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SOLOMON AIRLINES COMPLIMENTARY IN FLIGHT MAGAZINE

ISSUE 83

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The very best dive spots across 992 islands

Celebrations for Solomon Airlines' 60th anniversary



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Welkam frens and our valued travellers

I would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and especially our own Government of Solomon Islands for their close collaboration to sustain Solomon Airlines throughout a very tragic and difficult COVID-19 pandemic period.

The Board of Solomon Airlines has now given a clear direction to develop a revised strategic plan and we are working on this together. At the same time, the Solomon Airlines team is already making fast progress on immediate priorities so as the future of our national carrier is secured and the pathway is clearer.

With the borders reopened, we have announced an expanded international schedule, with Solomon Airlines flying in partnership with Qantas Airways, Fiji Airways, Air Vanuatu and Air Niugini.

From October, we also increased our domestic operations following the return of the Dash-8 aircraft. Our largest domestic aircraft has been offshore for an annual heavy maintenance check which proved to be more complex than expected and away for a longer period than planned or desired. However, this investment and the return of our Domestic pride has enabled us to increase capacity considerably to Munda, Gizo, Auki and Kirakira whilst improving the efficiency of our operation. Clearly the Government's plan of upgrading runways in Seghe and Taro in the West and Santa Cruz in the far East, augers well for our future Dash-8 operational plans in our Domestic market.

We have also welcomed our new management team members, Josefa Wivou who joined as Manager Commercial; Robert Rounds as Manager Ground

Operations and Robert Browne as our Manager Quality Assurance. Together they bring with them vast aviation expertise and experience gained with numerous airlines and regulators across the Pacific region. They will now be led by our new CEO Gus Kraus who will have a steady hand in rebuilding our airline, the Pride of Solomon Islands.

An urgent priority for us is the upgrade of our International Terminal and new Domestic terminal and we are working closely with the Ministry of Civil Aviation on these and other projects and are confident of improvements heading into the major event of our 2023 calendar, the South Pacific Games towards the latter part of next year.

*With the borders reopened,
we have announced an
expanded international
schedule.*

As the weeks now will fly quickly, I take this opportunity to wish everyone an enjoyable and safe holiday season and a very Merry Christmas.

To our Solomon Airlines staff, our industry partners and patient customers who have all in various ways supported our national carrier throughout this difficult time, we thank you all respectfully.

This shows what binds us all in tough times is a common love for our Solomon Islands and especially at this festive time; we deeply appreciate how blessed we are, and the bright future ahead.

Kind regards,

Frank Wickham
Chairman of Solomon Airlines

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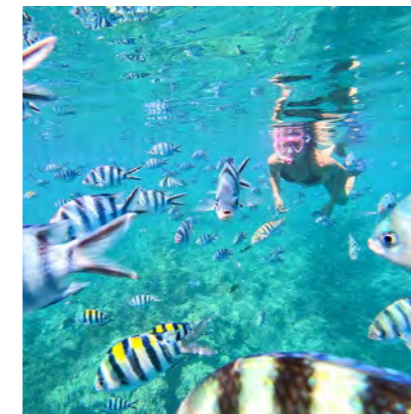
PACIFIC ISLANDS

Turtle Island

Fed up with the corporate rat race, a lost American traveller hit the high seas and created a legacy on an island not far from the Solomons. An extraordinary place, in an extraordinary part of the world.

Find out about why the Solomons is the perfect place to base yourself to explore the rest of Melanesia.

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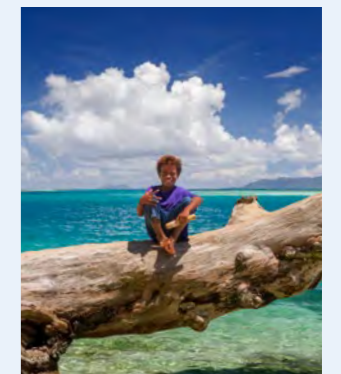
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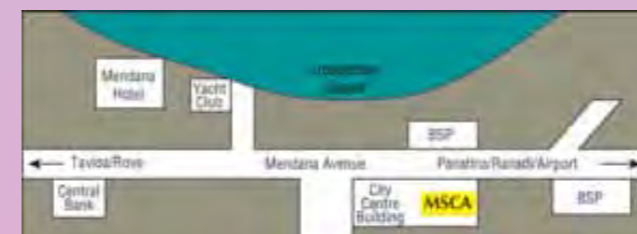
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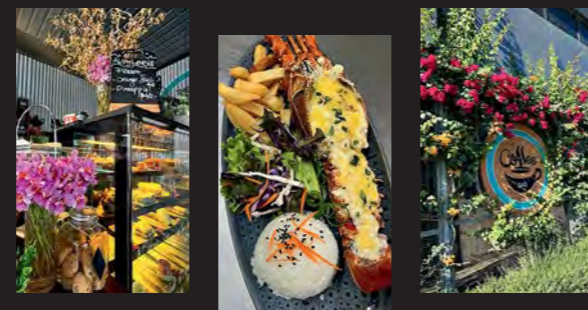
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“GOOD TO GO”: SOLOMON ISLANDS DROP PCR REQUIREMENT

On the 13th October, the Solomon Islands Government announced fully COVID-19 vaccinated passengers are no longer required to undergo a PCR test prior to arrival.

The announcement was welcomed by Tourism Solomons and local businesses alike. Prior to the pandemic, the Solomons received almost 30,000 visitors every year.

“Solomon Islands is very good to go.”

“Our tourism industry has survived numerous crises over the years but we are a strong and resilient people,” said Tourism Solomons Acting CEO Dagnal Dereveke.

“We are very confident with effort, good marketing and profile rebuild we can get back to where we were before the pandemic in relatively short time, especially with the Australian summer school holidays fast approaching.

