

AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

VANUATU COUNTRY BRIEF



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Purpose

The purpose of this Country Brief is to provide information to volunteers across all Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) programs that will assist in the safe and successful completion of volunteer assignments in Vanuatu. The Brief provides information on important contacts, country background and history, cultural considerations, security guidelines, health and medical issues, transport, and other information for daily living in Vanuatu.

Contacts

Australian High Commission, Port Vila

KPMG House
Winston Churchill Avenue
Port Vila
Vanuatu

P. O. Box 111
Port Vila, Vanuatu
Telephone: +678 22 777 (24 Hours)
Facsimile: +678 23 948
Website: <http://www.vanuatu.embassy.gov.au/pvla/home.html>

Opening hours: The High Commission is open from 8am to 4.30 pm Mondays to Fridays except for public holidays.

Emergency Numbers

Police: +678 22222 (Vila) +687 36222 (Santo)

Ambulance: +678 25566 or 22112 (Vila)

Hospital: +678 22100 (Vila) +687 36333 (Santo)

AHI Assist:

24/7 Emergency Hotline: +61 2 9978 6666

Australian Business Volunteers, Policy No: 32089

For other contacts specific to your program please see supplement page at the end of this document.

Country Profile



Land Area: 12 189 km²

Population: 267,694 (2016)

People: Melanesian 98.5%, Europeans, Asian, other Pacific Islanders

Language: Bislama, English, French, 115 indigenous languages in common use. English is widely spoken.

Time: Vanuatu is 11 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), making it the same time as AEDST. Fiji observes daylight saving time during summer.

Climate: Tropical in the north, sub-tropical in the south; wet season (November – April) including cyclone season, dryer season (May - October).

Religion: Predominantly Christian, small minority follow indigenous beliefs

Government: Vanuatu is a republic governed under a constitution which was formed in 1980. The head of state is a president who is elected by secret ballot to serve a five-year term. Executive power is vested in a council of ministers, which consists of a prime minister who is elected by Parliament. Vanuatu has a unicameral 52 member Parliament, elected to a 4 year term by the people.

Prime Minister: Charlot Salwai (2016)

President: HE Mr Baldwin Jacobson Lonsdale

GDP: 867 million (2015 US\$)

GDP per capita: 2,870 (2013 PPP\$)

Currency: Fiji's unit of currency is the Vatu. Current exchange rates can be found at: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Economy: Agriculture provides a living for 65% of the population. Tourism and financial services (Vanuatu is a tax haven), as well as exports of copra, kava, beef, coca and timber provide foreign exchange. There is also a substantial fishing industry and a small light-industry sector. There is no substantial mining activity, and Vanuatu relies on importing machinery, foodstuffs and fuels.

History

The archaeological remains found in Vanuatu indicate that human beings have been living there for approximately 3000 years. It is believed that New Guinean were the first to colonise Vanuatu. Crossing was long and dangerous, especially as the canoes were also used to carry animals and plants (taro, manioc, yam, etc). Other migrations followed and continued for quite some time before people settled down. This included Captain Pedro Ferdinand De Quiros, Louis Antoine de Bougainville and of course, Captain James Cook. By the early 1900s, the French and British had settled in Vanuatu and had signed an agreement making it a Condominium, under joint management by both countries. Vanuatu was used as a US Base in WWII. On July 30th 1980, Vanuatu became an independent nation. There have been various periods of instability in government since independence. Nowadays, all the inhabited islands have their own languages and their own customs and traditions whilst still retaining a British and French flair.

Cultural Considerations



The traditional culture is very important and still very much alive among the Melanesian people. It is not just a matter of rituals, ceremonies and traditions, it is a whole way of life, which governs behaviour and provides interpretations for what occurs. Customs and traditions ensure respect within the communities and are involved in every single major event in village life (marriage, death, circumcision, initiation, passage rites, etc). Where disputes arise, these can be resolved peacefully by exchanging foods, mats and pigs.

The Church is a very influential institution in Vanuatu and it is common to open a meeting with a prayer or to say grace before a meal.

