

Vanuatu

I INTRODUCTION

Vanuatu, independent republic consisting of more than 80 islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, located about 5,600 km (about 3,500 mi) southwest of Hawaii and about 2,400 km (about 1,500 mi) northeast of Australia. From the late 19th century until independence in 1980, Vanuatu (then called the New Hebrides) was governed jointly by France and Britain. The capital and largest city is Port-Vila, located on the island of Éfaté.



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Vanuatuan Flag and Anthem

II LAND AND RESOURCES

The islands of Vanuatu extend about 800 km (about 500 mi) from north to south and about one-quarter of that distance from east to west. They lie in a Y-shaped configuration that tilts in a northwest to southeast direction. Total land area is 12,190 sq km (4,707 sq mi). About 70 of the islands are inhabited. The largest island, Espiritu Santo, has a land area of 4,856 sq km (1,875 sq mi); other principal islands include Malakula, Éfaté, Erromango, and Ambrym. Vanuatu's exclusive economic zone—that is, the area of the ocean in which it controls fishing and other rights—covers about 1.8 million sq km (about 700,000 sq mi).

Most of Vanuatu's islands are peaks of volcanic mountain ranges that rise from the ocean floor; several of the volcanoes are active, including Mount Yasur on the island of Tanna. The highest peak, Mount Tabwemasana on Espiritu Santo, rises to an elevation of 1,879 m (6,165 ft). Many of the islands have narrow coastal plain regions with relatively rich soils that support a variety of agricultural crops. Forests cover a large portion of the land. Two small rivers drain Espiritu Santo and smaller streams flow on some other islands.

Vanuatu has a tropical, humid climate. Trade winds moderate the climate between May and October, producing a slightly drier, cooler season than during the rest of the year. Winds vary considerably

during the warmer season, causing occasional cyclones between December and April. A major cyclone ravaged Vanuatu in February 1987, destroying numerous buildings and ships. Average daily temperatures range from 22° to 27° C (72° to 81° F). Rainfall averages about 2,300 mm (about 90 in) in the southern islands and about 3,900 mm (about 154 in) in the northern islands.

Vanuatu supports more than 1,000 species of vegetation, including coconut palms, banyan trees, orchids, and ferns. Small reptiles, bats, and rats inhabit the islands, along with numerous varieties of birds, such as pigeons, parrots, and thrushes. Varied sea animals thrive in the surrounding waters, including bonito, tuna, swordfish, dolphins, sharks, crabs, and corals. Éfaté contains manganese deposits, which were mined in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1994 a geophysical survey identified possible gold and copper deposits on Malakula and Espiritu Santo.

III THE PEOPLE OF VANUATU



Jack Fields/Corbis

Port-Vila, Vanuatu

Port-Vila, the capital and largest city of Vanuatu, is located on Éfaté Island along the shore of a small bay. In contrast to the more traditional rural areas of Vanuatu, Port-Vila reflects considerable European influence

The population of Vanuatu was estimated at 192,910 in 2001, yielding a population density of 16 persons per sq km (41 per sq mi). Ethnic Melanesians known as ni-Vanuatu are 94 percent of the people; the remainder are of French, Vietnamese, Chinese, Polynesian, or Micronesian descent. Rural areas are almost entirely ni-Vanuatu and contain 80 percent of Vanuatu's people. About 70 percent of the republic's population live on the islands of Anatom, Éfaté, Espiritu Santo, Futana, Malakula, and Tanna. Besides the capital of Port-Vila, the only other urban area in Vanuatu is Luganville on Espiritu Santo.

English, French, and Bislama, a form of pidgin English, are Vanuatu's official languages. Government

documents are sometimes published in all three. There are also more than 100 Melanesian languages spoken in the republic (see Austronesian languages). Given this linguistic variety, Bislama tends to serve as the nation's lingua franca, or common language of communication. Literacy rates in Vanuatu rank among the lowest of Pacific nations. Although nearly all of Vanuatu's children attend primary schools, only about one in five students continues beyond the primary level. The joint British and French colonial administration established a dual education system in Vanuatu, whereby some primary schools teach in English and others teach in French; this system continues today. A teacher training college and an extension of the University of the South Pacific (founded in 1989) are located in Port-Vila.