“Almost all our country’s tourism plant across the entire destination, and especially in the main tourism corridors, is ready to host our visitors.

“Solomon Islands is very good to go.”

Inbound passengers are still required to provide proof of full vaccination on arrival into the country. ▶

PEACE MARATHON TO GO BIGGER, LONGER IN 2023

Around 1000 competitors of all ages and provinces are expected to take to the starting line for the Solomon Islands Peace Marathon on October 29.

Sponsored by Solomon Airlines, the Honiara-based event has become one of the biggest on the country’s sporting calendar in recent years.

Participants are able to register for a variety of distances catering for both competitive and social runners, with 21.1km (half-marathon), 10km, 5km and 2km options available.

All distances begin at SMI Ground and head west, with the 21.1 km race turning around at Bonegi.

Plans are afoot to take the event to the international stage in 2023, which would include a full marathon (42.2km) run, and add another sporting element to the Solomons’ tourism initiatives. This is ahead of the 2023 South Pacific Games, to be held in Honiara in November and December next year.

Other supporters of the Peace Marathon include Solomon Ports, Solomon Telekom, Solomon Power, South Pacific Oil, Solomon Island National University (SINU), The Heritage Park Hotel, Solomon Island Breweries and Soltuna. ▶



SUN STILL SHINING ON \$12.5M SOLAR POWERED HOTEL CONSTRUCTION IN GIZO

Despite challenges, construction of the \$12.5 million Zaru Hotel in Gizo is progressing well.

Difficulties in freight and sourcing construction materials due to COVID-19 is something that has affected builds all over the world, with the Solomons no exception.

Having kicked off construction in September 2021, the hotel is expected to be built in two and half years, which would mean an open date sometime in 2024.

The environmentally friendly waterfront hotel is to be powered by the considerable sunlight Gizo receives, and is expected to provide a major boost for the Western province’s tourism sector and economy overall. Already it has generated a boost to employment in the area, with most workers on-site coming from local, rural communities.

The plan is for the hotel to accommodate 32 self-contained rooms, a restaurant and VIP bar, a sports shop and a jetty. ▶



The Solomon Islands



The Solomon Islands achieved independence in 1978, The definite article, “the” is not part of the official name but is sometimes used, both within and outside the country.

For local government, the country is divided into ten administrative areas, of which nine are provinces administered by elected provincial assemblies and the tenth is the capital Honiara, administered by the Honiara Town Council.

The islands’ ocean-equatorial climate is extremely humid throughout the year, with a mean temperature of 26.5 °C (79.7 °F) and few extremes of temperature or weather. The period between June and August is the coolest period.

Though seasons are not pronounced, the north-westerly winds of November through April bring more frequent rainfall and occasional squalls or cyclones. The annual rainfall is about 3,050 millimetres (120 in).

Fresh from the Ocean



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A Quick Guide to Honiara

Conveniently positioned centrally within the South Pacific and embedded deeply in World War Two history and Melanesian culture, Honiara is not only the capital of the Solomon Islands, but a great base for travellers visiting the South Pacific.

As well as this, there are a number of excellent food and drink options throughout the city, and modern facilities available for every kind of traveller.

Check out our map for information on where to go in the capital.



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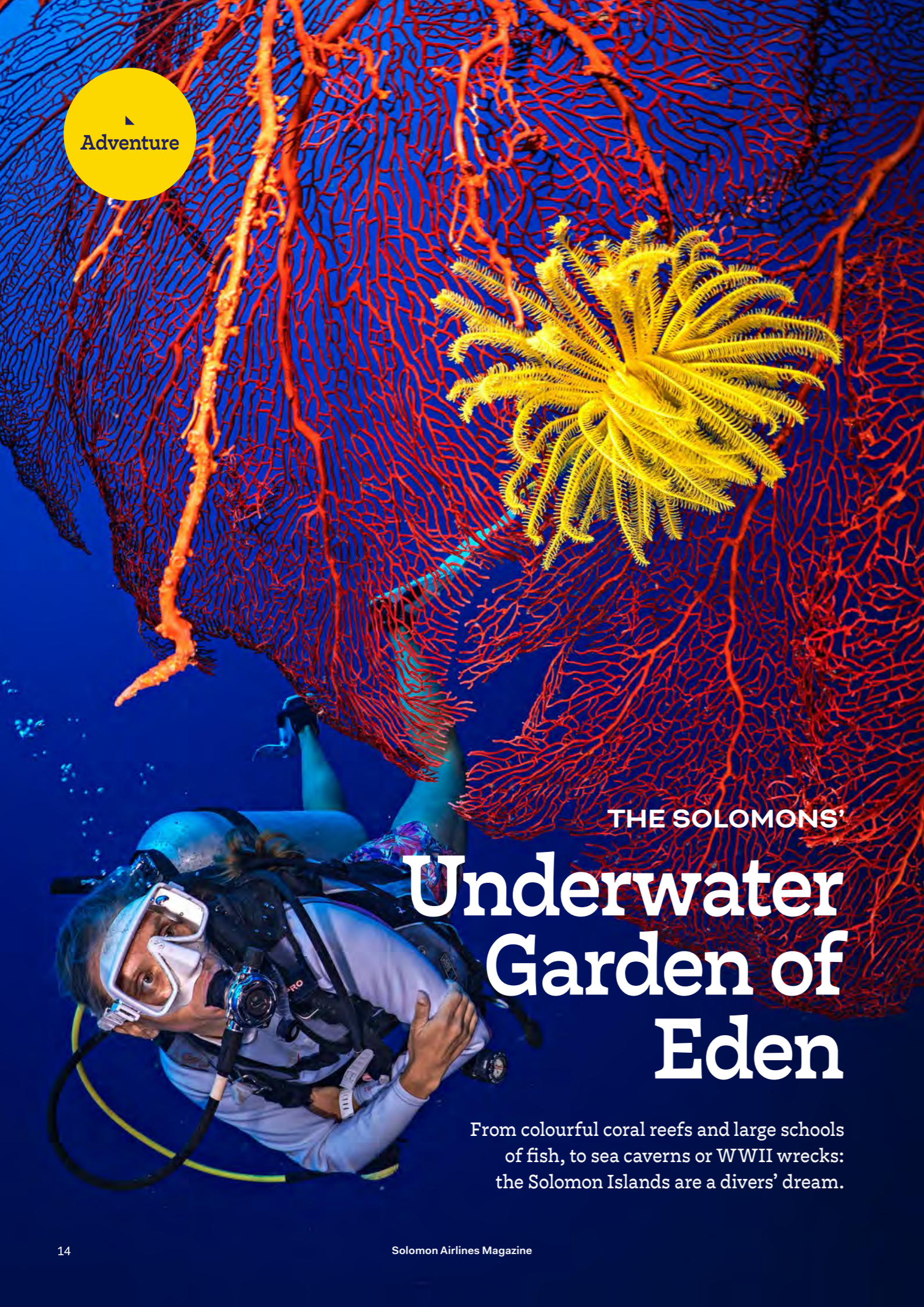
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THE SOLOMONS'

