The Vanuatu Compendium
A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!

Rev 2019.3  May 27, 2019, 2019

We welcome updates to this guide!
(epecially for places we have no cruiser information on)

Email Soggy Paws at sherry –at- svsoggypaws –dot- com.
You can also contact us on Sailmail at WDI5677

The current home of the official copy of this document is http://svsoggypaws.com/files/#pacific
Check for an updated copy there.
## Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

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1 Introduction

The original Compendium for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned while cruising the Tuamotus in 2010 and 2011. Now the idea has migrated with Soggy Paws, from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, Hawaii, the Cooks and Samoas, Tonga, Fiji, the islands between Fiji and the Marshall Islands, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia parts of SE Asia, and now the trip from PNG through the Solomons, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia.

If you haven't yet found our other ‘Compendiums’, they're available online at http://svsoggypaws.com/files/

This is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in places that the guides don't cover.

To compile this ‘compendium’, we have used all sources at our disposal, including websites, blogs, emails, and our own experience. We always try to indicate the source of our information, and the approximate time frame.

If your information is included in this guide, and you object to its inclusion, please just email us, and we'll remove it. But this is a non-commercial venture mainly to help cruisers from all of our collective experiences.

1.1 Organization of the Guide

This guide is loosely organized from north to south.

1.2 Overview of the Area

1.2.1 Navigational Cautions

1.3 Time Zone

Vanuatu operates on Vanuatu Standard Time, which is +11 GMT.

1.4 Weather In This Area

1.4.1 General Weather Conditions

Noonsite – 2018: The climate is semi-tropical. There are two distinct seasons. May to October is relatively cool and dry, while November to April is hot and humid. January to March are the rainy months. The cyclone season lasts from December until the end of March.

Sloepmouche – 2010: Lumpy sailing is generally the case between islands during normal cruising season. There are often strong currents running around points of land and between islands. Can be very nasty in strong winds (may be even overfalls). Don’t underestimate. One large catamaran trailing their dinghy for the short trip from Havannah Harbor to Vila broke the painter in big waves and the seas were so rough, they dared not try to recover it and just had to watch it drift away with the expensive outboard. Last season three boats went up on reefs and were lost. Always ensure 360 deg. swinging room at anchor and do NOT navigate at night and stand way off if you heave to. The Charts are off in most places.
1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email

Soggy Paws - 2019: In our transit through this area, what we used most of the time for watching the weather were these files (via the free service Saildocs). You send the request to saildocs at the address query@saildocs.com, with the coded request in the message body, and Saildocs will email you the response.

- Text forecasts (): send Met.10ne
  This returns the forecast from the Australian Met Office which covers the High Seas Forecast for North Eastern METAREA 10:
  NORTH EASTERN AREA: COAST AT 142E TO 0S142E TO 0S170E TO 25S170E TO COAST AT 25S
- A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days
  send spot:07.1N,171.3E|10,6|PRMSL,WIND,WAVES,RAIN,LFTX
- A ‘local’ GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days, and included sea state information
  send GFS:6N,10N,173E,165E|.5,.5|0,6..144|PRMSL,WIND,HTSGW,WVDIR,RAIN
- A ‘wide range’ GRIB that watched conditions approaching us. The area we request while in transit was a pretty wide area on a 3x3 grid, for the next 10 days. This is about a 25K GRIB file. This provided a decent long range forecast.
  send GFS:0N,30N,160E,175W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN
  send nadi.fleet
  This returns a coded file which then must be loaded into a Fleet Code viewer. OpenCPN has a plugin called IAD Fleet that will (poorly) display the Fleet Code Map. A better viewer is called PhysPlot. Not sure where you can find it on the internet except in the files from other cruisers. Save the coded file from you email into a text file on your computer, then load the text file into the IAD Fleet plugin in OpenCPN or PhysPlot.
- During times of tropical activity, we also found these sources useful for additional perspective:
  send nadi.summary
  This returns the Tropical Disturbance Summary for area Equator to 25S, 160E to 120W from the Royal Suva Met Service in Fiji.

1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice

The best source of voice weather for the Solomons and Vanuatu is the new Gulf Harbor Radio net, which is now on 8116 kHz or 8752 kHz, Monday-Saturday NZST 7:15am, May - November

David Sapiane (s/v Chameleon) is located in Gulf Harbor, NZ (or out cruising in the Western Pacific) and is easily receivable by boats in the western South Pacific islands, and enroute to/from NZ.

2014: The latest info on Gulf Harbor Radio scheds and frequencies is available on this website:

http://www.yit.co.nz/gulf-harbour-radio
If you register on YIT and send in position updates, when Gulf Harbor Radio is operating (cruising season, from May to November). David includes reports for places where boats have position reports on YIT.

Check these, not sure if they still apply:

Australia broadcasts on 5100.0kHz, 11030.0kHz, 13920.0kHz, 20469.0kHz, 5755.0kHz, 7535.0kHz, 10555.0kHz, 15615.0kHz, 18060.0kHz and Japan on 3622.5kHz, 7305.0kHz, 13597.0kHz, 18220.0kHz.

1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet

These are all the government office forecast products that I have found to be useful. (and a few non-govt sites)

Color Satellite View of Entire SW Pacific
http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html

It requires Flash (didn’t seem to work on my IE installation, and may not on an iPad, but works well on Chrome).

Bob McDavit’s Weather Blog
https://metbob.wordpress.com/

Fiji Met Service
Home Page: http://www.met.gov.fj/
Morning Surface Map: http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/0992.jpg

New Zealand Met
Current surface analysis:

Surface Forecast Series (30, 48, 72H)

These are great maps in small (PNG) format—about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices’ websites).

Australia Met
And here’s for Australia. There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:

1.4.5 Tropical Weather & Cruising During Cyclone Season

Vanuatu is covered by Australia’s Met Service, with regard to tropical cyclone forecasting. Below is a capture from the Australian tropical weather page, showing cyclone tracks in the Solomons from 2011 to 2016.
To check on individual storms, dates, etc, here is the website:

**Sloepmouche - 2008:** With appropriate planning and good attention to weather bulletins, you can take advantage of the best weather for cruising during the traditional cyclone period. There are several cyclone holes to take refuge in during the few cyclone alerts you might get. You may have heard that two cyclones passed through Vanuatu this 2007-2008 season, which is true, but as with most South Pacific cyclones, they were quite compact.

Only Futuna Island suffered big damage, while Tanna, which was close by, got some blustery winds, and in Port Vila we had nothing much over 25 knots.

### 1.5 Customs & Immigration

Best to double-check the respective government websites before you make landfall, to make sure you are aware of the latest government requirements. Links provided below.

#### 1.5.1 From the Vanuatu Customs Website

Copied from this link, April 2019:
1.1.1.1  **CUSTOMS PORTS**

The port of Lenakel on the island of Tanna, the port of Port Vila on the island of Efate, the port of Luganville on the island of Santo and the port of Sola on the island of Vanua Lava are the only ports of entry in the Republic of Vanuatu.

1.1.1.2  **ARRIVAL**

All Crafts on route to Vanuatu must provide a minimum of 24 hours advance notice of arrival to Customs. Notice must be provided by e-mail stating:

(a) the name of the vessel; and  
(b) the voyage (last 3 ports); and  
(c) the estimated date and time of arrival in Vanuatu; and  
(d) the appointed port or other place where the craft will land or berth; and  
(e) the name of the master or skipper of the vessel; and  
(f) the name and contact details of the person providing the information; and  
(g) the names of passengers on board; and  
(h) list of goods to be landed (if any).

According to Quarantine laws, the vessel is required to fly the yellow flag as soon as it enters Vanuatu’s exclusive economic zone. Upon arrival at the port vessels can call “Customs” on VHF radio Channel 16 (only at Port Vila and Lenakel at the moment).

Master of all yachts entering Vanuatu from a foreign port or place must first report to the Customs, Quarantine and Immigration authorities at either the port of Lenakel or Port Vila or Luganville or Sola.

Vessels may not call at Mystery Island (Anietyum) or Port Resolution (Tanna) or any other place in Vanuatu, prior to entering one of the ports nominated above for customs clearance, unless prior written permission is granted by the Director of Customs & Inland Revenue. The Master of vessels who visit these places prior to obtaining customs clearance, being issued with an “Inter-island Cruising Permit”, or obtaining written permission may be subject to fines and/or prosecution.

It is an offence to come ashore in Vanuatu unless having undergone customs clearance procedures on arrival.

Interactive Inward Reporting forms are available on the Customs website under Forms. To facilitate clearance, filled out forms can be emailed to the address provided on the form prior to arrival.

Interactive Passenger Arrival forms are available on the Customs website under Forms. To facilitate clearance, filled out forms can be emailed to the same Customs Border email address prior to arrival. The filled out form is required by Immigration to complete arrival formalities.

1.1.1.3  **ARMS AND AMMUNITION**

On arrival all arms and ammunition must be declared and surrendered to the Customs Officer for safe keeping. (Also refer to section 4 on prohibitions).

If Customs are satisfied that firearms and ammunition can be safely secured under seal on board the importing vessel this may be allowed. In cases where no suitably secure sealing arrangements exist, the goods will be detained by Customs throughout the vessel stay in Vanuatu. At least 48 hours notice of intended departure from the finale port of clearance must be given in such cases.
1.1.1.4 **PROHIBITED GOODS**
The laws of Vanuatu prohibit the importation of narcotics, obscene publications and materials (books, magazines, DVDs, computer stored images and videos, and video cassettes), and certain firearms such as automatic weapons. These have severe penalties for any breach of these prohibitions.

1.1.1.5 **PORT DUES (Ports and Harbour fees)**
All visiting small crafts are liable for port dues of 7,875 Vatu for a 30 days period or any part thereof. After 30 days from the date of first arrival, the vessel is liable for an additional charge of 100 vatu per day. Port Dues are to be paid at the Ports & Harbour office, or if unavailable, at the Customs office at the final port of departure (Lenakel, Port Vila, Luganville or Sola).

1.1.1.6 **QUARANTINE**
Live animals, reptiles, birds of any description, fresh meat, fruit or vegetables imported by yachts must not be taken ashore. Additionally, some restriction on whether such goods will be permitted to remain on board after the arrival at a Customs port may be enforced by officers of Bio-security. No foreign garbage may be landed in Vanuatu without permission from Bio-security.

1.1.1.7 **TEMPORARY ADMISSION OF VISITING YACHTS WITHOUT PAYMENT OF IMPORT DUTY**
Visiting yachts entering Vanuatu under their own power on a voyage from a foreign port or place may enter and remain temporarily in Vanuatu without payment of duty for a period not exceeding 18 months in any period of 24 months save for reason of circumstance (including a change of residence) accepted by the Director of Customs. For administrative purposes, Customs will issue an initial 6 months period for vessels who wish to remain in Vanuatu for more than 6 months. The person responsible for such vessels is required see Customs prior to the lapse of the 6 months period to extend its stay in Vanuatu.

The subject vessel must be owned by or hired, chartered or otherwise loaned to a person or persons traveling on board at the time of its arrival in Vanuatu and must be intended for their personal use only. It shall not be used for any commercial purpose in Vanuatu and must not be sold, lent, hired, pledged or otherwise disposed of in Vanuatu.

Vessels wishing to visit more remote and isolated destinations in Vanuatu may apply for an “Inter-island Cruising Permit” which is issued to genuine cruising small craft and is valid for a period up to six months. A copy of the cruising permit is held by the master who absolves the vessel from reporting to customs until the port of departure for overseas, or for application to extend the permit.

Vessels which are imported temporarily into Vanuatu must not be used commercially under normal circumstances. However if the vessel falls within the definition of a “super yacht”, certain allowances are made (see Section 8).

If not fitting the “super yacht” criteria, use of the vessel commercially, including the chartering or hiring of the vessel or the use of the vessel for activities for which a charge is made (e.g. sailing tours) is not permitted. It is an offence to carry on such commercial activities and customs duty may be payable on the vessel in those circumstances.

1.1.1.8 **SUPER YACHTS**
A super yacht is considered to be a vessel valued in excess of Vatu 200,000,000 (US$2,000,000 approx). To enable these vessels to undertake commercial activity in Vanuatu, the following criteria must be met.
(a) The vessel must hold current internationally recognized survey certificates permitting charter and/or carriage of passengers.

(b) Permission to charter in Vanuatu must be provided by the Licensing section of Ports and Marine.

(c) A local agent registered for VAT and who holds a current business licence in Vanuatu must be appointed to act as ship’s agent.

(d) The local agent must pay VAT on all purchases in Vanuatu on behalf of the vessel and on charter costs.

For further requirements for Super Yachts, please email us.

1.1.1.9 YACHTS LIABLE TO DUTY PAYMENT

A yacht will become liable to duty if :-

a) it is disposed of in Vanuatu for financial consideration or not; or

b) it is put to commercial use whilst in Vanuatu; or

c) it remains in Vanuatu for a period or periods exceeding six (6) months in any period of two (2) years, unless an application is made to Customs for an extension as per paragraph 6 above; or

d) it is imported by a resident of Vanuatu or a person taking up residence in Vanuatu after the 6 months concession period of obtaining residency permit as outlined in section 2(3) of schedule 3 of the Import Duties (Amendment) Act.

1.1.1.10 CUSTOMS ALLOWANCE

In the case of each crew member:-

i) All baggage consisting of wearing apparel, toilet requisites, articles of personal adornment and similar personal effects, being apparel, articles and effects possessed and used abroad by such passenger and which are not intended for gift, sale or disposal to any other person;

ii) 250 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco, 2 litres of wine and 1.5 litres of spirits, ¼ litres of toilet water and 10 centilitres of perfume, these allowance being granted per person and applicable only for persons aged over 18 years;

iii) Any other item (other than prohibited goods) up to a value of 50,000 vatu per person aged over 15 years.

1.1.1.11 LANDED GOODS

All goods intended to be landed in Vanuatu must be reported to customs. This includes goods intended to be given as donations to any person or organisation in Vanuatu.

1.1.1.12 INTER-ISLAND VOYAGES

On completion of Customs Quarantine and Immigration arrival formalities at the port of entry, master of any vessel wishing to visit other islands in the group, may only be allowed to do so after first declaring their intended movements to the Customs authorities and obtaining formal approval. See Section 7.

1.1.1.13 SHIPMENT OF DUTY STORES

Duty–free goods may be shipped on board any vessel which has cleared outwards, or which is about to clear outward for a foreign port or place. Duty free fuel may also be purchased on for the outwards leg
of the voyage after customs clearance for overseas has been granted. Full details of the duty-free schemes available may be obtained from the nearest Customs office.

1.1.1.14 CUSTOMS OUTWARD CLEARANCE
All yachts leaving Vanuatu for a foreign port or place are required to obtain an outward clearance from Customs at the final port of departure (i.e. Lenakel, Port Vila, Luganville or Sola). Unless approved by the Director, a vessel having granted a certificate of clearance must depart for overseas within 24 hours of its issue and must not go to any place in Vanuatu. Vessel wishing to obtain a certificate of clearance at places other than Lenakel, Port Vila, Luganville or Sola should obtain permission for Customs and Immigration in advance and if such a request is granted may be required to pay for official attendance and travel.

Alternatively, certificate of clearance from undeclared places can be issued from the last declared port in Vanuatu, provided that a request is made via email or a note to Customs at least 24hrs prior to departure from the declared port. Once the approval is granted, the certificate of clearance will be issued with the ETD from the undeclared location. Port dues will be calculated and paid up to the ETD from Vanuatu while fuel exemptions will only be granted for the outward journey as per current practices.

Interactive Outward Reporting forms are available on the Customs website under Forms. To facilitate clearance, filled out forms can be emailed to the address provided on the form prior to departure.

1.1.1.15 OPERATING HOURS
All attempts will be made to board vessels arriving from overseas as soon as possible after their actual arrival. Outwards clearance may be obtained within 24 hours prior to the actual departure. Customs normal operating hours are listed below.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
MORNING 07.30 Hours - 12.00 Hours
AFTERNOON 13.00 Hours - 16.30 Hours

Any attendances by customs outside these hours for either arriving or departing vessels will be subject to overtime attendance fees. The charges for these are as follows:

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
06:00 to 07:30 and 16:30 to 18:00  VT1000 per hour per officer with a 3 hour minimum payable
18:00 to 06:00  VT1500 per hour per officer with a 3 hour minimum.

SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS
VT2000 per hour per officer with a 3 hour minimum.

1.5.2 Immigration
From the Tourism website – Taken May 2019: Once you have completed your customs and quarantine formalities, the captain must go to the Immigration office, with the passports of the entire crew, in order to obtain the necessary visas for their stay.
This visa has a duration of one month and requires that you live on your boat and are prohibited from working in the country. An entry tax will have to be paid to formalize your entry into Vanuatu. 2018 fees include 4000vt for Quarantine, 3000vt for the Customs, 2000vt by passport. These amounts are subject to revision.

If you wish to stay longer, you must submit your visa extension request at least 4 weeks in advance (upon arrival) in any port of entry except Sola in Vanua Lava. The maximum length of stay is 4 months, with the possibility of extending to one year on request and with payment.

If a crew member is to disembark in Vanuatu, the skipper, who is responsible for his crew, will have to present the return air ticket to his home country immediately.

Visit the Vanuatu Customs website to keep up-to-date with the latest updates on entry procedures.

1.5.3 Cruiser Reports

Golden Glow – Oct 2018 - We cleared immigration at Port Resolution in August with no problem, but customs had to be done in Port Vila when we got there some weeks later (the officials in Tanna told us not to worry about the delay and officials in Port Vila also had no problem with that).

Friends who tried to clear Vanuatu immigration into Tanna EITHER in Lenakel or Port Resolution a few weeks ago however, were told it is no longer possible. There was a sign on the door in Lenakel saying go to Port Vila.

So folks, check the current status before you go. Stanley in Port Resolution May have the answer +678 68791

CruisingVanuatu.com – 2018 – Pre-Arrival Notice: Any vessel intending to visit Vanuatu must email customs at least 24 hours in advance giving the expected arrival time of the vessel, the last port of clearance, the names of crew and passengers on board and the port at which the yacht will arrive. If you are clearing into Port Vila you may provide the information to Customs on VHF channel 16.

Send the email to CustomsBorder@vanuatu.gov.vu (this is distributed to all 4 ports). According to the Customs website it will facilitate clearance if you fill out the required forms (above) and email them two working days prior to arriving.

Segue – 2014: A few comments to be helpful. On the Vanuatu Customs Website, there is a form to fill in for advance arrival. It doesn't work. Nor do any of the phone numbers. They're having some IT issues. Use the email address: customsborder@vanuatu.gov.vu for the required advance notification of arrival.

We stayed in touch with customs on our crossing from Fiji. We requested clearance for Port Resolution as is now required. Within 30 minutes of dropping the pick down -- we were boarded and cleared into Vanuatu by two of the friendliest government officials we've ever encountered! Yes, it did cost some extra money to clear-in to port resolution -- as opposed to Lenaki on the other side of the island -- but after experiencing the experience of traversing the two ports in the back of a 4x4, it's worth the expense!

Segue – 2014: Regarding bringing crew into Vanuatu. This is NO PROBLEM. We read here that bonds might be payable equal to a flight home. Or that a return ticket was required. This is simply not the case. The process is very simple. Provide a letter to immigration in Port Vila stating that "John doe" is joining your yacht, and will be arriving on flight <insert flight details>, etc... Along with a copy of the crew's passport. Bring this to the immigration office in Port Vila and Vatu$6,000 ($60.00) and you're set. Dead easy. And the immigration folks are amazingly easy to work with. Love this country!
Yolo – September 2012: CLEARANCE PORTS: The clearance port options listed from south to north in Vanuatu are:

A. Anelghowhat, Anelghowhat Bay, Anatom (Aneityum) Island: This port is located on the southwestern corner of the island. This location provides very good protection from all winds and waves except for those from the southwest. Very few goods or services are available here. Banking services are available. If you have not already obtained Vanuatu currency (VATU), try to get enough of it here to cover the cost of the volcano trip at Tanna Island and anything else you might need before reaching Port Vila.

B. Lenakel, Lenakel Bay, Tanna Island: This location is considered a poor overnight anchorage by most sailors and it is exposed to north, south and western weather. Very few goods or services are available at this location which is on the west side of the island. Banking services are available. Most yachts anchor in Port Resolution (southeast corner of the island) to visit the nearby spectacular live volcano, Mt. Yasur. A few sailors have hired a very expensive 4 wheel drive truck to take them from Port Resolution to Lenakel to clear-in. The round trip truck ride will take about six bumpy hours and is expensive.

C. Port Vila, Baie De Vila or Paray Bay, Efate Island: This is the capital city and most goods and services are available. Good all round protection is provided. Mooring balls for around $15 USD per day are available in Paray Bay, between Iririki Island and the city. We anchored just west of the yellow Quarantine Buoy, right off the large shoreline Port Vila city park which has several dingy dock locations.

D. Luganville (Santo), Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo Island: This is the second largest Vanuatu city (9,000 people) and most goods and services are available, including Wi-Fi Internet. You have numerous anchoring options at Luganville. Customs, Ports and Harbours, Quarantine Services, and Immigration officials do NOT care where your vessel is located when you clear-in or out.

E. Sola, Sola Bay, Port Patteson, Vanua Lava Island, is also a clearance port. The Banks Islands Group is the northern most Vanuatu clearance port. This village is located on the east side of the island and very few goods or services are available here.

NORMAL GOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS HOURS: Ports and Harbours, Customs, Immigration, and Quarantine Services normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 0730 to noon and 1300 to 1630. Anatom and Tanna officials appear to work “island time” schedules, so be patient.

“ADDITIONAL” CHARGES FOR SATURDAY, SUNDAY, AFTER HOURS, AND HOLIDAY CLEARANCES: It was implied that government officials never work on holidays and weekends. So, if you arrive on these days you should remain on your vessel until the next business day. However, if you want to depart Vanuatu on a Saturday, Sunday or a holiday, clearance paperwork will be processed on the prior business day.

DESPACHO/ZARPE/EXIT PAPERS FROM PRIOR COUNTRY REQUIRED: Yes

MUST CLEAR IN AND OUT OF EACH PORT: You do not have to provide access to your vessel for Cruising Permits. A NEW cruising permit is required each time you visit one of the five clearance ports noted above. The cruising permits are completed by the Customs officials. The cruising permit lists all of the islands you will be visiting prior to the next clearance port. So, from south to north your permits will typically list:

Anatom (Aneityum) – First cruising permit which will note Anatom, Tanna, Erromango, and Efate Islands.

Efate - Give Customs your first cruising permit and get a second permit which states Efate, Emae, Epi, Malekula, Ambrym, Pentecost, Maewo, Bank Islands, Torres Islands, and Espiritu Santo islands.
Espiritu Santo – Give Customs your second cruising permit, then secure a third permit which states Espiritu Santo, The Bank Islands, and the Torres Islands.

Vanua Lava, The Bank Islands – Give Customs your third cruising permit and if sailing south reverse the order noted above.

You are not required to visit every island that you list on your Cruising Permit. It appears that government officials do not review Cruising Permits while in transit. Cruising Permits are placed in a sealed envelope by Customs and you must hand carry the envelope to Customs at the next clearance port.

FEES (stated amounts are in VATU and approximate U.S.A dollars)

CUSTOMS: Clear-in per vessel: 0 VATU, $0 USD
Clear-out per vessel: 0 VATU, $0 USD
Cruising Permits: 0 VATU, $0 USD

IMMIGRATION: 30 day or less tourist visit per person: 0 VATU, $0 USD
Four month extended visitor VISA per person: 6,000 VATU, $67 USD
Vessel Clearance Fee: 4,800 VATU, $53 USD
VISA FOR U.S.A. CITIZENS: Not Required
QUARANTINE AND INSPECTION SERVICE: 3,000 VATU, $33 USD
PORTS AND HARBOURS: 30 days or less visit: 7,000 VATU, $78 USD
Each day after 30 days: 100 VATU, $1.11 USD
Value Added Tax On Ports & Harbours Fee: Add 12.5%

DUTY FREE FUEL (DIESEL ONLY) PERMIT: 0 VATU, $0 USD

Sadly, as is all too common nowadays, “it’s all about money.” A couple cruising on a yacht in Vanuatu for sixty days should expect to pay a total of about 31,050 VATU ($345 USD) for the various governmental fees. TG for averages...when you visit New Caledonia you can stay for up to one year and there are no, none, zero, clearance fees!

Mr. John – 2011: If you wish to stay longer than 1 month, you will need a Visa extension..... 4 months / 7 months / one year; we purchased 4 months which was the minimum we could do at 5000 per person.

ALSO with the VISA.... despite paying for four months they only gave us two months in our passport.... they said that we should use the two first then go to the nearest immigration office with my receipt and ask for the other two.

And, the best rip off of all, when you pay for the four month extension they take the first month back off you so it’s not really a four month extension at all....it’s only three months on top of what you have already paid for.

1.5.4 Longer Stays

Sloepmouche – 2008: So far, it is still only a rumor that the government is considering extending the maximum length a tourist can stay in the country (from the usual four-month, one could get up to a year with various fees, naturally). But as we understand it, no change has been made yet, so it’s still the four-month, non-renewable visa.
To get temporary residency is fairly expensive relative to other countries, but for us it was worth the
hoop jumping. You might be lucky in the future to be able to plan a full year here as the cruising grounds
quite warrant this much time, and with appropriate planning and good attention to weather bulletins,
you can take advantage of the best weather for cruising during the traditional cyclone period.

_Sloepmouche stayed in Vanuatu for 5 years._

### 1.5.5 Pets

**Sloepmouche – 2009:** We have some good news for boats with pets that have been in rabies free
countries for 6 months or more. There is a Govt. Vet who, upon request, can approve your animal to go
ashore on all islands without quarantine! You must have all paper work to prove the animal qualifies
and that it has a microchip or tattoo to verify it is the animal in question. He will inspect the animal, give
a parasite and worm treatment, and 24hrs (and 11,000vt) later it’s free to go ashore! If you are on the
fast track and you were in countries with rabies less than 6 months before, it will be confined aboard.
Please do not raise a fuss or cheat because Vanuatu is right now in debate about not only confining
animals aboard, but also confining the boat to certain harbors, as they do in NZ and AUZ. That, and/or
requiring a bond. That means no visiting the unique out-islands. PLEASE! DO NOT ruin it for others by
breaking the rules, and the faith of the officials. If you cleared in Tanna or other island, the animal stays
on board until the Vet approves it. We were given this info by the present Govt. Vet, Dale Hamilton,
who will give us info to post on www.noonsite.com.

### 1.6 Local Information and Customs

#### 1.6.1 Some History

**Nordic Breeze – 2016:** The history of Vanuatu begins with the Lapita people. They sailed to the islands,
about 3500 years ago in longboats, and are famous for their pottery. They brought pigs and chicken on
their boats, and yams and tarot-root.

They lived in small autonomous clans, separated by ravines, jungles and sea. And they lived in the
shadow of their ancestors who could be controlled by magic. It was important to get the ghosts to the
good (your) side or they could be hostile and ready to haunt with disasters, famines and military defeat.
Even today many ni-Vans believe their ancestral spirits and demons populate the world. The ghosts of
the recently dead are especially potent, and can also be potentially malicious even to their own family.
Practice of magic can help and most adult men (magic is generally taboo for women) in the traditional
parts of Vanuatu know some useful spells. These can be used for getting the ghosts to your side, or to
produce good crops. Or maybe for future love affairs. For more special missions, like calming storms,
healing the sick or controlling the volcanoes, a true magician is needed.

Vanuatu is also a country where the old beliefs still live by the side of the Christian church. Wherever we
were and whoever we asked the ni-Vans always answered that the spirits still live by them. When we
were on Wala we were invited to a walk to the old, inner part of the island, where the ni-Vans lived
before the missionaries influenced and changed their believes. This is where the spirits of the old
powerful chiefs still are. Here are areas where you are not allowed to walk, the sacred planted Namele
palm shows where the taboo is. And this is where Loren introduced us to his grandfather’s grandfather.

Loren’s grandfather’s grandfather was once the chief of the village. When he reigned the island was
known for their fierce fighters. Other chiefs could sometimes ask for help from the men in Wala, it was
politics that decided if and what side they would support. If they got in to fights they always showed
how many they had killed by bringing their penises back. Some of their victims, fighting victims were
only men, were eaten by the men who had killed them. Women could be taken from the conquered and be given to men who wanted them as their wives, or really as slaves, as Loren said.

When Loren’s ancestor died he was buried by a Namele palm since he was the chief. Body down in a deep hole and his head above the ground. After seven days his head was taken off and taken to the sacred place where other chiefs in the family were buried before him. This is where Loren took us.

At a sacred place you must be quiet, Loren prayed and talked to him entirely quiet, he told him we would support with a pig and made a dance around the burial ground. His great great-grandfather gave permission for us to walk and being told the history, but he also said that we must not talk to anyone on the island or in Vanuatu about it. Then we were introduced to the skull of his ancestor. After that Loren could show us around on the taboo area.

We walked by some Nakamal trees. Loren told us this is where the spirits stay. The spirits are the same size as us, or they can be small as dwarfs. When there are people on the island the spirits climb up the trees where they can keep an eye on what is happening, they only walk the ground if the island is empty or at night. Loren had met two of them one night, one lady spirit with long hair all the way down to her waist and one small spirit, walking on the trail across the island back to their Nakamal tree.

We also walked by the old place where the chiefs used to be crowned, and where men who want to earn statues through grade-taking ceremonies could, and still can, bring and slaughter pigs. If this is happening they need a thousand pigs. Five hundred tied on one side of the trail and five hundred on the other. One side is for the men, the other for the women. The men and the women may not be together, or talk to each other, during the ten days of ceremony. They must kill and cook the pigs on different sides of the trail. This is the only time men do any cooking, otherwise that is always a woman’s job. Once the boys get into puberty they are on the men’s side.

It was a long time since this was used for ceremony, almost a hundred years, in his grandfather’s time. But Loren was hoping it would be once again in not a too far away future so that he would experience it.

The men in the early history earned their statues through grade-taking ceremonies, each grade closer to becoming a chief. The more grades a man had earned the more powerful his defence of black magic would be, and the more potent his spirit would be after death. One way to show a man’s wealth in life was the number of his pigs. The tusks from the pigs provided currency (now they are a symbol on the flag), and the pigs were the second most important in the family. But who was then responsible for the pigs well-being and the man’s statues? Their wives...who came as number three. Loren told, with a smile on his face, that thanks to Christ and church women have upgraded and are nowadays considered more important than the pigs.

1.6.2 Languages

Nordic Breeze – 2016: When we were on the east coast of the island Malekula, in a small village by Banam Bay, the people explained to us that they have five different languages, besides the three official, in the same bay and peninsula, all within sight or walking distance. They always spoke their own in the village and could only understand two of the others, so usually Bislama with the others.

And when we were anchored by little Awai Island where two brothers live with families, Sofram told us that his island used to have its own language, but it disappeared when his grandfather died. It really can’t be easy to keep a language when it’s only spoken in the family. Just think about it: When getting married, the women always move to the husband’s village, with what probably for her has a new language. She needs to learn her husband’s language or they share a third one, she only speaks her own
old language with their children. So the children grow up with at least two languages, via mother and father, and maybe an extra via grandmother.

