

VANUATU

A natural attraction

The South Pacific islands offer families a feast of activities and fine accommodation, but where Vanuatu really stands out is its vast variety of fun, authentic experiences.



HOLIDAY INN RESORT





PORT VILA

Family holidays are all about leaving your regular schedules behind. Say goodbye to school drops-offs, cleaning rooms, and Mum can even have a break from making breakfast, lunch and dinner – which is no doubt a relief.

Indeed, for many families, a Pacific getaway is time to laugh, play and explore together in a place that is very different from home. And if done well, sharing a travel experience with your children can strengthen family bonds and provide your kids with a lifetime of memories.

With that mind, Vanuatu is the perfect place to visit. Here there is a culture where children are treasured. They play a big part in family life and become actively involved in all aspects of the local community from an early age.

Add this wonderful, child-friendly attitude to the choice of wonderful properties and the variety of activities on offer, and it's no wonder Vanuatu makes for a truly marvellous South Pacific family holiday.



STARTING POINT PORT VILA

Vanuatu's biggest centre is its capital, Port Vila. Sitting on the island of Efate, Port Vila is home to the nation's international airport, which makes the charming town the first stop for visiting families. It's also the ideal spot to base a family adventure.

It's a bustling little town that lies around a beautiful, natural harbour. Steep hillsides offer panoramic views and the dusty streets are always abuzz with locals going about their day and tourists enjoying the local cafés, bars and restaurants. Plus there are more than enough shops, selling everything from surf wear to local art and crafts and duty free.

A must see for families is the local market which is packed full of local vendors selling an abundance of fresh organic produce. It's sure to be an eye-opener for visiting kids used to walking the aisles of New World and Countdown. And from a practical point of view, mum and dad can pick up some supplies to keep "hunger" from hitting the troops.

If you'd like to stock up in more familiar surroundings, Port Vila also has a supermarket that sells all the usual mainstream food you get back home – with prices roughly the same too.



Flying family fun

The lush rainforests of Vanuatu are amazing landscapes to walk through, but imagine getting an adrenalin-pumping birds-eye view from four stories up. That's what you get with the action-packed, Jungle Zipline adventure half-day tour. You'll be strapped securely into your safety harness and zip through lush, cool treetops, with stunning views across Mele Bay and Port Vila Harbour.

You'll cross an 80 metre-high canyon, wobble across two suspension bridges and return high above a waterfall. Sound breathtaking? It most certainly is, and it's suitable for people of any age. Vanuatu Jungle Zipline has had clients as young as six and as old as 70. The crew will pick you up from any hotel in Port Vila and all you need to bring is some closed toe shoes or reef shoes, insect repellent, a camera, and clothing suitable to wear a harness over.

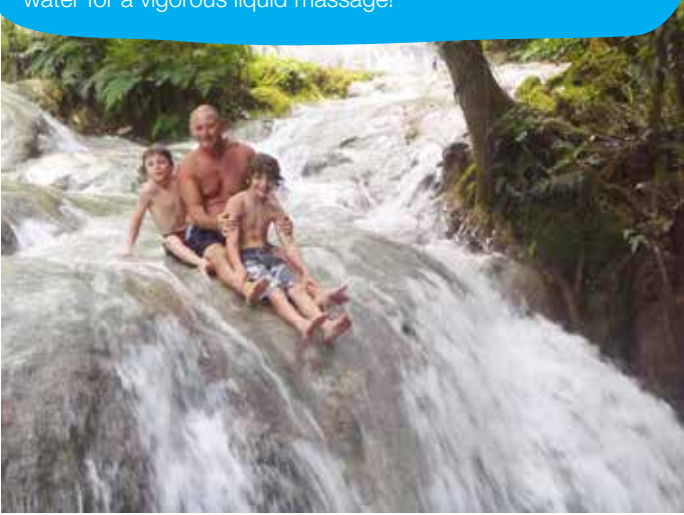


WARWICK LE LAGON VANUATU



Magical Mele

One of the classic family excursions is the trip out to the Mele Cascades and Waterfall. First you drive to Mele Bay (which is only 10-15 minutes outside Port Vila). The walk from the carpark to the waterfall takes about 20 minutes. There are a few inclines and steps along the way, but nothing challenging. Don't rush it, take time, breathe in the fresh air, savour the peace and quiet and admire the lush tropical scenery. The reward at the end is a cooling dip in one of the many natural swimming pools – each one fed by a 30 metre waterfall. In the top pool you can actually sit directly underneath the cascading water for a vigorous liquid massage!



