PAPUA NEW GUINEA, VANUATU, THE SOLOMONS & THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

INAUGURAL EXPEDITION!

ABOARD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ORION | MARCH 2014
My husband Ron and I have had a life of travel and adventure. In 1973 my photo was on the cover of *National Geographic*, and it caught the attention of Lars-Eric Lindblad, the owner of the famous red and white ship, *Lindblad Explorer*. He invited Ron and me to join his ship as staff. Now 40 years later Lars-Eric’s son, Sven-Olof, has invited me to join the *National Geographic Orion* inaugural voyage. Of course I agreed! It is going to be a fabulous voyage often to places rarely visited—I haven’t returned to Norfolk Island, Vanuatu or the Solomons for many years, and I’m very excited. I will make new friends and, I hope, meet old ones. Adventure is the cream on the cake and it has been given to me on a platter. How lucky am I to be sharing this remarkable adventure.” — VALERIE TAYLOR

*Undersea photos here and at right are from Valerie Taylor’s private collection.*

*Cover: Dancer in the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea.*
Travel with accomplished people who know this region intimately

Intrepid explorer Captain Cook, convicts, headhunters, and traders. Million Dollar Point where the Americans dumped all their Pacific Theater trucks and tanks. Incredible coral reefs, lagoons and active volcanoes. Astonishing snorkeling, diving and exploring. The site of JFK’s PT-109 rescue and the subsequent salvage efforts by National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, Robert D. Ballard of Titanic fame. UNESCO World Heritage site, Norfolk Island, and its iconic pine trees. The Great Barrier Reef, Australia’s crown jewel, the grandest expedition finale imaginable. All this and much, much more await you as we explore aboard National Geographic Orion on March 19, 2014.

**EXPEDITION HIGHLIGHTS**

- Experience the rich cultures of Melanesia—Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands & Papua New Guinea—in one comprehensive voyage.
- World-class beaches, snorkeling and diving experiences, including three days on the Great Barrier Reef.
- Some of the world’s most remote and storied islands—Kennedy and Norfolk.
- Some of the best places in the world to collect fine examples of “tribal” or “primitive” art.

Dive legend, shark chronicler, pioneering undersea photographer and filmmaker, and National Geographic cover subject, Valerie Taylor.

*Note from Tim Soper, Expedition Leader:* Valerie, and her husband Ron Taylor, gained fame in the early days of scuba diving for their breathtaking live footage of sharks, particularly Great Whites. In 1969, the Taylors formed their own production company. In the same year, Valerie was catapulted to international stardom in Peter Gimbel’s classic film, Blue Water White Death. During the 1970s Valerie and Ron’s live shark sequences appeared in the movies Jaws, Orca and The Blue Lagoon. Both she and Ron have won numerous awards in underwater photography and videography. In 2000, she became an inaugural Member of the Women Divers Hall of Fame. Ron and Valerie were already legends when I joined my first expedition and, along with the entire National Geographic Orion team, I am thrilled that she will be joining us in 2014.
National Geographic photographers Amy Toensing and Matt Moyer have traveled the globe photographing many of the world’s most amazing cultures and places; and have taught numerous photo workshops for the Geographic. Passionate teachers, Amy and Matt are devoted to passing on their insights and knowledge to photographers of all skill levels. Their shared interests drew them together during a chance meeting at National Geographic headquarters in 2004. They are now married and live in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains north of New York City. Collectively, they have worked on more than 20 stories for National Geographic magazine, and they have each won multiple international photography awards for their work.

...A startling archaeological find on the island of Éfaté, in the Pacific nation of Vanuatu, has revealed an ancient seafaring people, the distant ancestors of today's Polynesians, taking their first steps into the unknown. The discoveries there have also opened a window into the shadowy world of those early voyagers. ...It would have been absolutely amazing to have seen this place back then," says Stuart Bedford, of the excavation on Éfaté. Learn more about Bedford’s work in the March 2008 National Geographic article, “Beyond the Blue Horizon”.

