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## New Vanuatu Hospitality Training Academy

**O**wners of Vanuatu's le Grand Hotel & Casino on Port Vila harbour have announced they'll use the property as the base for a unique Training Academy to train staff both from there and Iririki Island Resorts and Spa to international standards. And it will offer its facilities to staff from resorts from the outer islands of Vanuatu as well. le Grand Hotel & Casino and Iririki Island Resorts & Spa have several common owners, and Managing Director, Andrew Spinks says the Training Academy will be free to the 350 staff of both properties who will be able undertake training in the workplace and in work time. *"I am very excited at this tangible example of our company helping our staff gain qualifications as well as lift standards in the tourism industry in Vanuatu,"* Mr Spinks said. *"We are a company that continues to plough its profits back into the country. With these two properties that include the new Snorkelers Cove precinct at Iririki Island that's Vanuatu's first true 5-star resort, we*



*aim to become the benchmark for the tourism industry in the South Pacific. We already have the product to equal anything in the region, now we will have the skills to match."* le Grand Hotel & Casino, that has been empty since being built in 2003, will be officially acquired by its now owners on May 12 and will open to guests in July. Mr Spinks said the new Training

Academy based at le Grand would operate under the direction of experienced Ni-Vanuatu Training Manager, Daniel Faivre. *"All the documents have been prepared and are ready to go to the National Training Board of Vanuatu,"* Mr Faivre said. *"Our staff are already very excited at this opportunity to further their training to international standard."* This will cover all aspects of both properties from Housekeeping to Front Office, Maintenance to Food & Beverage, and with the acquisition of le Grand Hotel & Casino, will also cover training in Responsible Service of Gaming and all facets of the Gaming Industry. Mr Faivre will have the backing of Iririki Island Resorts & Spa General Manager, Robyn Redknap who was previously Dean of the highly successful H.O.T.E.L. School at Sea World Nara Resort on the Gold Coast, and also that Resort's Deputy General Manager for seven years.

*(Source: David Ellis Associates 08/05/2006)*

## Top World Swimmers For Vanuatu Ocean Swims

**A**mong the swim stars heading for this year's Vanuatu Ocean Swim and Espiritu Santo Aore Swim in June will be last year's winners Nick Cordner and Shelley Clark, together with Shane Olliver and Luanne Rowe from Australia and Olivier Saminadan and Solene Fignes from New Caledonia. Shelley was recently selected for the Australian World Championship Team, Nick, Shane & Luanne are regular winners on the Australian Ocean Swim scene, Olivier was a multi Gold Medalist at the 2003 South Pacific Games in Suva and Solene is the current 200m Freestyle World Champion, winning Gold at last year's Montreal World Championships. Other prominent regional swimmers taking part include Fiji Champions Luke McGrath and Lorraine Patterson. Entries are still coming in with a large group of swimmers already confirmed from Australia. Numbers are expected to be up from New Zealand, New Caledonia and Fiji this year and for the first time there are swimmers coming from Japan. Overseas interest in the second Espiritu

Santo Aore Swim is also growing and organizers are expecting an increase in entries this year, with Swimmers from Australia, New Zealand & Fiji already making onward bookings to Espiritu Santo. Local entries are also expected to increase this year with local swimmers preparing for the swims with daily sessions in Port Vila Harbour and a smaller group taking to the waters off Luganville town. A full programme of activities has been planned for both events with the Espiritu Santo Aore Swim featuring races for paddle and sailing canoes as part of the two day programme. In other developments, the event has received increase in sponsorship. Two new sponsors have joined the ranks of the major sponsors supporting the Vanuatu Ocean Swim with Le Lagon Resort and View, manufacturer of some of the world's best swim goggles & accessories announcing new sponsorship deals with the event. Le Lagon General Manager, Tony Burns said that the Resort was happy to support an event that



highlighted Vanuatu's activity based tourism and promoted Vanuatu as a destination at some of the world's best Ocean Swim events. Le Lagon and View join Air Vanuatu, Telecom Vanuatu Limited, Tusker, Iririki Island Resort, Chantilly's on the Bay, the Melanesian Port Vila as major supporters of this VTO driven event, now in its 5th year. The second edition of The Espiritu Santo Aore Swim has also attracted sponsor attention with Tusker and View adding their support to the event. They join Major Sponsors, Aore Resort and Air Vanuatu, Associate Sponsors, Wilco Hardware, Deco Stop Lodge and LCM Store in supporting this growing event. *(Source: South Pacific Sports Promotions 31/05/2006)*

