


VANUATU

# Natural *charm*

HOLIDAY INN RESORT



A bride and groom are in a traditional Vanuatuan outrigger canoe on the water. The bride is in the foreground, wearing a white wedding dress and holding a large bouquet of orange and red flowers. The groom is behind her, wearing a traditional headpiece and holding a paddle. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery.

On the edge of the Pacific Rim of Fire sits the very special country of Vanuatu, home to more than 80 lush islands, postcard-ready white sand beaches and a fascinating ancient culture where the majority of people still live a village lifestyle. Its warm climate, stunning natural surrounds, ease of travel and beautiful simplicity provide the perfect location for romantic escapes and weddings.

## Tying the knot

Getting married in Vanuatu is a straightforward process. However, it's a process that's best started a few months ahead. First, an Intended Marriage Form needs to be filled out – the resort's wedding coordinator will be able to pass this on to you – and then this form needs to be lodged with the Vanuatu government at least 28 days prior to the wedding day. From there a couple will need to be in Vanuatu at least three working days prior to the wedding.

Plus the following will also need to be provided:

- Birth certificates and valid passports
- Divorce papers (if applicable)
- Death certificate (if a previous spouse has passed away)
- One witness for each person to prove your identity





TAMANU ON THE BEACH



WARWICK LE LAGON RESORT & SPA



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IRIRIKI ISLAND RESORT & SPA

## WELCOME TO NATURE'S PLAYGROUND

Port Vila on the island of Efate, is the commercial centre of Vanuatu and the first touchdown for visitors. Surrounded by a beautiful natural harbour and with stunning views from its lush hillsides, the capital hums with locals going about their business and tourists exploring its fantastic choice of French-inspired eateries and shopping. It is also Vanuatu's centre for adrenalin enthusiasts – with parasailing, ziplining, kayaking, surfing and jet boating just some of the many experiences on offer.

While Port Vila has more than enough to offer in the natural beauty department, with its acclaimed diving sites and marine sanctuaries (snorkelling the marine sanctuary on Hideaway Island is a treat!) those wanting to go further afield for more remote activities and sightseeing opportunities can do so easily with day trips from the capital.

Vanuatu is home to many active volcanoes. A short plane ride from Port Vila is Tanna Island, where visitors can experience the natural fireworks of Mt Yasur. It takes just 45 minutes to hike the mountain on foot, or those wanting a more chilled-out adventure can park their four-wheel-drive just minutes from the crater rim. All will be rewarded with the spewing of hot magma skyward every few minutes.

Diving and snorkelling enthusiasts will find their paradise on Espiritu Santo Island (Santo). Just a 10-minute boat ride from Port Vila, the island's rich World War II history has left a playground of wrecks to explore. Million Dollar Point offers tonnes of dumped surplus army equipment (Jeeps, plane parts) ready for an underwater investigation.

As well as being a natural oasis, Santo has a fascinating history. During the war, the pretty island was home to 40,000 US troops, who used the island as a base for supplies and recovery. Alongside rich ecosystems, with coral that teems with vibrant marine life, is a wealth of wreckages for snorkellers and divers to explore.

The most famous is the *SS President Coolidge*, the world's biggest, most accessible wreck. The US luxury liner was being used as a troop ship during World War II, when she struck a mine and sank, killing about





5000 people. Experienced divers can visit the stern at 60 metres where you can see the ship's letters, propeller and rudder.

As well as diving, visitors can hike to war remnants, kayak or cycle the coast, explore caves and experience unique vegetation and wildlife.

A favourite for visitors is to paddle a traditional outrigger canoe to spectacular blue holes, where they can swing from giant banyan trees into the freshwater spring. Santo has some of the best accessible beaches. Champagne Beach is a must with its soft white sand and turquoise water.

In terms of accommodation for weddings, honeymoons and romantic getaways, there are plenty of options in Vanuatu. They range from large brand name resorts to beautiful boutique properties – the only difficulty is choosing which one to stay in.

## PLACES TO STAY

### Breakas Beach Resort

For an award winning adults-only resort, try Breakas Beach Resort just 10 minutes from Port Vila on Pango Peninsula. This intimate getaway prides itself on its "feet in the sand" philosophy and offers a number of packages for exclusive wedding ceremonies on its private beach. Breakas is also perfect for a couples retreat or honeymoon escape with its 63 beachfront fares offering a charming alternative to classic hotel accommodation.

Relax the afternoon away with a massage at the beachfront spa, followed by a dip in the 22-metre infinity pool, which drops away into the ever-changing outlook of the Pacific Ocean. Then indulge in one of life's most relaxing romantic activities – dinner served under the stars. Famous for its "La Table sur La Plage", guests can enjoy the resort's carefully crafted meals alfresco, while taking in the positive ions of the lapping waves.