Dress and Appearance

Ni-Van men tend to wear shorts and shirts or t-shirts, sleeveless is only common among younger people, and not in a formal setting. Many Ni-Van women wear an 'island dress' or 'mother hubbard' throughout the year. They are large and billowy, made of bright patterned material. Women in more formal jobs will either wear island dresses or a neat skirt and a shirt.

In the workplace is it best to dress conservatively and to follow the standards set in your particular workplace. For a more formal setting a pair of smart leather sandals, trousers and short-sleeved business shirt (without tie) may be expected for men. Women should wear a cotton shirt (with sleeves), below the knees skirts and sandals or thongs.

Sleeveless tops are usually ok around Vila. If you are swimming off a resort then it is acceptable to wear western style swim wear, preferably not too skimpy. In other places, women are expected to cover up and swimming in a village or beaches round Vila will mean wearing long shorts and a loose covering t-shirt. Board shorts and sun shirts, t-shirts or rash vests are a really good idea. For swimming it is best to have a pair of reef sandals/shoes or diving booties that you can get wet as most swimming spots have a lot of coral or sea urchins, and possibly stone fish, and the risk of cuts and infections is rather high if you go walking in the water barefoot. It is possible to purchase basic reef shoes in Vanuatu for a reasonable price.

The most important advice about clothing is to seek advice about what to wear in the tropics. Clothing that is moisture wicking, breathable and durable is recommended as the climate is hot in most places.

Personal Behaviour

As a visitor to Vanuatu, ABV volunteers should be aware of and respect local culture and customs. Local people are very polite and friendly, and you should ask permission to take photos of local people. In line with the conservative culture you should take care not to wear revealing clothing away from beached and hotels.

As may be common in most places, discussing religious beliefs and party political preferences could be considered insensitive. Be careful with whom you discuss these matters and make sure your relationships are sound enough to engage in this type of dialogue.

While homosexuality is legal in Vanuatu, overt public displays of affection by persons of the same sex could attract attention and may offend in this conservative culture.



Security Risks and Personal Safety

The DFAT Smart Traveller website has up-to-date information regarding travelling in Fiji and current risks to personal safety, and is available at:

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Vanuatu>

ABV volunteers should read this information prior to departure to Vanuatu and check it regularly while in country [subscription to email updates to this page is available on the above link]. Australian citizens must register with Smart Traveller prior to departure (or within one week of arriving in the country) – link to do so is also available on this web page. ABV volunteers are also advised to monitor local media reports while in country to keep abreast of any potential security risks.

Please take note of the following advice for personal safety while in country:

- don't increase your vulnerability by excess alcohol drinking;
- as most crime is opportunistic, consider carrying fewer personal possessions in public, including cash and expensive jewellery/watches;
- try to appear confident and purposeful when moving about, looking fearful and lost can make you look like a soft target and invite an opportunistic crime against you;
- walk, go jogging or take a taxi/bus home with someone else where possible; and
- if walking alone, let someone know your intended destination and estimated arrival time.

The Smart Traveller website link above also has further information which it is useful to become familiar with prior to travel – especially the 'Safety and Security', 'Local Travel', and 'Laws' tabs.

Health and Medical

Health indicators in Vanuatu have improved in recent years. However, further improvement to medical infrastructure and increased trained medical personnel are still key priorities. Malaria continues to present a risk in Vanuatu. Early diagnosis and treatment is improving and infection rates are being lowered by better preventative action such as the use of mosquito nets. In addition to your medical kit from Globe Medical, it is recommended you also take with you: tropical strength insect repellent and sunscreen, betadine, waterproof bandaids, aqua-ear to prevent ear infections and anti-histamines if you have allergies.

