

NEW CALEDONIA

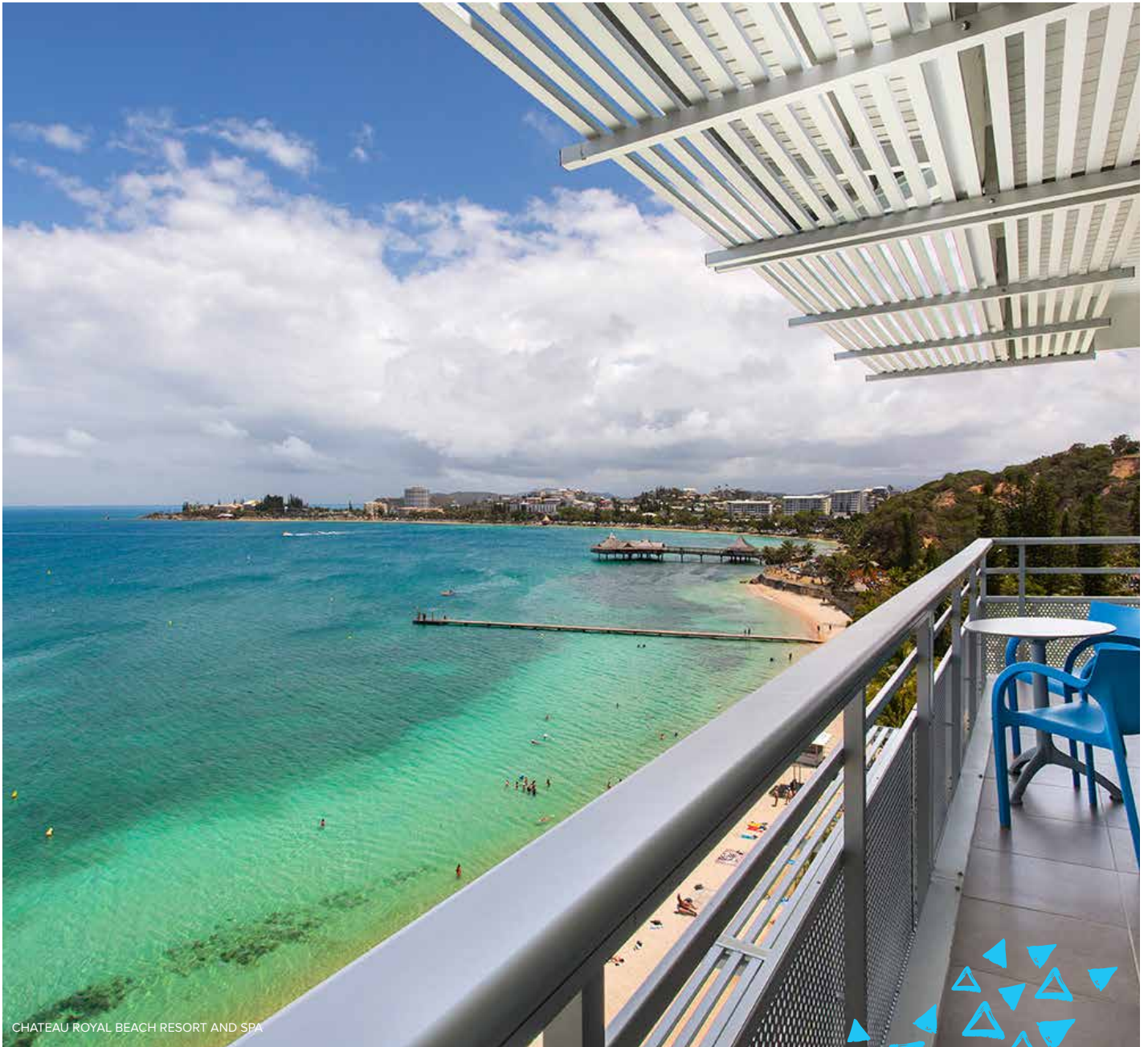


A little piece of **France**

Even though New Caledonia is one of New Zealand's closest neighbours, it tends to fly under the radar when it comes to family getaways. But with so much to see and do, its spectacular natural beauty, and of course its strong French influence, New Caledonia is a unique destination that any family will love.

KOU BUGNY HÔTEL IN ÎLE OF PINES





At a little under 2.5 hours, a family barely has time to squeeze in a movie before reaching the destination. Upon landing though, it feels like you're a whole world away – well, at least in a tropical South Pacific island version of France.

And that's a huge part of the appeal for visiting families. Driving on the opposite side of the road, trying your best to speak French, eating food that has been flown in from the other side of the world – they all add up to an experience that's unique and refreshing.

If the mix of people and culture is fascinating, the physical environment is equally captivating. New Caledonia boasts the world's largest lagoon (24,000 square kilometres) and the second largest barrier reef (it's only about 200 kilometres shorter than Australia's Great Barrier Reef).

This is a place for horse-riding up mountains, sailing through the iridescent blue waters, hiking through lush forests and mountain biking across dramatic trails. It's about harnessing the tradewinds and skipping across the sea on a windsurfer. Or snorkelling over colourful coral reef that is teeming with life.



