

EXPEDITION INFORMATION, EXPECTED CONDITIONS, AND EQUIPMENT LIST

This paper provides an overview of the expected conditions, communal gear, and individual equipment needed for the Expedition. Information on the rally point, evacuation, accommodation, flights, changing money, Maewo and learning more about Vanuatu is also provided.

EXPECTED CONDITIONS

It is anticipated that the weather in central and north Vanuatu in August will be in the high 70s and low 80s F, with a possible but unlikely low/high of 55 to 91. (Southern islands like Tanna will be a few degrees cooler.) Humidity will be about 80%, somewhat sticky. Five inches of rain and 12 days with rain are likely in the month. Rain is often heavy but intermittent. Likely winds: trade winds from the SE at about 6 mph. Gales possible but not likely, up to about 27 knots.

The all-island festival and female chiefs celebration will in a Kerembei/Kerepei village on the central west side of Maewo. (See map at end of this paper.) The only relevant grass/gravel airstrips are at the north end of Maewo and the east end of Ambae island. We will likely take Air Vanuatu (11 passenger plane) from Port Vila direct to Maewo (north end), or perhaps to Ambae. If to Maewo, there may be a long open truck ride on bad roads (or an open boat ride) down south to the village. If to Ambae, we will have a 3-4 hour boat ride in an open 20-foot boat from Ambae to the village.

Note that Maewo is the rainiest island in Vanuatu; bring a light folding umbrella and rain poncho.

We will likely stay in small, bamboo, individual or communal “bungalows” or family homes which are open, have dirt floors, thatch roofs, and a separate outdoor toilet and cold shower. A mosquito net may (or may not) be provided. The host will likely provide basic meals at a cost. Because the festival has morphed into an “all island festival,” it is possible that all bungalows and homes will be full, and you will need to bring a small tent or hammock. For hammocks or tents, be sure they have insect nets. Please advise Lew if you are able to bring a hammock or tent, so accommodations can be planned.

Likely threats include mosquitos, heat, water with giardia or other contaminants, and sun exposure. Possible threats include bedbugs, dengue fever, malaria, chikungunya, Zika, coral cuts, etc. Unlikely but possible threats include air- and sea-sickness, earthquakes, tsunamis, gales, volcanic eruptions, cold at night, etc. Keep these threats in mind when gear planning. There are no poisonous snakes or dangerous mammals on land except some semi-wild pigs. There are sharks and sea snakes in the ocean.

Accommodations in Port Vila can range according to budget from bungalows as above, up to a very high end resort (Le Lagon). You may wish to stay at Chantilly's hotel, the rally point, for about \$165 USD per night or next door at the Moorings, for \$85. Michael Wyrick recommends the Coconut Palms Resort (next to the Health Ministry and also quite convenient to the jail!), rates range from \$35-\$85 USD night. Try Hotels.com if the hotel website (<http://www.coconutpalms.vu/>) is showing ridiculously high rates. Note that rates there and at other hotels are often quoted in \$ AUD (Australian), not USD. Be sure to ask for a room with AC, fridge, and en suite bath (a "standard double room" or better) if that is what you want, the "budget" rooms are cheaper but small and grim and no AC.

Please advise Lew and other participants where you are in Port Vila, and if you have a local phone.

Most out islanders dress in shorts, T-shirts and flip-flops year round. In Port Vila a golf shirt, slacks and running shoes are considered "formal."

GEAR PROVIDED CENTRALLY FOR THE EXPEDITION BY LEW TOULMIN

This will include:

- Explorers Club Flag # 101
- Electronic and hard copies of the Exped questionnaires for the Female Chiefs and other subjects.
- Patches for Expedition members
- Sign for Expedition
- Name tags for female chiefs (to be used in getting their photos)

INDIVIDUAL GEAR/ITEMS TO BE PURCHASED/BROUGHT BY EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Items you will need include:

- Notepads and pens to record interviews
- Camera with extra batteries and extra memory cards
- Lightweight tripod for camera
- Recording device to obtain aural or video recording of interviewees. This needs a good microphone. Go-Pros or regular camera internal microphones are not acceptable.
- Solar charger for electrical devices (do NOT charge your devices off of local generators, which have very erratic power and can fry your equipment)
- Conair Travel Smart All-in-one (Plug) Adaptor and Converter Combo Unit (includes surge protection), \$22.15 on Amazon (Vanuatu uses Australia-NZ plugs)