Underwater Garden of Eden

From colourful coral reefs and large schools of fish, to sea caverns or WWII wrecks: the Solomon Islands are a divers' dream.

Adventure

WORDS & PHOTOS
DEBORAH DICKSON-SMITH

Lush green islands, turquoise lagoons, and vibrant coral reefs, the Solomon Islands are also one of those rare destinations for scuba divers that has something to suit everyone's underwater appetite.

This tropical archipelago sits on the eastern edge of the so-called Coral Triangle, the global centre of marine biodiversity.

At the other end of the diving spectrum, reminders of WWII's Pacific Battle Arena are never far away, present above and below water, with countless wrecks scattered in the lagoons.

A volcanic landscape provides stunning underwater landscapes, with slots, caverns, caves, even underwater lava tunnels to explore.

Here are seven dive sites worth exploring in the Solomon Islands.



LERU CUT RUSSELL ISLANDS

An underwater photographer's dream. The 'Cut' is a long passage cut deep into the land, almost — but not quite wide enough for a couple of divers to swim side by side. Open to the air at the top, it is lit by slanting shafts of sunlight in parts, and once at the end of the slot, you can surface and look up at vine clad vertical rock walls and listen to the gentle hum of the jungle above.

TULAGI TWIN TUNNELS FLORIDA ISLANDS

These twin tunnels are in fact two ancient lava tubes which drop vertically from the top of a coral seamount to around 34 metres. At depth, each tunnel opens to a cave with a large mouth which opens onto a dramatic wall. Schools of pelagic fish can be found feeding along the wall, and at least eight varieties of anemone fish in hundreds of anemone homes can be found on the top of the plateau.



CAVE OF THE KASTOM SHARK RENDOVA LAGOON

A memorable dive that starts in the centre of a small island. After trekking through mangroves, a sinkhole is revealed, roughly 1.5 metres in diameter. Dropping down into this hole, you descend a vertical chimney around 30 metres and by torchlight, a tunnel is revealed which ascends gradually to an opening on the reef wall, giant gorgonian fans and bright red whip corals fringing a wide entrance.



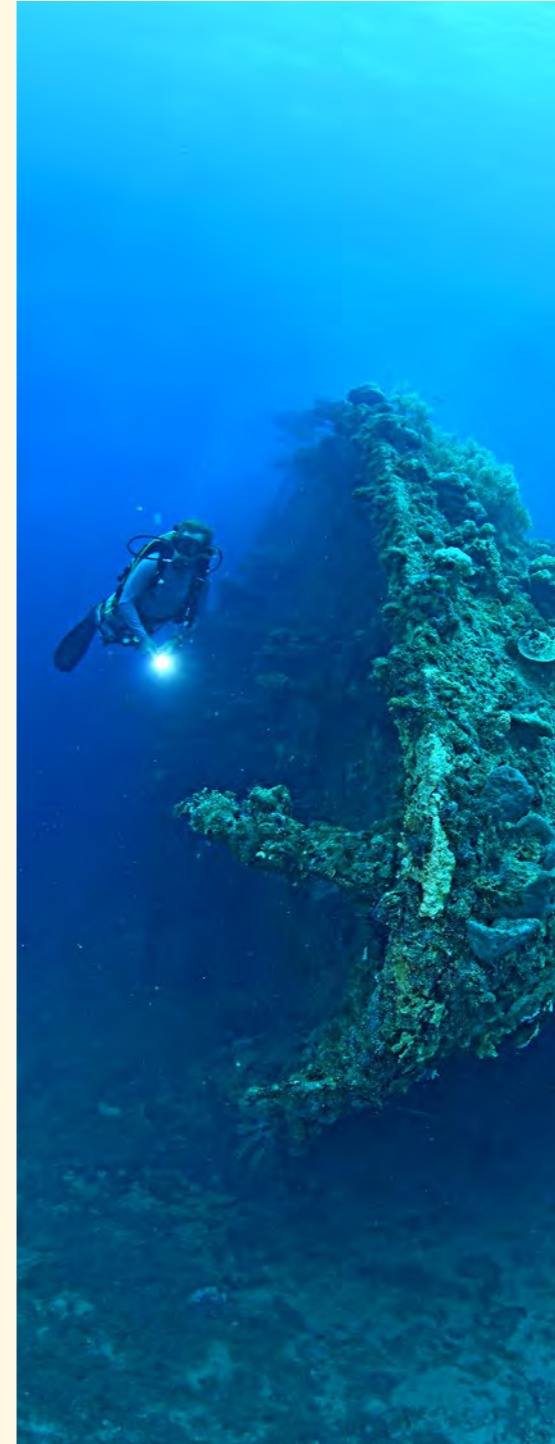


SHARK POINT
MUNDA

The reef wall at Shark Point is covered in corals of all shapes, sizes, and colours. Brightly coloured soft corals, whips and sea fans make way for hard branching corals and moon-shaped brain corals. Flitting among them are thousands of colourful little reef fish; butterfly fish, damsels, angels, anthias and surgeons, waving anemones with their resident anemone fish on guard.

