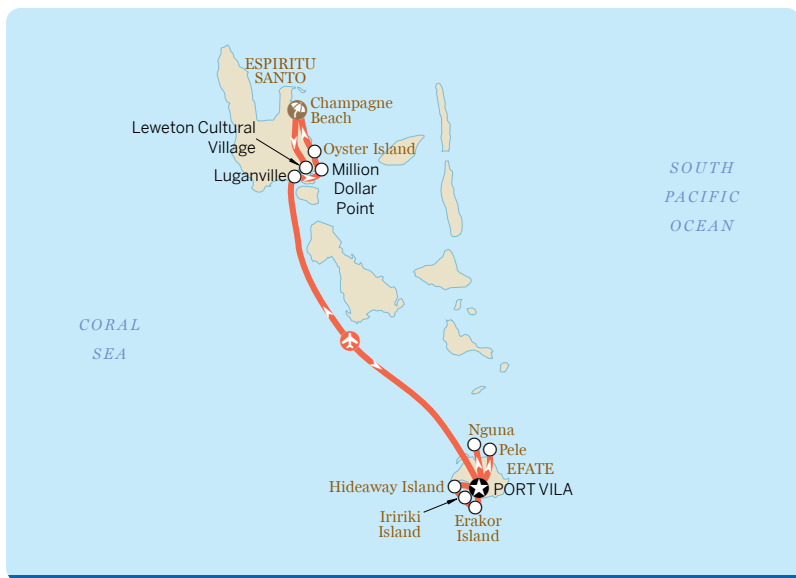


Exploring the Loyalty Islands

You can explore New Caledonia's three very different, isolated and fascinating Loyalty Islands in a week.

Fly from Magenta domestic airport in **Noumea** to **Houloup** airport on Ouvéa. Stay three nights, soaking up the sun on the island's magnificent white-sand beaches. Take an organised day trip that offers snorkelling off an uninhabited island, a barbecue and a peek at the local shark population. Check out the turtles from Ouvéa's only bridge.

Fly to **Wanaham** airport on Lifou and enjoy more island life, spotting turtles in its southeastern bays, visiting stunning beaches and snorkelling at **Baie de Jinek** in its northwest. After staying at the nearby cliff-top spot of **Baie de Jokin**, head down to **Wé** to catch the ferry to **Tadine** on little-explored Maré. Pick up a hire car from Tadine's ferry port and head south to lovely **Yedjele Beach**. Overnight before heading to the island's east and hiking **Shabadran** with a guide. Gaze at spectacular **Le Saut du Guerrier** near **La Roche** before dropping off your hire car and catching a flight back to Noumea.



5
DAYS

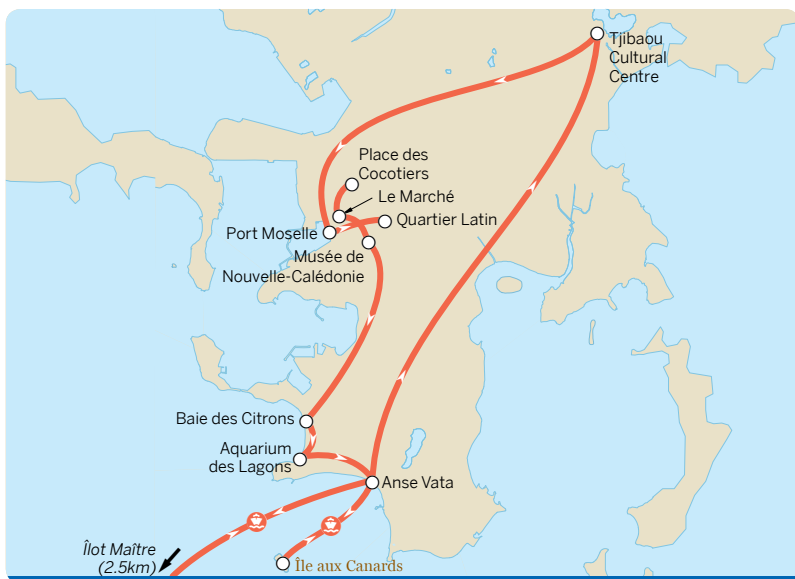
Vanuatu's Beaches & Islands

If you like gorgeous beaches, playing both in and on the water, and small islands, give yourself five days for the following itinerary.

