

Revealing the Mysteries of Melanesia - with National Geographic

From **9/2/2022**
to **20/2/2022**

Ship: **LE LAPÉROUSE**

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



Transfer + flight Honiara/Brisbane

In collaboration with National Geographic Expeditions.

PONANT invites you to discover the natural wonders of **the Coral Sea in Vanuatu and New Caledonia**. From **Nouméa to Honiara**, you will set sail aboard *Le Lapérouse* on a **12-day expedition cruise** into the heart of the South Pacific to discover ancestral tribes and paradisiacal landscapes.

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

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

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

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

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

The end of your voyage will be marked by the discovery of the **Solomon Islands**, a real tropical Eden.



The information in this document is valid as of 7/7/2021

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YOUR STOPOVERS :

NOUMÉA

Embarkation 9/2/2022 from 16h00 to 17h00

Departure 9/2/2022 at 19h00

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

LIFOU

Arrival 10/2/2022

Departure 10/2/2022

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

TANNA ISLAND

Arrival 11/2/2022

Departure 11/2/2022

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

AT SEA

Arrival 12/2/2022

Departure 12/2/2022

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

MALEKULA

Arrival 13/2/2022

Departure 13/2/2022

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

AMBRYM ISLAND

Arrival 14/2/2022

Departure 14/2/2022

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

ESPIRITU SANTO ISLAND

Arrival 15/2/2022

Departure 15/2/2022

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

UREPARAPARA ISLAND

Arrival 16/2/2022

Departure 16/2/2022

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

VANIKORO ISLAND

Arrival 17/2/2022

Departure 17/2/2022

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

AT SEA

Arrival 18/2/2022

Departure 18/2/2022

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

SANTA ANA ISLAND

Arrival 19/2/2022

Departure 19/2/2022

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

in the warm tropical waters of Port Mary.

HONIARA, GUADALCANAL ISLAND

Arrival 20/2/2022 early morning

Disembarkation 20/2/2022 at 06h30

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