



Vanuatu North - Banks & Torres Islands - SOUTH PACIFIC 2009

Pearls of the Pacific

Tall Ship adventures in the South Seas

V290 Vanuatu Discovery - Banks & Torres Islands

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Formerly named The New Hebrides by Captain Cook, Vanuatu, which gained independence in 1980, is one of the most culturally diverse groups in the South Pacific. Ritual and custom, ancestor worship and local cults, dancing and drumming and colourful ceremony are part of everyday village life here. Melanesian ritual and creative custom varies greatly from one island to another and one of the most exciting aspects of this cruise is the contact and exchange with the open and friendly islanders.

Voyage starts	Santo, Vanuatu Sunday 23 Aug 2009
Voyage Ends	Santo, Vanuatu Thurs 10 Sept 2009
Duration	18 nights
Type	Islands Cruising
Berth fee	UK £2050



This voyage will commence and end at Luganville on Espiritu Santo, a short internal air flight north from Pt Vila.. Sailing north up the east side of Santo we will stop and anchor, probably at famous Champagne Beach.



The northern Banks and Torres islands are the most inaccessible in the group. Named by Cook in honour of Sir Joseph Banks they stretch 60-100 miles from Santo. These rugged and mysterious islands are entirely untouched by modern tourist development and this voyage will be a truly unique chance to see an area beyond the normal reach of other travelers.

A Søren Larsen voyage is a holiday adventure where your enjoyment is of paramount importance. Participation in the ship and the voyage is central to the experience and you will be signed on ship as Voyage Crew as part of the ship's crew for your trip. However the level of involvement is up to you and no previous experience is necessary. The ship requires authentic seamanship to sail her but participating Voyage Crew are treated in a friendly and informal way and Søren Larsen's level of comfort and facilities reflect this.



The islands and anchorages we reach will largely be dictated by the wind and weather conditions. The prevailing trades are from the South East which will allow us to sail to the north east corner of Santo island, perhaps visiting the French settlement at Port Orly before sailing north to the steep volcanic island of Gaua the first in the Banks Group.

See **Previous Voyage Logs** and first hand reports and pictures of these destinations [here](#)



See Videos from this voyage from last season.

One days sail north is Vanua Lava, the largest island and administrative centre of the Banks and Torres with Port Patteson as it's a large and scenic bay. We may prefer to spend a day

at the adjacent Pakea island and enjoy its perfect white beaches and brilliant coral. This uplifted atoll is just 2 miles across is heavily planted with coconut trees from a former copra plantation. Presently there is just one family on the island.

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Time and wind direction will decide whether we visit Mota Lava or the uninhabited Reef Islands Lagoon and/or make to the island of Ureparapara at the north west end of the Banks. This last anchorage is inside the huge breached crater of the volcano that is the island and its steep, spectacular walls make for a strenuous but rewarding hour's climb through the jungle to the crater rim. Here we visit the well established village, see custom dancing and have the chance to buy wood carvings.

This voyage - for the first time takes us onwards to the Torres island group. This is an exciting opportunity to visit our most remote destination.



We should expect to have to make to windward back to Santo and will sail or motor sail down the protected (leeward) west side of Vanua Lava stopping at a good snorkeling anchorage we know with a thunderous waterfall falling to the shore.



We would make an overnight passage to maximise our time ashore. If there is time it is worthwhile sail into Big Bay on the north coast of Santo. Here the Portuguese navigator Quiros first discovered and named the land, thinking it was the fabled great southern continent, and the rugged hills and dense rainforest is just as he would have seen them in 1606. Alternatively the master may choose to sail down the west coast of Santo, calling at the coastal villages there who see very few visiting boats.

A duty watch system will still operate while we are under way but this will be less exacting than on an uninterrupted ocean passage. Once we drop anchor the deck watch is undertaken by the 13 permanent crew and you, the Voyage Crew, are free to explore ashore.



