

# FMC Travel Club

*small group tramping and travel overseas*

A subsidiary of Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (Inc.)

Club Convenor : John Dobbs

Travel Smart Napier

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## \*\*\* Vanuatu \*\*\*

21<sup>st</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 22 days

**\$4500### ex. Auckland Leader : John Dobbs**

### any payments by visa or mastercard adds \$100 per person to the final price

Vanuatu is a Y shaped chain of 83 islands, spread between the equator and the tropic of Capricorn, with the Solomons the nearest neighbor. Most islands are the summits of mountain ranges, dissected by gullies and covered with lush jungle. Sitting on the Pacific Ring of Fire results in frequent earthquakes and has produced nine active volcanoes. The friendly ni-Vanuatu people have a close affinity to the land which is agriculturally very productive, while village life and culture is very strong. Independent now, past English and French colonialism has left its mark. English, French and Bislama, a form of pidgin, are spoken. This is a laid back country of considerable variety and natural beauty where the landscape offers wonderful tramping and other adventure choices, and the surrounding seas some of the world's finest snorkeling and diving. Our itinerary covers five main islands in this exploratory trip. Bring an adventurous spirit!

### PRICE INCLUDES :

- Air Vanuatu international flights Auckland to Vila return, including flight and departure taxes
- Air Vanuatu domestic flights (8), including flight and departure taxes
- All accommodation (twin room basis in variety of styles – lodges, thatch bungalows, resorts, etc)
- All ground transport supporting the core trip (vans, 4 WD's etc)
- Tramping and sightseeing programme on 5 islands – Efate, Pentecost, Tanna, Santo and Malekula
- Most meals as indicated by B.L.D.
- Local guides, entry fees, cultural events and performances

### PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE :

- Personal spending outside the itinerary, e.g. internet, alcoholic beverages, optional commercial tours, phone calls, souvenirs, private gifts or tips
- Travel insurance

- **Travel connections to/from Auckland**

## **Trip Leader :**

John is the Travel Club Convenor and a regular trumper with the Napier Tramping Club. He has operated the Travel Club since 2002 and has built up experience at organizing and also leading trips. Destinal trips he has led include Fiji, Hawaii, Turkey, Madagascar (2), Alaska/Yukon (3) and Tasmania (3). His enthusiasm, care and attention to details will maximize your enjoyment. John welcomes your interest and can be contacted at any time.

## **Trip Organisation :**

The **tramping and walking programme** is a core feature spread across the islands. These will vary from short walks up to full day tramps where your day pack with picnic will be carried. At least one overnight tramp will also be arranged. These encourage a richer insight into the destination of Vanuatu, and at all times will be led by local people. The concept of collective ownership particularly away from the capital, means that you are always on someone's property – perhaps even that of an entire village. This includes beaches, although accommodations on beaches permit swimming and snorkeling by their guests, normally without permission. To smooth the way, meet protocols and gain permission, it is essential for a ni-Vanuatu person to accompany us on the walks/tramps and local tours. It would be easy to get lost without them anyway, as tracks are not always clear and signposting non-existent. It also means that local payments in cash happen a lot, visiting a village, natural feature etc. Visiting Yasur Volcano on Tanna, for example, includes a fixed cash payment to the local 'guardians'. Such expenses are built into the trip cost to make this easier. Tramps are not 'compulsory' and we are trying to be flexible, so if you want to opt out sometimes, this should be easily accommodated!

**Transport** is based around minivans and 4WD's mostly. Even in the main island of Efate, not all of the ring road is fully sealed. Dirt roads quickly become the norm away from main population centres and at times of high rainfall, become adventurous to say the least. Expect some rough rides that may sometimes be on the back of utes. Fuel is quite expensive, so the cost of getting around is considerable. In Vila and also Luganville, good shuttle bus and taxi services abound.

**Accommodation** in Vila and Luganville will be small, cheaper resort style or 'flashpacker' in comparison. Elsewhere expect different styles – such as the rustic but lovely thatch huts on a dark sand beach we use on Tanna. Wherever possible, a twin share arrangement with bathroom will be provided. Away from Vila and Luganville, electricity supplies may only be available for a few hours at night by way of a diesel generator. A final list of accommodations will be provided later on.

### **General Pointers :**

**Ni-Van's** are polite and honest people and will be pleased that you have come a long way to visit their country. Gear and items are safe within rooms, but you should not leave valuables unattended while out and about. There is a shyness and reserve displayed by villagers, but your smile and greeting will immediately elicit a friendly and genuine response. Ni-Van's really love and value their children, and children will be animated and very curious of you – any shyness will disappear quickly. It is good to have some small items that would be appropriate to give children, such as postcards from home, pens, pencils, notebooks etc. Parents will be very grateful as schooling costs are a great burden for most.