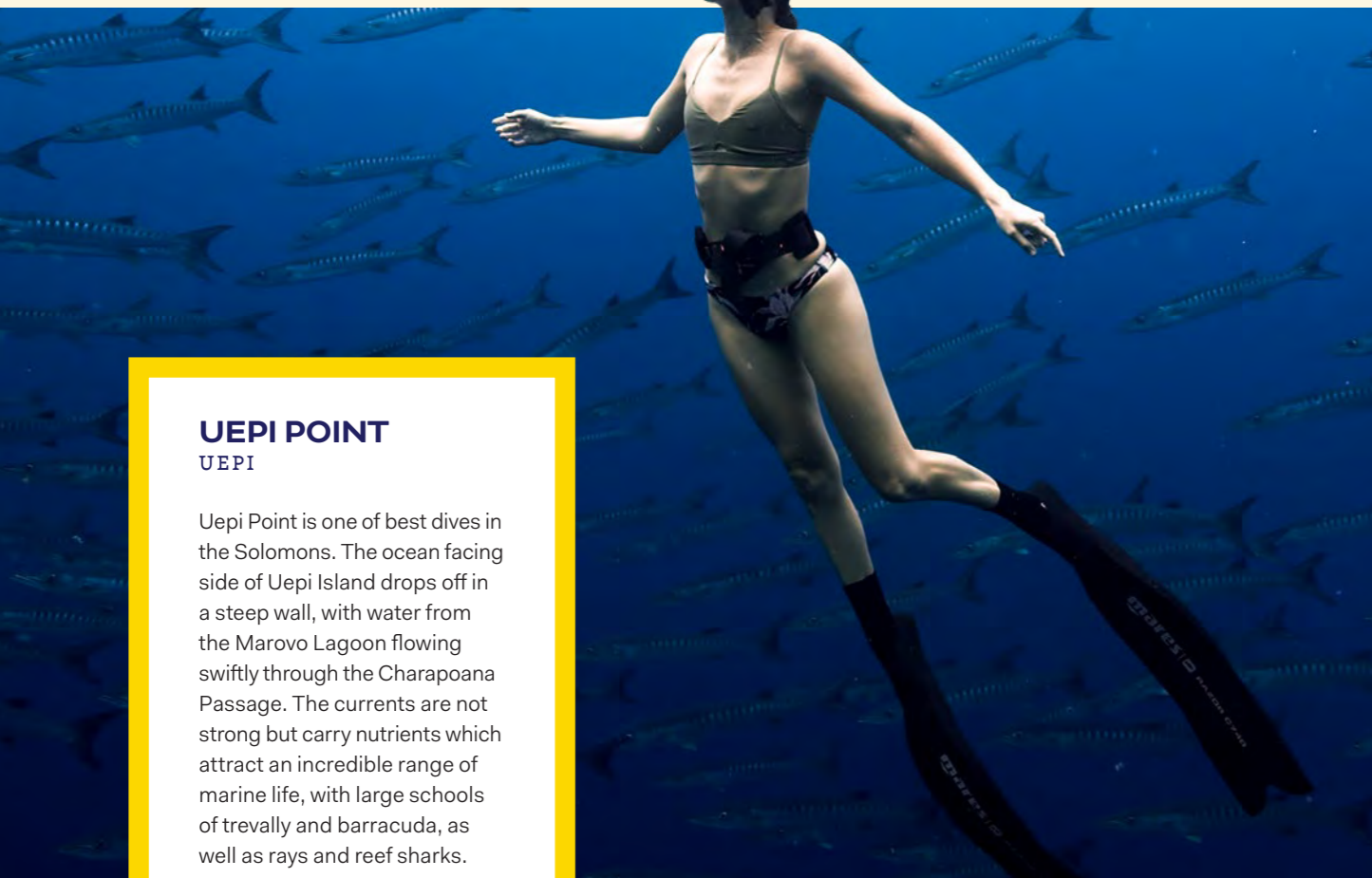
BELL P-39 AIRACOBRA AND DOUGLAS SBD DAUNTLESS
RENDOVA LAGOON

Two shallow plane wrecks can be dived on a single tank, sitting on a sandy sea floor at a depth of only 9 metres. Both are reasonably intact and surrounded by large schools of juvenile fish. The body of the planes, once painted in U.S. Airforce drab grey, are now painted in colourful corals which create gorgeous patterns along the length of each plane.



TOA MARU
GIZO

The Toa Maru wreck is an incredible 130 metres long, lying on its starboard side at a depth of 37 metres. It is the biggest and most impressive WWII wreck (at recreational diving depths) in the Solomons. Aside from the fascinating artifacts to be found in the cargo holds, every exposed surface of the ship has been colonised by coral, in fact this artificial reef rivals your average natural reef for coral cover and marine life.



UEPI POINT
UEPI

Uepi Point is one of best dives in the Solomons. The ocean facing side of Uepi Island drops off in a steep wall, with water from the Marovo Lagoon flowing swiftly through the Charapoana Passage. The currents are not strong but carry nutrients which attract an incredible range of marine life, with large schools of trevally and barracuda, as well as rays and reef sharks.

LEARN

LEARN HOW TO DIVE IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Given the inviting water temperatures, experience of the teachers and relative affordability, the Solomon Islands represents arguably the perfect place to learn how to dive.