NOUMEA

The cosmopolitan city of Noumea (population around 100,000) has a long list of attractions. The food is an obvious highlight. The cafés, restaurants and patisseries serve up delectable fare. Specialist wine shops stock a wide selection of French varieties (for Mum and Dad of course). And even a visit to the supermarket is an experience, particularly for kids accustomed to a New World or Countdown back home. Keep an eye out for imported French goodies like fine chocolates, mouthwatering cheeses, patés, crackers and buttery biscuits.

The popular tourist areas of Citron Bay and Anse Vata are also a lot of fun. Again they're home to a wide choice of cafés, restaurants and bars. And the beaches themselves are pristine and ideal for a cooling dip.

If the idea of a laid back family escape with beautiful beaches, water sports, amazing cuisine, culture and continental flair sounds appealing, then look no further. New Caledonia is the destination you've been searching for.



Day tripping from Noumea

Ile Aux Canard. Otherwise known as Duck Island, is a stunning little spot a kilometre or so off Anse Vata Beach. The atmosphere is superbly laid back and the snorkelling is top notch with crystal clear water and loads of colourful fish meandering their way through the coral. And even if the wind gets up, this island has plenty of sheltered spots to escape from the breeze.

Taxi boats go back and forth between the island all day long, so there's no need to book. Families are quite welcome to pack their own food, drink and snorkelling gear. Or it's easy to hire snorkelling gear on arrival, and grab a bite and drink from the island's funky little restaurant and bar. All in all, it's a fun, affordable way for the family to spend half a day.

If families have time, a full day trip to Amedee Island, located about 45 minutes away by boat, is another fun outing. Amedee is home to France's first metal lighthouse, built in Paris by the same engineers who constructed the Eiffel Tower, and then relocated to New Caledonia in 1862.

At almost 60 metres in height, the structure towers over the island and for those feeling brave, it's still possible to climb the 247 steps to the top. A day package includes transfers and a buffet lunch, and there is also the possibility of paddleboarding, snorkelling some pristine reefs, or simply chilling on the island's stunning white sand beaches. What's not to like.



LE MERIDIEN NOUMEA RESORT & SPA



RAMADA PLAZA NOUMEA

PLACES TO STAY

Le Meridien Noumea Resort & Spa

Sitting on the very southern tip of Anse Vata Beach, Le Meridien Noumea boasts one of the city's finest beachfront locations. The kids will love swimming in the warm, clear waters and they can grab a paddleboard whenever they please. The location is close to Citron Bay and the city centre, so everything is within easy reach.

The spacious two-bedroom, two-bathroom Voyager Suites are the pick for families – they come with a host of handy amenities like a kitchenette and microwave. And Dad and the kids can give Mum a bit of “she time” at the luxurious Deep Nature Spa that includes a fitness room, indoor and outdoor jacuzzis, sauna, steam room and nine treatment rooms!

Chateau Royal Beach Resort and Spa

Chateau Royal is another fine accommodation option. For families who love beach time, you can't get much closer to the sand. Simply stroll on down, lie down a towel and you're set. The water is warm and crystal clear and the beach also has some pretty amazing sunsets. The resort boasts a number of dining options – sitting on the open deck at La Pirogue, looking out to the ocean is particularly nice. For families, the two bedroom suites provide plenty of space for two adults and two children. Plus they come with a fully equipped kitchen which is perfect for whipping up a meal or even just a few snacks.

Ramada Plaza Noumea

A short walk to Anse Vata Beach. Tick. Family-friendly room options. Tick. First-class facilities. Tick. If you were going to name the key ingredients for a fantastic place to base the family in Noumea, Ramada Hotel and Suites has them covered.

The apartment-style accommodation is particularly practical. The two-bedroom option sleeps two adults and two children in comfort. Convenient features include two bathrooms, a living room, dining room, laundry, plus a full kitchen when Mum and Dad can whip up French inspired delicacies!

If even more space is required, families can step up the three bedroom apartment that comes with all the features mentioned above, plus the extra room of course. We're talking 94 square metres with a 26 square metres outdoor terrace. Now that's big.

The Ramada is also home to one of the city's most iconic restaurants – “Entrecote au 360” – a revolving restaurant that sits right up on the 17th floor. Needless to say, the ever-changing view is spectacular and it makes for a very memorable family lunch (11.45am to 2pm) or dinner (7pm to 10pm).

Add in a pool, sports bar, gym, lounge, free wifi and free secured parking, and there is not a lot else you could wish for.



EXPLORING GRAND TERRE

Most visitors to New Caledonia tend to stay in and around Noumea. Which is understandable, given its eateries, shopping and wonderful beaches. However, there is so much more to see and do outside the cosmopolitan capital.

The island of Grand Terre (Noumea is in its southern region) is roughly 450 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide, making it the third largest island in the Pacific. The size provides visiting families with a whole lot to explore.