Start exploring Vanuatu's watery delights with a visit to all three of the almost football-field-sized islands off **Port Vila**. On day one, don a snorkel and fins and send a postcard from the underwater mailbox at **Hideaway Island**. Spend day two enjoying lunch on **Erakor Island**, followed by a paddle in its calm shallow waters. Then, as the sun goes down, hop on the regular ferry to **Iririki Island** for dinner. Each island has its own resort but you don't need to stay at them to visit. If manicured-resort fatigue kicks in, travel north by public transport or hire car and take the short boat trip to the islands of **Nguna** or **Pele**. Experience hospitality ni-Van style while staying in a rustic bungalow by the beach.

Head back to Port Vila to catch a plane north to **Luganville**, the capital of Santo. Get straight into the action by exploring the underwater WWII dumping ground of **Million Dollar Point** and dive the wreck of the luxury liner *USS President Coolidge*. Once the diving's done, make your way north to recover on comfortable and fun **Oyster Island**. For a change from beaches, borrow one of the resort's kayaks and paddle your way to its nearby blue hole. You won't be able to resist diving into the luminous bright-blue water once you get there.

Return the kayak and venture further north by road to **Champagne Beach**, which is one of Vanuatu's most impressive strands. Its cuticle shape holds whiter-than-white sand and clear turquoise waters. It's a cruise-ship favourite but, if you're lucky, you'll have it all to yourself. Before you bother to get all the sand out from between your toes, you might be tempted by yet more blue holes along the road back south. To finish off the watery Vanuatu experience stop at **Leweton Cultural Village** in time to see women and children from the northern island of Gaua perform water music. The soothing sounds and images will stick with you as you board your flight from Luganville back to Port Vila.



Noumea

This itinerary will suit those with a day to explore Noumea, whether coming in on a cruise ship or staying in the city.

If you arrive by cruise ship you're in luck: the terminal is right in the middle of Noumea waterfront. It's just a short stroll into the city. Start your day with a bit of shopping and people-watching around **Place des Cocotiers**. Drop off your purchases and walk south to the multi-hexagonal municipal city market, **Le Marché**. Stand and drink your coffee like a local; buy fresh fruit; then walk up Rue Eugène Porcheron for some of the best pastries in the country. **Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie** is nearby; spend an hour here exploring Kanak culture and Melanesian artefacts.

Hop on the local bus to **Baie des Citrons** and settle onto your patch of sandy beach (there are grassed bits, too). Have a swim and chill out on the floating pontoons, just as the locals do. There are plenty of restaurants, cafes and bars just over the road if you feel like refreshments. Also nearby is the impressive **Aquarium des Lagons**. Spend at least an hour here, admiring the sharks and lagoon-dwelling sea life. Continue with a stroll to **Anse Vata**, a beachside hive of shopping and eating. Adventurous types can depart here for some kitesurfing on the windy but pretty **Îlot Maître** (book ahead), or you can just take the taxiboat out to **Île aux Canards**, the cute little island offshore. The snorkelling is great.

Then it's time to make your way (phone for a taxi) to the architecturally amazing **Tjibaou Cultural Centre**. The walk around it, complete with informative plaques, is impressive, as are the exhibitions inside. Call for another taxi or wait for the local bus to take you back to the city centre. Watch the yachting life while unwinding with an aperitif at a waterfront bar at **Port Moselle**, before ending your day with a wander through the historic and character-filled **Quartier Latin** (Latin Quarter). There are plenty of eating and drinking options here to finish off your day.

2
WEEKS

Grande Terre & Île des Pins

A good itinerary for those who want to see what New Caledonia really has to offer. Tack on another week to head out to the Loyalty Islands and you'll have pretty much covered the country.

Spend a few days in **Noumea**, swimming at the beaches of Anse Vata and Baie des Citrons and practising your French. Loll around the hotel pool, but take time for the gorgeous Aquarium des Lagons and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre.