Contacts for Medical Facilities:

Hospital +678 22100 (Vila) +687 36333 (Santo)

Dentists (Vila)

South Pacific Smiles Phone 24995 A/H 7744726

Novo Dental Phone 26696 A/H 7726696

Herve Collard Phone 22306 A/H 24381

Doctors (Vila)

Tassiriki Health Centre Phone 23112 emergency room 7100112

Emergency & Specialist Medical Centre (behind port Vila Medical centre)

Dr J. P. King Phone 22219

In an emergency situation, swift contact with your ICM (if applicable) is highly recommended, or for Emergency Medical Assistance contact your emergency assistance provider.

Transport and Accommodation

You will need to get a Special Category Visa to work as a volunteer in Vanuatu. The ICM will have arranged the visa prior to your arrival.. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between Vanuatu and ABV all volunteers are exempt from Residency and Work Permit requirements. This service/stamp is free of charge.

Flying and Airport Information

Bauerfield Airport in Port Vila is the countries main airport. It is located 6km outside of the city and is only a 15 minute car ride away.

Taxis and Public Transport

Buses do not run on set routes or timetables and must be hailed down. After hailing a 12-18 seater “service bus” you could reach your destination either by a direct route or a circuitous voyage. Bus fares are VT150 for any trip in the town centre.

Taxis can be hailed or found at designated taxi ranks. Taxis do not have meters in use, but for very short trips they may only charge you a nominal VT1500. It is best practice to ask for an indicative taxi fare to your destination before you get in.

Air Vanuatu is the domestic airline which can be used for inter-island travel.



Work Travel

All volunteers must advise their Project Manager/ICM of any work/leisure travel in a timely manner, and ensure that any required travel forms are completed prior to the trip. Information required may include:

- date of travel;
- destination and route;
- details of any travel companions; and
- contact details whilst travelling (eg. travel accommodation telephone numbers and mobile telephone details).

Accommodation

ABV volunteers may be accommodated in a hotel, a furnished apartment or a furnished house. All accommodation has been security reviewed against a standard set by ABV. In all cases accommodation will be secure, clean and waterproof with sound walls and floors. The following items are the standard volunteers can expect from their accommodation at their assignment location unless otherwise advised by the ICM or Project Manager:

- Beds with mattress, pillows, sheets and towels;
- Bathroom with running water in the shower or bath and a toilet;
- Air conditioning or ceiling fans;
- Lockable windows with insect screens and curtains;
- Some form of electricity;
- A small refrigerator;
- Table and chair;
- Cooking facilities where available;

Personal items such as international telephone calls, mini bar or room service are the responsibility of the volunteer.

You should be aware of the difference in living standards between a country like Australia and a developing country like Vanuatu. Through our ICM teams, we ensure that accommodation provided is secure and clean, however many facilities taken for granted in Australia – air conditioning, hot water, television, western food - are not a given.

Daily Life



There are Westpac, ANZ, National and BRED Banks in Vanuatu, each with ATMs. The best places for currency exchange is at Goodies in Vila and Santo Sports Club in Santo. It is sometimes difficult to get cash advances on your credit cards. Be mindful of the potential for thieves when you withdraw from ATMs.

WIZARD (GE Money) Clear Advantage Mastercard is a good option with no international withdrawal fees. You can transfer your pay from your Australian bank account into the Mastercard and then withdraw it in Vatu in country. If you have an Australian ANZ or Westpac account you can withdraw money from these banks in Vanuatu using your debit/credit card. However, if you have SMS security set-ups for any internet banking, change this with your bank before you leave, as your Australian mobile number may not work in Vanuatu.

It is recommended that you inform your bank when you will be traveling overseas, and:

- activate internet banking to facilitate transfer of funds between savings and credit card accounts; and
- check on any extra charges associated with withdrawing funds from accounts whilst overseas.

Note that some businesses (restaurants, small stores etc) cannot process EFTPOS/credit card payments unless it is an ANZ or Westpac card. You will have to pay in cash.

Tipping is not expected however, many restaurants and hotels have a Christmas fund where contributions are always welcome.

Business hours are:

- Banks hours: Monday to Friday 9.00 am –4.00pm
- Normal Government Business Hours: Monday to Friday, 7.30 am – 11.30 am / 1.15 pm – 4.30 pm. Private sector tends to work longer hours.

