

Central Grande Terre



The diverse scenery of the central areas of Grande Terre makes it a fantastic place to explore. It has high waterfalls, mountains, rainforest, beaches, red lateritic mining slopes and rolling plains. You can lose yourself in the silence of a small mountain village, or *tribu*, and experience that feeling of freedom you find in quiet, remote places. Its wonderful landscapes offer visitors an exciting range of activities from abseiling, quad biking, hiking and kayaking for the more energetic to gentle strolls through quiet forests for those seeking something more sedate. You can also go scuba diving or lose yourself for a day on a small desert island.

Each town has its own unique character. There is La Foa's rural chic and Bourail's Broussard (farming) atmosphere. The dusty mining town of Thio has a hushed aura of yesteryear and remote Canala sits serenely between the mountains and the sea.

On the west coast you can stay on a Caldoche farm one night, where Broussard families have worked the land and bred livestock for generations, and in a Kanak *tribu* the next.

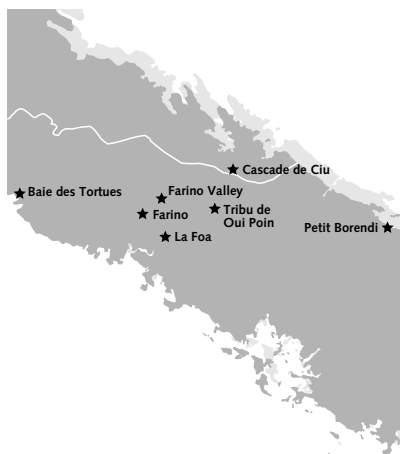
The east coast is a beautiful and isolated place with stunning scenery, where the red lateritic soil stands out starkly against the sea's deep blue. Despite its cut-off feel, the region is easily accessible – from Noumea it is just a couple of hours to Thio.

If you have only a couple of days to spare, central Grande Terre is close enough to Noumea to form a quick trip. But if you have time you could easily spend a week there.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Abseiling down **Cascade de Ciu** (p269) into a lush river valley
- Spotting turtles at baie des Tortues on a **scenic coastal walk** (p265)
- Trekking on horseback in the mountainous vicinity of **tribu de Oui Poin** (p261)
- Marvelling at the vivid colours of the landscape on the **scenic drive to Petit Borendi** (p268)
- Exploring the tropical forest of the **Farino valley** (p263) by quad bike
- Browsing through the stalls at the monthly **market** (p263) in the mountain village of Farino
- Visiting La Foa's **sculpture garden** (p260) with its towering totem poles.

■ POPULATION: 17,100



History

In the penal-colony years, freed convicts were granted concessions in the vicinity of the west-coast towns of La Foa, Boulouparis and Bourail. On the east coast, Thio and Canala were major mining regions in the early 1900s; mining is still an important economic activity in the region.

The Kanak insurrection of 1878 began in the La Foa region. After it was suppressed, the region was cleared of the Kanak 'troublemakers'. A century later, La Foa was again the scene of clashes between Kanaks and French. Protest against French rule culminated in the elections boycott of 1984, which was particularly strong in Thio. The rebellion in this part of Grande Terre was led by Eloi Machoro, a pro-independence leader from Canala. It resulted in the shooting of a Caldoche farmer near La Foa, followed by the shooting of Machoro in January 1985 in Thio.

Today the west-coast towns are strongly influenced by the Caldoches (the white people born in New Caledonia), while Thio and Canala on the east coast remain pro-independence strongholds.

Getting There & Around

Several buses a day run between Noumea and the west-coast towns. On the east coast a daily bus runs between Noumea and Thio, and Noumea and Canala. You will need your own transport to travel the one-way stretch of road between Thio and Canala, as buses don't run there.

BOULOUPARIS

pop 2089

Boulouparis is the departure point for trips to l'Îlot Ténia, an islet with fine white sand and clear waters by the barrier reef. L'Îlot Ténia is an ideal spot for surfing, diving (p220), snorkelling or simply soaking up the sun on the beach. Boulouparis is the first village north of Tontouta International Airport.

Sights & Activities

At the northern end of Boulouparis is the turn-off to Bouraké beach, where trips to l'Îlot Ténia leave. Fifteen kilometres from the main road, turn off to Bouraké beach.

Just before the Bouraké turn-off is the small **Distillerie de Boulouparis**, (Map pp260-1;

☎ 35 19 08; admission free; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Sat), on the main road, which makes liqueurs, soaps and essential oils.

There's an 18-hole **golf course** (green fees 9/18 holes 2500/3500CFP, club hire 1500CFP) at Les Paillottes de la Ouenghi (below).

Sleeping & Eating

Les Paillottes de la Ouenghi (Map pp260-1; ☎ 35 17 35; paillottes.ouenghi@lagoon.nc; bungalow d 9150CFP; kayaks per hr 730CFP; horse trekking per hr 2100CFP; 🍷 🍷) This hotel by the Ouenghi river has bungalows set in a shady garden. The restaurant (mains 1000CFP to 2000CFP) overlooks the pool. It's a short walk to the river where there are deep swimming holes. The hotel has various activities including golf. It's 5km south of Boulouparis and 2.5km from the main road.

Camping de Bouraké (Map pp260-1; Bouraké beach; camping free) This is a campsite with shelters and tables. It's by the beach but it isn't very attractive. However, it is just a 20-minute boat ride to the soft beach and transparent waters of l'Îlot Ténia. It's 15km west of Boulouparis.

LA FOA

pop 2903

La Foa is a pleasant town with neat, brick pavements and a beautiful sculpture garden. It has a classy movie theatre that attracts famous names in the movie industry with its annual film festival. The savannah plains surrounding La Foa are dotted with grazing cattle and the rectangular ponds of prawn farms.

Information

La Foa has a post office, clinic, pharmacy and *gendarmérie* (police station). There are a couple of banks on the main road.