Then when starting preschool and school they need to learn Bislama and English, French... Bislama is the main common language, but is quite new in the country, it was developed as a traders’ tongue in the 19th century and got its name from what the early traders took from the country; the beche-de-mer, or the sea cucumber.

**Yolo – 2012:** Almost all business and governmental employees speak three or more languages. The most common ones are English, Bislama, and French.

### 1.6.3 What is Kastom?

**From the Vanuatu Tourism Website (2019):** Kastom is a pijin word (Bislama/English) used to refer to traditional culture, including religion, economics, art and magic in Melanesia.

The word derives from the Australian English pronunciation of custom. It is consistent in spelling across most of the many variations in pidgin and pisin across the region. Kastom is mostly not written only passed down through teachings and stories. It is concentrated through:

- Kastom House - sites where objects and rituals are stored.
- Kastom stories - myths, legends and communal histories.
- Kastom tabu - objects of special power, significance and symbolism.

The use of the word is slightly different in the different countries and cultures of Melanesia. There are designated Kastom villages in Vanuatu which are open to tourists, dedicated to preserving Kastom.

The people of 'Vanuatu', a name which means ‘Land Eternal’, are largely Melanesian and the people are called Ni-Vanuatu (meaning ‘of Vanuatu’). Recognised as one of the most culturally diverse country in the world, dances, ceremonies, status and systems of authority, artistic styles, animal and crop husbandry can vary from island to island, known as 'kastom'.

**Kastom way of life**

In cultures where language is unwritten, oral traditions of the kastom way of life, have been faithfully passed down from generation to generation. Throughout the middle and southern islands of Vanuatu, there existed the story of a great and powerful chief Roimata who united the warring and cannibalistic tribes of the area into a unified, and peaceful group of tribes, a first in ancient Vanuatu. That kastom way of life exists today called 'naflak'.

**Languages**

Vanuatu boasts 113 distinct languages and innumerable dialects. Out of the three official languages, Bislama is the most spoken in Vanuatu, followed by English, and lastly French. Symbols and items used day to day especially in the outer islands which highlight the kastom way of life:

- nakamal / men's house or meeting ground
- namele leave /signs for taboo
- pigs tusk, red mat / signs of chiefly hood
- Nangol / land Diver first step from child hood to become man
- Circomsion / During the time of circumcise it is taboo to go near the place custom believes
• Navenue leave / someone holding a navenue leave working through into the village on which she or he left long ago the message is to say that he / she belongs to the place / that village
• Bamboo leave / when someone gives you a bamboo leave it means you belong to the tribe
• Basket with a bush knife holding in hand / going to the garden
• A women in a village with a tattoo sign or a broken front tooth / the girl is engaged
• Tattoos in the village/ symbol customary origin eg: spider, sharks, turtle, etc...
• Also a coconut leave or navele palm leaf across a beach / taboo sign
• Sand Drawing/ passing of messages and stories through kastom art on sand and song

Traditional Economy

Naturally, traditional societies’ economies are based on produce from the land and staple foods like yam, taro and manioc. And in places where there is plenty of water, taro is grown in complex terraces hand built from earth and rocks. Pigs are a mainstay of the economy not just as food but as a form of money and prestige.

1.6.4 Land Diving

From the Vanuatu Tourism Website (2019): One of the most well-known Vanuatu traditions is the Naghol. Legend has it that the first jumper was a woman. She was trying to escape from her abusive husband, climbed a tree and jumped. He followed her, leapt and died, unaware that his wife had secured liana vines to her ankles. For some time, only women participated in the dive until the male elders decided that they should dive to address their shame and prove their courage.

This awe-inspiring ancient tradition, is known as the land diving, is the role model for the modern bungee jumping. Each year, land diving happens from April to June on Pentecost island every Saturdays and invites observers to witness the event.

1.6.5 Festivals

Mr John – 2011: If there is anything you want to do or see (like a waterfall walk or dive on a reef) first you have to work out and pay the price….. Because there ain’t nothing here for free!!!!

Here is where some of the money goes:
• Walk to waterfall in Aneityum 1500pp
• Volcano trip from Tana Anchorage 5000pp (includes 3250pp entry fee)
• Cascade waterfall in Efate 1500pp
• Botanical Garden Efate 800pp
• Back to my Roots festival Ambrym 7000pp but expect 9000 at the next festival…..
• Port Sandwich Festival Malekula 4000pp
• SW Bay Festival, Malekula (Fire Beach, Labo Village) 5000pp
• Twin Waterfall Festival, Banks Islands 4000pp?

Photography may be charged extra and Video Cameras WILL certainly be charged extra (20000$US for a big Movie Camera)!
Sloepmouche – June-Aug 2009: So often in Vanuatu we find out about things only after the fact. This cruising season we were so excited that we had five different events in the islands to tell about, and even better, most were scheduled one after the other so it was possible to attend four in a row if so desired.

We had suggested dates to the SW Bay folks to make this possible, and Lamen Bay set their date accordingly. Only Tomin Island and the Ambrym Magic Festival dates were pre-set and, unfortunately, on the very same days in July.

On the VHF net in Vila, we announced two to three times a week the events, programs and anchorage info, and encouraged yachties to go. The uniqueness of Vanuatu is the incredible traditional native customs (kastom) that are still practiced or remembered here; each island or tribal group has its unique culture. The festivals were a mix of contemporary and ancient traditions.

With this much organization and some advance notice, the turnout of yachts overwhelmed our expectations and totally awed and amazed the villagers! SSCA was well represented!

1.6.6 Security Issues

1.6.7 Anchorage Ownership and Anchoring Fees

1.6.8 Betelnut

1.6.9 Kava

From Vanuatu Tourism Website (2019): Although kava is not just a food crop; it is a significant part of Vanuatu's kastom, usually drunk to seal an agreement between people after a long meeting. Kava is a derivative of the pepper tree family traditionally cut and chewed into a pulp, then spat into a bowl. The mushy pulp is squeezed and the resultant liquid drunk in. On some islands, both men and women may drink kava after a hard day's work. On Tanna however, it has become more ritualised as a 'men only' pastime and women dare not pass near nakamal's (men's houses) at the time kava is being drunk.

1.6.10 Shell Money

1.6.11 Trading

Noonsite – 2018: Many villages receive little or no contact with the outside world other than through yachts. Cruisers have noted the increasing trend of villages to charge for activities or tours and even for trips around villages. If taking part in a tour or activity check to see if the community benefits from it. Be polite and say you would prefer to walk around a village yourself; all too often they will show you around for free anyway.

Trading goods for local carvings and fresh produce is a major source of clothing, school supplies, and currency for these villagers. Carry second-hand clothing, notebooks, pencils and pens, fishing line and hooks, reading glasses, old magazines, etc. for bartering with locals.

Adina – 2015 – Trading in the South Pacific (Not sure this applies to Vanuatu): We found trading a great way to engage with the local people living on many of the islands we stopped at in the South Pacific. In the more remote islands trading with yachts has become a way for these people to source supplies they need but can't access. It is also a way for yachts to source fresh fruit and vegetables; at times we would be several weeks between main towns and therefore relied upon trading for our fresh supplies.
Our trading started in some of the remote islands in the east of Fiji, continued throughout Vanuatu and became a part of our everyday life in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (PNG). People would paddle out to Adina with fresh produce from their garden, whatever was in season at the time. In the Solomon Islands people also wanted to trade carvings and woven baskets and bags. At some islands we were able to “order” crayfish for trading. Sometimes we traded as we walked through villages. We never went short of fresh fruit and vegetables!

**HOW WE WENT ABOUT TRADING**

We always tried to make sure we traded fairly, giving back equivalent or more than we were being given. We looked at prices in shops and at the fresh market at the first town we arrived at in each country to gauge this. For example, in the Solomons we saw that a kilo of rice or flour cost around SBD15, whilst bundles of vegetables at the market were either SBD5 or 10 depending on the size of bundle. So if we were given a decent bundle of two or three different vegetables together we knew it was worth at least one kilo of rice.

We always traded with the first person to come to the boat in each place we anchored, even if we did not need or want what they offered. We felt this was the right way to start our relationship with the village.

We always asked the trader what they would like in return. In some places they would simply say "it’s up to you" and in others they would be specific. If we had what they wanted we would give it. Sometimes this would mean we’d give them more than they’d asked for to ensure we gave a fair trade whilst others might get lucky, for example getting a t-shirt for a bunch of bananas. For the shy, we would prompt them with the types of things we had and if they still wouldn’t say what they wanted we’d tend to give them rice and corned beef as we knew these were favoured items.

We would tell traders if there was anything we were looking for, to see if they had it or anyone else in the village did, emphasising the need for small portions "as we are only two people". In the Solomons we often asked for eggs and found that people wanted money rather than a trade, which was fine by us.

We always traded with children regardless of what they brought us. Sometimes this would be a pair of coconuts, a few oranges or as extreme as twelve papayas and a bird as we experienced at one anchorage! If the children brought a lot of produce, clearly from their parents’ garden, we’d give something for them (biscuits, a ball, hair bands) and something for them to take to their parents (rice, corned beef). If there were lots of children in the canoe together bringing a small offering, such as a couple of coconuts between them, we’d give them a packet of biscuits to share. Unfortunately some children would throw biscuit packaging in the sea despite us asking them not to, so we started asking for the packaging back or gave the biscuits out one by one to each child to avoid giving packaging at all.

Another yacht we met said they made popcorn when there were many children coming to visit, but had the same issue with the plastic bags they used to distribute it. We found children the most entertaining traders, some returning multiple times with different produce to see what goodies they could get from us! In many places children were asking for pencils and exercise books for their school work which we happily gave.

Occasionally we did say no to adult traders. In some anchorages we were inundated and it would have been mad to trade for everything that was offered. In these instances we would politely tell the trader we already had more than enough, thank them for coming to see us and ask them to tell others we now had enough of the fruit or vegetable in question. We would also tell them if there was anything else we were keen to trade for.
Making “tok-tok”: Some traders would come to the boat and simply want to trade, paddling straight back to the village. Others would want to stay and chat, or float a little way off Adina just watching us work or looking at things on the yacht. We never had a problem with this as we found people generally to be very well meaning and simply inquisitive. We would always make time to talk - you are curious about them, you should expect them to be curious about you and talking is an important part of life to the islanders.

We found that certain items would become popular in a particular village. For example, we would trade children’s pants with one person and half an hour later have two more canoes at the boat asking to trade for pants too - it was as if word had got out that we had pants on board!

Packaging is precious! If someone gave us their produce in a plastic bag, no matter how small, we always emptied it and gave it back to them. Bags of any size are valuable in remote islands! We often gave our trade in a bag to ensure it would get to shore still dry. And we gave the larger rice/flour sacks away - these are valuable items for transporting produce from the gardens and in some places are made into shoulder bags and school bags.

We would always carry a few items for trading in our rucksack when we went ashore to enable us to trade if we met someone with vegetables. These items also doubled as potential gifts to give to a chief if it was our first time going in to the village.

Save some things for the next village. We found some villages would quite happily have traded until we were empty, but you always have to think there is another village ahead and people there who will also be desperate to trade with you. So be careful and save trading goods for throughout your trip.

Trading and not just giving. We followed this rule as we believe giving alone sets a bad precedent as islanders will then expect the next yacht to do the same and in time it could cause problems. Similarly we learnt not to hand things over for a trade on the expectation of the person returning with their trade as the few times we did it, they never returned. That said, we had a golden rule that if anyone genuinely needed medicine or school material we would happily give it to them.

WHAT WE TRADED

We carried a selection of items purchased specifically for trading. At times we also traded from items we had on board for ourselves. The list below is exhaustive; we’ve annotated the most popular items with stars.

Food items:
- Rice*
- Sugar*
- Flour
- Tea bags
- Coffee
- Corned beef tins*
- Salt
- Powdered milk
- Sweet biscuits*
We would bulk buy rice, flour and sugar in sacks and re-bag into one kilo bags. Over the first three months of the 2015 season when we spent time in north Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and east Papua New Guinea, we traded approximately 60kg of rice, 15kg of flour and 10kg of sugar. We could have traded more sugar if we had been carrying it. To try to avoid issues with weevils we bought the sacks of rice and flour at main towns as we went along, rather than buying it all at the start of the season.

Household items:
- Washing powder for clothes*
- Matches
- Cutlery
- Cooking utensils (wooden)
- Plates, bowls and mugs (plastic)

Stationery:
- Biros
- Colouring pencils*
- Pencils*
- Pencil sharpeners
- Exercise books*

Fishing materials:
- Small hooks for trolling when paddling a canoe*
- Medium hooks for trolling from a banana boat
- Fishing line*
- Small plastic squids (called "bait" in many islands)

Toys for children:
- Small bouncing balls*
- Skipping ropes
- Hair bands (in pretty colours)*
- Small toy cars
- Swimming goggles*
- Balloons
- Bubble blowers

Clothing:
- Ladies t-shirts, shorts (to the knee) and sarongs*
- Men's t-shirts and shorts
- Children's pants, t-shirts and shorts*
Flip-flops
Small bottles of perfume for the ladies
We had a mixture of new and pre-warn clothes; people were perfectly happy to trade pre-warn clothes in good condition. We’d agree with the trader what type of clothing they wanted then show them a few options in about the right size to allow them to choose. This was particularly pleasing to the girls and children!
Solomon Islands only, for carvers:
Sandpaper of all grades*
Superglue*
Wood glue
Carving tools
Carving is big business in the Solomon Islands and we found these items to be things the carvers really wanted and actually seemed to expect yachts to be carrying to trade with them. We found we were able to negotiate combined money/trading item deals for the carvings we wanted.
SOURCING ITEMS FOR TRADING
Whilst the list above looks long, we found just a few trips to different shops enabled us to set ourselves up. We then topped up in main towns along the way if we needed to.
We bought clothing in budget stores in New Zealand. We bought food items in bulk from wholesale shops to get the best prices – BonMarche Wholesale in Port Vila, Vanuatu was our main source for this. The rest of the non-food items we bought from Chinese shops in Port Vila, similar to those you find in many main cities in the South Pacific countries.
When buying in bulk, as we often were, we would ask for a discount and were usually given 5% or 10% discount.
We also always keep any items we no longer want that we think might be useful to islanders and these became trading items, for example old fins and diving masks.

www.yachtadina.co.uk

1.6.12 Malaria and Other Health Issues

Cruising Vanuatu.com – Dec 2018: Malaria is a serious problem in Vanuatu - and it is only one of several diseases you can get from mosquito bites. The further north you go, the worse the risk of malaria. There have been cases of malaria that originated in Efate and even in Port Vila, but these probably came from carriers of the disease from more northerly islands.

Malaria is deadly and depending on when and where the symptoms start you can be in very big trouble very quickly. In addition to Malaria, mosquitoes in all the islands of Vanuatu can infect you with one of several varieties of blood virus commonly called dengue fever.

Of the two major mosquito borne diseases malaria is by far the most dangerous but dengue fever also kills people and is much more common - and therefore a greater risk. Dengue fever is carried by "domestic" mosquitos that thrive near villages. They also bite during the daytime, but are more likely to attack during dusk and dawn.
We had a friend who took one of those prescription anti-malaria prophylactics for two weeks. She wound up in the hospital in Sydney with her face swollen to twice its normal size and serious problems with her liver. These drugs can have serious side effects and many of the drugs that used to be effective against malaria no longer work. Plus none of them help with Dengue Fever.

We have been cruising in the tropics for over 40 years in remote areas of Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, PNG and New Caledonia and we have never had malaria or dengue.

### 1.7 Yachtsmen’s Services - Overview

#### 1.7.1 Money

**Yolo – 2012:** During our visit 100 VATU equaled about $1.11 USD (100/90=1.11). At times it can be very difficult securing local currency (VATU) at Anatom, Tanna and Vanua Lava Islands.

So (coming from Fiji) try to secure at least 30,000 VATU prior to/upon arrival in Vanuatu. This amount should cover the initial expenses of most couples clearing-in to Vanuatu and the charges related to the volcano tour on Tanna Island.

In Port Vila, most banks will exchange the major world currencies. Their related exchange rate is unjustifiably high. The money exchangers in Port Vila give you a much better deal.

Credit cards are widely accepted at resorts and by the retailers in Port Vila and Luganville. Most merchants will tack on an additional 5% surcharge on credit card purchases.

The large grocery stores and Yachting World will only pump-up the price several percent (2%). Watch out for the street side gas stations, they add an 8% fee for credit card purchases. ATMs can be located every 50 meters in Port Vila and Luganville, and in our case there was no fee for using them.

**Mr. John – 2011:** Some places / islands don’t have any Banks or ATM’s so you need a big stack of money with you.

#### 1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline

**Yolo – Sep 2012:** DUTY FREE FUEL: Only during the clearing-out process at Customs can you secure a special permit to purchase duty free diesel fuel (22% discount off the regular price). This will greatly reduce the price of each liter of diesel fuel. Full price must be paid for gasoline at all times and locations.

You must pay full price for fuel (diesel and gasoline) prior to clearing-out of Vanuatu. It is very unlikely that you will find fuel for sale outside of Port Vila and Luganville. If you do locate fuel at a remote island it typically sells for over $2.90 USD per liter (greater than $11 USD per gallon).

At Luganville it is only practical to jerry can fuel to your vessel. Taxi drivers typically charge you extra to transport jerry cans. If you are purchasing over 400 liters/100 gallons of diesel you can make arrangements for a fuel truck to meet you at a wharf and top off your tanks. In this case you will be required to pay an additional fee to the wharf owner. The length of your vessel in meters times 294 VATU ($3.27 USD) is the fee for tying up to a government wharf for less than 24 hours. So, a 13 meter (44 foot) boat would cost 3,822 VATU ($43 USD) per day to use the wharf. The Vanuatu rough concrete wharfs are not yacht friendly.

That leaves Port Vila as the only practical option for fueling a yacht. The Yachting World Marina at Paray Bay has an easily accessible and yacht friendly fuel dock. Unfortunately, most yachts do not depart Vanuatu from Port Vila so duty free prices are seldom paid.

In late 2012 the cost (cash price) of diesel fuel in US Dollars per US gallon were:
Fiji (does not have Duty Free fuels): $ 4.62 USD
Vanuatu – Non-Duty Free: $ 7.05 USD
Vanuatu – Duty Free: $ 5.51 USD
New Caledonia – Non-Duty Free $ 5.75 USD
New Caledonia – Duty Free $ 4.91 USD

In late 2012 the cost (cash price) of gasoline in US Dollars per US gallon were:
Fiji (does not have Duty Free fuels): $ 5.19 USD
Vanuatu (does not have Duty Free gasoline): $ 7.30 USD
New Caledonia – Non-Duty Free: $ 6.72 USD
New Caledonia – Duty Free: $ 4.78 USD

Fuel is sold by the liter in Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. There are 3.785 liters per US gallon. Plan your fuel purchases accordingly.

1.7.3  Propane (Cooking Gas)

1.7.4  Groceries

Noonsite – 2018: Provisioning: The outer islands have an increasing number of stores and shops, stocked with basic items. However nothing will compare with the facilities available in Port Vila or Luganville (the Bon Marche supermarket is good value with a French influence and many Australian & European brands). Many small island resorts are extremely helpful to yachts and one can arrange provisions as well as guides and tours through the local village chief. Cheap duty-free alcohol targeted at cruise ships can also be purchased on departure.

1.7.5  Water

1.7.6  Boat Parts & Repairs

Noonsite – on website 2018: Getting work done: Port Vila offers good services for yachts. Port Vila Boatyard has haulout facilities, marine electricians and mechanics and cyclone certified moorings. Many spare parts can be found in Port Vila and Luganville or can easily be ordered and flown in from Australia, NZ or USA and brought in Duty and VAT free for visiting yachts.

Bold Spirit – Jan 2017: Cruising the whole of Vanuatu, one can safely say there are more mechanical spare parts available in Luganville than Port Vila.

Best Marine Engineer is JT or John Turner available on: +678 7101766
1.7.7 Medical

1.7.8 Laundry

1.8 Embassies and Consulates

1.9 Getting Visitors In and Out

1.10 Communications

1.10.1 VHF

General VHF Advice that applies to all areas: Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are ‘tuned’ for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may ‘bleed’ over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you’re close enough). You don’t need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are ‘duplex’ channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated ‘a’, like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF’s in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are—both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

1.10.2 SSB Radio Frequencies and Nets

Vanuatu Cruisers Net: 8230mhz USB at 0730 local time

The Vanuatu Net operates daily at 0830 UTC, which is 7:30 a.m. local time in Vanuatu. Primary frequency is 8230 kHz USB and there is an alternate frequency of 8188 if needed for clearer communication. Coverage area is normally around Vanuatu but extends to New Caledonia, Solomons and Fiji.

Check-ins are about Vanuatu but can can come from any of the neighbouring countries with propagation.

The purpose of the Vanuatu Net is to facilitate communication between cruisers and exchange information to get the most out of your adventure.

The Vanuatu Net is for cruisers and relies on someone starting the net at the start of May and others sharing the load through the season by volunteering to do a day or two a week. It is not difficult and we all use our radios anyway so please help out.

Soggy Paws – 2019: In Vanuatu, it is possible to tune into the Gulf Harbor Radio net. Times and frequencies can be found here:
Here are some other radio comms information provided by Gulf Harbor Radio:

**International Emergency Frequencies**
2182 4125 6215 8291 12290 16420

NZ Maritime Radio monitors all emergency frequencies 24/7 see below for working frequencies
tel. 0800 MARITIME, 0800 627 48463 maritime@kordia.co.nz
tel . 0064 (0)4 9148333
RCC NZ tel 0064 (0) 4 577 8030 rcc@maritimenz@govt.nz

**Cruiser Nets**
Gulf Harbour Radio 8752 (alt 8779 or 8297)) at 1915 UTC, 0715 am NZST. Also 6230, 12353, 12365
Mon thru Sat Weather summary for South Pacific cruising area on the half hour.
May1-Nov30 GHR email: ghradio@xtra.co.nz
Far North Radio 6516 at 1800 NZST. Position reports. Starts with Islands weather.
Northland Radio various frequencies so go to: https://northlandradio.nz/frequencies/
Tony's Maritime Net 14315 USB daily at 2100UTC, ham net
Pacifc Seafarers Net 14300 USB at 0300 UTC, ham net pacseanet@gmail.com
JRCC Honolulu Tel 001 808 535 3333  JRCHonolulu@uscg.mil

**NZ Maritime Radio SSB WEATHER**

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NavArea XIV includes: Islands- Equator to 25S, 160E to 120W
Subtropic- 23S to 40S, Australian Coast to 120W
Pacific- 25S to 55S, 170W to 120W

**NZ Wx Fax Frequencies**
5807.0 9459.0 13550.0 16340.1, Subtract 1.9 for SSB RX
(and 3247.4 between 0945 and 1645UTC at the 16340 time)

Someone told us that Hans aboard Sea Goon hangs out in the Louisiades and sometimes has a net going on 8170 at 0800 Local.

**Mr. John – 2011:** The Namba Net 4003khz at 2115Z 0815T

**Forza – 2010:** There is also a north Aust and Islands HF net, called the ‘Shiela Net’ at UTC +10 at 0800 every morning where you can hear the latest and check in. Sometimes we could receive and transmit but other times there was too much static.
1.10.3  Telephones & Cell Phones

1.10.4  Internet Access

From Cruising Vanuatu.com – December 2018: Vanuatu has two mobile services, TVL and DigiCel. Both are great in Port Vila and the service varies considerably when out in the islands. Things were looking good until Pam wiped out so many mobile stations in the out islands; hopefully services will be back to normal this coming cruising season; but don’t count on it. So which service should you go with? TVL or DigiCel?

Coverage: TVL or DigiCel - which is better?

Click Here for the DigiCel coverage map.

TVL does not give a coverage map on their website but claims to reach 75% of the population with GSM from the Banks Islands down to Aneityum. I’ve seen a map showing coverage and we have it on the cruising guide to Vanuatu - but I have no idea how much you can rely on it. Apparently service varies considerably from day to day in some areas.

Cost: Data access on your smart phone, tablet, USB dongle or WiFi Hotspot is inexpensive when compared to Internet Cafes but it is also slower. Both networks offer GSM and 3G but you’d better count on GSM being the norm when you are cruising anywhere but Port Vila and possibly Luganville. So it isn’t going to be fast but you are buying MB of download, not hours so that’s OK.

TVL rates range from 50VT (about AUD 0.60 cents) for one day Internet with 75MB of data and free Facebook - to 2000VT (about AUD$25) for a month of data with 4500MB of data plus free Facebook.

DigiCel has a similar one day 50VT plan with 50MB of download but the one month 4500MB of data plan costs more than double the TVL plan at 4,500 VU.

Of course you need to have a SIM card for either DigiCel or TVL.

The DigiCel SIM card costs 500VT and you get 800MB, 800 minutes, 800 SMS and 800VT credit over 4 months!

The TVL SIM card costs nothing - that’s right, just show up at TVL and ask for a SIM card :-) 

Answer: Cost is the same for minor use, TVL is cheaper for heavy use. On the other hand, you can top up your account with DigiCel using their App or on their website while with TVL you'll need to buy scratch cards from TVL, an ANZ Bank ATM, or a TVL approved dealer - which might be a bit difficult to find depending on where you are anchored.

The Best Choice?

I’d suggest getting both a TVL and a DigiCel SIM card; maybe have two smart phones or have the one SIM in a tablet or WIFI modem and the other in your smart phone, or have one phone with two sim cards. Since you are paying as you go if you get to an anchorage in Ambrym where you have DigiCel but no TVL you can still get on line. Plus if both networks are available you could test each with a low cost one day or one hour plan to see which one actually works better. And if your TVL account gets used up while cruising, you could switch to DigiCel and top up that account online.

Yolo – 2012: Realistically, Wi-Fi is only available in the Port Vila and Luganville areas, be it free or otherwise. Several cafes in each city have “free” Wi-Fi for paying customers. “The” Vanuatu library is located in the Parliament Building in Port Vila. You can access the Internet via their computers for free during government hours, which are listed above.
1.10.5 Mail

Cruising Vanuatu.com – Dec 2018: The Post Office recommends that Visiting yachts have their mail delivered to Yachting World Marina.

THE ADDRESS IS:

Your Name
(NAME OF YOUR YACHT) - Yacht in Transit
C/O Yachting World
PO Box 1507
Port Vila
Vanuatu

Send PACKAGES to

Your Name
Your Yacht in Transit
c/o Yachting World
Lini Hyway
Port Vila
Vanuatu

1.10.6 News

1.11 Diving

1.12 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities

1.13 Tsunami Information

Soggy Paws - March 2014: The entire Pacific Basin is subject to tsunamis. Since we have been in the Pacific (5 years), there have been 3 significant tsunamis which have affected cruising locations (American Samoa and Tonga in 2009, South America, Galapagos & Panama in 2010, Hawaii & Mexico in 2011).

The tsunamis originate in various locations, but the worst origination locations were Japan and Chile, however, many ‘tremors' happen in these locations that do not cause widespread tsunamis.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center website is located here:

http://ptwc.weather.gov/

If you have onboard email, it is a good idea to subscribe to tsunami warning emails while you are in the Pacific, which you can do on this website. It might be useful to first subscribe from your internet email for a little while, to understand what messages might be coming your way, and how often, before you chance clogging up your onboard email.

1.14 Cruising Information Sources

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don’t mind that we’ve gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don’t have internet
A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what ‘a foot under the keel’ means, for example.

Where it’s important, we’ve annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

1.14.1 Local Websites
The latest edition of the primary tourism website in Vanuatu is
https://www.vanuatu.travel/en/ (vanuatutravel.info re-directs here)
You should especially visit the “yachting” page on this website, here:

1.14.2 Cruiser Reports
For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser’s websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of an SSCA bulletin. For the sources reported below, much of the info has come directly from our cruising friends, helping to round out the information in our various Compendiums.

Adina (2015): Adina is a Hylas 46 with 6’4” draft.
https://yachtadina.co.uk/
Alba (2015): Alba is a Halberg-Rassey 42F with a 6 foot draft.
http://thehowarths.net/alba-chronicles
Sloepmouche (May 2006 – Nov 2010): Sloepmouche is a 46’ Norman Cross trimaran - 5’ draft. Most of the info on Vanuatu from Sloepmouche was taken from a series of articles from the Seven Seas Cruising Association Bulletins (ssca.org). Sloepmouche’s current website is TheTropicalCruisingLife.com. They are typical low-budget, off the grid sailing adventurers, slowly working their way around the world. The have a ton of videos of their cruising adventures on their website.

1.14.3 Noonsite
Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.
http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/Vanuatu

1.14.4 Seven Seas Cruising Association
The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.
http://www.ssca.org
1.14.5 Ocean Cruising Club

The OCC is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a website and bi-annual publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. Membership is reasonable, and the publication is available electronically. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

http://oceancruisingclub.org

1.15 Printed Sources

1.15.1 Cruising Guides

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).

Chesapeake – 2012: We used two guides to help us navigate through Vanuatu:

The yellow guide, “Vanuatu, a cruising yachtman’s notes and drawings” by Bob Tiews and Thalia Hearne, South Pacific Cruising Series, Pub. by the Capt Teach Pressboat Books Ltd., 23B Westhaven Dr., Westhaven Marina, Auckland, NZ. It’s hard to find, but the information is still accurate even though the 2nd edition was 1995.

The Tusker Cruising Guide was given to us as an electronic file and I can’t seem to find it online but do have a copy on my computer. It offers a lot of information about many of the islands, along with charts and aerial views of the anchorages.


Get the latest edition as this great guide is updated every year or two. With charts, aerial photos and sailing directions to most anchorages, you will have no problem making landings.

CM93 electronic charts are slightly off in some areas, so do not rely blindly on them or on cruising guides or our waypoints!

1.15.2 Recommended Reading

For background, we recommend the following books:

2 Passage Reports

2.1 Sailing Here from Elsewhere

1.15.3 From New Zealand

1.15.4 From Fiji

Chesapeake – September 2012: It seems we left Denarau at just the right time. Reestablished our lost sea legs Saturday, the first day (no appetite so good for weight loss) as we sailed 7-8kt in 20kt wind and 1-2mt swells from the South and confused seas. We took several big waves into the cockpit - time for foul weather gear. Sunday was a beam reach and smooth sailing downwind and had a great full moon display all night. Monday we motored half the day with current against us then the wind kicked in to
20kt and we sailed 8-9kt (!!) beam reach with 2 reefs and small jib blasting us through the water in -2mt seas late Monday through our arrival Tuesday. There was plenty of water over the bow and a little in the cockpit and 2-2.5kt current against us. We made up for the slowness and arrived in Anatom at 2pm Tuesday.

**Shango – August 2012:** Our Passage to Vanuatu from Momi Bay at the southwest corner of Viti Levu, Fiji was a good one. We left mid-morning on Thursday the sixteenth with our friend Mike on Alchemi right behind us. As we exited Navula Pass we headed off on a beam reach with twenty knots of wind while Alchemi turned left for a passage to New Zealand.

Over the next two days the wind crept further astern but the trip continued to be pleasant and dry. On Sunday morning with thirty odd miles to Port Resolution the wind dropped and we worked hard for each mile gained, finally resorting to the engine when we were ten miles out. As we approached the island we could see Mt. Yasur belch large clouds of smoke into the otherwise clear blue sky.