A majority of the people of Vanuatu practice Christianity. About 35 percent of the population are Presbyterians, while Anglicans (members of the Church of England) and Roman Catholics each comprise about 15 percent. Much of the rural population, regardless of church membership, continues to adhere to traditional animist rituals and beliefs (Animism).

The way of life in Port-Vila reflects its French and English colonial heritage. With fine restaurants, shops, and hotels, it is a cosmopolitan city that caters to Western tourists. Vanuatu's other urban area, Luganville, is a simpler community with far fewer Western characteristics. In rural areas, the traditional lifestyle centered around subsistence agriculture remains largely intact. Houses made from local wood and palm leaves predominate, and much of the clothing is of traditional design. Both urban and rural residents consume *kava*, a mildly narcotic drink made from a plant in the pepper family, in ceremonial and recreational settings. Organized sports such as soccer and cricket are popular in Vanuatu's urban areas.

IV ECONOMY



Kal Muller/Woodfin Camp and Associates, Inc.

Traditional Agriculture on Vanuatu

Most of Vanuatu's population engages in subsistence agriculture. Here farmers on Pentecost Island in northern Vanuatu harvest yams, one of Vanuatu's primary food crops.

In 1999 Vanuatu had an estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of \$246.7 million. Agriculture dominates the country's economy at both the subsistence and commercial levels. About 80 percent of the people engage primarily in subsistence agriculture. Food crops include yams, taro, cassava, and bananas. Livestock raising and small-scale fishing provide nearly all of the beef, pork, poultry, and fish consumed in Vanuatu. Agricultural activities also generate most of the country's major exports, including copra (dried meat of the coconut), beef, cocoa, and coffee. The forestry industry, which is controlled to prevent overlogging, provides timber, the other important export. Agriculture and forestry also supply Vanuatu's manufacturing industries, which include food processing and canning and wood processing.

Although agriculture employs the majority of Vanuatu's workforce, the services sector—especially tourism and offshore banking—provides the majority of GDP. Although Vanuatu's government originally discouraged tourism beyond Éfaté in an effort to preserve isolated island cultures, the desire to spread the tourism industry's economic benefits more widely has led in recent years to an increase in rural and village-based tourism. Other sources of revenue in Vanuatu include a shipping registry, which allows foreign merchant ships to operate under the Vanuatu flag to profit from the country's less restrictive regulations, and the licensing of foreign vessels to fish in surrounding waters. The possibility of reopening manganese-mining operations on Éfaté holds further economic potential.

The value of Vanuatu's imports typically outweighs the value of its exports by several times. Principal imports include machinery and vehicles, manufactured goods, and mineral fuels. Sources for Vanuatu's imports include Japan, Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, France, and the Fiji Islands, while the principal purchasers of its exports are Japan, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The national unit of currency in Vanuatu is the *vatu* (129.1 *vatu* equal U.S.\$1; 1999 average).

Air Vanuatu and several other airlines provide international service from Vanuatu's main airport, located near Port-Vila. Several shipping lines provide frequent service to Port-Vila and Luganville, and small vessels shuttle among the islands. There are some paved roads on Éfaté, but mostly unimproved roads elsewhere. Vanuatu has two weekly newspapers, one published by the government and one privately owned. The government operates the only radio and television stations. Radio Vanuatu broadcasts in the three official languages. Many television programs are imported from New Zealand and France. International telephone service is available in Port-Vila and Luganville.

V GOVERNMENT

Vanuatu is governed under a constitution that came into effect with the republic's independence in 1980. The president of Vanuatu serves as head of state, a largely ceremonial office. The president is elected by Vanuatu's parliament and the heads of regional government councils. The parliament, or legislature, is a single-chamber body whose membership has increased several times since independence; in 1998 the parliament had 52 members. Members of parliament are chosen by popular election and serve four-year terms. The parliament chooses from among its members a prime

minister, who serves a four-year term as the head of government and may be reelected indefinitely. The prime minister and a council of ministers that he or she appoints hold executive power. Vanuatu's National Council of Chiefs, a body of traditional chiefs elected by their peers, plays an advisory role in matters concerning land and cultural traditions. All adults in Vanuatu age 18 and older are eligible to vote.

