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The Institute of Biopaleogeography  
named under Charles R. Darwin



IBPG 26 (2025) 1-60

E-ISSN 2956-4573

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## **New Caledonia, Southwest Pacific. A nature, touristic, and social expedition**

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**The Institute of Biopaleogeography named under Charles R. Darwin**

**Publisher's Address:**

Scientific Publishing House DARWIN at The Institute  
22, Adama Mickiewicza Street, 78-520 Złocieniec,  
District Drawski, West Pomerania, Poland

**Cite of this article:**

Tomasz Borowski. New Caledonia, Southwest Pacific. A nature, touristic, and social expedition. *The Institute of Biopaleogeography named under Charles R. Darwin 26 (2025) 1-60*

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a nature, geographic-touristic, and social expedition to New Caledonia, which took place in 2011. The first stage of this journey was a visit to the Isle of Pines, located approximately 50 km southeast of New Caledonia. The Isle of Pines resembles a paradise island, with its stunning bays, white beaches, and lush vegetation being its main highlights. The paper also provides a description of the southern part of the island of New Caledonia, with its capital Nouméa, which is better suited for more venturesome visitors. High unemployment, especially evident on the streets of Nouméa, sometimes leads to local conflicts with tourists.

**Keywords:** New Caledonia, Isle of Pines, d'Oro Bay, tourism, geography

## **INTRODUCTION**

The journey began in Poland with a bus ride to Berlin, followed by a flight from Berlin to London, and then a long-haul flight from London to Sydney, Australia, with a stopover in Bangkok (Thailand). Upon arrival in Sydney on the same day after a connecting flight, I boarded a flight to Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia. Map 1 shows the location of New Caledonia in the southwest Pacific.

The next day, I took a ferry from the capital, Nouméa, to the Isle of Pines, located southeast of New Caledonia. During the entire journey from Poland to the Isle of Pines (NC), I had my bicycle with me on the plane. When planning the trip, I considered that the bike would be useful for getting around the island, which made it much easier for me to observe the area (Photos 1 & 31).

By midday the following day, I was already basking on the beautiful white beach of the Isle of Pines. Interestingly, I did not see any other tourists on the beach (Photos 1 & 2).

At noon, the temperature in the sun was extremely high, so I was only able to stay in the shade of the palm trees. I spent the night on the beach, surrounded by the gentle sound of the ocean and the starry sky.

The next morning, I cycled to the northeastern part of the Isle of Pines, to the breathtaking d'Oro Bay. Silence, birdsong, coconut trees, white beaches, and the absence of tourists – this is what I found in this paradise.