**Mr. John – September 2011:** All of those that we had met, who had cruised this area before, had stressed the need to start in the South and work north; this was very sound advice and I pass it on!

One of the big attractions of Vanuatu is the Tanna Volcano Experience and most of the year this is a hundred (plus) miles dead to windward from Port Vila; thus it would be logical to head either directly to Tanna or to Aneityum in the south. ‘Clearing’ into Tanna has its own problems (more on that later) so now that Aneityum has become a ‘Clearance Port’, this is the best place to head for. For us, it was 493 miles from Lautoka and took us a very pleasant four days of broad reaching.

1.15.5  **To/From Solomons**

1.15.6  **From Australia**

2.2  **Between Stops in Vanuatu**

1.15.7  **Anetium to Tanna**

Mr. John – Sep 2011: The passage from Aneityum to Tanna should be a Trade Wind Reach and with a good current pushing you along. From Anelghowhat anchorage into the Port Resolution anchorage is 49 miles.

We left at 0600hrs and were happily at anchor by 1400hrs, departing from NW Bay would cut another hour off that so there seems little point in doing this as an overnight.....Those that do seem to spend their early morning hours trying to slow down however they can be treated to some nice displays from the Tanna Volcano.

After spending some time in Kiribati and the Marshall’s we were surprised by the extent of the wind shadow in the lee of Aneityum, we had to get almost ten miles downwind to find clear air. This is a good introduction to all the islands in this group where the mountainous nature and geography of the islands in relation to the pervading wind conditions, can cause some very unexpected wind directions quite some way offshore.

3  **Torres Islands**

**Sloepmouche – August 2009:** I (Luc) flew to the Torres Islands and visited all islands during one week of
a filming assignment. I did not see too many calm anchorages except for a few spots on the western coast. You are then quite isolated as, for some reason, most villages are on the windward side.

Even more remote than the Banks, you won’t see any vehicle here at all.

Metoma Island is managed by a mini family. A visit of their coconut crabs and megapodes conservation area will be remembered! The fishing was excellent between the islands as we traveled by speedboat—don’t forget to troll!

The sole airport is located on Linua Island. You can walk across from Loh Island. Do stop in the Torres on your way to the Solomons. You will enjoy the contact with the friendly islanders, and you will have a good opportunity to taste some excellent coconut crabs as they still abound here!

### 3.1 Tegua

#### 1.15.8 Hayter Bay

**Screensaver – July 2018:** 13 14.81 S / 166 35.65 E  Anchor in 18m sand/coral rubble no internet. Having been there a couple of times before I had an entry track so I wasn’t overly concerned with my arrival time which ended up being in the dark. Clearly this must be the windy season because once again I got more than my fair share. While I was running with it one gust in excess of gale-force (apparent wind) caused Screensaver to over correct, my poled out Jib backed and well that was the end of my whisker pole. It bent in excess of 90 degrees and murphy tried to take my sail as well, but that battle I won as I got it back under control.

### 4 Banks Islands

**Sloepmouche – August 2009:** In retrospect, to get the best sailing conditions, we recommend cruising the Banks in the following order: Gaua (Losalava), Vanua Lava (Sola), Mota Lava, Reef Islands, Ureparapara, Vanua Lava (Waterfall Bay, and then Vureas Bay for festival). We did it clockwise (and it was much easier than we would have guessed as we were lucky with the winds as we arrived from the Ambrym Festival direct for the festival in Vureas Bay), but you could time your visit to finish with the festival—that is if you don’t mind missing the Malekula and Ambrym Festivals in August.

#### 4.1 Sola / Vanua Lava Island (Clearance Port)

**Wandering Waterhorse – October 2018 – Check Out:** We checked out of the country in the Northern port of Sola. This was an experience in itself as the wind direction was coming right into the bay that we had to anchor in to go ashore, so the boat was bucking all over the place while trying to anchor and get in the dinghy. You become quite acrobatic living on a boat and get used to doing things very quickly so you don’t end up in the water!

We had hoped that the small bank in Sola would be able to change the last of our Vanuatu Vatu into Solomon Dollars, but we were out of luck. They held very little other currency. In fact, Sola held very little of anything. There were 2 ‘shops’ and a market, that by the time we got there had nothing left to buy.

We were counting on being able to get some fresh food for the passage north as we were almost out, but it was not to be. Ah well, I was going to have to get creative with what we had left for the next week or so...
Check out went smoothly, if not a lengthy process. The Customs guy had gone home for lunch. We waited and waited, and he didn’t seem to be coming back. One of the local guys ended up giving him a call for us and he came down to sort the process.

Once done, we were out of there as fast as a robber’s dog. The swell was so bad coming in the bay and the weather was not predicted to be very nice for a couple of days so we headed to the Reef Islands to tuck out of the wind for the night and make a plan on when to leave.

**Screensaver – July 2018:** Anchor in 5m sand/mud, TVL GSM when the sun shines.

SE Corner Anchorage: 13 52.322 S / 167 33.236 E

Nousa Point Anchorage: 13 49.584 S / 167 33.152 E

The weather just seems to be hanging around for days now without a single day that didn’t reach over 30 knots. Squander has guests waiting in Sola and this is always a risk that bad weather will delay you from reaching your friends or guests. Eventually we thought today might be our only chance so I left Squander and Forfar who was now surfing on the reef behind us again.

The wind and the seas both climbed and things moved in Screensaver that have never moved before, but it seemed manageable and at least periods below 30knts. Squander followed about an hour or so later, and Skedaddle waits in Port Olry for a weather window to catch up.

I stopped briefly in the SE corner of Sola just long enough to get some Mob credit. This website [https://www.ezetop.com/](https://www.ezetop.com/) allows you to top up almost any mobile phone carrier around the world, so as long as you have some credit left and internet access you can top-up from your credit card. I have found it very handy, but this time I was not expecting to be here and too late, my internet had run out, so I had to actually get top-up scratchy cards.

As I approached the shoreline all be it the swell crashing onto the beach wasn’t that large I have yet to master a beach landing in these conditions in style or in fact in any manner that is not embarrassing. Locals pointed me to the left end beside a small break wall as do most guides. Not a wise move I should have followed my earlier landing here 6 months ago. So after collecting a rock with the outboard and getting dunked in 1/2m of water as I exited the tender, I made it. There was a couple of white folks standing on the beach looking longingly at me clearly Squander’s guests whom were kind enough to help me.

Making tracks back to Screensaver as soon as possible I at least exited the beach nicely and was soon heading to the Northern end of the bay which is totally illogical in these big SE conditions, but past experience suggested it was the right choice for reasons I don’t understand. The SE corner of Sola… the so called recommended anchorage has never been good for me in any season.

Squander followed logic and stayed (1 night) in the SE corner that should have been fine but never is. So they joined me up the Northern end which unfortunately is a Lee shore and in 30 knots this doesn’t do a lot for ones relaxation at night, but holding is good and the scotch stays on the table, plus you don’t need to sleep with your head on one wall and feet on the other to remain in bed.

The locals here are very nice and were only too happy to see us, take us on a bit of tour. Arthur was able to give us a bit of the local history and was clearly focused on improving the place. They built quite a long fence that effectively cuts the northern peninsular off. The idea being to stop the wild pigs eating their crops. Next step is dig a decent size hole and turn the tables on the pigs to become dinner.
As for crocodiles, there are a few croc stories from the past and it seems now the limited crocs and people have agreed to coexist. The crocs (only a couple it seems) have the ocean side, and the people have the bay, both leaving each other alone, or so they say.

The ladies were out fishing and while they were small by our standards the bucket was 3/4 full and each fish would probably feed 1 person.

So we have now been hiding here also nearly a week. The shit weather just goes on and on. We are hopeful that we will get 2 days break around 8th and hopefully I can push forward into Solomons and get a bit closer to the higher latitudes hopefully seeing the end of this weather.

**Yolo – Sep 2012:** E. Sola, Sola Bay, Port Patteson, Vanua Lava Island, is also a clearance port. The Banks Islands Group is the northern most Vanuatu clearance port: This village is located on the east side of the island and very few goods or services are available here.

**Sloepmouche – Sep 2009:** This is the northernmost port of entry of Vanuatu. You can get your formalities done here as well as enjoy the hospitality of the Sola Yacht Club. Robert and Serah, gracious hosts, welcome cruisers at their small restaurant and BBQ and provide services for trade like laundry, book swapping, water and trash burning.

Land your dinghy on the beach or at the jetty, and follow the road to the right to find the government buildings, then continue walking along the road to find Lemerous Bungalows (Sola YC).

Walk up to the big white cross on the hill to get a magnificent view of the bay and surrounding area. You can fly crew in/out from the nearby airport (three flights a week from Santo).

A tour by boat to the crocodile river and mangrove is worth it for the tour itself, even if you do not see any alligators (they are alligators and not crocodiles!)

### 4.2 Vanua Lava’s West Coast

#### 1.15.9 Vureas Bay

**Sloepmouche – Sep 2009:** We had a nice overnight sail from North Ambrym (140 nm) to arrive here before the first of September for the annual Vanua Lava Festival in Vureas Bay (this year).

We anchored along the black sand beach in 10 meters of good sand (13°55.19’S, 167°26.80’E).

During the festival it got very rolly when the wind went more SE. Some monohulls found less rolling in the S end behind an arm of reef. Chief Godfrey’s community is just inland of the beach. Men came on the beach to help haul our dinghies above high water line on the steep beach.

This four-day festival was well worth it at 1,000 vatu (VUV) per person with lunch included on the last day. The 14 yachts attending were quite happy they came. All stayed for the four days despite the rolly conditions. We were delighted with the variety of the program, which included very well rehearsed new and old custom dances, singing, traditional games, demonstrations, handicrafts, historical tours and stories. This year’s organizing committee did an exceptional job, especially in looking after our needs. There were food booths and a very economical lunch offered by Christina in the cute “restaurant.”

One thing we noted about the dances and songs presented was a creative and happy—almost mischievous—feeling to many, unlike the seriousness and rigid ritualistic feel of most other custom dances in the islands to the south. The women especially seemed to have a lot of fun and didn’t seem repressed. The most magnificent dance with the most colorful pageantry and complex choreography was the Mag dance.
1.15.10 Twin Waterfall Bay

**Sloepmouche – Sep 2009:** Only a few miles north, this was a nice sail in the lee of the island with a much calmer anchorage! We met Chief Kereley and his family at the small yacht club. The twin falls are beautiful, especially with the late afternoon light giving them a special glow. Do not miss a look at the Paintings Cave. You can enjoy a good bush/garden tour with Chief Kereley.

We happily traded with the locals for fruits, vegetables, lobster, fresh water prawns and coconut crabs.

1.15.11 Single Waterfall Bay

**Sloepmouche – Sep 2009:** Not mentioned in the RG (Rocket Guide), this is another anchorage only a few miles north of Twin Waterfalls, just off a beautiful waterfall. Access ashore is not very easy as the shore is lined with shallow reefs, but worth the effort if you like waterfalls like we do.

If you take your dinghy north from here following the shoreline, you will find a large cave carved in the high cliff rocks that you can drive the dinghy into. Take a light as after you turn the corner, you’ll be in the dark, and it’s difficult to see how much farther you can actually go.

4.3 Reef Islands (Rowa Islands)

**Wandering Waterhorse – Oct 2018:** After clearing out at Sola, we we headed to the Reef Islands to tuck out of the wind for the night and make a plan on when to leave.

These islands are small, low lying and uninhabited, situated behind a giant reef that provided excellent protection from the swell and waves. Not only that but they were incredible to see.

The islands used to be inhabited but they ran out of fresh water, so the people that had lived there were moved to nearby Ureparapara Island (which is another incredible place in itself!)

We spent several hours there the next morning, wandering the length of the larger of the group and marveling at the paradise we had found.

From there we were meant to leave Vanuatu as our 24 hours were up after check out, but the weather was not playing ball so we decided to go and hide out of it all in the middle of the island of Ureparapara.

**Sloepmouche – August 2009:** This is another place that is actually much better than it was described in some guides.

We found the anchorage quite good despite some swell (it was blowing 15-25 knots from ESE). We anchored in 30’ of water at 13°37.636’S, 167°30.393’E.

The dinghy ride over the lagoon to reach the islands was a little long for our friends with a 5 hp outboard, but was not a problem for our RIB 15 hp. If you like pristine beaches and clear water, you’ll enjoy the Reef Islands (some yachts spend over a week here). We saw some fishing charters in this area.

4.4 Mota Lava

**Sloepmouche – August 2009:** The RG is correct when mentioning deep water all the way to the fringing reef. Our solution was to temporarily anchor in 50’ and make up a mooring on a nearby 10’ coral/rock to limit our scope and to be really secured in any wind direction (13°41.582’S, 167°37.829’E).

Access to the island anywhere is indeed difficult at low water since the fringing reef dries. The easiest seems to dinghy around the SE point before Ra Island.

Milli Bay anchorage is about a four-hour walk from the villages, but is very picturesque if you like solitude.
In the south, on Ra Island, you can have a delicious meal at Seaside restaurant (ask a day before for lobsters or coconut crabs) and see some of the Banks dances like the Snake Dance.

There are very welcoming and energetic people on Ra Island.

4.5 Ureparapara (13-32 S / 167-20 E)

Wandering Waterhorse – Oct 2018: Ureparapara is a volcano that has had the middle worn out of it by the sea over the years, creating a Pac-Man shaped island.

On our way over there one of the kids spotted a GIANT work up of birds, chasing the small fish that the huge, leaping Yellow Fin Tuna were feeding on and pushing up to the surface.

Never one to miss a fishing opportunity (even in large swells and 27kt winds!!!!) we trolled through the masses and got a double hook up almost instantly. Unfortunately, our excitement was short lived, as Chae’s whole line got taken by a shark near the boat and then mine was also eaten, just off the back step as we were about to bring it on board. It was a blood bath! The shark left us a tiny bit of one and we were able to get our lure back at least!

Back through the work ups we drove.....until finally we hit the jackpot! A very decent sized fish, a very happy Chae to have the fishing curse of Vanuatu broken and a very happy mum that we got to now head into the bay.

We ended up staying in Ureparapara for 2 nights as there was a howling gale out in the ocean and it was making itself well known in the bay with large rolling waves and bullet winds ripping down the long bay to where we and 2 other boats were anchored.

It has to be one of the most uncomfortable anchorages we have ever been in.

We did, however, spend the time in the bay trading tuna and other bits and bobs off the boat for all kinds of fruit and veggies.

The village in the bay (the same people that had been moved off the Rowa/Reef Islands had a multitude of gardens dotted around the area behind the beach and in the surrounding hills, so the amount of produce was exceptional. Capsicums, tomatoes, beans, kumara, pamplemousse, island apples, eggs and mangos were all traded for tuna, fishhooks, some antibiotic cream for someone’s leg that was all swollen, kids clothing and some of the last Vatu that we had all made for excellent deals.

Finally, our time had come, for real this time, plus the weather had settled. We were also eager to get out of the bay, where the boat was swinging around like mad on her anchor.

Getting out was an interesting experience, as there were quite large almost standing waves at the narrow entrance for the bay. It was half an hour of holding on tight and being incredible grateful that we have such a strong and capable boat and captain to get us out.

We turned left, away from the direction of the wind and life calmed immensely. I felt for the 2 other catamarans that had been in the bay with us, as they had to head back to Luganville, which was a long way right into the direction of the wind (and the big waves). Pointing into the wind in a catamaran is never fun.

We had a great sail heading toward the Torres Islands. These are the last in the tip of the Vanuatu Island chain and by far the most remote. Not many boats make it up to these islands and even we were only stopping as an overnight to break up the trip.
**Vellela – Pre-2015:** Take sugar. Anchored in 4m off Lahrop village. This island is a volcano where the rim has blown out. Anchored in the crater. Wind funnels in, but tucked in is ok. Still very isolated and need supplies from outside. First anchorage in the Banks Group.

Sloepmouche – September 2009: Contrary to what we read, we had two quite comfortable nights in the anchorage without bullet winds or heavy swell. Outside there was 15-20 knots from ESE, and inside we had 10-15 knots steady from the N as the wind funneled through this deep bay.

Chief Nickelson advised us to anchor at 13°32.478'S, 167°20.516'E as there is a lot less swell there. The Titinson Yacht Cultural Centre offers several tours and activities.

We enjoyed the Megel and Qwat custom dances for the beautiful hats the dancers were wearing. We ordered bread from the baker and traded for more lobsters and fruits/vegetables. There’s no airport here, so if you’re looking for really isolated people, this is one place where people are very friendly and hope for more visitors!

They have to go about 20 miles by speedboat to get to Sola, so you can guess they do not see many visitors at all except for a few yachts. This is an easy stop on your way to the Solomons and an easy island to reach, even if you only visit the Banks before going back down to Santo or Vila!

### 4.6 Santa Maria Island (Gaua)

#### 1.15.12 Bushman’s Bay

**Screensaver – June 2018:** 14 13.4356 S / 167 26.6510 E Anchor in 10m, Sand some rock/rubble, No Internet.

This place is not in any of the books and I picked it straight out of Google. I crept right up the head of the bay as it did open out a bit, however it just seemed a little squashed and shallow for the looming bad weather. Deciding to anchor just a bit further out as the bullets came through and a ratio of 3:1 I could not get a firm hold and Screensaver slowly crept backwards.

The end in order to get a decent hold and better anchor ratio I had to move out where Squander was and anchored where the bigger purple blob is. Sure enough the wind came in gusting to around 35-38 knots, but at least here there was no swell and we were relatively comfortable.

The local village and the people were all very nice giving us a tour around and introductions.

I had never seen a two story local built house before in any of my travels, so that was a bit of a first, and the Freon bottle hanging up outside the church makes an excellent church bell… one man’s rubbish is another man’s treasure…

Decent weather reporting was now becoming challenging without any internet or Sailmail HF. Squander had Iridium sat phone that in fact worked less than my HF radio much to Forfa’s frustration.

I had decided some time back I didn’t need HF Sailmail/email as I would only be without internet for a relatively short period of time, HF voice weather is still available free out of Australia that covers this area, and to my surprise weather fax services are still running for free all of which I can receive.

However a week on still stuck here and at least another week or maybe two before I can pick up a SIM in Solomon’s I decided to step out and see if I could get to Sola where there was TVL internet.

As Screensaver poked her head out into the swell I only got 3nm out and swell climbed along with the wind to just over 40knots at which point I decided this was silly, I was not out of scotch yet and it stayed...
where I left it so I should go back and for only the second time Screensaver turned around and retreated, to the flat water all be it 32-34 knots gusts at times.

The anchorage itself proved to be a bit of a saver because apart from the gusts we were all pretty safe all be it my timing plan was getting further behind, the cloud and rain was leading me to burn diesel, and yes, the fresh veggies were slowly going off and running out, so it will be cheese on toast soon.

1.15.13 Lakona Bay

Screensaver – June 2018: 14 18.85 S / 167 25.96 E Anchor in 5m, black sand some rock, no internet.

Last time Watusi and I were in this anchorage it was horrifically bad in terms of swell. When the scotch won’t stay on the table at anchor it really is time to move. Last time I was here the gimballed stove couldn’t even cope, but that was NE trades, so I was hoping the SE trades would be better. So I crept as far into the SE corner as I dare, and pushed the boom as far out as it would go (See my tips on rolling anchorages). While it was far from comfortable at least my scotch didn’t end up on the floor.

The bay has two villages, one at the NE end that last time charged a few thousand for their water music display and one at the SE end which interestingly didn’t want money, but more down to earth things, clothes, hats fishing hooks or in my case 4L of two stroke.

So I got another water music rendition by the local ladies, all pretty cool and much of the rhythm was common to other villages performance. The building on the right was the first of these I have seen and was effectively the Boys club i.e. only for men and complete with carvings.

In the morning the anchorage was becoming more rolly and it seemed weather conditions were getting worse, so time to find a comfortable hole.

1.15.14 Losalava

Sloepmouche – August 2009: Losalava has a protected anchorage. All yachts are now invited by Chief Edgel and his small community as they arrive. After string band welcome songs we were given flower leis and fruits and invited to sign the guest book. It was all fun for everyone and a good way to introduce each other for trade together and activities to do on the island. There’s plenty of hiking and cultural activities here. We made a day hike to the lake and volcano (Robert and his son are great guides) and another day hike to the Siri waterfalls. Make sure you leave early (6:30 a.m.) as you otherwise risk coming back after dark.

We had more traditional dancing and the famous water music. Chief Edgel also organized a Melanesian feast that was very nice!

5 Espiritu Santo

5.1 Santo East Coast

1.15.15 Port Olry

Screensaver – June 2018: 15 02.2818 S / 167 04.1541 E Anchor in 10m Sand, 4G TVL.

Trying not to use the engine and conserve diesel led to sailing in conditions much less than ideal, and eventually I gave in as the swell got up and the wind dropped. All three of us went into the inner anchorage across the coral/sand shelf and into the river mouth. A very safe and comfortable anchorage especially in the SE trades.
This would likely be my last chance for a civilized drink on a nice beach with good company for some time to come, so it was nice for us all to get together.

Skedaddle were having anchor winch-- issues on brand new winch I might add and as the weather window appeared Screensaver and Squander left.

**1.15.16 Hog Harbor / Champagne Beach**

**Screensaver – June 2018:** 15 08.4095 S / 167 07.2723 E  Anchor in 12m, Sand Coral knobs, 3g TVL, Can be a bit rolly with more than 10-15knts from any direction.

The trip up got quite sloppy and the swell gave my new auto pilot its first good stern quarter following sea work out. I must say I’m pretty impressed with it thus far

On my first trip to Champagne Beach the Cruise ships used to come here. The local village setup a lot of village type infrastructure to cater for the western tourist on what is a very beautiful beach certainly in the top couple for Vanuatu. As time passed the village got greedy with their charges per person to the Cruise ship grew and eventually the cruise ships pulled the pin.

So now the cows enjoy the paradise and for the moment the infrastructure remains a vacant reminder.

**1.15.17 Peterson (Paterson) Lagoon**

**Screensaver – June 2018:** Anchor in 14m, Coral/sand rubble, 4G TVL  My friends on Skedaddle were trying to checkout at Santo and get duty free fuel. So I moved on a bit further to Paterson Lagoon. After nearly a whole day and decanting Santo diesel litres, which are of course less than real litres, Skedaddle eventually got 98% of the fuel they bought. It is interesting how much difference you can get in 1 x 20L jerry can. As I recall you can actually get 22L in full to the top, and some pumps will show 24, or they will try to say this is the difference between English and American Litres. ??????

Eventually they made it along with another yacht Squander from Australia. So next day we all did the tour up the river to the Blue Hole.

The first time I came here back around 2011, the resort in the Lagoon behind Oyster Island was open and was happy to meet yachties and take their money. Now it’s owned by the Chinese and if you’re pushy and get the easy going security guard, you might if you’re lucky, get to set foot on the island and take a few steps. While it is true yachties run on a limited budget, almost all of them can find money for a beer and some more, so this narrow minded view is not good for their business either.

The river and Blue Hole on my first trip was excellent and free, then 6 months ago sadly when Kim and I went there the water was murky and they wanted 5000VUV. This time it did at least live up to its name as you can see and dare I say he did not get his 5000vuv for what nature provides.

Cecile & Jamie came well prepared to make the most of the fresh water and had a very refreshing bath. If my toe had not been grumbling at me I would have enjoyed a swim.

**Eagle’s Wings – Oct 2016:** Another beautiful anchorage. 15 22.89 S / 167 11.66 E

**Yolo – September 2012:** About 10 miles north of Luganville is Peterson Bay which provides protection from all sides, great holding, Wi-Fi at Oyster Resort on Malparavu/Oyster Island, snorkeling on a WWII airplane just south of the island, very good outer reef snorkeling, and several fresh water blue holes, complete with rope swings.
**Sloempouche – August 2008:** We arrived at the pass south of Mavea Island around 4 p.m. with the sun right in the eyes and intermittent clouds, but were able to go through a double set of red and green markers without problem and anchor inside. Piece of cake!

After one yacht grounded earlier this season and spent the night on its side, the yachties and Grant, the new manager of Oyster Island Resort, put in the markers: long pieces of PVC pipe painted red and green and designed so that at low tide, the pipes fall over and lie on their sides, and at high, when water in the pass is deep enough, the pipes float upright clearly marking the safest way in. This channel is not where the RG waypoints indicate the way in, but if they are still there in future seasons, the markers take the uncertainties out of getting into the inner bay.

At least two-thirds high tide, we never saw less than 9’ of depth. Once inside, you have a number of totally flat water areas to anchor, the most popular being near Oyster Bay Resort.

The two rivers to the blue holes are easy to find and beautiful. The landowner of both is Orbet, which was confirmed by Grant. You can find him near the copra dryer on the main island. He may or may not ask for fees (it’s nice to thank him with some small token).

If you dinghy up, there may be people at the bridge that will ask a fee up to 1,000 VT, but they may not be the landowner or a family member. As throughout Vanuatu, there’s often more than one who may claim to be landowner.

The resort recently acquired a vast forest area where cascade and river tours will be organized in the future.

Cave diving in underwater river holes is already done occasionally by a local dive center.

In a few months, a digger is going to excavate the pass leading into the lagoon so most yachts will be able to get in at low water!

**1.15.18 Aese Island**

**Eagles Wings Oct 2016:** We are in a beautiful spot off Aese Island. 15 26.56 S / 167 14.95 E

**1.15.19 Surundu (Surunda) Bay**

**Yolo – Sep 2012:** Surunda (Surundu or Suranda) Bay is located just over the hill 3 miles north of Luganville. This anchorage is exceptionally good, sand bottom, provides all round protection, clear water, and very good snorkeling on the outer reef. We spent over 10 days here waiting for a good weather window. A family of dugongs and numerous turtles live in Surunda Bay.

Getting to Luganville: The main north/south paved island road runs past the head of the bay. Countless buses, taxis, and cars travel to and from Luganville. Buses cost 100 VATU ($1.11 USD) per person, we negotiated the same rate for one taxi ride, and hitchhiked other trips for free. Vehicle license plates which start with a “B” for bus, “T” for taxi, and “PT” for public transportation will charge you for the ride. We never spent more than 5 minutes standing by the road. It is a good idea to agree on the cost for a ride before getting into any vehicle.

**1.15.20 Palekulo Bay**

**Screensaver – June 2018:** 15 29.5736 S / 167 14.8903 E Anchor in 8m behind 2 reefs, 4G TVL. If you try to go to this anchorage be extremely careful and I strongly suggest you do not attempt it without a good image and or a good lookout up front watching for reefs.
It is quite a nice spot and as you would imagine calm. The SE trades had made the prior anchorage at the Beach Resort uncomfortable and a lee shore.

There are many wrecks around this area both above and below the water. As you come through Diamond Passage and turn to port you will see a jetty and a rather large wreck. The charts will suggest you can anchor there, but I could not find a spot anything like the chart suggested. I guess in its day it was dredged to accommodate what I believe was a fish cannery factory. In the SW corner of the bay lies another wreck and in total around this area there are about 5 above water alone.

**Yolo – September 2012:** Palikulo Bay has been reported as an excellent anchorage, except in strong northerly winds which are rare. Few cars and taxis travel out to this anchorage area.

Sloepmouche – August 2008: Palikulo Bay is still a deserted bay (for how long before development?). There’s a nice walk to the abandoned slipway all around the peninsula. Well-protected in most wind.

### 5.2 Luganville (Clearance Port)

#### 1.15.21 Approach, Arrival and Formalities

**Screensaver – June 2018:** Luganville Bay Beachfront Resort: Anchor in 4m, Sand, 4G. It’s all very good to say “gentleman never goes to windward” but sailing downwind in 6-8 knots is quite painful and I personally would sooner not be a gentleman. It was not my intention to make these sort of stops, but the weather has been raining hard, and no wind or too much wind. There were a few hiding out from the weather. At least my water tanks are full, but the lack of solar means the genset is draining my diesel.

**Yolo – September 2012:** Anchor just west of the large Luganville river in front of the yacht friendly Beachfront Resort. Good holding, yet exposed to trade winds, waves, and strong current.

**Sloepmouche – August 2008:** Luganville’s Beachfront anchorage, just south of the Sarakata River, might be a bit bumpy in trade winds but is closest to town. You can either land your dinghy at the Beachfront (yachties really welcome) or dinghy into the river (mid to high tide) and tie off just off the public market.

It’s too bad that Luganville does not have a well-protected and convenient anchorage close to town as Port Vila offers. Two restaurants to recommend in town are the Nemo (French chef in 2008) and the Deco Stop Lodge. Both are a 200 VT/taxi ride away.

Coral Quay Resort: Contrary to what is stated in the RG, there are no moorings, and the anchorage is more exposed than the Beachfront. Being further away from town, we didn’t see any reason to anchor there.

#### 1.15.22 Cruiser’s Services

**Yolo – Sep 2012:** At Luganville it is only practical to jerry can fuel to your vessel. Taxi drivers typically charge you extra to transport jerry cans. If you are purchasing over 400 liters/100 gallons of diesel you can make arrangements for a fuel truck to meet you at a wharf and top off your tanks. In this case you will be required to pay an additional fee to the wharf owner. The length of your vessel in meters times 294 VATU ($3.27 USD) is the fee for tying up to a government wharf for less than 24 hours. So, a 13 meter (44 foot) boat would cost 3,822 VATU ($43 USD) per day to use the wharf. The Vanuatu rough concrete wharfs are not yacht friendly.

**Noonsite – Sep 2007:** Peter Wederell of Total Marine Solutions says that there’s a new boatyard being developed on Santo which should be operational early next year. It has a 60 ton travel lift and plans are to have a multihull haulout facility as well.
1.15.23 Diving

Shango – September 2012: Espiritu Santo, locally know as Santo is the largest island in Vanuatu. It is home to the country’s second largest “city”, Luganville. Santo first came to the attention of Americans during World War II when it was a staging point for the American military. Men and equipment left here for the battlegrounds of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. From a diving perspective the war left two famous sites.

As the Americans were preparing to leave Vanuatu (then known as the New Hebrides) at the conclusion of the war in the Pacific, they offered to sell their surplus equipment for almost nothing to the British & French powers who jointly ruled the country. Thinking that the Americans would be forced to abandon the equipment and they would eventually get it for free the ruling powers said no deal. Much to their shock the Americans proceeded to build a long pier out into Segond Channel east of Luganville and dumped all of the equipment into the sea. This spot is now known as million dollar point and it is a very popular dive.

The second, and to me the more interesting dive, is on the wreck of the President Coolidge. The Coolidge was built in Seattle as a luxury liner. When war broke out in the Pacific she was pressed into service as a troop ship. As the Coolidge arrived in Luganville on October 26th 1942 she hit two “friendly” mines and began to sink in Segond Channel. It took her several hours to go down so almost the entire crew was saved by the time the ship went to the bottom.

The day before we dove on the Coolidge we met a man on the beach of the sparsely inhabited Tutuba Island, at the mouth of Segond Channel. He told us that his father, who is still living, had stood on the very same beach seventy years ago and watched the ship sink. I told him that on the same day seventy years ago my Grandfather had been on the deck of the Coolidge as it sank below him.