The Supreme Court of Vanuatu holds the highest level of judicial power. The president appoints the chief justice of the court upon the advice of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition. The country also has a court of appeal and magistrate courts that handle local matters. Legislation passed in 1994 replaced Vanuatu's 11 local government councils with 6 provincial bodies that hold greater executive authority than the former councils.

Vanuatu is active in regional affairs. The country is a member of the South Pacific Commission, a body promoting social stability, and the South Pacific Forum, a regional organization concerned with foreign affairs and international trade. Vanuatu also belongs to the Commonwealth of Nations, a voluntary association of countries and territories that give symbolic or actual allegiance to the United Kingdom.

VI HISTORY

Human settlement in present-day Vanuatu dates back at least 4,000 years. Archaeological findings suggest that the first settlers were related to the Melanesian people of the islands to the west of Vanuatu. Polynesians from the central Pacific islands arrived between the 11th and 15th centuries, establishing settlements on the southern islands of Vanuatu. Spanish explorer Pedro de Queirós sighted the islands of Vanuatu in 1606 while searching for a purported southern continent. In 1768 French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville sailed through the islands and landed on several of them. British explorer Captain James Cook arrived in 1774 and began mapping the islands. He named them the New Hebrides after a similarly rugged group of islands off the west coast of Scotland.

More substantial European contact began in 1825, after an Irish seaman discovered sandalwood, valuable in trade with China, on the islands. Despite several violent incidents between Europeans and local residents, the sandalwood trade flourished until the late 1860s, by which time most of the supply had been depleted. In 1839 the first British missionaries arrived in the New Hebrides, and during the 1840s and 1850s missionaries used new Christian converts from the Samoa Islands to establish Christianity, especially Presbyterianism, among the ni-Vanuatu. European settlement on the New Hebrides began in the late 1850s. About this time, European and Australian labor recruiters known as *blackbirders* began to persuade—and in many cases kidnap— Islanders to work on plantations in Australia and on other Pacific islands. The practice of blackbirding continued throughout the 19th century.

By the late 1800s British and French planters had acquired vast tracts of land in the New Hebrides. In order to protect their respective interests and maintain order, Britain and France created a joint naval commission in 1887 composed of naval officers from both countries. However, the commission had no authority to intervene in matters such as land disputes between settlers and native islanders, and thus failed to achieve its purpose. In 1906 the two countries established a unique political body, the British and French Condominium. Each country had authority over its own nationals, and a joint

administration was established to govern non-European islanders. Although the arrangement proved to be cumbersome and largely ineffective, it remained in place until 1980.

Shortly after the United States entered World War II in 1941, American military forces established bases at Port-Vila and Luganville. The visible wealth and power of the Americans, along with the apparent equality among soldiers of different races, undermined the islanders' willingness to obey colonial rule. Many ni-Vanuatu began to feel that the colonial rulers were intentionally denying them the wealth that seemed to exist in the outside world. Several anti-European social and religious movements emerged on the islands after the war ended in 1945.

In the 1960s and 1970s political parties formed in opposition to colonial rule and began working with activists to prevent further sales of land to foreigners. In 1975 the colonial government agreed to the formation of a local legislative body, the Representative Assembly. However, while Britain was eager to rid itself of colonies and thus willing to grant the New Hebrides full independence, France was reluctant to leave. English-speaking and French-speaking islanders became increasingly divided along political lines, and secessionist movements emerged on Espiritu Santo and Tanna. Nevertheless, with military assistance from Papua New Guinea, the New Hebrides' assembly managed to restore order. French, British, and local government officials reached a final independence agreement in mid-July 1980. On July 30 the islands became the sovereign and independent nation of Vanuatu, under a constitution that had been drafted the previous year .