Banque Calédonienne d'Investissement (BCI bank; Map p262; ☎ 44 37 00; 🕒 7.35-11.30am & 12.15-3.45pm Mon-Fri) On the main road, the RT1.

La Foa Tourisme (Map p262; ☎ 41 69 11; www.lafoa.com; Georges Guillermet sq; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun) The tourist information centre has friendly and efficient staff. Good tourist maps are available and you will find all you want to know on accommodation and activities in La Foa, Moindou, Farino and Sarraméa.

La Médiathèque (Map p262; ☎ 41 73 34; Internet per hr 600CFP; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) On the left about 200m down the street beside the tourist information centre.

Sights & Activities

If you have your own transport, tribu de Oua Tom is an easy day-trip from Noumea and a great introduction to life in a Kanak tribu. It's 5km from the RT1 turn-off, 13km south of La Foa.

The **sculpture garden** (Map p262; ☎ 8am-8pm Sep-Apr, to 6pm May-Aug) behind La Foa Tourisme is magnificent. Six towering totem poles in Georges Guillaumet square line the entrance to the garden. More sculptures, carved by artists from throughout New Caledonia, are arranged around the garden among palm trees and flowerbeds. There's also a children's playground and public toilets.

The old bridge **Passerelle Marguerite** (Map p262) sits next to the new bridge at the southern end of La Foa. It was designed by two students of the famous engineer Gustave Eiffel and inaugurated in 1909. It was named after the wife of a governor of New Caledonia and has become the main symbol of La Foa.

Fort Térémba (Map p263; ☎ 44 32 71; adult/child 300/100CFP; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sun), 10km north-west of La Foa on the way to Bourail, was

built in 1871. It's surrounded by a stone wall and was used as a convict penitentiary. The fort was besieged during the 1878 Kanak insurrection led by chief Ataï. However, the Kanaks never managed to capture it. It's about 2.5km from the RT1.

Tours

Half-day **horse treks** stay in the vicinity of the tribus or private properties from where the tours are run. Longer treks take you up twisting trails to mountain summits, or to visit neighbouring tribus, or even across to Canala on the east coast.

About 3km south of La Foa is a signposted turn-off to **Pocquereux Randonnées** (☎ 77 32 54; ½-/1-2-day treks 5000/8000/20,000CFP), well known for its horse treks. You can also camp or sleep in a dormitory (per person including meals 500/1000CFP). It's 11km along an unsealed road from the RT1 turn-off.

Another option is **La Foa Randonnées** (☎ 78 84 13; per ½/1/2 days 5000/9500/19,500CFP), next to Naïna Park Hôtel (p262). Rates include meals for treks longer than half a day and, for overnight treks, camping.

Louis Careba (☎ 44 38 17; guided walks per person 1/3hr 1000/2000CFP; horse treks 1/2hr 2500/3100CFP), an enthusiastic guide in tribu de Oua Tom, runs **guided walks** and horse treks. The hour-long historical and botanical walk through the village and forest is a popular choice.

Tribu de Oui Poin (Map p263; ☎ 41 72 81, 35 45 22; guided walk 500-2000CFP, horse trek half-/full-day 2500/5000CFP) This mountain tribu is 25km inland. Its guides can organise overnight walks or horse treks to Canala. Accommodation, meals and activities are shared among a network of people. La Foa Tourisme (p259) can help with bookings.

Festivals & Events

La Foa's annual **film festival**, held at Cinéma Jean-Pierre Jeunet (p262) in June/July is a major event on the New Caledonian social calendar. The week-long festival features international films screened in their original languages. Each festival is presided over by a famous name in the movie industry. Past officials have included Oscar-winning director Jane Campion, and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, who directed *Alien Resurrection* and

Amélie. It sells out quickly. Festival films are also shown in Noumea at Ciné City (see p243).

In November every year there's a **light and sound show** (☎ 44 32 71; adult/child 3000/2000CFP) at Fort Térémba. It features a cast of over 100, including actors on horseback and Kanak dancers. The show revolves around the convict and settler history of the region as well as more recent events. It culminates in a fireworks display. Tickets are cheaper if bought in advance. Transfers from Noumea are available; enquire through the organisers.

Sleeping

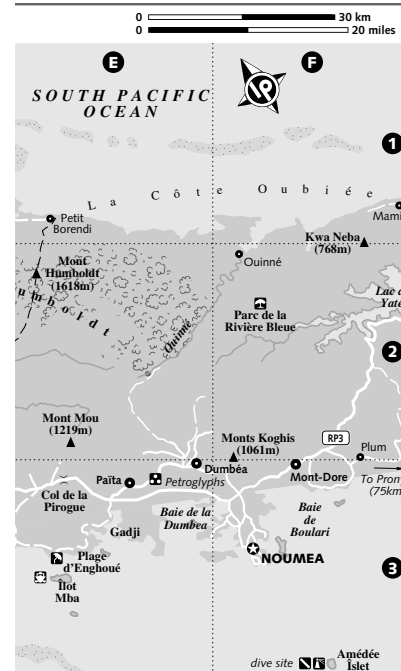
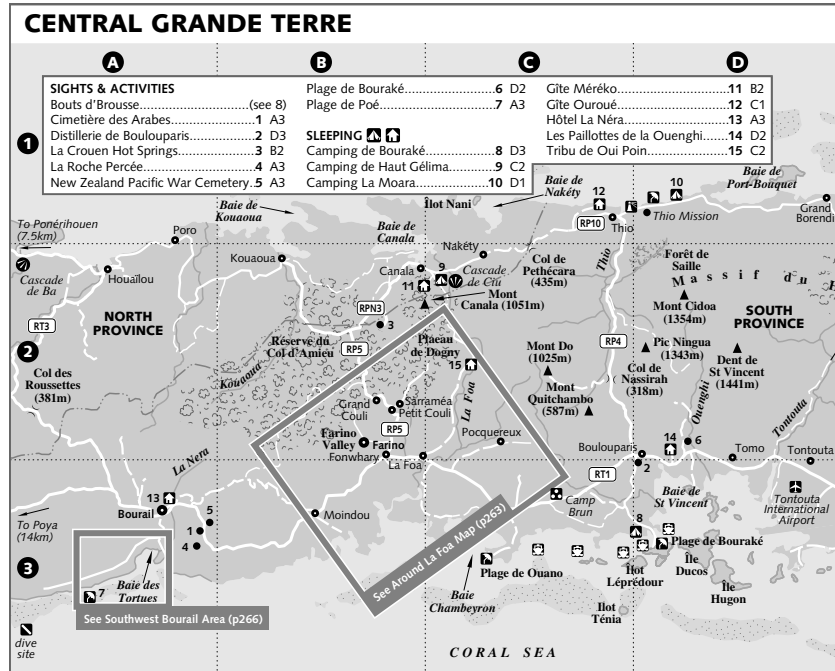
Pocquereux Randonnées (Map p263; ☎ 77 32 54; Pocquereux; per person camping/dm 500/1000CFP) Basic camping and dormitory accommodation aimed at people doing horse treks.