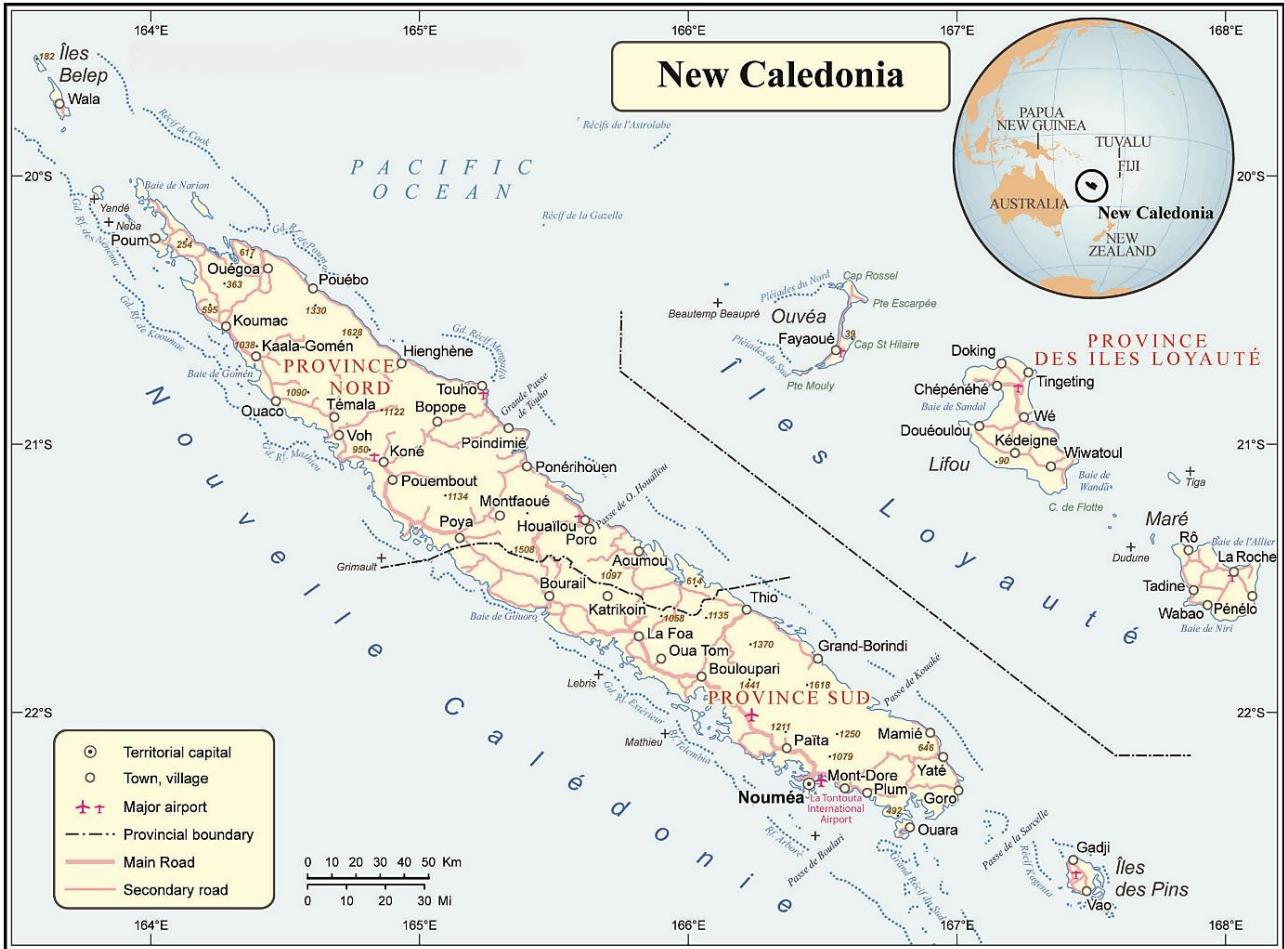
The charm of this place captivated me so much that I spent several weeks camping, sleeping on the white beach near d'Oro Bay. I drank coconut juice (very tasty and nutritious) (Photo 3), fished (Photos 11 & 12), swam, and snorkelled in d'Oro Bay. This is how I spent my time, admiring both the natural beauty and traditional local houses (Photos 3-14, 28-37).

While staying at d'Oro Bay, I was invited to join a trial sail on a traditional pirogue with local sailors. During the journey, the pirogue sailed swiftly and gracefully (Photos 15-27). However, during the cruise I noticed that the pirogue was taking on some water (Photo 20), though I still felt safe as we sailed around the bay.

New Caledonia is home to many endemic animals and plants. This is due to isolation to New Zealand following tectonic movements that occurred there around 65 million years ago.

The Isle of Pines is also home to the tall coniferous evergreen trees, *Araucaria columnaris* (Photos 15-18, 23-25).

The residents of the Isle of Pines sustain themselves through traditional agriculture and fishing. However, tourism is their main source of income. A good example of this is the large cruise ships that arrive from Brisbane, Australia, bringing tourists to the island. During these visits, islanders sell local souvenirs to the tourists. The Isle of Pines also boasts many high-standard hotels, most of whose guests are Japanese tourists, who dominate the tourist demographics.



Map 1. New Caledonia, Southwest Pacific (Google).

