

Real Estate in Vanuatu South Pacific

By Escapeartist Staff / Feb 12 • Categorized as [International Real Estate](#)

Escapeartist would like to introduce its readers to the beautiful country of Vanuatu in the South Pacific. Vanuatu is an emerging growth destination, which is now in the process of opening up to the rest of the World. Several factors make Vanuatu an ideal place to visit and invest in and in our interview with a prominent Vanuatu businessman I think you will see why Escapeartist has selected Vanuatu as one of the best destinations in the world for your retirement, business activities and investments.

Tripping into Paradise

We interviewed Richard Butler who has over 35 years of property development experience in Australia and New Zealand. Mr. Butler's first visit to Vanuatu was in February 2008, just prior to the beginning of the current global credit crisis. He was marketing and selling luxury resort and residential developments for \$1-3 million for two and three-bedroom luxury apartments on the Queensland coast of Australia and he knew the end was near.

"The result of these million dollar prices for concrete boxes had placed an enormous price increase of 20 to 25% per annum over 50 to 60 months. It has been said in recent Property Reports that any growth of 4 x 20% is heading for leveling in demand."

Richard Butler reports; "I could see the beginning of the tightening of credit market and the plateau of property values throughout Australia and New Zealand, which is now confirmed through the media to the general public in Australia. It had all the same signs as the credit crunch of the 1980's."

"I decided seek out and identify property developments to market that were going provide a faster recovery and higher return for my clients."

The two major driving factors that led Richard to Vanuatu were:

1. The increase in property values in Australia was making the affordability and finance of these property developments difficult to sustain not only for the customer, but the developer as well.
2. The incredible amount of Federal Government and State and local Government red tape that was driving the price of the developments sky high.

Vanuatu is an emerging growth Nation which has gone unnoticed until now. The Republic of Vanuatu, recently passed The Strata Title Act in 2005, which has been a major game changer. Before the act passed you had to be a native of The Republic of Vanuatu to own land in Vanuatu. The Strata Title Act is a very important key that opened up the market for international property investors in Vanuatu. Now foreigners can own land in this beautiful paradise.

Here are three reasons to seriously consider investing in Vanuatu:

1. The introduction of the new Strata Title Act in 2005 was recommended by the World Trade Organisation. The passing of The Strata Title Act is part of the first steps for Vanuatu to open up and increase its' major income earning industry which is Tourism. In Vanuatu Tourism amounts to 75% of the country's GDP. The balance is cattle, timber and seafood which cover the remaining 25%.

When Mr. Butler heard about the passing of the Strata Act he and another Director Mr. Keith Waewick made a beeline to Vanuatu to meet with a Solicitor that drafted the act to find out the 'inside' details. The Solicitor, Robert Herd is now on the board of advisors for Mr. Butler's developments. As in any country, it is good to know the right people...who know.

2. Virgin airlines introduced Virgin Blue (cheap flights) to Australia and New Zealand and then opened flights to the Pacific Islands which provided up access and increased tourism to Vanuatu. This opened up the opportunity for inexpensive holidays that Mr. Butler calls 'Pacific Paradise'. He fell in love with Vanuatu on the first day, as most people do when meeting the natural beauty of the Vanuatu Paradise.

3. The relaxed lifestyle. In 2008 Mr. Butler's first experience, other than the fantastic staff friendly cabin crew in flight direct from Sydney, was being entertained at Vila Airport by five Vanuatu native men in a string band, using an empty tea chest with pole and a string being plucked as their base. Flowered shirts and head bands and around their necks were flowered leis' (garlands). He states, "their singing was in perfect harmony and I recognised the song, It was the classic hit 'Pearly Shells'".

"He was then driven with Robert Herd, The Strata Title Solicitor, to Breakas Resort at Pango Beach, where he was introduced to George Winslett, a male version, of the famous bloody Mary of Tahiti. Mr. Winslett, the developer and owner of Breakas Beachfront Resort. He described the beachfront buildings as 'upmarket tribal bungalows', stretched along 1.5 km of beach front.

This beachfront Development has now grown to 49 one-bedroom Bungalows and 17 three-bedroom beach front Bungalows, which show high occupancy and are rented between \$270 a night for the one-bedroom fares (local name for the Bungalow), to as high as \$1,350 a night for the three-bedroom Bungalows. Upon arrival at Breakas he was immediately ushered past the 'horizon pool' and beach front restaurant, down to a one-bedroom beach front fare.... "we settled in and headed to the Bar for

a welcome cocktail”.

The rest is history – Please request our Investors Guide to Vanuatu and hear the rest of Mr. Butler’s story and how you can participate in this paradise.

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Living in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

Vanuatu is located in the [South Pacific](#) and is a Y-shaped archipelago consisting of more than 80 distinct, beautiful islands that cover over 12,000 square kilometers. Voted "The Happiest Place on Earth" in 2006, the islands are enchanted with beautiful white sandy beaches, magnificent sunny weather, stunning

active volcanoes, as well as a variety of indigenous cultures that are always looking to share their traditions with the locals. Not only is it one of the most culturally diverse places on earth, but it is quickly becoming a primary location to move to from all around the world. In the last few years, the expat community has grown rapidly as more people, anywhere from mid-twenties to retirement age, come to discover the beauty and magnificence that is Vanuatu. Most people opt to live on the islands of Efate and Espiritu Santo. For those who decide to live in Vanuatu, the world is at their fingertips.

The Definition of Paradise

Dining and Entertainment

Vanuatu is filled with a number of restaurants, all offering some of the best in local cuisine as well as international fare, such as Asian, Indian, and Australian inspired meals. As well, the country's historical ties with France are evident in the number of French restaurants and cafes around the islands. Vanuatu takes food extremely serious – aside from fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh seafood, and local beef, there is foie gras, escargot, and extremely appetizing desserts.

Port Vila on Efate is known for its nightlife, having some of the best clubs and bars found anywhere in Vanuatu. It is possible for locals and visitors to mix and mingle at a local pub or discotheque. Vanuatu is also extremely rich in various cultural festivities that cannot be found anywhere else. This includes the death defying Pentecost Land Dive and the Tanna Toka Dance, which is known to go on for many days. There is also the mystical Rom Dance of Ambrym island of magic and fire, and the Water Music Custom Festival performed by the women who live on Gaua Island. Those who live in Vanuatu are able to take part in these amazing experiences and witness some of the most amazing rituals and cultural festivities.

