

New Caledonia

After the political shenanigans of 2011 when President Gomés was replaced by Harold Martin as President of Congress in June, 2012 has been quieter. In the French legislative elections held in June 2012, Sonia Lagarde and former president, Philippe Gomés (both from the Calédonie Ensemble (CE) (Caledonia Together)) were elected as New Caledonia's two deputies to the French National Assembly. The result is significant as it is a move away from the Rassemblement pour une Calédonie dans la République (Le Rassemblement-UMP) (The Rally-UMP): the loyalist party and its antecedents had held at least one of the seats for the past 35 years. The independentist Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) candidate also performed strongly in one of the electorates.

New Caledonia has one of the largest economies in the Pacific Island region. It has a relatively high GDP per capita but there are disparities in income distribution, both geographically and ethnically. Although New Caledonia has significant nickel resources, which account for 90 per cent of its export earnings, it is still heavily reliant on financial transfers from France which account for approximately 25 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Large financial transfers from the French government (approximately US\$1.7 billion per annum) help sustain a significant public sector. About half of this goes towards public service salaries, with the balance directed predominantly to health, education and special development projects, mostly in the Northern and Islands Provinces.

In 2011, tourism numbers picked up, reaching 111,800 (thanks largely to an increase in visitors from metropolitan France). The cruise ship sector performed well, with 135 ships and 238,000 passengers visiting in 2011, double the numbers of five years previously. A €80 million (US\$104 million) upgrade of the Tontouta airport is close to completion

Nickel (a key ingredient for stainless steel production) accounts for over 90 per

cent of New Caledonia's export earnings. Behind Russia and Canada, it is the world's third largest producer of nickel, with an estimated one quarter of the world's nickel reserves. Chrome and cobalt are also mined commercially, and deposits of iron, copper and gold have been found.

With expansion of nickel mining in both the Southern and Northern Provinces (at Goro and Koniambo respectively) by a range of private and publicly-owned companies, the nickel industry will become even more important to New Caledonia's economy, significantly increasing its contribution to GDP, and generating further employment opportunities in the longer term. However, a significant drop in global nickel prices and a fall in demand from the North Asian economies between 2007–09 saw rising unemployment. This price volatility resulted in some recognition of a need for economic diversification as a buffer against economic uncertainty.

The combination of the two new nickel mining projects (the Vale mine at Goro and the Koniambo project are expected to enter into production by mid-2013) and budgetary support from the French state will nevertheless insulate New Caledonia in the medium to long term from the worst effects of the global financial crisis. Although current economic growth is estimated well below earlier figures (3.7 per cent in 2011 compared with a range of 5–7 per cent in the years before the downturn) because of lower nickel returns, the rest of the economy has continued to perform quite well. With the current return to higher prices for nickel, prospects are even better.

The first shipment of finished product (80 containers of nickel oxide) were shipped to South Korea and China from the Vale-Inco Nickel plant (in Goro) on 6 April 2012. The official opening of the plant was delayed in June following serious damage (estimated at US\$4 billion) to the plant in May,

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1766 First sighted by Europeans.

KEY FACTS

Official name: Nouvelle Calédonie (New Caledonia)

Head of State: President of France François Hollande (PS) (from 15 May 2012), represented by High Commissioner Yves Dassonville (from 9 Nov 2007)

Head of government: President of the Congress of New Caledonia, Harold Martin (from 10 Jun 2011)

Ruling party: Grand Coalition (government post are allocated in proportion to electoral victory and support of head of government) Le Rassemblement-UMP (The Rally-UMP) (from 2007; re-elected 10 May 2009)

Area: 18,575 square km – Grande Terre island: 16,600 square km

Population: 264,022 (July 2013)*

Capital: Nouméa (on Grande Terre)

Official language: French

Currency: Comptoirs Français du Pacifique franc (CFPF) = 100 centimes

Exchange rate: CFPF90.05 per US\$ (Jul 2013); (pegged CFPF119.25 per euro)