After spending about 2 months on the paradisiacal Isle of Pines, which proved to be an island of peace, tranquillity and beautiful nature, I returned to the capital of New Caledonia, Nouméa, by a regional airline (Photos 38-51). Photos 44 & 45 show the flight from the Isle of Pines to Nouméa. Photos 52-54 capture a Traffic Police inspection in Nouméa.

Just like on the Isle of Pines, the sunsets in Nouméa are breathtaking (Photos 14 & 55).

Even when visiting the capital Nouméa there do happen to be car accidents (Photos 56 & 57). As I approached the scene of one such accident, I realised it was a serious incident with severely injured individuals ...

Planning to extend my stay in New Caledonia for a few additional weeks, I decided to join a deep-sea fishing boat. At the first opportunity, I embarked on a long voyage west of New Caledonia aboard a fishing boat named 'GOSSANAH'.

During the trip to the fishing grounds, it was a bit windy and choppy, but the adventure in the southwestern Pacific was worth the effort. At the back of the boat, a long line (about 1 km) was spooled out, with hooks baited with sardines attached. After five hours, the line was reeled back in, with fish caught on the hooks.

All the fish were stored in a refrigerated hold below deck. The most valuable catches were swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) (Photo 59), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) (Photo 60), and mahi-mahi (*Coryphaena hippurus*) (Photo 61). Other species of tuna, though much smaller, were also caught.

Occasionally, sharks were caught, and some of them were considerable in size. All of the sharks were released back into the ocean. Upon returning to the port in Nouméa, the fish were weighed and sorted, a process that took two days (Photos 58-64). The most valuable fish – swordfish, yellowfin tuna, and mahi-mahi – were prepared for export to Japan. The remaining smaller fish were destined for the local market. The crew of the boat were friendly and cheerful (Photos 65 & 66). I spent the night on the outskirts of the park (Photos 67 & 68), then headed to the centre of Nouméa. After a delicious breakfast, I noticed a legendary Harley-Davidson motorcycle parked next to the restaurant (Photo 69).

From the hills of Nouméa, one can observe beautiful views of the Pacific Ocean (Photos 70-76). I spent the night almost outdoors in a large nature park south of the centre of Nouméa. I built a one-person den, as shown in Photos 77-82.

South of Nouméa, I observed heavily folded sedimentary layers, indicating the turbulent geological prehistory of southern New Caledonia (Photos 83-86).

Photos 87 & 88 show paratrikes in flight, likely of French enthusiasts of advanced sports. While exploring, I spotted large ferns on a property in the capital, Nouméa. These are tree ferns that grow naturally on this property (Photos 89-94).

Photos 95 & 96 show a local festival with regional music.

On my return to Poland, I took a souvenir photo at Nouméa Airport with French soldiers stationed in New Caledonia (Photo 97) [1-32].

During the flight back, I admired views from the airplane window (Photos 98-104).

Photos 102 & 103 show an aerial view of the airport in Osaka, while Photo 104 captures the vast city of Osaka.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The general public in New Caledonia is generally reluctant towards foreigners. This attitude is connected to social independence movements aiming to separate from France. New Caledonia possesses rich nickel deposits which makes France unwilling to grant independence to New Caledonia. Occasionally, there are riots, arson incidents, etc.

However, the beauty of New Caledonia and the surrounding islets overshadows local social issues related to independence.

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## Appendix



**Photo 1.** Beach on the Isle of Pines, New Caledonia  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 2.** Beach on the Isle of Pines, New Caledonia  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 3.** Drinking coconut juice while camping on the Isle of Pines (with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 4.** Camping on the Isle of Pines (with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 5.** Camping on the Isle of Pines  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 6.** Local traditional buildings on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 7.** Local traditional buildings on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 8.** Beach at d'Oro Bay, Isle of Pines (with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