- Mosquito and no-see-um net, preferably impregnated with mosquito repellent such as Permethrin. Net should be large enough to tuck under you, to keep out bedbugs and other nasties. Extra paracord to hold out the net.
- 550 Paracord, minimum 50' (tiedowns, clotheslines, hanging flashlight, etc.)
- Mosquito repellent for the skin, 50% DEET or more. Combination bug and sun repellents are available in the US but hard to find and usually have less than 50%. If you want to have more natural but odd and sometimes smelly protection, eat lots of garlic, onions, B-complex vitamins or apple cider vinegar before and during the exped. According to most experienced experts, these do not work well.
- Lightweight shirt (quick dry) impregnated with mosquito repellent
- Lightweight shorts or expedition pants (quick dry), impregnated with mosquito repellent
- Malaria medicine, possibly Atovaquone-proguanil (Malarone). Note that Malarone must be taken daily and must be started 1-2 days before entering the infected area. I don't recommend doxycycline because it must be taken daily, kills off the bacteria in your system, and can lead to sun skin sensitivity. Another good possibility is mefloquine (*Lariam*), which is only taken weekly. Some people experience nightmares and other side effects from this drug. (Michael took mefloquine for a 1½ years while living in Haiti with no side effects, but some people do have problems.) Malaria meds should begin per doctor instructions, sometimes a week or two before arriving in Vanuatu.
- Sun hat with wide brim and neck cord
- Sunglasses with neck cord
- Light jacket, windbreaker or fleece
- Light plastic poncho (for possible use in boat or rainstorms)
- Light umbrella
- Waterproof match tube, lighter (matches and lighters can be purchased locally, can't fly with them) or flint fire starter
- Medium backpack with plastic bags or a dry bag inside protecting your gear. Leave space in pack for souvenirs
- Canteen (recommend wide-mouth Nalgene bottle, graduated)
- Water purification tablets or purification straw or similar (SteriPen or another UV purifier is another good choice; it doesn't change the taste and the water is ready to drink within seconds (easier to use with wide mouth bottles)). You can buy small and large bottles of commercial pure water in Port Vila at the large Bon Marche grocery store or elsewhere, but likely not enough to cover the entire trip to Maewo.
- Small individual first aid & survival kit, containing aspirin or pain reliever, Imodium or similar, Pepto Bismol, sun cream, antibiotic cream, antibiotic tablets, etc.
- Emergency space blanket
- Melatonin (for jetlag recovery and helps in sleeping through nights of villages' roosters)
- Personal medications, with extra tablets in case you are delayed in-country. (All meds and pharmacy items are about 4X more expensive in Vanuatu than in the US.) (Recommend packing pills in Ziploc minis (2ml), but if prescription, then photograph the label and include in the bag.)

- Backup pair of eyeglasses
- Flashlight, lightweight, with fresh batteries
- Small headlamp with white and red LED bulbs (red does not attract bugs, nor blind others)
- Packet of toilet paper
- Ziploc bags of varying sizes for organizing small items, waterproofing travel docs, electronics & clothing and/or compression. (Tip: If pack each days' worth of clothing in separate freezer bags, then you don't have to search through entire bag, and can compress to remove air.)
- Small bottle of shampoo
- Duct tape, small roll (¼ to ½ inch wide)
- Keep cool soaking scarf with crystals
- Energy bars or similar
- Lightweight sleeping bag or liner
- Backpacking air mattress or mattress cover (or plastic sheet, rain poncho, etc., to avoid bedbugs, which are a problem in some Vanuatu bungalows)
- Compressible pillow or fleece-lined stuff sack (which can double as a pillow).
- Toiletries, including shampoo and soap (not usually provided by bungalows)
- Small camping quick dry towel (towels often not provided by bungalows)
- Swim suit
- Walking/hiking shoes, light to medium
- Quick dry light to medium socks (recommend SmartWool or other merino wool socks, high wicking and quick dry)
- Quick dry underwear (recommend Ex-Officio Give-n-Go)
- Ear plugs
- Swiss Army knife, multi-tool, or similar (pack in checked luggage)
- Small travel alarm or alarm watch
- Cash money. Cash is king in Vanuatu, especially in the outer islands. In Port Vila you may (or may not) be able to use money machines in one of the four local banks to get local Vatu (the Vanuatu national currency) out of the machine. If you can bring in Australian dollars, these are often accepted in Vanuatu and are easier to change into Vatu. Credit cards only work at some hotels in Port Vila, not at all in the outer islands. Often a 3-5% fee is tacked on to any credit card transaction. US money is not accepted anywhere, but may be changed in 1-4 banks in Port Vila. Goodies (see goodiesforex.com) is a commercial service with 3 outlets in downtown Port Vila, that offers good exchange rates. You may wish to obtain Vatu (the local Vanuatu currency) from a local US branch of a major bank prior to departure. Bank of America can deliver in 1-3 days. Some banks allow orders to be made through online accounts. Note that the rates offered are up to 10% worse than changing money in Vanuatu. A typical rate is that \$100 USD will get 9,500 to 10,643 Vatu. To be safe, bring AT LEAST \$1500+ USD WITH YOU IN CASH to Vanuatu, so that you have cash to exchange for Vatu in tranches, and pay for expenses.
- Pens or other small items to give out as gifts to kids

