

PACIFIC YACHT MINISTRIES

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE

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WORK LOCATIONS



PYM works in northern Vanuatu, mostly in Torba Province – Tor for Torres Islands and Ba for Banks Islands. These islands are remote and under serviced. Many have little or no anchorage. This increases the difficulty of delivering the health care we can provide.

See the Lonely Planet Guide ‘Vanuatu’ for excellent information on everything from poisonous creatures to local culture.

TYPES OF TEAMS

Yacht Based Teams

As well as the yacht being the primary form of transport to get to otherwise inaccessible villages, usually all volunteers are accommodated on board.

Land Based Teams

Land based teams are used to service islands with no anchorages and if yachts are unavailable. These islands tended to be very remote and because of this are often worse off in terms of health care. Volunteers, medical supplies and equipment, food and cooking gear may be dropped off and picked up by the yacht or flown in with the team. If dropped by yacht, it and the crew will usually remain on standby at the closest possible anchorage and communicate with you by HF radio when available.

Air TRANSPORT

To Vanuatu

- All volunteers pay for their own plane tickets and in transit accommodation. You will need **adventure travel insurance** to cover being on a private (non commercial) yacht. The quickest way to find travel insurance is online.
- Travel can be arranged through the SDA Church's South Pacific Division volunteer department. **Free travel and medical insurance is provided for PYM volunteers.** To contact the SPD Travel Agency - Phone Jacqui or Karen (02) 9847 3202 and mention PYM.
Email spdtravel@adventist.org.au
- PYM board members fly with Air Vanuatu because they give us generous allowances for taking equipment and supplies. Details pages 8-9. In Australia phone 1300 780 737. If you are a Qantas Frequent Flyer some fares can be credited to your Frequent Flyer program.
- Pacific Blue often offer discount fares but their seats crane your neck forwards most uncomfortably and you have to pay for food and drink on board or bring your own. Some domestic Vanuatu flights are more expensive if your international flight is not with Air Vanuatu.
- Of course if you have time to come before or stay after your PYM tour of duty, Vanuatu is a tropical paradise begging to be explored! Diving out of Santo is world class. See www.vanuatu.net.vu and www.vanuatutourism.com.
- We request that you keep personal baggage to a minimum for yacht reasons! And please note domestic allowance is 10kg in the small planes. Steph is in the process of requesting more because we're working in remote areas.
- If we ask you to courier medical or other supplies to the yacht then the PYM person making the request will arrange an excess baggage allowance. Please notify that person immediately if you are traveling with other than Air Vanuatu (where we have regular contacts re allowances.) Also ask your Volunteers Coordinator for a PYM letter for Vanuatu Customs so you aren't held up trying to justify why you are bringing in medical or dental goods.
- Most international travel is into Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, on the island of Efate. Other international flights operate into Luganville on Espirito Santo. Flying there direct is often cheaper.
- You will need to arrive in Vanuatu the day before your flight from Santo to the northern islands.

Within Vanuatu

- Air Vanuatu is also the domestic airline, typically flying smaller twin engine aircraft on inter island sectors.
- The airstrips beyond Vila and Santo are grass strips. These airstrips don't have toilets or drinking water.
- Some grass airstrips are only accessible during fair weather so rain cancels some flights. It's just one of the unchangeable inconveniences of island life! Volunteers wait until the next scheduled plane or change to PYM's alternate bad weather plan for your team. Your bad weather plan will be given to you prior to your departure.

ACCOMMODATION

- Overnight accommodation in Port Vila ranges from tropical luxury to totally basic. Book with your travel agent or go to www.vanuatutourism.com.
- **NB:** Please do not ask to use the telephone at anywhere – this is inappropriate – buy a phone card instead.

In Port Vila, Efate

- Budget accommodation includes:
- SDA Mission transit flat - Always subject to availability – **local SDA workers always have precedence**. V1000 /person/night (\$AUD10) – backpacker style – kitchen - shower & toilet - washing machine - supermarket across the street, or 20mins walk to the market and shops. Phone Vanuatu 22157 (Prefix 0011 678). To get there ask your Bus/Taxi driver for ‘SDA Number Two’.
- Emman & Imalo Motel - Free airport pickup - private room – fan – ensuite - 15 mins walk to market and shops - V1500/person/night (\$AUD18). Phone Vanuatu 23927. Email emmanimalomotel@vanuatu.com.vu
- Shefa Guesthouse - private room – fan – shared bathroom – meals – V1500/person/night – Phone: 23927
- Kalfabun Guest House & Bungalows – close to airport – single/double with ensuite – from V1500/person/night - Phone: Vanuatu 24484

In Luganville, Santo

- SDA Mission flat – V1000/person/night – backpacker style - cooking facilities – ensuite – 15 mins walk to market and shops. Phone: 36427. See p11 for location directions. Ask Bus/Taxi driver to take you to ‘Sarakata SDA Mission’.
- Unity Park Motel – single/double with ensuite - From V1500/person/night – Phone 36052
- Lingi Motel – single/double with ensuite – fans – shared kitchen – 2 mins to market and shops – V1300/person/night - Phone:
- For a comprehensive list of accommodation, latest information and enquiries go to www.vanuatutourism.com

GETTING AROUND

Port Vila

You've landed in Port Vila, walked the tarmac, heard the welcome string band's enchanting songs and returned their smiles. You've had your passport stamped, withdrawn some vatu (Vt) from the ATM next to the luggage carousel, collected your luggage, met the serious young customs officers, and now you are thoroughly perspiring in the sticky humidity. Where to now?

There are taxis and buses waiting just outside the front door, day and night. Arrange a bus/taxi asap after arrival if you are on the late evening flight. The airport closes for the night and transport disappears quickly. A 'bus' can come in any colour and repair and is a small mini-van with a registration plate with the prefix 'B'. A 'taxi' is a car of any colour, model, shape and repair, maybe with a rooftop 'taxi' sign, and a registration plate with the prefix 'T'. A bus from the airport to town costs 100 Vt (about 80cAUD). A taxi costs 500 Vt (about \$4 AUD). As you'll look like a tourist to begin with, you may be approached by a taxi driver or someone advocating a particular taxi. It isn't rude to say 'No thank you' and walk a little further down the terminal to where the minibuses are or will be shortly.

If you have booked accommodation at the Port Vila SDA Mission flats ask your driver to take you to 'SDA Number Two' (pronounced as 'narmbar 2'). Vila's suburbs are Number One, Number Two, etc.

To catch a bus or a taxi at any time just stand beside the road in the direction of travel, look briefly at the driver and put your hand up politely – they stop anywhere there are customers. Allow time for buses to go on circuitous routes! They do take you right to your destination – not just a bus stop somewhere.

