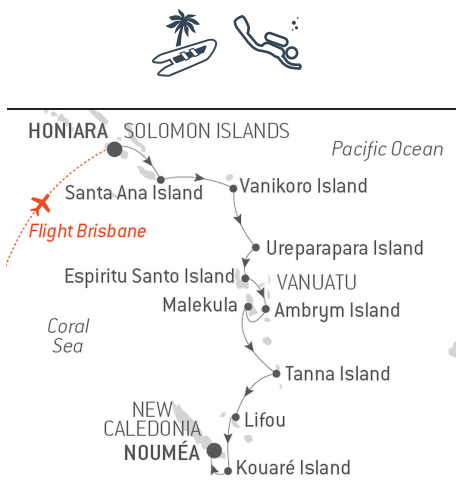


# Revealing the Mysteries of Melanesia - with National Geographic

From **11/11/2022**  
to **22/11/2022**

Ship: **LE SOLEAL**

From **Honiara, Guadalcanal Island**  
to **Nouméa**



Flight Brisbane/Honiara + transfer

## In collaboration with National Geographic Expeditions

**PONANT** invites you to discover the natural wonders of the Coral Sea in Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

From **Honiara** to **Nouméa**, you will set sail aboard *Le Soléal* on a **12-day expedition cruise** into the heart of the South Pacific to discover ancestral tribes and paradisiacal landscapes.

Your ship will first reach the **Solomon Islands**, a real tropical Eden.

Your cruise will continue to **Vanuatu**, considered by some as the “**happiest country in the world**” with its 83 islands, it unfurls a palette of extremely varied landscapes. Active volcanoes, beaches bordered by palm trees, and **tropical forests** welcome visitors to this exceptional archipelago located in Melanesia.

*Le Soléal* will also allow you to disembark onto dream beaches. **Espiritu Santo**, the archipelago’s main island, promises you an unforgettable bathing experience in an idyllic setting.

During your cruise, you will have the opportunity to visit several **traditional villages**, particularly on the islands of **Ureparapara**, **Ambrym** and **Malekula**. Their inhabitants will be happy to share their customs, notable for singing, dancing and art, with you.

In **Tanna**, do not miss out on exploring the imposing Mt Yasur, considered to be the most accessible active volcano in the world.

*Le Soléal* will then take you to the sublime island of **Lifou** with its picture-postcard landscapes of white-sand beaches and tropical vegetation, located in the Loyalty archipelago.

Then your ship will set sail towards **Kouaré Island** which will reveal you all its beauty and the richness of its seabed.

Your cruise will come to an end in **Nouméa**, capital of New Caledonia.



The information in this document is valid as of 21/10/2021

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## YOUR STOPOVERS :

### HONIARA, GUADALCANAL ISLAND

Embarkation 11/11/2022 from 16:00 to 17:00

Departure 11/11/2022 at 18:00

Honiara is the capital city of The Solomon Islands, administered as a provincial town on the north-western coast of Guadalcanal Island. **Honiara** comes from the local Ghari Language “naho-ni-ara” meaning 'facing the ara', the place where the southeast winds meet the land. Discover this city, its beautiful landscape, and the significant role it played in **World War II**. Particularly The Battle of Henderson Field, the last of the three major land offensives conducted by the Japanese in 1942.

### SANTA ANA ISLAND

Arrival 12/11/2022

Departure 12/11/2022

**Owaraha** (formerly Santa Ana) is located at the eastern end of Makira (San Cristobal) and just north of the smaller Owariki (Santa Catalina). Our ship will navigate through the picturesque channel separating the Islands before dropping anchor just outside Port Mary. The islanders are well known for preserving ancient traditions and producing intricate **wooden carvings**. Their artefacts include magnificently carved fishing floats and ceremonial bowls intricately inlaid with shells. After a short zodiac ride ashore you will be guided through the village to an open area to witness a number of traditional performances. Afterwards experience life in a traditional Solomon Island village or **take a swim** in the warm tropical waters of Port Mary.

### AT SEA

Arrival 13/11/2022

Departure 13/11/2022

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

### VANIKORO ISLAND

Arrival 14/11/2022

Departure 14/11/2022

The **French explorer Jean-François de La Pérouse** was stranded on Vanikoro after both his vessels, struck the reefs of the island in 1788. The complete **disappearance of La Pérouse caught the imagination of the European** public. Songs, stories and plays were written about the possible fate of the expedition. It is believed that some of the men were killed by the local inhabitants, while the surviving sailors built a smaller vessel and left the island, but were never seen again. Those that remained on the island died before search parties arrived in 1826. Today guests have the opportunity to head ashore to the infamous location of this historical event. Enjoy a welcome and cultural performance whilst pondering the fate of the expeditioners.