Dive Munda offers this opportunity to learn – from beginners wanting to gain full certification, to the more experienced wanting to further their dive training.

You can choose to start the theory element of your course online, minimising time spent in the classroom while on holiday, before making the most of time spent underwater in practical sessions.

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THE Coconut

KENNEDY'S GREAT ESCAPE
IN THE SOLOMONS

What do a former United States President, the Solomon Islands and a coconut have in common?

WORDS & PHOTOS KATE WEBSTER

Gizo is known for its picture-postcard villages, remote beaches, war history, fascinating culture and superb scuba-diving. It is also where an unlikely figure made his mark on the history of the Solomon Islands: a certain John F. Kennedy.

Before becoming the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy was a Lieutenant in the Navy. World War II was in full swing in Europe, and the attack on Pearl Harbor had taken place in 1941. Lt. Kennedy found himself in the waters of the Pacific during WWII battles against the Japanese army.

As night fell on 1 August 1943, Lt. Kennedy and his crew patrolled the waters in the Solomon Islands, when the much larger Japanese Destroyer Amagiri crashed into their boat, patrol torpedo boat PT-109. Upon impact, the much smaller US boat was split in half, killing two of the crew and leaving Lt. Kennedy and other sailors injured.

With the ship sinking, there was no choice for Lt. Kennedy but to swim with 10 of his crewmates to a nearby island.

As night fell on 1 August 1943, Lt. Kennedy and his crew patrolled the waters in the Solomon Islands, when the much larger Japanese Destroyer Amagiri crashed into their boat...

For days, the surviving men tended to their injuries and looked for help, while still trying to evade the Japanese that they knew were closing in. Lt. Kennedy and his shipmates realised they were close to a larger island and in search of more food and water, braved the ocean again by swimming to this island. Just as hope felt dim for the survivors, help came in the form of two Solomon Islander scouts in a canoe. At first, these two local men, Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana, thought the soldiers were Japanese and paddled away, afraid for their lives.

Opposite: Kennedy speaking at Rice University in 1962. Image supplied. Below: Kennedy Island.





“NAURO ISL...COMMANDER...NATIVE KNOWS POS’IT...HE CAN PILOT...11 ALIVE...NEED SMALL BOAT KENNEDY”.

Situated 15 minutes by boat from Gizo, a walk around the island reveals remnants of Kennedy’s dramatic WWII bravery. The survival story of JFK and his crew can be read on the information board. Also located on the island is a shrine built for Lt. Kennedy by one of the Solomon Islanders who aided in his rescue, Eroni Kumana.

Today, the island is a well-loved local tourist attraction, popular with wreck-diving enthusiasts, as well as history

buffs interested in WWII. Visitors to the Solomon Islands can follow in the footsteps of history, retrace Kennedy’s voyage in the Solomons, take in the local culture, and see WWII relics first-hand.

The story of JFK and the coconut was first picked up by the writer John Hersey, who told it to the readers of *The New Yorker* in 1944. It followed John F. Kennedy into politics and provided a strong foundation for his appeal as a leader. ▲