If you need transport to the airport at an early hour of the morning you can

- (1) Get up a half an hour earlier and wait on the main road for a bus or taxi.
- (2) Contact Michel, a reliable 24 hr SDA taxi driver with a small green van (not available Saturdays). Phone 41781 the day before. If you have trouble contacting him, ask for help at the reception desk of the SDA mission office.

Luganville

A few taxis and maybe a minibus meet each flight. A bus from the airport to town is 200 Vt (about \$AUD1.60). A taxi is 500 Vt (about \$AUD4). If you are waiting for a connecting flight it is wise to just fill in the time at the airport. If you have a few hours to spare and want to go into town then go outside immediately you have your luggage and make it known you want a ride. Taxis don't wait long. If you are meeting the PYM yacht in Luganville then a PYM person will come to the airport unless you are otherwise notified.

For the Luganville SDA Mission flats ask your driver to take you to 'SDA Sarakata' (for the 'a' use an 'u' sound as in 'cup'). Sarakata is the suburb. It's on a badly potholed road. Generally buses will drive there but many taxis cannot oblige in their tiny vehicles and will only take you to the corner 200 metres from the Mission.

DAILY LIVING – YACHT BASED TEAMS

This info is specific to a yacht based team.

Personal Space

Captain James Ward tells it all, 'There are no secrets on a yacht!' Privacy is minimal - similar to living in a tent or caravan. Be prepared to turn your back to allow others to get changed. Patience is needed when personal space is limited. Try not to encroach on others' personal space, which frequently may only be an assigned bunk.

Storage Space

Storage space is extremely limited. **Suitcases and yachts are incompatible.** You can bring the equivalent of two approximately 50cm long, soft sided, collapsible travel bags or a soft sided backpack.

Sleeping Arrangements

The accommodation on board the yacht tends to be small and cramped – be prepared for this! Sometimes your bed needs to be packed up to be used as a chair during the day. The yacht will provide bedding and a pillow for each volunteer.

Electricity Supply

There is usually an inverter on board which converts 12 volt electricity to 240 volts. This can be used for battery rechargers etc. If you need electricity please check with your Volunteer Coordinator for specific information regarding your yacht.

Garbage

Generally biodegradable garbage (ie. food scraps) goes over the side to feed the fish. All other garbage is collected into an onboard bin and regularly taken ashore for disposal or burning.

Housekeeping

Everyone takes turns. Rinse your feet before stepping on board. Be ready to take your turn at cleaning the bathroom.

Kitchen (the galley)

This small space is comparable to a kitchen in a caravan. Most yachts have a stove top, oven and grill. Some yachts have refrigeration – some do not. Food tends to be eaten immediately. Your team cook will provide you with three meals a day. When cooking is under way the galley (and indeed the entire yacht) can get very hot and steamy! For further information on food and cooking please refer to page 27.

Laundry

This is a DIY affair. There are no washers or dryers on board. The yachts carry pegs and a limited amount of laundry liquid.

Option 1 Wash clothes daily in 1-2 litres of water in a bucket on board the yacht. Peg out on the yacht's lifelines – firmly and with extra pegs!

Option 2 Carry washing ashore to the water spigot or stream and wash there. Carry back to yacht and hang out to dry.

Option 3 Ask if one of the local ladies might wash and dry for you. A fair payment for this is 500-600Vt with laundry liquid supplied in a small jar.

Fresh Water

Most yachts can only carry 200 to 300 litres. Water sources can be up to two miles or more distant by land and dingy. It is essential to become skilled at using unbelievably small amounts of water. Your ration of fresh water will be approximately 5 litres per day for drinking, showering, laundry.

Captain's standing orders: if you wish to use more water, please feel free to take a 20 litre container ashore to fill – that's 20 kilos to carry.

Toilets

Marine toilets are delicate and fussy creatures. They may cease functioning from dealing with constipation, undigested fibre, pips or seeds, tampons, or too much toilet paper. So for your 'plumbing' system let the golden rule be 'If you can't chew it don't swallow it'. The boat's plumbing system is incapable of 'chewing' and the skipper has the horrid job of pulling the toilet unit apart to clear blockages! Ladies if you expect to use menstrual hygiene products while onboard take some snap-lock bags with you – used, wrapped pads or tampons can be placed inside a snap-lock bag and later disposed of discreetly in the general waste.

DAILY LIVING – LAND BASED TEAMS

This info is specific to a land based team.

Personal Space

This isn't as big an issue as it is for yacht based teams. You should find that you can have 'time out' as needed. If you are a socialiser and don't need 'time out' please respect other people's need for space and privacy.

Storage Space

Again this is not so much an issue as it is for yacht based teams. However please bear in mind that **YOU WILL HAVE TO CARRY EVERYTHING YOU TAKE**. Also if you are travelling by yacht to the island please respect the minimal storage space on board. ***Suitcases and yachts are incompatible.***

Sleeping Arrangements

Most villages have a 'guesthouse'. Generally this is no more than an island hut constructed with natural materials such as palm. This is quite primitive by our standards but it can be viewed as a real cultural experience! You will need to bring your own small pillow and sheet. PYM has some mosquito nets but if you'd like to bring one please do so.

Electricity Supply

There may be a small 850 watt electric generator available. If you need electricity please speak to your Volunteer Coordinator.

Garbage

The guesthouse owners will be able to direct you as to how to dispose of various types of garbage waste in the appropriate manner.

Housekeeping

Very basic. Just be prepared to keep your corner of the guesthouse in order and take your turn at washing up the dishes.

Kitchen

Your team cook will provide you with three meals a day. For further information on food please refer to page 27.

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Laundry

This is a DIY affair. There are obviously no washers or dryers – all is done by hand.

Option 1 Wash clothes daily at water spigot or stream. Hang out to dry.

Option 2 Ask if one of the local ladies might wash and dry for you. A fair payment for this is 500-600Vt with laundry liquid supplied in a small jar.

Fresh Water

This will be obtained from the local fresh water supply – this might be a natural spring or fresh rain water. There have been no problems with local water safety on previous trips. If there is any doubt regarding this matter it would be advisable to boil your drinking water.

Toilets

You will have the use of the local toilets. These tend to be a basic version of what we know as 'pit' toilets. PYM will provide supplies of toilet paper to be used in these facilities. Ladies if you expect to use menstrual hygiene products these can be disposed of into the pit toilet. Any plastic wrappers or other non-biodegradable products should be disposed of in the general waste.

YACHTS

If you are only travelling via yacht and not living aboard please still read the following information for your safety and cruising pleasure!

PYM uses ocean going yachts to transport teams and patients. Yacht based teams get the dubious privilege of living on board. Yachts sound romantic but are often extremely cramped.

Seasickness

Forget the romantic pictures of sailing on calm seas sipping from glasses of bubbly. The calmer the sea, the less likely you will be sailing!

Before vomiting, land-lubbers tend to vary their shades of colour.