Sports

Sports are highly indulged in throughout Vanuatu. The locals love basketball and soccer and they are the most frequently played sports. Vanuatu has two soccer clubs – Nadi F.C. and Tafea F.C. Most soccer matches are held at Korman Stadium and both teams participate in the Vanuatu Premia Divisen Competition.

Vanuatu has a national rugby team and a national cricket team that locals and visitors alike love to see play at every chance possible. Vanuatu plays Australian rules rugby and has their own rugby union. To bring a bit of imported culture in, the Brisbane Broncos from Australia routinely come to play rugby. The cricket season in Vanuatu is played from April until October. Since 1995, when Vanuatu was admitted into the International Cricket Council as an affiliate member, the popularity of the game has grown, allowing the country to host a number of events and make into the ICC World Cricket League competition.

Education in Vanuatu

In Port Vila, where many expats choose to live in Vanuatu, there are no free public schools. A majority of the local Ni Vanuatu children do not continue their education much beyond primary school. There is the Port Vila International School which provides local expat families with a great education until grade ten. The education is based on the curriculum from Australian schools. Children can receive senior school education through distance learning, but many families choose to send their children to boarding schools in Australia and New Zealand to finish off their education. After done with secondary school, there is the University of the South Pacific in Port Vila, which is co-owned by twelve countries in the Pacific, as well as the Australia-Pacific Technical College School of Tourism and Hospitality and Health and Community Services.

Country Clubs and Resorts for the Adults

While the kids are at school, the adults can enjoy some rest and relaxation at the many country clubs and resorts available in Vanuatu. One of the best adult-only resorts is the Breakas Beach Resort in Port Vila. Located along a two kilometer private beach, it is the perfect location for some rest and relaxation, including dining options, a cooking tour, day spa, and anything else.

Vanuatu also has a number of golf and country club locations. There are a number of courses around Port Vila and Luganville. The Port Vila Country Club is the most professional course in the entire island nation and host to the PGA Vanuatu Open. These golf courses are uniquely designed as to not disturb the beautiful local flora. Individuals can take their time swinging amidst beautiful palm trees. It is the most idyllic tropical setting one could expect for playing a round of golf in a Pacific Island paradise.

Enjoying the Crystal Clear Blue Water of the South Pacific

As an island nation, the primary thing Vanuatu is known for is its beautiful water that is crystal clear and always inviting. Scuba divers, for example, come in from all around the world to enjoy the amazing visibility underneath the South Pacific water and take part in some world-class dive sites, including wreck diving off of Santo Island to see the SS President Coolidge and swim along old corridors and stairwells. This 22,000 ton luxury liner that was converted into a troop ship is the largest wreck

dive in the world and not far from the beach.

Aside from scuba diving, individuals can go on fishing charters for a few hours a day and sightseeing trips. Many want to test their fishing skills against the fish of the South Pacific, including Marlin, Mahi Mahi, Albacore, and Wahoo. The water surrounding Vanuatu is also known as a great place to enjoy various water sports, including surfing around the harbor, water ball walking, jet rides, tube rides, ocean kayaking, catamaran, and numerous other options.

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Moving to Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

Vanuatu is probably one of very few places on the map where individuals can enter into a beautiful ancient culture, get in touch with their roots, and make connections with the natural world while feeling comfortable and safe all at the same time. Peace, security, scenic natural splendor, magnificent cultural

opportunities, and a sense of wonder and amazement – these are just a few of the reasons why people from all around the globe come to settle in the South Pacific island nation of [Vanuatu](#). The feelings of culture and community extend very far and the native people, the ni-Vanuatu, offer friendliness and peace to all residents and visitors. Today, many people are making a move to this stunning island nation and enjoying everything it has to offer.

Can you Survive in Paradise

Why People Opt to Move to Vanuatu

Vanuatu is a tropical island nation paradise that offers a beautiful and consistent temperature all throughout the year. The coastline is environmentally protected to maintain biodiversity of all the magnificent rainforests and lagoons. There are large areas that remain unpopulated, especially around some of the still active volcanoes in the area. It is really one of the very last in truly spectacular locations around the globe. The pristine white sandy beaches stretch to eternity and are lapped by turquoise-hued seas of bays and inlets. It is less than three hours by plane to Auckland, Brisbane, or Sydney, Australia, and it takes less than ten hours to get to any of the major cities along the Pacific Rim.

Many investors choose to move to Vanuatu to do business because of all the benefits the country has to offer in that area of the world. Vanuatu does not sustain the social and political problems that have ravaged some of the other South Pacific nations, like the Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, and the country does not have colonialist or ethnic problems, unlike New Caledonia and Fiji, which are the closest tourism sector competitors to Vanuatu. The rate of crime is very low and terrorism is a foreign concept. The government is very much for foreign direct investment and has made it easy by streamlining customs and immigration procedures as well as the foreign investment board. There is no income tax, no foreign exchange control, a stable government, and low costs of labor.

Many people who make the decision to move to Vanuatu are looking for a natural atmosphere filled with rest and relaxation, along with friendly people, in the middle of the South Pacific. They are looking to absorb the culture, the lifestyle, as well as the adventure the island nation has to offer. It is a place where the living is quite easy, there are no hassles, and the hustle and bustle of the crazy, hectic world is far behind.

Knowing the Facts before you Move

Before moving to Vanuatu, it is essential to do all research to ensure full preparedness for the relocation process. For instance, the Vanuatu Customs Act provides the opportunity to bring personal furniture and electrical appliances into the country free of VAT (value added tax) and duty, if they have been owned for longer than one year. Individuals may have to provide proof of length of ownership, such as a receipt with the date of purchase. The act also permits individuals to import a mode of transportation, such as a car, motorcycle, motorbike, water borne craft, or even an airplane or helicopter. Much like personal effects, these must be owned for at least one year. All other personal items, such as clothes and liens are duty free. But they do need to be packed well and inventory. There is a chance that the Customs Department may require a physical examination of the box. To ensure protection, expensive personal goods, like clothing and shoes, should be placed in plastic bags and family heirlooms and jewelry should not be packed into the personal effects.