Tribu de Oui Poin (Map p263; ☎ 41 72 81, 35 45 22; camping per tent 500CFP; faré per person with/without meals 1000/2700CFP) A river winds its way through this tribu, wedged into the mountains, 25km inland. In the faré, guests sleep on mattresses on the floor. Accommodation, meals and activities are shared among a network of people. La Foa Tourisme (p259) can help with bookings.

La Petite Ferme (Map p263; ☎ 44 34 05; d bungalow 4150CFP; camping per tent 1650CFP) This farm-stay offers simple housing in a containerlike bungalow with a bathroom. Guests join the family for dinner (set menu 3300CFP) under a thatched faré (shelter). The farm's animals include horses, goats, pigs, emus and geese, which guests can watch being fed in the morning.

Hôtel Banu (Map p262; ☎ 44 31 19, fax 44 35 50; d 4350CFP, d bungalows 6350CFP; ☎ ☎) The central Hôtel Banu on the main road has bungalows with air con; the block of rooms (without air con) has seen better days. The restaurant (mains 1200CFP to 2000CFP) is open for lunch daily and dinner Monday to Saturday. It has a casual country atmosphere and serves great seafood platters (6250CFP). The ceiling in the bar next to the restaurant is lined with an ever-increasing collection of caps. In the three years since we last checked nearly 530 have been added, bringing the tally to 4768.

L'Auberge Historique de Moindou (Map p263; ☎ 35 43 28; Moindou; d 5000CFP) This old hotel in a colonial building by the main road has recently been lovingly renovated. Its restaurant



(mains 1500CFP, open for lunch Tuesday to Sunday, dinner Friday and Saturday) serves seafood specialities. There are only two bedrooms. There's also a small library with books and photos relating the history of the hotel as well as the region. It's in Moindou, a small village 18km northwest of La Foa on the way to Bourail.

Naina Park Hôtel (Map p263; ☎ 44 35 40; fax 44 39 35; bungalow tr 7300CFP; ♿ ♿) This hotel has bungalows in a shady garden where there's a relaxing pool area. The restaurant (mains 1800CFP to 2200CFP) is closed on Mondays. It's 1.5km south of La Foa.

Chez Marie-Georgette (Map p263; ☎ 44 38 17; tribu de Oua Tom; camping per tent 1000CFP) This *table d'hôte* (family home offering meals) in tribu de Oua Tom serves Kanak cuisine including *bougna* (a traditional meal), and chicken or prawn dishes. Make a reservation 24 hours in advance.

Eating

La Foa has a good range of places to eat. See p261 for accommodation places with attached restaurants.

Casino (Map p262; ☎ 44 33 20; 🎰 5.30am-noon & 1.30-7.30pm, closed afternoon Sun) This supermarket has a good range of groceries.

La Case (Map p262; ☎ 81 83 23; coffee 250CFP, cake 100-300CFP; 🎧 5.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun) This café on the main road north of the town centre serves chocolates, cakes and croissants, and a variety of coffees.

La Fautaua (Map p262; ☎ 44 35 00; mains 1800CFP; lunch & dinner, closed Sun dinner) Restaurant under a large *faré* at the southern end of town.

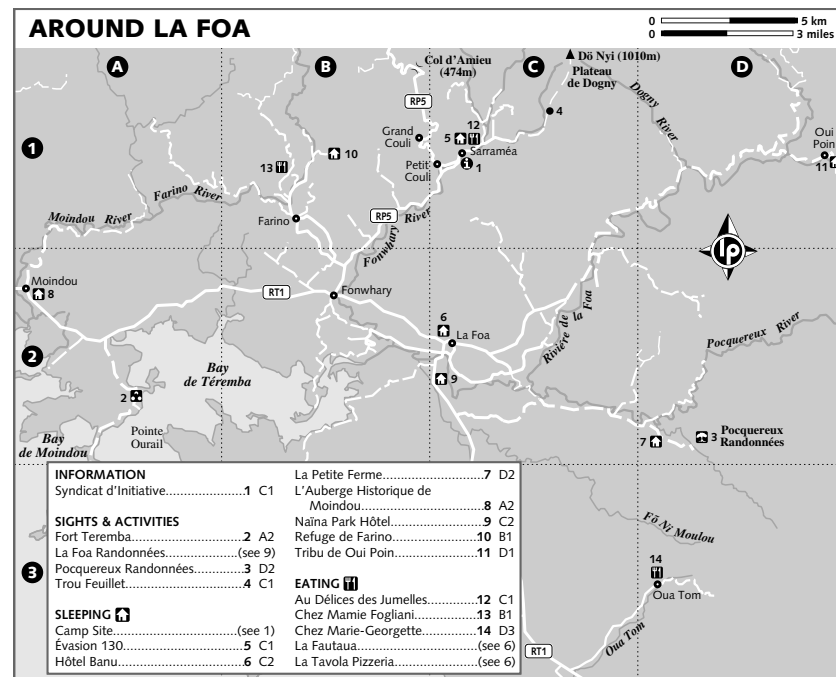
La Tavola Pizzeria (Map p262; ☎ 44 30 09; small/medium/large pizzas from 600/900/1900CFP; 🎧 to 8pm) On the main road; has a good range of pizzas for lunch and dinner.

