

VANUATU FACTS FOR TRAVELERS

Geography:

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands, of which two — Matthew and Hunter — are also claimed by the French overseas department of New Caledonia. Of all the 83 islands, 14 have surface areas of more than 100 square kilometres. Most islands are mountainous, of volcanic origin, and have a tropical or sub-tropical climate. The nation's largest towns are the capital, Port Vila, which is situated on Efate, and Luganville, on Espiritu Santo. The highest point in Vanuatu is Mount Tabwemasana, at 1879 m (6158 ft), on the island of Espiritu Santo. There are several active volcanoes in Vanuatu, including Mt. Yasur on Tanna. The largest Volcanic Lake in the South Pacific is on Gaua Island in the Banks Islands north of Vanuatu.

Population:

Approximately 300,000

Source: 2020 (Vanuatu National Population & Housing Census Report)

Youth Population: Vanuatu has a relatively young population, with a significant proportion under the age of 25. This youthful demographic presents opportunities and challenges for the country, including the need to provide education, employment, and healthcare services to support their development and well-being.

Religion:

The main denominations in Vanuatu are Presbyterian, Anglican Catholic (Sunday) and Seventh Day Adventists (Saturday). Visitors are welcome to attend church services, which usually run between 2.5 and 3.5 hours. Sundays are generally a day of rest, and visitors will find many activities, services and shops unavailable.

Father Watler Lini:

Known as the “Father of Independence”, Walter Lini was a prominent Ni-Vanuatu politician and the first Prime Minister of Vanuatu following its independence in 1980. He played a crucial role in the country's struggle for independence from colonial rule and is widely respected for his leadership and commitment to social justice.

Diverse Culture:

Vanuatu has over 80 islands with unique cultures, languages, and traditions. Visitors can experience a rich tapestry of customs and ceremonies across the archipelago.

Languages:

Vanuatu is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world per capita, with over 130 indigenous languages spoken. Bislama, an English-based Creole language, serves as a lingua franca among the diverse population.

Active Volcanoes:

Vanuatu is renowned for its impressive and sometimes volatile volcanic activity. Mt. Yasur on Tanna Island is one of the world's most accessible active volcanoes, allowing visitors to witness spectacular eruptions.

Stunning Scuba Diving:

The crystal-clear waters surrounding Vanuatu boast some of the best scuba diving spots in the world. From vibrant coral reefs teeming with marine life to historic shipwrecks, divers can explore a diverse underwater paradise.

Land Diving Tradition::

The origins of modern bungee jumping can be traced back to Vanuatu's land diving ritual, known as “Nagol” or “Pentecost Island Jump.” During the annual ceremony, local men leap from tall wooden towers with only vines tied to their ankles, symbolising the harvest season and proving their bravery.

Kava:

Vanuatu is a fascinating, diverse and mysterious Melanesian archipelago about culture and their use of Kava. With 80 of the 118 species of kava growing in Vanuatu, kava use is a way of life in historical and contemporary ceremonies. Kava is also a cash crop that brings income to farmers. The plant's roots produce a drink with sedative, anaesthetic, and euphoria properties and are drunk by a shell at kava bars or ‘Nakamals’ as they are called in Vanuatu. Ask guest relations where you can try kava.

World Heritage Sites:

Vanuatu is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Chief Roi Mata's Domain on Efate Island preserves ancient archaeological sites and cultural landscapes, while the Cultural Landscape of North Ambrym showcases traditional practices and beliefs.

Cuisine:

Vanuatu's culinary scene is a delicious fusion of traditional Melanesian flavours and international influences. Visitors can savor fresh seafood, tropical fruits, and unique dishes like lap lap (a traditional root vegetable dish) at local markets and restaurants.

Warm Hospitality:

One of the most memorable aspects of visiting Vanuatu is its warm and welcoming hospitality. Whether exploring remote villages or relaxing at a beachside resort, you'll be greeted with smiles and genuine hospitality wherever you go.

Natural Blue Holes:

Vanuatu is home to stunning natural blue holes and crystal-clear pools of water formed by collapsed limestone caves. These brilliant blue holes can be found all over Vanuatu, although the best ones are located on Espiritu Santo, the largest of Vanuatu's 83 islands. These enchanting pools offer a refreshing oasis for swimming, snorkelling, and diving amidst the lush tropical surroundings.

Colours of the Flag:

The colours of the flag have symbolic significance:

- Red represents the blood of wild boars and men, symbolising the sacrifices of the nation's struggle for freedom and unity.
- Green symbolises the richness of the islands' natural resources and the agricultural fertility of the land.
- Black represents the Melanesian people and the country's Melanesian identity.
- Yellow symbolises peace and prosperity.

VANUATU FACTS FOR TRAVELERS

The Importance of Kastom :

In Vanuatu, “Kastom” (also spelt as “custom”) refers to the traditional customs, practices, beliefs, and social institutions of the indigenous Melanesian peoples of the archipelago. Kastom encompasses various cultural elements, including rituals, ceremonies, dances, music, oral traditions, language, and customary laws.

Kastom is deeply rooted in the history and identity of the Ni-Vanuatu people, shaping their worldview, social relationships, and interactions with the environment. It serves as a framework for understanding the world, maintaining social order, resolving disputes, and passing knowledge down from generation to generation. Kastom is not static but dynamic, evolving while remaining grounded in tradition. It reflects the resilience of Ni-Vanuatu communities in the face of external influences such as colonialism, globalisation, and modernisation.

In contemporary Vanuatu, kastom plays a vital role in everyday life, with many communities integrating traditional practices into various aspects of modern society. It serves as a source of cultural pride and identity, fostering a sense of belonging and connection among the people of Vanuatu.

Birdwatching:

Vanuatu is a haven for birdwatchers, with over 130 bird species recorded in the archipelago. These include various species of parrots, kingfishers, doves, and honeyeaters. Notable birds found in Vanuatu include the Vanuatu megapode, the Vanuatu imperial pigeon, and the Vanuatu kingfisher.

Sport:

- 1. Football (Soccer):** Football is one of the most popular sports in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu national football team, nicknamed the “Vanuatu National Football Tribe,” represents the country in international competitions. The team has participated in regional tournaments such as the OFC Nations Cup and the Pacific Games.
- 2. Cricket:** Cricket is gaining popularity in Vanuatu, with efforts to develop the sport across the islands. The Vanuatu national cricket team competes in regional competitions such as the East Asia-Pacific (EAP) Cricket Trophy and the ICC World Cricket League.
- 3. Beach Volleyball:** Beach volleyball is popular in Vanuatu due to its stunning coastal locations and favourable climate. Vanuatu has produced talented beach volleyball players who have competed in international tournaments, including the Olympic Games and the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour.

Traditional Sports:

In addition to modern sports, Vanuatu still practices traditional sports and games in some communities. These include land diving, coconut tree climbing, and traditional canoe racing.



—THE MOMENT YOU—

ANSWER.

THE CALL OF

Vanuatu