On Monday we were picked up at the boat by Santo Island Divers and headed out the Channel to the Coolidge dive site. David, our dive master from the previous day, took us down for our first dive. The ship is lying on its side almost completely upside down with the bow higher than the stern. We swam along the bow and past a heavily encrusted three inch gun. Continuing on we passed the giant anchor winch and two cargo bays, the second of which was full of tires attached to what might have once been jeeps. David showed us an old cook pot into which he had put a variety of goodies such as old shoes and a comb. Rifles and helmets are strewn about as are ammunition shells, small and large.

On our second dive we went inside the ship. We followed David on a circuitous route through the bowels of the Coolidge; past the barbershop, past a long row of toilets, past sinks with handles which still turned and to the pharmacy which still had jars of powders and liquids of astonishing colors on its shelves. There was more ammunition as well as airplane drop tanks looking like gigantic eggs abandoned in their nest. For a somewhat unnerving thrill David had us turn off our flashlights and we floated in complete watery darkness except for the glowing flashlight fish which loomed around us.

Sloempouche – August 2008: We went with Santo Island Divers and dove the beautiful reefs north of Tutuba Island. Crystal clear water and healthy reefs were the order of the day.

We also dove with Aquamarine on Million Dollar Point where you see the tons of WWII equipment dumped in a pile. Most of it is below 50’, so you won’t see much if snorkeling.

More interesting were the several dives we made on the famous Coolidge wreck with both Aquamarine and Alan Power Diving. They all pick you up at the Beachfront and offer special rates for yachtsies.
**1.15.24 Things to Do**

**Verite – May 2018 – Hiking, Caves, Waterfall:** *(Millennium Cave is situated in South Central Santo, a 45 minute drive from Luganville town.)*

Face paint after a 5km trek through the jungle to the mouth of The Millennium Cave, Santo Island, Vanuatu.

Fabulous, huge cave with bats and swallows and a river running right through.

Lunch at a waterfall and then 30 minute swim in cool, flowing river running through a deep canyon with beautiful rock faces and more waterfalls. It was like being in the movie Jurassic Park or Indiana Jones.

Then more climbing out of the canyon and more trekking back to the village and onward to the waiting vehicle.

A magic day had by all 6 of us. Fantastic adventure highly recommended to anyone (with a reasonable level of fitness) visiting Vanuatu.

**Sloepmouche – August 2008:** One place that needs to be visited is the village of Vunaspef where they have the famous Millennium Cave Tours. If you like hiking, walking and swimming in rivers and caves with rivers, you will be thrilled. It is possible to stay overnight there too.

The best way to go there is to arrange your own transportation: hiring a taxi for the day (he waits while you tour) cost about 5,000 VT for up to 3-4 people. The tours cost 2,000 VT or less per person.

If you go with a local tour operator, they will charge you 6,500 VT/person! You can call Samuel direct at 547-0957.

**1.15.25 Aore Resort**

**Alba – June 2015:** Asanvari Bay to Aore Resort, Luganville, Santo

The alarm went off at 0450, so that we could sail 60 miles to Luganville. In the pitch black of night, I had a little bit of trouble getting the anchor up because the chain was caught under another coral head, but a few minutes of slowly motoring around soon cleared it.

We had 20-30 knots from the east and our course was almost straight downwind, so we didn’t bother with the mainsail and just ran with the genoa. This made it very easy to cope with the wind shifts on the few squalls that passed over us.

We arrived in Luganville at four o’clock and picked up a mooring off the Aore Resort. *(15°31.46’S 167°09.80’E)* It costs $15US per night, but what the hell - the other anchorage on the mainland looks like it would be very rolly in the east winds that we have at the moment.

As a treat, we went ashore to have burger and chips at the hotel. It’s a very nice place with comfy chairs in the lounge area, tiled floors, cold beer, wireless internet and a swimming pool. After a couple of beers, we both had reality attacks, remembering that this is how the western world lives.

20 June 2015   Aore Resort, Luganville, Santo

The hotel provides a small ferry service to get guests to the mainland across the 1 mile channel. We caught the eight o’clock ferry and wandered to Immigration and Customs to see what we have to do when we clear out. Being a weekend both offices were closed.

There was a cruise ship in town, so the dirt road leading to the port was lined with small stalls selling lava lavas, t-shirts, shells and other souvenirs to the cruise ship passengers - we didn’t buy any. Instead,
we walked to the vegetable market and checked out some of the supermarkets. There’s a very good supermarket called LCM, which has most of the stuff that we will need to stock up on before we leave here. We bought enough food to last us for a week and caught the ferry back to the resort.

After lunch on board, I went to the hotel lounge to do some internet work, trying to download information about anchorages in the Louisaides and Indonesia. Unfortunately, the hotel was very busy with local ex-pats who had come over from Luganville to escape from the cruise ship, so the internet was painfully slow.

21 June 2015  Aore Resort, Luganville, Santo

It was a Sunday, so we had a lazy day. At midday, we went ashore. The idea was to lounge by the pool, but it was overcast and drizzling, so we did the next best thing and went straight to the bar and ordered a couple of cold beers. We then had a fabulous meal and a bottle of wine - a perfect Sunday.

22 June 2015  Aore Resort to Beachfront Resort, Luganville

It was a horrible rainy day, so we waited for a lull in the rain and scurried across to an anchorage on the mainland next to the Beachfront Resort. The anchorage is okay, but I guess that it will be very rolly and choppy when the wind is strong from the south-east. The hotel is very yacht friendly with free internet and they charge a reasonable price for laundry ($8US per load).

We walked into town and did some serious food shopping and then caught a taxi back to the hotel for $2US. While in town, we visited the Customs office and found out that they probably won’t bother to inspect our duty free wine. This is good news because we’ve already drunk quite a few bottles, but we’ll fill up the empty bottles with black paint and water anyway, just in case we get a keen customs officer.

It was hot and humid in the afternoon, so we lurked about sweating. I dropped off 3 or 4 loads of laundry at the hotel then tried to use the hotel’s internet, but it was painfully slow. It’s a bit frustrating because I want to create a load of KAP files from Google Earth for the Louisaides and the first part of Indonesia.

Yolo – September 2012: Four mooring balls for around $15 USD per day are available at Aore Resort which is located across the Segond Channel south of Luganville. It may be impossible to locate the mooring balls during high tide and swift running currents since they may be pulled under water during these events. There is a 100 VATU (about $1.11 USD) charge per person per way to use the ferry that runs several times per day from Aore Island to Luganville. Very few sailors dingy across the wide and rough Segond Channel.

Sloepmouche – August 2008: When the tradewinds picked up and kicked a sea in the anchorage at Beachfront, we moved across the channel to Aore Resort. While the resort does not really seek to attract cruisers, it still offers over ten moorings at 1,200 VT/night. We explored the area on both sides of the resort and found no suitable anchorage as the bottom drops so quickly to 80’ from shore.

Meals, laundry, Internet and garbage disposal are available at both Beachfront and Aore.

1.15.26 Ratua Island (Internet)


I nipped into the Beachfront Resort hotel in Luganville to pick up our laundry and then we motored around to Ratua Island on the south side of Aore Island. There’s a small holiday resort here, who have installed two moorings, but they looked to be in a poor state of repair. We ignored the moorings and anchored in 14 metres of water away from the various reefs in a sandy patch. It’s a nice looking anchorage and we can pick up the Hotel’s wi-fi internet on the boat, so we’re happy here.
We took some time off boat jobs to go snorkelling and first tried a spot about ½ mile to the west of the anchorage where the reef sticks out from the coast. I was hoping that it could be a dive site, but the reef quickly runs out to sand and isn’t as steep as it looked on the chart. The snorkelling there wasn’t too good as the water was very choppy and murky. We went back to anchorage and picked up a mooring on the edge of the reef, which was much better.

We started to seriously think about when to leave Vanuatu and head to the Louisiades in Papua New Guinea, which is 900 miles away. Our plan was to leave early next week, but the weather forecast doesn’t look very favourable. There’s an area of unsettled weather to the north of us and it looks like it will spread south next week giving strong trade winds and then a trough - we might be here for a couple of weeks.

We spent most of the day using the internet to gather more information about the Louisiades, working out which islands to visit and which passes to use to get through the barrier reef surrounding the islands. We’ll only be there a week, so we want to make the most of our time there.

In the afternoon, we went for a snorkel on the south side of the island, but again it wasn’t too good. The seabed was mostly dead coral rubble with the odd live coral head sticking up. I spotted many Crown Of Thorns Starfish, which cause major damage to reefs by eating the coral polyps. These starfish produce millions of larvae, which grow in the coral rubble. If there are insufficient fish to eat all the larvae, then huge aggregations of starfish grow on the reef and decimate the coral. It’s a vicious circle because an unhealthy reef has less fish, so more starfish grow into adults.

In many places throughout the Pacific, dive operators actively kill Crown of Thorns starfish, by injecting them with a poison, to reduce their numbers and protect their reefs. I believe that these starfish can also be killed by collecting them in a large flour sack, then leaving them in the water for a day. The starfish need a flow of water over them, so die in the confines of a sack - they can then be tipped out to feed the fish. Perhaps I should start doing my bit.

The next day, I pottered about in the morning and then went for a snorkel. I tied the dinghy to the buoy next to the anchorage and found a shoal of about eight Broadclub Cuttlefish. About 12 inches long, they were very large and seemed to be as curious about me as I was about them.

At first they kept their distance, but gradually edged closer. I found that if I dived down, hung onto a rock and stayed still, the cuttlefish would come near enough to allow me to take photographs. Unfortunately, there were a lot of particles in the water and I was getting “back-scatter” where the light from the flash gun is reflected back by the particles, causing white spots on the photograph. However, I spent an hour with the cuttlefish, trying different settings and positions and got a few reasonable photographs: photo 1 photo 2.

The next day it was a windy day with strong gusts and a little bit too cold to go snorkelling. It’s been good to have a rest from travelling for a few days, but we need to get moving onto Papua New Guinea, although neither of us relishes the thought of a seven day, 900 mile passage in these 25-30 knot winds.

I had a serious look at the weather forecast and downloaded two weeks’ worth of GRIB files. There’s a band of unsettled weather to the north west of us mostly over the Solomon Islands, which is caused by the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ). The GRIBS show that low pressure systems keep forming in this area, and then head south down over our route to the Louisiades, causing higher winds, squalls and rain.

Unfortunately, the forecast of the movement of these lows is unreliable and it’s hard to predict what we will encounter. Ideally, we would wait until the SPCZ calms down, but that might take weeks and we
can’t wait that long. I tried to work out the best time to leave next week by looking at the weather each day along our route, but there doesn’t seem to be a perfect weather window.

It looks like we might have to leave in the middle of next week and take whatever comes, which is a bit depressing. On the positive side, the winds are constantly from the south-east, so with our north-west course, the winds will be directly behind us. On the downside, we’re likely to have a couple of days of squally weather with high winds and rain.

29 June: The unsettled weather north of the Solomons has now turned into a Tropical Depression, which is serious enough to have been given a number - TD17F. It’s heading south-west towards the Louisiades, so we won’t be leaving Vanuatu until that has dissipated.

We decided that we ought to go back to Luganville to get some food and to also see who else was around. Maybe some of the other cruisers might be heading in the same direction as us and we could compare notes on the weather.

It was just after low water, when we upped anchor and the tide was perfect - we had a 1 knot current with us around the south of Aore Island, then a 3-4 knot current with us through the narrow channel up the west side of the island, so the 15 mile trip was quick. The wind was blowing a hooley from the SSE, so we first went over to the Aore Resort, which is sheltered. Unfortunately, all the moorings were taken, so we had to go over to Beachfront Resort, which had a 30 knot onshore wind and breaking 2-3 foot waves in the anchorage - bloody horrible.

We anchored amongst eight other cruising boats, who were all gritting their teeth and coping. I didn’t want to leave the boat unattended, so I dropped Glenys off at the beach and she caught a taxi into town. While she was out, I went and chatted to Karen & Graham on “Red Herring”, who are also heading west to join the Sail Indonesia Rally. They were hoping to leave in the next couple of days like us, but are now waiting and watching the low.

Glenys was soon back on the beach with two cases of beer and enough meat to last two weeks. We both got wet through as we left the beach, bashing into the 2-3 foot waves. Back at the boat, we dumped the shopping in the cockpit, hauled the dinghy up on the davits and got the hell out of there, heading back to Ratua, which we know is a nice settled anchorage.

The tides were kind to us again and we had about a knot with us for most of the way, although we had a tough bash directly into the 30 knot winds when we turned the corner for the last three miles to the anchorage. What a difference. We anchored in 6 metres on white sand, surrounded by blue water and reef. The wind is still strong, but is moderated slightly by the island and we’re gently rocking as a little bit of swell sneaks around the corner - lovely.

Two hours after we arrived back, “Dreamtime” came back after their excursion to Luganville to extend their visas. They feel the same as us - why would anyone stay at the Beachfront anchorage?

30 June 2015   Ratua Island, Santo

At four o’clock in the morning, we were woken up by a very strange noise, which sounded like the white noise that you get from a radio when it’s between stations. We leaped out of bed and rushed into the saloon, but couldn’t find the source of the very loud noise. At first I thought that I’d left our stereo on, or it was a laptop, but everything was turned off. I went up on deck and couldn’t hear the noise - it was down below. Weird.

After a couple of minutes, the sound died off and then stopped. I checked the bilges, but they were dry. I checked the engine room - all looked okay. Mystified, we went back to bed. I lay there for an hour, trying to work out what the noise had been and the best explanation that I could come up with was an
underwater volcanic eruption - so were we going to get a Tsunami? I didn’t sleep well. (Update - a month later, the mystery was solved when I found that the over-pressurisation disk on one of our dive tanks had burst - we’d heard the sound of high pressure air rushing out of the tank, buried deep in the cockpit locker.)

A couple more boats turned up today. “Deese” and “Red Herring” are both waiting for a weather window to sail to Indonesia, so we compared notes and the consensus is that TD17F is going to stall over the Solomons and intensify, so we’re all stuck here for the next few days.

6 Malekula

6.1 Malekula West Coast

1.15.27 Malua (15-59 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: We had a nice sail around the north side of Malekula to Malua Bay.

We were welcomed by one of the three schoolteachers from the Seventh Day Adventist primary school in the bay. The school (as all schools in Vanuatu) is always in need of any materials. We had nothing left except scrap paper, and they were happy for that.

After visiting the school, Fredrick, one of the teachers, guided us to a nice swimming hole on the river that flows to the anchorage. There is also a nice swimming hole only about 100 yards from the beach just where the road crosses the river.

Natives paddled in their canoes to speak to us and to offer us fruits. Chief Don came with the yachtie’s gold book to sign. This is a comfortable anchorage as you can anchor very close to shore to avoid any swell rolling in.

We also walked with Rodrick and Alfred to the Lekhan Spirit Cave described in the Lonely Planet guide (about 45 minutes one way). It is a big cavern where the top caved in, letting the light through. Some pictograms can be found on the walls, and some bats inhabit part of the cave.

1.15.28 Willekh Bay (16-07 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: We checked it out as we passed by in order to update the RG. You will be quite isolated as there’s no village. The anchorage is protected from the wind, but you get a swell—amazing how swell rounds any point to get at you! There’s good snorkeling with lots of turtles at the reef around the isolated rock on the southern part of this little bay.

1.15.29 Lamboumbu Bay (16-11 S)

Sloepmouche – July 2009: The copra pier is now gone, but you can still put your dinghy at the stone jetty and walk to the small settlement (Presbyterian Church school). There’s some swell despite being tucked in.

We met Amil Setla, a chief of a small village in the “neck” of Malekula (where, unfortunately, there is no anchorage). He belongs to a tribe of the Middle Nambas. We had only heard of Small and Big Namba tribes. He showed us a fascinating area with many custom stories and taboos and spiritual powers. He, as the eldest son of the paramount chief of the area, had been initiated to all the custom ways.

We saw human bones and an ancient overgrown ceremonial nasara. In the afternoon he took us to a beautiful waterfall at the end of a 1.5-hour walk up the river past crystal clear natural terraced pools.
That’s the beauty of Vanuatu: by talking to locals, you can just chance on fantastic, spontaneous opportunities to get glimpses of an endangered ancient culture.

1.15.30 Tavendrua and Dixon Reefs (16-21 S)

Sloempouche – July 2009: We arrived here during a period of black and squally weather and so did not dive on the reefs. Winds were very strong from the SE, so we anchored just north of Lamendranga Point (name in RG, name on chart is somewhat different) at 16°20.102’S, 167°22.821’E near the mouth of a little river.

We decided to walk to the point and look at the anchorage in the big bay. We found the village is not where the RG points it; it is actually on the north-facing side of the peninsula, facing Dixon Reef. There are no dwellings along the shore inside the bay itself. Villagers said that most yachts anchor in the north corner of the bay in front of a black sand beach. It looked calm.

Next day we went into the bay and could easily see the channel around the reefs, even in black cloudy weather. Keep a good watch for a few isolated reefs indicated on the charts inside the bay. We anchored on the south side behind the reefs, but found the holding only fair in the 20’ depths. We walked along the shore southward all the way to the next bay, nice views. Took some GPS points asked for by the RG, so hopefully the next edition will give more detailed info.

1.15.31 Southwest Bay (16-30 S)

Alba – June 2015: 16°29.59′S 167°25.74′E The sail along the sheltered west coast was fabulous, sailing on a broad reach in flat seas past spectacular cliffs and even a waterfall. We enjoyed it so much that we even tacked upwind into Southwest Bay before anchoring off Lembinwen village in 5 metres of water over dark sand. An added bonus was catching a small Bonito.

After our fish sandwich lunch, we went ashore and found Patti and Tim Malon, the brothers of Angela’s husband. After chatting for fifteen minutes about cyclones and the places that we’ve visited, we asked if anyone could take us for a hike. This seemed to be a difficult concept for them.

“Where did we want to go?”
“Well, perhaps to a village in the mountains? Or a waterfall? Or a nice viewpoint?
“Why?”

Eventually, they grasped that the mad English people wanted to go for a walk for exercise and after ten minutes of discussion, we agreed that they will take us to a village in the hills. It should take three or four hours to get there and we’re going to meet them on the beach at seven o’clock tomorrow morning. I told them that it was my birthday tomorrow and they want us to go and drink some kava with them after the hike.

In a brief lull in the conversation, Tim suddenly asked me if I knew anything about toilets. “Errr, a little”, I said cautiously. He took us for a walk through the village where some guys were working on a new toilet block for the village. They’ve bought six flushing toilets from Port Vila, but there are no instructions and the first toilet that they’re installing was leaking. I had a fiddle with it and after removing and replacing the cistern three times, placing the seals in different places, I finally managed to get it sorted.

It was only mid-afternoon when we got back to the boat, so we decided to go for a snorkel at a nearby island. Tim had told us that we would need to get permission from another village, so we duly went along, but the village was completely deserted. We spotted a couple of small kids, but they disappeared very quickly. It was very eerie walking around the huts shouting “hello” - were they all hiding in their huts?

After five minutes of fruitless searching, we gave up and went to have a look at the reef, but the water was very murky and there was a fast current, so we gave up and went back to the boat.
**5 June 2015 Southwest Bay, Malekula**

It was my 59th birthday today and, following our tradition, Glenys had bought me nothing apart from a small camera case that she picked up in a cheap Chinese shop in Port Vila. (I’m going to buy myself an iPod when we get to Singapore.)

We made it to the beach by seven o’clock and went for a hike with Patti and Tim. We took the dinghy to a beach next to the small grass air strip at the village of Wintua From there we walked up a dirt road to the village of Lamlo. It was a pleasant walk, but not as adventurous as I would have liked - I was hoping to be hacking our way up an animal track into the mountainous jungle to see a remote village of the Small Nambas (a tribe that wear a small penis pouch and ate their last human being in 1969).

However, our guides had a different idea and after an hour of trudging up the sometimes steep road, Tim was starting to sweat a lot and suggesting that we take it slowly and turn back soon. Patti seemed to be fitter and more enthusiastic to carry on. I managed to keep us going for 2½ hours and then agreed that it was time to return. By the time that we arrived back at the dinghy, we’d had a pleasant four hour walk.

We invited Tim and Patti on-board Alba to have a drink, then dropped them on the beach, promising to meet them at five o’clock at their Nakamal to drink some Kava for my birthday. We then chilled out for the afternoon.

Kava is made from the root of the Pepper Tree (Piper methysticum) and the name says it all, “Piper” meaning pepper and “methysticum” meaning intoxicating. The bushes grow to two metres tall and are normally harvested at 4-5 years.

There are two species of Piper that have gained notoriety for their “medicinal” uses - the Betel Nut (Piper betel) which is chewed and is more common in Asia; and Kava which is widespread in Vanuatu. Kava is a drug and not an alcoholic drink. It’s supposed to be non-addictive, but most Ne-van men drink it every evening. It doesn’t produce the drunken behaviour of alcohol, but is more of a sedative or relaxant, that first numbs the mouth and tongue and slowly relaxes the rest of the body.

Kava is a peaceful drug which is said to lead to amusing and intellectual conversations that would not normally be considered between strangers or even enemies. It has been used throughout Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia at meetings and ceremonies for a long time to promote peaceful conversations especially at tense situations.

When we went ashore, Tim met us at the beach and took us to see the kava being produced. Basically, the root is pounded to a pulp, added to water and then sieved through cloth. It’s not a very hygienic process and the resulting liquid looks like grey, dirty dish water. There are photos of the process in the “Galley Slave”.

The drinking of Kava is traditionally carried out in a special building called a Nakamal, which historically was the domain of men - no woman being allowed into the building or even allowed to look into the Nakamal when men were present. Men were then free to carry on their drug-induced pontificating without any disturbance. In modern times, this has been relaxed and in the cities of Port Vila and Luganville, there are now Kava bars where women are allowed. In the village of Lembinwem in Southwest Bay on Malekula, there are five Nakamals where women are allowed to purchase Kava, but normally the women will take it home leaving the men to discuss their weighty matters.

We were invited to the Nakamal that is owned by Tim, Patti and three other men. It’s a small traditional house next to the beach, with seating inside and outside and a hatch where you buy the kava. They treated us as honoured guests and Glenys was allowed to enter and stay. I bought three cups of kava - a full helping for Tim and two half cups for Glenys and me, which cost $0.80US.

The kava is supposed to be drunk down in one go, which is definitely the best way of drinking the dirty grey mixture. It doesn’t taste too bad, but you wouldn’t sip it for pleasure like a fine red wine. We slugged our cupfuls back and immediately felt tingling in the lips and mouth. Then slowly we felt more relaxed, but the effect is not very pronounced. After sitting outside and chatting a while with some of the villagers, we bought another small cup, but there were no further effects.
One of the habits that accompany drinking kava is spitting. I suppose that the drink loosens the phlegm in the throat and the men are constantly spitting on the ground. It’s very frequent, and unpleasant to hear them hawking and spitting every other sentence. I’m glad that we sat outside the Nakamal hut.

We met James, the chief of the village, who was a nice guy. He has a small business where he collects the “Nam Bangura” nut and produces his own Tamanu oil. This is mixed with 30% coconut oil to make the natural healing oil, which he sells to the locals for 250 vatu for a 200ml bottle. His oil is used to treat skin complaints, sores and is used as massage oil.

Tim seemed to be assigned to us as our “protector” and was very good to us, but he quickly began making hints that it was getting late and perhaps we would be leaving soon? I think that the pressure of being responsible for us was affecting his peaceful, Kava state of mind. We left at about seven o’clock and safely made it back to the boat. With our dinner, we had we had a couple of glasses of wine - we’ve heard dire warnings about mixing alcohol and kava, but we felt no side effects.

6 June 2015 Southwest Bay, Malekula
I had a restless night and kept waking up with the taste of kava in my mouth - not very pleasant and it took most of the day to get rid of the taste. I’ve decided that kava is not my drink of choice.

It was a very hot day with a light wind, so we stayed on board and got on with a few chores. There was quite a bit of excitement because a small cargo boat arrived from Santo with some passengers. Everything was taken ashore on small boats, so there were lots of trips backwards and forward.

We went ashore in the afternoon to find Tim or Patti, but it seemed that most of the village was taking advantage of the fine weather and were out at their gardens. We managed to find James, the chief, and he walked around the village with us for a while.

He’s keen to build a guest house in the village and wanted to know how he should attract people to come here. I told him that the internet was the way that people find out about these sorts of places, but he doesn’t have access to the internet and doesn’t know how to progress his ideas.

The next morning, I was up early and went into see James. I gave him some printouts of tourist guides, so that he understood what the other islands are doing and then went through my six pages of suggestions. Basically, I think that they should concentrate on “adventurous” type travellers that want to stay in a traditional village and to see village life up close.

They should set up a small guest house that would accommodate four people in clean, but basic rooms - two double rooms and a central living/dining room is all that is needed. Guests would typically stay three or four days based on the twice weekly flights to the nearby airport. Local food would be prepared for the guest and the whole thing should have a B&B feeling - like living in someone’s house. The village community should own and profit from the guest house.

The villagers should suggest and then run small activities/tours lasting one to four hours, so that guests can pick a mixture of things that they want to do. These activities/tours could be anything, but should be aimed at showing the guests the village life and the surrounding nature. I came up with a list of about 40 different tours, including snorkelling, weaving, hiking, history, pig hunting, trips in dug-out canoes, fishing, cooking, kastom dancing, how to build a dug-out canoe, etc.

They could offer a price list of these activities/tours to both guests and yachts when they arrive. I suggested to James that the villagers get paid to run each activity/tour, so that they make money directly from the tourists. If their tour is good then they will make more money. I suggested that the cost of the tours should be fixed and enough that the villagers get paid a reasonable hourly rate for their time, but cheap enough for tight-fisted yachties - perhaps $3US per hour.

On marketing, I told him that he must have access to the internet and email, but perhaps he has a relation in Luganville or Port Vila that could handle the administration for the village. By the time that I had finished, he
was reeling with information overload, but hopefully, I've given him lots to think about and a way of getting started without spending too much money. If he aims the tours at the yachtyes who visit, then it won't cost the villagers anything upfront.

**Sloepmouche – August 2009:** The second annual festival (Aug. 12-14) was attended by only 12 yachts this year, in part because the weather this season had not been that great.

But the three-day festival in three villages was well appreciated by all. It was good to see our brothers Esrom and Pastor Gilbert and families.

We finally met Colin and his family, the NZ owner of the small farm in Labinwen. Some cruisers even went pig hunting with him. His dealings with the locals are sensible, and their relations are good.

The South West Malekula Yacht Club (SWMYC) got a new, bigger, thatch building for its first anniversary, and Esrom built us a bungalow on the lagoon (we had to name it and officially open it!), so if you are in the area do not hesitate to take a meal there or spend a night on the inner lagoon edge (no mosquitos!).

The small French community of Bennorce (10 Stick) welcomed us nicely again, but because of rainy weather, very few went snorkeling or diving. Day three of the festival happened in Labo. The Nalawan dancing was really good in the very nice setting along the beach. And this year the lunch was great (with a reduced fee for the day).

The Labo Festival will be held on two days this 2010 season, so plan on visiting the area Aug. 10-14, 2010, if you want to have a good time.

**Sloepmouche – July 2009:** We spent a week here waiting for the trade winds to calm down so we could sail back to Port Vila, and we were busy ashore the whole time. So many things to do here!

We anchored at 16°29’56”S, 167°25’54”E in 20’ of good sand. There are no dangers anywhere around, so we felt safe in strong winds. As there was no swell in SE winds, we had restful nights.

First we visited Loorwen village and met Chief Esrom. We took him as our guide in our dinghy exploration of the inside lagoon. Our good friends Roger and Lucie on Catimini (fellow SSCA’ers) followed on in their dinghy. On hearing Luc’s offer to help with tourism advice and promotion, we made a custom ceremony on our floating nakamal (cockpit), where we exchanged gifts, and Chief Esrom announced that we now belong to his nakamal and that he considers Luc his brother. Roger and Lucie were the witnesses.

Chief Esrom invited us to his home with his brother (the pastor) for dinner, and that is when the South West Malekula Yacht Club (SWMYC) was born. We talked about a yacht club flag, and Roger made a small model. The pastor’s wife painted two flags for the opening of the club. Once you enter the river mouth into the inland bay by dinghy, look for the first flag to indicate the dinghy stop and the second one in front of the yacht club where you can get a guide for the lagoon and maybe book a local meal for later.

The village showed us traditional dancing and other video/photo subjects.

We also visited the small French community of Bennorce at the SW point of the bay in front of Ten Stick rock (which earned the natives ten sticks of tobacco during WWII so U.S. planes could use it for target practice.)

After a nice visit of the community, we snorkeled with Chief Ronald on the reefs surrounding the rock. What a surprise for us to discover some of the nicest reefs we have seen in Vanuatu!
We saw five eagle rays, a small Napoleon wrasse, two huge groupers that would have fed 30 people and countless other fish amongst lively, colorful corals of all kinds. We had a GREAT dive during the three-day festival, swimming through the numerous crevasses lined with the most colorful fans. Saw a huge tuna that liked our silvery bubbles, a school of giant parrots and lots of action with good-sized fish.

South of Ten Stick, there is a waterfall that you can see from the sea. You can go most of the way by dinghy at medium tide up along the beach, inside the reefs. Halfway, we met Kali, who sometimes lives isolated with his small family in a small valley. He is a Vanuatu boxing champion and has competed overseas. He wants to build a stone dam at the foot of the fall so visitors can bathe under the fall. Nice people!

1.15.32 Melip Bay (16-35 S)

Alba – June 2015:  Anchorage 16°34.67′S 167°29.42′

The alarm went off at quarter to six and we were soon underway motoring west from Lammen Bay. There wasn’t much wind for the first two hours until we cleared the wind shadow from Epi, then we had a beautiful sail with 15 knots off the port quarter. I went to bed for an hour before lunch and Glenys managed to haul in a nice Rainbow Runner - fish for dinner tonight.

We were heading for a bay opposite Tomman Island, where we were hoping to deliver some school books to a lady called Priscilla Jimmy, the mother-in-law of Harry Fox. Unfortunately, we had very little information about the bay. The charts had very sparse detail and none of the cruising guides mention the place, so we were relying on a few comments made by Harry that it was “ok”. We eyeballed our way in and found that there was lots of depth all the way into the lovely bay with no hazards.

The sandy sea bed shallows very slowly and we anchored in 5 metres with a small amount of swell gently rolling us. The Navionics charts only have a little detail - the mainland is correctly positioned, but there’s a small island shown in the middle of the bay, which is actually further south at the edge of the bay.

We had very good visibility, so we hugged the reef to starboard, but in less perfect conditions, I suggest the following waypoints

   16-35.45S 167:29.26E
   16-34.81S 167-29.12E.

We anchored at 16-34.71S 167-29.48E.

It was mid-afternoon by the time we were settled and Tomman Island is ¾ mile from the anchorage, so we decided to go there tomorrow. Instead we went ashore to the nearby village, which we discovered is called Melip Bay.

A small crowd of kids and adults soon gathered and, when we asked for the chief, pointed us towards a clearing were we met a few people sitting on a log. We’re not sure if one of them was the chief or not, but after chatting for ten minutes, a nice lady called Melin offered to show us around the village. They don’t get many boats here (we were the first ones this year) and were not quite sure what to do with us.