Entertainment

Cinéma Jean-Pierre Jeunet (Map p262; ☎ 43 16 67; entry per person 800CFP; 🎬 evenings Mon, Fri, Sat & Sun) It mainly screens movies dubbed over in French except during its annual film festival (p261). In late June and early July.

Getting There & Away

There's a daily bus (except on Sundays) between Noumea and La Foa. However, all



buses heading further north up the west coast or across to Canala stop in La Foa.

FARINO & SARRAMÉA

pop 1069

The tiny, picturesque villages of Farino and Sarraméa are only a 15-minute drive north of La Foa. Farino is a mountain village and is famous for its monthly market. Sarraméa sits in a narrow, verdant valley surrounded by mountains. The cool climate in the villages makes them a refreshing stop in summer.

Information

Farino and Sarraméa are both tiny villages and it's best to stock up on supplies before you get there. Sarraméa's **Syndicat d'Initiative** (tourist office; Map p263; ☎ 44 39 55; 🎧 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) is by the main road and has information on walks and accommodation in the area.

Sights & Activities

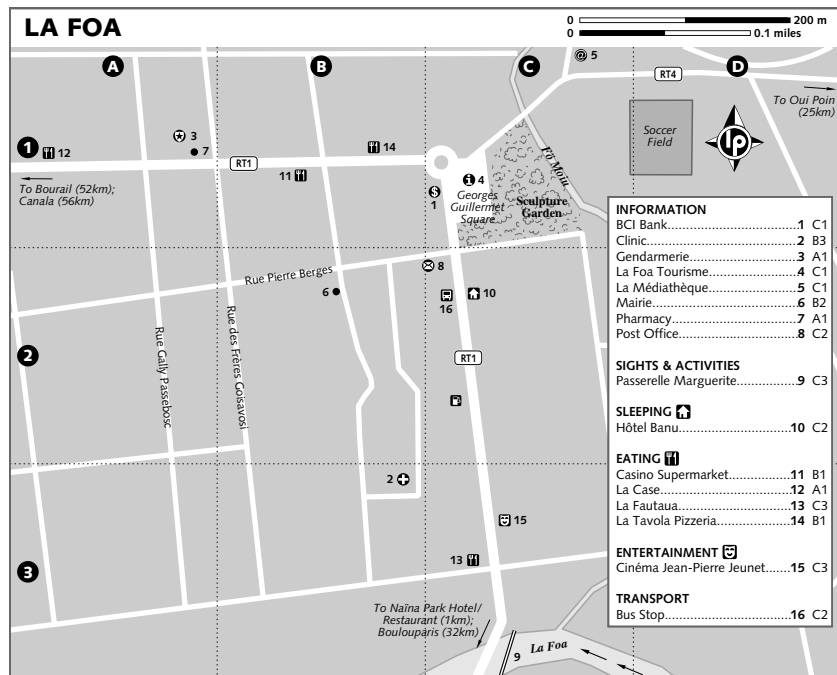
The Refuge de Farino (see p264) organises **quad-bike tours** (per first/subsequent hour 5000/1000CFP) in the forest.

Le marché du Farino is a morning market held on the second Sunday of the month. Produce includes home-made jams and pickles, sausage, cheese, seafood, fruits and vegetables. The most popular market day is in September and is dedicated to the *ver de Bancoule*, a wood grub (see below). It's held outside the *mairie* (town hall).

Most visitors to Sarraméa head to Trou Feuillet, also known as *la cuve*, a **rock pool** in a mountain stream. You can slide down a small waterfall into the pool. To get there, go to the end of the road, just before Évasion

VER DE BANCOLE

The September market day in Farino is dedicated to the *ver de Bancoule*, a fat white wood grub that's considered a local delicacy. Visitors can sample the grub grilled, cooked in *pastis* (anisced-flavoured alcohol), or curried. At midday there's a contest to see who can eat the most of the squirming grubs (yes, they're eaten alive) in one minute. Anyone is welcome to enter, so give it a go.



130, where there's a car park above a stream. From here either walk up the right side of the stream through a farm gate and past an old colonial house or follow the path on the other side of the river behind the hotel, where you'll also pass through a farm gate. It's a 15-minute walk to the pool.

If you have time and are equipped for a longer walk, continue along the track on the hotel side of the river up to Plateau de Dogny. It's a steep three-hour climb through shady forest. The plateau has low bracken-type vegetation. In clear weather there are views of the east and west coasts.

Just past the Sarraméa turn-off is *tribu* de Petit Couli where there's a beautiful *case* (traditional Kanak house) surrounded by araucaria pines. It's at the top of a grassy meadow by the road. Ask permission at the nearest house before taking photos or approaching the *case*.

Sleeping & Eating

Refuge de Farino (Map p263; ☎ 44 37 61; refuge.farino@lagoon.nc; camping per adult/child 600/300CFP, bungalows d/child 5000/1000CFP) This place has a forest setting. The wooden bungalows built on a steep hillside have fully equipped kitchenettes. The campsite is a wide grassy area beside a stream. It's 4km from the Farino *mairie*.

Évasion 130 (☎ 44 55 77; Sarraméa; bungalows d/child 13,500/1000CFP; 🍷 🍷) At the end of the road, this new hotel sits in a woodland setting overlooking a stream. It has modern bungalows with all the usual comforts including a minibar. The restaurant (mains 1500CFP to 3500CFP) opens out onto a swimming pool area.