On day four, get up early and catch a ferry to Île des Pins. On arrival at the wharf in **Baie de Kuto**, pick up your waiting rental car and stop at all the sights en route to **La Piscine Naturelle**. Stay the night on the island, explore some more, then return the car and jump back on the ferry to **Noumea**. Dance like there's no tomorrow at an over-water nightclub. Recover, then hire another car and head north along the west coast for a week of cultural exploration. The roads are excellent, so no worries there.

Take a day out and head inland near **La Foa** for a walk at **Le Parc des Grandes Fougères** (Park of the Great Ferns) and stay in the bush at Refuge de Farino. Return to the west coast road and head north again. Wander along the beach at **La Roche Percée**, near Bourail, and check out the intriguing rock formations.

Further north, at Koné, make sure to take a microlight flight to see the **Heart of Voh** and the 'blue hole' in the lagoon before heading up to the Far North for a magical time at **Relais de Poingam**, right at the tip of Grande Terre. Next, head across and down the northeast coast, exploring historical hotspots near **Balade**, buying up Kanak carvings and fresh fruit from roadside stalls, and taking the **Ouaième River car ferry** on your way to **Hienghène**. After exploring **Poindimié**, cross back to the west on the RPN2 and retrace your path back down the west coast to Noumea.

Still time? Duck down to the Grande Terre's Far South and explore **Parc Provincial de la Rivière Bleue**, on foot or by canoe.



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DAYS

Volcanic Vanuatu

This is the way to go if you are into volcanic landscapes. We're talking active volcanoes, ash plains, lava explosions, crater lakes and sulphur galore.

Take the early morning flight from **Port Vila** straight to Whitegrass airport on the island of **Tanna**. Choose your accommodation from the resort or bungalows nearby and hang out in the blue pools filled with coral and fish. Join a tour to a *kastom* (traditional) village to see how Tanna's tribes have been living for centuries; if you're lucky you'll get a peek at some black magic – it's particularly strong on this island.

Rest up and prepare to cross a vast ash plain by 4WD truck in the late afternoon. Stop and take photos of this moon-like surface, with **Mt Yasur** rising in the background. The 4WD drops you a few minutes' walk from this active volcano's lip. Settle into your viewing position, and when dusk approaches witness the fireworks as lava and smoke spit out. Stay in a tree house beneath the volcano – you'll hear the rumbles and lava explosions all night. Climb back up in the morning if you want to get another sulphur fix before crossing the island again and flying back to **Port Vila**.

From Port Vila, fly to **Craig Cove** on the island of Ambrym. The island has several routes to **Mt Benbow** and **Mt Marum** volcanoes; each community has its own paths and guides to help get you there, and each involves a different degree of difficulty. Reaching the volcanoes requires a four- to eight-hour walk and incorporates an overnight stay camping by the rim (only if it's safe to do so – check the warnings first).

Finally, fly from Craig Cove to **Longana** on the island of Ambae. Once there, head up to **Ambanga** (a two-hour 4WD journey) and in the morning set off to visit Ambae's three crater lakes with a guide. The lakes are accessible on foot, though it's fairly dense forest you'll be making your way through. Take camping gear and overnight by one of the lakes before returning to Longana for your flight back to **Port Vila**.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Paul Harding

As a writer and photographer Paul has been travelling around Asia, Australia and parts of the Pacific for nearly two decades, examining beaches and islands along the way. Vanuatu stands out though for its remote islands, pristine waters, friendly faces and ancient traditional culture. On this trip Paul climbed a volcano, drank too much kava and braved rough seas in very small boats. He has contributed to some 50 Lonely Planet guides.



Craig McLachlan

An island enthusiast from way back, Craig has covered such varying spots as the Greek Islands, Okinawa, Tonga, New Caledonia and Oahu for Lonely Planet. A Kiwi with a passion for exploring, he loves New Caledonia, in particular the Loyalty Islands and Île des Pins. A 'freelance anything', Craig has an MBA from the University of Hawai'i and is also a pilot, karate instructor, tour leader, hiking guide, Japanese interpreter and budding novelist. See www.craigmclachlan.com.

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