Dr. Stuart Bedford, an archaeologist with the Australian National University, has been involved in research in Vanuatu since 1995 when he began his PhD there. Research was focused on establishing the timing of the first arrival of people in Vanuatu and the subsequent cultural (pottery was a focus) and environmental changes that occurred across the archipelago. His PhD was completed in 2000 and published in 2006 (Bedford 2006), the first major archaeological publication on Vanuatu for 35 years. Bedford is an expert in the Lapita colonization of the Pacific. Along with his colleague, Matthew Spriggs, Stuart’s work has focused on the inhabitants of the islands of Vanuatu, one of the first places the Lapita colonized when they began to sail long distances into the open ocean. Just a few years ago local construction workers discovered a Lapita cemetery on an island called Éfaté. National Geographic funded Spriggs’ and Bedford’s excavations at the site, and they have found a wealth of data that sheds light on life and death in a Lapita community. Stuart will spend time with us aboard, giving us a first-hand report on his project.
Kennedy Island: Destruction and Search

We’ll explore a selection of WWII sites on this expedition, including historic Kennedy Island in the Solomons, where island scouts Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana carried out the messages from JFK and his crew that led to their rescue.

“Although we couldn’t read definitive markings on the wreckage, it looked like the real thing. We double-checked our records, making sure that no other PT boat had been lost in the area except for PT 109. Weeks later our hunch was backed up by Navy scholars who closely examined our video images.”

— ROBERT BALLARD, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, DEC. 2002

TO READ THE ENTIRE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARTICLE CHRONICLING BOB BALLARD’S SEARCH FOR PT-109, VISIT EXPEDITIONS.COM/PT109

25 DAYS/22 NIGHTS—ABOARD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ORION

PRICES FROM: $25,390 to $52,400 (See ship flyer for complete prices.)

MAR. 19-21: U.S./AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND/EMBARK
Fly to Auckland, cross the International Date Line, and embark. (D)

MAR. 22: BAY OF ISLANDS
Go ashore at Russell, rich in Maori history. See a carved Maori meeting house and ceremonial war canoes. (B,L,D)

MAR. 23-24: AT SEA/NORFOLK ISLAND, AUSTRALIA
A day at sea takes us to Norfolk Island, a UNESCO site and former British penal colony. Explore the ruins, swim, or hike. (B,L,D)

MAR. 25-30: AT SEA/VANUATU
A day at sea brings us to Vanuatu, an archipelago of more than 80 islands. On Tanna Island hike to the rim of Mt. Yasur, an active volcano. Wander Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila. Explore Leles Cave, with its thousand-year-old petroglyphs. Land at ancient ceremonial grounds on Malakula and see a spirit dance. Swim, snorkel, and kayak at Paradise Lagoon on Espiritu Santo. See the remnants of WWII on the island of Luganville, and snorkel Million Dollar Point, where hundreds of tons of U.S. military equipment were dumped after the war; divers may descend on the troop carrier Calvin Coolidge. Spend a day exploring the seldom visited northernmost islands in Vanuatu. (B,L,D)

MAR. 31-APR. 3: SOLOMON ISLANDS
Settled as early as 25,000 BC by skull worshipping tribes, today the friendly Solomons remain some of the least-visited, most dive-worthy South Pacific islands. Villagers on Santa Ana perform a stunning dance with spears and mud-covered face masks. This region was a strategic WWII battleground and we visit Honiara, a former U.S. supply depot, and Kennedy Island, named after President John F. Kennedy, who swam ashore here after the Japanese sank his PT-109 boat. Meet the wood carvers of Marovo, and explore isolated Marovo Lagoon, a proposed UNESCO site and an exceptional spot for snorkeling, kayaking, and diving. (B,L,D)

APR. 4-6: PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Papua New Guinea is home to some 700 Papuan and Melanesian tribes, each with its own language. On Kitava in the Trobriands villagers gather to celebrate with dancing, singing, and chanting. Samarai has a fascinating history of colonialism, missionaries, and headhunters. Swim, snorkel, and beachcomb amid idyllic scenery. (B,L,D)

APR. 7-8: AT SEA/THURSDAY ISLAND & TORRES STRAIT, AUSTRALIA
Enter the Great Barrier Reef, one of the natural wonders of the world. Head into Torres Strait, stopping at Thursday Island, formerly a hub of the pearl industry. (B,L,D)

APR. 9-10 LIZARD ISLAND, THE GREAT BARRIER REEF
Snorkel or dive among corals that encircle Lizard Island National Park. Wander on white-sand beaches; learn about the islands’ significance to the Dingaal people; and hike up to “Cook’s Look,” where Captain Cook plotted his route through the reefs. Then sail to a remote section of the reef and discover an array of marine life. (B,L,D)

APR. 11-12: CAIRNS/DISEMBARK/OVERNIGHT HOTEL/U.S.
Disembark in Cairns, explore its vibrant tropical setting, and spend the night at a lovely seaside hotel before flights home. (B)

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