Please **forget the toilet and go for the rail away from the wind!!** Being sick on deck is much easier to clean up later than being sick in the cabin.

ADVICE - When packing for your trip buy a variety of sea-sickness remedies so that if one method doesn't work you can try a different one on the next sea voyage. Seasickness can be affected by de-stressing – look to the horizon, stay in fresh air, breathe slow and deep, think about how beautiful the place is and how grateful you are to be in such an amazing part of God's creation.

TRAVEL SICKNESS OPTIONS - speak to your own doctor for further advice.
Kwells available in most chemists.

Stugeron available in chemists - only in Vanuatu.

Phenergan available in most chemists. Use this sedative the night prior to travel. It's anti-emetic effect is still very present in the morning.

Stemetil not the best – need script – suppositories are more useful.

Dried Ginger works for some .

Seabands, an acupuncture band with magnets that seems to work for some.

Landsickness.

A quirk of nature is that as you adjust to living on a moving surface and develop 'sea legs', you may find that your 'land legs' may let you down and you may feel off colour when on land. This is laughingly referred to as 'land sickness'.

Moving About on Yachts

Yachts present a new art to walking –

1. Keep your legs bent and fluid at the knees, hips and ankles. This acts as a shock absorber.
2. Keep contact with the yacht at all times. This means **HOLD ON**.
Keep three points of contact at any one time. Go from one handhold to the next. If on deck, use the lifeline as a loose handhold.
3. Go slowly. Leave the rushing about on deck and in the cabin to the yacht crew who are familiar with the yacht's movement.
4. If you feel unbalanced, STOP, and hang on. Staggering about to regain your balance will not work on a yacht as it does on land. The floor will either rise to meet you or fall away when you don't expect it to.
5. Be careful where you step. Avoid treading on hatches, ropes, deck fittings, and sails.

PYM Volunteer Orientation Info

Safety

The captain carries the entire responsibility for the vessel and its safe passage, and for the lives of the crew and volunteers. Sailing is intrinsically a high risk operation. Extreme isolation adds to that risk. PYM teams will often be working two days sailing away from the humblest of hospitals. Each volunteer must become part of living and working with **safety as the utterly first priority**.

Give your total attention to the onboard orientation - life jackets, man overboard protocol, life rafts, and how to evacuate the yacht in case of emergency.

You must be prepared to wear a safety harness whenever the yacht is under sail, and a life jacket when deemed appropriate by the skipper.

The greatest threat to a yacht is fire. There are only 30 seconds to control a fire onboard and 90 seconds to abandon ship. Extinguishers and fire blankets are located throughout the yacht. Learn where they are located. Do not attempt to use any flammable substance until the captain has orientated you to its proper use – this includes lighting the stove in the galley (kitchen).

The captain has the prerogative of disembarking anyone they feel is a danger to the yacht or its safety, or is disruptive to the team's work. This responsibility is not taken lightly - your safety is their primary concern. The captain is also aware of the dangers a working sailing vessel presents to novices and will let you know what you may or may not do.

You must follow all the captain's directions – act first, ask why later.

A Word About Your Captain

You may notice that your captain sometimes appears preoccupied. That's because he or she is! This whole moving environment needs a vigilant master. Before setting out on the gruelling two week ocean crossing, the captain has checked the yacht from the tip of the mast to the bottom of the keel and everything in between, including all the safety equipment. Time is spent locating spare parts, checking navigation equipment and obtaining all the charts for the areas to be visited. The Australia Vanuatu crossing means constant movement, sailing nonstop, weather checks, radio skeds, battery charging, watch systems, navigation checks, and sail changes – in fair weather or foul, at all times of the day and night. It usually means bruises, injuries, missed meals, equipment failures, and seasickness when the sea is rough. The excitement of landfall in Vanuatu is followed by Customs, Immigration and Quarantine formalities for yacht and crew. Then there's repairs and reprovisioning. Finally, the yacht gets to pick the team up! But the captain's vigilance must continue. He or she will have sleep broken to attend to anchor watches and any change in wind, weather or sea which affect the anchorage. There is no rest from being alert to keeping the yacht safe and the team members out of harm's way. Your captain takes these responsibilities seriously. It's right that each of us who are not the captain takes the captain seriously even when we can't see the captain's overview!

AGILITY & FITNESS

Yacht Based Teams

The ladder from yacht to dinghy is tricky in swell and wind. The Captain will show you how to watch the timing of the yacht's roll and the dinghy's rise and fall to judge when to move.

Some beaches are steep with landings requiring nimbleness and balance in the low surf. Often you will be required to step out of the dinghy the moment it hits the sand and help to drag it up out of the water before the next wave hits from behind. Some days you'll make a picture perfect landing and other days you'll find yourselves soaked to the core and doubled over with laughter!

Thongs (flipflops, jandals) are OK for transfers on sandy beaches. Have closed shoes or **well protected reef/jungle velcro sandals** for landing on rocks, coral or mangroves. If you are walking any distance carry dry jungle sandals or walking shoes for after the landing. Walking in wet shoes quickly creates nasty tropical blisters which become infected overnight. Check your feet twice a day.

Land Based Teams

You need sufficient strength and stamina to be able to hike three hours while carrying a light equipment load. Tracks in the hills are often rough, wet and slippery. You are a risk to your own wellbeing and the team's efficiency if you aren't prepared for these challenges. **Take the time to train before your leave**, and include steep tracks in your training. Make sure your shoes are well worn in. Bring water bottles for a day's supply.

Swimming Ability

It is preferable that you can swim well. If you are a poor swimmer or non swimmer you must notify your Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leader and Captain. You must wear a lifejacket at all times when in water deeper than your waist. Lifejackets have buoyancy in the front so you float face up. If you are in the water and tire or begin to get anxious then relax and go limp and the jacket will hold you up.

GENERAL INFORMATION – MEDICAL & DENTAL

Registration in Vanuatu

Dentists, doctors and nurses must register with the Vanuatu Health Practitioners Board. The Board requires -

* Police Clearance – in NSW sent to Volunteers Coordinator, in QLD sent to applicant.

If you have a Blue Card that suffices. Please photocopy & send to the your Volunteer Coordinator.

* Copy of current registration certificate.

* Letter of good standing from professional colleague
(suggested form letter enclosed).

* Photocopy of front page of your passport.

* CV and two referees – the coordinator will copy that page from your PYM application.

Please organise the Police Clearance ASAP as this can sometimes take ages.
Your Volunteers Coordinator will send the documents to the VHP Board.

Working Environment

In some villages the shade of trees becomes the clinic. Other villages have community buildings which are offered for our use. These may be buildings with a tin roof and walls and a concrete floor, or it may be a pole shelter with palm thatch roofing, no walls and dirt floor. Other times someone's simple village hut may be made available. Some areas have well-constructed clinics and negotiations are made with the chief to work in them alongside the clinic staff. However it has been known for the clinic staff to have left for an indeterminate length of time and taken the clinic key with them, forcing other arrangements.