Outside of the organised activities, there is also lots for them to do - the pool complex is set up for hours of watery fun, and with its acres of wide open spaces, Iririki might just be the ultimate place for a game of hide and seek! Bigger kids will love the snorkelling in Snorkellers Cove and there are kayaks to get out on, too.

Holiday Inn

Like Iririki, Holiday Inn completed a major transformation in mid 2016. No stone was unturned and for children that meant a superb pool area down by the lagoon, and in particular the “kids only” pool with giant cascading water buckets and a mushroom topped water fountain. Plus a modern-well equipped Kids' Club for three to 12 year olds.

During the day, kids can join in the scheduled activities held at various times during the day, such as fish feeding, basket weaving and beach soccer. The restaurant opens early in the evening to give children a chance to eat and have enough time to go back to the kids' club until it shuts at 8 or 9pm. This gives parents a bit of breathing space to sit down and enjoy a nice, quiet dinner by themselves. On top of that, babysitting services are available for children under three years of age.

Warwick Le Lagon Vanuatu

When it comes to catering for families, Warwick Le Lagon is another resort that delivers the fun. Daily entertainment is guaranteed at the Funtastik Blong Kids Club. It's free for kids aged from three all the way up to 16. Think cooking classes, bonfire sing-a-longs, beach Olympics, badge making, musical games, soccer, t-shirt painting, crazy crab races and much more! Add in some great facilities like a cinema, dedicated children's pool and electronic goodies like PS3 games and you've got the recipe for a fun-filled family getaway. The icing on the cake? The whole family can make the most of the many free activities around the resort such as native arts and crafts, water sports, golf, tennis and other staff-run games.

The Terraces

Overlooking Erakor Lagoon, The Terraces offers families modern, stylish apartment accommodation, just five minutes drive from downtown Port Vila. The property does have a “five years plus” children's policy, which rules some families out. However, The Terraces is an ideal spot for older kids, particularly teenagers who can enjoy their own space. The two-bedroom apartments are spread over two levels, with living, dining and a full kitchen downstairs, opening out to a private pool and outdoor living zone. The second bedroom (for the kids) connects at the rear of the living room, and upstairs, Mum and Dad have the master bedroom with stunning views over the lagoon. Add a floodlit tennis court, gym and main pool and everyone is sure to be happy!

PLACES TO STAY

Ramada Resort Port Vila

Even though Ramada Resort has a handy location just one kilometre from downtown Port Vila, this “secret” spot on Erakor Lagoon feels like it could be a million miles away. In other words, family relaxation is guaranteed! The smooth lagoon waters are ideal for “go-to” activities like kayaking, snorkelling, stand-up paddleboarding and swimming. The Kid's Club opens its doors at 9.30am each morning and provides a day's entertainment before closing at 5.30pm. Note, there is a daily charge for the Kid's Club, about NZ\$20 - however this includes a yummy lunch (main dish, dessert/fruit and bottled water).

Like many Ramada properties, the Port Vila example boasts accommodation designed for travelling families. In this case, ground floor family suites, connecting junior suites and two-bedroom apartments. Each option provides Mum, Dad and the kids with plenty of space, plus a full kitchen. Port Vila's largest supermarket is close by, so picking up supplies is a breeze. Plus families can explore the local produce markets, which is an adventure in itself.

Iririki Island Resort

Sitting proudly on its very own island in the middle of Port Vila Harbour, it's hard to miss Iririki Island Resort and Spa. It's also hard not to have a ball here. In May 2016 the resort underwent a top-to-bottom multi-million dollar upgrade. The accommodation was also revamped, including family-friendly accommodation options like the spacious two-level apartments, and the deluxe family fares. Both of these can sleep family of five with ease.