**Gear List.** A gear list will be supplied later on. Ideal luggage would be a full pack plus a day pack. It will not be necessary to supply tents or sleeping bags.

**Food / water / beverage.** One of the delights of Vanuatu is the food. In Vila, restaurants of every standard and food type are available. Definite highlights are organic Santo beef, Tanna coffee, the range of ocean fresh fish, and the organic tropical fruits and vegetables. Rice is frequently eaten. The colonial influences, particularly of the French, can be seen in the breads and pastries available. Small local supermarkets carry local and imported foods. Specialist dietary requirements can be facilitated with care and prior knowledge.

Outer islands have restricted menus, usually a set meal for that day. Since there is no electricity, you are happy to realize the chicken dinner was clucking that very morning.

Markets sell food grown in village gardens : coconuts, pawpaw, bananas, yams, grapefruit, tomatoes, as well as cooked foods such as the national dish *laplap*. Manioc, taro roots or yams are grated into a doughy paste. The mixture is put onto taro or wild spinach leaves and soaked in coconut cream. Pieces of pork, beef, poultry, fish, prawns or flying fox are often added.

Fresh coconut juice is a refreshing drink. Vanuatu's locally produced beer, Tusker, is a fine brew and widely available. Imported wines and spirits are costly.

Tap water is safe to drink in Vila. Elsewhere, our hosts will advise if the supply is pure water from a spring. If not, drink bottled water or consider taking purification tablets. The tropical temperatures and exertion of walking and tramping in such an environment means drinking plenty of water to ward off dehydration, heat exhaustion, etc.

Kava culture. Kava has a pungent, muddy and slightly peppery taste and it looks likely dirty dishwater. Traditionally kava ceremonies are an important part of Vanuatu culture and normally for men only, although this is becoming more relaxed. Kava ceremonies welcome visitors, seal alliances, begin chiefly conferences, commemorate births, deaths and marriages, boy's initiation rites, etc. Vanuatu kava is rated the strongest among the nations of Melanesia. Expect to partake of kava on a number of occasions on this trip.

**Some concerns** include the very slight possibility of malaria on outer islands, heatstroke and heat exhaustion, sunburn, coral cuts and travelers diarrhea. Sensible eating and drinking habits, keeping clean hands, staying hydrated and discussing the trip with your trusted medical professional who may prescribe several inoculations - these will all ensure your best chance of maintaining good health.

**A newsletter** closer to departure will have fuller details not able to be included here, a gear list, accommodations list and so on.

## The Islands :

### EFATE.

The capital Port Vila and most government offices are here, as well as the international airport and main shipping port. A small city on hills embracing a lovely harbor plus several lagoons, duty free shopping and markets abound. Vila bustles into action whenever a cruise ship docks, but otherwise is a beguiling and quiet town. It is also Vanuatu's principal tourist destination so it has the bulk of the excellent restaurants, accommodations, museums and more. Beyond Vila, the main ring road around Efate links many small villages and side roads to the resorts not otherwise found in and around Vila. Savannah Harbour in the north has some lovely beaches, jewel like islands and great snorkeling. Efate also has many adventure activities available, from snorkeling to abseiling, jungles peaks to explore on foot or various motorized options, plus various cultural activities.

The convenience of Vila makes it the natural hub of any trip, and we move in and out as we take in the neighbour islands.

## **PENTECOST.**

Long and thin, Pentecost has had little involvement with western visitors, except during the approximate 6 weeks of the *naghol*, the most remarkable custom in all of Melanesia. On selected Saturday's in April and May, near naked men make spectacular leaps of courage from spindly 35m high towers of branches and saplings, attached only by the ankles with vines; as a gift to the gods, to ensure a bountiful yam harvest. The witnessing of this remarkable event is our prime reason to visit Pentecost. The *naghol* is more evident in the south of Pentecost where we will stay. There are numerous *kastom* villages here, some gold sand beaches and one of the world's most stunning coastal walks – cliff hanging paths through rainforest with vivid blue and white bays sparkling through the vines.

## **TANNA.**

“Tanna means ‘earth’. Glorious rich, soft volcanic earth, producing seriously organic meat and vegetables; lush undisturbed rainforests, heady night-perfumed flowers; coffee plantations; plains where wild horses gallop; mighty mountains, a giant banyan - the world's largest living organism; hot springs; waterfalls; and presiding over it all, fuming, furious Mt Yasur, the world's most accessible active volcano. The surrounding seas offer surf, coral reefs for snorkelling, deep blue swimming holes and more. Christianity, cargo cult (where believers act like Europeans so that wealth ‘cargo’ will come their way) and *kastom* (the rules surrounding ancient ancestral legacies and customs) are important and all natural phenomena have a fourth dimension of spirituality and mystique.”