GDP per capita: US\$41,646 (2011)*

GDP real growth: 1.90% (2011)*

GDP: US\$10.60 billion (2011)*

Inflation: 2.40% (2011)*

* estimated figure

1774 Captain James Cook named the island after the Latin name for Scotland.
1853 New Caledonia became a French colony.
1863 Nickel deposits were discovered. The displacement of villages, which stood on new mine sites, and the encroachment of settlers' cattle on Kanak (indigenous Melanesians) land provoked several rebellions, all of which were suppressed by the French authorities.
1864–97 The island grew as a penal colony.
1878 A Kanak revolt led to over a 1,000 deaths.
1942 New Caledonia was transformed into a US military base during the Second World War.
1946 The colony became a French territory.
1980s Tensions increased between the Kanaks and European settlers, principally over land.
1988 Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front), signed the Martignon Accord which divided New Caledonia into three distinct regions. It also proposed an end to rule from Paris and agreed a vote on independence in 1998.
1989 Tjibaou was assassinated.
1998 The referendum agreed in 1988 was postponed after the signing, between the government of France and FLNKS and Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), of the Nouméa Accord on 5 May, giving increased autonomy and a referendum on independence to be held sometime between 1914–20.
1999 The French Loi Organique of 19 March agreed changes to the constitution, changing the national assembly into a more autonomous congress and restricting voting rights to those who have been resident for a minimum of five years.
2001 The territory's president, Jean Lèques, (RPCR), resigned. Pierre Frogier (RPCR) replaced him.
2002 Negotiations started on the future adoption of the euro. Land disputes caused ethnic clashes between native Kanaks and Wallisian immigrants.
2004 Parliamentary elections resulted in a four-party coalition government. Marie-Noëlle Thémereau (Avénir Ensemble (AE) (Future Together)) was elected president.
2005 Michel Mathieu was appointed High Commissioner.
2006 The French parliament voted on constitutional amendments to restrict the voting rights of settlers, who must be resident for 10 years before eligibility to vote.
2007 Marie-Noëlle Thémereau resigned and Harold Martin was elected President

of the Congress. High Commissioner Mathieu resigned and was replaced by Yves Dassonville.
2008 Despite scientific claims that the rich coral lagoon in Goro would not be damaged by the release of liquid mining effluent, residents remained unconvinced and warned the authorities that they would keep a watch on the surrounding environment.
2009 A five-month epidemic of dengue fever, which intensified during the summer heat wave, killed two and infected over 3,000. Around 100,000 litres of toxic sulphuric acid spilled into North Bay Creek, killing thousands of fish and crustaceans in Prony Bay in the Southern Province. The Worldwide Fund for Nature called for the licence of the Vale-Inco Nickel plant in Goro to be suspended pending plant monitoring and emergency measures being brought up to specification. A fine of US\$5,000 was imposed in 2012. In Territorial Congress elections, anti-independence parties won 36 seats out of 54 and nationalists 10. Parliament elected Philippe Gomès as president of the Congress.
2010 President Gomes was indicted on suspicion of bribery, that his company had won a US\$1.3 million contract to supply electrical units to Vale-Inco to the Brazilian mining company, which in turn had been granted an operating licence when Gomes was president of the South Province in 2005–06. Albert Dupuy was appointed as high commissioner.
2011 The government of President Gomés collapsed after ministers belonging to Union Calédonienne (UC) (Caledonian Union) resigned from the cabinet in February. In March, parliament elected a new government and Harold Martin was chosen as president. However, Martin's government collapsed on the same day following the resignation of one of its members. Harold Martin was re-elected as president on 17 March but again his government collapsed within the day after the resignations of some of his cabinet. Parliament re-elected Harold Martin as President of Congress in June.
2012 Almost 80 containers of nickel oxide were shipped to South Korea and China on 6 April, the first shipment of finished product from the Vale-Inco Nickel (in Goro). The French presidential election was held on 22 April, with a runoff on 6 May. The runoff was won by François Hollande (Parti Socialiste (PS) (Socialist Party)) with 51.63 per cent of the vote; turnout was 80.35 per cent. On 15 May François Hollande took office as president and Head of State. The official opening of the Vale-Inco Nickel plant (in Goro) was delayed in June following serious damage

to the plant in May, estimated at US\$4 billion.

2013 Cook Islands premier, Henry Puna, visited in July as part of his assignment as the head of a Pacific Islands Forum delegation monitoring progress in self-determination efforts in New Caledonia.