Melin only spoke French, so our conversations were a little stilted, but she explained that there were 200 people in the village. The houses are mostly traditional wooden frames, with thatched roofs and woven bamboo panels for walls. Cyclone Pan didn’t affect them very much and they still have fruit and coconuts on the trees. As we walked around, I took a few pictures of the kids following us around, who love seeing themselves in the LCD display - howling with laughter at each other’s pictures.
After an hour, we retired back to the boat, promising to drop off some vegetable seeds tomorrow.

2 June 2015 Melip Bay, Malekula: I was woken just after dawn by the sound of voices nearby and looked out to find twenty or so villagers paddling back and forth in their dugout canoes, trolling for fish. One guy spotted me on deck and came over for a quick chat. He’d only caught four little sardines and said that it was a poor day. I told him that the people in Tanna catch the same fish with nets, but he told me that the chief doesn’t allow them to use nets, so they troll small lures made from a piece of clear plastic tubing and two small hooks.

After breakfast, we loaded the two boxes of school books and some other things into the dinghy and whizzed over to Tomman Island. There’s a fringing reef around the island, but the villagers have dug out a narrow channel through the coral, so that small boats can get access to the beach (approach starts at 16-34.89S / 167-28.42E, then head 195 degrees towards the beach at an angle of 60 degrees). By the time that we’d landed, we had a small crowd and were met by Angela, who is the primary school teacher. We explained that we’d come to see Priscilla and some kids were dispatched to go and get her. After the introductions had been made, we walked to the school with the two heavy boxes of books, followed by Priscilla, a gaggle of kids and a few curious adults. Angela told us that they hardly ever get white people on the island, so we were a real curiosity (apparently the kids were calling us "Ambat" which means “white skin” in the local language).

The primary school was charming - a traditional wooden hut, but inside were lots of posters on the walls. It’s funded by the community with no government money and there are only eight kids. We dropped the boxes down on a table and the kids were straight in looking through them.

Angela then volunteered to show us around the island and we had a lovely two hour walk, wandering about, being introduced to people and chatting. The kindergarten school has about fifteen children with a couple of ladies looking after them. All the kids were fascinated by us and I had a fun time photographing them and just messing about. The village has built a nice playground with swings and even a slide all made from local wood.

In the Kindergarten, I was intrigued by a set of small hand written posters instructing the kids in ten steps to basic health and hygiene. It was all written in Bislama, which is a kind of pigeon English and makes sense when you say it out loud.

1. Wasem Hans - Wash your hands
2. Klinim Nus - Clean your nose (with a leaf)
3. No Spet - Don’t spit (a habit that the adults have after drinking kava)
4. Bloken maot taem yu kof - Cover your mouth when you cough
5. Brasem tut o kaekae drae kokonas - Brush your teeth (or chew dry coconut)
6. Kavremap ol so - Cover up all sores (if no plasters available, use a leaf)
7. Katem ol nel - Cut your nails
8. Katem hea i sot - Cut your hair short
9. Werem kil klos - Wear clean clothes
10. Gudfala kaekae - eat good food (they are taught to eat fruit, vegetable and meat in each meal)

After leaving the Kindergarten, we were taken to Priscilla’s house, where she was very proud to show us her husband’s grave which is next to her house. It’s a very splendid white concrete slab with a lovely headstone showing a picture of her husband - he only passed away 18 months ago and it’s obvious that Priscilla misses him.

As we walked around we were accompanied by a crowd of kids and a few adults, who came and went. Most of the adults seem to walk around with a machete or at least a long knife, which seems to be an
extension of their arm. The thing that intrigues me is the way that kids are constantly handling knives - we see toddlers of 2 years old handling a knife as long as their leg. I took a picture of one little girl who I was sure was going to slit her throat with the knife that she was carrying.

Angela was really on our wavelength, understanding that we were interested in the everyday side of their lives and so she took us to her house, showing us around. Her main house is concrete, with a living room and three bedrooms. She also has two traditionally built huts, which are her kitchen and dining room. It was interesting to see her kitchen with a stone fire for making Laplap and open fire for normal cooking.

Tomman Island is owned by two families (hence “To - Mann”) and the land is split in two. Priscilla belongs to one family called Jimmy and Angela married into the other family called Aisoh. As Angela showed us around, she told us which family owned which land. The ground is obviously very fertile and we were shown through coconut groves and gardens containing banana, taro, papaya, etc.

We were shown a nut called the Poison Naval, which is used to paralyse fish. The tough, fibrous outer shell is opened up with a machete, then the nut inside is scraped down to the white part and grated. The grated nut is sprinkled on the surface of a rock pool and five minutes later the paralysed fish float to the surface. With these traditional techniques, I always wonder how they first thought of using things in this way?

One of the main sources of income for the island is copra. Here they use a slightly different method to what we saw in Polynesia. They gather the fallen coconuts from the ground; chop them in half with an axe; flip out the coconut flesh using a special tool; then dry the copra on a platform above an oven fueled by the coconut husks - much quicker than drying in the sun. They get 300 vatu ($3US) for a bag of dried copra, which is picked up by a cargo boat and taken to Santo to be processed into coconut oil.

Another way of generating hard cash is by harvesting a nut called "Nam Bangura". The hard shells are the size of a walnut and the people gather them from the ground, clean the shell and pack them away in sacks. The nuts get taken away to the USA where they are processed into Tamanu oil, which is supposed to be a natural healing oil. The locals get 200 vatu ($2US) per sack.

Before we left, Angela gave us a Lava Lava, which is a gaily coloured map of Vanuatu and we promised to return tomorrow with a few things that they need.

We made it back to the boat by lunchtime and then went for a snorkel on the headland to the south of the bay. The reef drops vertically down to 15 metres very close to the shallow drying reef, so we put our anchor on top of a pinnacle. It was a fabulous spot with lots of large fish and bright coral in clear water.

After returning to the boat, we nipped into Melipe village and handed out prints of photographs that I took yesterday, which were a great hit. We found Melin at her house and gave her a few little things as well as a photograph of her and her daughter. She insisted that we have some Pamplemousse and a huge bundle of Island Cabbage. We retired back to the boat and collapsed.

3 June 2015 Milipe Bay, Malekula - After our breakfast of Pamplemousse, we went over to Tomman Island again with a big bag of things. Priscilla met us on the beach and gave us a few crabs and a fish that she’d cooked, which was nice of her (a bit later she caught us up and gave us a couple of freshly baked bread buns.)

We found Angela teaching at the school and gave her some printed photographs that I’d taken yesterday - the kids loved them. Glenys handed out some things that she’d rustled together for the school and I showed the kids some of the animals that we’ve seen on our travels using our iPad.
Angela again volunteered to accompany us around the village. I handed out photographs to a few of the villagers as we walked around, which is not only fun, but gives us an excuse to go and see people again. We called in at the Kindergarten and gave them some small things like crayons and writing paper. Glenys whipped out a glove puppet which was an instant success (even though it was an "Ambat") and they insisted on singing us a long song about the alphabet.

Yesterday, I’d seen a wind generator, which Angela said didn’t work, so I’d brought in some tools to have a look at it. Unfortunately, there wasn’t much wind, so I couldn’t really test it although it was producing some voltage even in the odd breeze. The guy seemed to have it set up correctly, alongside his solar panel, so all I could do was to suggest that he connect it up to a single battery next time that it was windy and try to isolate any problems. It’s very frustrating not being able to help because we are so transient.

Before we left, some of the villagers appeared and gave us drinking coconuts; more pamplemousse; spring onions; a strange, two foot long bean pod called Snake Beans; and a writhing bag of twenty Land Crabs.

Back on the boat, we tackled the crabs, which were very dirty and very feisty. I ended up using a pair of pipe grips to grab each one to dunk it in a bucket of sea water to try to wash it - the crabs went bonkers, but were a little cleaner. Meanwhile, Glenys boiled up some water in a big pan with a trivet and using the pipe grips, I dropped each one into the steam. After seven minutes, we had cooked crabs.

I opened up a couple of the crabs, but the insides were a grim brown colour and there didn’t seem to be much meat in the carapace, so we decided to only eat the claws. Glenys spent a tedious 30 minutes, scrubbing each of the forty claws to remove dirt and we ended up with a nice bowl of clean, red claws. Glenys then spent a further 30 minutes cracking the claws and extracting the meat from which she made a Spicy Chili Crab Pate. The remains of the claws were boiled up in a pan to make a Crab Bisque for lunch tomorrow. Crabs are a lot of work.

Other than labouring with the crabs, we had a quiet afternoon, reading and napping.

4 June 2015 Milipe Bay to Southwest Bay, Malekula: We had a slow start to the day, waiting for the sun to be high in the sky so that we could navigate out of the north channel which is uncharted. Hollen, who seems to be the local water taxi, passed by and I gave him some photographs of our boat to take over to Angela in Tomman. He told me that there was plenty of depth through the channel.

I hate waiting to leave an anchorage and cracked up before nine o’clock. We motored out of Milipe Bay, then went on a heading of 290 degrees through the channel which is ½ mile wide. The minimum depth that we saw was 9 metres, although we skirted a couple of slightly shallower spots.

Our track was

- 16-34.70S 167-28.60E
- 16-34.60S 167-28.03E
- 16-34.22S 16-27.05E

**Sloempouche – July 2009:** We were due back in Port Vila in a few days, and a window opened, but before we took off, we gave a ride to Longlel, the principal chief of Tomman island, about 10-12 miles from SW Bay.

In pre-missionary times, male children had their heads bound so that they developed elongated heads. The last one died some years back, but we saw photos. The chief told us that the third week in July there
would be a three-day grade-taking ceremony on the island, a very special event, the last one being in 1998.

They would allow visitors to attend and take photos for a fee that would help offset the costs of the ceremony, which for them is quite expensive. They were so keen that they gave us the program and quickly organized a women’s and a men’s dance for Luc to film as a promotional preview. That same afternoon just about sunset, we pulled up anchor, and 28 hours and a bunch of tacking later, we were in Port Vila, just making it in before the weather window closed. Later we returned to the Melip anchorage shown on the RG and took some GPS points requested.

Moses, the chief of Melip, almost adopted fellow SSCA’ers on Catimini as Roger repaired the HF telephone, their only way to communicate with the outside. Johnny, the French-speaking son of the chief of Tomman, often comes out to greet yachts and can get fruit and veggies. It looks tricky, but you can get in close to the beach in front of the village in very good black sand bottom; otherwise, you’ll be exposed to the swell rolling in.

Anchorage: 16°34.694’S, 167°29.421’E

You can dinghy up the river seen in the satellite photo in the RG quite a long way. Go at high tide as the bar at the mouth is very shallow, and you may have to walk the dinghy in or time the swells for an exciting surf-riding entry. You can dinghy to Tomman if you have a good motor. There is a small channel cut through the reefs; ask the islanders who paddle across daily to go to the gardens or the Catholic school. Very interesting island with complex, ancient culture.

The water between Tomman and the main island as you travel to/from SW Bay is deep enough to pass without problem. With good light you will see the isolated reefs clearly.

6.2 Malekula East Coast

1.15.33 Vao Island (15-54 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: At Vao Island we were lucky to meet Juliette, a very nice, enterprising lady who gave us a tour of the island after we charged the batteries of her mobile phone (the new request of islanders in the new millennium).

There is a large French Catholic school there. We took lots of photos/video of several nasaras (ceremonial dance areas) and local artists, who do nice wood and coral carvings.

1.15.34 Wala Island (15-59 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: Wala Island is now a little spoiled by cruise ships, so a 1,000 VT/person/village fee is asked to visit the five villages (although some negotiating is possible). Twice a day you see an exodus of small paddling canoes going to the mainland to work in their garden or to go to school.

1.15.35 Norsup Island (16-03 S)

Screensaver – June 2018: 16 03.532 S / 167 24.305 E Anchor in 7m, Sand, 4G Again just a place to stop, but there is a lot of protection within this 1 mile area. There was just no wind so a few more vatu were consumed. On average Screensaver does very well on Diesel and use less than the vast majority. But these next few months are as much about conserving available diesel as it is about cost.

I swam to shore towing the tender which was carrying my burnable rubbish and of course the necessary fluids. After convincing the locals I did not want to just leave it on the beach the kids built a fire and it
burnt away to pretty much nothing while I chatted to a growing crowd. These local guys are off to Ozy fruit picking for the first time next season and are all pretty keen to earn some money. But as one guy described to me, we really don’t need money we have our gardens we attend every day, and fish a few times a week, a bit of Kava and all is good. There is a French school and English along with medical care and an airport.

1.15.36 Port Stanley (16-05 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: Port Stanley offers several anchorages. We anchored off the eastern end of Uri Island (see RG) where we were welcomed by the small community. We toured their clean village and snorkeled in the marine park, where we took underwater photos of very vibrant corals and the giant clam shells they protect there.

We also anchored temporarily on rubble off the dock in Lislits in order for one of us to walk to Lakatoro to get bread.

1.15.37 Nunbecken Bay (16-08 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: Nunbeken Bay: We anchored at 16°07′44″S, 167°29′48″E in 22′ on foul ground but had a very calm anchorage despite the trade winds. As at Crab Bay, you can just duck in behind the first reef and get out of the swell without going all the way in. On the aerial photo it looked like you could go all the way into the mangroves, but when we explored by dinghy, we were happy we didn’t try as it was almost too shallow for the dinghy in some places.

1.15.38 Crab Bay (16-10 S)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: We anchored in the first anchorage, just in front of the sand spit. Not a lot of room, but each of the three anchorages mentioned in RG can accommodate a boat, though there is not much point weaving around reefs to get in further. It is also possible to anchor just inside behind the protection of the first reef before you arrive in the anchorage area and still be protected from swell. It’s calm here in 20-25 knots E-SE.

The mangrove area is now a protected park and, thus, no fishing or collecting allowed—but they might collect 500 VT/person if you visit. We didn’t see any natives at all.

1.15.39 Pankumu Bay (16-16 S)

Screensaver – June 2018: Anchorage 16 16.12 S / 167 39.53 E in 11m sand and coral rubble, 3g. This place though is just a place to stop rather than motor on up and in these flat conditions it was just fine.

I was going to go to Pentecost to see the original Bungy jumping—it’s just around Wali west side 3/4 the way down the coast. But at 10,000 vuv I guess I will pretend I saw what is there on YouTube and cross it off my list.

Sloepmouche – June 2009: The Pankumu Bay anchorage was as described in the RG and a bit rolly due to strong SE winds. We did get into the river with our dinghy, but we had to cross the shallow bar with breakers (very exhilarating!). Alas, we were only able to navigate the first half a mile.

Even though this is the second largest river of Vanuatu, there are too many shallow rapids shortly after you get in.
1.15.40 Banam Bay (16-20 S)

Vellela – Pre-2014: 16 20.34 S / 167 45.44 E Protected except from the north (unusual). Interesting diving but infested with crown of thorns. Good walks ashore to Aulua Mission Station.

Sloepmouche – Oct 2007: Banon Bay offers a great anchorage in normal trade winds with friendly natives. No fees, no begging. The chief of the small community near the beach can organize some very interesting custom dances for a group of yachties (the dances involve the whole community). There’s also a pleasant little waterfall where you can stand under the cascade in the fresh water. It’s about a 20 minute walk away.

1.15.41 Port Sandwich (16-26 S)

Screensaver – June 2018: Anchor in 16m mostly mud, very poor. If you are lucky, you may get some internet. The weather was about to get worse possibly reaching 35knots, and Lamen Bay already had a bit of a swell, whereas Port Sandwich I knew would be flat.

So I hid out there for a few days. Eventually the sun returned and I headed off.

Alba – June 2015 - Uliveo Island to Port Sandwich, Malekula: It was a miserable overcast day with rain showers, but we decided to head off towards Banam Bay on the east coast of Malekula. High tide was at midday, so we hung around until eleven o’clock before tackling the sand bar out of the anchorage. The minimum depth that we saw was 3.8 metres.

There wasn’t much wind so we motor sailed out of the Maskelyns and then tried to sail for a couple of hours, but with an average speed of 2.8 knots and horribly sloppy seas, we grew tired of the crashing and banging of the sails and went back to motoring.

The swell was coming from the east and I became worried that the anchorage at Banam Bay might be rolly, so we cut our passage short and went into Port Sandwich, which is a long deep bay. We went three miles up the bay and anchored in an isolated anchorage near a wrecked ship on the west side of the bay. It was so peaceful, being surrounded by jungle and coconut trees, with one small hut just visible on the shore.

We managed to catch three small bonito on the way, so Glenys made Poisson Cru for dinner - fabulous.

Sloepmouche – 2009: A new tourism and environmental association has been created and is led by willing young people from different tribes in the area. We were fortunate to be invited for their first island night. Kava tasting, a local string band and a delicious local buffet (plenty of big, tasty oysters) were on the program. Some cruisers even sang and played guitar.

That morning we had been invited in a custom area to see some traditional dancing. Since it was the first time we visited them, we brought a small pig (only 1,000 vatu from the other village) as a gift.

If you anchor close to the old Ballande wharf, don’t miss a visit to Rock, who welcomes cruisers at his house behind the beach. He created a book exchange/public library for the locals. You can do your laundry, fill water, and he can organize a pig roast for cruisers. Nice guy!

Sloepmouche – Oct 2007: We decided to go up the east coast of Malekula. Our first stop was Port Sandwich. This would definitely be a good hurricane hole if ever needed! (Although there’s a three-mile fetch if the winds are out of the N. There are majestic views as you enter.
You have the choice of several placid anchorages with occasional breezes. Across the bay, opposite the Ballande dock, you can dinghy into the river for quite a ways at high tide. Ask locals how to find the river mouth. Too bad for the shallow bar at the mouth because inside would be the perfect hurricane hole.

Snorkeling in the bay is not recommended because of low visibility and past shark attacks but it is nice on the outside of the bay around the Lamap area. Bread is available at Lamap, a nice walk away. It’s a little depressing to see remains of the French pre-independence time. Their quality of life was better in the outer islands in those times with better communications, schools and health care.

6.3 Masekelyne Islands (Southeast End of Malekula)

Sloepmouche – June 2009: A caveat about the Masquelynes, especially around the Pescarus anchorage: many boats and land tourists complained about being conned or ripped-off by one or more young men who propose to act as guides to areas like the Giant Clam reserve or to organize a custom dance and/or feast, and who later ask for more money or more than the customary fee or even take you to the wrong area if they don’t feel they’re getting enough money for the effort. They are a well-known gang in the area, but the custom chiefs and villagers seem unable to control them.

Two of the main guys are Jimmy and another name like Jeffery. Kalo runs the bungalows on the beach at Pescarus and can probably tell you whom to avoid in any dealings. This situation is unfortunate because it gives all the Masquelynes a bad name.

There are many very nice people who have been to legitimate workshops for tourist guides and have certificates, but yachties are suspicious that they may be forgeries.

1.15.42 Avokh Village

Verite – May 2018: Avokh Village, Maskelyne, Vanuatu. Fascinating afternoon spent with these generous people.

The kids are waiting to place the flowers around our necks as a welcome to the village with Kustom dance to follow. I’m sure the little girl delegated to me thought I was going to bite her.

The kiln-looking structure is actually a bread oven. And the house was a new construction. Pandan leaves used for many things.

Later, we witnessed a Kustom dance performance.

1.15.43 Awei Island

Alba – June 2015: Southwest Bay to Awei Island.

As we were motoring out of Southwest Bay, There was a low pressure trough going through and it was raining, but the forecast said that the winds would be light and the seas calm, so we’d decided to take the opportunity to head back up-wind to the Maskelyne Islands.

It was a tough bash, motoring into the swell and waves first couple of hours. We hit a 15 knot head wind and the waves were steeper than I expected, so we were being stopped dead occasionally because we were motoring. We dodged through the gap between the mainland and Tomman Island and after that the conditions got better. The waves were on our beam and we actually had enough wind to sail for an hour, before the wind died.

We motored into the anchorage at Awei Island in overcast skies with drizzle. The anchorage is very nice and very sheltered being completely land locked.
8 June 2015 Awei Island, Maskelyne Islands
This is a lovely anchorage. There's a small village on the other side of the island that has fifteen people living there. Sofren (the chief) came over and had a chat with us then scammed a bag of sugar. The villagers' gardens are over on the main land and we're anchored directly in their path, so we had a constant stream of people passing close by in their dug-outs. We had another of those contradictory events when an old lady dressed in her tatty Mother Hubbard dress paddled over in an ancient dug-out canoe and asked if we would charge her mobile phone.

We're planning to go into an anchorage at Uliveo tomorrow, which apparently has a very shallow bar of 1.2 metres at low tide. There's about a metre of tide here, so we will just be able to scrape over at high tide with 10 or 20 cm of water under our keel. Normally we go through shallow spots on a rising tide, so that we'll float free if we go aground, but this is so tight that we will have to go in at high tide. If we go aground then we'll be in trouble.

Our friends on "Caduceus" are already there and have given us some waypoints, but I'm still a little worried about it. So, I did some calculations to see how much our draft is reduced if we heel over (I knew my school boy trigonometry would come in useful one day). I calculate that if we heel over at 10 degrees our draft is reduced by 3 cm; 15 degrees gives 7 cm; and 20 degrees gives 12cm.

Therefore if we go aground, a solution would be to heel our boat over by 15 degrees and we should be able to float free. As an experiment, I pulled our boom out to port and using a block on the end of the boom and the spinnaker halyard, I lifted our dinghy up at the end of the boom, but disappointingly we only heeled over by 5 degrees, which only reduces our draft by 1 cm. Good idea, but I would need to put a lot more weight into the dinghy - perhaps flooding it with water would work.

We tried to go for a walk on the mainland in the afternoon, aiming to get to a beach on the south shore, but the mangroves on the shore and the impenetrable vegetation inland forced us to give up. We should have asked one of the kids in the village to take us.

Sloepmouche – June 2009: The Awei anchorage is a well-protected anchorage behind the reef. The reef is high enough to break any waves, so you are in a smooth pond while the wind generators are producing. Amazingly there were 13 boats here coming back from the SW Bay festival!

At low tide, you can walk across the sandbar between the small island and the main island for nice coastal walks.

1.15.44 Uliveo

Alba – June 2015: Anchorage: 16°31.87′S 167°49.77′E

9 June 2015 Awei Island to Uliveo Island, Maskelyne Islands

At half past eight, we picked up the anchor and motored around to Uliveo Island, a mere five miles away. We had to weave our way though some reefs and encountered big standing waves just off the island where the 20 knot wind was against a two knot current, but that was only short lived.

The approach into the anchorage was a little tense, but the minimum depth of water that we saw was four metres, so no problem at all. (Our track was bang on the recommended waypoints of 16:32.180S 167:49.777E, 16:31.965S 167:49.802E.) Once past the sand bar, we anchored next to “Caduceus” in 15 metres of water. We're in a deep lagoon that has a maximum of 20 metres and shallows very fast at the edges.

After lunch, we went ashore to watch some Kastom dancing that “Caduceus” had arranged with the village's yacht liaison, Stewart. The men were dressed in their traditional Nambas, which are penis pouches made from banana leaves. In this area, the men are known as Smol Nambas (which means
small penis pouch). In the north of Malekula, live the Big Nambas who (errrr) have big penis pouches - I’m not sure if the men from the north are better endowed...

The dance is performed only by men and the local ladies are not allowed to even see the performance (female tourists are exempt from this restriction). In addition to their smol nambas, the men wear ankle bracelets made from nuts called Navake, which rattle as they dance. The dances all enact traditional stories including pig hunting, the flight of a hornet and even child birth. Along with the rhythmical drumming on traditional bamboo instruments, it was interesting and enjoyable.

The guys obviously enjoyed the whole thing and were keen to know if we enjoyed it. It seems like they’ve only recently started to re-perform these kastom dances and there were three old guys who played the drums and I guess are teaching them the traditions. It was a fun half an hour for only $20US each.

After the dancing, we went for a walk to one of the other villages called “Pescara”. While we were there, Liz, who’s a doctor, was asked to look at an old man’s foot which had a horrible looking infection. While Liz was in the hut, I had chance to stand and look around without anyone talking to me (for once) and I was struck by the simple and primitive life in these islands.

Most people were walking around in bare feet and all were dressed in worn out clothes - the men in tattered shorts and t-shirts and ladies in their Mother Hubbard dresses. Women were carrying buckets to the well to lift water using a hooked pole; men were repairing the thatched roof of a traditional hut and two ladies were sat on the earth next to their open fire making laplap. It’s all quite humbling.

10 June 2015 Uliveo Island, Maskelyne Islands

We had horrible weather with rain showers passing through, so we lurked around on board. I caught up with editing photographs and the website, while Glenys read up on places to visit over the next month.

In the afternoon, we went for a walk. Glenys bought some local beans which were a strange shape like a star fruit in cross-section. We came across a Parakeet which one of the villagers has tamed, we’ve caught glimpses of them flying noisily overhead, so it was great to see one up close - such stunning colours. I gave some printed photographs to the two old guys who were the band at the Kastom dancing. They loved them. One guy disappeared into his wooden hut and brought out a beaten up photo album containing twenty or so photos of his family and insisted on telling me about every photograph - all of his three sons now live abroad. The other guy turned out to be the oldest guy on the island - a mere 93 years old.

There are three villages on the island each with 500 people, so there’s quite a population here. In between the villages is extensive bush containing coconut trees and the villager’s gardens, with pleasant dirt footpaths joining everything. We spent an enjoyable two hours walking around and chatting to people.

1.15.45 Lutes

Field Trip – January 2017: From Havana, we sailed straight up to the Maskelynes. Diana and Graham were already in Lutes and we decided to join the pack once again to explore the clam sanctuary and participate in the Vanuatu Independence Day celebrations.

The entrance to the anchorage was a bit of a nail-biter with one section narrow and quite shallow (3 m) edged by reef. We used the satellite images to plot a course and also cross-referenced the course with the waypoints given in the guidebooks. Still, I stood up on the bow, keeping a lookout for hazards below and cringing as the crystal clear water made things look so close to the surface! Mark carefully
monitored the depth sounder over the shallow bit, and we were fine. The opposite challenge awaited us in the deep, dark waters of the anchorage. And we took care to put out 5 to 1 scope in the 20+ meters, leaving plenty of swing room between us and the other boats.

The big news in Lutes, though, was that only 3 weeks prior, a sandspit had risen up suddenly from the shallows. A new island had been pushed up from below by some sort of tectonic plate movement, and the owners of that portion of the reef were preparing to have a dedication and naming ceremony for this new piece of land. It was quite the event and somehow we all were invited as the honored guests - the first white men to set foot on the dry sand. The Ni-Vans sure do love any reason to create a full-on celebration!

Mark and Damian set off in the morning to pick up folks on shore who would be joining/facilitating the ceremony. Joseph rode with us, the actual owner of the new island. His English was fantastic, and we soon understood why - he works the vineyards every year in Marlborough, NZ for months at a time. I continue to be impressed by the industrious characters here in Vanuatu. Later, in Malekula, we’d meet George who worked on a commercial fishing boat and traveled all through Asia and Oceania. Through his travels, he realized what a rich, unique culture he had here in Vanuatu and decided it was important that they share it with the world. That’s how he got started in tourism here.

We anchored off the new island, where men were busy setting up a wooden sign adorned with tropical flowers. It read, “Niel Fat Sunburn Floating Beach” - a mouthful for such a small spit of land, but I’m sure there is significance... well, pretty sure. Niel is the family name of Joseph, it’s the ‘Fat Sunburn Floating Beach’ part that I’m not too sure about. Maybe in honor of all these fat, sunburned tourists that come to visit them here?? But no cruise ships come this way! And they can’t be talking about us, can they!?

A few prayers are said by the pastor, speeches are given, and Graham is the official cartographer - commissioned to walk the perimeter of the island and plot GPS coordinates that will put it on the map. Oodles of photos are taken, as well as some video of the first outrigger canoe landing on its shore. Stewart, the tourism rep on the island could be a hollywood producer with his knack for dramatic and poignant images, and he directs the cruisers (necks heavy-laden with ridiculous camera equipment and video cameras) as if we are his full-time film crew.

He keeps mentioning his hopes for how the village can use this island to attract visitors, thinking people will come from far and wide to see a piece of land that rose from the sea. Geologists, maybe, but I’m not sure the average Joe would deem this an eleventh wonder of the world. However, based on its location and makeup, it might prove to be a fantastic draw for wind kiters - flat water, sand from which to launch, and steady wind. I love his enthusiasm and foresight, again, a sign of the industrious spirit here.

It was a carefully orchestrated ceremony, and I felt so honored to be invited to be part of it. The following day, Mark would come back with two dinghies full of villagers to take some drone footage. The people had never seen a drone before, and the kids especially went nuts about it - a mixture of awe and uncertainty. But when the adults saw the finished video on Mark’s laptop in the kava hut later that night, they were hooked. I think they must have played it 5 or 6 times! The elderly father shuffled up close to the screen, not believing what he was seeing. It was so fun to see their reactions! And of course, they insisted Mark bring it to the Independence Celebrations the next day to film the village.

Before leaving, Stewart organized a trip out to the Giant Clam Sanctuary for us. We paddled in authentic outrigger canoes, and had a chance to snorkel in shallow waters over extravagantly colored clams. The sanctuary had been set up by a local man, seeing the need to protect these vital sea creatures. Although Cyclone Pam depleted the population of clams, many are still thriving.
On the day we left, we saw Stewart showing the video footage to a newly anchored yacht as part of the tourism welcome! And then when we arrived in PKiKort Sandwich a week later, a man stopped Mark and asked if he was the one who had a drone. Turns out Joseph had told him all about it!! News on the coconut telegraph travels fast!

1.15.46 Gaspard Bay

Sloempouche – June 2009: Gaspard Bay is another good spot and a definite cyclone hole if you go all the way inside. We checked the depth by dinghy, and it is possible to go in with 6’ draft, and we would even feel safer than inside Port Sandwich. One yacht reported being asked for an anchoring fee here, but no one asked us.

There is no village here; people come to fish or cut copra. The reefs noted in the RG were easy to discern even in cloudy conditions.

1.15.47 Pescarus

Sloempouche – August 2009: We went back to Pescarus Village (Uliveo anchorage) and still found some demanding folks, and our Peace Corps guide was attacked by the same dog that had bitten our friend Commodore Jean on Quest just two weeks before! Something about this particular village! But the rest of the Masquelynes has no problems!

Sloempouche – Oct 2007: We did a direct overnight passage from Port Vila to Pescarus. We made sure we would arrive in good daylight as the approach is tricky due to numerous reefs way off the low-lying islands. With good waypoints from the Rocket Guide, it is no problem as long as you can eyeball for confirmation!

There is a well-protected anchorage off Pescarus and the other two villages. We did some bartering for fruits (grapefruits, papaya, lemons, mini-apples, and more) and lobsters. Being spoiled by many cruisers, they were quite demanding, but with patience and good will you can have a good relation. There is local music, kava-drinking and a small resort aspiring to develop tourism.

An unfortunate event over a year ago (the looting of a local yacht that went aground at night on the outside reefs) kept some cruisers away. Villages are often jealous of each other, and each tries to lure yachties’ money and goods their way. We are all the same on the planet.

Ask Kalo to show you the best snorkeling spots around. There is also a giant clam and marine reserve they can show you.

We also anchored behind the reef (Mamu AB on Rocket Guide), but did not find the good sand at 6m – it must have shifted away and left only coral rubble.