- Water/beach shoes, quick drying or waterproof, Crocs or similar, for boat rides, beach landings, and scrambling over coral. (I suggest Crocs model 202111 Swiftwater Fisherman or similar plastic shoes. Do NOT rely on rounded “aqua sock” type water shoes.)
- 1-2 days worth of freeze dried food, small packets of oatmeal (for fill in meals, if needed)
- Oral rehydration salts.

Items you may need or want:

- Australian visa if traveling more than just a short transit through Australia (6 hours or less). Obtain online at <https://www.australiaeta.org/english/>. However, should you choose to connect through New Zealand, no tourist visa is required for US citizens visiting for 90 days or less. (You will not need a Vanuatu visa if you are a tourist staying less than 30 days and are a US citizen. Be sure your passport is valid for more than 6 months.)
- 1-2 person light tent, combination hammock-tent, or hammock with insect screens
- Buff (e.g., Vanuatu “Survivor” buff, from www.planetbuff.com or an Explorers Club buff from www.explorers.org)
- Sweat rag
- Diving, snorkeling or other specialized equipment
- Airline face mask
- Monocular or light binoculars
- Cell phone. These can be purchased in the airport or in downtown Port Vila. Coverage is very poor in the outer islands, including Maewo. Unlocked US cell phones and smart phones may work with a Vanuatu SIM card. There are two operators: Digicel or TVL. You may wish to leave your expensive US smart phone at home.
- Hammock with mosquito net, or combo hammock-tent.
- Fly/bug swatter
- Hand fan
- Explorers Club baseball hat and/or shirt
- Sarong
- Starbucks VIA instant coffee packs
- Rubberized wired gear ties (Nite-Ize) or cable/zip ties 8”+
- Lightweight handheld luggage scale (helps avoid hold ups at airport check-in and overweight fees)
- Solar shower
- SPOT GPS personal locator beacon (satellite messenger for sending message to emergency Evac service or friends/family/exped followers)
- Lightweight laptop and charger (you may wish to leave this at the hotel in Port Vila, rather than risk it on Maewo and in open boats, trucks, etc.)

Leave behind the following:

- Heavy hiking boots

- Heavy clothes
- Large expedition packs
- Hard sided luggage
- Travelers checks
- Jacket and tie, high heels, formal clothes

THE RALLY POINT AND FLIGHTS TO MAEWO

The Expedition rally (start) point will be in the ground floor restaurant of the Chantilly's Hotel at the north end of Port Vila. The date/time is 5:30 pm, Tuesday, August 23, 2016. Please be punctual.

If for some reason Chantilly's is closed or not available, then the Moorings restaurant next door (north) will serve. Michael Wyrick (and possibly Lew Toulmin) will be staying at the Coconut Palms Resort, just east of the Ministry of Health and the "English Jail," if you want to get in touch earlier.

Exact flight details for the flight/transport to Maewo are not completely worked out yet as of this date. You will be advised by email.

EVACUATION INFORMATION

Medical attention in Vanuatu is generally poor, with only a few good doctors (mostly located in private clinics in Port Vila), and one central hospital (in Port Vila, not well regarded). Most expats with any kind of serious condition or injury are evacuated by air to New Zealand or Australia. Therefore I recommend you investigate evacuation insurance. I am a member of the Divers Alert Network (DAN; diversalertnetwork.org), which has a million members and provides evacuation insurance at low cost for divers and non-divers. There are other alternatives, however, which you may wish to explore. For example, all Explorers Club members can get a 5% discount on GlobalRescue.com (example: regular rate for an individual medical evac membership for a 14 day trip = \$159 USD less 5%).