Don't expect to have privacy while treating your patients! For the more delicate problems, some privacy can be arranged for examinations, but mostly consultations seem to be a spectator sport! Whoever is conducting triage needs to be on the alert re privacy. He or she can invite patients to come and say (not put their hand up).

Professional Disorientation

As a health professional who is probably used to working in first class facilities with medical conveniences at hand, you will find facilities in Vanuatu most limited. What you will be dealing with in the islands is a totally foreign environment. Expect to be professionally disoriented as you face challenges such as unfamiliar languages, patients who have no concept of time, patients who often do not have the words to describe their symptoms accurately, a limited choice of medications, and no diagnostic facilities (x-ray, pathology, etc) within a hundred odd miles of where you are working. Our work is at a grass roots level and at first glance may appear to be bandaid medicine. But you can make a crucial difference in numerous people's lives by assessing and referring serious and chronic cases. There are no sickness benefits, rehabilitation centres or nursing homes here. Every individual you keep from early death or disability makes a huge difference for their family and village.

PYM Volunteer Orientation Info

From a dental point of view, the lack of equipment is just as drastic. But the results of your work are immediate and stunning. People who have suffered for years find sweet relief and regain their stamina and enthusiasm for life!

Indemnity Insurance

The Vanuatu Ministry of Health has assured PYM that all volunteers working in Vanuatu under the PYM Memorandum of Understanding and individually registered with the Vanuatu Registration Board through the temporary registration process are covered for indemnity by the Ministry of Health. This assurance has not been checked at a legal level.

You may wish to contact your current professional insurance provider and check that they are willing to cover your professional activities while overseas. Due to the isolation and lack of medical services you will find that the villagers are simply grateful for anything you can do to help them. The possibility of anybody wishing to sue you or having the means to do so is extremely unlikely. The services provided by PYM are basic low risk services. There are as many lawyers in TORBA Province as there are doctors and dentists - zero.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION – MEDICAL

Cultural challenges

Be on the lookout for conditions behind the presenting symptom. It's worth a quick ask about every body system. A male may present with chest pain when his actual problem is an STD!

Be sensitive to taking time to establish rapport. A woman can present with a minor ailment to develop confidence in the practitioner and then return even days later with her major illness. We see timid people in front of us. However it seems that the cultural issue may be about the Vanuatu way of developing a working relationship before 'business' is done.

Referral Procedure

Referral for patient specialist or hospital care must be through the normal Vanuatu Health system. The local dresser or nurse will know what to do. The patient may qualify for financial travel assistance from the Health Department for their trip home. Unfortunately this assistance is not always available immediately if the travel budget for the month has been reached. The patient may need to wait months before money again becomes available.

In the case of *urgent* referral

- (1) PYM can transport the patient to the closest appropriate hospital or airport.
- (2) The Vanuatu Government may Medivac the patient via chartered plane to a central hospital. Planes often can't land on grass airstrips during or after bad weather.

For the *non-urgent* cases the patient may be required to find their own transport and finances – unfortunately the medical referral is often not followed through because of these two obstacles. Even when transport is organised the choice may still be made not to avail themselves of medical care due to a fear of treatment and fear of hospitals (which are seen as places you go to die). There is no Medicare type system in Vanuatu and even the low costs incurred for hospital treatments are often more than the island family can pay.

Vanuatu Health Workers

Health Centres and Dispensaries are staffed by government paid Registered Nurses. Aid Posts are provided by local communities. Each is staffed by an Aid Post Worker who is chosen from, and paid by, the local community. They have just very basic training. Often staff-members, regardless of level of training, are referred to as 'Dressers' by the locals. Considering their sometimes-minimal education and limited medical resources they do an excellent job. Due to the isolation factor these nurses and dressers have minimal opportunity for further education. Because of this PYM encourages its medical and dental teams to seek opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with the nurses and dressers. It's a case of teaching a man to fish rather than giving him a fish and leaving. However, given the island culture you may find the nurses and dressers quite timid about seeking such education and skills. You will probably need to extend a courteous invitation.

Medical Equipment

Medical equipment is limited to what is practical to carry on board the yacht. The following list is *not* comprehensive but will give you a rough idea of what is available.

- Sphygmomanometer
- Stethoscope (feel free to bring your own)
- Otoscope
- Ophthalmoscope
- Glucometer
- Thermometer
- Vaginal speculum
- Ear syringe
- Tongue depressors
- Percussion hammer
- Wax loop
- Torch
- Magnifying glass
- Suture repair kit
- Sharps bin
- Syringes
- Needles
- IV cannula
- IV lines
- IV fluids
- Dressing packs
- Dressings
- Bandages
- Scissors
- Gloves
- Lubricant jelly

Medical Texts

There should be two books in the medical backpack that you will find useful.

- the little yellow book put out by the Vanuatu Health Department – this has all the conditions you are likely to come across along with their signs, symptoms and treatment – albeit small, this is nonetheless a very valuable book.
- the Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine – a great concise text on just about anything related to medicine in the Tropics.
- a small first aid pamphlet on various types of tropical envenomations.

PYM Volunteer Orientation Info

Medications

Some of the Dispensary Level drugs listed in the Vanuatu's national drug register are carried. Outside medications are not promoted but can be used, although not left in local dispensaries.

Below is a sample list of many of the medications you may have at your disposal.

- Lignocaine injection 1% 20ml
- Lignocaine 1% with Adrenaline injection 20ml
- Aspirin tabs 300mg
- Paracetamol tabs 500mg, syrup 120mg/5ml, suppositories 125mg
- Codeine tabs 30mg
- Pethidine injection 50mg/ml
- Ibuprofen tabs 400mg
- Promethazine tabs 25mg, syrup 5mg/5ml, injection
- Diazepam injection 5mg/ml
- Amoxil caps 250mg
- Doxycycline tabs 100mg
- Erythromycin tabs 250mg
- Penicillin V tabs 250mg
- Chloroquine tabs 150mg
- Fansidar tabs
- Ferrous Sulphate tabs
- Folic Acid tabs
- Digoxin 250mcg
- Adrenalin injection
- Hydrocortisone injection 100mg
- Frusemide tabs 40mg, injection 20mg
- Benzyl Benzoate lotion
- Hydrocortisone 1% cream
- Magnesium Sulphate paste 500mg
- Silver Sulphate cream 100g
- Sofradex ear drops
- Kenacomb ear ointment
- Multistix
- Povidone solution 10% 500ml
- Antacids
- Multivitamin tabs
- Retinol caps
- Antihaemorrhoid cream
- Metoclopramide tabs 10mg, injection 10mg
- Prednisolone tabs 5mg
- Amethocaine eye drops
- Chloramphenicol eye drops 10ml, eye ointment
- Fluorescein strips
- Salbutamol aerosol
- Oral rehydration powder

Types of Illnesses and Conditions

It's anyone's guess as to what types of illness you may need to deal with in the remote corners of Vanuatu! Below is a list of some of the more common conditions you may encounter. This is *not* a comprehensive list – just an outline of potential scenarios in no particular order.