Bringing in a pet can be expensive but not a major quarantine or logistical problem. Pets may be brought in only from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia because they are rabies free countries. All other countries need to contact the Vanuatu Quarantine and Inspection Service to show proper documentation, including a Veterinary Certificate regarding vaccinations and treatments, as well as an Import Application. The service must also be notified 24 hours before arrival. If all requirements are met, there is no need to quarantine the pet.

Selecting a Relocation Service

Once a decision is made to move to Vanuatu, either for retirement purposes, investment opportunity purposes, or just to gain access to a fun adventure, it is necessary to look for an overseas relocation service. Individuals want the best service that can properly handle their effects. Do some research online and look for overseas relocation services that have necessary licenses for export and import. Obtain a few quotes and read over everything, including the fine print so there are no hidden surprises the day of the move. Also check out the reputation of the overseas relocation service by asking for referrals and testimonials from any past clients. Lastly it is extremely important that the overseas relocation service know all the nuances in regards to shipping to Vanuatu, such as how the import procedure works, how to properly inventory all items, and so on and so forth. No one wants to be stuck at customs in Vanuatu with a relocation service that has little knowledge about how customs in Vanuatu works.

In Conclusion...

In 2006, Vanuatu was voted as "The Happiest Place on Earth," and it is extremely true. Vanuatu wants people to come in and explore and discover what this beautiful island nation has to offer. It is an adventure enthusiast's paradise and a primary

location for investment in today's economic climate. With beautiful beaches, amazing multicultural cuisine, swaying palm trees lining magnificent places, individuals can easily come to any one of the 83 islands that makes up Vanuatu and forget that the rest of the world exists.

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Technology in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

While many often desire to be free of technology on a vacation, tourists and residents alike appreciate the varied technology found throughout Vanuatu. Though most of the islands are covered with beautiful rainforests or remain uninhabited, there are the plenty of technological services and opportunities for those who need it. Whether you want to share emails or photos of your island adventures to friends and family back home, or you want to spend an undetermined amount of time in the major city of Port Vila to live and do business, Internet and phone access are required for such needs.

Run Your Business from the Beach

For tourists staying at any number of the hotels and resorts, it is important that you pack the necessary adapters with you – otherwise, you will not be able to plug in your laptop or cell phone charger to the electrical outlets. In Vanuatu, the electrical current is 220V to 240V, 50Hz AC and requires the use of Australian-style plugs in order to connect to electricity. For tourists coming to Vanuatu from other parts of the world, especially the United States, it is important not to use appliances that run on a 100 to 125 volt range in these types of outlets, or else the appliances will become severely damaged and might even create a fire danger. Protect your appliances and property by purchasing the proper plugs or appliance converters prior to visiting Vanuatu.

Cell phone usage has drastically risen in the past few years, but Vanuatu is still new to the surge in use and popularity. In 2008, Vanuatu experienced the addition of a telecommunication company to the islands, creating competition for the first time in the industry of this type of technology. Telecom Vanuatu Limited offers mobile, landline and High Speed Internet services to the residents and businesses found through the islands of Vanuatu.

Mobile services include:

- International calling rates
- Prepaid and postpaid plans
- Roaming service

Landline services include:

- International calling rates
- Telecard – Allows you to use TVL public phones throughout Vanuatu using the Telecard, making it easy and convenient for you to make calls whenever you need to.

Internet services include:

- ADSL – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, which is high-speed Internet accessed through telephone lines in urban areas. This service prevents the need for waiting to be connected to the Internet, and allows you to use the Internet and phone at the same time, which is ideal for businesses or family homes.
- WIMAX – Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access, which is a wireless connection that provides high-speed Internet access. This type of access needs the use of a tower to transmit signals from the tower to your modem.
- Dial-Up – Should WIMAX or ADSL options not be available in the area in which you are visiting, dial-up is a viable option in order to use the computer or laptop. The downside to using dial-up is you need to connect to the Internet each time you want to log on, and telephone use is not available when the line is being used for the computer.

A competing telecommunication company, Digicel Vanuatu, also provides mobile cell phone service to the residents of Vanuatu. Services from the company include:

- Prepaid and post paid plans and services
- Top of the line cell phones, including Blackberry, Samsung and Motorola
- Roaming and International rates

To help those in remote areas, Digicel Vanuatu offers customers the option of a “Kredit Mi – Kredit U” service, which allows customers to purchase and transfer credit to the mobile phone with a simple text message. Understanding the needs of the customer, especially those without transportation or access to stores in order to refill phone use, allows even those in sparsely populated areas to enjoy the use and convenience of technology.

These two companies offer residents and visitors many options when it comes to connecting Vanuatu with the rest of the world, whether it is for business or staying in touch with loved ones, and the competition between the two improve all-around customer service and sales for the island’s residents.

While cell phone coverage is new and available throughout most of Vanuatu, Internet use and availability has grown over the

years. Internet cafes may be found throughout Port Vila, especially down the main Lini Highway, and many of the hotels around Port Vila and the islands offer guests the use of wireless Internet access, or provide the use of terminals so guests can check personal email or send messages out to friends and family back home. The use of wireless Internet through the hotel or resort is the perfect option should you not have an appropriate adapter for your laptop while on vacation.

Since Vanuatu is still relatively new to the world of mobile phones and high-speed Internet, there are many opportunities for telecommunication companies to come to Vanuatu and enhance services for residents and visitors of the island. Deregulation of the ISP, or internet service provider space, allows more advances to be made in terms of technology.

International businesses will find that the growth in Vanuatu will provide many services and amenities needed for expansion. Information Technology companies, many of whom have expanded to neighboring islands in the South Pacific, find Vanuatu to be on the cusp of expansion within the next few years. Currently, the lack of competition in the market allows companies to increase revenue while improving services and amenities for the residents of Vanuatu.