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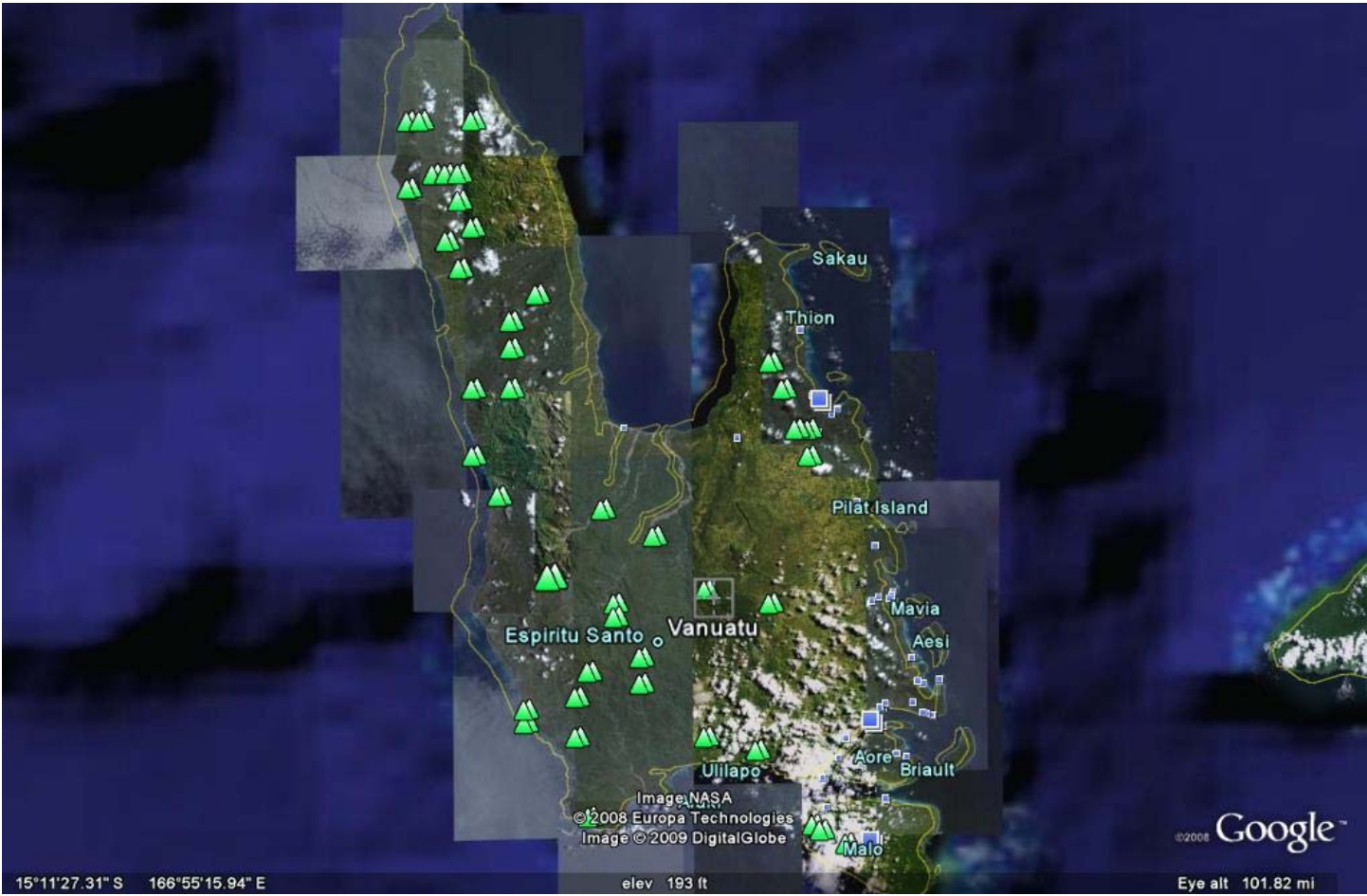


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Traditional Agriculture on Vanuatu

Most of Vanuatu's population engages in subsistence agriculture. Here farmers on Pentecost Island in northern Vanuatu harvest yams, one of Vanuatu's primary food crops.