The northern half of Grand Terre is (rather appropriately) called the Northern Province. The area is very diverse, with wide open plains on the West Coast through to picturesque waterfalls and tropical forests on the East Coast, as well as deserted islands, pretty beaches and excellent snorkelling sites.

Families who love nature and unspoilt spots will be in their element. The best ways to explore this region is by car. Yes, we're talking about a good old-fashioned family road trip!

The roads themselves are in excellent condition, and travelling like this gives families the freedom to stop here, there and wherever they please.

Heading north from Noumea there are numerous highlights. These include the spectacular Poe Beach near Bourail, plus you can take a detour to Roche Percee Beach and check out the impressive rock formations that have been carved by wind and waves. The Northern Province capital of Kone is a good place to spend the night, plus it's not far from the iconic Heart of Voh, the heart-shaped mangrove made famous by photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

Head from west to east, and you come to Hienghene, another Northern Province must-see. The area is famous for its towering black limestone rocks that you will first see on the road south of Hienghene. They are all spectacular, but don't miss the Poule Couveuse rock formation (translated means the Brooding Hen) that lie at the entrance to Hiengene Bay.

A visit to Belvédère will give you the best lookout point. If the weather is clear you'll also be able to see Mount Panié, New Caledonia's highest peak at just over 1600 metres.

The Far North area also has plenty of wild landscape adventures. There are flights over the reef, boat day trips to amazing islets, or go on a cultural discovery to Tiebaghi's old mining village, plus there are lots of things to do and see in the town of Poupou.

PLACES TO STAY

Sheraton New Caledonia Deva Spa & Golf Resort

Drive 90 minutes north of La Tontouta International Airport and you'll come to the serene Deva Domain – a vast regional park that is home to the Sheraton New Caledonia Deva Spa & Golf Resort.

Sitting on a sheltered lagoon, the location is perfect for water-based activities like stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and sailing. The calm, glassy mornings are particularly good for paddling out to the coral reef, where the kids will spot schools of fish going about their day.

For bigger kids, the glass-bottom boat tour is a real highlight. There's a good chance of spotting turtles, plus the tour includes a snorkelling stop over vibrant coral reef formations that are teeming with fish.

Connecting with Kanak culture



With all the French influence in Nouméa, it's easy to overlook the fact that New Caledonia also has a history rich in indigenous tradition and culture. The Kanaks are the original Melanesian inhabitants and make up about 40 percent of the population, although most live outside the capital. The New Caledonia Museum is located in the city centre close to the municipal market and offers a fascinating insight into Kanak and Melanesian heritage.

The Kanaks have a long association with the arts, and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre, located along a ridge line on a peninsula about eight kilometres northeast of Nouméa, also makes for an interesting family visit. Designed to promote the heritage of the Kanak people, the complex contains 10 pavilions based on original indigenous design. It's architecturally impressive and includes an art centre, exhibition spaces, multi-media library and a landscaped park that the whole family can enjoy.



TJIBAOU CULTURAL CENTRE

The Deva Domain is home to some of New Caledonia's best hikes and they're all within easy access of Sheraton Deva. The closest circuit of tracks begin right across the road from the resort's front gate. For an amazing view, take the well-maintained track up the hill that sits directly behind the resort. The 30-minute climb is worth the effort. And anyone can do it. There are plenty of mountain bike trails too – best cycled in cool, early morning temperatures.

The resort's pool is a winner. It's also a novelty for visiting kids to be around local French-speaking children. And like kids anywhere, they're quick to make new friends. To top it all off, Sheraton Deva also has a fantastic Kids Club. Free for resort guests, the centre is open seven days a week from around 7am to 5pm. It's a clean, well-designed space with loads of playthings.



SHERATON DEVA NEW CALEDONIA AND SPA



SHERATON DEVA NEW CALEDONIA AND SPA



Escape to New Caledonia

Only a short flight from New Zealand, Sheraton New Caledonia Deva Spa & Golf Resort offers a unique South Pacific experience for your next family holiday destination.

To learn more, visit www.sheratonnewcaledoniadeva.com

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SPOTLIGHT

KIDS CLUB

Sheraton New Caledonia
Deva Spa & Golf Resort

Deva delights.

When families stay at Sheraton New Caledonia Deva Spa and Golf Resort, they're surrounded by a natural environment that kids love exploring. The beautiful beach, hiking tracks and bike trails provide endless fun, but it's also nice to have a Kids Club, so the little ones can mix things up!

At Sheraton Deva, they've created the perfect spot. Bright, spacious and beautifully designed, Deva Kids Club is an oasis of fun where children can enjoy a host of organised activities. The long list includes board games, arts and crafts, along with workshops such as weaving, sculpture and painting.



The atmosphere is very chilled out (just like the resort itself). The French-speaking teachers also do a great job with non-French speaking kids. In some ways it makes the experience more fun.

The Kids Club is open daily from 8am to 4pm and if there's a special occasion, such as a child's birthday, a celebration can be organised and hosted at the club. On top of that, Kids Club can organise in-room baby-sitting for children from six months to 12 years, which means Mum and Dad can have their fun too!

