



5 reasons to cruise NEW CALEDONIA

I sent newlywed Lifestyle Director Vanessa Marshall to romantic French Polynesia

Just a few months after our official honeymoon in Paris, it seemed only fitting to take my (new-ish) husband for a second break cruising the romantic French islands of New Caledonia.

1 The love boat
Eight days on board the *Celebrity Solstice* with no kids, no work, no worries! What's not to love about that? Especially once we bid *adieu* to Sydney from the balcony of our lovely stateroom with the sun setting, champagne in hand and nothing else to do but change into glamour wear for our first formal-wear evening of the cruise. Our fellow passengers followed suit – one couple dressed to the nines to celebrate their actual wedding on the top deck – strolling past the casino, multi-level theatre, molecular cocktail bar, luxury boutiques and opulent dining halls in a dazzling display of bow ties and ball gowns.

2 Bon appetit
Which brings me to food. Everything you've heard about overindulging while cruising is true. You need the willpower of a monk to resist the endless supply of food on tap. Pizza at 4am? Easy. Ice cream for

breakfast? Not a problem. Except when you need to fit into your bikini for a spot of poolside lounging. Therefore, I recommend a few swift laps of the open-air walk track before booking into one of the specialty restaurants for dinner. French-inspired Murano was our top pick, whisking us right back to Paris with its sensational wine list and lobster tail prepared at the table. *Magnifique!*

3 Love's travelling salvation show
If there's anything that can career a newlywed's love buzz off track, it's the crushing realisation that you don't share the same taste in music. Fortunately for us, our mutual love of Neil Diamond flourished onboard. Phew! Nashville muso Rob Ondras, who packed the theatre to capacity, was so like the original Mr D in looks and vocal mimicry, he had women yelling out to marry him on the spot. Had I not had my own husband sitting right next to me, I may have been inclined to join them.

4 Massage a deux
After realising that eating is not in fact a sport, we decided to take a look around Canyon Ranch Spaclub, an actual, proper

fitness centre with seaviews to die for. On a rolling tide, we practised yoga, the slight tilting of the ship aiding our determination to balance on one foot without pitching into each other. Hilarious! A brisk walk on the treadmill was an easier option, until we decided that we'd earned a couples' deep-tissue massage. Unsurprisingly, it was the best use of the boat's rocking motion and I fell asleep on the therapy table – only to awaken refreshed, rejuvenated and ready for yet another night of top-class entertainment.

5 Ile des Pins
Of all the docks in port – Ile des Pins, Lifou Island and Noumea – Isle of Pines (the English translation) was our favourite. After disembarking at Kuto Bay, we took a jet-boat excursion to Turtle Bay, sailing through the most pristine aqua water we had ever seen. A visit from a green turtle was a highlight, as was the giant manta ray that swam right past the back of the boat. A quick dip at Brush Island, the kind of tropical, uninhabited island you dream of being shipwrecked on, was our last stop. And yes, we drew a love heart in the sand. We were in paradise, after all!



Turtle Bay really lived up to its name – this little guy popped in to say *bonjour!*



Greg and I were more than happy to cruise the Pacific Ocean in pure luxury. What a treat!



The *Celebrity Solstice*, our ocean hub of fine foods, lavish massage and high-class entertainment.