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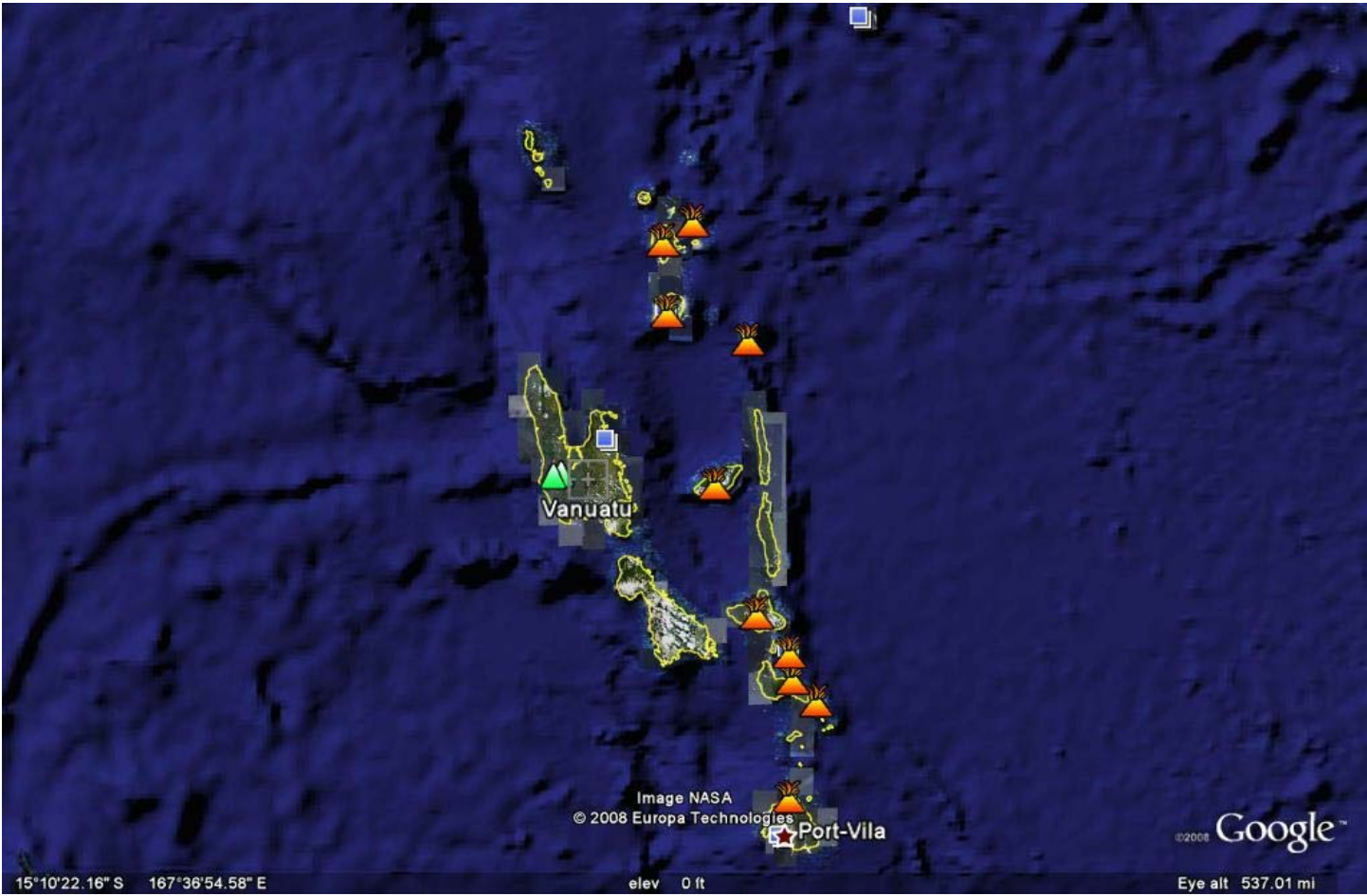