Syndicat d'Initiative campsite (☎ 44 39 55; Sarraméa; camping per tent 1000CFP) There's a campsite at the tourist office, by the road, which isn't busy, and has shelters and hot showers. Call in advance so the staff can leave the bathrooms unlocked.

Chez Mamie Fogliani (Map p263; ☎ 43 23 14; set menu 1500-3000CFP) Mamie Fogliani's *table d'hôte* has been operating for years and is renowned throughout New Caledonia. There's a choice of three set menus, with seafood meals the most expensive. The *table d'hôte* also offers venison, wild pig, fish and duck. Children under eight don't pay. Wine is available but you're welcome to BYO bottle. Mamie Fogliani's sits in a lush wooded

area and the tables are set out on a veranda. It's 3km from the Farino *mairie*.

Aux Délices des Jumelles (Map p263; ☎ 43 46 65; Sarraméa; set menus 2500CFP) This *table d'hôte* is run by twin sisters. They serve Kanak cuisine including seafood, wild pig, rabbit, chicken, and *bougna* dishes. The house speciality is *mamarènu au café niouru*, a Kanak dessert made with sprouting coconuts and coffee. The *table d'hôte* is near the chapel on the main road. You need to order meals 24 hours in advance and you can BYO wine.

Getting There & Away

To get to Farino and Sarraméa, turn off the RT1 on to the RP5 about 4.5km north of La Foa's centre. The turn-off to Farino is 1km further, and the road winds up the side of a mountain for another 3km. The Sarraméa turn-off is 6km from the RT1, from where it's about 3km to the village.

There's a Nouméa-La Foa bus (daily except Sunday) that continues to Sarraméa (1000CFP). The Nouméa-Canala bus can drop you off at Petit Couli (950CFP).

BOURAIL

pop 4779

Bourail is a typical Caldoche country town. It sits on the banks of the Néra river and is informal and relaxed. Pick-up trucks trundle slowly down the main street, where an old T-shirt and shorts are considered adequate attire. Almost everything in Bourail is on the main road, which is part of the road north (RT1). Its popular annual agricultural fair is largely responsible for the Broussard or cowboy image so strongly associated with Bourail. But Broussard culture aside, it's best known for the beaches a few kilometres west of town. La Roche is a surf beach and the beautiful white Poé beach is a sloth's paradise. The turn-off to the beaches is about 1km south of town.

Information

There are a couple of banks on the main street north of the church including a **BCI bank** (Map p265; ☎ 44 18 14; 🕒 7.45-11.30am & 12.30-4.15pm Mon-Fri). There is also a post office, *gendarmérie*, hospital and pharmacy.

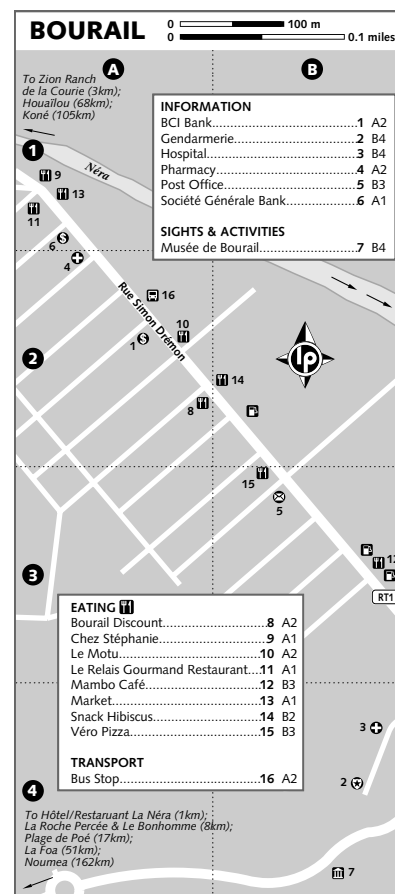
Festivals & Events

The **Foire de Bourail** (Bourail agricultural fair) is held over the weekend that falls closest to

14 August. It has loads of interesting stalls and activities. There's a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and other fresh farm produce including strawberries as well as potted plants, arts and crafts, and cake and fast food stalls. Children love the farm animals, especially the poultry and rabbits. There's also a wide choice of fairground rides to entertain them. The highlight is the rodeo on Sunday afternoon, where watching the injured being carried out of the arena seems to be all part of the entertainment. The turn-off is about 5km south of Bourail. Just follow the traffic.

Sights

There are some interesting historic and natural sights in the vicinity of Bourail.



An old stone building 500m south of the centre houses the **Bourail Museum** (Map p265; ☎ 44 12 18; adult/student 250/100CFP; 🕒 8-11am & 1-5pm Mon & Wed-Sun, closes early Sat & Sun). It has interesting displays on the history of the region, including photos, documents and objects relating to the presence of American and New Zealand troops in Bourail during WWII. There's also a guillotine complete with the head-basket. The first guillotine was brought to New Caledonia in 1867 although the one in the museum is a later model. In total 100 people were guillotined in New Caledonia, the last in 1940. Behind the museum there's a *case*. The museum has explanations in both English and French.

The **Cimetière des Arabes** (Arab cemetery, Map pp260-1), near a small mosque 11km south of Bourail, is a sign of the region's strong Arab heritage. Many of the Berbers who were exiled to the penal colony later settled in the Bourail region where their descendants still live.

The **New Zealand Pacific War Cemetery** (Map pp260-1) 9km south of Bourail, where 200 Kiwi soldiers killed in the battles of the Pacific during WWII are buried, is a beautifully maintained site. During the war, the New Zealand army had a hospital base in Bourail where many locals received free medical care. The Kiwis are remembered affectionately and there's a ceremony at the cemetery every Anzac Day (April 25), when local children place a flower on each grave.