FLIGHT INFORMATION

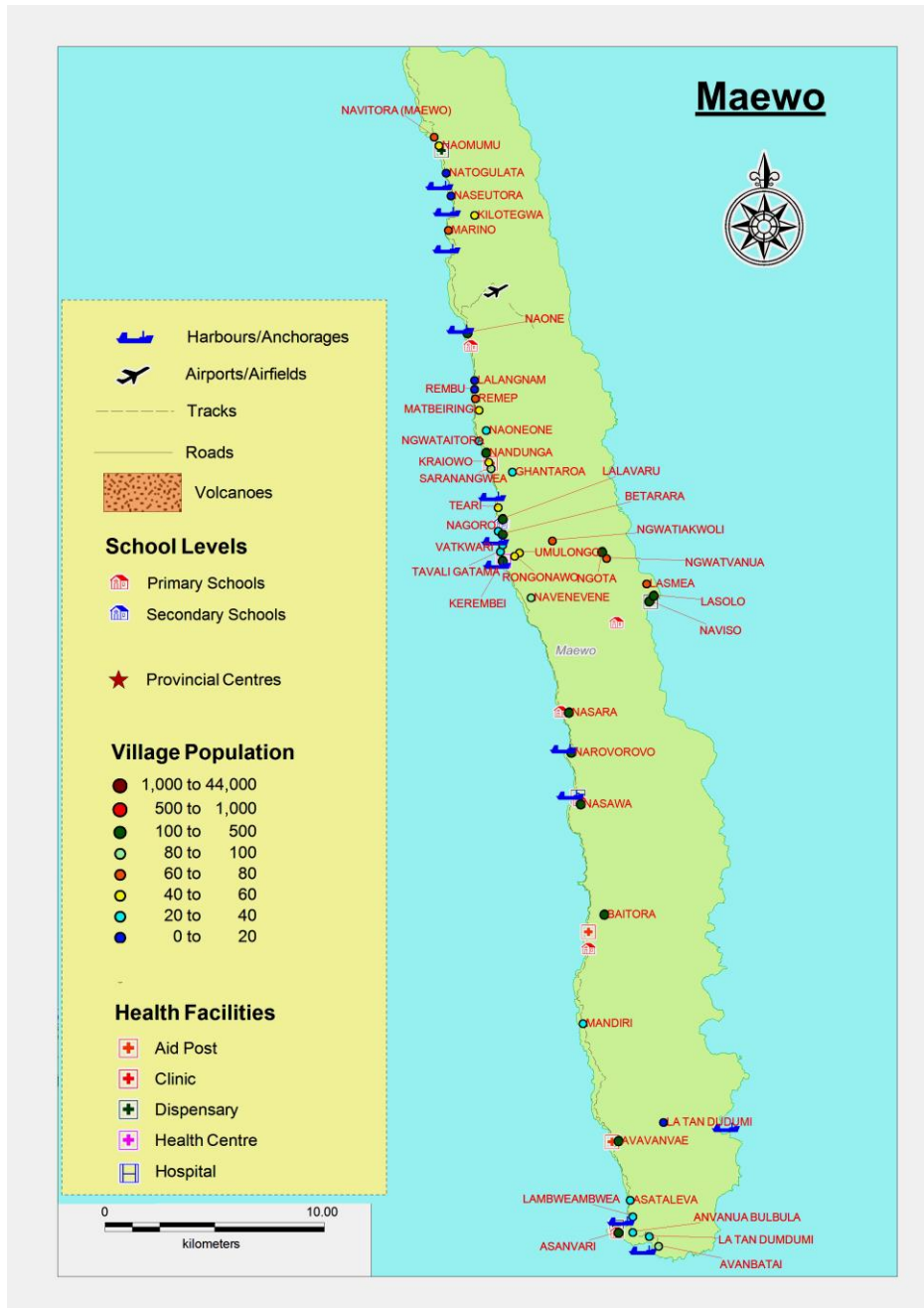
Port Vila is currently served by Virgin Australia from Brisbane; Fiji Airways from Nadi, Fiji; and Air Vanuatu from Auckland NZ, Brisbane and Sydney, Australia, and Nadi or Suva, Fiji. The most reliable route might be Virgin to Brisbane and on to Port Vila. Air Fiji from LAX to Fiji to Port Vila is not quite as reliable as Virgin, but cheaper.

LEARN MORE ABOUT VANUATU

See DailyPost.vu for the only national daily newspaper. See Facebook Yumi Toktok Stret for the only major on-line forum, with over 11,000 Ni-Vanuatu subscribers. A piece about Vanuatu's ambassador to the UN, written by two members of the Expedition in *Island Life*, the national magazine, is attached.

MAP AND OTHER SOURCES

See below for a map of Maewo. Kerembei village is on the central west coast, beside the words “Secondary Schools” in the legend. “Harbours” are really just landing beaches. See <http://www.positiveearth.org/bungalows/penama/maewo.htm> for more but dated info.



V4, 23 June 2016

#end#