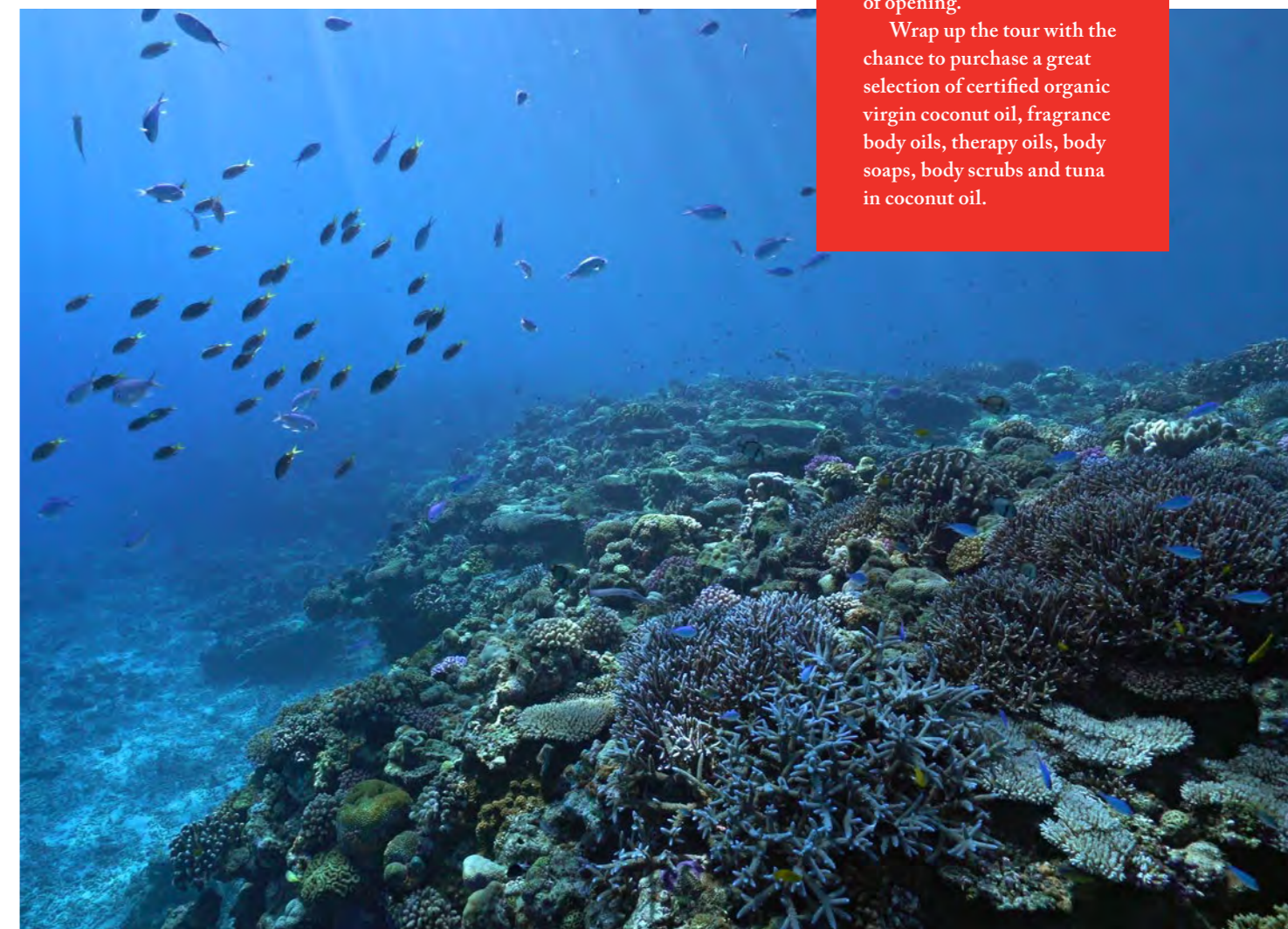
FACTORY TOUR

A DIFFERENT USE FOR KOKONUTS

Kokonut Pacific Solomon Islands is a for-profit social enterprise comprising a network of more than 50 village businesses producing Virgin Coconut Oil.

A tour of the factory, on the outskirts of Honiara, shows the Direct Micro Expelling (DME) method of processing coconuts into coconut oil using a cold press. One of the beauties of the DME method is that producers can turn coconuts into oil within just an hour of opening.

Wrap up the tour with the chance to purchase a great selection of certified organic virgin coconut oil, fragrance body oils, therapy oils, body soaps, body scrubs and tuna in coconut oil.



The men later returned in their canoe and Biuku Gasa showed Lt. Kennedy how to carve a message into a coconut. That message read “NAURO ISL...COMMANDER...NATIVE KNOWS POS’IT...HE CAN PILOT...11 ALIVE... NEED SMALL BOAT...KENNEDY”.

Above: A monument to WWII on Kennedy Island. **Below:** Lt. Kennedy in the 1940s. **Opposite:** Kennedy and co were forced to swim through beautiful, but dangerous waters to find help.

Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana then risked their lives to deliver that coconut to a US Navy base in the vicinity.

The message was received on 8 August and just a week after Lt. Kennedy and his crewmen were shipwrecked, they were rescued. When John F. Kennedy became President of the United States, he used that same coconut as a paperweight in the Oval Office at the White House.

John F Kennedy never forgot the bravery and selflessness of the Solomon Island people, even inviting his two rescuers to his inauguration as President of the United States. In turn, the Solomon Islands named one of its islands after the US President.

Kennedy Island, also known by its local name Kasolo Island or Plum Pudding Island, remains an uninhabited island in the Solomon Islands.

Unlike the barren hellscape for the crew of the PT-109 who feared being discovered by the Japanese, the island today is a paradise that is surrounded by coral reefs stretching beneath clear blue waters that lap at white-sandy beaches.





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Tavanipupu

IN ROYAL WATERS

Meaning ‘a place where the fish pass through’, Tavanipupu is not a place you want to just pass on through.

WORDS & PHOTOS KATE WEBSTER

East from the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara I jump aboard a traditional banana boat for a short but scenic ride across the coral mosaic aquamarine waters of Marau Sound. My destination is Tavanipupu Private Island Resort, a place that I am told was one of the South Pacific’s best-kept secrets.

That was until the Royals — Prince William and Princess Kate — came to stay for their honeymoon. Since their visit in September 2012, this paradise in the Pacific has scribed its name on the map. Ask any local and they’ll

swear by the timeline that it was here that Prince George, Prince William and Princess Kate’s firstborn, was conceived.

Stepping off the boat and onto the wooden jetty, I can see why the Royals found this five-star private island resort so appealing. Tavanipupu is all about space and privacy.

Pictured L-R: Hard to think of a more tranquil setting than the pier at Tavanipupu. Coconut trees remain from previous plantations.

I can see why the Royals found this five-star private island resort so appealing.





The 13-hectare island once was a coconut plantation in the 19th century, owned by Norwegian traders who bought it off the locals for some ammunition. Sipping my cocktail I thought what a bargain those Norwegians got and wondered what trinkets I had to possibly offer for a sale.

Today, the coconut palms are fewer but are still very much a part of the resort. I was quick to kick off my shoes and change into my swimmers before venturing off to explore around the island. The resort itself was romancing me enough with its sweeping manicured lawns adorned with private villas hidden under the coconut trees that remain from the previous plantation palms. I fell more in love the further I moved

I moved down the path, which soon led me to exceptionally beautiful bays and white-sand beaches.

Above: If you looked up paradise in the dictionary, it might as well come up with this. **Right:** Paddle or...put your feet up. **Bottom right:** A coastal colour palette.

down the path, which soon led me to exceptionally beautiful bays and white-sand beaches.

For my first inspection of the reef, I chose to do so by traditional dugout canoe. Launching myself from the shoreline, I had a few wobbles and nearly ended up swimming sooner than I had intended.



The canoe was far shallower in the hull than I expected, but with a large wooden paddle to stabilise me, I was soon paddling around like a local.

Squinting through the glare of the sun's reflection on the water, I managed to spot a few fish darting away from my arrival.

I decided it was time to dive in, so I slipped

on some fins, fixed my snorkel and mask and dove beneath the surface. To my delight, the coral reef was teeming with marine life. Little silver fish schooled and glittered in front of me as if someone had thrown confetti into the ocean. Parrot fish chopped away at coral creating an almost deafening noise like crackling bacon cooking.