We had quite a washing-machine sea just outside those reefs when rounding them to sail to Port Sandwich. By luck it only lasted for two miles (seas and currents), and we had an easy sail the rest of the way in 20 knots ESE.
7 The Central Islands

7.1 Aoba

7.2 Maewo

1.15.48 Asanvari Bay

Alba – June 2015: 15 June 2015  Wali to Asanvari Bay, Maewo

I was up early, keen to go ashore to look at the Land-diving tower. Having pulled our dinghy up the steep pebble shore, we were met by Luke Fargo, who in 1978 was responsible for setting up land-diving in this village and making it accessible to tourists. Each year, the villagers build a 30 metre high wooden tower, tie thick vines around their legs and then dive from the tower. Unfortunately, the land-diving only occurs on a Saturday and we’d just missed it. However, “Lil Explorers” had seen it a couple of days ago and have given us some video and photographs. Luke Fargo took us up a steep slope to the tower and told us all about it.

The activity only takes place in April, May and June because at any other time of year the vines do not have enough elasticity and would snap. This corresponds with the time of year best suited to plant yams and land-diving has become a ritual to ensure a good harvest of yams. Only men take part in the activity and there is a strict progression path with young boys starting at lower heights and progressing upwards over a period of years.

I was fascinated by the tower. It’s made from rough-hewn tree trunks and branches lashed together by small vines. The tower is perched on the edge of a steep slope and supported by thick vines leading to trees at the top of the slope. At each level of the tower there are small hinged platforms, which the flexible vines pass over. The platforms are supported by small sticks, which break when the vine becomes tight and acts as a shock absorber.

The vines are roughly one inch thick and there is one for each leg. The chief of the tower, who controls everything, determines how long the vine should be for each jumper. The perfect length is when their head just touches the ground - too long and they hit the ground and too short and they swing back into the tower. The landing area is at a slope of 45 degrees and is well dug over earth making a “landing” a little softer.

The video that “Lil Explorers” took shows how the dive ends abruptly - nothing like the slow gentle deceleration of the modern day bungee jump.

We were back on the boat by nine o’clock, so we headed north to Asanvari Bay on the next island of Maewo. Halfway along Pentecost, we were amazed to watch a swordfish leap out of the water only 20 metres to the side of our boat. It jumped three times in succession, flashing blue and silver in the sunshine and then with a final splash, disappeared - incredible.

The 35 mile passage was variable with hardly any wind for the first couple of hours; pleasant down-wind sailing in 15 knots for an hour; and then howling 35 knots katabatic gusts at the top of the island. The short 5 mile jump across the channel between islands was bouncy with 3 metre seas and 25-30 knot winds, so we were glad to arrive at the anchorage.

Asanvari Bay is a lovely sheltered harbour, just around the most southern headland of Maewo. It’s very deep and we had to motor around for a while to find a spot where we could anchor in 15 metres of water in some sand, but far enough away from the shallow reef surrounding the shore. There was only
one other boat in the anchorage, but the wind swirls around and made it a challenge to know where their anchor was.

There’s a big waterfall ashore and guy called Alex has built a lovely little bar right next to it, so we went over for a couple of beers in the evening and met John and crew from “Wind Change” from Australia.

16 June 2015  Asanvari Bay, Maewo

We had a chill-out day. I caught up on my diary and photographs, then read a book and did some research about Indonesia. We’ve got very little information about the anchorages in Indonesia, so I need to get on the internet and download some blogs and maybe buy a cruising guide. I’ve had an email conversation with a British boat called “Spruce”, who are on the Sail Indonesia Rally, so I might be cheeky and get them to bring a few things out from Australia for us.

Glenys read a book and pottered about - she even got out some of the new shells in her collection and started taking photographs of them.

In the evening, we went over to the Sparkling Waters Bar and had a couple of beers. Alex only built the place two years ago and was hoping that he’d get 100 yachts a year, but last year there were only 50 turned up. He’s only had a few boats this year and is worried that Cyclone Pam will have put more people off coming.

Alex is still in the process of doing the finishing touches to the bar and the main problem he has is access from the anchorage. There’s a one metre tide here and the shoreline is all rocks and reef, so it’s a mission getting ashore and trying to stop your dinghy bashing into rocks all the time. Without using dynamite to make a channel, I’m not sure what the solution is.

While we were there, I spent twenty minutes sorting out Alex’s guitar. It’s a cheap Chinese model, which only had five strings and one of those was very rusted. I used a wire brush to clean the rust of the head mechanisms; oiled them and then replaced the two bass strings with some old strings from my guitar - it’s not perfect by any means, but at least it sounds a bit better.

We’ve finally run out of the wine that we bought in New Zealand, so the 60 bottles of duty free wine stored in our aft heads have been calling remorselessly. The customs have sealed the boxes with labels, but the glue on the labels is not very good and they peel off easily.

So, we’ve come up with a cunning plan to drink some of the bottles of wine with twist-off caps and then re-fill them with water mixed with black acrylic paint. We’re hoping that the customs officers will only give the bottles a quick glance (if they bother to inspect them at all). Hopefully, our little subterfuge will pass undetected and we won’t have Alba impounded and have to spend five years in a hell-hole of a jail.

17 June 2015  Asanvari Bay, Maewo

At seven o’clock, we were woken by a knocking on the hull. I staggered on deck to find a guy in a dugout canoe with a large bag of hot bread. Did I want some bread? Hell, yes! I bought a large loaf for $2 and collapsed back into bed.

After our decadent breakfast of fresh bread, boiled eggs and jam, we went ashore and were met by a nine year old girl called Lynn and two other small boys, who tagged along with us. We wandered about the village for ten minutes, but couldn’t find anyone. None of the children spoke any English, so we were a bit unsure where to go. Lynn saw our confusion and decided to lead us in a circular tour of the village, which is large and spread out.

Eventually we met a young lady called Lucy who told us that everyone had gone to a wedding in another village - all 200 people. She was a nurse and had stayed behind to deliver a baby that was expected
today. Lucy acted as translator and we asked Lynn if she would guide us on a walk to the waterfall and then back.

The kids were great fun, looking after us and taking us along a narrow path to Alex’s bar. We indicated that we wanted to get above the waterfall, so Lynn decided that we’d climb up the edge of the waterfall, which was interesting. At the top of the waterfall, we came upon a path, so we headed right and climbed up towards another village.

On the way, the kids insisted on stopping off at a small grove of Cocoa trees to pick some pods. They then smashed them open on a rock and sucked the Cocoa seeds - there’s a bitter, lemony coating on the outside of the seeds - a natural sweet. We also saw Taro growing in flooded soil like a paddy field, around which flew brilliant red Dragonflies. (I later found out that the Taro is called Water Taro and is sweeter than normal Taro.)

After lunch, I went snorkelling around the headland to the south of the bay, but the reef was mostly rock with a small amount of hard coral and there was a strong current, so I soon gave up. As I went back into the edge of the bay, I came across a large pinnacle just off the shore, which was again rocky reef, but had a spectacular wall that dropped off to 30 or 40 metres. There were lots of large Snappers and other predatory fish swimming around on the outskirts of huge shoals of smaller fish - nice.

Back at boat, I had a look at our anchor chain, which was wrapped around a few coral heads. I’d tied a fender on the chain when we anchored, but it wasn’t in the correct place and had been dragged down to the sea bed at 15 metres, collapsing with the water pressure. Glenys pulled up 20 metres of chain and I tied two fenders higher on the chain at 35 metres. When Glenys let out chain to a total of 50 metres, it seems to better - the chain is now suspended above the coral heads.

18 June 2015  Asanvari Bay, Maewo

We’d arranged to go for a hike up to a bat cave and met Barry on the beach at nine o’clock. He led us along the path to Alex’s bar and then across the river at the bottom of the waterfall, following a faint path around the shore and then steeply up to his small village, where three families live in traditional huts.

Barry picked up his machete from his house and we were joined by his nine year old son, Hendry, who had decided that going for a hike was more fun than going to school. We walked up past the village’s pig pen, where we stopped to admire a couple of Tuskers owned by Barry’s uncle. The path gradually became more overgrown and steep as we headed along a ridge climbing up into the jungle.

Hendry slashed at the vegetation to clear a path, while we slipped and slithered on the mud, hanging onto trees and vines. After about an hour, we had a torrential down-pour and within minutes were soaking wet through. We plodded on for 2½ hours, wading through streams and walking through varied landscapes including coconut groves, temperate woodland and dense jungle with tree ferns.

The cave is large with an entrance measuring about 20 metres wide by 5 metres high. We turned on our torches and tentatively walked into the pitch-black cave, slipping and sliding, trying not to put our hands down on the thick, slimy bat guano on the rocks. The bats are tiny about 2 inches long. There were thousands of them clinging to the roof, hanging upside down and most of them didn’t seem to be too concerned by our torch beams.

After we’d walked a couple of hundred metres into the cave, we came across a huge hole where the cave roof has collapsed and we could see the sky. Below us was a chasm in the earth dropping down to another cave 50 metres below us. With bats swirling around us, we tossed rocks down in to the cavern, listening to the sound of the echoes. It sounded like the scene in The Hobbit movie where one of the
hobbits drops a chain down into a well in the Mines of Moria - we were expecting orcs to come swarming out of the deep hole.

The walk back down the anchorage took 1½ hours, so we were tired and very muddy by the time that we arrived back at the boat at three o’clock. It was an excellent day out for only $10US each.

**Sloepmouche – Cyclone Season 2007/2008:** This is a well-protected anchorage with occasional frequent rainstorms. We met Chief Nelson and his son Nixon at the well-known yacht club. They’ve been welcoming yachts here for a long time and are well organized in doing so.

A small green light marks the dinghy landing at night. A hydro-generator powers the village with 220VAC-500W, so there are several lights ashore at the yacht club (cold beer, DVD movies), nearby houses and in the nakamal where you will drink kava.

We did some hiking (with swimming in waterfalls and rivers) and snorkeling around the bay, so we slept well at night. The waterfall does not fall right into the sea, but is so close that we enjoyed seeing and hearing it from the anchorage and swam in the refreshing water every day.

There’s another smaller fall up above the main fall. There’s lots of rain as Maewo is the wettest island in Vanuatu with over 175 inches of rainfall a year! Luckily, we had no rain during our all-day hike to the tabu bat cave. Be careful not to slip on the muddy tracks!

There’s a lot of climbing during the first hour of the hike on sometimes slippery mud; the second hour follows the river itself, and there are several nice swimming holes. You enter a long, large chamber and quickly are engulfed by darkness with thousands of small bats and lots of smaller stalactites hanging in places where rain drips through the ceilings. Take a strong light to get the full effect.

Nixon and his father are quite smart to realize the value of yachts visiting the otherwise very isolated village. The village is one of the prettiest we’ve seen in Vanuatu, all natural thatch and bamboo, flowers and colorful plants all around and lots of space between houses. They are welcoming, do many things, organize custom dances, hikes, dinners, laundry, etc., for very reasonable fees.

From the amount of help and compliments showered on the chief and village from yachties, we can see that there is a special bond formed on both sides. Unfortunately, their very welcoming nature is also the very thing that could bring big changes to their lives and create jealousies where before there were none.

There will be some rallies going to Asanvari this 2008 season with 20 to 60 boats. Try to find out the dates and avoid them if you don’t like crowds.

Also the anchorage is deep: 50’ dropping quickly to 70’ on coral bottom.

**Sloepmouche – August 2008:** Quite a difference from our first visit in April 2008 when we were the only boat here. In August, after the festivals, we anchored with 14 others! The ICA Musket Cove to Asanvari Rally this 2008 season saw only 13 boats. ICA did install three moorings in that deep anchorage, for which the YC charges a 500 VT fee (always snorkel or dive moorings to check them). We all found a place, and despite the fluky intermittent gusts from all directions and a giant barge that anchored and tied ashore at the waterfall at 3 a.m. one night, we all happily co-habited the bay.

Rod’s 75th Birthday (Saw Lee Ah) and some organizing by Yvonne on Providence in coordination with Nixon and Nelson of the YC resulted in a very nice dinner and fun farewell evening for 35 people, many of whom had been to the festivals together and were now heading their different ways. Nixon did a great job providing activities, bread delivery, fruit and vegetable and a handicraft market, and the
delicious dinner. The yachty once again troubleshooted the ever-fickle hydro generator, which once again works—for now.

1.15.49 Mbenavui Pt. (Moon Cave)
Sloepmouche – August 2008: A strong SE wind set up a good southerly swell. When we looked at the anchorage suggested in the RG with our own eyes, we decided to anchor instead in the most southern bay visible on the satellite photo (15°14.073’S / 168°06.848’E) behind a rocky outcropping. In fact, from where we anchored, we could see the big black opening to the Moon Cave and were as close, or closer, to the other caves as RG’s anchorage.

We saw people on the beach near us, so asked to visit the caves. They said two children would go with us in the dinghy and guide us into the Moon Cave and then show us where to land to see the other caves and petroglyphs. In one cave they are making their own stalagmites, a fun game that actually could teach us about how long the process takes. Another cave serves as a tunnel for the actual coastal walking track. No one asked for fees—how refreshing! We gave the children some gifts as a thank-you.

At low tide the swell was minimal, but in the night it increased with the tide. Therefore, we would suggest visiting the caves as a day stop and continuing three nm more to Narovorovo, which is calmer.

1.15.50 Narovorovo
Sloepmouche – August 2008: Anchorage at 15°11.039’S, 168°06.406’E; if you anchor close to the beach, it’s better protected from the swell going up along the coast. We hiked with Winifa (one of the trained tour guides—they have workshops) across the island to see the other coast. It took us about two hours to get to a great spot overlooking the east side. We decided not to go down to the beaches as it would have added another 90 minutes before taking the same path back.

1.15.51 Naone Bay
Sloepmouche – August 2008: We totally agree with Tamariki that the cascades and waterfalls here are the best we have seen in Vanuatu! Alas, the swell along the coast cannot be avoided as there is no indentation in the coastline to protect you.

We anchored at 15°00.718’S, 168°03.805’E in good sandy bottom in front of the river. It was quite rolly. You can go with your dinghy up the creek and tie up at the first cascade that is the road. From there, after getting permission from the chief, Maurice took us up to, around and through the cascades. You walk in the running water that sheets over the rough textured rocks above you, below you, around you, under you, and then plunges over the edge in a giddy roaring rush. Thanks to digital cameras, I did photos and video in all directions; it was so pretty all around us with waterfalls and sea views. There are at least three different complexes of cascades, each with names and different custom stories.

Elliot is not the chief anymore; after seven years he gave the torch to his assistant chief. The normal fee is 1,000 VT, but they will also accept gifts. Since the tour takes you about two hours, you can easily plan to arrive here early morning and take off for a better-protected anchorage for the night. We left mid-day for Ambae, Lolowai, and had a lively sail in winds gusting to 25-30 (acceleration in the channel).
7.3  Epi

1.15.52 Revolieu Bay

Screensaver – June 2018 – Mae Morae (Revolieu Bay): 16 43.64 S / 168 08.69 E  6m, black sand, 3g. OK on entry but the next morning the swell started coming in, so rather than hanging around for another day, left in crappy weather.

Shango – September 2012 - Revolieu Bay: Our fifty-five mile sail to Revolieu Bay, Epi was terrific with 20-25 knots on our starboard beam. We made great time, dropping the hook by mid afternoon. The anchorage was well protected by a reef and was lined by a long sand beach. We planned on moving up the coast the next day so the dinghy stayed on deck.

Sloepmouche – Dec 2007 (SSCA Bulletin): Rivelieu Bay: Calm anchorage as described in Rocket Guide; good holding in volcanic sand in 10m. The young chief is welcoming cruisers with fruits and veggies. There’s also a river where you can do your laundry, but it’s not deep enough to swim in.

1.15.53 Lamen Bay

Screensaver – June 2018 – Lamen Bay: 16 35.784 S / 168 09.886 E Anchor in 5m, Black sand, no internet (TVL) I had planned to go see if I could swim with the Dugong but instead I ended up watching bucket loads of rain fall filling my water tanks.

Shango – September 2012 – Lamen Bay: On Saturday we headed ten miles north to Lamen Bay. In the afternoon we walked through the village to the far end where the grass airstrip was located. The locals seemed a bit shy but answered our questions with good humor. On our way back to the boat in the dinghy we encountered several large turtles and a pod of dolphins.

We had chatted with a young Belgian backpacker who said he had snorkeled with the resident dugong the previous day but we never saw it.

On Sunday we headed in for church. This week it was Presbyterian. Immediately after being shown to a pew we were joined by a helpful local who translated the highlights from Bislama to English. When the service was over Atis invited us to his home for lunch. After standing in the receiving line and shaking the hand of every Presbyterian in the village we headed up the hill behind our new friend. Atis moved with his wife to his hilltop spot in 1986 and has cleared it and planted a variety of fruit trees and crops in little patches. He has cows and goats to help him clear the land, which keeps them safe from the cook pot. He enjoys inviting visitors up to his place to compare notes on life. We spent a good afternoon sitting under his trees, eating laplap and talking about the world. We made it back to the boat in time for sunset and marveled as a local ghosted by in his dugout canoe using palm fronds as a sail.

Mr. John – Sep 2011: Next we went to Lamen Bay on Epi but couldn’t find a spot where we were not rolling, we had gone for the Canoe Races but could see that the deteriorating weather and increasing swell were going to cause problems (and indeed it was all cancelled), thus we shot across to Port Sandwich on Malicula where good protection and a flat anchorage can be found in almost any conditions.

Sloepmouche – Dec 2007 (SSCA Bulletin): Lamen Bay is the most popular anchorage on the island. Meet Tasso at Paradise Sunset Bungalows. He is a very nice fellow who organizes lots of activities for his guests. He often organizes a barbeque or pig roast. We did a nice, but long, day hike to a large, high waterfall (about three hours one way for good hikers). The transport to the starting point of the hike was itself an adventure with some great views of the bay and Lamen Island. Tasso’s son, Douglas, has a
small boat to go deep-sea fishing or to take you to Lamen Island where the dugongs are staying mostly now.

We were lucky to be here for New Year 2008, and the celebrations were quite impressive with bonfires lining the whole bay at midnight! Our older flares made for extra fireworks. The village had a whole week of activities.

1.15.54 Mapouna Bay
Sloempouche – Dec 2007 (SSCA Bulletin): After a few days at Lamen Bay the winds veered to the NW-SW so it was time to move to a better-sheltered anchorage. We went around the north of Epi and first checked Lemaru, a beach anchorage between the two north tips of the island. It was not protected as the wind moved to the NW, so we continued down the east coast and stopped for two nights in Mapouna Bay. Anchorage around 16°35.85 S / 168°12.66 E in about 40’ of coral with sand channels.

Dugout canoes came shortly after our arrival to welcome us and ask if we needed any help getting in. Chief Pharmacopee invited us to his village the next morning. Little did we expect a royal welcome with flower leis, fresh fruits and lots of smiles from his extended family! Very nice to be genuinely welcomed. We’re glad we had some gifts with us to offer.

Important Ed note: Sloempouche’s waypoints were originally given in degrees, minutes, seconds, but at least one of the waypoints (Mapouna Bay, Epi) had 85 seconds, which is illogical if the values are indeed dms. So I have changed the formatting, but not the numbers, to reflect degrees, minutes, and decimal minutes. If these don’t plot right, try plotting with the same numbers in dms format.

1.15.55 South Coast of Epi
Sloempouche – January 2008 (SSCA Bulletin): Having northerly winds for over three weeks, we also explored the south coast of Epi and found two anchorages in good black sand with a depth of about 20-30’, Kambokia Bay 16°50’.37 S, 168°28’.20 E and Sakao Village 16°48’.16 S, 168°23’.06 E. Both anchorages would be exposed in any southerlies.

Important Ed note: Sloempouche’s waypoints were originally given in degrees, minutes, seconds, but at least one of the waypoints (Mapouna Bay, Epi) had 85 seconds, which is illogical if the values are indeed dms. So I have changed the formatting, but not the numbers, to reflect degrees, minutes, and decimal minutes. If these don’t plot right, try plotting with the same numbers in dms format.

7.4 Pentecost
Honey – July 2015 - Land Diving, Southern Pentecost Island, Vanuatu
We recently witnessed the phenomenal land diving on Southern Pentecost Island with a number of other yachtsies. The villages are quite poor in Vanuatu, and finding recovery from Cyclone Pam is challenging. We asked if the 10,000 vatu (about $125 Aud.) per person ticket to the land diving was helping the village and beyond. We were told by a local that the chief who collects this money does not use it to contribute to the health and education for the village, but uses it instead for personal gain.

We suggest asking the village people and the chiefs where fees are going before paying.

1.15.56 Martelli Bay, S Pentecost (Good only in N/W winds)
Sloempouche – April 2008: We had to shelter from a northwesterly that came up while in Homo, so we went into this south-facing bay. It is very picturesque with wild, tall cliffs and jungle on one side and, on the other, a beautiful, gleaming green-blue church perched on a hill overlooking a small inviting beach.
that is protected by giant rock outcroppings forested with trees and pandanus. Steep, jungled hills form a backdrop and reminded us of the Marquesas.

We anchored on the side near the church, not getting any closer than 30’ depth, and found good black sand unencumbered by reef. Any closer, though and the reef rises to just under the surface. The bay is huge, and there are many places to anchor.

There looked to be a reef extending out from the rocky cliff area that separates the bay’s two black sand beaches. Anchorage: 16°00’.4 S, 168°13’.5 E. From the church there is a beautiful view of your boat in the bay, and from the anchorage is a view of the beautiful bay and beaches and seaward, a beautiful view of Ambrym and the cone shaped Lopevi Island. If the wind goes N or W, hopefully you’ll have a chance to visit this lovely place.

1.15.57 Homo Bay (Land Diving)

Sloepmouche – April 2008: Anchor in 25’ of good black sand with good holding just south of the old pier. Chief Luke (son of famed Chief Willy who passed away in 2007) is as welcoming as his father. He believes in offering fruits to visitors instead of asking fees or begging. He knows that cruisers are helpful folks always ready to assist when they can.

We took a walk (90 minutes one way) to Ratap Cultural Village. Alas, the whole community but one was gone to Bunlap for 100 days of mourning. No custom dancing, but a nice walk back following the river this time. Nice swimming holes and a pleasant hike with Chief Luke.

Being here in April gave us the great opportunity to witness the famous Pentecost land diving. That traditional ceremony happens every year in April-May-June to start the yam harvest season and as an initiation ritual. Most of the ceremonies are only for the communities themselves, but a few can be seen by visitors. They will put on a performance for a minimum cost of 30,000 vatus (VUV) or just over $300 USD any day of the season, but for a group or on a regular performance day (every Saturday), it will be about 8,500 vatus per person. Extra fees for video filming might be demanded.

This year there are three different towers for public performances. The tallest is the one near Pangi Village at the north end of Homo Bay. There is another near Wali Bay and one near the Airport of South Pentecost. The confusing thing was that Donald Wayback (telephone: 38107) lives in Pangi but organized viewing the jump near Wali Bay, and Luke Fargo of Wali Bay organized viewing the jump at the tower near Pangi.

Men, if you can, ask permission to go to the tower the day before the jump and see the jumpers preparing the vines and the platforms. Very interesting. Women are not allowed to go to the tower until the day of the jumps and cannot go near the base until the native women dancers go up there. Chief Luke will organize land dives at the tallest tower for yachties to view for 8,000 vatus.

1.15.58 Wali (Land Diving)

Alba – June 2015: 14 June 2015 Ranon to Wali, Pentecost

It was a miserable night with shrieking gusts of wind howling down from the mountain making the boat veer around and heel over. Morning brought an overcast sky with light drizzle and we still had the gale-force katabatic gusts.

After lunch, we decided that we didn’t want another night of these katabatic winds, so we upped anchor and set off on the 15 miles trip to Pentecost Island. I put 2½ reefs in the main and we pulled out the stay sail, which was just about right because we faced 35 knot gusts as we left the anchorage. As we cleared the island, the wind settled down to 25-30 knots and the waves weren’t too bad at 3 metres.
We dropped anchor just north of Wali, village. The anchorage is more of a road-stead being on a long straight beach. It’s sheltered from the main brunt of the prevailing south east winds, but there’s still some swell and wind waves bouncing us around a bit. Tomorrow we’ll go and look at the famous Land-diving tower, which inspired the current day bungee-jumping.

**Sloepmouche – April 2008:** Wali Bay: We met Luke Fargo, who organizes land diving shows for tourists (including cruise ships a few times in the season). He is a great host, running the Londot Garden Beach Resort (telephone: 38120/38444). With the first cruisers we saw this new season, we had garden visits, hikes to the hot springs, a kava break (women allowed) and a meal. His whole family was very welcoming. We also were lucky to be invited to a double wedding in the village nearby with about 200 guests.

**1.15.59 Lemot**

**Verite – May 2018:** Lemot, Pentecost, Vanuatu. Village of the land dive. Young men from the village jump headfirst from the 120 meter tower with a vine attached to their feet. A ritual is attached to the land and the harvest. Men only. Women can observe but no touching the tower or the vines.

**1.15.60 Waterfall Bay**

**RG:** 15 47.2 S / 168 09.7 E

**Sloepmouche – April 2008:** You will see the waterfall as you approach the anchorage off the nice beach. We met Jeffrey, who guides visitors to their two attractions: the Madiat waterfall (an easy 15-minute walk to a bubble bath pool and big waterfall) and the worthwhile Rell Waterfall Cave (an easy 15-minute walk to a waterfall inside a two-chamber cave; bring a waterproof light).

Jeffrey and his community decided to clear a path and beautify those two areas for the pleasure of visitors. The 500-vatu fee can probably be negotiated for a DVD or other trade items. A 20-minute walk on the main road brings you to the High School (Wadi College) on the hill, where you can buy bread loaves.

**1.15.61 Loltong Bay**

**RG:** 15 32.81 S / 168 08.79 E

**Noonsite – Oct 2018:** Loltong Bay- North Western Pentecost

We visited Loltong Bay which is a very secure sand bottom reef anchorage for any winds from the east. Note that the buffeting winds around the very tall steep mountains does cause accelerated bullets from all directions which jolt on the chain but provided you have set the anchor well it is still secure (we had 40 knot gusts). It is important to note where the reef is on all sides & how close you will be if the wind comes from a different direction to how you set the anchor. While most of the western coasts of Maewo & Pentecost are affected by the south east swell wrapping around in developed conditions, Loltong Bay & Asanvari on SW Maewo are are calm & swell free.

The family that run the Vatulo Yacht Club here on the left hand side of Loltong Bay are Matthew & Marie (Tel: +678 5344714) with their 5 adopted children. They were the kindest & most welcoming people we have met here in the friendliest country on earth! The rest of the village were equally friendly.

In Sept 2018 both Maewo & Pentecost received heavy unseasonal rain & the Yacht club collapsed. They used to offer yachties meals, a book swap, and tour bookings, but with no physical shelter for the club they have put all services on hold.
While we were there Marie created a wonderful meal for us out of the tiny hut next door over a fire in exchange for help fixing their sailing dingy. We encouraged them to still offer meals to yachties despite not having a permanent shelter, so anyone visiting here please support them. Maybe they will have rebuilt already by next 2019 season but if not, I am sure that any help would be very much appreciated in getting them back on their feet. Also, if anyone has a sailing dingy, the kids are eager to learn & race too!

**Sloempouche – April 2008:** This bay is protected from all directions but west. You will find a calm anchorage in 15-20’ of good sand behind the reef seen in the Rocket Guide aerial photo. Follow the alignment of the two triangular markers on the beach (70°T) as you approach the shore to anchor.

We found the anchorage waypoint in the Rocket Guide slightly off, putting you in the shallow corals to the south of the sandy anchoring area, so beware! There’s not much room for more than two to three boats, and the transport boat uses the channel and lands on the beach.

If you need to use the phone, you can use the public phone at Chief Richard’s. String bands can be heard by arrangement. No natural attractions were mentioned.

### 7.5 Ambae

**1.15.62 Lalowai / Lolowai Bay (15-17 S / 167-59 E)**

**Sloempouche – July 2008:** It is an easy and short dinghy ride into Lalowai Bay from Vanihe Bay where the village is located. You have two leading markers to get you inside the old crater bay, but we decided to stay around the corner in the more isolated and less noisy anchorage. Nice people, as usual (small limited stores—bread and eggs available).

It was probably an important center at some point, but now is sadly untidy and shabby. There are no doctors at the hospital, only volunteers that pass through. There is a bank and a post office, but no Internet.

There was one bright spot in this unappealing town: Lucky Joes Restaurant, which is run by Joe’s sister, a very sweet lady named Celia. There is no sign on the building; we found it by accident asking around if anyone with a garden would barter for fruits and veggies. The tiny restaurant is clean and neat inside, and a plate is 200 VT. The chicken curry and rice looked delicious. Too bad we’d just eaten!

We were attracted by some good, live pop music emanating from an old shed, where we discovered a very talented band jamming. They play reggae, but also very good instrumental new age tunes. I recorded some of their songs to include in my professional video productions in Vanuatu, and they were pleased to know that some outsiders found they had talent.

They’ve asked me to call them one month in advance next year so they can practice and prepare five new songs for recording.

**1.15.63 Vanihe Bay (15-17 S / 167-58 E)**

**Sloempouche – July 2008:** We anchored in majestically scenic Vanihe Bay as we wanted a little solitude. There’s no village or easy access from shore, so we saw no locals there. The bottom is perfect volcanic sand with no corals or rocks. Pick any spot, even very close to the cliffs or the beach, in order to avoid
the swell and waves created by the wind bursts coming from behind Lolowai Point. The towering brown cliffs, about 150 m high, form a dramatic backdrop as they rise out of the clear blue waters, and swallows and flying foxes flit and dive and soar past the sheer walls. The scenery is more reminiscent of the Sea of Cortez than Vanuatu.

1.15.64 Loone Bay (15-22 S / 167-46 E)

Sloepmouche – July 2008: Not wanting to leave at 4 a.m. to sail to Santo (like some other cruisers), we decided to break the trip by stopping in Loone Bay.

We anchored at 15°21.594’S, 167°45.687’E exposed to that eternal swell running along the island. Not a great stop for a monohull.

Access to shore was difficult as the coast is quite rugged, and the surge makes even going up on the steep boulder beach difficult. There is an easier dinghy landing on sand in the tiny bay just east (under a derelict turquoise building on the cliff).

We moved about a mile north in front of Jerome Bani’s house (in Sarramundi) as he guides people up the volcano crater lakes. But five hours going up with two hours return discouraged us to go up. Like the crater in Ambrym, it’s much harder to reach than the easy Tanna top.

1.15.65 Devil’s Rock (15-27 S / 167-41 E)

Sloepmouche – July 2008: Always curious about out-of-the-way anchorages, we decided to check out Devil’s Rock at the West end of Ambae as the description in the RG made the snorkeling there sound interesting and adventurous, and Lonely Planet’s mention of sharks was intriguing.

After RG’s warning of swirling currents and “unsurveyed waters,” what a surprise it was to discover a well-protected, calm anchorage in a very dramatic picturesque bay with a red sand beach! We anchored in 20’ of good volcanic sand at 15°26.874’S, 167°40.610’E.

We might have been lucky that there were light wind conditions those three days and that the moon was in mid-phase, but can say that it was delightful. Easy access on the beach and nice reception from James, a son of the old chief. It appears the father has divided the “rights” to the sea front between his two sons. James has rights to the windward side, and his younger brother has the Devil’s Rock and anchorage side.