15°11'27.31" S 166°55'15.94" E

elev 193 ft

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Eye alt 101.82 mi



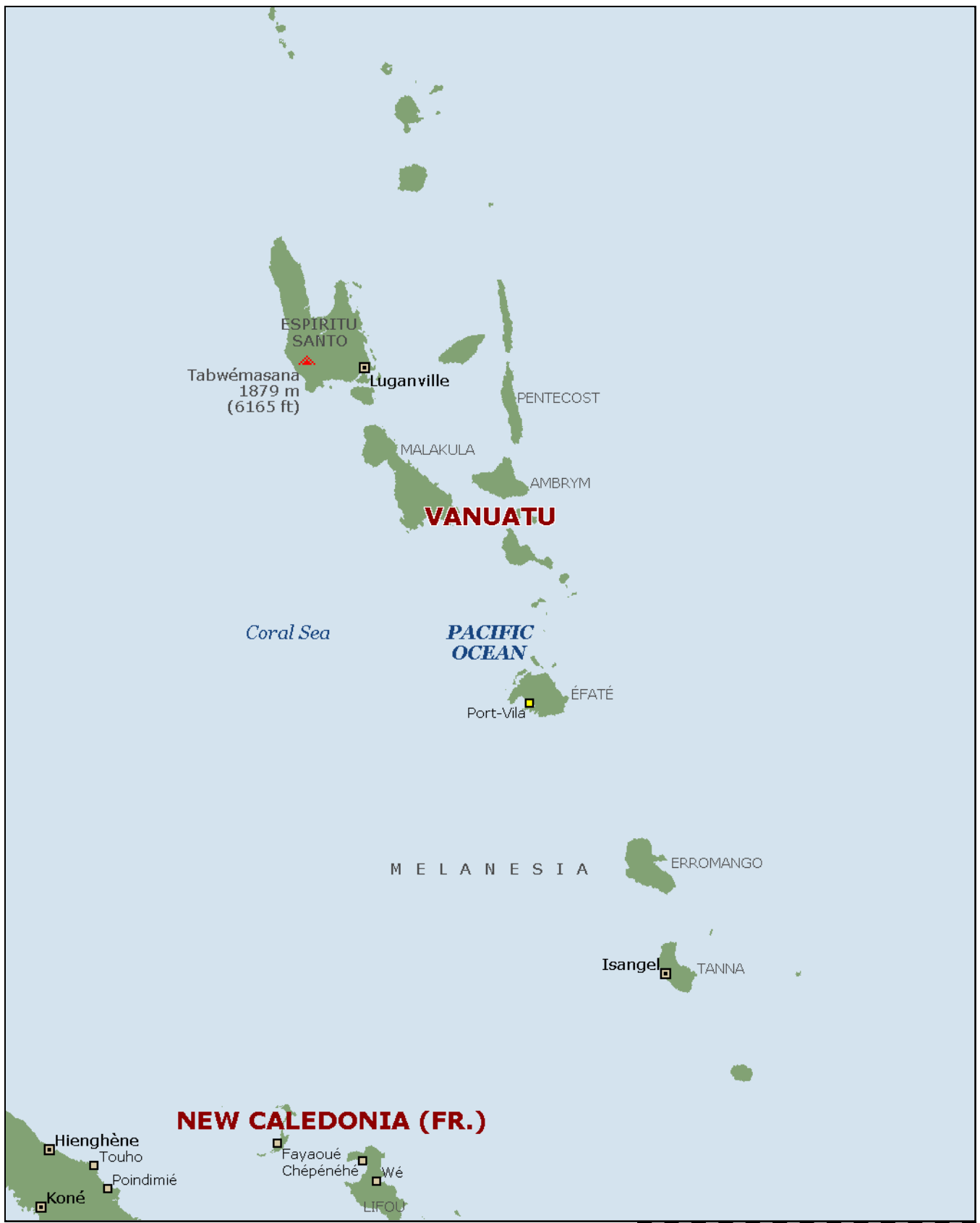
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elev 0 ft

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Vanuatu
Pacific Ocean



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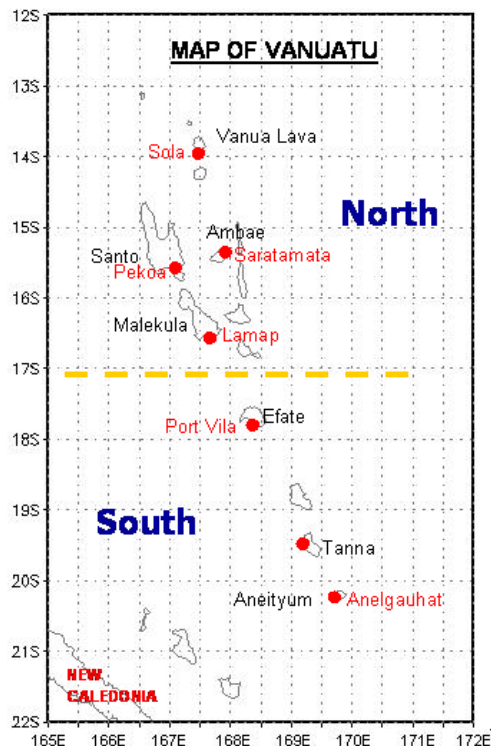
The Climate Of Vanuatu