### Iririki Island Resort & Spa

Just a three minute ferry ride from Port Vila is Iririki Island Resort & Spa where seclusion and convenience meet. The resort specialises in wedding planning and can cater for functions of up to 200 people in its luscious tropical setting.

Featuring a new wedding cabana, the resort offers eight types of accommodation, from penthouses and stylish ocean view apartments to waterfront bungalows and humble island fares to suit a variety of wedding guest needs.

Those on a romantic getaway or honeymoon can enjoy the romantic Azure Restaurant with views of Port Vila Harbour, indulge in a private balcony dinner with mesmerising sunsets or sip cocktails in the four-tier swimming pool. For the ultimate relaxation, Iririki offers rejuvenating spa treatments from atop the peak of the island. Bliss.

Ten minutes' drive from Port Vila's Airport is the idyllic Holiday Inn Resort, which boasts 148 rooms, two pool areas, a golf course, multiple bar areas and a veranda restaurant

### Holiday Inn Resort

The Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu "Tugeta" Wedding Package includes a warrior escort on a traditionally decorated wedding canoe, a personal wedding coordinator and a minister or celebrant with all the necessary documentation. The happy couple and up to 20 guests can also enjoy an hour of celebratory canapes and drinks as part of the deal. In addition to the wedding package Iririki offers guests and brides specials at its "Namele Day Spa" which features indulgent massages in its lagoon-side massage cabana.

### Tamanu on the Beach

For a hint of the Caribbean in a stunning, secluded hideaway, just 20 minutes drive from downtown Port Vila, there's Tamanu on the Beach. Home to a picture postcard stretch of private white sand beach, this is the kind of resort that makes lucky couples feel like they're a million miles away from anywhere. With sand between the toes and waves on the doorstep, Tamanu is an ideal choice for a romantic getaway or wedding.

Guest can relax in the comfort of one of 15 modern, Caribbean-style luxury villas. On top of that, the resort offers Vanuatu's only purpose built wedding chapel on the beach. Which means couples have a tough choice - get married on one of Vanuatu's finest white sand beaches, or in a stunning beachfront wedding chapel. Either way, the day will be wonderful.



### The Moso

The Moso is an adults-only retreat for intimate boutique honeymoons and romantic getaways, with only 10 guests staying at any one time. With personalised service, guests can put their feet up and let the valet cater to their needs. A romantic getaway package at this delightful escape includes a sunset cruise with sparkling wine, a cheese platter, a candlelit dinner on the beach with a bonfire, two full body massages plus transfers.

Just a five-minute boat transfer from the mainland, The Moso has a day spa, bistro and bar, a freshwater swimming pool, overwater hammocks and a private beach. Accommodation choices include two beachfront villas, a garden villa and two private plunge pool villas with outdoor bath tubs (aromatherapy dip anyone?). There is also a king-bedroom beach house. And for those who prefer a little more activity, scuba diving and snorkelling, deep-sea fishing and explorations to turtle sanctuaries and volcanoes can be arranged.

### The Havannah

Back on the mainland is an adults-only resort on the Havannah Harbour. While The Havannah Resort is only 10 minutes from the hustle and bustle of Port Vila, it feels worlds away – and operates at village pace. The harbour is a beautiful playground for diving, snorkelling, fishing, kayaking, stand up paddleboarding and sailing, or swim in the split-level unity pool.

Overlooking Efate's premier white sand beach, The Havannah is a family owned business with six Waterfront Villas, 10 Lagoon Pool and Garden Villas, and two Deluxe Waterfront Villas. Guests can eat in the Harbourside restaurant or choose from many private dining settings – either way you'll be getting innovative French and Asian-influenced food. Delish.

The Havannah caters for weddings big and small – guests can invite friends and family or enjoy a small, personal ceremony for two. Couples can choose to marry on the beach or in the tropical gardens and the

local villagers will ensure the wedding has traditional Melanesian touches. The indulgent wedding package includes body treatments, pampering for the bride, champagne for the special moments, wedding bouquets, floral decorations and a three-course dinner for two on the beach. A wedding coordinator and venue set up is also included.

### Aore Island Resort, Santo

Overlooking the crystal-clear waters of Espiritu Santo is a beautiful base for exploring and experiencing the island. Aore (pronounced Ow-Ree) Island Resort is a welcoming boutique escape on the quiet, nature-rich island.

The studio bungalows at Aore Island Resort are adults-only and are available either on the beachfront or set back in lush tropical gardens. The resort has its own private marine sanctuary where visitors can swim with tropical fish just metres away from their bedrooms.

The Aore Day Spa offers a tranquil place to relax and unwind in traditional Melanesian style. The spa staff are all experienced in the Melanesian healing art of massage.