James ended up being our principal guide. He showed us his surprisingly beautiful and horticulturally-rich garden. Along with a good variety of vegetables, he has bush medicine plants and a species of orchid endemic to one of Ambae’s volcanic lakes. We hiked with him on the edge of the cliffs overlooking Devil’s Rock. We went snorkeling around Devil’s Rock twice and discovered an underwater arch that we could free-dive through. And there’s a “pancake ceiling” underwater cavern around the other side of the point. Visibility was incredible, and we even encountered a huge grouper and seven dolphins while snorkeling (but not one shark).

7.6 Ambrym

1.15.66 Ranon

Alba – June 2015: We were up early and had breakfast while we motored out of the bay. I wish that we could stay and linger for a few days because it’s such a peaceful place, but we only have two more weeks here in Vanuatu before we have to do a 1,000 mile passage to the the Louisaiades in Papua New Guinea and still have a lot to do in Vanuatu.
The wind picked up outside the bay and we found that we were on a close reach for the ten mile trip across the channel between Malekula and Ambyn. I’d put in our usual, cautious 1½ reefs in the main, but half way across we had over 25 knots, so I had to reef a bit more. Twenty minutes later, we came into the shadow of the Ambryn and the wind died completely.

We motored up the lee of the volcanic island and could clearly see the main active volcano which is called Mount Marum. The mountainous nature of the island meant that we soon had katabatic winds giving 35 knot gusts, so we rolled away all of the sails and motored the ten miles to Ranon.

The sea bed shelves slowly from over 100 metres deep and we anchored in 10 metres on black sand 50 metres off the beach. The village of Ranon is spread out along the shore and doesn’t look particularly attractive.

We went ashore and walked for 45 minutes up to the village of Fanla, which is a Kastom village where they put on ROM dances for tourists. There’s a dirt road which heads north along the edge of the shore and after about ½ mile, there’s a small path off to the right, which goes up steeply following a small gorge. We walked past it thinking that it led to someone’s garden, so had to walk a bit further and follow another dirt road that branched off ½ mile further on. (The small path is a shortcut back up to this road.)

As we walked into Fanla, we met a guy called Freddy, who said that he could arrange a ROM dance tomorrow. It’s going to cost us $50US each, but we agreed and arranged to be back at nine o’clock tomorrow. On the way back down, we started to have doubts about the whole thing... So the first guy that we meet in a village is able to organise this special dance for two people the very next day? There was nothing we could do about it - we’ll see what happens tomorrow.

Back on the boat, Glenys noticed that “Lil Explorers” had popped up on our AIS, so we contacted them and said that we’d meet up on Sunday. AIS is great and shows other boats within 20 miles, but I sometimes miss the mystery of arriving in an anchorage wondering who’s there.

It was a lovely clear night, so we had a fabulous display of stars with the red glow of the volcano over the island.

13 June 2015 Ranon, Ambryn

Our man Freddy met us on the beach, which was a bit of a surprise because we’d told him that we didn’t need a guide. Call me paranoid, but my first thought was that he was going to try to stiff us for a fee for guiding us up to Fanla. I was wrong though, he’d come down to go to the grocery store in Ranon and had waited to walk up with us.

Our doubts in his ability to organise the ROM dance soon faded because it turns out that Freddy is the brother of one of the chiefs in Fanla and he’s one of the few people allowed to make the traditional masks for the ROM Dance.

Fanla is a traditional Kastom village steeped in tradition and “Majick”. Having a volcano on the island gives great powers to sorcerers and Ambryn is the magic capital of Vanuatu. The men in the village go through a grading process over many years and have to perform various rituals to increase their grade, which seem to mostly involve killing pigs.

Most of the men have a large number of pigs - Freddy has 19. On some animals, they remove the top teeth to allow two of the lower teeth to grow abnormally in a six inch diameter circle. It takes five years to grow a complete circle and these “Tuskers” are greatly prized for grading rituals.

Many of the more powerful chiefs/sorcerers cook and eat their meals alone in tabu places, where women are not allowed to go. Freddie showed us around the village and pointed out a number of places
that were tabu - one belonging to his father who is buried in the place where he used to prepare his meals.

The ROM dance was good - it's a traditional dance and ritual that is one of the levels in the grading process. Some of the dancers are dressed in large masks and costumes made from Pandanus leaves, while the others dance in the middle chanting and drumming, wearing only nambas (penis pouches). There were only four dancers in ROM masks, so I suspect that they were a little short-handed for our display, but it was enjoyable.

We walked back down to Ranon and spent the afternoon wilting in the heat with no wind. Our friends on Lil Explorers arrived after dark, so we’ll see them tomorrow.

1.15.67 Nobul / Nebul

Vellela: Anchor in 11m in front of white sand beach. Land on beach. Walking tracks to Ranon and around the northern point where there are quite a few villages.

Sloepmouche – August 2009: Thirty yachts attended the 8th Back to My Roots Rom dance, a three-day festival (7,000 vatu/person). Like years before, we think this is one of the best cultural festivals in Vanuatu.

This year, Norbert (a school principal) took his sixth chief’s grade. There were more dancers this year including the new generation. Money is raised to help kids with the school fees, and several cruisers sponsored some students. Don’t miss this annual event at the end of August in Olal.

Sloepmouche – August 2008: We came back at the end of August to assist with the famous “back to my roots” festival. We anchored again at 16°06’.6 S, 168°07’.7E in Nebul Bay in 13-20 meters in black sand.

Important Ed note: Sloepmouche’s waypoints were originally given in degrees, minutes, seconds, but at least one of the waypoints (Mapouna Bay) above had 85 seconds, which is illogical if the values are indeed dms. So I have changed the formatting, but not the numbers, to reflect degrees, minutes, and decimal minutes. I am fairly certain this is correct. But if these don’t plot right, try plotting in dms format.

We were lucky to anchor close enough to Olal to be able to walk to the new North Ambrym Yacht Club and Bungalows. The anchorage is not mentioned in guides and is much more protected that the small exposed anchorage just north of Olal.

From the beach there, it is an easy 45-minute walk past several villages to Olal or a five-mile dinghy trip best done only in mild conditions. You can ask Chief Johnson from Nebul Bay village.

Chief Sekor in Olal now has a handheld VHF, so you should be able to hail him from the anchorage if you want to arrange dinner or custom dances. We were lucky to be there for the inauguration of the first Rom Nakamal. Be sure to ask Chief Sekor to explain this to you. One young Czech cruising couple even had a custom wedding while we were visiting. A memorable experience! Nice villagers here too.

It takes a little effort, but to witness one of their festivals and Rom Dance is definitely worth it. Unique to the northern region of Ambrym, the Rom dancing truly gave us the feeling of stepping into a living National Geographic magazine. There’s a long, complicated cultural significance to the dance. The high chief decides who can dance. Men pay high prices in pigs and goods for the privilege. Some of the dancers disguised themselves with layers and layers of dry banana leaves and wore elaborate tall conical masks, the design of which is closely guarded by each clan and passed along to initiates who pay. The masks are destroyed after the ceremony, which is why ancient masks that exist in collections are so rare.
The other male dancers were clad only in nambas, a woven sheath that covers only the penis and is attached to a wide bark belt holding it straight out or erect. Women danced in grass skirts only. The rhythm was primitive and compelling to the deep bass reverberation of a gigantic three-meter tam-tam, accented by the energetic higher pitched beats of smaller tam-tams and handheld bamboo models. The dancers sang and chanted and stamped, vibrating the ground around them. This was the first dancing we witnessed where we could believe they were actually dancing the dance for its original spiritual purpose, not as a show to entertain tourists. Very powerful! Pigs were killed and the nakamal was revealed with its painted tiki guardian and giant masks.

Back at the YC, where burgees and flags donated by yachties gaily flitted on bamboo poles, everyone dived into the abundant kai-kai feast with the dancers and villagers. Chief Sekor and his village recognize the great resource that yachties can be to isolated islanders. Don’t expect cold beer and watching the World Cup finals on the big screen at this YC as there is no electricity yet. Do not miss the festivals each year in July and August.

In 2008 the Magic Festival is scheduled for July 22-24 and the Back-to-Your-Roots Festival with Rom Dance on August 20-22.

7.7 Paama
Paama is a small island at the south end of Ambrym.

Sloepmouche – November 2007: We stopped at the Tahi anchorage: 20-35’ over good volcanic sand bottom. There is a wreck on the northern end of the beach (copra boat that caught fire in 2000). This is a small, shy, but welcoming community.

8 Efate

8.1 Port Vila

1.15.68 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities

Screen saver – June 2018: Pricing has also gone through the roof and now pretty much ether aligns with Sydney or is more expensive. Over and above the $80aud for the boat on arrival, they also charge $1.10aud/day just for being in Vanuatu waters (anywhere) add to that Visa costs @ about $20aud/month, internet at least $20/month, a mooring about $30aud/day, and you won’t get much change out of $1k/month, definitely no change for the 1st month.

Depending whether you’re going or coming, Port Vila is the best place to restock your food supplies in many miles. While it is expensive, most things can be bought here if you’re patient. I was nearly ready to depart here when I discovered another leaking skin fitting. While it wasn’t bad, pulling Screensaver out of the water after I leave here would be a long way off, so reluctantly I made plans to haul Screensaver out.

I could have got the new Skin fittings here but decent hose was not readily available and out of the US, would have taken longer along with bigger freight bill so in the end they came out of Ozy and it only took 4 days before it was in my hand.

Yolo – November 2012: The following clearance and cruising information is provided to help sailors who visit Vanuatu. This information is based on two U.S.A. citizens on the 42 foot catamaran “YOLO” with no pets. Note that bays, islands, villages, and cities can have several different names and/or spellings throughout Vanuatu.
ARRIVAL PORT: Anelghowha, Anelghowhat Bay, Anatom (Aneityum) Island, September 2012

DEPARTURE PORT: Port Vila, Baie De Vila or Paray Bay, Efate (Efata) Island, October 2012

If you have been waiting for the Quarantine Officer to contact you for several business hours when clearing-in at non-Anatom ports, visit the Customs office to start the ball rolling.

When clearing-out visit Immigration, Customs, Ports and Harbours, and then return to Customs to get your Certificate of Outward Clearance Permit and Duty Free Fuel Permit (optional).

BOAT INSPECTION REQUIRED: Ports and Harbours, Customs, Immigration, and Quarantine Services do not REQUIRE an inspection upon arrival. However, they have the option to complete an inspection. Quarantine Services will most likely visit your vessel upon arrival to Vanuatu. In most cases a Quarantine Services Officer will expect a dingy ride to your vessel, Anatom Island being the exception, to complete his inspection, related paperwork, and collect his fee.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S.A. CITIZEN: None, most visitors are granted an automatic 30 day tourist visit. For an additional fee you can extend your visit an additional four months through the Immigration office.

DECLARED: You must declare the usual items. I.e., guns, ammunition, obscene publications and materials, illegal drugs, “hidden compartments,” pets, spear-guns/slings, etc.

PORTS AND HARBOURS: Regardless of where you travel or anchor in Vanuatu you will be charged a one time Ports and Harbours fee. Customs will not issue your Vanuatu Certificate of Outward Clearance Permit until this fee is paid. This fee is paid on the day you clear out of Vanuatu.

Shango – August 2012: On arrival, we picked up a Yachting World mooring and were surveying our surroundings. Ashore were a variety of large buildings with lush green hills as a backdrop. In the harbor there were dozens of yachts on moorings and tied along bulkheads. Just behind us (a matter of meters, depending on the tide) was Iriki Island, home to a large resort. After tidying up and watching a small beach wedding we went ashore to explore, returning to the boat after eating both brunch and a late lunch. After the briefest experience with village culture in Tanna we were in “the Big City.”

Our ten days in Port Vila went fairly quickly. We did a good deal of provisioning at the nifty Au Bon Marche II. It was our last major provisioning stop before Palau so we made the most of it.

On the entertainment front we opted for dining out, skipping the native dancing and Jet Ski tour options available in this tourist hot spot. We enjoyed the Summit, a garden and restaurant combo north of town and Kanpai, a Japanese restaurant at the south end.

Mr. John – Sep 2011: If you are going to “Clear In” then you must anchor near the Yellow Buoy in the Outer Harbour and make contact with the Port Authorities…. The best and easiest course of action is to contact Yachting World Marina on VHF and let them know you are there; they are most helpful in making the arrangements.

If you are looking for a swing mooring or require to berth on their dock you may want to tackle this at the same time, even if you do not like the ‘Marina Idea’ it is worth it in this case to have their assistance and at least one night on a mooring to get more familiar with the area before going your own way. Can’t say we thought a lot of the showers but the availability of water and a pontoon to tie the dinghy were worth the $12.

The blurb that you read on line suggests that you have little room in the outer anchorage and that space available there is only for yachts ‘clearing in’…..There is actually quite a lot of room and it is by far the best anchorage in normal trade wind conditions. There is coral and some of the heads are quite large,
we picked the shallowest spot we could find and had about eight feet under the keel, I got the chain well wrapped round some large heads to the extent that we were ‘well secured’; I slept well knowing I could recover my gear easily from that depth.

Most of the inner harbor is taken over by moorings however there are times during peak periods that they are all taken, which can be a problem. Best not anchor anywhere in the middle of the inner harbor as it is deep and any spots without moorings on the surface are still likely to have mooring gear all over the bottom (along with an accumulation of other junk)!

There were spots available for anchoring with a line ashore along the inside of Irriki Island, this would let you anchor on the up-slope in a depth where you could see / retrieve your anchor however it may be a little buggy so close to shore. We did similar further south on the spit, using an anchor instead of a line to a tree.....it worked but only as a stop-gap whilst it blew a fresh westerly in the outer harbour.

Boats on the Yachting World Marina Dock went bow or stern too and had to use their own anchors, there MAY be someone available to help you doing this but from what we heard on the radio...don’t count on it! It wouldn’t be my ideal choice of venues, you get some heavy wakes from passing traffic, the holding is tenuous and side winds can be strong.....seemed to me to be a great place to destroy a vane gear!

In normal conditions you can tie your dinghy to the seawall along the esplanade if you are in the outer harbour, not at night though! If you want to go ashore in the evenings or overnight it would be better chained to the dinghy dock at Yachting World but even there, they are not immune. In just about all cases, you need a stern anchor or weight to hold her off. There are plenty of ladders but watch out for the kids playing, particularly near the water slide, you can end up with a very wet dinghy.

**Sloepmouche – 2010: Approach to Port Vila from south:** The Pango Pt lighthouse is not operational; so don’t expect to see it. There is now a giant wind generator with a red light for air traffic about halfway along the arm of land between Mele Bay and Devils Point that may confuse you if you don’t know what it is. There is a leading light into Port Vila. If the light is white, it is clear to go straight for it. If you are off the line, the light will be red or green.

1.15.69 Obtaining Duty Free Supplies

**Noonsite – 2018 – Duty Free**

While in Port Villa 2018 we investigated the procedures for duty free alcohol intake in Villa, even though we would be clearing out of Sola in several weeks’/ months time. Customs said it can be done, but they have to physically come to the boat to "seal" the goods & the inter island cruising permit would have to be amended/ re-issued (in order for Luganville to check the goods). We would then have to get another new cruising permit in Luganville to check out of Sola. We decided not proceed.

**Yolo – Sep 2012:** DUTY FREE FUEL: Only during the clearing-out process at Customs can you secure a special permit to purchase duty free diesel fuel (22% discount off the regular price). This will greatly reduce the price of each liter of diesel fuel. Full price must be paid for gasoline at all times and locations.

You must pay full price for fuel (diesel and gasoline) prior to clearing-out of Vanuatu. It is very unlikely that you will find fuel for sale outside of Port Vila and Luganville. If you do locate fuel at a remote island it typically sells for over $2.90 USD per liter (greater than $11 USD per gallon).

Unfortunately, most yachts do not depart Vanuatu from Port Vila so duty free prices are seldom paid.
1.15.70 Port Vila in Cyclone Season

Screensaver – June 2018: This Cyclone season every week for about 6 to 8 weeks winds 35-45knots came through with Cat 1 cyclone’s coming within 50-100nm and they alternated between going down the East or West sides. Sadly there are very few well protected and safe places in the event of a Cyclone, and Port Vila harbour while it would not get sea action, the potential risk from local boats is considerable.

In the lead up to one of these events, a yacht dragged its mooring, and they simply dragged it back with a tender, mooring and all, so yep that boat is real secure... NOT. When the wind switched, I spent all night up with the radar on keeping an eye on it, as it was suddenly upwind of me.

1.15.71 Yacht World Port Vila Marina

Cruising Vanuatu.com – Dec 2018: Yachting World Port Vila Marina and Moorings

Yachting World will be your home port in Port Vila for moorings (includes water), sea wall marina services (with water and electricity), furnished 2 bedroom air conditioned apartments with kitchen, laundry, internet, for some shore leave right in front of your yacht, diesel fuel, laundry, assistance with clearing in, and internet access. Yachting World is a distributor of the Cruising Guide to Vanuatu (available in the Connect Cafe).

The Yachting World and Waterfront Bar and Grill complex, with its sheltered location and deep water access provides a lively and attractive yachting center and between the two complementary businesses, they make Port Vila one of the Pacific’s most comfortable and hospitable destinations for cruising yachts.

Call "Yachting World" on VHF Channel 16 when you arrive in Port Vila. They will help you arrange for inward clearance and make arrangements for a mooring or marina berth at the same time. If you want to contact them in advance to assure a place on the wharf, call them on International + 678 - 23273 or email them from their website at www.yachtingworld-vanuatu.com

Write to Yachting World P.O. Box 1507, Port Vila, Vanuatu

The staff at the Yachting World office are very helpful and can assist you with information, fuel, water and laundry. Just ask if you need help with anything.

Hours are 8-12:00 and 13:30 to 17:00 Monday to Friday. 8:00 to noon on Saturday. Closed public holidays and Sundays.

Anchoring in Port Vila harbor is difficult. The protected area behind Iririki Island is small and usually crowded. Holding is not good in most of the shallow parts of the outer harbour. The inner harbour is deep with the only available anchoring areas in 35 to 40 meters of water. The bottom is excellent holding but the black mud somehow manages to strip galvanizing from anchor chains and the remains of old ships can trap your anchor.

You will probably elect to pick up one of Yachting World's yellow moorings in the inner harbour or, if you prefer to have water and electricity and step-ashore access, snag a mooring float by the Yachting World sea wall and tie up to the mooring cleats ashore. Call Yachting World first on VHF 16 and they will help you get settled.

Yachting World crew in Yachting World's yellow boat will assist you to the seawall or mooring.

Yachting world has planks you can use to walk ashore and there are electrical outlets, water taps, and garbage bins within easy reach. You will walk ashore within easy walking distance of central Port Vila's
many stores. Yachting World also provides all yachts with diesel fuel, a dinghy wharf (in association with the Waterfront Bar and Grill) and a dinghy landing beach.

Yachting World has a brand new "WiFi" Connect Cafe Cyber Yacht Centre where you can check out the latest Vanuatu weather information, surf the web or get your email. WiFi works for any boat at the wharf and on closer moorings (and out front and inside the cafe).

**Fuel:** The fuel wharf is directly in front of the Yachting World office. You can fill up any time during office hours as the water alongside the wharf is deep (there is a tide gauge indicating depth on the wharf). Their fuel is clean and the nozzle fits into normal sized yacht fuel ports. A water hose is available for cleaning up afterward or filling your water tanks (there is a small fee for water if you are not using the Yachting World harbour moorings or sea wall moorings). Be sure to take advantage of the Duty Free price for Diesel when you fill up prior to departure. You will need to tell Customs you want to buy Duty Free fuel and they will give you the necessary forms.

If you have a large motor yacht needing a large amount of fuel of if your yacht's mast is too tall to go under the overhead wire of 24-Metre safe clearance you must get your fuel via mini-tanker at the main wharf. Yachting world will assist you with this by getting the required permission from the harbour master and checking with the oil companies to find the best price for you. This will save you a considerable amount of time and effort at making all the arrangements is often complex and time consuming.

**1.15.72 Blue Marlin Lodge**

http://bluemailnidgevanuatu.com admin@bluemailnidgevanuatu.com "The 100ft fuel Wharf caters fueling up local fishing boats to full catering Yacht Services from Custom Clearance to assisting with supplies. 3 moorings and 2 cyclone moorings are also available for rent."

**ScreenSaver - March 2018:** When we had occasion to leave our boat overnight in Port Vila, we put the boat in at the docks at Blue Marlin Lodge. Its good place to get fuel, nice and easy, with good padding for those that bump into things. It also has the cheaper diesel, and you can buy duty free, with your exit papers in hand.

I also spent quite some time hanging out on the Blue Marlin moorings.

**1.15.73 Port Vila Boatyard**

Noonsite – Sep 2014 - Port Vila Boatyard, Efate

Just a few words about this out of the way boatyard. It was taken over by Justin, a South African, about two years ago. They offer a full range of repair and caretaker services including cyclone certified moorings. The small repair job they did for me was carried out very expertly and at reasonable cost. All the employees are long serving. I watched them haul a catamaran and they had two divers in the water to ensure that everything was OK.

Efate is not somewhere you would automatically think of when getting work done but my experience demonstrates that it is a location that should be on your list.

**1.15.74 Things to do Inland**

**ScreenSaver – January 2018:** Friends had kindly offered to take us for a bit of drive around the North and Eastern side of Efate (Port Vila mainland) which was nice to get to see the other side and away from the main tourist area.
It turned out to be a bit of a relaxed resort crawl with a tourist slant which suited me 100%.

We stopped at a number of other places as we wandered along the coast road.

There is a new development going on called Undine Bay Marina Estates. Its early days yet but everything is there to build your dream homes and park your boat at the back door. It’s not open for public yacht berthing, but as a land owner you would end up with an Ocean beach on one side and your boat berthed in your back yard. Definitely the safest place to have a berth.

We often ended up finishing our day at Francesca’s Bar and Restaurant—one my favorite places in Havana and it does have live music on Sundays. Plus there is one of only a few anchorages in Havana about 500m to the west of beach entry.

We have managed to meet a few very nice people through our friends, and one way or another be it Friday night drinks, special occasions, or they have been driving past where ever we are anchored and we have managed see quite a few places. We haven’t quite circumnavigated the Island by road yet but that is on the cards.

On one outing, we stopped at a turtle farm. There is also at least one waterfall and fresh water lagoon where we stopped for a swim.

Sirius – June 2018: For yachts visiting Port Vila, Vanuatu. During cyclone Pam 2015 a number of yachts were sunk in the inner harbour. They were abandoned and left to Vanuatu authorities to salvage and remove. It is now the Maritime authorities policy for all foreign yachts anchoring or on a mooring in Port Vila inner harbour to have a watch on board at least overnight and yachts must have insurance that includes salvage recovery. In case of a cyclone all vessels are to leave the inner harbour area. This was conveyed to us in a very friendly manner by the Office of Maritime Regulators when they were doing their inspection of our ownership and insurance paperwork.

Mr John – 2011: There is a very good and active tourist office down town and this should be one of the first places you visit as you have to ‘not miss anything’. It is a good idea to make up some sort of schedule as to what you want to see in the outer islands and be ready to get away from Vila in plenty of time to get there.

For us, the first critical date was the Canoe Regatta at Epi on the 4-8th of August which would lead on to the ‘Back to my Roots Festival’ at Olal, North Ambrym; you don’t have to do any of the festivals but to not do at least one would be a cultural tragedy and a waste of waste of all the time and money spent to get yourself here.

There is quite a lot to see and do on Efate and Vila is a safe place to operate from; not much, if any, is free however some of it can be good value for money and entertaining.

Chesapeake – Sep 2012: We sat two days in Dillon waiting for the wind to die down. After checking and rechecking the weather we decided to leave at 4pm and upped the anchor and sailed out into the sunset at 5:30pm. We had a beautiful sail in 15-20kt wind and 1m seas. Coming into Port Vila dolphins were swimming off the bow. It doesn’t get much better than that. We grabbed a mooring ball on the inside and checked in with Yachting World.

Anchor waypoint: 17-44.808S, 168-18.686E on a mooring ball inside

Obstacles: well-marked narrow channel into anchorage with mooring buoys. Also a power line you cross under to get into that area, our mast is 67ft and we were okay

Dinghy dock at Yachting World
8.2 Tukutu Bay

**Sloepmouche – 2009:** Tukutu Bay offers a convenient anchorage just West of the infamous Devil’s Point. Waters there around can be very rough as strong trade winds and currents can make it quite choppy. If you want to take a rest before rounding Devil’s point (going to Port Vila) this is a good spot. The whole bay is pastureland with a few new constructions going on. Anchor in about 25ft between coral heads (17°42’58” S / 168°10.67’ E) favoring the East side of the bay. Good light needed to see the coral plateau that stick out quite a bit from the shore in some places.

8.3 Mele Bay

**Screensaver – January 2018:** Just 18nm from Port Vila is Mele Beach. Anchor in 5m, sand 4G. Mele Bay is one of the few easy anchorages with good holding on sand and relatively well protected. There is a nice beach, bar, food, and you can also sit and watch to sun go down. We have basically come here so I can get started on long list of maintenance tasks that I have been putting off, now too long. They have a few different themes going on at the Beach Bar with a movie night shown on a big screen outside on the beach, a fireworks night, live music, so in all given the anchorage as well, I liked it. Kim was not so keen as there was a lot of local noise.

Many of the other spots you might want to anchor are either too deep at 30+ meters or there are moorings there.

**Noonsite - Mar 2017:** Feedback from Port Vila Boatyard re Mele Bay:

Mele Bay - Hideaway Island is not a safe anchorage. While it’s fine in good weather overnight or as a day anchorage, unless one gets very close to shore it’s actually too deep to anchor there, then if a westerly comes through a vessel will then get dangerously close to shore. Not a place to leave a vessel unattended. Beach Bar is great fun but they now do have a jet-ski operator there.

We actually rescued that large red catamaran from the beach a few years ago after it was washed ashore in the night when it was left unattended. Had it not been for the immediate assistance of Vanuatu Yacht Services and Marine Surveyors and Consultants with the help of the people of Mele village that we organised to help, the vessel would have been a total loss. I am concerned that the information presented on Noonsite regarding Mele bay being a safe anchorage will lead to another yacht being washed ashore there.

**Pelican – Oct 2014 – Mele Bay:** I recommend Mele Bay as an anchorage. It is much better holding than Port Vila and has good protection from SE if you tuck into the corner near the big red racing cat mooring. Beach bar has good food & entertainment. Port Vila market is only 15 mins away by public bus at 150 vatu. Quiet anchorage without all the jet skis.

**Mr. John – Sep/Oct 2011:** On leaving Port Vila most boats head for Havannah Harbour on the NW coast of Efate, however some do go first to the anchorage off Mele in Mele Bay; here is found Hideaway Island where they claim to have the world’s only Underwater Post Office.

You can tuck in to the NW of the island and then swim on the reef, which is a Marine Sanctuary....... you do, of course, have to pay for this and/or landing on the island / using any facilities. It is possible to land on the main beach and I believe there is a very good ‘Pizza Place’ down here. You can also walk from here up the road to The Cascades or The Botanical Gardens (Secret Gardens).... we did a half day at each and it worked as a nice day out.

**Sloepmouche – 2009:** If you want to get away from the crowds of other boats in Port Vila, but still be close to town, a great alternative is Hideaway Island (Mele Bay). It’s only a 1-2 hr sail in protected...
waters to a black sand bay with great holding in 10-30 ft. Hideaway Island has some nice snorkeling along its reef, a marine sanctuary, and also home of the Underwater Post Office.

The American owners like yachties, and waive the 1000vt entry fee if you arrive by yacht to visit the island, which has a dive center, gift shop, and beach bar and restaurant (copious plates of hearty food). From the beach landing on the main island, you can also catch a local bus back into town, if needed, for 200-300vt pp. It’s also close to bus to Mele Golf Course, Mele Waterfalls, Benjor Beach Resort (good restaurant), and Island Dreams (kayak and good snorkeling).

The complete upgrading of the road around the island is now almost completed and you can now enjoy a very comfortable and faster ride around!

8.4 Havana (Havannah) Harbor

Screensaver – June 2018: 17 36.235 S / 168 14.61 E. Anchor in 18m, 3G. After getting over the $300+ au dollars to simply to depart, finally I am off. Clearly Screensaver was as keen to get going as I was. I am fairly determined to sail as much as possible for these next legs and so as I exited the harbor at blistering 2knnts in 5knnts of wind I figured I had the time, so who cares. It wasn’t long before screensaver gradually picked up her heals and we were into double digits SOG and having the best sail in a very long time.

Chesapeake – Sep 2012: Esoma Bay in Havanna Harbor, Efate Island. We motored out Port Vila Harbor at 8am as church bells were chiming in a light mist. About 2pm we anchored next to our pals on Yolo. We decided to day hop from here up to Santo so we could see as many islands as possible.


Shango – Sep 2012 – Ai Creek in Havannah Harbor: Ai Creek in Havannah Harbour was only twenty miles north of Vila but would allow us to make the island of Epi in a long day sail. Unfortunately the weather closed in on us and we were stuck in Ai Creek for four long blustery days with the dinghy up and nowhere to go.

Mr. John – Sep/Oct 2011: Getting around to Havannah Harbour from Mele Bay is not a great problem even when the trade winds are fresh. However, Matao Tiupeniu Point was always referred to as Devils Point by the Admiralty and not without good reason. It cuts up quite lumpy here, especially when wind opposes tide....be warned, one moment its nice sailing and the next you have a lump of water in the cockpit!

This is a nice little area to hang out and explore if you have time and the weather is co-operating, there are some good fishing spots just outside the Purumea Channel (off Payne Point).

During WWII this was an anchorage for part of the American Fleet and a place they retired to for R&R. Thus the bottom of the harbour is still littered with Coca Cola bottles (and much more). The locals are now getting revenge by selling this junk back to (mainly American) tourists who now want to do what they should have done in the first place.....take their rubbish home with them!

On the positive side, like in many of the Pacific Islands, the Americans spent a lot of time and effort building roads, other nationalities have of late been involved in their upkeep of late but the original infrastructure on most Pacific Islands is down mainly to American generosity. This partly explains the superb road that runs from here to Port Vila (and probably right around the island. although I didn’t get chance to sample the rest of it). Buses into towm run fairly regularly along this road so if you do have to go back for something you can.....it saves hanging around in Vila waiting (as many do).
We found Esema Bay to be the best anchoring area. If you anchor in Esema, you are sure to get a visit from Frank with his sons, Justin, David and Andrew. They always have something to trade. This is usually a prelude to being requested to charge the mobile phone, a small service we can provide without hardship and keeps the locals very happy!

Sloepmouche – 2009: While in Port Vila, visit the Cultural Center Museum and find out about the Chief Roi Mata Heritage site. It may be possible for a group of yachties to pre-arrange a guided tour of the Cave (Lelepa Island) and the burial Site (Hat Island) while in Havannah Harbor.

Al Creek is a tricky anchorage in 50ft good sand with coral heads but the bottom slopes quickly to 70-80ft. Take your dinghy into the river estuary (at the point of land behind the moorings of Coongoolah Cruises) and leave your dinghy at the bridge. Cross the road and walk in the riverbed for 30-45min. You will find several nice swimming holes and mini Jacuzzis in crystal clear water.