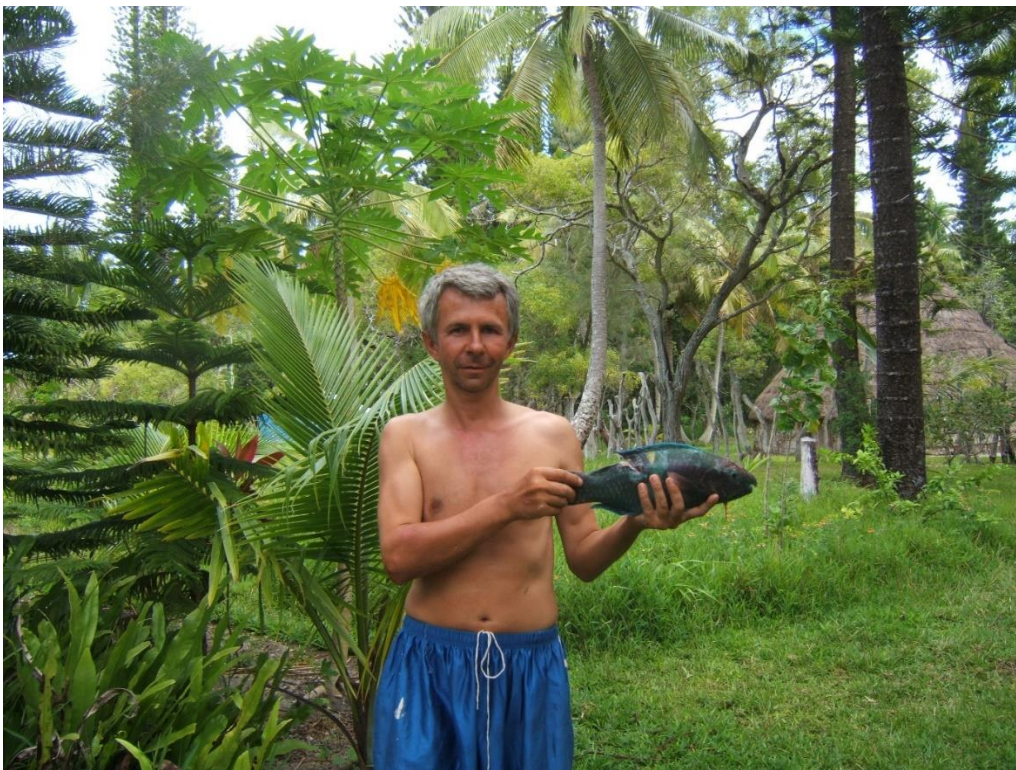
**Photo 9.** French tourists at the campsite on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 10.** Campsite owner Emil and Tomasz Borowski, the author.



**Photo 11.** Campsite owner Emil and Tomasz Borowski, the author.



**Photo 12.** Parrotfish caught at d'Oro Bay, Isle of Pines (Tomasz Borowski, the author).



**Photo 13.** Beach at d'Oro Bay, Isle of Pines  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 14.** Sunset at d'Oro Bay, Isle of Pines.



**Photo 15.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 16.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 17.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 18.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 19.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 20.** The pirogue took on some water during the cruise.



**Photo 21.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 22.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 23.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.  
High coniferous trees in distance (*Araucaria columnaris*)



**Photo 24.** A trial pirogue cruise on the coastal waters of the Isle of Pines.  
High coniferous trees in distance (*Araucaria columnaris*)



**Photo 25.** Tomasz Borowski, the author, during the pirogue trip.  
High coniferous trees in distance (*Araucaria columnaris*)



**Photo 26.** View of the pirogue on the beach  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 27.** View of the pirogue on the beach.



**Photo 28.** View of the campsite by the beach at d'Oro Bay.



**Photo 29.** View of the campsite by the beach at d'Oro Bay.



**Photo 30.** Traditional housing in which I stayed at the campsite.



**Photo 31.** Traditional housing in which I stayed at the campsite.



**Photo 32.** Traditional housing in which I stayed at the campsite.



**Photo 33.** Traditional housing in which I stayed at the campsite.



**Photo 34.** Traditional housing in which I stayed at the campsite.



**Photo 35.** Local pirogues on the Isle of Pines.  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



**Photo 36.** Local pirogues on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 37.** Local pirogues on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 38.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 39.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 40.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 41.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 42.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 43.** At the airport on the Isle of Pines.