Though many will still want to travel to the breathtaking islands of Vanuatu to escape a hectic everyday life, residents and tourists do not have to feel isolated from the rest of the world. Vanuatu is ripe with opportunities ranging in various industries, including technology and telecommunications. Its close setting to Australia offers investors and international companies a prime location to establish new branches or offices, which in turn enhance the economy of the country, as well as bring in new business and increase job opportunities for residents to improve their quality of living.

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Investing in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Asset Protection](#)

Vanuatu is a beautiful, Y-shaped archipelago that consists of 83 islands and covers more than 12,000 square kilometers. It is located approximately 1,700 kilometers east of the Australian coastline. In 2006, Vanuatu was voted "The Happiest Place on Earth," because of its amazing white sandy beaches, beautiful volcanoes that are still active today, untouched lagoons and rainforests, consistent sunny weather, and a large abundance of various indigenous cultures, making it one of the most culturally diverse countries found anywhere on the globe. Combine that with no foreign exchange control, no income tax, as well as an independent judiciary, and Vanuatu becomes the premier location for investment right in the center of the South Pacific. Not only that, but current social and political problems occurring on other South Pacific islands, such as Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea have turned investors toward Vanuatu as a highly viable alternative.

Count Your Sand Dollars

A Bit about the Benefits of Investing in Vanuatu

Vanuatu boasts a very beneficial tax regime which is further enhanced by a number of unique features when compared with other finance centers. First of all, there is no income tax throughout all of Vanuatu. This includes exchange controls, death duties, withholding tax, and capital gains tax. Money can be easily transferred into any of the major currencies. The financial center in the country has been in existence for just about forty years. With a strong infrastructure of established trust companies, accountants, banks, and lawyers, it provides the opportunity to investors to receive top quality, reliable service right on the spot.

The country also has a democratically elected government that is strongly dedicated to promoting new investments and assisting large investments in many pursuits as much as possible. Recently, the government passed the Strata Titled Act to make it much easier for investors to invest in the country and receive a reasonable chance of a positive return. The government has also streamlined customs, immigration procedures, and the foreign investment board to ensure all formalities regarding investing and residency are painless. Vanuatu's government is extremely pro foreign direct investment and offers low labor costs. The government is very interested in investment opportunities in the industries of timber products, forestry, fishing, agriculture, and tourism. Tourism is one of the largest industries to invest in throughout Vanuatu. Now that the country is established as a very attractive tourist destination for people all around the world, there is much potential in the way of quick growth. It is a primary holiday destination for those looking for a bit of rest and relaxation. There are a number of funds that have been created to aid in the promotion as well as development of the tourism industry.

Here are some other great benefits associated with investing in Vanuatu:

- Investors do not need to be a resident of the country or have employment to purchase residential or commercial property and then generate income from the property.
- Unlike the nearest competitors in the South Pacific tourism sector, like New Caledonia and Fiji, Vanuatu does not have any colonialist or ethnic problems. While not everyone in the country gets along 100 percent of the time, the relations between all island people are great.
- The crime rate is extremely low and terrorism is an unheard of action across the island nation.
- The ni-Vanuatu natives are always happy to work with real estate investors because the investors can only lease land, meaning the natives continue to benefit from a generated income, no matter how modest it may be.

There is a great opportunity to make money through investments in Vanuatu. The majority of people and companies that do invest here are looking for a natural, friendly, and relaxed atmosphere where there are minimal hassles.

How to Invest in Vanuatu

For those looking to invest in Vanuatu, it is important to receive approval from the Vanuatu Investment Promotion Authority, or VIPA. VIPA is the same as Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB), and it authorizes any new investments made in the country of Vanuatu. After a company has been granted approval by VIPA, approvals for a residency permit, business, license, as well as work permit are easy to obtain.

When filling out the application for VIPA, there is a list of information that is required to provide. This includes copies of the passports for all investors, details and evidence regarding the financial level of the investment, a chart of the company structure, copies of certificates of police clearance, bank reference, projections of cash flow for the next three years, full employment details for anywhere work permits are required and how many work permits will be needed, an environmental impact assessment if required, how many residency permits will be needed, and disclosure of any bankruptcies, liquidations, and convictions. VIPA has also made the foreign investment process much more streamlined by doing away with regular approval meetings and instead going for an approval process that occurs right on the spot once applications are completed. Investors must also apply to renew their certificate on an annual basis.

In Conclusion...

Vanuatu is a beautiful island nation that is extremely enticing with its beautiful sights and diverse culture. However, it is also

one of the best locations for investment as well in today's current economic climate. Vanuatu offers all interested investors a very stable political environment and a consistent commitment demonstrated from the government dedicated to the growth of the country. Aside from a very unique tax haven status, many investors are able to rest assured that both the central bank and the government have proven track records when it comes to a sound monetary and fiscal policy. The commitment made by the authorities looking to promote Vanuatu as a safe destination for business has enabled the country to rise to the top, above all other Pacific island nations in the 2011 International Finance Corporation's "Doing Business Report." It is extremely rare to find a unique combination of a tropical paradise mixed with a fiscal paradise, but it does exist in Vanuatu.

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Vanuatu Joins the World Trade Organization

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Asset Protection](#)

It has taken 16 years, but Vanuatu has finally become a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization). This means that Vanuatu has taken a seat at the table of what is in effect the world's economic parliament. They are staking a claim as a member of the world economy, giving them the ability to have a voice in decisions affecting itself and the rest of the world. This decision has not come without controversy. On one hand it can be seen as surrender to powerful global interests, on the other it is regarded as a mature policy of engagement.

Vanuatu Takes a Seat at the BIG Table!

So, what are the pros and cons of Vanuatu joining the World Trade Organization? And what affect does this have on their tourism economy?

To start, the World trade Organization sets the rules for global trade and provides a forum for trade negotiations. The WTO has 153 member countries. Decisions are made at Ministerial Conferences, via the secretariat in Geneva. The secretariat has limited power, their main role is to coordinate negotiations between countries, analyze world trade and give technical support to developing countries considering membership. Decisions at the WTO are made by consensus, meaning that all members must agree. Consensus based governing can be cumbersome; this is why WTO talks are so slow to come to a decision. Each county has the same formal influence regardless of its size and pays the same membership fees, except LDCs (Least Developed Countries), like Vanuatu.

