

# The Land of Eternal Spring

By Kevin Lippe

Everywhere you look you see a tropical island surrounded by blue sea. This is how many visitors describe New Caledonia. To many visitors it is quite beautiful.

Located in the southwest pacific and far off the coast of Australia, New Caledonia is a perfect getaway spot. A total area of 19,060 kilometers (7,360miles) it's the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island put together. It is made of



ocean and islands with tropical rainforests, mountains, and plains. The main island is known as the Grande Terre. The Grande Terre is also the only island with mountains. The highest of which is the point of Mt. Panie, which is about 1,628miles (5,241feet.).

The climate of New Caledonia is a typical tropic climate. While there, it may seem like an extreme Florida climate. It's also very humid, usually at between 70% and 80% humidity. The rainy season is during November and March; the dry season in any other month. A natural hazard is cyclones, so watch the weather. They are usually present during the rainy season. The temperature is usually an average of 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit.

There are many animals and flora living on the islands of New Caledonia. There are some types of tropical evergreens such as the monkey puzzle trees. There are also many types of flowering trees as well as conifers and Antarctic ants. The origin of the Antarctic plants is most likely from the ancient super continent Gondawa. There is an

array of animals as well. One of these is the national bird, the Kagu. Unfortunately, the Kagu is endangered because of the introduction of dogs, cats, and pigs. Since this bird is



flightless, it can't escape easily and has to lay its eggs on the ground. There is also an array of lizards, most are skinks and geckos. One of these species of geckos is the



Rhacodactylus. Within this species is the Giant Gecko. The Giant Gecko is probably the biggest gecko in the world, growing to from 14-16 inches long. Another one of these geckos is the endangered New Caledonian Crested Gecko. It was thought to be extinct until found in 1996. The export of these geckos has stopped directly from this country because they are only found on one eighth of the Grande Terre and the Isle des Pines of New Caledonia. They can be found as pets because before the exportation stopped, several were in captive and were then bred.

Most people live in the capital of Nouméa which is the only city in New Caledonia. The people are mostly Melanesian and first landed there in about the 1600s. In fact New Caledonia is the most southern Melanesian island. The population is around 194 – 197 people for the area of New Caledonia. French is the official language, but there are 33 Melanesian – Polynesian dialects.

Although small, New Caledonia manages to catch the eye of tourist and is teeming with life as a land of eternal spring.