**Photo 44.** Flight from the Isle of Pines to Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia.



**Photo 45.** Flight from the Isle of Pines to Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia.



**Photo 46.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 47.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 48.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 49.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 50.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 51.** At the airport in Nouméa.



**Photo 52.** Local traffic police in Nouméa.



**Photo 53.** Local traffic police in Nouméa.



**Photo 54.** Local traffic police in Nouméa.



**Photo 55.** Sunset in Nouméa.



**Photo 56.** Serious car accident in the capital, Nouméa.



**Photo 57.** Serious car accident in the capital, Nouméa.



**Photo 58.** Tomasz Borowski, the author, on a fishing boat in the southwestern Pacific.



**Photo 59.** Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*).



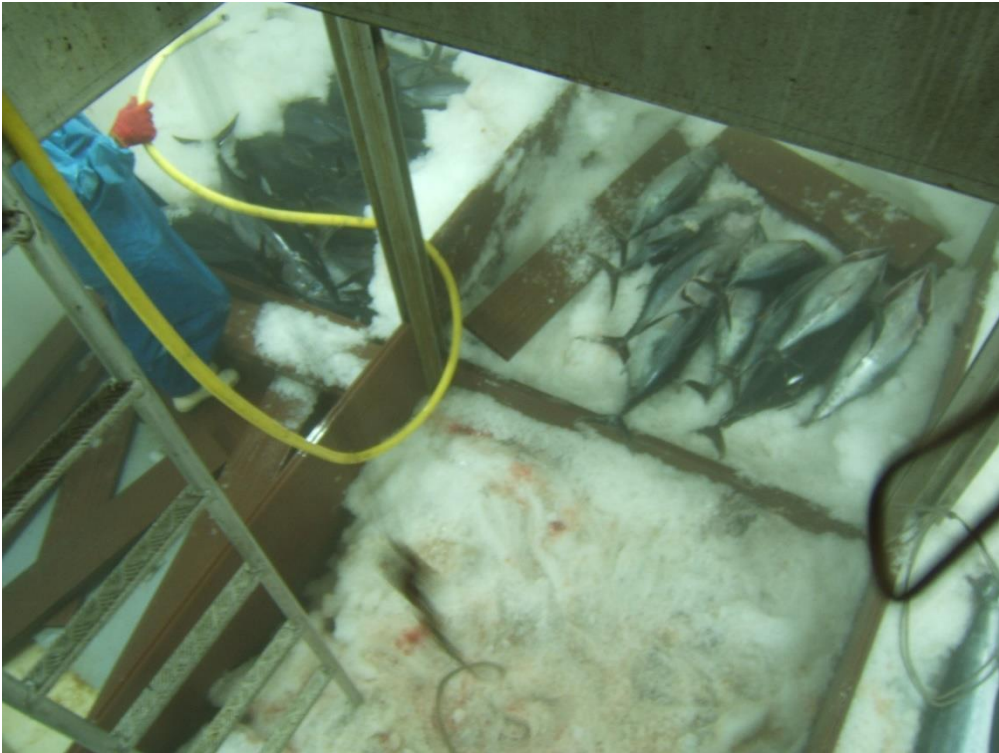
**Photo 60.** Yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)  
(with Tomasz Borowski, the author, in the background).