Introduction

Vanuatu luxuriates in a tropical maritime climate with characteristic uniform temperature, high humidity and variable rainfall. Winds are generally light except during a tropical storm. The climate of Vanuatu can be defined by two main seasons, the *cold (dry) season* from MAY to OCTOBER and the *hot (wet/cyclone) season* from NOVEMBER TO APRIL.

Location

The Y-shaped archipelago of Vanuatu stretches over some 1,300 km in the centre of a quadrangle marked by Fiji (to the east), Australia (west), Solomon Islands (north) and New Caledonia (south). (Cf. Appendix, Figure 1) The 83 islands, of which 65 are inhabited, have a total land area of 12,190 square kilometers. It lies between latitudes 13°S and 21°S and longitudes 165°E and 170°E. Most of the islands that make up the archipelago ranges from atolls to mountainous/volcanic with the highest peak about 1800 meters above mean sea level. Santo Island, the largest island in the chain, possesses the highest peak.



The Vanuatu territory including its marginal seas covers an area of approximately 700,000 square kilometers. The total population of the country is estimated in 2002 to be about 200,000 with an annual growth rate of 3.0% (UNDP, 2004). Approximately 30% of the population lives in urban areas. The remaining 70% lives in rural villages ranging from a few families to several hundred people. Almost 80% of the population lives on seven islands: Efate, where the capital Port Vila is located, Santo, the largest island, Tanna, Malekula, Pentecost, Ambae and Ambrym (Vanuatu Government, 1999).

Time

The time Meridian is 165 degrees East, hence the time zone is Western Standard Time with 0000-hour midnight or 2300 hour Zulu (GMT)

Temperature

Being an equatorial country, Vanuatu has relatively uniform temperature throughout the year. The warmest month is February and the coolest is August. In the coastal areas, daily temperature average 26 °C in the hot season with an average maximum of 30°C and an average minimum of 24 °C. Extreme night-time minimum temperature in some coastal areas may reach 13°C. Port Vila, the capital on the west coast of Efate has an average temperature of 25 °C with August averaging 23 °C and February 27 °C.

Rainfall Distribution

Rainfall is generally higher in the hot season than in the cold season. The seasonal windflow, coupled with the local topographic features determine the rainfall distribution patterns over the country. The predominant southeast wind-flow is often saturated with moisture and contributes to a highly variable rainfall pattern.

Another major mechanism that produces rainfall in Vanuatu in the summer and especially during La Nina years is the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ) that often shifts over Vanuatu.

Orographic rainfall is a common feature on the main Islands. During the wet season, rainfall is particularly high on the windward side (southeast parts) of the bigger islands and scarce during the dry season especially on the leeward sides (northwest part). Rainfall is variable on the smaller islands depending on their location and size

Rainfall on the island of Efate shows this particular pattern. On the windward side, annual rainfall is measured from 2400 mm - 3000 mm and is almost half that amount on the leeward side.

The wettest month in Vanuatu is usually March and the driest month is August.

Afternoon showers are still a common feature of the weather in Vanuatu.