Most nights will be at anchor as sailing distances between the islands are perhaps only 20-70 miles. We will usually weigh anchor early each morning and aim to arrive at our next anchorage by early afternoon although there will be the chance for a couple of overnight sails between the islands. When at an anchorage we use Soren's 17 ft inflatable boat for runs to the beach to explore ashore. The ship has masks and snorkels for all those who want to swim from the ship.

The voyage finishes back at Luganville on the southern side of Santo and it would be worth spending a day or so here after the voyage if your time allows. The town was the main American base in W.W.II and today is the only main town on the island. When the Americans left they chose to bulldoze all their war surplus equipment into the sea rather than leave it behind and the huge collection of trucks, jeeps, and stores lies just off the shore at Million Dollar Point. It now forms a colourful reef that can be dived on or seen with snorkels. For experienced scuba divers the US President Coolidge is a must. The 1930's luxury passenger liner was sunk by a friendly mine and now lies intact on its side in 70-200 ft of water. We can organise dive groups through a local dive operation for what is the most amazing wreck dives in the world. Or there are guided tours around this island of contrasts. Espiritu Santo, a short internal air flight north of Pt Vila.



Vanuatu is a Malaria Risk Area so insect repellent is vital and it is recommended that you check with your own doctor for the requirements this area whether malaria medication is necessary or suitable for you.



Villages - we will be visiting some fairly remote places, and we are fortunate to be able see the life in their village communities. People live in traditionally built bamboo and thatch houses, cook by heated stone ovens and are without electricity. They are extremely welcoming of visitors even though our lifestyles are literally worlds apart.



There is no problem about photography but we should be sensitive when using cameras or video. Where there is a modern school we've found that paper and writing supplies are extremely useful and the ship brings school books for them each year. If you have room when packing for a couple of clothes items that you wouldn't mind leaving behind, these are always very gratefully received in the villages.

If a local cruising permit is levied on the ship by Vanuatu officials then this will be shared and charged individually. (Maximum \$40-50 per person. Last year the authorities did not charge the ship.)



On arriving onboard you will be shown your berths, introduced to the crew, and signed on Ship's Articles as Voyage Crew members. Much of the first morning will be spent introducing you to the ship and explaining the various routines, safety procedures and equipment and how the watch system works.



Our sailing between anchorages in the island groups may involve some motoring but also some quite intense sail handling. However this allows those who would rather relish the amazing scenery to stand back and let the keener sailors get involved in handling the ship under sail. Everyone is involved in the duty watch system as Voyage Crew which will operate while we are under way and you may have your turn at the helm, on bow lookout or helping trim sail or help tack ship. Going aloft is a unique experience but is not compulsory and everyone can decide when or if they'd like to. People of all ages join us and many have never sailed before - previous experience is certainly not necessary.

There are 13 permanent crew who maintain and sail the ship who are there to assist and help you enjoy your time aboard.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in the Soren Larsen's Voyage Handbook, available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your voyage.

Luggage:

One main piece of luggage, which should be a soft kit bag. A hard suitcase is NOT suitable as space is strictly limited.

Accommodation:

The ship has 7 x 2 berth cabins and 2 x 4 berth cabins and generally they are



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Santo 26 to 30 deg C. during the day, slightly cooler at nights, although in tropical latitudes you should expect it to be still warm and humid.

Equipment: High factor sunblock and sunglasses are recommended protection from sun on water; sea sickness tablets (Stugeron recommended); a large and small towel; earplugs, a torch and spare batteries; extra camera film; binoculars may be handy. A lightweight rain jacket would be good insurance as when it rains in the tropics, it really pours. On tropical journeys bringing insect repellent, ideally containing Deet, is vital for taking ashore. A personal waterbottle is also highly recommended.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: Three meals a day are included in the voyage price while on board the Soren Larsen. Soft drinks and alcoholic drinks are available on board and are paid for separately at the end of the trip.

allocated on a first come/first served basis, or occasionally on a needs basis.

Cabins are comfortable but compact and are intended as somewhere to keep your gear and sleep and the ship's layout is designed for having larger social areas in the main saloon. Being a traditional timber ship she does not have air conditioning and when operating in tropical latitudes it of course gets quite warm below. Some like to bring a sleeping roll mat for sleeping out on deck.