La roche percée (pierced rock, Map pp260-1) and **le bonhomme**, a rock shaped like a tubby man, are two famous rock formations in the cliffs at the northern end of La Roche beach. Recent rock slips have made

SCENIC BAYS WALK

At the base of the cliffs on La Roche beach, near *la roche percée* (pierced rock) and *le bonhomme* (rock shaped like a tubby gentleman), a path leads to the top of the cliffs. This is the start of a 4km scenic coastal track that meanders past baie des Tortues (Turtle Bay), with its leaning araucarias, to the far side of romantic baie des Amoureux (Lovers' Bay). Along the way there are magnificent viewing points overlooking the lush Néra valley and river mouth, and the distant reef and islets.

it dangerous to walk around the base of the cliffs to the pierced rock and *bonhomme*. There's a barrier to deter people, although it's not very effective. Both landmarks can be viewed safely from the beach. It's 6km from the RT1 turn-off to La Roche beach.

The sealed road veers to the right at the La Roche turn-off and shortly after passes a stone retaining wall. A dirt road to the left leads to **la belvédère** (lookout) and **baie des Tortues** (Turtle Bay). Along this road there are two right turnings. The first leads to the cliff-top above picturesque baie des Tortues and secluded **baie des Amoureux** (Lovers' Bay). The second right turn leads down to baie des Tortues with its secluded beach nestled at the foot of the cliffs. You can swim here but be careful, as there is a strong current.

The *belvédère* is at the end of the road above the *bonhomme*. There is a view over La Roche bay on one side and baie des Tortues on the other. You can also see out to the reef and can often spot turtles in baie des Tortues from this vantage point. From the car park there's a path to the top of the hill, where there's a statue of the Virgin

Mary and a 360-degree view of the surrounding countryside and sea.

Plage de Poé (Poé beach, Map pp260–1) is a stretch of white beach several kilometres long that borders an aquamarine lagoon. About 200m out from the beach there's a small reef that is excellent for snorkelling. You can see tropical fish, sea snakes and rays. The main reef is another 500m out. Poé is often windy, attracting wind- and kite-surfers. Sunset at Poé beach is a magical moment. From the RT1 turn-off near Bourail, it's 15.5km to the start of Plage de Poé, where there's a campsite.

Activities

La base nautique de Poé (☎ 44 23 27; basenautique@lagoon.nc; Poé beach; per hr kayaks/windsurfing boards/catamarans 1000/1600/2800CFP) hires out activity equipment. It also organises glass-bottomed boat trips to the reef (per adult/child 1800/900CFP).

Divers can explore a number of sites (see p220) with Bourail Sub Loisirs (see p224).

Nékwéta (opposite) can organise **surfing trips** (per person 5000CFP, board hire

1000CFP) to the barrier reef and **boat trips** (per person 3000CFP) to a nearby islet. The best place to surf, and an ideal spot for beginners, is at the mouth of the Néra river.

Tours

Zion Ranch de la Courie (Map pp260–1; ☎ 44 14 90; per person 5000CFP) The turn-off to this property is 3km north of Bourail. The ranch organises half-day horse treks for a minimum of two people. With a minimum of six people, it can also arrange a two-day trek into the central mountain ranges where you stay overnight in a *tribu*.

Sleeping

Bourail has a wide range of sights and activities but is somewhat short of places to sleep.

Hôtel El Kantara (Map pp266–7; ☎ 44 13 22; La Roche; d with/without air con 5750/4950CFP; mains 1800CFP; 🍷) The El Kantara is in need of a facelift but it's one of the few places to sleep in the area. It's by the Néra river 100m from the beach. Turn left at La Roche, then left again 700m further on.

Hôtel La Néra (Map pp260–1; ☎ 44 16 44, fax 44 18 31; s/d 5660/6660CFP; 🍷 🍷) This hotel is on the northern side of the Néra bridge, opposite the turn-off to La Roche and Poé beaches. It has a swimming pool and views over the Néra river and valley. The restaurant (mains 1800CFP), overlooking the river, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Camping de Poé (Map pp266–7; ☎ 41 28 78; Poé beach; camping in grounds/on beachfront per tent 1000/1500CFP & per person 100CFP, per bungalow 2500CFP, tent hire per night 500CFP, bicycle hire per hr/½-day 800/3500CFP) A municipal campsite is the only place to sleep at Poé beach, 15km from the RT1 turn-off. There are empty wooden bungalows for hire but you need to provide bedding including mattresses. The bungalows sleep up to three adults. The campsite has hot showers and a small refreshments bar open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It sells croissants and baguettes (order in advance), as well as toasted sandwiches, fries and pizza.

Nékwéta (Map pp266–7; ☎ 41 90 81; www.nekweta.com; case adult/child 3000/1500CFP) This attractive camp is set in a lush garden dotted with Kanak sculptures. The *case* has a stone wall and an appealing wooden interior with a mezzanine. You can order a BBQ meal (2800CFP) or lobster (5000CFP). It's 200m from the beach. Turn left at La Roche, then left again 700m further on.

Eating & Drinking

Bourail has a couple of restaurants and several cafés, all on the main street. For details on the restaurants attached to hotels, see left. The market sells fruit, vegetables and crafts. It's held on Friday and Saturday mornings (6am–11am), at the northern end of town on the main road.