Above: You can paddle, or you can put your feet up and enjoy yourself – you do you. **Below:** As the name would suggest, the Marine Triangle is a plethora of colour and marine life.



Accommodation

Immersed in the underwater wonderland, I floated over the shallow reef dominated by soft corals that swayed as the ocean current ebbed and flowed. There were giant clams and blue starfish scattered around the reef. Snorkelling to where the reef flat ends and drops off to a reef wall rich in corals, I see where the island gained its name.

Here I saw regal angelfish, ornate butterflyfish, bannerfish and several species of damselfish, just like the story goes, passing on by the reef and around the island.

Time has no meaning on Tavanipupu, but sunset meant it was time for sundowners, so I meandered back to my villa, coincidentally the same villa that the Prince and Princess stayed in, and took a long outdoor shower before settling onto the chair on the balcony with a drink in my hand. With the sunset throwing off pastel hues of pinks, purples and oranges across the horizon, I felt like a Pacific Princess myself. ▀



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Right: Fit for a royal — William and Kate's accommodation at Tavanipupu.

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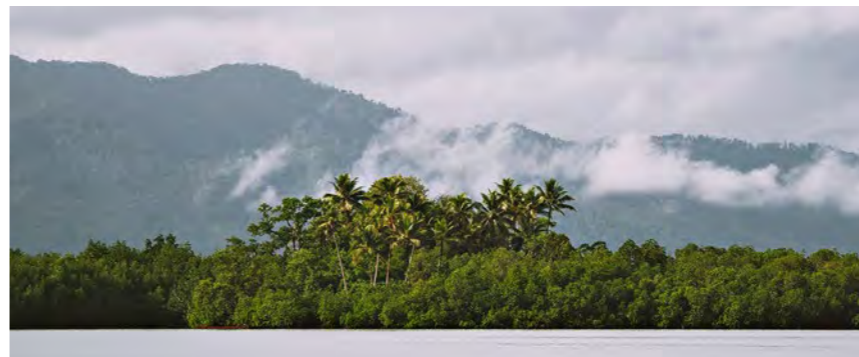
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10 Things To Know About The Solomon Islands

BEFORE YOU GO

Raw, rustic and an authentic island experience.



2

DISCOVER AN UNDERWATER PARADISE

Anchored in the far eastern corner of the Coral Triangle, the Solomon Islands are home to some of the most pristine and biodiverse reef in the world.

Vibrant coral gardens and vertical reef walls create a rich habitat for tiny creatures and colourful reef fish to thrive, while the vast lagoons and deep-sea channels play host to large pelagic fish, manta rays, turtles and whales.

But it's not just the explosion of marine life that attracts curious divers to this speck on the globe. Countless World War II shipwrecks pepper the seabed, while curious underwater rock formations, like Leru Cut, a narrow underwater ravine, make unique environments for underwater enthusiasts to explore.

Many of these wrecks can be found just off the coast of Honiara, while both Munda and Gizo are prime dive destinations for those seeking unspoilt reef and incredible biodiversity.

1

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Boasting a gorgeously warm, tropical climate, the Solomon Islands are a fantastic destination at any time of year with steady temperatures of around 30°C.

The short-lived wet season rolls in between November and March and can make the weather somewhat temperamental, while the driest period falls during June and July, a perfect antidote to the winter blues for visitors from Australia and New Zealand.

WORDS & PHOTOS FREYA MULLER

For intrepid travellers seeking somewhere offbeat and untarnished by mass tourism, where soaring volcanic peaks are bound by pristine coral reefs and world-class waves, and where strong cultural identity and laidback village life go hand in hand, then the Solomon Islands are just the ticket.

For first-time visitors, it's time to switch to island time, prepare for the blissful warmth the seep into your bones and let these travel tips guide you through what to expect from your trip.





3

LAND ADVENTURES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Returning topside from the treasures of the underwater world, you'll quickly discover that these lush volcanic islands are ripe for exploration.

From the fringes of Honiara, the interior of Guadalcanal is engulfed by dense jungle and untouched cloud forest that conceals thundering waterfalls, challenging hiking trails and a network of streams that cascade toward the sea from the archipelago's highest peaks.

Far-flung Kolombangara and Rendova Islands also offer up adventurous trekking opportunities, where navigating mossy forest trails and fording the many rivers that carve up the steep mountain flanks are all part of the fun.

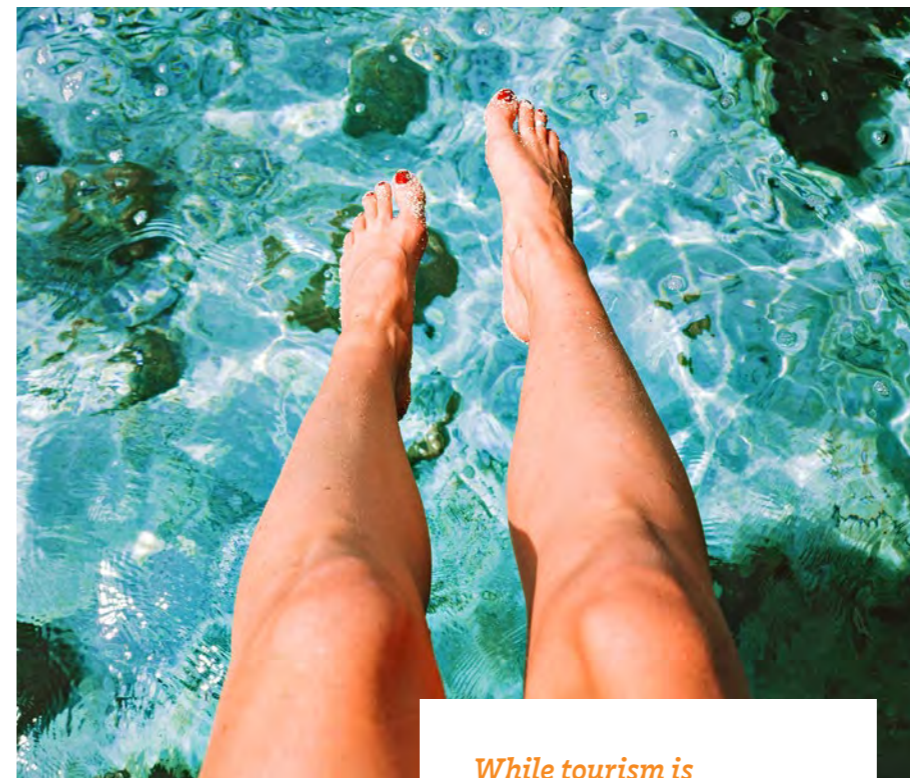
Engulfed by dense jungle and untouched cloud forest that conceals thundering waterfalls, challenging hiking trails and a network of streams.