On Iririki, kid's activities centre around the cutely named “Pikinini Club”. Activities run seven days a week from 10am to 6pm, and during these hours children can enjoy all the traditional kid's club style activities like face painting and weaving and shell collecting.



OUTER ISLAND ADVENTURES

Tanna

Not all the action in Vanuatu takes place on the main island of Efate. In fact far from it! Fly south from Port Vila to the island of Tanna and you'll find natural attractions the equal of anywhere in the South Pacific. For families with older children, making the effort to get over to Tanna Island can offer a variety of experiences few will ever forget.

Home to just over 30,000 people, Tanna is a place where you can snorkel some the best coral in Vanuatu, ride through the jungle on horseback, visit secret waterfalls and experience a culture that continues to live by its age-old traditions.

Tanna's biggest drawcard is Mount Yasur, one of the world's most accessible live volcanoes. By four-wheel-drive vehicle, visitors can get to within about a 10-minute walk from the edge of the crater. Ash-laden smoke has smothered the surrounding landscape, creating a scene that's like something from another planet. Like any volcano, the level of explosive activity varies, but it's always best to view Mount Yasur at dusk and into the night, when the red-hot magma makes its own fireworks display against the dark sky. If you think children get excited on Guy Fawkes Day, multiply that by a hundred!

Bigger kids (and adults) will also love swimming in the spectacular waters of Tanna's Blue Cave. A hole in the roof of the cave lets the sun shine through, turning the water into a beautiful iridescent blue. If you have a Go Pro or waterproof phone or camera, make sure it's packed – this is the photo op of a lifetime! There is also more fun outside the caves, with jumping (into the water) platforms for those who love taking a leap.



MOUNT YASUR © DAVID KIRKLAND - VTO TOURISM



Family fare

Sometimes it seems like kids are always hungry – quite possibly because they are! Well, fear not, because the food in Vanuatu is very good. The beef on Santo is considered world-class and the fresh seafood is amazing. Add in the French influence and a fusion of Pacific flavours and you have a holiday destination that can serve up something that's just a bit different from the normal family fare. And if your children are fussy eaters, not to worry! Plenty of places serve up classic dishes for less adventurous children.



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Santo

For families on a tight timeframe, jumping on one of Vanuatu's interisland flights may not be possible or practical. But if time allows, it really should be part of the itinerary. If you think Efate is chilled, Santo is even quieter! Here the locals have a very different outlook on life compared to Westerners. Material possessions are of little concern. Even time isn't a factor, so people are never stressed out about being late. Welcome to island time!

All visiting families should take a drive up the coast from Luganville – home to some of the most spectacular beaches in Vanuatu. About 45 minutes drive away is pure beach perfection, otherwise known as Champagne Beach. (It's the one that's often seen on advertisements promoting Vanuatu tourism).

As far beaches go, it doesn't get any better. Warm, translucent water, powdery white sand and offshore islands in the distance, all surrounded by dark green tropical rainforest. It really is magic.

Despite this picture postcard set-up, the beach remains virtually crowd-free. There is no resort or any other form of accommodation on the beach, and the only people you're likely to see are a handful of local families going about life as they always have. Most visitors will have the place to themselves, unless a cruise ship is visiting, in which case it's busy and best avoided.

Santo is also famous for its blue holes, and there are several of them dotted along the eastern coast. One of the best is the Matevulu Blue Hole. It's signposted on the main road and the short drive inland just happens to be along one of the old military airstrips. Like Champagne Beach, it's a wonderfully peaceful place for families to spend time.

The fresh water is a little cooler than the sea and the lack of salt makes it considerably less buoyant. The kids will also love the big rope swing that hangs from a huge tree - just climb the ladder, hold on tight and fly!



© DAVID KIRKLAND - VTO TOURISM

Port Vila's finest boutique apartment styled resort



Featuring breathtaking views over the Erakor lagoon and tree top canopies, these 16 spacious apartments are designed especially for the tropical lifestyle, beautifully appointed to anticipate every guest comfort including a private pool. A mixture of generously proportioned one and two bedroom combinations span over two levels.

Pool side the infinity edge pool is a hub for rest, relaxation and family enjoyment.

A tour desk is available to book all your Vanuatu excursions and the central location means you are a ten minute walk from the Port Vila township.