Compiled from the Lonely Planet 5<sup>th</sup> ed. July 2006

## **SANTO. (full name Espiritu Santo)**

Substantially larger than any other island, Santo also holds the country's 4 highest peaks (all over 1700m) and Luganville, the 2<sup>nd</sup> urban centre and home to the northern government and airport hub. The island is known as the capital of adventure – diving and snorkeling here are world class, the beaches sublime (east coast); Vatthe and Loru Conservation Areas – Vanuatu's closest things to national parks; many *kastom* villages; terrific tramping through rainforest to gardens, waterfalls, rivers and the massive Millenium Cave. It is here that the very fine Santo Beef originates, that along with Tanna Coffee, have become icon products of Vanuatu. Santo draws many travelers and facilities are excellent. Santo also played an important role in WW11 that few people are aware of. Japan's relentless southward drive in 1942 meant that the Allies needed a forward base and for three years to 1945, more than half a million military personnel were stationed in southeast Santo, and at times there were as many as 100 ships moored off Luganville. The Americans dumped everything after the war and it is some of those sunken ships that have become modern diving meccas.

## **MALEKULA.**

Our fifth island is different again. Shaped like a sitting dog, Malekula has two highland areas that are extremely rugged and inhospitable. It is more linguistically and culturally diverse than any other island with 28 languages spoken, and it's a favourite stamping ground for anthropologists. The Big Nambas and Small Nambas cultural groups and *kastom* dances are fascinating. We will operate mainly in the north of the island where the population and facilities are more concentrated. We can do a half day trip into the Big Nambas cannibal site deep in the forest and a two day tramp across the rugged ‘dogs head’. This trek has been documented by the Australian Heritage Foundation as it combines natural and cultural treasures with magnificent scenery, caves, waterfalls and *kastom* villages.

## Itinerary :

### **Day 1. Wed 21 Apr Port Vila**

Evening flight up to Vila, transfer to our accommodation in downtown Vila.

### **Day 2. Thu 22 Apr Port Vila**

Morning orientation, an afternoon local tour and a feast and fun night! All meals today.

### **Day 3. Fri 23 Apr Port Vila**

Another local tour in the morning, with free time for suggested snorkeling on nearby Hideaway Island in the afternoon. Lunch and dinner your cost today.

### **Day 4. Sat 24 Apr Pentecost Is.**

Morning flight to Pentecost Is. We stay in the south of the island and witness the amazing naghoh festival, plus include some wonderful tramping in the southwest. All meals on Pentecost are included.

### **Day 5. Sun 25 Apr Port Vila**

Continue our programme, then an afternoon flight back to Vila. **B. L.** Dinner is your cost tonight

### **Day 6. Mon 26 Apr Tanna Is.**

The programme on Tanna will include day tramps, a visit to Yasur Volcano, Port Resolution, cultural performances and village visits with kava ceremony. All meals on Tanna are included.

### **Day 7. Tue 27 Apr and Day 8. Wed 28 Apr Tanna Is.**

Continuing our programme on Tanna Island.

### **Day 9. Thu 29 Apr Santo Is.**

Late morning flight back to Vila and a 4hr transit awaiting the next flight on to Santo. Transfer to accommodation. **B. D.** Lunch at Vila airport is your cost today.

### **Day 10. Fri 30 Apr Santo Is.**

Our base will be in Luganville where we have access to all services. We have the longest block of time on Santo because there is so much to do! The order of activities, tramps etc will be determined later on. Examples are : Vatthe Conservation Area (2276ha of lowland alluvial rainforest with great walks and birdlife); Loru Rainforest Protected Area (beautiful rainforest walks, birdlife and a bat cave; rainforest tramp to Millenium Cave; day trip to Port Orly village. There are also three multi-day trips I will assess and discuss further. These range right up to a 5 day grand trek through dense rainforest, gardens, rivers, waterfalls, caves. Quite basic, with little huts as the accommodation, these may prove beyond the scope and comfort level of the group.

Santo also has many *kastom* villages and brilliant beaches, snorkeling and also diving possibilities.

### **Day 11. Sat 01 May to Day 15. Wed 05 May Santo Is.**

Continuing our programme of activities on Santo. All meals on Santo will be included.

### **Day 16. Thu 06 May to Day 18. Sat 08 May. Malekula Is.**

Based in the north of the island where the population and services are concentrated. We have a range of marvelous tramping and cultural activities available. There are several half day tramps of note along with a two day trip with 'everything'. All meals on Malekula will be included.