The resort offers a unique diving experience – it works closely with selected local operators to offer a variety of options from a fun shore dive to multiple boat dives on world-class wrecks and untouched outer reefs. The service is ideal for couples and small groups, catering for a variety of interests and experience. The resort also provides diving guides and scuba courses for first-timers.

Couples wanting to marry at Aore can choose a bespoke wedding experience tailored to their needs with an in-house wedding planner on hand. The resort can cater for large weddings parties with exclusive use of the resort, smaller groups or just the special couple. There are a number of locations in the resort for a picture-perfect wedding – choose from the garden, the beach or the newly renovated Nakamai (restaurant and bar). 🌸

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*The Havannah*  
VANUATU



## Nicole and Jarrod Katene

### Warwick Le Lagon Resort & Spa, Port Vila

Just a five minute taxi ride from Port Vila, is Warwick Le Lagon Resort & Spa, situated on more than 70 acres of tropical gardens bordering the sparkling Erakor Lagoon. The resort has a reputation for appealing to families and couples because of its variety of accommodation, eateries and facilities. It has more than 140 rooms including over-water villas, pool villas and bungalows, and a choice of three restaurants and bars including a swim-up pool bar. The resort also offers conference and events centres, a kids club and the Oasis Spa with five therapy rooms.

This was just the ticket for Nicole and Jarrod Katene, who had their wedding there in October. The couple had attended a cousin's wedding in Fiji a few years earlier and fallen in love with the idea of an island wedding. With family in both Australia and New Zealand, Vanuatu was a convenient meeting point and with capacity to accommodate their 60 guests, Warwick Le Lagon Resort and Spa was ideal. "Guests didn't have to leave the resort, and we could show off the culture we fell in love with when we first visited Vanuatu," says Nicole.

"We had the ceremony overlooking the water and the reception was on the sand under an open marquee. It was unexplainable, like a fairy tale! Getting married so close to the sand and water really set the tone for the wedding - giving it a romantic but vibrant seaside-atmosphere where we were truly able to immerse ourselves in the beauty of the island."

The couple organised the accommodation and wedding directly through the resort, and while the couple says having an Island wedding required some extra organisation and a change of pace, it was well worth it for the benefits.

Nicole says the wedding planner at the resort was an enormous help. "I honestly could not have planned it without her, we both built a great relationship and what was achieved was definitely beyond my expectations, including special touches that were unique to Vanuatu."

IMAGES COURTESY OF [WWW.GROOVY-BANANA.COM](http://WWW.GROOVY-BANANA.COM)



These included a cultural band, native flowers and "the amazing people of Vanuatu, who are just so lovely".

Instead of a honeymoon, Nicole and Jarrod stayed at the resort an extra week with their immediate friends and family. "We wanted to relax and spend quality time together before we went our own ways."

The couple says the wedding was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. "My husband and I cannot praise the island of Vanuatu and Warwick Le Lagon Resort and Spa enough. We are so proud it was an epic experience to remember for a lifetime. If we could do it all over again we would."

## CAPTURING THE SPECIAL MOMENT

There to capture Nicole and Jarrod's special moment were resident photographers Gaëlle Méheut and Benoît Heurtault (or Gaga and Ben) from Groovy Banana. The duo's approach to photography is to capture each magic moment as it unfolds.

"We will be there for all major milestones of the day, including the crazy dance moves of the groom, but we are also looking for all those simple moments in between, when people are truly themselves," say the couple who left their jobs in France a few years ago to move to Vanuatu.

Gaga had lived on the tropical island for a time as a child and Ben and Gaga, who now have two children of their own, are settled in Port Vila ready to capture both still and moving images of your tropical wedding story.

[www.groovy-banana.com](http://www.groovy-banana.com)

A romantic photograph of a bride and groom standing in a lush, tropical field. The groom, on the left, is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and khaki pants, looking down at the bride. The bride, on the right, is wearing a white lace wedding dress and has a flower in her hair, looking up at the groom. They are surrounded by tall green grass and yellow flowers. In the background, there is a traditional building with a thatched roof and palm trees under a bright sky.

### *Nicole's top five tips for an island wedding:*

1. Visit the location first
2. Decide on a budget
3. Have a wedding planner
4. Send out the invitations early, I sent mine out 14 months prior to the day
5. Do your research on suppliers

“My husband and I cannot praise the Island of Vanuatu and Warwick Le Lagon Resort and Spa enough. We are so proud it was an epic experience to remember for a lifetime. If we could do it all over again we would.”