## Air Pacific Buys Out Sun Air (Fiji)

**A**ir Pacific Limited has bought Sun Air for an undisclosed sum. The acquisition is in line with Air Pacific's wish to expand and service domestic routes. From July 1, Sun Air will be changed to Fiji Airlines Limited. The takeover was subject to the transfer of Sun Air's licence and air operator's certificate to Fiji Airlines Ltd. Air Pacific chairman Gerald Barrack said Fiji Airlines would start by servicing Sun Air routes with its fleet. He said all aircraft would be refurbished and new ones bought. Negotiations were in progress with manufacturers for the acquisition of new aircraft capable of flying to all airports in Fiji. The airline has an ATR42 airplane to fly the Suva, Nadi and Labasa routes and to Rotuma when the island's runway is repaired. The 44-seater aircraft will service Tonga and Vanuatu from Nausori to supplement Air Pacific flights from Nadi. Mr Barrack said the airline would be re-branded and painted in a distinctive new colour and design. He said the company's re-entry into the domestic aviation market was triggered

by the Government's request for it to examine the possibility with the aim of providing improved services. "After the examination of various options Air Pacific decided they could deliver improved

*"...from July customers can experience improved reliability and affordability..."*

comfort, reliability and more affordable travel for residents and visitors to Fiji." Mr Barrack said the rapid means of providing improved services was through acquisition of one of the two domestic airlines which was accomplished after months of negotiation with Sun Air. "We will improve connecting flights to help tourists going to Vanua Levu, Taveuni and Kadavu. "It will be a year before improvements are made but from July customers can experience improved reliability and affordability," he said. (Source: Fiji Times 29/04/2006)



The above news items have been compiled from SPTO (South Pacific Tourism Organisation) and VTO (Vanuatu Tourism Office) news updates, as well as other travel-related sources. Worawia Holiday Haven is a paid member of SPTO and member with VTO.

## Fiji and Queensland's Champagne job for Vanuatu Tourism

**V**anuatu tourism officials are over the moon with the publicity photos being used on the Virgin Pacific Blue and Blue Holidays Website promoting packages to both Fiji and Queensland, because most of them are from Vanuatu's new collection highlighting the beauty of Vanuatu, including Vanuatu's world-famous Champagne Beach. "Its publicity you can't buy," said Vanuatu Tourism Office's Marketing Manager, John Cvetko. "We're delighted Virgin had to turn to Vanuatu to get a picture of the perfect beach for its Fiji and Queensland promotion, and more so that they've obviously recognised that Champagne Beach on Espiritu Santo offers the most idyllic white sands for a couple to escape to. "Its wonderful that Virgin and their Pacific Blue first realised what a magic place Vanuatu is for holidaymakers by starting flights here from Australia nearly two years ago, and now using our beaches for publicity shots for their Queensland and Fiji holidays.



"Well done!," he said, adding: "If anyone wants to see Champagne Beach and just what else Vanuatu has to offer holidaymakers, they've just got to log onto [www.vanuatutourism.com](http://www.vanuatutourism.com) to see the rest of destination – and while at it, also see how much closer we are to Australia than Fiji, so there's not the need to spend as much time in the air getting to your ideal holiday haven." Chances are if you're looking at really great images on the above websites promoting trips to Fiji or Queensland, you're really looking at Vanuatu. Having a bit of fun, John Cvetko added, "You can see how great Vanuatu looks, so what the bloody hell are you still doing at home" Virgin flies twice a week to Vanuatu on Saturday and Monday, with direct connections from most Australian cities through Brisbane. Contact John Cvetko (678) 41482 for more information. (Source: VTO Media Release 23/05/2006)

**Worawia Holiday Haven**  
 Dr. Fr. Lini (old Kumul) Highway  
 Mele, Port Vila VANUATU  
 Tel: +678 25 498  
 Fax: +678 25 499  
[www.resort-vanuatu.com](http://www.resort-vanuatu.com)



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