



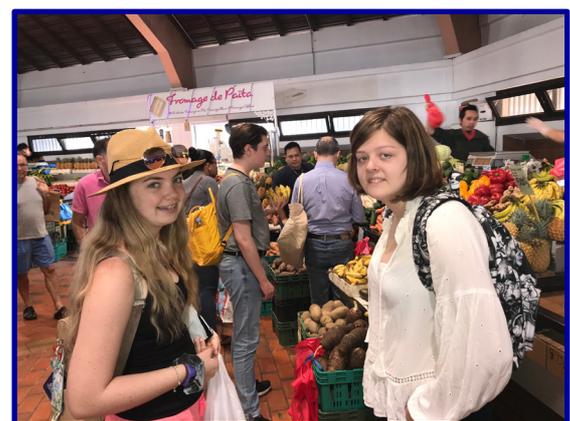
2019 STUDY TOUR TO NEW CALEDONIA

The inaugural New Caledonia Study Tour in 2019 for Mercy Regional College Camperdown was a great success. The French-speaking gem of the South Pacific lived up to everyone's expectation of French language, culture and snorkeling with the sea turtles. Ten French students from Years 9 to 11 spent eight days in New Caledonia during the Term 2 break. Students travelling were Year 11s - Jordan Gray, Hayley Wason, Tess Lourey, Will Elliot, Oliver Wright; Year 10s - Tom Wright and Isabella Finney; Year 9s - Hayley Hewitt, Will Kealley and Skye Baran along with teachers Mme Chamon Vogels and Mme Siggie Macleod, who accompanied the group on the tour. All students were fantastically well behaved, excellent representatives of our school abroad and were proactive in getting the most out of the trip on a cultural, linguistic, friendship and not to mention, fun, level. For their accompanying teachers they were a delight to be with, full of joie de vivre and always ready for new adventures.

Despite the very early meeting time of pitch dark 6.45am at school on the first Monday of the school holidays, the tour got off to a good start. After the bus ride to Melbourne airport, we met our representative from GET Educational Tours and progressed smoothly through both check-in and customs, ready to board our Air Calin flight to Noumea. Three hours later we landed at Tontua Airport. Another bus drive and we checked into the Hotel Novata at Anse Vata, had a quick swim and then we headed out to dinner all together. End of an exciting but tiring day 1.

Days 2 to 5 saw the students participating in their French language classes at CREIPAC Language School Noumea on the grounds of New Caledonia's first and biggest penal colony. Our students had two mornings of classes from 8.30-11.30 plus one full day of classes and a final day of cultural activities.

The lessons were very engaging - students played games, performed charades, acted, sang and learnt language relevant to their stay that they could use at the market, with their host families or while shopping. For our last day at CREIPAC we went to the local Port Moselle market to purchase fresh food items for the Bougna - a traditional meat and yam feast that the students helped to prepare. Students also learned the skill of palm frond weaving to create their own dining plates and followed up with a traditional pre-meal dance. Their teacher at CREIPAC, Mme Huebert, congratulated us on how wonderful our students were to teach and how much she had enjoyed her time with them.





Students, in pairs or threes, were placed with their hosts from Day 2 to Day 6. For five consecutive nights students lived with their host families. Our students took this in their stride - they were excellent, fully embraced the local culture, were polite and respectful and learned much from the experience about both themselves and about life in Noumea for the French. They had the wonderful opportunity to practice their French and broaden their minds culturally and linguistically. Apart from the evenings, they also had all Saturday together with their host families. This was unfortunately also the only day it rained – so it put somewhat of a dampener on activities. After their last day together, students and families exchanged gifts and memories of meals, endless games of UNO, cooking lessons and conversational French. Many students were sad to say their farewells and I hope they think about maintaining contact.



Our group program was varied. On three afternoons we explored different aspects of life in Noumea. One afternoon we had a two-hour guided tour of the city aboard the Tchou Tchou Train. It was a fun tour with commentary in French and English, allowing us to get our bearings of the city, driving through the local suburbs and visiting panoramic view points.



Another afternoon we visited the Tjibaou Cultural Centre. We had a two-hour guided tour in French about everything Polynesian. The Centre educates visitors and locals alike about the indigenous kanak culture, who were the original inhabitants before the French. Students saw some traditional art and learned about how native huts are constructed. On our third afternoon we explored the variety and cost of goods on offer at the local Super Marché and then shopped for souvenirs.



A highlight for us all was the full-day excursion on Day 7 to the outer lagoon island containing the Amedee “phare” or lighthouse. The twenty-four kilometres distance between Noumea and Amedee Island was covered by a comfortable high-speed cruise boat. On the island we enjoyed a delicious tropical banquet, a spectacular Polynesian dance show, a glass bottom boat tour of the nearby reef and of course, hours of snorkeling! Many students were even fortunate enough to swim with the many green turtles feeding on the sea grass! Oh, and did I mention the resident population of extremely docile sea snakes? Some climbed the lighthouse and were rewarded with spectacular 360 degrees views. Other students also participated in Polynesian dancing. On our last night together

as a group we enjoyed a buffet dinner at our hotel and participated in a fun karaoke evening hosted by the hotel together with other Noumea residents. Chamon and Siggie got the ball rolling with a rendition of “Proud Mary” followed by our students singing “Bohemian Rhapsody” much to the delight of the predominantly French-speaking audience. It was then time to collect our breakfast trays for a 5am start the next morning of Day 8 to return home. After a trouble-free flight and bus trip we arrived safe and sound back at school at 4pm. Some of us were tired and emotional - and that wasn't just the parents!

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has assisted us with the tour - Mme Chamon Vogels for her tireless work in initiating and coordinating the study tour, the members of our School Leadership and Administration teams for their support in tour budgets, paperwork and student organisation and Mark Evans and Danny Gordon for being our trusty bus drivers to and from the airport. I would also like to thank our wonderful students for being so open to developing an understanding of the many benefits and joys learning a second language can bring.

Et voilà! A résumé of a fantastic and highly successful inaugural study tour to New Caledonia. Thank you to all parents and guardians of the students for allowing their sons and daughters to participate in the tour and consequently gifting them with hopefully some life-long memories and, hopefully, the passion to continue with their studies of French. Merci et Au Revoir!



Mme Siggs Macleod - Head of Languages Domain



Above: L to R: Siggs Macleod, Hayley Wason, Thomas Wright, William Elliott, Oliver Wright, Jordan Gray, Skye Baran, Tess Lourey, Isabella Finney, Chamon Vogels, William Kealley, Hayley Hewitt