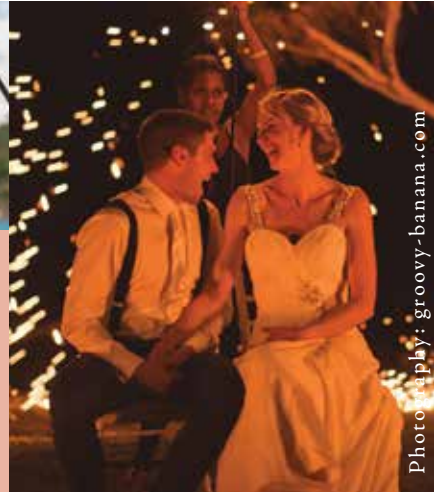
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HOLIDAY INN RESORT



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## Wedding Planner

**Erinah Kalo**

Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu

**How long have you had this role at Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu?**

1 year six months

**What sort of lead-in time do you require to get married there?**

We prefer approximately two months' notice, as wedding documents must be lodged with local Vanuatu authorities three weeks prior to the wedding date. This isn't usually a problem, as most couples book well in advance, but we have been known to create amazing events with short notice too.

**How many weddings do you do a month?**

We host at least two weddings a month, which is wonderful. We receive about three wedding inquiries per day for 2018 and even 2019, which is exciting!

**What are the unique things your resort can offer?**

- The Wedding Cabana located on the shore of the lagoon is the perfect location for a romantic ceremony. Our chief can escort the beautiful bride by a traditional canoe laden with tropical flowers to the cabana where she and her husband-to-be exchange vows. It's an amazing experience.
- Our Overwater Villas situated on our very own private Erongo Private Island. The villas have direct access to the lagoon from the private balcony and our resident chef can deliver breakfast by traditional canoe for guests to enjoy while overlooking the water.
- Family Suites - Our Family Suite has been designed with kids (big and small) in mind. This vibrant 56 square-metre room combines a King Room with a banyan tree house-themed room for kids.

**What are the main benefits of getting married at a resort?**

All things are taken care of, from the early stages of planning, right through to the very last detail on the big day. We have the experience, knowledge and the resources to make sure the day is special and unique. All the wedding party need to do is to relax and leave the rest to us.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

To plan and be organised. I also love meeting so many incredible couples, each with their own style and thoughts of a dream wedding. Seeing the bride and groom react to all the details come together on the wedding day makes me so happy to be a part of their special day.

**What's the biggest challenge of your job?**

When we have to make a call on Plan B! That day when the weather does not play ball and we have to change the original confirmed plans. However, we always have a Plan B up our sleeve and ensure that the couple still has the most amazing day. There is a solution to all challenges!

**What are Top 5 things a planner needs to find out from a couple?**

1. Their expectations and what they'd like their day to be, how they'd like it to feel.
2. Beach or garden ceremony? What is the picture they have in their minds?
3. The budget and estimated number of guests
4. The wedding date to ensure there is availability
5. Why us and why Vanuatu as their wedding destination. That helps us add the personal touch to their day.



Erinah Kalo



**What are some of ways you can personalise a wedding?**

Each couple has their own style and dream. It is my job to find out what these are and to make it become reality, based on what is available here in Vanuatu.

**What is the best advice you would give a couple?**

Planning a destination wedding and choosing the destination can sometimes be difficult. First you need to select a destination, then you need a wedding planner who knows that destination and knows what is available that can be tailored to your needs, to ensure expectations are met. Vanuatu is the most amazing destination for your dream wedding.

All couples need to do is get in touch with me and, as the wedding planner, I will ensure your day is perfect here at Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu. We believe a once-in-a-lifetime occasion deserves an idyllic destination where everything can be taken care of. We bring you, family and friends together to seal the love shared, and host an event where everyone can relax, enjoy and have fun!

**What makes Vanuatu a great place to get married?**

Vanuatu is between a two or three-hour flight from New Zealand and Australia. It is a tropical paradise with white sandy beaches, crystal blue waters, tranquil surrounds that will create a nice backdrop for your special day. You will be amazed by the photos which will create lasting memories! It is also the ideal place for guests to relax and have a holiday – using your wedding day as the best excuse ever!

**Do you help with honeymoon plans too? If so, where would you recommend a couple to go to?**

Here with us at Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu! After the big day, kick back and relax in your Overwater Villa, with your own private beach, with the full service of the resort just a short stroll or phone call away.

**What's your key tip to avoiding wedding day stress?**

Stay organised. I help with that.

**What is the best time of the year to get married in Vanuatu?**

We are definitely a year-round destination. But guests find it most comfortable from April to October, when temperatures average 18° to 28° Celsius.

**Do you have any memorable wedding stories you can share?**

Deana and Michael's wedding on November 3, 2016. See the Great Wedding Destination story on the resort's website.

**Sarah and Mitchell, 29 March 2017**

*"We had our wedding at Holiday Inn and stayed for a week. It was amazing, we had the best time and would recommend it to anyone. Thanks to Erinah and Benjamin for looking after us." - Sarah, Facebook review.*



# There's more to do in Vanuatu



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