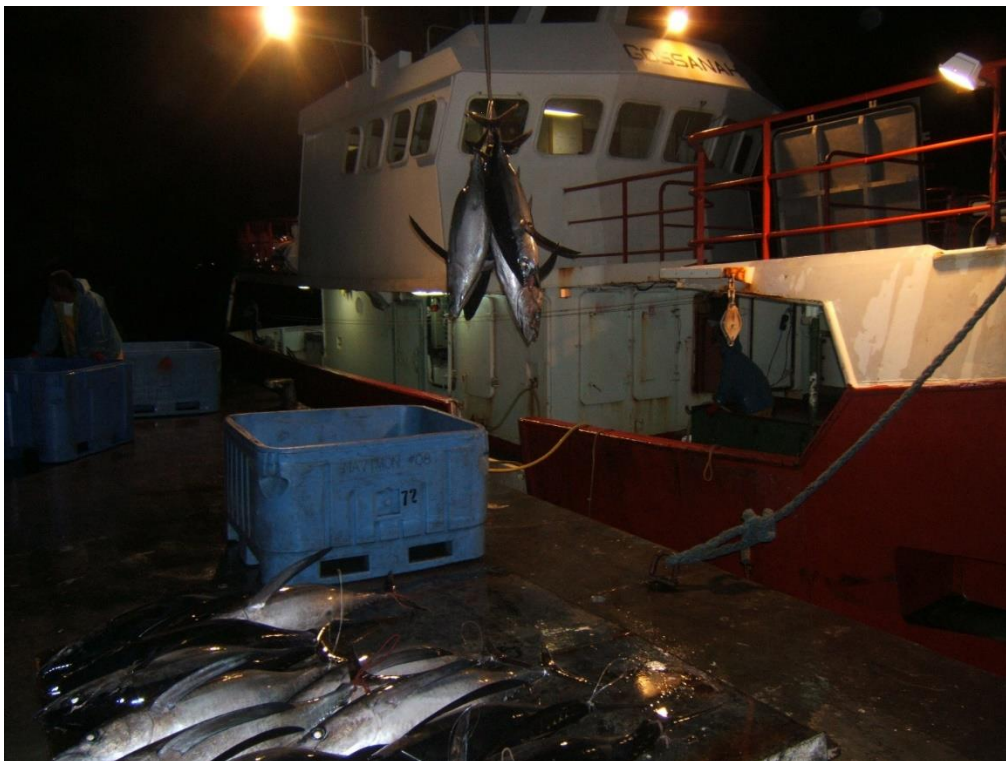
**Photo 61.** Mahi-mahi fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*).