The Terraces is suitable for those aged five years and over.

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SPOTLIGHT KIDS CLUB

Iririki Island Resort & Spa

A kid's top pick.

This resort is one big playground for kids. There's a tranquil beach for kayaking and catamarans. Around the other side of the island, Snorkellers Cove offers a safe place to snorkel and plenty of sea life to observe. The sunset pool is a dream set-up for kids. And there's even a games room.

On its own, this is more enough to keep the kid's entertained. However, the icing on the Iririki cake is the Pikinini Kid's Club. Clean, spacious and run by professional staff, this fantastic facility offers a wide variety of organised activities from grass skirt making, to treasure hunts to dance competitions!

Need some down time?

Mums and dads wanting a little time on their own can make good use of the resort's babysitting or child-minding services. An hourly fee applies and it starts from A\$20 per hour.

Fun with good values

Family holidays are all about having lots of fun, but that doesn't mean that kids can forget about their behaviour! At the Pikinini Club, kids have a ball, but they're also encouraged to follow some house rules:

1. Be respectful

Respect different people with different cultures and backgrounds.

2. Be honest

Tell the truth. Say what you mean and follow through on your word.

3. Be responsible.

Accept the consequences of your actions, ask for help and think of others.

4. Be grateful.

Be thankful for what you have.

5. Be kind.

Be nice to yourself and be positive towards others.



Air Vanuatu



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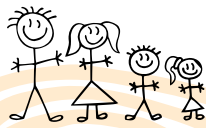
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FAMILY FAVOURITES

A cool change.

The brief for this family holiday was adventure. And a lovely place to rest at night. For Aucklander Amanda Platt and her family, the choice of destination was the tropical playground of Vanuatu, and it delivered just what everyone was hoping for.

Why did you choose Vanuatu for your family holiday?

In the first instance it looked like a fascinating and beautiful place to go. Plus we wanted to explore somewhere different, somewhere just a little bit off the beaten track!

How many times has your family visited Vanuatu?

We'd been there once before, however, it was only a day-long stop that was part of a cruise.

Which property did you stay at?

We stayed at The Terraces boutique apartments in Port Vila.

What was the reason for choosing the accommodation?

In a couple of words - luxury and space! We loved the apartment style accommodation – it gives you a bit more room, when

compared to regular resort accommodation. The design of the apartments at The Terraces is also clever as us adults had our own space upstairs, and the kids could hang out down below. Having your own private plunge pool was a bonus, and nothing was too much for the friendly staff.

How old are your children

10, 11 and 13 years old.

What did the kids love most about Vanuatu?

They've always been water babies, so the snorkelling and swimming was a real highlight – and luckily for them there was plenty of it.

What did you love most?

They call Vanuatu “the happiest place on earth” and when you get there you can see why. The people are friendly and super relaxed – and I think it rubs off on you. You kind of sink into their no stress way of life, which is what a family holiday should be about. We loved pottering around the local markets in Port Vila. We picked up some fresh fruit and tried a few things you don't see back home. The quality of the food in the restaurants and cafés was also really impressive.

What was your top family activity?

We did so much, but a real winner was our day trip to the Blue lagoon swimming hole. We hired a driver for the day (which I'd recommend, as you can all just sit back and relax) and made the journey about 90 minutes out of Port Vila. The spot is amazing. The water is crystal clear and it's surrounded by lush foliage. It's next to sea, so they're salty at high tide and fresh at low tide. And for the kids (and adults) there are swings you can launch off. It was a blast.



AMANDA AND THE KIDS

Ramada Resort Port Vila



Vanuatu's newest resort, Ramada Resort Port Vila, welcomes families with a daily kids club and kids activities, kids and toddlers pool, and great value kids meals. Relax in spacious self-contained 2-bedroom apartments or guaranteed inter-connecting Junior Suites with panoramic lagoon views, accommodating up to 2 adults & 4 children. Parents will enjoy the spa, gym & swim-up pool bar with complimentary WIFI. Located within reach of Port Vila and all the attractions it has to offer, Ramada Resort Port Vila is a great choice for families with kids of all ages!

do your thing, **leave the rest to us**™

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