There are different reasons countries decide to join with the WTO, but the biggest reason is that lowering import taxes and other obstacles should increase the overall volume of trade, raising the average wealth. Globally, the potential gains from cutting tariffs and lowering trade barriers are great. But for smaller, less developed countries like Vanuatu there is not much to gain, even if there is an improvement in overall global prosperity.

Global trade rules are supposed to stop arbitrary changes in trade policy, thus making trade fairer for smaller LDCs, who cannot retaliate through trade wars. The laws are there to help balance the scales, so that the bigger and stronger economies do not dominate global trade any more than they already do. Tragically, smaller countries have little choice than to join the WTO, since most regional trade agreements must be WTO compliant, meaning that countries must accept WTO rules even if they are not members. Since Vanuatu's neighbors and trading partners are members of the WTO, Vanuatu is subject to the laws of international trade. They might as well have a voice, rather than having the rules being dictated to them by other nations.

However, becoming a member of the WTO means that some of Vanuatu's policies become fixed and they are not allowed to bring in new legislation that would violate its commitments to the WTO. The biggest problem with this is it gives bigger, richer countries access to Vanuatu's market. With tourism as the largest foreign exchange earner, accounting for roughly 50-75% of the country's GDP, constraints on their ability to regulate their tourism industry will make it very difficult to optimize the benefits for the local people and protect the environment. The doors have been opened to foreign tourism operators and if they do not like a policy that Vanuatu is trying to enforce, they can have their own government complain to the WTO on the basis that the regulations are an unnecessary trade barrier.

Investment liberalization first came to Vanuatu in 1995, when the UN Development Program and the World Tourism Organization drew up a Tourism Development Master Plan for the government of Vanuatu. The plan was to open up the nation's economy and resource bases to foreign investors, turning Vanuatu into a tropical paradise destination through large scale tourism. Vanuatu was to change its property ownership laws to allow for the privatization of its beaches and reefs, establish an investment promotion body and offer tourism investors tax breaks and other concessions for developments undertaken within tourism precincts. The Tourism Master Plan continues to advise Vanuatu's tourism policies.

By joining the WTO, Vanuatu becomes legislatively locked into a commitment of opening the door for foreign investment in their economy, particularly in tourism. Vanuatu has already seen a large influx of foreign investment in their tourism industry over the past 10 years, as they slowly worked towards a deal in joining the WTO. The problem with joining the WTO is that it becomes even harder for Vanuatu to protect its developing markets from more powerful foreign investors. WTO policy prevents small developing countries like Vanuatu from actively promoting local firms, which is a key direction in the development of many newly-industrialized countries.

Because the WTO pushes for progressive liberalization, new members must submit to more rigorous terms than existing members. As a result Vanuatu is being forced to open up its tourism industry far more than the United States or Australia. This creates a blatantly unfair situation for Vanuatu. The Vanuatu government is already faced with many new and difficult administrative tasks. Joining the WTO requires the introduction of a number of new legislations, much of which is only there to satisfy the WTO requirements and does nothing to promote the development of the country and its budding tourism industry.

In Vanuatu's Accession Package pertaining to services sector, one of the specific restrictions states that the government will not make it more difficult in the future for foreigners to come to Vanuatu and operate. The problem with this is that the tourism industry is already largely controlled by foreign investors and now it will be next to impossible to keep any new investors out. There are some investments reserved specifically for Vanuatu citizens, but they are only small to medium sized operations. This means that the largest portion of the tourism industry is controlled by foreign investment and the monies earned are not reinvested into the country. A pattern has emerged in which most of the benefits of the tourism boom are flowing to foreign

investors and expatriates, with the ni-Vanuatu scrambling for the crumbs.

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Relocating, Residency and Taxes in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Overseas Retirement](#)

As with relocating anywhere, it is important to consider not only your own position and finance, but also the situation and customs of the place to which you will be moving.

The Tax Month but Not Often

Vanuatu is a beautiful group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean. It is known not only for its great location and climate, but also as a great place owning and operating a business. However, there are some important local rules and regulations to be aware of before you pick up and relocate to Vanuatu.

Residency and Citizenship in Vanuatu

People seek to establish permanent residency in Vanuatu because of two major reasons. Vanuatu is a tax haven and it also offers the most excellent and carefree tropical lifestyle. Aside from easy access to New Zealand and Australia, Vanuatu also offers one of the best and reliable international banking communities and fairly priced modern housing.

There are various factors that may be common among every applicant who wants to establish their residency in Vanuatu. However, different steps are needed for those who want to establish a business. However, residency permits are granted to employees, retirees, and investors. Investors who want to apply for residency permit in Vanuatu are required to apply to the Vanuatu Foreign Investment Board for approval. Retirees who are over fifty five years old can also qualify for a residency permit only if they present proof of their retirement from their country of origin. Individuals who are in Vanuatu for employment purposes can also qualify for a one year residency permit. However, this type of residency permit can only be eligible for certain professions but it can be renewed annually.

And while Vanuatu offers huge benefits for investors who want to invest and apply for residency permit, ordinary persons who simply want to live in Vanuatu without seeking for employment or engaging in business investments may also qualify for a residency permit provided they prove that they can financially support themselves within the residency period. They also have to invest funds in Vanuatu because the level of investment is used as criteria for determining the duration of the residency permit.

A residency permit is required for anyone who will be staying for more than four months in any one year. The rules are quite simple and if you can show a Vanuatu net worth of at least \$104,000 or \$2,600 monthly income, you can qualify for a residency permit. The larger your investment, the longer your duration of residency permit will be and investments may come either in cash or assets.

Expatriate Services in Vanuatu

Vanuatu is considered one of the prime relocation islands for expats. Not only does the island offer a great climate and very relaxed lifestyle, but it also has a complete lack of personal taxes and income taxes. This has made it a very popular destination looking for those who are looking to move away from the hustle and financial burdens of other countries. The only tax that is collected in Vanuatu is known as the Value Added Tax (VAT), which is a 12.5% tax on goods and services.