**Photo 62.** Fish in cold storage on the fishing boat.



**Photo 63.** Fish in cold storage on the fishing boat.



**Photo 64.** Fish being transported from the boat to storage facilities.



**Photo 65.** The boat captain and Tomasz Borowski, the author.



**Photo 66.** The crew of 'GOSSANAH', the fishing boat.



**Photo 67.** Overnight stay under trees in a park in Nouméa.



**Photo 68.** Overnight stay under trees in a park in Nouméa.



**Photo 69.** Legendary Harley-Davidson motorcycle next to a restaurant.



**Photo 70.** Bay with yachts in Nouméa.



**Photo 71.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



**Photo 72.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



**Photo 73.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



**Photo 74.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



**Photo 75.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



**Photo 76.** Panoramic view from a hill in Nouméa.



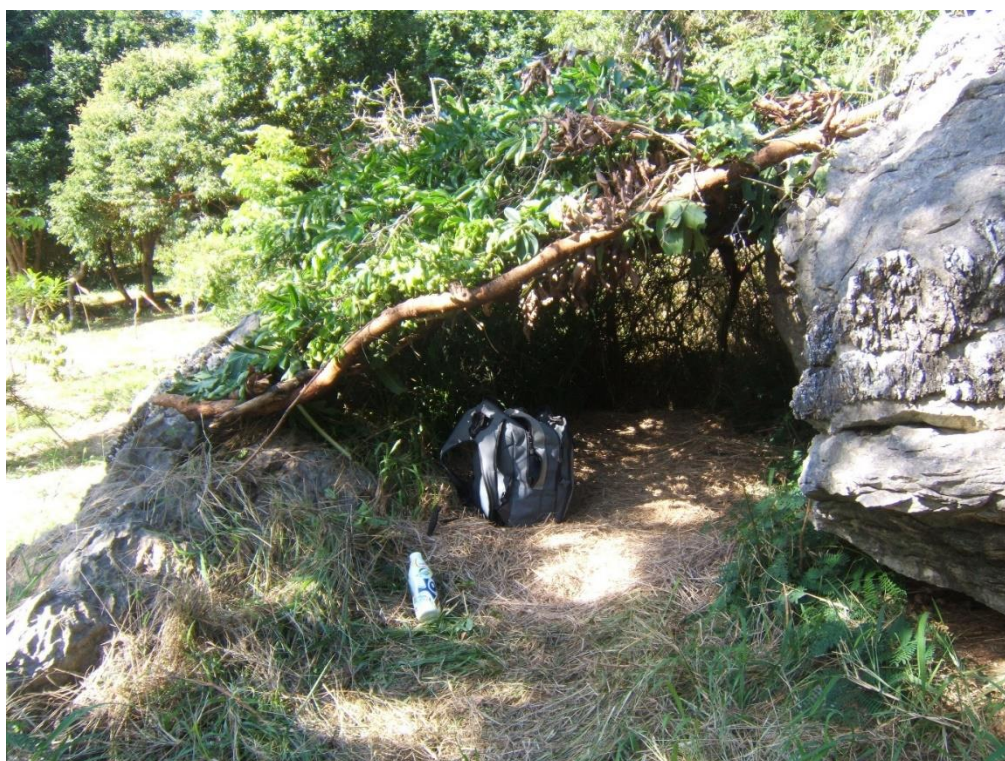
**Photo 77.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 78.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 79.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 80.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 81.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 82.** Improvised shelter in the park where I stayed in Nouméa.



**Photo 83.** Folded sedimentary rocks near Nouméa.



**Photo 84.** Folded sedimentary rocks near Nouméa.



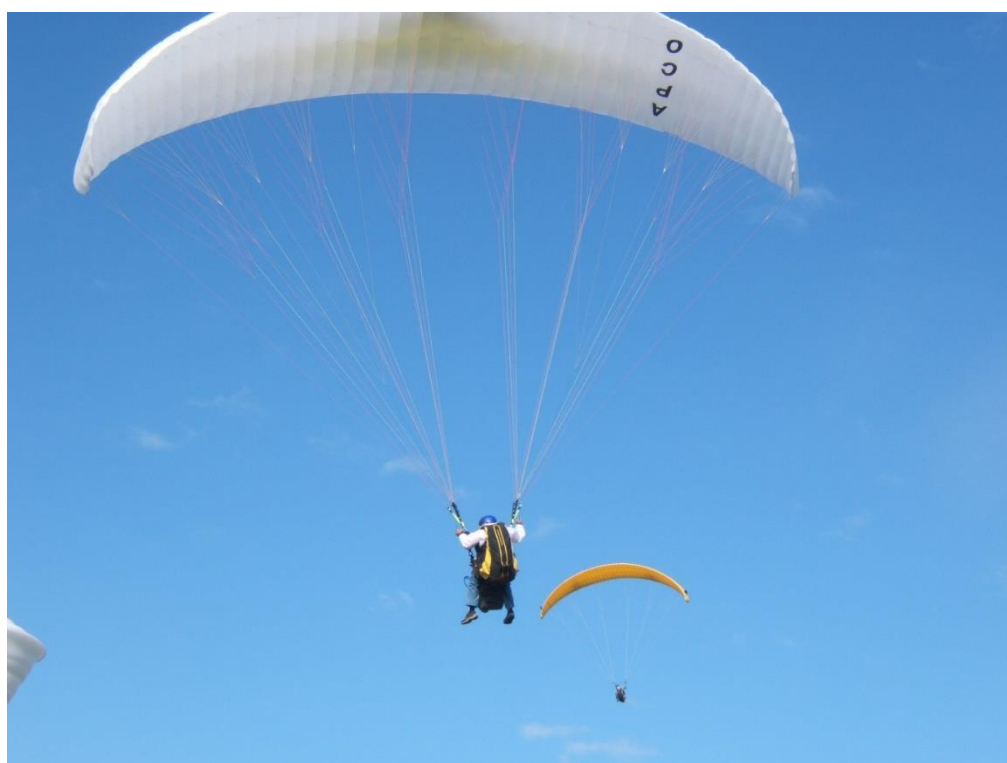
**Photo 85.** Folded sedimentary rocks near Nouméa.