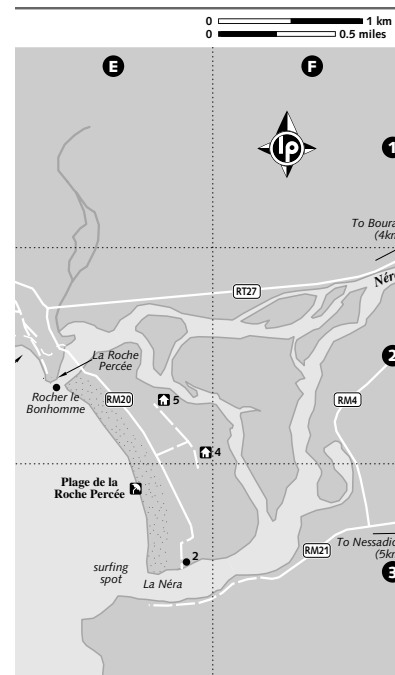
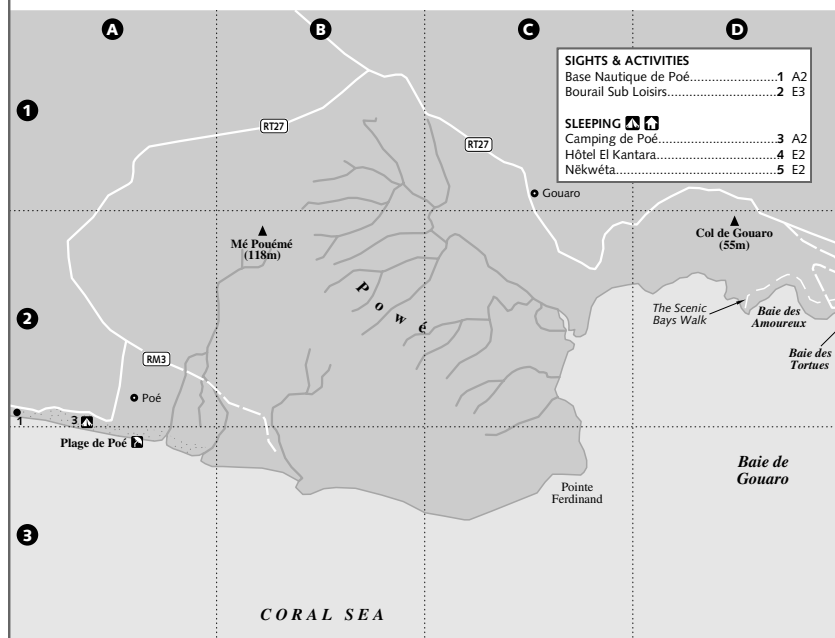
Bourail Discount (Map p265; ☎ 44 11 31; 🕒 7am–noon & 2–7pm Mon–Sat, morning Sun) Supermarket next to the church.

Chêz Stéphanie (Map p265; ☎ 85 46 47; mains 500–700CFP; 🕒 10am–1.30pm & 5.15–10pm Tue–Sun) This *roulotte* (mobile van) is at the northern end of town and does the usual fast-food options including *panini*, sandwiches and burgers.

Snack Hibiscus (Map p265; ☎ 44 12 17; mains 950CFP, snacks 350–500CFP; 🕒 7am–6pm Mon–Sun) This busy place does *panini*, toasted sandwiches and burgers, as well as rice and meat dishes.

Le Motu (Map p265; ☎ 44 21 41; mains 1200CFP; 🕒 8am–3pm Mon–Fri, 6.30–9pm Tue & Thu) Opposite

SOUTHWEST BOURAIL AREA



the church, Le Motu specialises in Vietnamese dishes.

Mambo Café (Map p265; ☎ 44 29 30; mains 1350-1600CFP; 🍽️ 6am-1.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm) Mambo Café specialises in Asian dishes and also does pizzas (small/large 1350/2450CFP).

Véro Pizza (☎ 77 38 33; on main road; small/large pizza 1000/1800 CFP; 9.30am-1.30pm & 5.30-9pm Mon-Sat, 6-9pm Sun) For pizza head to Véro's. It has an excellent choice of pizzas made from fresh local produce. It's on the main road next to the *mairie*.

Le Relais Gourmand (Map p265; ☎ 44 23 23; rue Simon Drémond; mains 1800-2500CFP; 🍽️ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) This restaurant, serving French cuisine at the northern end of town, overlooks a small garden.

Getting There & Away

There's a daily bus between Noumea and Bourail (see p329). In addition, all buses heading up the east or west coast stop here. There's no public transport to La Roche or Poé beaches.

THIO TO CANALA

pop Thio 2743 & Canala 3512

The main attractions in this isolated east-coast region are the beautiful beach camp sites in Thio and the stunning scenery such as Canala's Cascade de Ciu, or the contrast between the deep blue sea and red soil along the scenic coastal road south of Thio. The region has a strong pro-independence spirit and portraits of the bespectacled Eloi Machoro, a fallen hero from Canala, sit alongside those of Che Guevara on buildings and bus-stop shelters.

Economically, the local population relies heavily on mining and in places whole mountaintops have been excavated by mining companies and left bare. This shocking scenery is a legacy of early mining days when

no consideration was paid to environmental concerns. Thankfully, these days, legislation requires mining companies to follow more ecologically friendly practices and to revegetate sites when they leave.

From the west coast, you can head across the mountains to Thio from Boulouparis (RP4) or to Canala from La Foa (RP5). Like all the roads that cut across Grande Terre, both these roads take you past picturesque mountain scenery.

At the eastern end of the RP4 there's a junction. To the north the road leads past Thio village towards Canala. There's a one-way system (see opposite) 8.5km to the north of Thio village.

To the south it passes Thio's Catholic mission. Just beyond the mission a large nickel conveyor juts into the sea beside piles of red ore heaped by the road. If your timing is right you might see the ore being loaded onto a tanker. Along the rocky shoreline beside the conveyor you'll see New Caledonia's green gold: nickel-rich garnierite stones shining in the water.

The road eventually ends 30km further south at Petit Borendi, an isolated Kanak *tribu*. If you have the time, this is a beautiful scenic drive. The road follows the coast past beaches and up hillsides where views stretch endlessly across the sea. The coast south of Petit Borendi is known as La Côte Oubliée (the forgotten coast). It is one of the most remote places on Grande Terre. Keen adventurers can do a three- to four-day trek down the coast to Yaté in the far south of Grande Terre. For more details enquire at Office du Tourisme de Nouméa et de la Province Sud (see p232). An even better way to explore this magnificent wild coast is by kayak. Experienced kayakers can arrange a four-day trip through **Terra Incognita** (☎ 78 94 46; terincognita@canl.nc; per person from 15,000CFP).