Political structure

Constitution

Under the Nouméa Accord of 1998, New Caledonia has a special status within the French constitution. The local government, elected by universal suffrage, has wider degrees of autonomy regarding legislative issues. Up until 2010, France will retain power only over justice, public order, currency, defence and foreign affairs outside the South Pacific region. France is also obliged to conduct up to three referenda on independence between 2013–18. Until then, the High Commissioner has overall responsibility for the territory while the president of the Territorial Congress is the head of local government.

New Caledonia is represented in the French parliament by two deputies and two senators

The territory is divided into three provinces, each with its own assembly and local executive. There is an economic and social committee, which has an advisory role, and a Custom Senate, which advises the government on matters affecting the indigenous Kanak community.

Form of state

Self-governing territory of France

The executive

Executive power is exercised by the High Commissioner, with delegated power, for local administration, from France. The president of Congress advises the High Commissioner on matters of local jurisdiction.

The Congress elects the president who represents the congress and directs administrative services aided by an 11-member executive council drawn from Congress members (with at least one member from all political parties represented).

National legislature

Under the Loi Organique (Organic Act, 1999) the Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (Congress of New Caledonia) has enhanced powers to elect the government and enact legislation, separately from France. It has 54-members elected by proportional representation from the provinces of New Caledonia (32 from the South Province, 15 from the Northern Province and 7 from the Province des Iles Loyauté). All members serve for five-year terms.

To be eligible to vote for congress members, voters must have been resident for

10 years and resident for 20 years to vote in referenda scheduled in 2015–20.

Last elections

10 May 2009 (parliamentary)

Results: Parliamentary: Rassemblement pour une Calédonie dans la République (Le Rassemblement-UMP) (The Rally-UMP) won 13 seats (out of 54), Calédonie Ensemble (CE) (Caledonia Together) 12, Union Calédonienne (UC) (Caledonian Union) 8, Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance (UNI) (National Union for Independence) 8, Avenir Ensemble (Future Together) 6, Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) 3, Parti Travailleiste (Labour Party) 3, Rassemblement pour la Calédonie 2, and Libération Kanak Socialiste (RPCR) (Rally for Caledonia in the Republic) 1. Turnout was 76.44 per cent.

Next elections

2014 (parliamentary)

Political parties

Ruling party

Grand Coalition (government post are allocated in proportion to electoral victory and support of head of government) Le Rassemblement-UMP (The Rally-UMP) (from 2007; re-elected 10 May 2009)

Main opposition party

Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) alliance

Political situation

With one of the world's largest reserves of nickel, the community in New Caledonia has been trying to balance the need for foreign direct investment to boost the economy and the damage mining can do to tribal lands and the environment. The indigenous Kanak people are opposed to the Goro-Nickel mining operation and since a court in 2006 rejected its legal bid to halt the biggest industrial project in the South Pacific have taken direct actions in their attempt to halt production. An estimated US\$10 million in damage was caused to heavy machinery and vehicles in the US\$1.88 billion Goro-Nickel plant when a riot, inspired by the Rheebeu Nuu Committee, broke out in 2006. However, after police imposed rule, such action did not stop the project although the owner (Brazilian mining company CVRD) did review its investment and called for talks covering all aspects of local opposition, to reach a consensus. The plant was 70 per cent completed by 2008, after US\$2.8 billion had been invested the expectation is that 4,500 tonnes per annum of cobalt will be produced by 2012. While mining output rose by 20 per cent in 2007, nickel production fell by 7 per cent, nevertheless world prices for commodities have given windfall bonuses.

In 2007, for the first time in its history, the National Assembly in France had to amend the French Constitution specifically to allow New Caledonia to impose voting restrictions in local elections, in accordance with the 1998 Nouméa Accord. Only residents who have lived in New Caledonia for 20 years may vote in local elections and referenda, including those due to be held between 2015–2020 concerning New Caledonia's independence from France.

Population

264,022 (July 2013)*

More than 70 per cent of the total population live in the south of La Grand-Terre Island.

Last census: August 2004: 230,789

Population density: 11 inhabitants per square km.

Annual growth rate: 1.8 per cent (2003)

Ethnic make-up

Of the total population, 45 per cent are Melanesian Kanaks, 34 per cent Europeans (mainly French), 20 per cent are Wallisians and the remainder are mainly Tahitian, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

The wealthy southern province is mainly inhabited by Europeans and the remainder of the country is mostly populated by the poorer ethnic Kanak community.

