

## *Daniel Marbot – Travelogistics*

“At the end of April New Caledonia Tourism invited me and some 80 other travel agents on a ‘Journey of Discovery’ to New Caledonia, flights: with compliments of Aircalin. ... And let me tell you, a discovery it was! This since I didn't really know what to expect. However, after spending a couple of wonderful and extremely relaxing days in the world's largest lagoon I found 1001 reasons to return to this gorgeous Gem in the South Pacific, ... so incredibly close to Australia.

“Noumea - also known as the little Paris of the Pacific - with it's friendly, bilingual people and the well-known Tjibaou Cultural Centre (designed by the famous Italian Architect Reno Piano) is an easy 2 1/2 hours flight from Sydney. This - kind of - provincial town is charming, well organized & clean. Right from the word go Noumea provides that special French atmosphere one otherwise gets to experience in the South of France only. There were plenty of excellent French Restaurants, Street-Cafes, Boulangeries (Bakeries), Designer Boutiques and Super-Marchees with a huge selection of French Wines, Aperitifs, all sorts of Cheese and many other French Goodies that make your heart jump ... Yes, you guessed right; .. shopping was fun, even for a bloke like me!

“Mind you, there are many activities that would keep an entire family excited and busy. Some of us experienced just about everything from Windsurfing, to Kayaking, Canoeing, Hiking, Biking, Snorkelling & Scuba Diving just to mention a few ... yet others hired a car, drove around La Grande Terre and explored the many stunning sceneries on offer. .... and yet others had a kind of romantic encounter, got spoiled and pampered on the Loyalty Islands or the Isle of Pines .... perfect hide-aways four couples & honeymooners.

“Our group did something totally different. We had the opportunity to spend two (2) days and one (1) night on a 40ft Catamaran provided by the ever cheerful & most generous people from Air Mer Loisirs. ... and let me tell you, if you are a group of 6-8 people hiring a fully equipped and skippered Catamaran is not only a

clever & economical but equally fun way to experience "The Real New Caledonia". Sailing the pristine waters of this huge lagoon, alongside wonderful sea-turtles, encountering a myriad of lush and extremely small islands (that you can call your own for the day) with a green subtropical vegetation does give you that wonderful sense of "freedom". The empty beaches with it's powdery sands are divine and the many snorkelling / scuba diving sites along the way invite you to explore & discover!

“I came to realize that New Caledonia has something for every budget, from Self-Contained Apartments to 5 Star Hotels, Bed & Breakfast Accommodation and typical Family Hotels or that special Yacht hire ... it's all there for you and this just 2 1/2 hours East from Sydney. Even if you are contemplating a weekend away, New Caledonia is certainly an excellent & most exciting option.

“This was an incredible ‘*European*’ Experience in the middle of the Pacific. I enjoyed every bit of it and I am more than happy to strongly recommend this destination to discerning travellers that are looking for a well balanced, kind of European experience in the Pacific but still close to home. I certainly know where I would rather be right now! ...

“Much to my surprise I can now reveal that New Caledonia has taken me by storm”.