

# *Travel & Training in New Caledonia*

## *by Simon Puffett - 05 to 22/01/2008*



*Shumeikan Dojo members in Noumea after a seriously enjoyable session.*

*Upon arrival into Noumea, I was struck by the humidity in the air and the heat of the day .... Marc Cessio Sensei kindly extended an invitation to join him and his family for 17 days, with the aim of holding seminars in Noumea and Koumac. Marc and I also planned to travel around New Caledonia on his two custom motorcycles Yamaha 1300cc V4 Royalstar, and Yamaha 1600cc V2 Wildstar.*

*The first night of my stay I was welcomed with a feast organized by the members of the Shumeikan Dojo. Had I realized that I was to be tortured with copious amounts of Beaujolais and Bordeaux wine, not forgetting a ton of French cheese I may have reconsidered my visit... Yeah Right!*



*The only way to travel in New Caledonia.*



*Weapons training during sunset*

*It was great to rekindle the friendships from two years ago while creating new friendships with the new enthusiasts of Aikido. Our original plan to train one hour per evening was soon put to the sword, with everyone wanting a minimum of two hours per session. Members from other organizations were welcomed by Marc and the Shumeikan members, to enjoy the occasion and to share in the spirit of Aikido. The atmosphere in every class was one of eagerness to learn, combined with many tears being shed from the larity created by my attempts to speak French while demonstrating techniques.*

*Our first day trip we travelled approximately 250 kms in a loop around the south of New Caledonia. The earth was a rich red with flowing streams that continually crossed the road that we were navigating. This provided a much needed cooling down due to the temperature sitting around 35 degrees.*

*We stopped to swim at a secluded beach at the end of a dirt track that only previous knowledge would have alerted you to its existence. The snorkeling was fabulous with multi-coloured tropical fish including "Nemo" (clown fish) everywhere!*

*This was a great warm up for our trip 2 days later to Koumac 400 kms north of Noumea. While on the road we enjoyed the spectacular mountain views on one side and the inviting blues and greens of the ocean to the other.*



*Life's a Beach in New Caledonia*

*Upon arrival in Koumac I was introduced to Lionel, Mary and Nicolas, friends of Marc who also practice Aikido and who we were to stay with for the next 4 days. That afternoon I was introduced to the other Koumac members and Jean Paul Do Sensei, who has only just celebrated his 20th anniversary of teaching at the Koumac dojo.*

*The camaraderie within the dojo was truly heart warming and that evening I was invited to a pizza and Champagne dinner at Jean Paul Do Sensei's home. The 3 day seminar in Koumac was very enjoyable with everyone taking to weapons training like ducks to water, and expressing how much they enjoyed the visitation from Takase Shihan and members from NZ in August '07.*



*Marc Sensei at play*

*The final day of the seminar involved a short drive to the Malabou Resort and training on the grass next to the sea. Later that afternoon training moved into the water where we were practicing a range of Koshinage techniques in knee-deep water. Marc and I departed Koumac at 9am and had planned that to travel east some 250kms to stay the night at Poindimie, unfortunately the weather turned and we found ourselves riding in torrential rain for 70kms. This brought on engine problems on one of the bikes and we had to stop under a make shift shelter near a small village. We were both thoroughly soaked.*

*We waited for 3 to 4 hours after finding our way to a small convenience store where we ate lunch, however we were unable to continue along the main road due to the road being cut by heavy flooding and landslips. Having decided to turn back to Koumac the rain also decided to stop...typical! So we made our way back to the bikes and the water problems on one of the bikes had resolved itself.*

*Riding back to Koumac we rode past a newly excavated bypass, however when we rode past originally heading east, the mountains had created a natural waterfall down onto the road. This time the hillside gave way when we were alongside and we were very nearly caught in a landslide that covered 3/4's of the road. To say that our hearts had missed a beat would be an understatement!!*

*Unfortunately this was not to be the last of our hair-raising experiences. About 30kms further on a windy section of the mountains the road was extremely slippery, Marc Sensei came off his motorcycle. Thankfully he was unhurt and had only received a few scraps and bruises. It is never pleasant to watch a fellow motorcyclist take a fall in your rear vision mirror. We made it back to Koumac at 3pm and stopped for a coffee with Lionel and Mary.*

*We decided to continue onto Noumea and set off at 4pm which saw us arrive home at 10pm that night a little tired and worse for wear, though we had big smiles on our faces as we recounted our days events to Marc's family.*

*To say that we had an exciting adventure in my first week would be true in every sense. Although Marc and I knew that we had what could be called a good day in comparison to a little pig that had just been caught, when we stopped to ask for directions to a local village convenience store.*



*The local gentlemen was very friendly and helpful by pointing us in the right direction with a machete in his hand....lets just say preparations were being made for a feast that evening and pork was on the menu.*

*Beautiful scenic views everywhere you go*

*My stay was truly wonderful thanks to Marc, Colette and their two children Amandene and Cedric who have tolerated my numerous attempts to pronounce French correctly everyday.*

*I would like to also thank all the Shumeikan members in Noumea and the Koumac members lead by Jean Paul Do Sensei. I wish you all the very best for 2008 and I'm looking forward to seeing you next year.*