#### **Day 19. Sun 09 May Port Vila**

This morning we fly back to Vila via a 5.5hr compulsory transit in Luganville Airport, where we should be able to leave the airport and spend some time back in downtown Luganville. Arriving back into Vila late afternoon with the rest of the day at leisure. **B.** Lunch and dinner is your own cost today.

#### **Day 20. Mon 10 May Port Vila**

Would you like another day tramp? Several options available, or we will schedule another tour. **B.** Lunch and dinner is your own cost today.

#### **Day 21. Tue 11 May Port Vila**

Final sightseeing and shopping opportunities. Trip celebration dinner together. **B. D.** Lunch is your cost.

#### **Day 22. Wed 12 May**

The morning is free time until we transfer back to Vila Airport for the final time. Mid afternoon schedule departure & evening arrival into Auckland where the trip concludes. **B.**

## **Booking Conditions : FMC Travel Club & Travel Smart Napier**

1. FMC Travel Club (FMC) offers this small group trip in conjunction with Travel Smart Napier (TSN). All travel arrangements are made through TSN. Participants must agree to all terms & conditions by signing the Registration Form.
2. FMC & TSN are not responsible or liable for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may arise from weather, vehicle vessel or aircraft defect; or through the acts or default of any person or company engaged in conveying passengers or in carrying out any trip arrangements.
3. Registrations will be accepted in good faith on a first comers basis on receipt of the signed Registration Form & deposit of \$500 per person. This is due by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. A progress payment of \$2000 is due by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The balance will be due by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.  
Invoices advise of payments required. Payments may be made by cash, cheque, EFTPOS, visa or mastercard, or direct credit to the office of TSN Napier. No other method or place of payment is accepted. Cheques must be payable to Travel Smart NAPIER.  
ANY PAYMENTS BY VISA OR MASTERCARD WILL INCREASE THE FINAL TRIP PRICE BY \$100 PER PERSON.
4. FMC & TSN reserve the right to cancel the trip if minimum numbers required do not eventuate. If we cancel, you are fully refunded. If you need to cancel for any reason, then you must advise TSN in writing as soon as possible. An email is accepted. Per person cancellation fees apply as follows :  
Cancellations up to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009 will incur a fee of \$250  
Cancellations from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010 will incur a fee of \$1000  
Cancellations from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 will incur a fee of 100% of trip costs
5. TRAVEL INSURANCE IS MANDATORY. A brochure/application for QBE Travel Insurance is available by email or post. FMC participants receive a discounted premium. Alternative policies are acceptable provided they cover all activities of this trip. A copy of any alternative policy must be provided. TRAVEL INSURANCE SHOULD BE ARRANGED WHEN REGISTERING TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE PROTECTION AGAINST CANCELLATION FEES. Please note that travel insurance covers you for unforeseen circumstances, but not if you change your mind after initially committing.

6. The price is shown in NZD. Events beyond our control such as adverse currency fluctuations & 'on ground' arrangements may result in a variation to the final price, so an allowance should be made. Until such time as the trip price is paid in full, the final price cannot be guaranteed. The price includes a payment to FMC.
7. Please include a scan or photocopy of your passport(s) when completing registration. New Zealand passport holders do not need a visa to enter Vanuatu.

## Registration Form :

Secure your place on **Vanuatu 2010** by completing this registration form & send to John Dobbs by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. Include deposit of \$500, scan/photocopy of passport & signed travel insurance application. A reminder that a payment by visa or mastercard will add \$100 per person to the final trip price.

Full name(s) as per passport(s) & underline preferred first name.....

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Mailing address.....

Day ph.....Night ph.....Mob.....

Dietary requirements, allergies, medical conditions?.....

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Are you affiliated to FMC through a tramping club? Which club?

Or are you a private member of FMC?      Yes/No

If neither, we encourage you to join FMC as a private or club member. See [www.fmc.org.nz](http://www.fmc.org.nz)  
(direct or affiliated membership of FMC is not a pre-requisite of joining this trip, however)

Please evaluate you recent tramping experience & your tramping ability. Is there anything extra we need to know? Continue overleaf as necessary.

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Contact person in NZ for emergencies (name, address, relationship to you, email, phone etc)

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I / We have read the full trip dossier & I / We accept all booking conditions of this trip. I / We enclose My / Our registration payment of \$500 per person. I / We agree to pay remaining trip costs when due, as advised by invoice. I / We accept that the final trip price cannot be guaranteed until full payment has been made.

.....signed & dated by each person registering