



Expedition Vanuatu: Volcanoes and Tribes

Duration:

14 Days on location (Day 1: Arrival in Port Vila)

Difficulty:

Hikes of 3-6 hours' length through humid rainforest and volcanic deserts (with daypack only, porters will carry the main luggage). Spartan living conditions, accommodation in basic guesthouses and camping in tents. Close immersion into the exotic Vanuatu with its hospital people. Remember: When the level of comfort is low, the level of adventure is high. ☺

Participants:

Max 12 participants

Price:

3190€ Euro, Discounts for returning customers

Included: All accommodation, all meals, all purified water, all domestic flights, guides (German/ English/ French/ Bislama), all entry fees, scientific lectures/ explanations and professional photo workshop.

Not included: International flights, soft drinks and alcohol, tips and souvenirs

Highlights: See the world's only place with four active lava lakes, abseil into one crater, camp inside the volcano, meet different tribal groups on different islands, step back in time with tribal people wearing grass-skirt and penis wrappings.

Scientific lectures/explanations + professional photo workshop included





We'd like to emphasize that this is an expedition. Vanuatu seems to be an easy country to travel to and its people are very friendly, selected as the happiest people on the planet. The climate is usually pleasant, but on top of an active volcano, everything can be very different. Away from the beaten paths, Vanuatu can be tricky. Therefore, please, be prepared that this is a real adventure! We have the unique opportunity not only to see one of the most amazing landscapes on earth, but also to live closely with indigenous tribes, which know and trust Ulla Lohmann, photographer and filmmaker, since 1998. You'll benefit from her experiences, gained in over 20 voyages during the past 15 year, totalling in over 2 years stay in Vanuatu. Basti Hofmann, climbing instructor and Alpinist with over 20 years of experience in the mountains, will also take care of you, especially whilst abseiling into the volcano. He is a studied Geologist and knows the volcanos of Vanuatu very well. Over the past 5 years, he has spent more then 5 months just inside the Caldera of Ambrym.

We are excited to share our exotic "home-away-from-home", with amazingly friendly people, traditional customs, breathtaking altitude rain forests, giant Banyan trees, the vastness of a volcanic landscape, and the only place on earth with four active lava lakes with you!!!
Enjoy reading and dreaming...



Our journey is divided in a stay on Ambrym, with the active volcanoes Benbow (1160 m) and Marum (1270 m). They feature a lava lake, almost always present. Niri Membelsu Taten and Niri Membelsu, two small craters, sometimes display a lava lake or show explosive activity. For 4 nights, the caldera will be our base, the rest of the time; we will stay in tiny villages sharing traditional life style far away from civilisation. The second week, we'll spend on Tanna Island at the foot of the Yasur volcano, one of the world's most active volcanoes with a legendary strombolian activity: In 1774, it showed Captain Cook the way to the island. On Tanna, we'll step back in the stone age in a traditional village and we'll visit the world's last active cargo cult- a tribe who who believes the Americans are Gods. Slight program changes might occur, and it's not guaranteed that both guides are available at all times. A knowledgeable and fun local guide will replace one of them if needed.



DAY 1

Arrival in Port Vila, Vanuatu

You will be picked up at the airport, either by us or by our appointed transport.

Transport to Port Vila and check into Hotel Vanuatu Holiday (www.vanuatuholidayhotel.com), a clean hotel close to the city centre, situated in lush tropical garden with swimming pool. Free afternoon, possibility to buy snacks for Ambrym at the supermarkets in Port Vila (5min walk from the hotel, western food choices, like muesli bars, dried fruits...). Meeting at 18.30h at the hotel reception for early dinner at a nearby restaurant.

O/N hotel with hot showers

DAY 2

Flight from Port Vila to Ambrym Island.

Drive with 4x4 to our village (1 hour), where we'll pitch the tents in Jimmy's garden under palm trees. Jimmy will be our main guide for the next days. Tour of the village and possibility to swim in the ocean (Black sand beach), Assessment of the weather.

Sumptuous dinner with local food made by Jimmy's family and friends. All local women help, everyone provides a different dish.

O/N tent

The program for the next days depends on the weather and can be altered!

If the weather is bad and if it is raining on top of the volcano, we'll spend an extra day at the beginning in the village with Jimmy and his family (visit of the school, learning how to make copra, visiting cocoa plantations, learning how to surf the waves « local method », have a traditional kava ceremony...)

DAY 3

Early morning: Meeting of the porters (1 porter per person, carries 15 kg in your bag pack, please- no suit cases!).

Four hours hike up the mountain (700m altitude gain) with lunch break (snack).

Arrival at the base camp inside the volcanic caldera, Installation of the tents.

The porters return to the village; our guides will remain with us.

Afternoon: Optional hike to Benbow (1.5 hour) or Marum (2 hours), depending on conditions of the volcanoes and of the weather.

Dinner

O/N tent

DAY 4

Hike to Marum (2 hours from the Base camp).

