



Flying high over New Caledonia's lagoon.

# FLYING BY HEART

NEW CALEDONIA

**Shaun Busuttill** *cops an eyeful of New Cal's best view from the passenger seat of a microlight.*

Photography by **Shaun Busuttill**

The Pipistrel Virus ultralight gathers speed as the early morning light brightens the runaway and U2's 'With or Without You' plays in my headset. The broken white lines on the tarmac flicker – *almost* in sync with Adam Clayton's hypnotic bass line – before merging then disappearing as we take off, replaced by the landscape that unfurls around me like a map.

To my left, just beyond Jean-Yves – the French pilot actually flying this thing – is the familiar backdrop of interior New Caledonia: patches of verdant forest in contrast to excavated sections of reddish earth dug up during nickel mining. On the right is a kaleidoscope of blues

and greens, converging in just a small section of the world's largest lagoon. As we bank towards it at an altitude of 610 metres, I spy giant manta rays gliding effortlessly through the crystalline water below – sparkling in the morning sunlight – and I can't help but feel as if I've been transported to the pages of some glossy Pacific Island brochure.

I'm on a 50-minute scenic flight bound for the gorgeous Heart of Voh – a natural mangrove formation resembling a heart when seen from above – in the country's Northern Province. I've just spent the past three days exploring the French territory's diverse geographical landscape by car. But now, as I glide over New Caledonia's sacred heart and gape at the almost unreal picture below me – seemingly drawn onto the earth by some cosmic van Gogh – I'm certain I've found my favourite perspective. And that's coming straight from the heart.

## GET PLANNING



### GET THERE

Aircalin flies direct to Noumea from major Australian cities on the east coast. Return fares from Sydney start at around AU\$549.

[aircalin.com](http://aircalin.com)



### STAY THERE

Hotel Hibiscus is a modern three-star property in Kone. Double rooms start at AU\$220 a night including breakfast.

[hotelhibiscus.nc](http://hotelhibiscus.nc)



### TOUR THERE

A 50-minute scenic flight over the Heart of Voh costs AU\$220 per person. Flights can be booked through Hotel Hibiscus.



NEW CALEDONIA

The Incredible Heart of Voh.