

NEW CALEDONIA - SOUTH

The Lagoon of New Caledonia has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List



Paris, 9 July 2008: Since yesterday the lagoon of New Caledonia has been inscribed on UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage list – a first for one of France's overseas territories. Almost 15 000 square kilometres out of 23 000 square kilometres of New Caledonian lagoons are entitled to this internationally renowned recognition. It is the 33rd French site to be inscribed on this list, but only the 2nd natural site after that of the Golf of Porto in Corsica.

A group of six New Caledonian sites have been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list including the lagoon, the barrier reef and the mangrove. Among these are:

- **the Grand Lagoon South and the West coastal zone**, in the south
- **the North and East coastal zone and the Grand Lagoon North**, in the North
- **the Ouvéa Atolls and Beautemps-Beaupré**, in the Loyalty Islands
- **the Entrecasteaux Atolls**, in the open sea

To be included on UNESCO's World Heritage List, selected sites must meet with four natural criteria:

- To be outstanding examples representing significant ecological and biological processes in the evolution of ecosystems.
- To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value.
- To contain areas of exceptional natural beauty.
- To be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history.

This international recognition is a fantastic opportunity for New Caledonia. They are now incorporated into the most coveted club, which includes 167 other countries, who all possessors of "natural heritage sites" that are acknowledged throughout the world for their "outstanding universal value", including: the Grand Canyon, Norwegian Fjords and the Galapagos Islands.



New Caledonia is surrounded by a coral reef barrier that measures some 1 600 kilometres long making it the country with the largest lagoon in the world. In some places along the coast the coral reef is only a few kilometres from land, whilst in other areas one must travel 65 kilometres to reach it. The coral reef provides a habitat for some unique fauna and flora with over 1000 species of fish and 6500 species of marine invertebrates.



The New Caledonia is doted with some unique natural and **cultural** assets, which make it an extraordinary destination. Being inscribed on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List is, without a doubt, a most important element for the perseverance of protecting the lagoon and for the development of **quality tourism** in New Caledonia.

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