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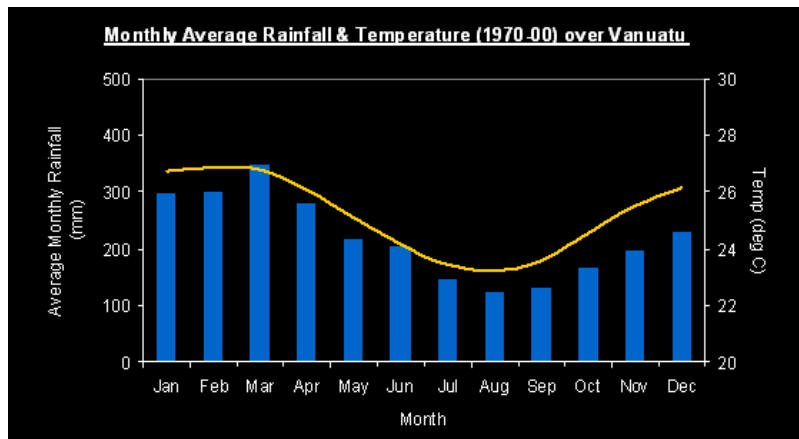
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Winds

The predominant wind flows in any season are the trade winds from the east to southeast at about 5 knots. The wind flow during the summer (November to April) are generally light and variable. In the winter from May to October, the trade southeast wind flows become persistent and averaging at 10 knots.

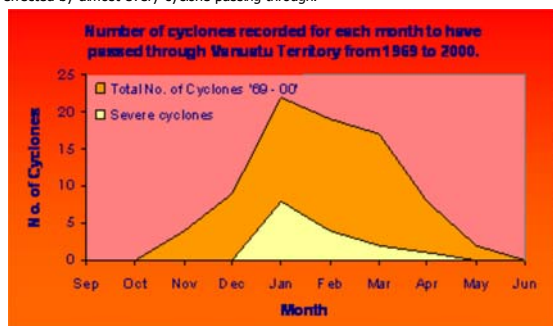
Strong marine wind warnings over open waters are common in the winter season with speeds up to 25 knots. However, tropical cyclone and depression are also common, which can be responsible for high and disastrous winds in the summer.

Tropical Cyclone

The hot or wet season in Vanuatu, which is from November to April, is also known as the cyclone season. The geographical location of the archipelago in the southwest Pacific is on a route occasionally traversed by cyclones, which by definition are associated with winds of at least 34 knots (62 km/hr).

The area of Vanuatu (land and sea) receives about 2-3 cyclones in a cyclone season, and the greatest frequency is in January and February. On average, Vanuatu and its marginal seas is a common route to some 20 to 30 cyclones per decade, with 3 to 5 causing severe damage.

Cyclones are very erratic in their movement therefore often hard to predict, but they generally maintain their southerly movement until about 21 °S to 25 °S when they do a parabolic curve mostly to the east, and dissipate. The archipelago of Vanuatu being small islands grouped together in a north to south distribution are effected by almost every cyclone passing through.



Floods

Floodings are common on low-lying flood plains near rivers especially during tropical cyclones and during La Nina years. Prolonged rainfall during La Nina years often cause severe impacts to crops.

Droughts

Droughts in Vanuatu are related to the El Nino (ENSO – El Nino Southern Oscillation) phenomenon. During El Nino years when the SOI is on a negative phase, rainfall in Vanuatu is generally below average. The latest ENSO episodes, which resulted in dry conditions in Vanuatu, were in 1982/83, 1990/95 and the 1997/98. The worst drought year in Vanuatu was in 1993. However, during a normal year, drought effects can be experienced on rain-shadow areas during the dry season.

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General info

Entity:
Vanuatu
Capital:
Port-Vila
Population (2008-07-01):
215,446 (CIA)
Area:
12,200 sq.km.
Country code:
VU
Region:
Melanesia

Vanuatu

Administrative units

province	capital	area (sq.km.)	population 1989-05-16 census	population 1999-11-16/30 census
Malampa <i>Province</i>	Lakatoro	2,779	28,174	32,705
Penama <i>Province</i>	Longana	1,198	22,281	26,646
Sanma <i>Province</i>	Luganville	4,248	25,542	36,084
Shefa <i>Province</i>	Port Vila	1,455	38,023	54,439
Tafea <i>Province</i>	Isangel	1,628	22,414	29,047
Torba <i>Province</i>	Sola	882	5,985	7,757
total		12,190	142,419	186,678

source: [Vanuatu Statistics Office](#).

Main cities

name	population 1989-05-16 census	population 1999-11-16/30 census
Vila	18,905	29,356
Luganville	6,965	10,738

source: [Vanuatu Statistics Office](#).