With such a relatively small tax that is taken as part of a purchase, it makes dealing with finances in Vanuatu a very simple task. There is no longer any need to worry about whether you have saved enough money to cover your taxes at the end of the year. Nor is there any concern about having to pay taxes for unexpected reasons.

This is one reason why it may be quite worth it to go through the process of becoming a citizen in Vanuatu. Once you have the right to buy property, the taxes are very straightforward. There is no concern for added financial items such as property taxes. This makes relocation to Vanuatu relatively affordable for people who have the means and know what they are looking for.

Along with its easy to understand tax system, Vanuatu also provides a number of other benefits and useful tools for expats. The islands have a very accessible system of banks, internet and mobile networks. This makes it very easy to move to Vanuatu, and yet still maintain a good and active connection with other places in the world. This is why Vanuatu is sometimes considered a good place from which to do business.

Even so, it should not be a concern with the availability of these useful business tools that life on Vanuatu could become just as hectic as the place from which you moved. Life on Vanuatu is far from hectic. As anyone who has visited the islands before—in the South Pacific or elsewhere—hectic is one of the last words you would use to describe island life. People in the islands, with Vanuatu being no exception, often prefer to relax and take life as it comes.

Still, Vanuatu is known for the accessibility of its banks and other services that expats might find to be very helpful. Many offshore service providers are set up in towns such as Port Vila to help new residents of Vanuatu to get set up and become comfortable with their new surroundings. This is very important to those who wish to run an international business or even an online business. The Republic of Vanuatu makes it very easy for anyone seeking to accomplish these goals, as well as those just seeking to find a new home. Either way, the people of Vanuatu will welcome you.

Facts about the Republic of Vanuatu

Location: Oceania, group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to Australia

Geographic Coordinates: 16 00 S, 167 00 E

Area: 12,200 sq km (includes more than 80 islands, about 65 of which are inhabited)

Coastline: 2,528 km

Climate: tropical; moderated by southeast trade winds from May to October; moderate rainfall from November to April; may be affected by cyclones from December to April

Highest Point: Tabwemasana 1,877 m

Population: 215,446 (July 2008 est.)

Languages: local languages (more than 100) 72.6%, pidgin (known as Bislama or Bichelama)

23.1%, English 1.9%, French 1.4%, other 0.3%, unspecified 0.7% (1999 Census)

Note: Information according to the CIA World Factbook.

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Health Care in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Overseas Retirement](#)

Whether you plan to visit the beautiful island of Vanuatu or want to move there, one important amenity of any destination is the quality of health care provided to residents and tourists. For tourists, it is always a good idea to prepare for any trip by obtaining the required vaccinations from a public health department or physician before departure. Though vaccinations are not required for visiting the islands, specifically Port Vila, they are vital to staying healthy in many environments, especially the rain forest locations around Vanuatu. Anti-malaria vaccinations are essential if you plan on visiting many of the larger islands or exploring the rain forests.

Coconut Juice is the New Penicillin

Travelers to Vanuatu should also have international medical insurance. International insurance will cover selected medical costs should there be an emergency while on vacation – one important item to look for in an insurance policy is medical evacuation, which will transport patients to major cities in Australia and New Zealand, such as Brisbane or Sydney. In the event of a serious accident or trauma, patients will be flown out to such locations in order to receive necessary treatment from medical centres equipped to handle serious conditions and traumas. Another important factor in purchasing medical insurance – especially if you are visiting – is to find an insurance plan that pays for your expenses to travel home, in the event you need to leave Vanuatu unexpectedly or sooner than planned.

While no one would like to think of being in a serious accident on vacation or suffering from a severe ailment or condition, preparation for such an event is always recommended. Medical evacuations are very costly, so an insurance plan will help lower potential costs. Residents may purchase private health insurance from local offices around Vanuatu to cover the costs of medical accommodations, ambulance, air transportation and treatments. The annual premium cost of private insurance depends on the age of the individual.

Since Vanuatu is not largely populated, it is to be expected that the level of health care does not rival that of a major city, such as Sydney, but there are many facilities to make use of in the event of an illness. According to the World Health Organization, there are 27 health centres spread around the islands of Vanuatu – which means four locations in each province. These health centres provide the following to residents and tourists to the islands:

- Outpatient and inpatient services – which include drug prescriptions and child deliveries
- Immunization, preventative health services and healthy lifestyle promotion
- Locations are staffed by a nurse practitioner, who also acts as a manager of the centre and a midwife for those who need delivery services

Five public hospitals also have services and amenities for those in need, as well as private hospitals in larger communities, such as Port Vila. In Port Vila, the Vila Bay Health Centre leads the community in care and reputation, especially for expatriates living on the island. Expat medical professionals run the Centre and the hospital follows international medical guidelines and standards. Hygiene, professional and medical work ethics and patient safety are all of the utmost concern at the Vila Bay Health Centre. Medical issues of any proportion are taken care of at the centre, including:

- Asthma
- Traveller's diarrhea
- Respiratory infections

Nevertheless, even large-scale medical conditions may be handled at the centre, including:

- Wound care
- Malaria
- Emergency services
- Minor surgeries

The medical centre also offers resources to families and children. Vaccinations are flown in under proper care and supervision from surrounding countries, such as New Zealand and Australia. Laboratories at the centre provide tourists and residents with standard tests and can test for viruses like Malaria or the Dengue fever. In the event that advanced testing is needed, urine, blood or tissue samples are sent to Australia.

Private hospitals, such as Port Vila, offer peace of mind to those in Vanuatu. This hospital in particular is experienced and knowledgeable in dealing with many major traumas and emergencies, such as cardiac arrest or organ failure. Motor vehicle accidents, pre-natal emergencies and infections are also taken care of with experience.

Should you need medical attention while visiting Vanuatu, care may be paid for with credit cards and cash, in addition to insurance cards. Visitors from Australia may be reimbursed for certain medical expenses.

The beauty and surroundings of Vanuatu make it a perfect location to offer medical tourism services and amenities. Port Vila is the most populated city on the islands and has access to a variety of amenities, such as a main domestic and international airport – Bauerfield Airport – that serves as a main destination for tourists coming to experience the islands.