Main public holidays are celebrated as follows:

- | | |
|----------|--------------------|
| • 1 Jan | New Year's Day |
| • 21 Feb | Father Lini Day |
| • 5 Mar | Custom Chief's Day |
| • 2 Apr | Good Friday |
| • 5 Apr | Easter Monday |
| • 1 May | Labour Day |
| • 13 May | Ascension |
| • 24 Jul | Children's Day |
| • 30 Jul | Independence Day |
| • 15 Aug | Assumption |
| • 5 Oct | Constitution Day |
| • 29 Nov | Unity Day |
| • 25 Dec | Christmas Day |
| • 26 Dec | Family Day |

There are extra holidays announced, generally with little notice. Where a public holiday falls on a weekend it is often shifted to either a Friday or Monday. Most of the listed holidays fall at the same time each year.

Electrical current on the national grid is 220 - 240 volts AG 50 Hz, with 2 or 3 pronged Australian plugs being standard.

Telecom Vanuatu and Digicel offer a wide range of voice communications, both in terms of fixed and mobile telephony. If you have an unlocked handset and it is easy to get a SIM card from a supermarket, and Digicel also have a stand at the airport. It is also easy to get a cheap handset if needed.

There are a number of internet cafes in the main street of Vila – Chantilly's restaurant, Nambawan Café and La Tentation. There are also a few places around town with free wifi. Internet connections can be variable. SKYPE works although the quality can be variable in some wifi spots – Google Talk is another option. Definitely consider bringing a laptop if you already have one, so that you don't have to rely purely on computers in internet cafes and the workplace.

You can post an aerogramme for 36c to anywhere in the world. Standard mail takes 7-10 days to reach Australia, sometimes longer, and for around F\$1.60 you can send it International Fast Post (3 days). Surface mail (for packages) is reasonably priced. Sending by air is expensive.

Food. Port Vila has a very large assortment of restaurants catering for all nationalities and tastes details of which may be found in the telephone directory. You can also get a good meal at the Markets. Shopping at the markets for food is cheap and great for seasonal produce. The market is open 24 hours a day except Saturdays and Sundays. Supermarkets stock most items that you are used to in Australia, although at slightly higher prices. It is a good idea to get in the habit of checking use-by dates when shopping for food.

What to bring. Suitable clothing, preferably cotton, for the tropics and sunscreen is a must when visiting Vanuatu. Sunscreen and any cosmetics you need tend to be more expensive so you should consider bringing these from Australia. Also consider bringing books, hobbies, music devices or laptop computer to fill in any spare time you have as you may not have access to what Australians consider usual forms of entertainment. You should consider bringing a surge protection device for any electronic devices you bring and any accessories you need for a laptop, including a good solid carry case. A small torch is useful as streets aren't that well lit.



Previous Volunteer Contacts

The following is a list of volunteers who have recently been on an ABV assignment to Fiji and who have agreed to be contacted to provide information to other volunteers. You should feel free to contact any of these people as first hand practical advice will no doubt assist you in your preparation for your assignment as well as for the country.

Volunteer	Contact Phone/Email
Jennifer Marshallsea	
Bevan Sharp	
John Randall	
Brian Heatherich	
Barrie Hawkins	
Christopher Hinds	
Nancy Lane	
Paulette Tyhuis	

Further Information

The following websites may be useful sources of more information, including tourist information:

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/vanuatu/Pages/vanuatu.aspx>

<http://www.vanuatu.embassy.gov.au/pvla/home.html>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/vanuatu/>