- malaria
- tuberculosis
- upper respiratory tract infections
- skin trauma and infections (impetigo, boils, etc)
- musculoskeletal pain
- pterygiums
- sexually transmitted diseases
- epilepsy
- dengue fever
- filariasis
- hypertension
- TIA's and CVA (strokes)
- eye infections
- ear infections
- gastric reflux / ulcers
- skin stuff
- fungal conditions
- trauma
- parasitic conditions
- congenital abnormalities

Village Health Education

Village health education is one of the ways PYM can make a difference in the long term. While PYM usually has a health educator in each team, we encourage all team members to be on the lookout for health ed opportunities. Village people often have limited education so any health ed must be presented in a very simple manner. Resources available to you include DVD's, flip charts, and posters.

Pertinent topics of education include

- Women's issues – ie. menopause, family planning, pregnancy, menstrual cycle
- Causes and treatment of gastro intestinal infections, particularly paediatric
- Malaria – cause and prevention
- HIV AIDS – cause and prevention
- Basic hygiene – preventing gastro, skin infections, etc
- Back care – lifting correctly
- Importance of completing medication – ie. antibiotics, antimalarials
- Hypertension, diabetes, etc
- Nutrition – eating well

PYM Volunteer Orientation Info

Glasses

Another work of PYM is giving the village people glasses. Second hand glasses, usually donated by Australians, have been used. New magnifying glasses (like those you buy in chemist shops) are used in preference.

Job Description – Doctor

- To attend to the medical needs of the villagers – in particular those who have presented a management problem to the local clinic nurse or dresser.
- To actively seek to impart knowledge and skills to the local clinic dresser or nurse where appropriate.
- To assist with health education sessions in villages where possible.
- To maintain adequate medical records.
- To provide written referrals and help coordinate transport for patients requiring assessment or ongoing care at tertiary level health facilities.

Job Description - Nurse

- To manage the process of triaging patients where necessary.
- To provide wound care expertise.
- To fit glasses for villagers who require them (where available).
- To assist team doctor where required.
- To assist other team members to maintain adequate medical records.

Specialists to refer patients to in Luganville & Santo

Please note that Luganville hospital is the first port of call. Referring to Port Vila would be an unusual event. Discuss potential referrals with the nurse at the nearest Health Centre, or Provincial Health Manager by phone if possible. Do not let a chief, or someone else from the village, push you into going outside the system, or paying for transport yourself. The government encourages communities to provide contingencies for such emergencies. A 'savvy' chief will save those contingencies for other uses if he can convince you to cover the costs out of your own pocket.

Northern District Hospital at Luganville Phone 36345

This hospital has limited facilities – x-ray, ultra sound, basic haematology and bacteriology, general surgery, sometimes gynaecology and sometimes orthopaedics.

Port Vila Hospital Phone 24417

This hospital has a little more equipment and specialists.

For the most appropriate advice at the time, it would be wise to talk by phone with the Senior Medical Officer of the hospital concerned.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION – DENTAL

Dental Needs

The remote northern islands which PYM services have essentially no access to dental care. Unfortunately some villages have access to Western types of food due to the trading boats that periodically service the area. The foods that are sold by the shops serviced by the trading boats are high in sugar – lots of lollies and soft drink. The result is obvious – high amount of dental decay. Toothbrushes (and sometimes toothpaste) are available in most shops but are not widely used.

Essentially the dentist's role is to extract teeth and clean plaque. An equally important role is to educate the village people regarding the process of decay – the cause and effect that their diet plays in preventing further decay.

Registration Requirement

See page 19.

Dental Equipment

- a complete set of dental instruments for use in removing plaque and extracting teeth
- local anesthetic – lignocaine with adrenaline
- dental needles – types vary – often donated

Method of Sterilisation

Due to the obvious lack of electricity in the areas PYM services the only practical means of sterilisation is various cold methods. We use repeated applications of strong concentrations of either Alcohol, Milton or Medol.

Job Description – Dentist

- To attend to the dental needs of the villagers.
- To actively educate patients regarding diet and dental hygiene.
- To assist with health education sessions in villages where possible.
- To maintain adequate dental records.

Job Description – Dental Assistant

- To assist dentist in attending to the dental needs of the villagers.
- To be responsible for maintaining the hygiene and sterilisation of dental equipment.
- To actively educate patients regarding diet and dental hygiene.
- To assist with health education sessions in villages where possible.
- To assist dentist in maintaining adequate dental records.

WHAT TO BRING

- saline nasal spray – Air Vanuatu's 737 has extremely low humidity, we've picked up nasty inflight infections. Saline spray prevents cilia damage
- 3-4 pairs shorts knee length (recommend *board* shorts - quick dry, comfy, cool)
- 3-4 cool shirts or t-shirts
- 4 pairs undies
- 2 bras (women)
- 1 pair of swimmers (women - no bikinis please, wear rash shirt & board shorts over swimmers whenever in the company of Ni Van people)
- 1-2 sarongs or skirts (women) to wear over shorts whenever in villages
- 1 pair short pyjamas or other modest option for nightwear
- 1 light waterproof jacket
- 1 light warm sweatshirt or jumper or jacket
- 1 hat (recommend broad brim with chin-tie)
- 2 pairs cotton ankle socks
- 1 pair thongs (highly recommended)
- 1 pair walking shoes (suitable for hikes to work areas)
- 1 pair Reef walkers or surf boots (for wear on reef or mud)
- 2 light towels (one for salt water use, one for fresh water use)
- personal toiletries – include liquid soap (good for washing clothes too) as normal 'cake' soap is un-useable with salt water
- 30+ sunscreen
- insect repellent - tropical strength unperfumed Rid recommended
- small bottle of Tea Tree Oil or similar – for treating personal skin abrasions
- anti-malarial medication
- travel sickness medication
- personal medications – charcoal tablets recommended in case of gastro – also recommended a couple of packets of Gastrolyte in case of vomiting
- 2 litre reusable water bottle or 'camel pack' (from outdoor & camping stores)
- polarised sunglasses
- Bible (pocket size)
- camera and film (in waterproof bag)
- small pillow (land based teams only)
- waterproof bag (available from outdoor/camping stores)
- small day backpack - for taking ashore and on hikes
- one medium sized travel bag for belongings – ***must be soft sided & collapsible (no suitcases please!)***

Optional Extras

- personal torch (headlight is helpful as frees both hands)
- packet of Baby Wipes (handy when you can't be bothered having a shower!)
- pair soft earplugs – for a good night's sleep
- pair snorkel and fins – for a bit of aqua fun
- a small stash of special food treats just for you (not to be shared!)