Education

Education is provided free for the compulsory years. Primary education covers ages six to 11 years and secondary education from aged 12 to a maximum of 18 years. There is a major shortage in the supply of trained secondary school teachers. Public expenditure on education is typically 7 per cent of GNP. Nearly US\$30 million was allocated, up to 2005, to implement the government's policy of equity funding for the early childhood education sector. The government also doubled funding for adult literacy, setting aside US\$18 million to fund the Adult Literacy Strategy. More emphasis has been given to Māori and Pacific children with special educational needs.

In 2005 the government introduced a new primary school curriculum which places more emphasis on local culture and history and allows lessons to be taught in Kanak. The changes will come into force in early 2006.

Compulsory years: Six to 15

Enrolment rate: 101 per cent gross primary enrolment of the relevant age group (including repeaters) (World Bank 2003).

Pupils per teacher: 18 in primary schools.

Health

Life expectancy: 74 years (estimate 2003)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:

2.5 births per woman (World Bank)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): Seven deaths per 1,000 live births.

Main cities

Nouméa (capital, on Grande Terre, estimated population 106,105 in 2012); Le Mont Dore (27,909), Dumbéa (24,852), Païta (17,483), Wé (10,616).

Languages spoken

Thirty Canaque languages are spoken. English is often understood.

Official language/s

French

Media

Press

In French, the only dailies newspaper is *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* (www.info.lnc.nc), weeklies include *Télé 7 Jours*, *Les Nouvelles Hebdo*, *L'Echo Calédonien*, *Dimanche Patinane* and *Femmes*, which is a women's magazine.

Broadcasting

The French overseas broadcaster RFO (www.rfo.fr) provides locally produced radio and television news and imported French programmes, as well as internet TV services.

Radio: RFO operates Radio France Internationale (<http://www.rfi.fr>). Private local radio services operate 24 hours a day; stations include NRJ (www.nrj.nc) and Radio Djiido (www.radiodjiido.nc).

Television: From France, RFO Nouvelle-Calédonie (<http://nouvelcaledonie.rfo.fr>) offers a fully range of programmes. Pay-to-view TV is also available.

Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net

Economy

There is a lack of economic diversity; however as New Caledonia has large deposits of nickel ore, around 25 per cent of world deposits, its economy is largely buoyed by sales of ore (which account for around 12 per cent of global nickel production) and from smelting enterprises, such as the development of the Koniambo deposit. The new and improved infrastructure made necessary by building the nickel plants will also benefit other sectors of the economy, such as tourism, education and health. Other activities include manufacturing of consumer goods and intermediate products such as electrical components and capital goods such as mechanical and electrical automotive parts. Other components of the economy include financial transfers from France and foreign aid. Agriculture includes production of premium coffee, meat and

other food processing, while aquaculture includes fish processing and packaging. The territory's other big source of foreign exchange is its tourist sector, which had been rising steadily since the 1990s, with cruise arrivals increasing. However by 2009 tourist numbers had slumped to a 15-year low with just 99,379 arrivals; numbers did not increase in 2010. Citizens of New Caledonia have one of the highest per capita incomes in the Pacific region (after Australia and New Zealand), which had risen to an estimated US\$41,646 in 2011. GDP growth in 2007 was 0.5 per cent remained constant until 2011 when it rose to 1.5 per cent in 2010, when global trade strengthened and economic nickel exports increased. Although the French military presence in New Caledonia has been a source of internal tension, it also makes a significant contribution to the local economy. France contributes around 25 per cent of GDP, 80 per cent of which covers healthcare, education and public sector wages. New Caledonia uses the euro-pegged Comptoirs Français du Pacifique franc (CFPF) as its currency. The government began negotiations in 2002 over the adoption of the euro, which would boost the territory's chances of attracting investment and tourism, but has been unsuccessful in overcoming the objections of pro-independence groups.

External trade

As a *collectivité sui generis* of France, New Caledonia is a Special Territories of the European Union and apply its rulings and trade agreements.

Imports

Main imports are machinery and equipment, fuels, chemicals and foodstuffs.

Main sources: France (22.1 per cent of total in 2011), Singapore (14.6 per cent), China (10 per cent).