Matapu Bay has an easy anchorage in good sand – stay in about 30-40 ft depth to not get too close to reefs ringing the shoreline. A short walk South on the main road will lead you to the American pool. It has finally been cleared after years of neglect. It is now beautiful blue and clear. Nice bath there! There’s supposed to be a plane wreck you can see while snorkeling, but we did not find it. The Rocket Guide gives good descriptions of the other HH anchorages and activities.

8.5 Nguna / Pele Islands

Sloepmouche – 2009: Anchoring near the pass between Nguna (pronounced noo-nah) and Pele was very nice in white sand between widely scattered, easily-seen and deep-enough coral heads in around 25 ft depth. Even in moderate Northerly winds we didn’t roll too much.

The snorkeling out from the guesthouse bungalows on Nguna was some of the most colorful and diverse that we’ve seen in Vanuatu. You can ride the current holding on to your dinghy in the pass between the two islands. Both have beautiful white sand beaches and swimming pool blue water. NW Nguna, Nawora Matua bay: We anchored here twice just for a rest stop without going ashore to the village. If you use this, go in carefully with good light, because the chart doesn’t show there are some isolated bommies too shallow for comfort. Bottom is coral and hard plateau.

9 Erromango

9.1 Dillons Bay

Navigator – 2017: Navigator 1 and several other yachts arrived at Erromango island in Vanuatu at Dillons Bay (or Williams Bay as the locals call it after John Williams). We all had clothes to give to Villagers, however we did ask the Chief (Jason Mete - Cell: 7767737) for a list of items that are required in most Villages throughout Vanuatu. This is a general request to any visiting Yachts to please bring products with them as donations. We didn’t realise the extent of gear they needed.

- Clothes: Mens, womens, childrens and babies. The latter two are important as adult clothes are easy to obtain from the likes of Australia.
- Cooking items: Pots, spoons, cups, kitchen knives
- Bush knives or Machetes
- Shoes
- Student books
• Reading books
• Pens, Pencils
• Childrens toys
• Small solar lights or panels of any size
• Torches
• Fishing gear: lines, lures, hooks
• School laptops
• Milk, Milo, rice (25kg bags), sweets

Any of these items would be gratefully accepted and can help a great deal.

Sophie – September 2014: We stopped in Dillon’s Bay on the west side of Erromango. David, our local village guide took us on a hike to some nearby skull caves. We scrambled over rocks, crossed a stream and through the forest on a steep ascent for fifteen minutes to reach the cave.

In the first cave, handprints are painted all around the cave, with human remains at the end of one of the passages.

The second cave was a more sacred burial site for chiefs. David stopped for a prayer and then showed us the original location that is now too difficult and dangerous to enter following a landslide that destroyed most of the cave. We climbed up a banyan tree to a small opening in the rock where the skulls of chiefs and their wives have been relocated.

We saw skulls of two chiefs and their wives. David told us one of the chiefs was his mother’s grandfather. The area around the cave is a special family place where they often come on Sunday afternoons to relax and barbecue around a firepit.

Chesapeake – September 2012: We pulled the anchor at Port Resolution at 8am and shortly thereafter a squall came through bringing wind 20-35kt with 2-3m choppy seas. We put in a 2nd reef and made it into Dillon Bay at 4:30pm. It was calm inside and we could hear the birds singing. We were approached by David who wanted cigarettes and dvds. We had neither.

Anchor waypoint: 18-49.271S, 169-00.696E – anchor north of the river off the big beach. Wind protection from N to S, exposed to the W. 10m depth

The wind funnels through V of the land. Very calm but windy.

Slopepmouche - ?? before 2010: This makes a good stop to break up the trip from Tanna to Port Vila. Dillon Bay harbors the largest of the villages on the island. The anchorage has constant swell, more or less exaggerated depending on wind and swell outside. There can be accelerated gusts sweeping down the river valley.

The calmest place to anchor is on the south corner of the rocky beach, it’s all black sand bottom, and at least 20ft deep close up to the beach. Those that anchored farther out and in front of the river mouth rolled a lot more.

While the village doesn’t seem to have much to offer, the people are nice, and two brothers especially, David and Joseph, welcome yachties, often coming out in the canoe to offer you some fruits and talk. Yachts are often their only visitors, and much of the time, a source of supplies. The Chief’s son said that his father does not want the people to beg, or ask things or money without giving things in trade or
services. We applauded this attitude. Trading goods for goods is a much better deal for both, as what is small value for each, can be great value to the other.

David and his family showed us how to make lap-lap the Vanuatu traditional dish, and we showed them how to make poe, a Tahitian dessert using local ingredients. He, and others can organize a small meal or large “feasts”, for small prices or trade items.

Joseph told us about a waterfall that he had never visited, but would like to make a tour for visitors to earn a little money. It turned out a very feasible tour: less than 2 hr walk over flat ground, some shallow river crossings, passed gardens and wild fruit trees with stops to sample, passed clear deep pools, and only the last 10 mins climbing up a small gorge to the fall and large pool. The fall isn’t especially large, but is pleasant and a nice picnic setting. Joseph is a good storyteller who remembers a lot of history and legend. For the very adventurous, climbing to the top of the fall, there are more pools and falls.

Joe, the chief’s son, guided us, in our dinghy, to some burial caves up the coast about a mile and a half. After some incantations to ask the spirits’ permission, we entered to see many human bones and skulls. One flat stone was used as the “death bed” for the dying. There are also “treasures”, possessions that were buried with the owners. Joe and others are hoping for government funding or archeologists to come and carefully excavate and preserve these burial caves as museums. There are caves further up the coast with ancient handprints painted or stenciled on the walls.

10 Aniwa

Sloepmouche - ?? Before 2009: We had a period of windless weather, so came here to help update the Rocket Guide by taking GPS points requested and investigate the area.

The anchorage indicated is 50ft or more deep, the bottom mostly hard rubble, any sand patches are tiny and superficial. Since the weather was flat calm, we anchored on a dead coral plateau area, also hard rubble, but only 10-20 ft deep, put out minimal chain, since the anchor and first part of the chain would catch in the rubble and hold, then buoyed the rest to keep it from sinking and tangling on the bottom.

Landing the dingy is not easy anywhere along the coast from the anchorage to the lagoon entrance, as it is jagged rock with barrier reefs and rock. We did find a way to get on the beach nearest to the anchorage.

There are some thatched shelters under the coconuts, and a sign in Bislama that you could figure out meant don’t kilem totl (kill ‘em turtle). We took the dinghy into the lagoon at high tide, where you can get over the barrier reef anywhere where it wasn’t breaking. There is a small dinghy pass on the north side of the entrance for lower tides.

The lagoon is very shallow inside; we thought we saw a native rowing to us in his dugout, but closer, saw he was walking across! Not much of interest in the lagoon waters. The man walking was Miak (Mike), the manager of the lagoon area, who told us that anyone doing any activity in the lagoon area were supposed to pay 1000 vatu/person. Money only, no gifts or barter. If this fee was not paid, there was a fine, or if refused, they would “come take things from the boat”. What a nice welcome…such a contrast to Port Resolution.

Why?? Because this is a Cruise Ship stop, and the ship pays the fee for its passengers. We agree that they should, since they impact resources, make money from using these resources, and they should pay the villagers to build facilities and groom the beaches. But because of this, the fee is imposed on everyone. Not only that, but if Miak is not in the area to collect, you are supposed to walk 30 minutes to Isavai village (good luck to find the path) or go by boat on the outside (but the village is not visible from the seal).
We elected not to go back to the boat to get money to pay the fee. From what we could see, there was nothing special about the area. It may be worth to pay on a cruise ship day when the villagers put on entertainment and sell arts and crafts. The water clarity on the outside was great, 70-80ft, but the snorkeling was just so-so from the anchorage to the lagoon entrance.

11 Tanna

11.1 Port Resolution & The Yasur Volcano

Field Trip – December 2016: Port Resolution is known as the anchorage to pull into when you want to take the Mt. Yasur volcano tour, but there is more to this location than what they tell you in Trip Advisor. Stanley at the Yacht Club is happy to help organize your volcano tour, but make sure to leave some time to visit the villagers, watch them weaving, browse the handicraft stall, and have a coffee at the café. That’s when you’ll be greeted with the warm friendliness that is the true glow of Tanna.

A teacher from the village paraded us around and introduced us to some of her family members. She told us that her 8-year-old son was still up in the bush (and had been for two weeks) as part of his circumcision ceremony. Messengers had been running food from her to him, and sending news of his well-being. I imagined what it would be like to send Michael up into the bush to fend for himself as he prepares to step into his manhood. Yikes. I’d be a wreck!

Among the huts, ladies sat weaving skirts and mats of brightly dyed pandanus leaves. The skirts would be worn at the upcoming circumcision ceremony, but for now, were hanging up to dry in an empty bamboo hut - a curtain of fusia, turquoise, and purple grass whispering in the dark.

Outside again, I looked at the heavily laden roof of the next door neighbor’s hut, a carefully placed pile of stiff-leaved fringe. It was all very primitive looking, except for the small solar panels that had been stuffed into the roof and a snakelike cord leading to a cell phone in need of a charge!

Mark took the opportunity to do a bit of drone footage of the bay, since a total of three Antares were in the same South Pacific anchorage - something I thought we would never see! Of course, the kids were enamored at the helicopter that buzzed above their heads, and Mark had an audience of curious onlookers. I love watching their excitement and complete awe - seeing something like this for the first time. Even some older men gathered in the wings, trying to get a glimpse without letting on how interested they actually were.

It was quite a sight to see two women sitting on the floor in the handiwork shop, sewing curtains for the school with a fancy old-fashioned manual sewing machine from China! We giggled together at how life is so similar everywhere in the world in so many ways, enjoying the connection we could share.

Segue – Oct 2014: Some other notes about Tanna. There are NO ATMs that will work with foreign cards. Full stop. None. You MAY be able to find OEM guest-house or other business on the other side of the island in Lenakel that MAY have enough cash in they’re 'till to help you out, but DON’T count on it. Of coming from Fiji, go to the airport with your passport, and, most important, your customs paperwork -- and you can exchange whatever dollars you might have for Vanuatu Vatu. Clearing in at port resolution will cost v$10,000 ($100.00). Bring lots more V$ with you as everything will cost money. Going up the volcano, visiting custom villages, etc., all require vatu$. And every penny spent is worth it!

Chesapeake – Sep 2012: We left Anatom at 11pm and arrived in Port Resolution at 7:30am the next morning.

As we rounded the NE point at dawn, we could see the red glow of Yasur volcano. There are several villages scattered around the bay but the predominant one is where Jocelyn and Sam live. He’s the chief
but she clearly runs things. They have extensive gardens and are most generous in giving fruit and veggies. I spent a day learning how to weave a basket while friends of ours, dedicated almost a week of hard labor helping them make cement bricks and clear space for a new garden.

Snorkeling was not possible off the beach by the point because of the waves. The trip to Yasur volcano was well worth the expense. At the Yacht Club you wait for the truck to drive to the volcano park ($1500V pp, $3350V park entrance fee pp). It was very chilly and windy when we went and a long hike up the cement stairs and a further hike up the sand hill. Be sure to bring a good flashlight.

Back at Port Resolution Sarah and her husband have a small café, Avoca, selling Tanna coffee. For $300V they serve French press coffee and cookies in a traditional hut and it’s a delightful opportunity to relax and get to know more about their culture.

Anchor waypoint: 19-31.532S, 169-29.702E

This anchoage is very rolly as swells wrap around the corner so we put out a stern anchor, bay is open to the NE. Black sand bottom, easy anchoring, good holding

There is a reef and bommies as you approach shore, but didn’t see anything in the middle of the anchorage.

Shore access: easy sand beach by dinghy

Bugs: no bugs except occasionally some flies

Weather: sunny then a day of rain

There were about 6 boats anchored when we arrived and there’s room for 10+ boats

Yolo – September 2012: Viewing the Yasur Volcano on the island of Tanna is one of the spectacular highlights of the South Pacific. Don’t pass this opportunity by, under any circumstance.

When you are anchored in Port Resolution on the southeastern corner of Tanna, the round trip four-wheel drive truck ride to/from the volcano will cost you 1,000 VATU ($11 USD) per person and the admission fee to the volcano is 3,350 VATU ($37 USD) for adults and half that for children under the age of 12.

The truck ride takes about 45 minutes to get to the volcano. The cost of the ride is negotiable, some tourist paid 2,000 VATU or more for the round trip. VATU is the only currency accepted by John, the truck driver. The truck departs the Port Resolution Yacht Club which is located on the bluff at the northeast corner of the bay. You can walk to the volcano. The hike will take you 2.5 to 3.0 hours one way. Walking back from the volcano would be a big challenge for most yachties since the road and trails are rough and there are no lights to guide you in the dark.

The one day volcano park pass is paid at the entrance to the park. The cashier prefers VATU, yet will take U.S. or Australian dollars, discounting their value as much as 15%!

Keep in mind the following points when taking the volcano tour:

1. Visit the volcano on a clear weather day when the wind is NOT blowing from a western direction. On cloudy days, rainy days, or western wind days you will have a very difficult time viewing the volcano, if you see it at all.

2. Make sure you take bug repellant, a flash flight, plenty of camera batteries, good footwear, and clothes to stay warm and dry. The walk from the parking lot to the rim of the volcano is about one hundred meters long on a concrete path. It gets very cool at the rim of the volcano after the
sun sets. Plan on taking hundreds of photos and videos. You will be walking around the rim of the volcano and down the path in the dark, so a flashlight will come in handy.

3. You should see the volcano in both daylight and at night time. Doing both gives you a totally different perspective. So you want to arrive at the volcano just before sunset. This REQUIRES that the truck leaves the yacht club at or before 1630. Make sure the truck driver knows your requirements and do not pay him until the truck is ready to depart. If the truck is not moving at 1631 tell the driver that you will view the volcano some other day. Historically, some truck drivers work on island time and their clients only see the volcano at night because of a late departure.

4. The volcano is shaped like a figure 8. It has two calderas with a low wall of rock between them. The southernmost caldera is near the parking lot and is the most active. However, from the rim of this caldera you can NOT see the bottom of the volcano where much of the continuous action is. Most tourists only view the southernmost caldera.

Make sure you walk the rim of the volcano several hundred meters to the north and look down inside the northern caldera. You can look directly into the mouth of the monster from the rim of the northern caldera. From this location you can also view the massive destruction of the volcanic lake that once existed on the western side of the volcano.

If you are an adventurer, walk the entire rim of the volcano, plenty of people have done so in the past. Just be sure to do so in daylight hours with good footwear.

Other Vanuatu islands have active volcanoes. They require very, very long hard hikes, have higher fees, and the volcanoes are often hidden from view by clouds and rain. Do Yasur on Tanna Island, then place a big check mark next to “volcano.”

Shango – August 2012: The anchorage in Port Resolution had a reputation for being roolly and it seemed to be well earned. We dropped a stern anchor for the first time in two years. Happily our friends on Kite were still in the anchorage and we were able to catch up over the next few days. On Monday four yacht crews and a variety of locals made the trip to Lenakel, the main village on Tanna, via Toyota pick-up truck. Three boats needed to check in and the rest of the passengers were heading to the vegetable market. The head count in the truck was seventeen, with twelve of us in the (short) bed of the truck. As one might suspect the two+ hour trip over the unpaved, winding jungle track was a memorable one. The crews of two Dutch boats entertained those in the back with boisterous folk songs. The locals found them particularly amusing. Roger and Jack sampled some Kava on the way back hoping to make the trip more pleasant. The results were inconclusive.

On Tuesday we made a trip to the volcano. We once again piled into the Toyota truck with numerous others and at five p.m., headed to Mt. Yasur. As we climbed the steps to the rim of the crater the sun was setting, making the glow of the lava increasingly more brilliant. When we reached the summit we were able to peer over the edge (no fence) into the bowels of the earth. Molten lava boiled away below us. Occasionally a rumble began beneath the surface and steadily grew until there was a huge explosion sending lava bits flying high into the air above us. It was all pretty impressive. We were told by other cruisers later that instead of lava bits they watched large rocks flying through the air. I think the lava bits were sufficient.

Mr. John – Sep 2011: After we cleared in at Aneityum, we moved next to Tanna and did the Volcano Trip, which was exciting and memorable. However Port Resolution was roolly (as normal) and we’d already run out of local money so we moved on northwards.
When arriving in Port Resolution be aware that the early Rocket Guide had an incorrect waypoint so best check everything and know where you are.

The C-map that I was using was almost in a different ocean; best be careful with all electronic devices; this is another reason for not rolling up here in the dark or early morning hours!

Route: Port Resolution inwards from south

1. S19 30.879 E169 30.897
2. S19 31.011 E169 29.956

These waypoints worked quite well for us and our anchor position was 19 31.565S 169 29.745E in about 16ft of water with good holding mud.

In retrospect we could have moved a little further ESE to ‘tuck in’ a little more but as you move into the shallower water there are more scattered coral heads and ‘coral junk’ on the bottom. It is however worth it to move in as far as you dare as the swell wraps around the headland (as can be seen on the Google shots) and this anchorage can be quite uncomfortable.

Tanna has one of the world’s most accessible active volcanoes in the world and whilst it has other fine points and a very interesting culture, it is ‘Yasur’, the Volcano, which is a MUST SEE if passing this way.

You should go and see “Stan the Man” for this.... Stanley lives just past the school on the way into the village -- he likes to have a group of six or more so it helps if you arrive with a couple of other yachts. We made an agreement to visit the volcano the next day and fixed a price (5,000Vatu/per head – about US$100 for the two of us), which included the 3,250Vatu per person entry fee.

If you do this trip you need the following equipment:

- Good footwear ie. Hiking Boots
- Warm Clothing….its cold up there when the sun goes down also its windy so wind-proof and water-proof may work better than an umbrella!!!
- Thermos of something Hot to drink (optional)
- Supply of water
- Something to munch / eat… it’s a long day
- Spare batteries and spare cards for the camera
- Flashlights...one each (at least)
- Kneeling / sitting mat... bum padding for riding in the back of the pickup
- Camera Stand / Tripod

Notes:

Some people would have added ‘full set of Kevlar Body Armour and burn dressings’ to this list; it can get exciting and even dangerous on occasions.....it is a live Volcano you’re standing on!

This adventure should not be mixed with alcohol!
Try and get up there in time to see the sunset….you may have to gee Stanley along a bit to do this.

It’s late when you get back... watch out for the coral (prop) when leaving the beach

Leave your anchor light on and be sure your dinghy will float you back.

**Sloepmouche – 2006:** This island was our first landfall, as cruising NW to see the Northern islands will be easier than the other way around!

We arrived in Port Resolution early on Lucky Thursday...lucky because that is the day of the week that the Customs and Immigration officials come the 2 1/2 hour, 4-wheel drive across from Lenakel. We checked in at no extra cost, and avoided the expense of hiring a transport (2000 vatu RT). We met Werry, the caretaker of the Port Resolution “yacht club”, donated a weary Belgian flag for his collection, and found out about the volcano visit, tours, and activities. Stanley, the son of the Chief, is responsible for relations with the yachts, and he is the tour guide or coordinator of the tours that yachties decide to do.

Every letter covers the volcano, so we’ll just say that it IS a fantastic experience, we went twice! The entrance fee for the volcano is up to 2250 Vatu now as the govt decided to tack on VAT!

This area is beautiful, and a fitting introduction to the unique islands of Vanuatu. The principal village, Irepow, is almost entirely traditional thatched huts constructed of natural materials paneled with different weaves of bamboo or rush. The paths are lined with tropical flowers and trees like a botanical garden. Walk through the village to the beautiful white sand beach. There’s a cute thatched “restaurant”, where you can have a meal prepared by Lea, who makes some of the best food of local ingredients.

There are many more things to do than the volcano. Dinghy to the base of the cliff on the N side of the bay to see hot water churning and boiling up from the rocks, and a small hot water cascade steaming into the sea. You can swim close and chose your temperature for a hot soak! By arrangement, you can see Kastom (Custom, traditional) villagers who still wear the G-string penis shields called nambas do thundering chanting dances under the roots of an immense ancient banyan tree, see firewalking and “magic leaves”, horseback ride to the volcanic plain or the cave at the base of Mt Melon, the highest mountain, or trek 3 hrs each way to the sacred Kefar waterfall, guarded by jungle villagers who believe this fall houses spirits and magical rocks, and who have opened this sacred cascade to visitors only since mid-2005.

1.15.75 Shark’s Bay

**Sloepmouche – 2006:** A place we had never heard or read about that’s very unique is **Shark’s Bay**.

From about June thru about Mar every year, this tiny rock strewn bay plays host to dozens of sharks that wallow around in the shallows and even come up on to the beach with the waves. We, unfortunately, were there in May, too early. The Waiwai family, who own the land, are guardians of the bay, and they will tell you the legends their ancestors had about the sharks, the sacred shark stones, and the tabu (taboo) beach. The newest thing at Shark’s bay, is the Tree House bungalow built about 50ft high in a giant spreading banyan tree. We scrambled up the “staircase” to the really cute bungalow and saw the smoke belowing from Mt Yasur, and from another window, Mt Melon. Marie Pauline prepared us a beautiful lobster lunch accompanied by avocado in season and local fruits and roots. Stanley or Werry can, with a full day’s notice, arrange for Richard to meet you on the beach near the anchorage and accompany you the 45-50 minutes walk to Shark’s Bay. Lobster takes advanced notice and settled weather for them to catch them fresh. The family is really sweet, and anxious to please, someone there can speak English or French. Even without the sharks, the sea views are breathtaking.
The people of Port Resolution and volcano area are fairly new to tourism as a business and so are still working out some bugs. Shyer than Fijians, they hesitate to volunteer details, so be sure to ask many questions as to what the total charges are for tours. We found that the transport, the guide, the guardian of the attraction, and perhaps others each get something for their part in the activity, and sometimes you can be surprised to find out that the price quoted, did not include the cost for every element. Since their own language of Bislama does not always express things like past, present, and future tense, or connecting or specifying words, sometimes what they think they say is not what you think they said. This can lead to awkward situations, like thinking transportation is arranged already when in reality they are hoping that when it comes time, they will be able to find one of the few people with vehicles.

1.15.76 Black Sands

Sloepmouch – 2006: Locals told us that when the winds are too rough for boats coming to Lenakel wharf, local boats go up to Black Sand beach, on the northwest side, where it’s calmer. The approach is hazard free, and except for the rock in the middle close to the beach, which is easily seen since waves break on it, the area is all pure black sand bottom until just before the beach. We anchored fairly far out in about 35ft, south of the rock, and saw later we could have gone in closer, as the depth stays over 20ft quite close to the beach. There is still the ubiquitous swell, but not bad for a multi-hull. Apart from the scenery and the good holding, there is not much to do, and only a very primitive road with almost no traffic.

1.15.77 Evergreen Resort Bay

Sloepmouch – 2006: While in Lenakel, we met Iaken, Chairman of the Tanna Tourism Association, and Merian (Maryann), also an active member. There is a small bay that they felt might be a good anchorage for yachts in front of Tanna Evergreen Bungalows, which they run in partnership. They were keen for us to come with the boat to give our opinion, as they would like to welcome yachts to the resort for drinks, meals, easy transport into Lenakel, and tours to attractions on this side of the island. We were interested too, thinking that this could be a good alternative to Lenakel Wharf area, which has a bad reputation as an anchorage.

Merian and Sam, the active managers, are very gracious and welcoming. Since the bay is pretty small, we built 2 strong moorings for them. The small bay is protected by reef systems extending from the north and south points, and by some shallow reefs, which almost enclose the bay. There is still some swell that gets in, but a lot less than Lenakel. Swelly in strong S winds, good in SE, great in E (even in very strong trades), pretty good in NE.

The safest way to enter the bay is to stay well off shore until just in front of the White Grass Resort, easily recognized by the bright pink bougainvillea flowers, and large thatched buildings on the white colored heights.


This will bring you mid-way between the shore reef and an isolated blind breaker reef marked by two hard red fishing buoys. From there proceed to the new yacht moorings, each with 3 yellow foam floats, at approx 19-26.589 S / 169-13.27 E

The moorings are complimentary for patrons. Please check the mooring to ascertain it is well maintained and safe for your vessel! They hope to add another mooring in the future if the response is
good. The bay is otherwise pretty deep for anchoring, 60-70 ft. Dinghy landing can be tricky with the tidal difference and the uneven hard shore that dries, but they are hoping to make a dingy channel up to the high tide line.

It’s only 15 min drive to Lenakel from here if you need to clear in/out or get basic foods, and the airport runway is just at the south end of the bay, making it convenient if people are flying in/out.

The resort has good basic facilities, good home-cooked meals, a beer and hard liquor bar. White Grass Resort, a short walk away, has a fancier restaurant and bar, more upscale landscaping, a small pool, and putting greens.

There are many tours and activities on this side of Tanna too. The Yakel Kastom village, is a real village where the people have chosen to live traditionally, men wearing only numbans, and women, topless in grass skirts, without any amenities from the outside world. Another Kastom village, Ipai, is more colorful, and the “traditions” more modern, with emphasis on handicrafts, local dishes, and bush medicine.

There’s a waterfall/surfing beach tour, cultural tours of South Tanna, and one of the more unique tours, a boat trip up north to the Blue Cave pool, and a very interesting land cavern. This was our favorite. The shoreline all the way up is very scenic, and geologically intriguing. The Blue Cave pool is accessed by swimming to the rock wall, duck diving a mere half meter (or just swimming in at low tide), into a gigantic dome-shaped cavern with a small round opening in the top where you see the green forest overhead, beams of sunlight streaming down striking the water’s surface, and aqua blue water below you illuminated, like a lighted a swimming pool, shimmering bright blue from the sun shining through the water from the outside. Magic! The land cave appears as a giant black hole in the white cliffs from a mile off. From the beach, you see it is an immense open cavern cut deep into the hillside, beautiful with the contrasting colors of light and dark, green vegetation and barren cliffs, bright flowers and somber shadows. You must do this on a sunny day for the best effect. Even with strong trade winds blowing, the shoreline is protected and the cave pool entrance was calm.

There is interesting snorkeling and scuba diving (if you have your own gear) right in front of Evergreen along the drop-off of the shore reef system, or on the towering formations that create the isolated shallow reefs a few hundred meters from shore.

11.2 Lenakel

Mr. John – Sep 2011: When we left Port Resolution going north another, larger yacht, left at the same time going south then west around the island…..we met up with them approaching Port Vila; they had searched the whole west coast for an anchorage and then, like us, they had checked out Dillon Bay on Erromango but with a large swell rolling in from the southwest it was a lost cause.

12 Anatom (Aneityum)

12.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities

Yolo – Sep 2012: FIRST GOVERNMENT OFFICE VISITED: When clearing-in at Anatom Island raise the Q flag and wait on board your vessel for the Customs official to arrive. He will arrive by small boat during business hours. He will complete the Customs, Cruising Permit, and Quarantine paperwork. He will then collect the Quarantine Service fee. He wears more than one hat so to speak. He will advise you to clear-in with Immigration when you visit one of the other clearance ports, since he typically does not provide this service.
Usually the only government visitor to your boat will be the Quarantine Officer. In our case all paperwork was completed in the cockpit and the inspector never entered YOLO.

Chesapeake – Sep 2012: We arrived in Anatom at 2pm Tuesday.

Customs saw us and came to the boat (they have no radio) and checked us in. Next day we went ashore to get vatu$$ - bank is only open Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30am-12, 1-3:30 (4:00 Friday). We took the dinghy over to Mystery Island for the "market" which is set up for the cruise ships. Very touristy but well organized. Unfortunately most of the locals sell cheap tourist Chinese/Indian stuff they bought in Port Vila but did find one woman who weaves her own beautiful baskets and sells them at a great price. We were told tourists can't bring woven items through customs back in AUS so they offer the junk instead. As you've heard on the radio, our winds are 20-25kt and chilly outside. We've got good holding in this wind and plenty of swing room. We wore our foul weather garb in the dinghy. We tentatively plan to leave in a couple days, as soon as the wind dies down, heading for Port Resolution on Tanna, to see the volcano. Will keep you posted.

There are no stores for provisioning here in Anatom, but we were assured by a local woman they have plenty of papayas and coconuts and some of the villagers have tomatoes for trade. We also saw pumpkins and mangoes growing for later in the year. Customs said we have to hold our trash until we get to Port Vila.

Tuskers Guide waypoints we used:

- 20°14.418S, 169°43.420E Anatom approach
- 20°14.327S, 169°44.606E Anatom harbor entrance
- 20°14.414S, 169°45.898E Anatom inside harbor
- 20°12.893S, 169°43.254E Anatom clear Western reef
- 20°14.195S, 169°46.583W our anchor spot

This is a large calm anchorage. Mystery Island is adjacent to the bay, where cruise ships frequently deposit the tourists as they are not permitted to go into Anatom. The “market” is overly commercial with foreign imports bought in Port Vila and transported down. Three cruise ships stopped during the 4 days we were there. Snorkeling off Mystery Island was disappointing with nothing to see.

Wind/wave protection: open to SW wind but protected from swells by a reef, very calm here
Bottom condition: sand bottom with good holding
Entry/exit: easy wide entrance
Shore access: easy by dinghy
Bugs: none
Weather: rain off and on, chilly and windy, sometimes strong gusty winds 20-25kt

Mr. John – Sep 2011: Making ANEITYUM a clearance port was a very good move and shows the readiness of the Vanuatu Government to adapt around its greatest asset...Tourism. Not that this has been done just for the 'yachtyes', it is mainly to service the numerous Cruise Ships that call here to sample “Mystery Island”.

When we were there Colin was the local customs official and despite his responsibilities for Clearing Cruise Ships in and out (sometimes two in a week) his Customs Launch turned out to be rather leaky dugout canoe; which he can paddle one handed whilst talking on his mobile phone, this is indeed a land of contrasts!
When we arrived the trade winds had been light for a while but there was a large swell coming up from a disturbance to the SW. The outer reef had some spectacular breaking waves and the western end had some good spots for experienced surfers; the anchorage was however quite calm except that our first anchorage, in the SW part, which we thought would give best protection when the trades returned, was too close to the reef; what swell that was getting in was refracted back off the reef wall and set us rolling. It was better when we moved to a more central position in the bay.

Ashore there were some nice little walks, a store with a few basics and a couple of schools; Mystery Island has some nice beaches and is really very pretty when there’s no Cruise Ship in; it was also fun to go and see the Cruise Ship operation when one pulls in......the entertainment was ‘tacky’ in the extreme but none of the passengers seemed to notice.

You can find protection here in everything but a Westerly Blow.... it is a relaxing place to Clear In and sets you up with a nice down-wind sail through the whole Vanuatu Group.

**12.2 Itchepthav Bay**

Mr. John – 2011: When headed North out of Anelghowhat you can break up the passage to Tanna by calling at Itchepthav Bay, located up on the NW coast of Aneityum. This is a nice quiet spot and you are unlikely to be disturbed; the holding is good and you can pick your depth in sand / mud. The only drawback is the bullets of wind that drop down into the anchorage, especially when the trade winds are developed.

Whilst it only takes seven miles off the distance to Tanna, it does mean you can get around Inmat Reef in good visibility......This reef is nearly always breaking.

Anchorage: 20-08.52S / 169-46.62 E