

# Welcome to Vanuatu & New Caledonia

*Tropical weather, sandy beaches and turquoise waters await you. Locals welcome visitors, with dazzling grins and a chance to peek into their unique Melanesian cultures.*

## 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 they get pounded up at a kava bar. 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.

## Something for Everyone

Take the kids to Vanuatu; the ni-Van children are a lot of fun, and there's always beachside hermit-crab action for entertainment. Peering 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 one of the world's largest reefs 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.

## A French Twist

Noumea, especially around Baie des Citrons and Anse Vata, is decidedly French. Its food, language and architecture may make 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.

## Offshore 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 glow of the stars?



## Why I Love Vanuatu & New Caledonia

By Craig McLachlan, Writer

I love colour, especially those hues of aquamarine that dominate the lagoons and seas around Vanuatu and New Caledonia. And it gets better. Those waters are full of a kaleidoscope of technicolour tropical fish that are quite happy to eyeball me through my mask as I snorkel around their paradise. Out of the water, the skies are a stunning blue, rainforests a brilliant green, sandy beaches white or black, and my cocktail can be virtually any colour I choose.

**For more about our authors, see page 224**

Above: *Pirogue* (outrigger canoe) approaching New Caledonia's Île des Pins (p163)