**Photo 86.** Folded sedimentary rocks near Nouméa.



**Photo 87.** Advanced sports in the capital, Nouméa.



**Photo 88.** Advanced sports in the capital, Nouméa.



**Photo 89.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa.



**Photo 90.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa.



**Photo 91.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa with Tomasz Borowski, the author.



**Photo 92.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa.



**Photo 93.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa.



**Photo 94.** Tree ferns on a property in Nouméa.



**Photo 95.** Local festival with regional music (Nouméa).



**Photo 96.** Local festival with regional music (Nouméa).



**Photo 97.** At the international airport in Nouméa with French soldiers.



**Photo 98.** Flight from Nouméa to Osaka.



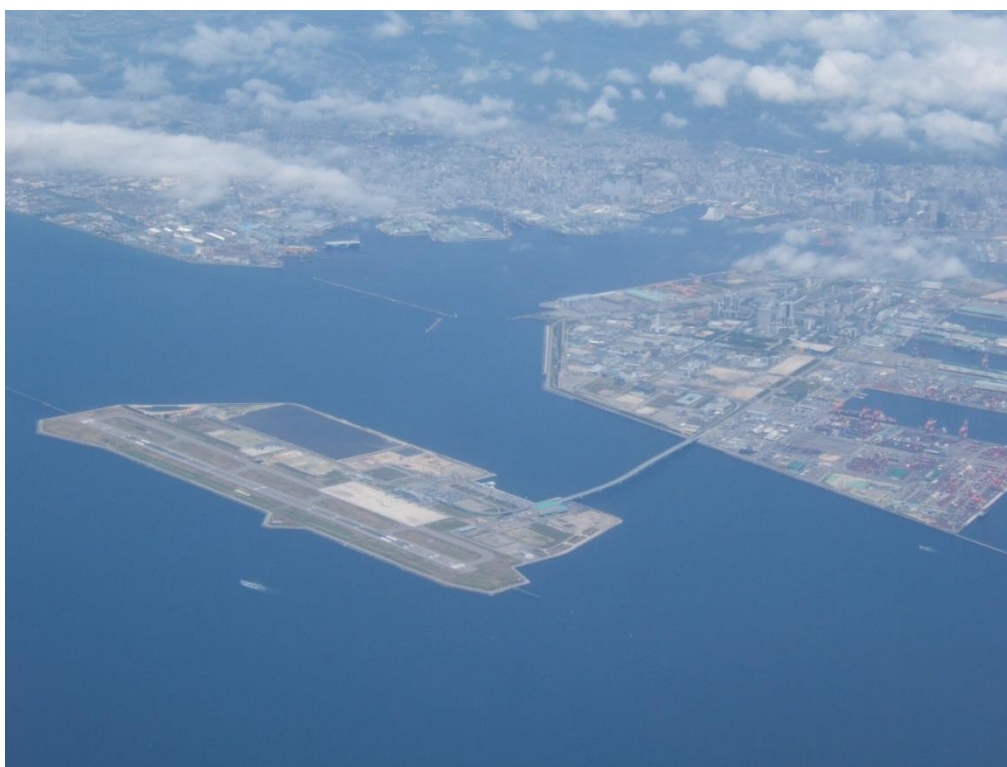
**Photo 99.** Farmland in Japan.



**Photo 100.** View of Osaka Airport from the airplane.



**Photo 101.** View of Osaka Airport from the airplane.



**Photo 102.** View of Osaka Airport from the airplane.



**Photo 103.** View of Osaka Airport from the airplane.



**Photo 104.** View of the city of Osaka from the airplane.