## UREPARAPARA ISLAND

Arrival 15/11/2022

Departure 15/11/2022

Ureparapara, also known as Parapara for short, is the third largest island in the Banks group of Northern Vanuatu and formed by an extinct volcano cone that has been breached by the sea on its east coast, forming a spectacular 3km long harbour. During your voyage, your ship will **sail into the natural harbour**, affording guests spectacular views from the outer decks. You will also have the opportunity to go ashore for a **welcome and custom dances**. An opportunity to witness life in one of the remotest parts of Vanuatu. Very few vessels visit this part of Vanuatu and the local residents are eager to welcome visitors.

## ESPIRITU SANTO ISLAND

Arrival 16/11/2022

Departure 16/11/2022

At the end of the world, in the north of New Caledonia, lies Vanuatu, a little archipelago that subsists mainly from fishing and farming. It is composed of several islands, **Espiritu Santo** being the largest and one of the most beautiful. You can meet the people here who are very welcoming and who live in harmony with nature. Plus you'll see **unimaginable landscapes** formed of volcanic rocks, as well as sandy beaches and lagoons beckoning you to dive into their of turquoise waters. You'll be surprised to find, in the middle of dense vegetation, brackish water with an amazing ecosystem called "blue holes". If **paradise** exists, it must be here.

## AMBRYM ISLAND

Arrival 17/11/2022

Departure 17/11/2022

The island of Ambrym in Vanuatu is often referred to as **the "black" island** due to its volcanic ash and because of its **'black magic' steeped in mystery**. In the villages, the ancient customs play a significant part in day to day living. The **"Man blong Majik"** are treated with the utmost respect and practice sorcery and magic beyond all imaginings. Ambrym prides itself on some unique characteristics, such as the magnificent tam-tams (or slit gongs) sculpted out of tree trunks, sand-drawing, black-fern masks and local dances. The most striking custom dance is the Rom (or masked) dance – where 9 foot covertly cloaked and masked 'spirits' stomp out ancient rhythms to the beat of the

tam tam.

## MALEKULA

Arrival 18/11/2022

Departure 18/11/2022

**Malekula** is the second largest island in Vanuatu and the most diverse, culturally and linguistically, with over thirty distinct languages spoken. Some of the best custom dances come from the island. The very friendly villagers will be proud to share with you their cultural heritage. Guests will be transferred ashore for a welcome and cultural performance. Afterwards, you will have an opportunity to witness traditional village life in Malekula, with demonstrations of traditional village practices such as weaving and Kava, and purchase genuine artefacts.

## TANNA ISLAND

Arrival 19/11/2022

Departure 19/11/2022

A visit to **Vanuatu** cannot be complete without viewing the erupting **Mount Yasur Volcano** on the Island of **Tanna**. It is regarded as the world's most accessible active volcano. Known for its spectacular persistent strombolian activity consisting of regular small to violent explosions, it has been in more-or-less continuous activity since Captain James Cook observed ash eruptions in 1774. Often referred to as "the lighthouse of the Pacific", the glow of the volcano apparently led Captain Cook to Tanna during the first European journey to the island. Today the volcano is considered a sacred area by members of the John Frum cargo cult, who believe their deity resides in the heart of the volcano.

## LIFOU

Arrival 20/11/2022

Departure 20/11/2022

You'll land around 100km east of **Grande-Terre**. An ancient coral atoll atop a collapsed volcano, Lifou is today the largest and highest of the **Loyalty Islands**. This is an outstanding natural site, waiting to be explored: to the north, the coastline ends abruptly in sheer cliffs, while to the south lie expanses of long white sand beaches. Lovers of wild plantlife may well be tempted by a walk further inland, where the rich and authentic **Kanak culture** is proudly upheld by the local community.

## KOUARÉ ISLAND

Arrival 21/11/2022

Departure 21/11/2022

Aboard your Zodiac<sup>®</sup> dinghy, you will sail along the turquoise waters of New Caledonia's coral reef, the second largest in the world. When you land on Kouare Island, in the heart of the southern lagoon, you will discover an idyllic environment. On this small tract of uninhabited land, in a marine area listed as World Heritage by UNESCO, the animals rule supreme. From the white-sand beaches where marine turtles and sea snakes like to lay their eggs, take off with your mask and snorkel to discover an abundant underwater world that is home to multicoloured fish, beautiful coral, and marine reptiles. Look up to the sky and admire the incessant ballet of terns and black noddies

that appear to be jealously guarding their island.

## NOUMÉA

Arrival 22/11/2022 early morning

Disembarkation 22/11/2022 at 07:00

Perched on a peninsula between bays and hills, on the south-west coast of Grande Terre, **Noumea** enjoys a **magnificent natural setting**. The town shelters some exceptional biodiversity, thanks especially to the coastal mangroves. To feel the town's heartbeat, you can mosey in the **place des Cocotiers**, where Noumeans love to gather. The Tjibaou cultural centre unveils the secrets of the **kanak culture**. As for the Hagen castle or the **maison Célières**, these are precious witnesses of a colonial past. But Noumea is also about sumptuous beaches.