<http://www.vanuatu.travel/>

Language - Basic Bislama and French

English	Bislama	French
Hello	<i>Alo</i>	<i>Bonjour</i>
Goodbye	<i>Tata</i>	<i>Au revoir</i>
Good morning	<i>Gudmorning</i>	<i>Bonjour</i>
Good afternoon	<i>Gudaftenun</i>	<i>Bonjour</i>
Good night	<i>Gudnaet</i>	<i>Bonjour</i>
Please	<i>Plis</i>	<i>S'il vous plait</i>
Thank you (very much)	<i>Tank yu (tumas)</i>	<i>Merci (beaucoup)</i>
You're welcome	<i>I oraet nomo</i>	<i>C'est de rien</i>
Yes	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Oui</i>
No	<i>No</i>	<i>Non</i>
Maybe	<i>Ating/Maet/Mebi</i>	<i>Peut-être</i>
Excuse me	<i>Skiusmi</i>	<i>Excusez-moi/Pardon</i>
I'm sorry	<i>Mi sori tomas</i>	<i>Pardon/Je sius dé/éé</i>
How are you?	<i>Olsem wanem/Yu oraet?</i>	<i>Comment ça va?</i>
I'm fine, thanks	<i>I oraet, tank yu/I gid noma</i>	<i>Ça va bien, merci</i>
I understand	<i>Mi save</i>	<i>Je comprends</i>
I don't understand	<i>Mi no save</i>	<i>Je ne comprends pas</i>
I don't speak	<i>Mi no toktok</i>	<i>Je ne parle pas</i>
Do you speak	<i>Yu toktok</i>	<i>Parlez-vous</i>
English	<i>Engglis</i>	<i>Anglais</i>
Bislama	<i>Bislama</i>	<i>Bichlamar</i>
French	<i>Franis</i>	<i>Français</i>
I want to talk to the Chief/Pastor	<i>Mi wantem toktok long jif/pasta</i>	<i>Je voudrais parler au chef/pasteur</i>
Help!	<i>Help!</i>	<i>Au secours!</i>
Go away!	<i>Gowe!</i>	<i>Allez-vous-en!</i>
Call a Doctor /the Police!	<i>Singaot doctor /polis</i>	<i>Appelez un médecin /la police</i>
What's your name?	<i>Wanem nem blong yu?</i>	<i>Comment vous appelez-vous</i>
My name is	<i>Nem blong mi</i>	<i>Je m'appelle</i>
I'm from	<i>Mi blong</i>	<i>Je viens de/d'</i>
Do you like	<i>Yu ting you likum</i>	<i>..... vous plaît?</i>
I don't like	<i>Mi no likim</i>	<i>..... ne me plaît pas.</i>
Wait a moment	<i>Weit smol</i>	<i>Attendez un moment</i>
It's all right/No problem	<i>I olraet/no problem</i>	<i>Ça vu/Pas de problème</i>
How do I get to	<i>Di mi go kasem</i>	<i>Comment fair pour allera à</i>
Where is	<i>Olsem wanem?</i>	<i>Où est</i>
Bank	<i>Wea ples</i>	<i>Où est</i>
Hospital/clinic	<i>bang</i>	<i>la banque</i>
Store	<i>hospital/klinik/haos meresin</i>	<i>l'hôpital/le centre medical</i>
Market	<i>stoa</i>	<i>le magasin</i>
Post Office	<i>maket</i>	<i>le marché</i>
Church	<i>post ofis</i>	<i>la poste</i>
Where are the public toilets?	<i>joj</i>	<i>l'église</i>
I'm a vegetarian	<i>Wea ples I pablik tolet/ Klosis/smolhaous</i>	<i>Où sont les toilettes?</i>
I don't eat	<i>Mi no kakae mit</i>	<i>Jes suis vegetarian/ienne</i>
	<i>Mi no kakae</i>	<i>Je ne mange pas de/d'</i>

AVID Program Supplement

In Country Manager

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ABV

Canberra Office: +61 2 6151 9999

Project Manager: Farhana Rahman, +61 2 6151 9902

Travel Policy

Please see additional procedures for travel at 'AVID Program Travel Guidelines for ABV Volunteers'

Security Plan

ABV volunteers undertaking assignments under the AVID program are required to complete a 'Personal Safety and Security Plan' upon arrival in country. Details of this plan, including the proforma are available in Scope Global's PNG Country Safety and Security Plan.

ADB Partnership Supplement

ABV

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Project Manager: Jack Collins, +61 2 6151 9905