Exports

Main exports are processed nickel ore and processed nickel, mechanical and electrical components and fish

Main destinations: Japan (20.1 per cent of total in 2011), France (17.9 per cent), Australia (13.2 per cent).

The agricultural sector typically accounts for as little as 2 per cent of GDP. Although the soil is fertile, only 10 per cent of the land area is cultivated. There is a ratio of around 50-50 for locally grown to imported foods. The number of farmers has fallen by almost 50 per cent since the early 1990s, with the greatest percentage loss in the northern province.

About one-third of the main island's land area is devoted to cattle raising, chiefly on the central and north-west coasts. Exports of coffee and copra crops have increased since the 1990s.

Tropical shrimp farming has been developed, although the farms are fragile as there is always the risk of disease. Fishing is both for local consumption and for export, mainly to Japan.

Annual fish production typically includes 2,800t marine fish, 1,900t other seafood and 343,000 units of pearls and shells. Domestic forests supply about 35 per cent of timber demand, with some reforestation undertaken.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector typically contributes 20 per cent to GDP. Main industries include nickel processing, domestic equipment, clothing, foodstuffs and beer. There are three major nickel processing projects in the pipeline. New Caledonia's only existing nickel processing plant, owned by the Société le Nickel (SLN), is undergoing renovations to increase production from 60,000 tonnes to 75,000 tonnes annually. SLN will increase activity at one of its mines to supply enough ore for the plant's increased capacity. The project is expected to be completed in 2006.

Construction of a US\$1.50 billion Koniambo nickel processing plant in the north, with production starting in 2008 is projected to output 60,000 tonnes of nickel a year.

Construction of a plant in the south, at Goro, is due to be completed by 2007. At an estimated capital cost of US\$1.88 billion it is expected to produce 60,000 tonnes of nickel and 4,300-5,100 tonnes of cobalt annually, beginning in 2007.

Tourism

New Caledonia combines a traditional Melanesian culture overlaid with a French flavour. As such, it attracts many French visitors, fleeing a bleak Northern Hemisphere winter. The seas around the islands are popular sites for water sports including diving and fishing. The lagoons which include mangroves and the barrier reef, are listed as World Heritage Sites by Unesco. Inland the diverse terrain also offers a variety of activities.

Visitors numbers fell below 100,000 in 2011, which had been relatively constant at above this until 2010. The government has instigated measures to offer value-added holidays, including festivals held on different islands each year and a proposal for tourists to stay with local people and experience the culture first hand by fishing, working in 'gardens' (smallholder plots) and exploring the islands. There is a range of accommodation, from hotels to bungalows to traditional huts. Infrastructure to enhance the market is still being constructed in the Northern Province, whereas in the

Southern Province there are more amenities and internationally branded hotel chains.

Mining

New Caledonia holds between 25-40 per cent of known world nickel deposits and is one of the world's largest producers.

There are several mines in New Caledonia, the principal ones are located at Koniambo, Tiebaghi, Thio, Kouaoua, Nepoui-Kopeto and Etoile du Nord.

The potential production capacity of the seven main nickel mining operators making up Société Le Nickel (SLN) has been estimated at 830,000 tonnes a year, with reserves expected to last until 2012. SLN is 60 per cent owned by France's Eramet and 30 per cent by the Société Minière de Sud Pacific (SMSP), which is owned by ethnic Kanak groups.

Nickel and ferronickel production accounts for up to 10 per cent of GDP and contributes 80 per cent of foreign earnings.

Chrome extraction is undertaken. There are also deposits of iron ore, copper, manganese, lead and zinc.

SLN is expanding its smelting plant in Nouméa, and in order to supply enough ore for the plant's increased capacity, it is increasing production at one of its mines from 250,000 tonnes to one million tonnes a year, creating around 200 new jobs. The project is to be completed in 2006.

Production in the new Goro Nickel plant was scheduled to be 20,000 tonnes by December 2012. The nickel ore is processed into nickel oxide locally before being exported to a refinery in Canada, also owned by the Brazilian mining company, Vale SA, which owns the Goro Nickel mine.

There are no known natural gas or oil reserves. Consumption of oil was 13,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2008, all of which was imported.