Do NOT Bring

- suitcases, hairdryers, radio or cassette players, laptop computers, lace nightwear, high heeled shoes, designer clothing, etc!!!

FOOD & COOKING

Types of Foods to Expect

Please be aware the PYM does the best they can with a limited selection of canned and dried foods supplemented by locally available fresh produce. PYM cannot cater for fussy eaters.

Locally grown and available foods are vastly different from what is known and available in western countries. Some foods are seasonally available. Pineapple is ready to pick at Christmas. Citrus fruits are plentiful in winter, then none in spring. Some foods are affected by recent cyclones – pawpaw (papaya), banana, and other soft fruiting trees become badly damaged in cyclones, while root vegetables can be affected by pigs, soggy soil, grubs and landslides or lack of rain. What is available on one island will not necessarily be available on the next.

Your captain or team leader will coordinate village people supplying root vegetables, island greens and fruit as their thanks for PYM's commitment to serve in the area. Please do not buy local produce and upset this arrangement. If you see something luscious on offer, talk to your team leader.

Do not expect to see potatoes, carrots, apples, pears, cauliflower, broccoli and other staple fruit and vegetables from the Western diet. If you do happen to be served these fruits and vegetables, please appreciate them for what they represent – a special treat, a delicacy, an item of high cost.

The foods you will commonly see are: yam, taro, manioc, sweet potato, cucumber, island cabbage, coconut, snake beans, pawpaw, lemons, limes and pomelo. Occasionally: tomatoes, pumpkin, choko, eggplant, lettuce and shallots, oranges, mandarins, watercress, bananas, ginger root, cabbage, garlic and onion. Fish is on the menu when the yachts are successful with the trolling lines. Prepared with a bit of imagination (sometimes imagination runs low!) all of these foods are quite enjoyable although some need an acquired taste. Most village communities have a baker – we often purchase this bread to support the local community and save ourselves the effort!

Refrigeration onboard the yacht is more on the level of cooling than refrigeration or freezing. Do not expect frozen or refrigerated foods as some yachts do not have refrigeration. Generally food is prepared and eaten with minimal leftovers – if inadequate cooling is available any leftovers feed the fish!

Special Food Requirements

If you do have special dietary requirements, please bring your own specialist supplies. Please also discuss this with your Volunteer Coordinator.

PYM Volunteer Orientation Info

Who Cooks?

That depends on the team you are with. You might just be lucky enough to have a cook allocated to your team – count your blessings! Otherwise sometimes there will be a team member who just loves preparing food – if this is the case count yourselves lucky and shower that team member with thanks! Other times it is just a matter of pitching in and taking turns! Just remember this is no time to contest who can prepare the best three-course meal – consider food preparation a task of survival! It gets very hot and humid in the galley (the yacht kitchen) – if you didn't have to cook the meal make certain that you help clean up! If you are a land based team you most likely will be staying in a guesthouse. Some of these guesthouses provide meals as part of your accommodation.

Preparation of Local Foods

Cooking is dependent a lot on imagination and improvisation. Sometimes there is an abundance of fresh produce and other times very little. As the tour of duty continues the supply of canned foods tends to dwindle to a miss match of ingredients! You will find onboard each yacht a PYM Recipe Book compiled to get your creative juices flowing. This recipe book also lists common local foods and hints on how to best prepare them. Often you'll not have all the ingredients for any one recipe – that's where your creativity kicks in and you learn to make do.

Suggestions for Survival

- Prepare yourself mentally in advance for the fact that the food situation will be different to what you are used to.
- Take some light weight treats for yourself – not to share – these are just for you to eat when you are feeling in need of a special treat.
- If you tend to need energy foods when hiking, bring some with you.
- When there is plenty of fresh local produce available take advantage of it and eat plenty of it.
- When there is a lack of fresh local produce count your blessings by remembering that you only have to endure this for a short time while for the island people this is the reality of island life!

PERSONAL HEALTH CARE

Before PYM Trip

- Please see your doctor regarding your current vaccination status. He or she will be able to advise you of the current vaccinations needed for your area of travel. Your vaccinations should be attended to no later than eight weeks prior to departure.
- Also organise with your doctor what type of anti-malarial medication you should take. There are a variety of medications with various pros and cons for each – your doctor should be able to advise you of these.
- Remember to begin your course of antimalarial medication as advised (usually just prior to your departure).
- An excellent reference book on travel health is 'Travelling Well' by Dr Deborah Mills. Website www.travellingwell.com.au

While in Vanuatu

Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes carry and transmit three serious diseases: malaria (parasite), dengue fever (virus), and filariasis (worm).

Preventing **malaria**. Continue to take your anti-malarial medication throughout the duration of your stay and complete the course when you get home.

Preventing **dengue fever**. There is no prophylaxis except to avoid being bitten. Avoid perfume and dark clothing which attract mosquitoes. Cover up at dawn and dusk. Use insect repellent whenever ashore – tropical strength unperfumed Rid is recommended for its strength and kindness to others' sensitive noses.

Preventing **filariasis**. There is no prophylaxis except to avoid being bitten. Filariasis is a disease that the Vanuatu government has been actively working on eradicating. It appears so far to be effective with no new cases detected for several years. Early detection and treatment can stop the disease process but once the worm reaches maturity its effects can be permanent. The Bislama for filariasis is 'sick big leg'.

It is only the female mosquito that is capable of drawing blood and thus transmitting disease. Female mosquitoes do not bother yacht crews when anchored 100 to 200 meters offshore. You will however likely see swarms of large male mosquitoes clustered around the yacht – these males are harmless and actually deter the females from approaching the yacht!

Broken Skin

Any broken or traumatised skin needs to be looked after carefully from the time of injury. Neglecting to do so is an invitation to infection, tropical ulcers, cellulitis, or even septicaemia. Such infections can set in quickly and take a long time to clear. At the other extreme is over zealous care with too much antiseptic solution that prevents the wound healing. A balanced approach is needed. The best way of treating broken or traumatised skin is to attend twice daily dressings. The morning dressing should be applied at the clinic. The evening dressing should be applied when back on board the yacht or in the guest house. This ensures that each dressing is attended to following an activity which may have caused it to become wet or dirty. Self adhesive dressings such 'Tegaderm' that totally seal the broken skin area are brilliant and are best left unchanged for 3 or 4 days provided they stay fully attached and the wound sealed.

Flies

Vanuatu has very friendly, industrious, small bush flies. They love open wounds, bush toilets, pigs, dogs, children's eyes, your food – they just love hanging around. If your scratch wasn't infected before the fly visited, it would be by the time he left. It is most important to keep any wounds covered all the time.