Medical tourism offers a variety of benefits to all involved. Tourists may visit the gorgeous islands of Vanuatu to have cosmetic or medical procedures completed for a fraction of the cost found in their respective country, and then rest and recuperate for the remainder of a vacation. Countries who offer medical tourism experience a growth in resources and revenue due to the increase in travelers to a certain area to pay for treatments, hotel or spa accommodations, souvenirs and food.

Over 50 countries in the world consider medical tourism to be a major part of the tourism and economy resources, and Vanuatu features many well-experienced and knowledgeable doctors and nurses from all around the globe. As medical costs rise around the world, medical tourism is a viable and affordable option for those who want to travel to Vanuatu. Tourists who wish to have a procedure done at a quality facility in Port Vila do not have to sit on a waiting list or pay an extravagant amount of money for desired cosmetic procedures.

One of the main benefits to bringing medical tourism to Vanuatu is that tourists may get the requested medical or cosmetic care, and then recuperate within the care and hospitality of the people and surroundings of Vanuatu. Gorgeous beaches, delicious food and climate are all great reasons why medical tourism would thrive in Vanuatu.

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Doing Business in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

The Republic of Vanuatu is very popular in the community of entrepreneurs and people interested in doing international business. This is partially due to Vanuatu's very relaxed tax laws, which are simple for business owners as well as regular residents.

Build Your Empire in Vanuatu

This makes it very inviting for some businesses to move their practice to Vanuatu in hopes of maintaining a strong business with fewer restrictions. Vanuatu, with the introduction of new commercial laws in the 1970s, quickly became an international Financial Center, specifically in the South Pacific where it is located.

The town of Port Vila is the main location for commercial business on Vanuatu, which is composed of a group of islands. In Port Vila, finance and banking are the major practices. A sudden expansion occurred in the area with the onset of the new commercial laws and has thrived ever since. Port Vila is the Vanuatu capital for support organizations and professionals. It has had such rapid growth, along with the rest of the islands' economy, that it has become known and respected in the international business community.

For those wanting to do business in Vanuatu, there are a few important things to consider. First, you should consider whether relocation to Vanuatu is the best thing to do personally, as well as business-wise. Also, one must consider what it means to do business in Vanuatu. The Republic of Vanuatu offers many great business opportunities, but there are still regulations to follow. Most if not all of these regulations are helpful, but it is important to review them in detail before deciding to do business in Vanuatu.

Relocating to Vanuatu

The Government of Vanuatu unequivocally promotes foreign investment and its newly passed legislation known as the Strata Titles Act makes it a lot easier for anyone to invest in the country with a good chance for a profitable return. The government also simplified the procedures implemented by the Foreign Investment Board, Customs, and Immigration to streamline the formalities of taking up residency and investing in Vanuatu.

Relocating to Vanuatu opens a lot of opportunities and you will quickly realize that in this country, compared to other contenders in the tourism sector like New Caledonia and Fiji, land leasing arrangements in Vanuatu actually work excellently. All land leases must be registered in the Land Records Department of the central government. And in urban areas like Luganville and Port Vila, the Vanuatu government itself turns into the lessor representing custom owners.

More often than not, courts protect both the interests of the lessee and landowners much more efficient than any land dispute courts. As an added benefit, leases for residential property usually last for fifty years and seventy five years for commercial properties. The property lease can also be renewed once it reaches its expiration like subdividing the property for example.

Banking, Finance, and Foreign Investment

Vanuatu has a very strong support system for foreign investment. Much of this is due to the numerous offshore banking agencies that make homes and centers on the islands, particularly in Port Vila. Foreign investment is perhaps the most quickly expanding form of economic growth on Vanuatu. This is again because of the simple tax laws that draw in investors from all over the world. While tourism, fishing, and cattle ranching support much of the economic stability for locals, it is the financial center that has brought much of the growth since the 1970s.

Foreign investment is even more strongly encouraged by the fact that there are no exchange control regulations or authorities on Vanuatu. This means that accrued funds remitted to Port Vila in any currency can be held and transferred to anywhere in the world without any questions being asked. Because of this, companies may be incorporated using any currency, allowing for much more efficient business. Companies are allowed to run based on any currency and may exchange currency for any other type of currency for free. Naturally, strict money laundering laws do exist to prohibit businesses from taking advantage of this relatively free business environment.

Tax Incentives

As mentioned above, one of the major attractions to doing business on Vanuatu is the very relaxed nature of taxes that government requires. There are no income taxes, corporate taxes, estate duties, succession duties, gift duties, capital gains taxes, double taxation agreements, or withholding taxes. This complete lack of any burdensome taxes on businesses is what makes Vanuatu a great location for international companies. There is much less to worry about when it comes to considering the tax implications of doing business around the world. These tax incentives also show Vanuatu government's great interest in being helpful partners for any company willing to bring business to their shores.

The one tax that does exist in the Republic of Vanuatu is known as the Value Added Tax (VAT), which is a 12.5% tax on all goods and services. While this is a fairly hefty tax on each individual item, it is taken in a straightforward manner and is very easy to understand and calculate into a budget. The government of Vanuatu may also take a similar tax on interactive gaming and online casinos run on the islands.

Cost of Doing Business

While all of these tax incentives are very inviting and really do much to help businesses thrive on Vanuatu, it is good to remember that there are still costs involved with setting up a company. Just like any other countries, the Government of Vanuatu also requires businesses pay for a variety of business licenses and fees. These fees include business license fees, insurance, banking and trust company licenses, annual registration fees for all companies, stamp duties, and other smaller fees. These are just a few of the cost items to be aware of before seeking to set up a business on the Vanuatu islands.

Even so, the Republic of Vanuatu is a very inviting group of island for business owners of any kind—from tourism to foreign investment, and even from the fishing industry to cattle ranching. Vanuatu has set up its commercial laws specifically for the purpose of drawing in new business, and anyone is welcome.

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Working in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

Vanuatu, a South Pacific volcanic island, is a tropical island, with ancient culture and friendly people. Vanuatu is the ideal place to live, and the living atmosphere relaxed, with time for the afternoon siesta for all employers and employees. The economic growth is strong with different work opportunities.