Clothing:

The ship has Musto wet weather jackets and trousers for your use. For any extended sea passage it is wise to invest in a quality wet weather jacket of our own. It would also be sensible to have warm clothes for night watches. Cotton tops, t-shirts and shorts get worn on sunny days.

Footwear:

In these tropical latitudes most go barefoot on deck. Bring a pair of trainers or velcro strapped sandals (reef walkers) for excursions ashore.

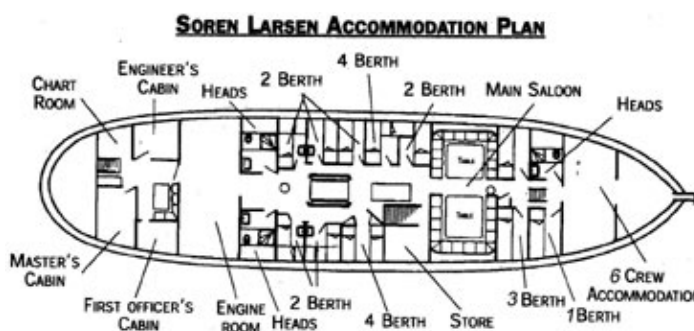
Personal Expenses

You'll need some extra money to cover drinks and souvenirs not included in voyage price, and some local currency for sightseeing and spending money at islands visited etc. Credit cards are accepted on board.

Health - Useful websites are wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/regionOceania.aspx
www.who.int/ith/map_pacific.html

Freedom and Flexibility

Voyages are planned to allow us some flexibility en route as to where we stop and anchor, how long we stay at each place and where we choose to go. We feel this is the key to the sailing authenticity and the genuine adventure of the ship's voyaging. Itineraries may change due to weather conditions, readiness of the vessel or any other reason and so are without guarantee. If winds are unfavourable we may make use of the ship's engine to maintain the schedule. All decisions regarding our route and itinerary will be made by the ship's Master.



About the Søren Larsen

Now famous for providing sail training adventure voyages and as the star of the BBC's classic series "The Onedin Line", the Soren Larsen was originally one of the last cargo carrying sailing ships trading throughout Scandinavia, northern Europe and Britain. Built of oak by the Danish ship building company of 'Soren Larsen & Sons' in Nykobing Mors in northern Denmark, she carried timber, grain and general cargo from 1949 to 1972. Purchased in 1978 by Tony Davies and his family, she was taken to Colchester on the east coast of England and lovingly restored and rigged as the graceful 19th century brigantine she is today. Captain Davies specialised in period film work and so the Soren Larsen began her working life again in early 1979 starring in "The Onedin Line". Other projects followed including "The French Lieutenant's Woman" and "Shackleton". In 1982 she was invited to pioneer sailing for the disabled for the Jubilee Sailing Trust in Southampton before being chosen, in 1987, to be Flagship of the First Fleet Re-enactment Voyage to celebrate Australia's Bicentennial. She led a fleet of squareriggers on an ambitious 22,000 mile voyage from Portsmouth via Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town, arriving to a tumultuous welcome in Sydney in 1988.



She came to Auckland in 1989 to represent Britain in the 150th Celebrations and was made

so welcome that she adopted New Zealand as her base from which to cruise the idyllic South Pacific Islands, taking many first time sailors on adventure holidays to Tahiti, Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu. In 1991 she made a passage back to Europe along the Clipper Route across the Southern Ocean and in December 1991 she became the first British tallship to round Cape Horn since 1936 and is now one of the very few authentic square riggers still operating in the 21st century.

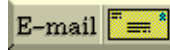
After a major refit in the UK at Gloucester, Soren Larsen returned home to Auckland. She established herself as 'Flagship of the City of Sails' and has won Tourism Awards for Adventure and Experience categories. This illustrious ship celebrated the Millennium with a spectacular round the world voyage, the 2000-2001 Global Odyssey, visiting 25 countries and sailing 30,000 nautical miles. This 2008 project sets out to visit the further corners of the Polynesian Triangle and visit the very best of the untouched tropical South Pacific.



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