Fire Ants

Tiny 1-2mm red fire ants now infest some of the Banks and Torres Islands. They leave a nasty bite. Watch out for them around opened coconuts. The Vanuatu government is taking measures to try to arrest the spread of this nasty threat. Follow all quarantine measures carefully.

Prickly Heat

This is an uncomfortable itchy overheating complaint that strikes when the skin cannot off load enough sweat to cool the body. The skin can't evaporate the sweat and fluid is trapped usually under skin folds. The skin then becomes irritated and itches profusely around the neck, chest, upper arms and torso with a prickly rash. Washing with fresh water and gently drying the affected, sitting in a cool, shady and well-ventilated area helps relieve the condition. Prickly heat powder may also help. You may wish to include this in your personal toiletries kit.

After PYM Trip

- Continue to take your anti-malarial medication to the end of your prescribed course – this is very important.
- If you feel unwell see your doctor immediately and advise him or her of your recent travel.

WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

Sabbath

PYM is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. Thus the Sabbath is considered as a special day for PYM. It begins Friday sundown and goes to Saturday sundown. If you are a not an SDA feel free to be excused during this time however you are most welcome to participate as you feel comfortable.

In villages where we find fellow Seventh-day Adventists we will endeavor to join them for their worship service. If you are an SDA you should come prepared to take the mission news, lesson, sermon (!), or afternoon AY's program at short notice. It can be a very full day ending with closing Sabbath at sundown. Thongs and neat clean clothing are appropriate for attending church. Culturally it is required that women wear a dress or sarong.

Where there are no SDA villagers in the area PYM volunteers will tend to spend the day quietly at anchor – they might sit around and chat, read a good book, do some snorkeling – in short it is generally a totally restful day.

Anyone requiring urgent medical treatment will be cared for. Non-urgent cases may be delayed until Sunday.

Sunday

Some villages have strong views about Sunday being a strict day of rest and so will not attend a clinic on this day even if it is offered. Generally the Team Leader will approach the chief of the village prior to Sunday to discuss what is appropriate. Some villages will welcome a Sunday clinic but request that it occurs after their morning church service. PYM respects the wishes of the village. Because of this Sunday is often a restful and relaxing day.

If you have your own personal convictions about the way you like to spend your Sundays please communicate these to your Team Leader or Volunteer Coordinator. You will have your personal convictions respected.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

You will most certainly find time during your trip for recreation. This will include time at the end of the clinic days as well as weekend relaxation.

Perhaps the best activity that you'll find to do is snorkelling in the clear and warm tropical water. This is guaranteed pleasure. The variety and colours that you will see in fish, coral, and other critters is mind boggling! If you have never had the pleasure of tropical snorkelling then this is going to be one experience that will stand out in your memory for life.

If you have never snorkelled before then rest assured you'll learn fast in an effort to see as much as you can! Ask another team member who can snorkel to show you the basics and allow them the joy of teaching you.

If you lack confidence in your ability to swim this is no reason to presume you'll miss out. You can plan on going also – however you must wear a properly fitted life jacket, you must remain a safe distance from the shore or yacht, and you **must** have another team member (who is a strong swimmer) with you at all times.

Other recreational activities include beach combing, relaxing on the beach, chatting with the locals, learning how to weave with palm leaves, reading a book, or going for a walk.

VARIOUS IMPORTANT POLICIES

Policy on Dress Modesty

In Vanuatu the dress code has more far reaching implications than questions of personal modesty or freedom. Our tours of duty are in the remote north where the influence of western ways has been minimal. If we are to be seen to be respecting the chief of the village, and to be presenting ourselves as worthy to receive the respect of the chief and the village people, we must follow the Vanuatu way.

Previous PYM teams have not been aware of the extent to which we Westerners show respect or disrespect for the chief by our dress.

Ladies - cover cleavage, shoulders and thighs at all times. A skirt or sarong is wise whenever in the presence of Ni Van people. Avoid tight fitting clothes. When you're wearing shorts to disembark the yacht, add a sarong as soon as practical. When swimming wear board shorts and t-shirt or rash shirt and put on a sarong immediately you leave the water.

Men - always wear some form of shirt to cover torso except when swimming. Avoid tight fitting shorts or swimmers.

Policy on Alcohol, Kava, Smoking and other Drugs

Because of the potential destructive effects of alcohol, tobacco and recreational drugs on people's health and relationships, the Seventh-day Adventist Church promotes a drug free lifestyle. PYM's 'Operation MEDIC' programs also promote such a lifestyle for Pacific Islanders. While volunteers may not personally share this value it is expected that they will maintain an alcohol free and drug free lifestyle during their service opportunity with 'Operation MEDIC'.

Policy on Proselytising

While 'Operation MEDIC' is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its volunteers will not be involved in active proselytising. Such activity has the potential to create barriers for people of differing religious persuasions that may prevent them from accessing the services of 'Operation MEDIC'. 'Operation MEDIC' is committed to relieving human suffering with nothing expected in return.

However certain situations are considered appropriate. Such as where villagers approach volunteers and ask them to pray with them, study the Bible together, or where an islander asks to trade local produce for a Bible. In such situations it is appropriate to accept the given invitation. This is not proselytising or imposing one's own religion on others with coercion.

CULTURE & ISLAND LIFE

Language

The main language spoken in Vanuatu is Bislama, the Vanuatu Pidgin. It's relatively easy to understand as it almost sounds like back-to-front-inside-out-upside-down English! When the islanders speak at their normal top speed it's most challenging to understand. But they are always happy to slow down if you ask them. You'll soon catch on. If you specifically want to learn a few words or sentences before you arrive we would highly recommend getting your hands on the Vanuatu Lonely Planet guide. There is a chapter in the back that gives a good run down on the basics.

There is usually at least one person in each village who can speak fairly good English – they will be asked to be your translator when necessary and are often proud of their abilities.

Island Life

Pacific islanders tend to be relaxed, laid back people. This aspect of the Pacific culture can cause us 'westerners' to view the islanders as lazy and disorganised. They take life one moment at a time with seemingly little or no respect for efficiency or time management. Please be prepared for this. All of our best made plans can become slightly unravelled because we are working in such a culture. It can be frustrating – however don't waste your energy as this part of their culture will probably never change. So please respect this intrinsic part of their culture – try to go with it rather than fight it even when that causes inconvenience. You'll probably find that by the end of your trip it is something of the island lifestyle you have come to appreciate – even envy!

Culture Shock

Yes it can happen. Culture shock is the psychological effect on an individual who has undergone a drastic change in the cultural environment. Symptoms of this may include (but are not restricted to) feelings of helplessness, discomfort or disorientation. If after you arrive you feel overwhelmed by these or other such feelings please talk to another team member. The earlier you talk about such matters the better. You may find that just talking about these feelings helps you to adjust. Please remember that to be overcome by culture shock is not a sign of failure on your behalf – it is just a phenomenon of life.

