

OCEANIA · ISLANDS · DIVING · BEACHES · ADVENTURE · CULTURE



Vanuatu

Vanuatu's 80-odd islands deliver rare natural drama: walk to the rim of Mount Yasur on Tanna to watch lava bursts at dusk, dive the vast wreck of the SS President Coolidge off Santo, swim at Champagne Beach and, in season, watch Pentecost's land divers leap from wooden towers. Kastom villages and kava bars keep island culture strong.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Vanuatu and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 March 2026.

 CAPITAL Port Vila	 CURRENCY Vanuatu vatu (VUV) £1 ≈ VUV 160	 LANGUAGE Bislama, English French	 BEST TIME May–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £60–£260 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type I 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 27h via Singapore and Brisbane/Sydney, or Nadi ~£1,400–£2,400 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+11 standard time

Vanuatu is a Y-shaped chain of 83 islands stretching some 1,300 km from north to south. Most trips start on Efate, where Port Vila has the main international airport, the best restaurants, and waterfalls and lagoons along the island's ring road. From there, short domestic flights reach Tanna for Mount Yasur and kastom villages, and Espiritu Santo for blue holes, Champagne Beach and the Coolidge. Pentecost (for land diving, April to June), Malekula and Ambrym add deeper culture for those with time. Ten days covers Efate, Tanna and Santo comfortably.

Vanuatu is not a budget destination, as most goods are imported and prices are close to Australian levels, but it has far less resort development than Fiji, with simple bungalows on the outer islands and a strong sense of customary land ownership: expect to pay small kastom fees to visit waterfalls, blue holes and villages. Island time is real, and flights change at short notice. Visitors are often surprised by how close they can get to an active volcano, and by the fact that more than 100 languages are spoken. It suits divers, adventurous couples and culturally curious travellers.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ADVENTURE

Mount Yasur
On Tanna, one of the world's most accessible active volcanoes. After a 4WD ride across the ash plain, a short walk leads to the crater rim to watch and hear lava bursts, best at dusk. Access depends on the alert level.
- 2

ADVENTURE

SS President Coolidge
A 200 m liner turned troopship that struck mines off Santo in 1942 and now lies on her side from about 20 m down. Shore dives reach 'The Lady' statue, guns and holds full of wartime equipment.

3

BEACH

Champagne Beach

A curve of powder-white sand and glassy water on Santo's north-east coast near Hog Harbour, named after the volcanic gas bubbles that rise through the sand at low tide. Arrive early on cruise-ship days.

4

CULTURE

Land diving on Pentecost

From about April to June, men in south Pentecost leap from wooden towers up to 30 m high with vines tied to their ankles, a yam-harvest ritual called naghoh that inspired bungee jumping. Day trips run from Port Vila.

5

NATURE

Mele Cascades

A stepped series of turquoise pools and limestone cascades about 10 km north-west of Port Vila. Follow the path up through the rainforest to the main waterfall, swimming in the natural pools on the way.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Port Vila

≈ 50,000 people

The small, easy-going capital on Efate's harbour, with a waterfront market, French-influenced cafés and the national museum; a comfortable base for waterfalls, snorkelling and the ring road.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Luganville

≈ 18,000 people

Vanuatu's second town, laid out along a broad main street built for US forces in the Second World War. The base for diving the Coolidge and Million Dollar Point, and for Santo's blue holes.

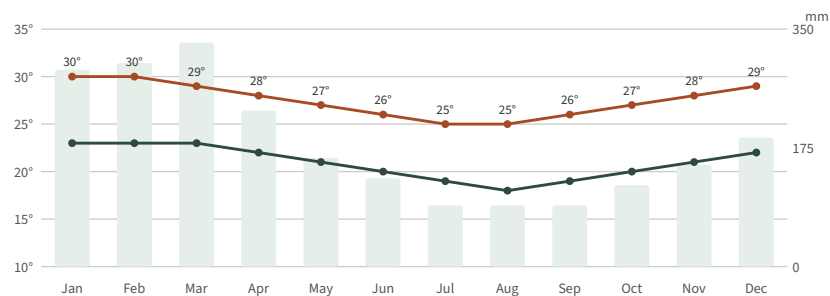
Vanuatu has only two towns, Port Vila and Luganville (2020 census figures, rounded); every other settlement is a village of a few thousand people at most.