On the way, we stop to observe the craters Niri Membelsu and Niri Membelsu Niritatem.

Niri Membelsu is a side crater to Marum and also has an active lava lake.

We arrive at Marum, who features a permanent lava lake.

We stay there until dark, not to miss the amazing photo opportunities, and return with the moon light to the base camp.

Breakfast and dinner at the camp, lunch (snack) on the volcano

O/N tent



DAY 5

Hike to Benbow (1,5 hours from Base Camp) with its lava lake of 40-50 m diameter. The lake can only be seen from the first terrace. Therefore, if the conditions permit, we will descend 200m into the crater, protected with ropes. You will be wearing a climbing harness, helmet and gas mask. No previous knowledge required.

We stay there until dark, not to miss the amazing photo opportunities, and return with the moon light to the base camp.

Breakfast and dinner at the camp, lunch (snack) on the volcano

O/N tent

DAY 6

Day to discover the caldera.

Hike through a small palm tree forest with orchids to a historic lava flow with small lava tubes (1 hour). If you wish, we can abseil down (50m) to explore the geological features.

Depending on the weather conditions, we can return in the afternoon to the Marum, Benbow or Niri Membelesu.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner at the camp

O/N tents

Day 7

We traverse the caldera by foot through spectacular landscape and descend on the other side of the island. We overnight in the village from our second guide. The children will be there to greet us, and the family will prepare a nice meal.

Possibility to swim in the ocean and to have cold water showers. Opportunity to wash the clothes or to give them for washing to the girls (at a small extra charge).

Camping in the tents with the sound of the waves.

O/N tents



DAY 8

Spare day to allow for bad weather and to experience the real village life.

Relax in the village! We will visit the village, learn about copra, cava and carving and visit a coconut plantation. We will witness an impressive local dance- and learn all about it. In the evening, there is a small feast and you can try traditional kava.

O/N tents

DAY 9

Drive to the airport, flight to Port Vila, short stopover at the airport for lunch, Flight to Tanna. Transfer in 4x4 to our accommodation. Ascent of the volcano at night (with 4x4, 10min hike to the rim). Breathtaking fireworks of Yasur volcano almost 100% guaranteed! Drive or Hike back (30min) to the guest house, Dinner.

Opportunity to recharge batteries (we have electricity through generator every night).

O/N Guest house, with cold water showers and real toilets (Shared facilities)

DAY 10

Day at the Beach! 4x4 drive to Port Resolution for a delicious lunch at the beach. Swim and relax at the beautiful white sand beach (Feel free to bring a mask and snorkel).

Return in 4x4 and drive to Yasur Volcano in the afternoon. 10min walk to the top.

Observations at night. If the situation permits, we will hike around the crater (1 hour) and descent in the ash plane in the dark. Hike back (30min), dinner.

O/N Guesthouse, with cold water showers and real toilets (Shared facilities)



DAY 11

Visit of a custom village, where we will learn about the traditional life, how to plant vegetables, how to care for Kava, and where we will see a wonderful custom dance with the volcano as back drop. At sundown, we will have a traditional Kava (local drug: Grinded root of a plant), which the tribal elders use to talk to the spirits.

Visit of the volcano in the evening to witness its spectacular eruptions from another point of view . 45min hike to the top, and 30min hike down.

O/N Guesthouse, with cold water showers and real toilets (Shared facilities)

DAY 12

Hike through the Ash Plane, and observations of its geological features with explanations from Basti. Continuation to the custom village of John Frum (together 1,5 hours): A tribe, which prays to the Americans as gods. Chief Issak Wan explains why, and how he talks to the volcano.

Option 1: Spend the rest of the day in the village, and witness the Friday night ceremony, where people dance themselves in trance and pray all night long to their god.

The men will have a kava with the other men, and the women can help preparing the food or have a swim in the nearby hot springs. Hike back to Jungle Oasis (1,5 hours)

Option 2: Hike back to Guesthouse, and ascension of the Volcano (2,15 hours). Observations at night. Late Dinner.

O/N Guesthouse, with cold water showers and real toilets (Shared facilities)



DAY 13

If conditions permit, optional to ascent the volcano a last time by foot in the early morning to watch the sunrise (45min hike up and 30min hike down). Drive to Whitegrass airport.

Flight from Tanna to Port Vila.

Transfer to the hotel.

Dinner to celebrate our return into civilisation and an eventful expedition.

O/N Port Vila, Hotel with hot water shower

DAY 14

Flight back to your final destination

We look forward to an exciting trip together! Hopefully until soon,
Ulla + Basti



Ulla Lohmann

Film- and Photojournalist with BSc in Natural Resource Management, Works amongst others for National Geographic, GEO, BBC, Discovery...



Basti Hofmann

Climbing instructor, logistics manager and studied geologist, Alpinist with over 20 years of experience and passionate photographer (Macro and Drone Photography).