Cultural concerns while working in Vanuatu

PYM teams usually work in remote parts of northern Vanuatu, far from commerce and international interaction. We try to walk respectfully in their culture and not impose our own.

- The social structure is maintained around the chief's control -
 - The villagers require permission from the chief even before taking fish out of the ocean. Your captain or team leader will conduct liaison with the chief. Each team member needs to operate within a framework of respect for the chief.
 - Do not presume that you may wander around the village or nearby areas at your own will. First check with your team leader. You may be given a village person to accompany you.

- Appropriate dress code – see page 34.

- Appropriate eye contact
 - For expat women: a Vanuatu man who is highly educated may engage in western style eye contact with you. If he glances away to avoid extended eye contact you do the same. However if any Vanuatu man looks away for more than a glance, that's your cue to use Vanuatu style eye contact. Look to the side of his eyes or his forehead. To look into his eyes is sexually provocative and an act of domination. Looking around but not into someone's eyes is most difficult – practice beforehand and have a good laugh.
 - Men, take your cue from the person you're speaking with. It's polite to glance away and not maintain extended eye contact.

- Handshake
 - It is a strong social custom both when meeting and leaving company that you oblige with a handshake all round.
 - The Vanuatu handshake involves a very gentle clasp with one quick up and down motion.

- Door knock
 - In Vanuatu one knocks on a door extremely gently.

- Hand-holding
 - Please be aware that in the island culture it is appropriate for males to walk around holding each other's hands in public – this is a normal social custom.
 - Also it is most unusual to see an island male / female couple holding hands in public or being affectionate in any other manner – such behaviour is generally not accepted as appropriate.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

Money

You will become familiar with dealing with the Vanuatu currency Vatu (Vt). Regarding exchange rates... it is best for you to check this out dependant on your country of residence. Approximate rates for Australia are \$AUD1 = 80Vt.

You will need only a small sum of money while with the team as your food and accommodation is provided by PYM. You may wish to carry a small amount of money for souvenirs, snacks from the village store, or replacing lost thongs (!!). The smaller denominations are the most useful – particularly 100Vt coins or 200Vt and 500Vt notes.

Weather

PYM works in Vanuatu during the winter/spring months of June to November. These months offer sailing vessels the safest period of time to be in the tropics (ie. outside of cyclone season!). Nevertheless the seas (and thus the yachts) are at the will of Mother Nature. Your skipper may need to make the decision to leave an anchorage a few days early, or remain at anchor until the weather improves, or even to choose another destination instead of the planned one.

Rain

The months from June to November are meant to be the dry season in Vanuatu. In 2004, someone forgot to let the weather know! It was unseasonably wet. In such conditions everything gets and stays wet – airstrips may be closed, rain can affect visibility, day may be confined to the yacht, and Cabin Fever (irritability, restlessness, anxiety, claustrophobia) boredom and frustration may set in. During these times the need for personal space is stronger and patience is limited. Sunshine is the only cure (!) and it does come!

Sunshine

A beautiful change when it is out but beware its burning ability! Sun reflects off the water to give a double dose of UV – cover up, wear a hat, sunscreen, and drink a lot of water (take at least 2 litres of water with you every day).

Humidity

Yes, you are going to the tropics – and yes it will be humid. Humidity often sits in the high percentages. For people not used to living in humid climates this can take a bit of adjusting to. If living on board the yacht you'll quickly learn that open portholes are your best friend! Except if it rains!

PLEASE NOTE

Due to PYM's reliance on the weather for its operations there always remains the risk that if the weather turns bad then original team schedules may not be able to be maintained – thus the potential risk of missing your plane flight home.

THE REWARDS OF PYM WORK...

The rewards of bringing health care to the remote and isolated areas -

- To see the rapt enthusiasm of the island folk when you give village health education.
- To hear the words “nobody has ever told us that before... now we understand why we get sick...”, “we want the best for our babies – thank you for telling us how to...”, “we just didn’t know how to care for our backs thank you for explaining how to lift things using our legs...”
- To see the ladies’ faces light up when they realise there was a reason or answer for the women’s problems they experience and that they are not alone with the problem.
- To see small children bounce back from malaria, gastro and infections when treated.
- To see infected wounds and swollen legs respond to treatment and begin to heal.
- To see faces, drawn with pain from aching teeth, a day post-extraction smiling because they are free of the pain that had made their life miserable.
- To hear them say they had the best night’s sleep in a long time (months, sometimes years) without a toothache.
- To receive a pawpaw from a grateful patient.
- To be called off the main road and given a hand of bananas by a villager happy to have you caring for his people.
- To be awoken early in the morning by the sounds of a local villager in a canoe calling out for you to come to the village to see a sick relative.
- To fit a pair of glasses and see their face light up because they can read in comfort again.
- To have a dozen children walking along beside you chattering in Bislama and giggling non-stop.
- To have young children enthusiastically listen and learn how to care for their teeth.
- To have a child watch you intently from a distance all day then as you leave remove their handmade bead necklace from around their own neck and place it around yours.
- To have a small child shyly bid you farewell in his own language, repeating the word as you endeavor to pronounce it, then breaking into a smile and a giggle when you get the word correct.
- The surprised look on an adult’s face as you bid them farewell with your newly acquired vocabulary.
- To board the dingy at the end of a long clinic day and turn and wave to the dozens of grateful villagers who have in a day become your friends.
- And so much more...

RETURNING HOME

You are home at last! What a relief to stretch out in your very own bed, shower in excess water, and dig in to the luxuries provided by your handy supermarket!

We trust your experience with PYM was fulfilling. The basic care you were able to give has certainly brightened the lives of many. More than likely you will probably discover that your views and priorities on life have changed – you will likely return home to realize just how blessed your humble life is!!

Debrief & Feedback

On your return from Vanuatu we would like to contact you for a debrief. This will be a positive opportunity for both yourself and us

- you get a chance to confidentially voice complaints, make suggestions for improvement, and communicate problems to someone who has the power and motivation to ensure such things are dealt with promptly
- we get a chance to hear real experiences that show us where PYM needs to improve
- we get to enjoy hearing of your memorable experiences and feel better about all the hours we spend in Australia as backup to the real thing!

Anti Malarial Prophylaxis

In closing ... if you were taking anti malarial prophylaxis continue to complete the duration of treatment as instructed by your pharmacist or doctor. If you develop chills, a fever, or feel otherwise unwell please see your doctor and notify them of your recent travel.

OUR THANKS

Thank you for all your personal sacrifices which have certainly contributed to another year of PYM service to the beautiful people of the Pacific!

Til next PYM trip ...

God bless

&

lukim yu!