

# Hard core Yasur

Vanuatu's most popular adventure destination is Tanna Island, home of Mount Yasur, the world's most accessible active volcano

"Welcome to the World's Happiest Country", the sign in the airport arrivals hall read. We'd come to Vanuatu to have an adventure in paradise and here on Tanna Island we were about to embark on a tour taking us to the very brink of a live volcano. But first, we had to get there.

Old Man Yasur is a seriously hard core experience. Our tour from White Grass Ocean Resort departed at 2.30pm and the bone jarring, roller-coaster ride in an open truck to the volcano's summit took more than two hours.

We got our first glimpse of Yasur from atop a mountain range and 30 minutes later we tasted its ash, blown into our ears, eyes and noses as we paused in the volcanic plain below for a welcome cold drink.

The road worsened, if that was possible, and then as we were feeling like an about-to-be-served stir-fry, we pulled up. Over the rise, bits of black rocks floated in the skyline and then sank out of sight. Our guide gave a safety talk: "Whatever you do, don't run", and wearing our bright yellow

safety jackets we pressed closer to the lip.

Charcoal rocks littered the solid grey asphalt under our feet. Wind tore at us and ash gritted our eyes.

Suddenly we heard a "BOOM" that reverberated through our bodies and after a second's pause, the fireworks came. Huge fiery bright lumps of magma were tossed, confetti-like, about 300m into the sky.

Everyone busied themselves with cameras and tried to adjust to the tugging wind which

vents. There were no rail barriers, just the monstrous wind, flying ash, unconscious majesty and pure adrenalin. We sat down on the lip, our backsides flattened into the ash as another boom reverberated.

Yasur performed even better as night fell, making more effort to exhaust our camera's batteries. The explosive bursts were now going 500m in the air, way above our heads although we were so high up anyway. It was unbelievable, elemental, mesmerising. Like staring into flames, you start to pick up fanciful shapes out of the flying magma, was that a dog?

At full dark around 6.30pm, Yasur gave three great belches, like it was presenting a finale.

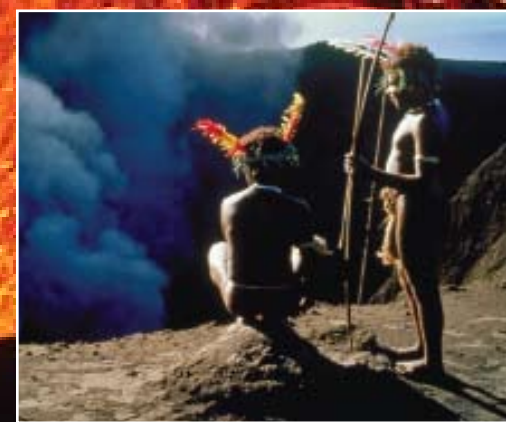
"Go home now, show's over for today," it seemed to say. We walked, slipped and slid down the volcano to our vehicle. No one needed to say anything.

Some island inhabitants believe Mount Yasur is the origin of the universe as well as being the place a person's spirit goes after death. I believe it was the most marvellous and unforgettable adventure, put it on your bucket list.

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I think would probably push a small child into the volcano's crater. In the last rays of dusk, the clouds above our heads were black and cream and dramatically outlined in gold from the setting sun.

As it became darker, the show got even better. We moved to the northern lookout, a steep walk up the volcano's shoulder, sinking into fresh ash until we were high up on the lip, looking down into the three



Spiritual ... Some Tanna Island inhabitants believe Mount Yasur is the origin of the universe.



Air Vanuatu flies to Tanna Island daily from Port Vila/Efate Island. White Grass Ocean Resort has evening tours to Yasur for about \$140 per person. A double room bure, including breakfast and transfers, is about \$300 per night. For more information, visit: [www.whitegrassvanuatu.com.vu](http://www.whitegrassvanuatu.com.vu)

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