MINING

In the first 100 years of nickel mining in New Caledonia very little, if any, thought was given to the environmental impact of this open cut mining. When mineral extraction at a site ended, the scarred mountain was simply abandoned. Poor mining techniques caused extensive erosion, which resulted in the massive gullies visible today particularly in the Thio region.

Modern methods are more environmentally friendly. In the 1970s environmentally focused mining regulations were adopted in New Caledonia. These specify particular extraction techniques and require revegetation of sites with endemic species once extraction is completed. Revegetation is tricky because of the fragility of the species that grow on the nutrient-poor lateritic soil.

ONE-WAY ROAD

Heading north to Canala you'll arrive at a 13km stretch known as *route à horaires* (literally, 'schedule road') 8.5km north of Thio village. A rather original one-way system makes travelling this unsealed road fun. The system works on an alternating schedule; cars depart at odd hours from the Thio end, between 5am and 5pm, and even hours from the Canala end, between 6am and 6pm. To prevent head-on encounters, you can only enter the road in the first 20 minutes after the hour.

Early arrivals stop in the shade of roadside trees to wait out the hour before heading off unhurriedly. For the first few kilometres at the Thio end there's a vertical drop at the edge of the single-lane road. Further north the road widens and there are places you can stop for photos or to admire the view. The road runs past savannah hills dotted with trees and the occasional patch of forest. Make sure you're well and truly off this road by dark when, ironically, traffic becomes two-way.

In Thio, the tiny **Musée des Mines** (☎ 44 51 77; Thio village; adult/child 200/100CFP; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Thu, to 2pm Fri & Sat) has information on the history of mining in the region. Its displays include old photos, mining tools and bits of nickel. There's an old steam engine and bits and pieces of mining equipment on the front lawn. It's on the main street.

More **mining vestiges** are at Gîte Ouroué (below), where you can wander around the brick and iron **ruins** of an old nickel smelter built in 1889.

There are a couple of places to sleep in Thio, both in attractive settings.

Gîte Ouroué (☎ 44 50 85; bungalows 4000CFP, camping per tent 1000CFP & per person 150CFP; kayak ½-day 300CFP) sits on a wide dark sandy beach by a small river mouth. Dolphins often swim past the beach in the morning. From the turn-off, 4km north of Thio village, it's 2km to the *gîte*. There are four very basic thatched bungalows with bathrooms, and plenty of space to pitch a tent on a shady stretch of lawn. Meals (mains 1800CFP) need to be ordered 24 hours in advance.

A grassy campsite under large leafy trees, **Camping La Moara** (Map pp260-1; ☎ 44 51 84; camping per tent 1500CFP) has a beautiful white beach curved around a small bay. On one side of the bay there's a reef with colourful fish. It's a great place to snorkel when the sea's calm. The campsite is 11km southeast of the Thio junction.

A small shop, **Chez Vaiana** (☎ 44 51 29; Thio village; 6am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon & 3-7.30pm Sat, 7am-noon Sun), is bursting with supplies, on the main street.

The road becomes sealed once again 4km north of the one-way stretch at Nakety. Here, beside the church's twin steeples, is the **grave** of Eloi Machoro topped by a

flèche faitière (ornamental wooden spear). It's 300m off the main road. Turn off at the bridge at the northern end of Nakety.

The spectacular **Cascade de Ciu** (Ciu waterfall; Map pp260-1) can be seen from the RPN3 south of Canala. It's a vertical drop and from the top you can't actually see the waterfall, but you can swim in a large rock pool and there's a fantastic view of the lush plain around Canala and the long, narrow Canala Bay. If you're adventurous you can **abseil** (☎ 41 98 41; guyyquer@canl.nc; per person 10,000CFP) down the waterfall. A minimum of two people is required. It is cheaper if there are more people. The turn-off is not signposted. It's a sealed road next to a green corrugated iron shop, 500m south of the DAF Province Nord office. It's 4km to the falls. The last 2.5km are unsealed.

Canala has a few places to stay. These ones are both in the vicinity of Cascade de Ciu.

In tribu de Kuinet, 3km south of Canala, **Gîte Mèreko** (Map pp260-1; ☎ 42 84 42; case adult/child 1200/800CFP, d case 3000CFP, camping per tent 1000CFP; guided walk per person 300CFP) is run by a local association. The concrete and wooden *cases* with tiled floors and thatched roofs are modern versions of traditional *cases*. Guests can chat to the friendly staff, watch them prepare a *bougna* (mains 1800CFP), or take a guided walk through the *tribu* or to the waterfall. Take the road to Cascade de Ciu and turn right after 1.5km. The *gîte* is 500m further.

Camping de Haut Gélina (Camping Kouré; Map pp260-1; ☎ 78 64 90; camping per tent 1000CFP; guided walk per person 300CFP) is a calm campsite in a lush setting beside the river flowing from Cascade de Ciu. It has a view of the waterfall and there are wooden platforms with *farés* and tables above the river. There are no showers but plenty of water in the river,

and guided walks to the waterfall. It's 1.5km from the main road around 3km south of Canala and is signposted.

Magasin Tournier (☎ 42 31 39; 🕒 7am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) This is one of the shops selling groceries in Canala. It's off the main road, near the *mairie*.

If you're continuing north on the RPN3 it's a long haul up to Houailou. Before Kouaoua (45km north of Canala), a long covered nickel conveyor belt descends a mountain. The road runs beside a stream about 100m before the conveyor crosses the

road the first time. If you look to the right you'll see a rock covered with petroglyphs. Look out for a sign nailed to a tree. Once you've crossed over the mountains north of Kouaoua, there are great views of the sea and coastline as you descend to the coast, south of Houailou.

From the west coast, the RP4 leads to Thio and the RP5 to Canala. Separate buses run daily from Noumea to Thio and Canala (see p329). There are no buses between the two villages. You need a private vehicle to travel the one-way road.