Imported coal was 336,000 tonnes in 2008, used in power generation.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 350MW in 2007, producing over 1.6 million kilowatt hours. Électricité et Eau de Caledonie and Enercal are responsible for electricity generation and supply.

Around 80 per cent of electricity generation is produced by thermal generators. Renewable sources of energy, including hydroelectricity and wind generation, are growing in importance. The nickel extraction and smelting sectors consume around 75 per cent of electricity output.

Banking and insurance**Central bank**

The Paris-based Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer (IEOM) provides all central banking services except foreign exchange reserves.

Main financial centre

Nouméa

Time

GMT plus 10 hours

Geography

New Caledonia comprises one large island and several smaller ones, situated in the south Pacific Ocean, about 1,500km (930 miles) east of Queensland, Australia. The main island is La Grand-Terre, it is long and narrow. Rugged mountains divide the west of the island from the east, and there is little flat land. The nearby Loyalty Islands and a third group of islands, the uninhabited Chesterfield Islands, lie about 400km north-west of the main island.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

Hot (average temperature 26 degrees Celsius (C)), with occasional tropical depressions and cyclones, from mid-November to mid-April; and cool (average temperature 23 degrees C), with moderate rains, from mid-May to mid-September. Rainfall is quite irregular and can be extremely heavy. The east coast (at about two metres per annum) has twice the rainfall of the west; the wettest months are January, February and March.

Entry requirements**Passports**

Required by all, except certain French nationals; all passports must have at least six months validity from the date of visit.

Visa

Required by all, except citizens of EU, North America, Australasia and Japan, for stays up to one month; this includes business trips by representatives of foreign entities with an invitation from a local company or organisation. Proof of adequate funds for stay, an itinerary, a guarantee of repatriation if necessary and return/onward ticket are also required. For further exceptions, full details and a copy of the application form visit www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/thema/dossier.gb.asp and follow the path (going to France) to the database.

Currency advice/regulations

The import and export of local and foreign currencies are unrestricted but amounts over CFPF 900,000 must be declared.

Customs

Personal effects are allowed entry duty-free. Duty is not payable on goods of

EU origin, although all imported goods are subject to a general tax, and an increasing number of goods require import licences. Expensive items, such as laptop computers, may require proof of ownership when departing.

Prohibited imports

Parrots, parakeets, pigeons, turtle-doves and non-domestic mammals; plants and seeds require a health certificate. Export of birds of paradise and objects of ethnographic interest are prohibited.

Health (for visitors)**Mandatory precautions**

Vaccination certificate required for yellow fever if travelling from infected area.

Advisable precautions

Vaccination for diphtheria, tuberculosis, hepatitis A and B, polio, TB, tetanus, typhoid. There is a rabies risk.

There has been an increased risk of dengue fever, visitors are advised to use mosquito repellent, a mosquito net at night, and wear protective clothing at dawn and dusk, to reduce the risk.

Hotels

Tourist hotels are classified by category and size on the five-star system. Hotel tax is levied, the amount varying according to classification. Details of rural or tribal lodgings in some Melanesian villages and areas are available from tourist information offices. Upper-end bungalow accommodation is growing.

Credit cards

Most major credit cards are accepted.

Public holidays (national)**Fixed dates**

1 Jan (New Year), 1 May (Labour Day), 8 May (1945 Victory Day), 14 Jul (Bastille Day), 15 Aug (Assumption Day), 24 Sep (New Caledonia Day), 1 Nov (All Saints' Day), 11 Nov (Armistice Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Easter Monday (Mar–Apr), Ascension Day (Apr–May).

Working hours**Banking**

Mon–Fri: 0730–1545.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730–1130, 1330–1730. Sat: 0730–1130.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0730–1130, 1215–1600.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0730–1100, 1400–1800. Half-day Sat and Sun.

Telecommunications**Mobile/cell phones**

There is a GSM 900 service that covers the coastal regions of Grand Terre and surrounding islands.

Electricity supply

220V AC, with two-pin plug fittings.

Weights and measures

Metric system

Social customs/useful tips

Tippling is not customary. Islanders find it offensive when women sunbathe topless.

Getting there**Air**

National airline: Aircalin

International airport/s: Nouméa La Tontouta International (NOU), 48km from Nouméa; duty-free shop, bar, restaurant, bank, shops, car hire.