Entrepreneurs Welcome in Vanuatu

Vanuatu's economy is primarily agriculture based with beef, kava, copra and coconut oil making up over 75% of total agricultural exports. Agriculture accounting makes up around 20%. After agricultures, tourism is the next largest strength in the economy growth.

Work Opportunities in Vanuatu

Vanuatu offers diverse opportunities. There are government office, shops and restaurants, fishing, and the opportunity to open your own business.

Business Hour in Vanuatu

Government Offices: Government offices typically are open from Monday to Friday from 7:30 am to 11:30 am with a two hour break for a siesta or to eat lunch and run errands. The business then reopens at 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Some government offices may be open on a Saturday morning.

Shops: Shops generally begin to trade at 1:30 pm and continue throughout the day until about 6 pm. Shops are open on Saturdays until about 11:30 am, with the exception of Chinese stores, which are open all weekend.

Teaching is another Vanuatu work opportunity and the perfect means to obtain work. The island is an English speaking island and school is taught in English.

Working in Vanuatu

When working in Vanuatu you must realize that the country and its people are very relaxed and because the clock says 8 am does not necessarily mean the open of the business. Time is not a big priority, and patience must be practiced.

Working in Vanuatu is a friendly atmosphere, and people work together. Friends and family connections are great. Don't always expect the expected. In fact, expect the unexpected. Eye contact and smiles are important.

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Survive 'The Good Life' in Vanuatu

Survive 'The Good Life' in Vanuatu

By Richard Butler / Feb 12 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#)

Vanuatu has become the new hub for Pacific Tourism. In part, tourism in Vanuatu has seen a rise since it became the site of the successful reality TV show, Survivor. Survivor season 9 was filmed on Vanuatu and titled "Survivor Vanuatu: Islands of Fire". Australia's Celebrity Survivor was also filmed at the same location used by the U.S. version. Since 2002, the Vanuatu government has stepped up its efforts to boost tourism.

Be Happy in Vanuatu

Vanuatu has something for everyone. For those that want a relaxing and luxurious escape with balmy breezes and gourmet food you will find it on Vanuatu. And for the adventure seekers it is home to some of the world's best eco tours.

The first settlers arrived approximately 3500 years ago, from New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Vanuatu was first sighted by Europeans in 1604 by Pedro Fernandes de Queiros of Portugal but it was not revisited until 1774 when the navigator James Cook charted the islands. The French and British both laid claim to the islands, which led to the formation of a condominium government in 1904. The islands began lobbying for independence after World War II and obtained it in 1980. Much of the traditional Vanuatu culture remains unchanged today.

When you are in Vanuatu you can immerse yourself in the island culture. Tour companies fully owned and operated by the local Ni-Vanuatu offer a peek into an ancient culture still being lived out today. You will witness cultural ceremonies and watch dancers perform traditional dances that are unique to their island; visit ancient village set ups demonstrating the old way of life, and take tours of rural village communities. For the cultural and history buff Vanuatu offers the chance to step back in time and experience life as it once was.

Vanuatu has also become known for its eco tours. On an Eco tour you will experience Vanuatu life off the beaten track, explore flora and fauna in its natural environment, learn about the islands history and meet the locals. There are a wide variety of Eco tours available, from a relaxing walk through the bush to plunging through the jungle. Eco tours offer you a way to see places and people that are not normally accessible to the general public.

For the adventure bound tourist the islands offer some of the most breath-taking natural sights in the South Pacific. The volcanoes of the Vanuatu Islands attract a large number of hikers; the most famous being the Yasur Volcano, located on Tanna Island. It is one of the world's most active volcanos and has been erupting 10 to 20 times per hour, every day, for at least 800 years. In spite of this, it is very easy to reach and you can walk around the entire perimeter. You will never forget the experience of feeling the earth shudder beneath you, watching the molten magma, rock and ash shoot out of the earth, and hearing the thunderous groans coming from deep within the volcano.

Vanuatu is also a mecca for scuba divers and snorkelers. Divers come from all over the world for Vanuatu's superb visibility, warm water and world-class dive sites. Plunging cliffs, grottoes, overhangs, huge caves and intricate tunnels all make the underwater exploration an exciting experience and a sight to remember. The true draw for divers to Vanuatu is the SS "President Coolidge" – the largest wreck dive in the world. It is a 22,000 ton luxury liner that was converted into a troop ship. It sank fully laden during the war, just a few metres off the beach. Another world famous dive site off of Vanuatu is the Tongoa Wall, the edge of a live volcano.

Vanuatu offers scenic flights, fishing, water sports, cruises, golf, shopping and dining. Fly over the volcanoes and experience the activity of a live volcano from up above and stop for lunch on a deserted beach. Vanuatu is known to have one of the best selections of game fishing operators in the Pacific, with a wide range of tour options available. Vanuatu has a number of small golf courses as well as an established 18 hole championship course in Port Vila. The best time to travel to Vanuatu is from late April to October. The temperature ranges from 18 degrees Celsius to 28 degrees Celsius during this time. Light clothing and a sweater for the cooler evenings is all you will need.

For a pamper filled vacation, Vanuatu has high end resorts that offer overwater bungalows, beachfront, and waterfront villas, deluxe room suites set in tropical gardens, fine dining restaurants, pools, spa facilities and activities and services for travelers who are seeking a luxurious and relaxing holiday without leaving their resort. Port Vila's expertise in creating invigorating and indulging pamper packed holidays is growing. Pamper packages cater to both men and women, offering massage therapy, facials, manicure, pedicure, body scrub, waxing, and more. The day spas may be set in amongst tropical gardens or beachfronts with an ocean view.

Vanuatu offers everyone a safe and comfortable experience. The people are open and friendly, welcoming you to explore the land they love so much. There is no bargaining or hawkers to pressure you into buying their wares. It is a refreshing experience to feel welcomed by the locals and not feel pressured into buying anything. In Vanuatu the options are endless. You can have an adventure vacation or a relaxing pampered vacation. You can stay in a luxury resort in a bungalow over the water or camp on one of the smaller islands. Vanuatu really does offer something for everyone and every type of vacation experience. It is the new Eldorado of the Pacific.

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