When to go to Vanuatu

Best time: **May–Oct.**

**Average climate in Port Vila**

High °C Low °C Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr–Jun	Naghol land diving season South Pentecost's land diving season follows the yam harvest from about April to June; book through a Port Vila operator, as flights and dives are scheduled together.
Jul	Independence Day On 30 July, Port Vila celebrates independence from Britain and France in 1980 with parades, string-band music, sports and fireworks, with events throughout the preceding week.

How much does Vanuatu cost?

SHOESTRING £60 per person / day ≈ VUV 9,573 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £130 per person / day ≈ VUV 20,742 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £260 per person / day ≈ VUV 41,485 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Lap lap The national dish: grated yam, taro or manioc mixed with coconut cream, wrapped in leaves and baked in an earth oven, sometimes with pork, chicken or fish.	Santo beef Cattle graze beneath Santo's coconut plantations, producing famously tender grass-fed steak; order it in Luganville or at Port Vila's restaurants.	Kava Among the strongest in the Pacific: a muddy, peppery drink served in coconut shells at nakamals around dusk. Drink it in one go, then sit quietly.
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Getting around

Domestic flights link Port Vila with Tanna, Santo, Pentecost and other islands, but schedules are thin and change often, so reconfirm bookings. On Efate, minibuses with a 'B' on the number plate run hail-and-ride routes for a flat fare, and car hire is easy. Outer islands rely on trucks, boats and lodge transfers; interisland cargo ships are slow but cheap.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  I 230V — bring a UK-to-I adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 115 Fire: 113 Police: 111 or 22222 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +678	TIME ZONE UTC+11 (standard time)
TAP WATER Varies — bottled or filtered is safer	DRIVING On the right

TIPPING

Tipping is not part of local custom and is not expected, though a small tip for exceptional service in Port Vila restaurants is appreciated.

ETIQUETTE

Ask permission before entering villages or taking photographs, and pay the small kastom fees asked at natural sites. Dress modestly away from resorts; on outer islands, nakamals are often men-only.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Bauerfield International Airport (VLI), Port Vila; Santo-Pekoa International Airport (SON), Luganville

Visas & entry for Vanuatu

Shown for a British passport.

Check the entry requirements

Check with the Vanuatu Department of Immigration and Passport Services for details of whether you need a visa in advance of travel.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Bat Lyssavirus

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

Malaria risk in some areas

- There is a risk of malaria in the whole of Vanuatu: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Vanuatu

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 29 Nov 2026	Unity Day
Mon 30 Nov 2026	Unity Day (observed)
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Family Day

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sun 21 Feb 2027	Father Lini Day
Mon 22 Feb 2027	Father Lini Day (observed)
Fri 5 Mar 2027	Custom Chief's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sat 24 Jul 2027	Children's Day
Fri 30 Jul 2027	Independence Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day
Mon 16 Aug 2027	Assumption Day (observed)
Tue 5 Oct 2027	Constitution Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Bislama

ENGLISH	BISLAMA	SAY IT
Hello	Halo	<i>HAH-loh</i>
Thank you	Tankyu tumas	<i>TANK-yoo too-MAHS</i>
Please	Plis	<i>pleess</i>
Excuse me	Skiusmi	<i>SKYOOOS-mee</i>
How much is this?	Hamas long hem?	<i>HAH-mahs long hem</i>

Know before you go

- Carry vatu in small notes for kastom fees, markets and minibuses: ATMs are concentrated in Port Vila and Luganville, and cards are rarely accepted on outer islands.
- Book domestic flights and Tanna accommodation early for the dry season, and leave a buffer day before your international flight home, as schedules change at short notice.
- Mount Yasur's access depends on the volcanic alert level set by the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department; check the current level before booking Tanna.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.