Airport tax: None

Surface

There are regular shipping services from Australasia, Europe, Japan and South East Asia.

Getting about**National transport**

Air: Air Calédonie operates regular flights from Nouméa's domestic airport, Magenta, to the east and west coasts of Grande-Terre island and daily flights to the Ile des Pins, Maré, Tiga, Lifou and Ouvea. Charter and tour airplanes and helicopters are available.

Road: Grande-Terre, the main island, has a total road network of approximately 5,000km, about 71 per cent sealed in municipal areas and a considerable length of track suitable for four-wheel drive and similar vehicles. Exercise care driving along the west and east coasts, as some roads are not sealed. The Canala-Thio main road is one-way only, with direction of traffic changing at scheduled times.

Buses: Regular bus services operate on Grande-Terre.

Water: There is a high-speed catamaran link between Grande-Terre and Ile des Pins, and Loyalty Islands. Small trading vessels also sail to nearby islands.

City transport

Taxis: Taxis are available in the central square (Place des Cocotiers), with some operating 24 hours. Charges are for time and distance. There is a surcharge after 1900 and on Sundays.

Buses, trams & metro: Buses from the airport to city centre usually take about 60 minutes.

Car hire

Self-drive car hire is available in Nouméa. A current valid driving licence is required. Driving is on the right-hand side of the road.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that

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changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for New Caledonia is +687 followed by subscriber's number.

Useful telephone numbers

Fire station: 18

Police: 17

Ambulance (Nouméa): 252-100

Banking

Bank of Hawaii-Nouvelle Calédonie, BP L3, 25 Avenue de la Victoire, Avenue Henri Lafleur, 98849 Nouméa Cedex (tel: 257-400; fax: 274-147).

Banque Calédonienne d'Investissement, BP K5, 50 Avenue de la Victoire, 98849 Nouméa (tel: 256-565; fax: 274-035).

Banque Nationale de Paris Nouvelle Calédonie, BP K3, 37 Ave Henri Lafleur, 98800 Nouméa (tel: 258-400; fax: 258-459) .

Société Générale Calédonienne de Banque; 44 rue de l'Alma, Siège et Agence Principale, 98848 Nouméa (tel: 256-300; fax: 276-245).

Central bank

Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer (IEOM), 5 rue Roland Barthes, 75598 Paris Cedex

12, France (tel : (+33-1) 5344-4141; fax : (+33-1) 4347-5134; email: contact@ieom.fr).

European Central Bank, Kaiserstrasse 29, D-60311 Frankfurt am Main, Germany (tel: (+49-69) 13-440; fax: (+49-69) 1344-6000; e-mail: info@ecb.int).

Travel information

Air Caledonia, BP 98845 Nouméa (tel: 252-339; (bookings tel: 252-177); internet: www.air-caledonie.nc).

Aircalin, 8 rue Frederic Surleau, BP 3736, Nouméa (tel: 265-500; fax: 265-651; internet: www.aircalin.nc).

Destination Nouvelle Calédonie, 39-41 rue de Verdun, PO Box 688, Nouméa (tel: 272-632; fax: 274-623).

Nouméa La Tontouta International Airport, BP2, Tontouta 98840 (tel: 352-500; fax: 352-535; e-mail: ccita@cci.nc).

Nouméa Tourist Office, 24 rue Anotole France, BP 2828, Nouméa 98.800 (tel: 287-580; fax: 287-585).

National tourist organisation offices

New Caledonian Tourism Promotion Board (internet site: <http://www.nouvelle-caledonie-tourisme.nc>).

Other useful addresses

Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques, PO Box 823, 5 rue Gallieni, Nouméa (tel: 275-481, 283-156; fax: 288-148).

South Pacific Commission, PO Box D5 Cedex, Nouméa (tel: 262-000; fax: 261-844).

Other news agencies: ABC Pacific Beat: www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat

Pacific Magazine: www.pacificmagazine.net

Internet sites

South Pacific Tourism Organisation: www.tcsp.com/new_caledonia/index.html

New Caledonia tourism: www.nctps.com/home.cfm

New Caledonia tourism: www.newcaledonia.com.au

New Caledonia website (in French): www.yahoue.com

Travel information: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/caledonie/indexe.htm>