4

IT'S AMONG THE LEAST VISITED COUNTRIES

Compared to some of its tropical neighbours that see hundreds of thousands or even millions of tourists each year, the Solomon Islands receive less than 30,000 visitors, making it one of the least visited tourist destinations in the world.

While tourism is flourishing, it remains as one of the last unspoilt frontiers.



While tourism is flourishing, the Solomon Islands remain as one of the last unspoilt frontiers.

5

MONEY MATTERS

Paddling through the tranquil, gin-clear waters of a castaway island or kicking back in the sunshine on your waterside balcony is hardly an ideal time to be mulling over when you'll next have access to an ATM.

Before setting out further afield, it's a good idea to visit an ATM in Honiara (keep in mind that there isn't one at the airport) so you'll have cash on hand for shopping at the vibrant village markets, any spontaneous activities and other incidentals.

6

VISA-FREE TRAVEL

Making arrival a breeze, visitors from more than 70 countries are granted visa-free access or an entry permit upon arrival to the Solomon Islands.



7

TRAVELLING BETWEEN THE ISLANDS

Prop planes and banana boats are the go-to modes of transport for travel within the Solomon Islands.

Solomon Airlines offer an extensive network of domestic flights that connect Honiara with key destinations in the outer islands. Arching high above the forested ridgelines of Guadalcanal as you veer out of the capital before tracing the iridescent thread of reef that stretches on for miles below is a real treat. Try to nab a window seat to experience the rugged beauty from above.

Once in the outer islands, you'll transfer to a banana boat that will bring you to distant white-sand beaches, coral reefs, local communities and your accommodation.

Thankfully, the waterside views as you whizz between the islands are equally as impressive as you'll see from the air, with a stunning backdrop of palm-fringed cays and hulking jungle-clad volcanoes rising up from the horizon.

8

INDULGE IN THE SEAFOOD

The ocean is a crucial lifeline that connects and supports the remote communities that lay scattered across the archipelago. It's no surprise then that seafood is a staple of the islander diet.

Prepared using techniques honed over generations and drawing on outside influences, fresh sashimi, lime and coconut cured fish, crab, garlic buttered crayfish and barbecued squid are just a few delicacies that will have you salivating.

Fresh sashimi, lime and coconut cured fish, garlic buttered crayfish and barbecued squid are just a few delicacies that will have you salivating.

Locally grown root vegetables like sweet potato, taro or cassava accompany most meals, with a serving of deliciously sweet tropical fruit to finish.



9

A STRONG CULTURAL IDENTITY

Despite centuries of change and foreign influence, the Solomon Islands maintain a strong cultural identity, with the older generations determined that the youngsters will not forget the old ways in the face of sweeping modernisation.

Honiara is a lively hub, with many remote communities continue to uphold their traditional practices and live largely off the land and sea, often trading goods for services and relying on hand-crafted dugout canoes for short-distance transportation.

10

RUSTIC ECO-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION

With sustainability at the forefront of design and operations, accommodation in the Solomon Islands is most often locally run, embraces cultural immersion and provides thoughtful touches throughout. But perhaps most enchanting are the sublime settings that these island hideaways occupy.

Nestled beneath the rugged peak of Rendova Island, Titiru Eco Lodge is one such place where rustic bungalows peak out from the rainforest at the mouth of a protected cove.

Not far from Gizo sits Oravae Cottage (pictured) – an open-plan wooden bungalow situated on its own, gorgeous island – where you can live out Robinson Crusoe fantasies. www.oravaecottage.com



Fed up with the corporate rat race, a lost American traveller hit the high seas and dreamed of being shipwrecked in the South Pacific. Decades on, he would leave behind one of the greatest barefoot luxury legacies in the world.

Turtle Island

WORDS & PHOTOS JUSTIN JAMIESON

“Welcome home!” is the faint cry we hear from a bunch of broad smiles beckoning us from the beach.

At first I'm confused and before I can ask my wife if she's ever been here before (and neglected to tell me?) she's whisked elegantly onto the shoulders of two buff shirtless Fijians, waist-deep in the aqua blue water surrounding our private seaplane. She's carried like a queen onto the white powder sand of Turtle Island in the Yasawa Group of Islands north west of Fiji's main island Viti Levu.

By the time those same two men have carried me ashore – nowhere near as elegantly – she has a glass of champagne and a smile as broad as the locals surrounding us.

“There's no place like home, hey sweetheart?” I ask, just as her glass is topped up for the second time.

A few years earlier I'd read enviously about Turtle Island's founder Richard Evanson and his adventurous backstory.

No longer content with the stresses of corporate success in the US, Evanson had cashed out in 1972, heading for Australia to see what else life had to offer. Along the way he found himself waylaid in Fiji, and stumbled upon the then barren Nanuya Levu island in the Yasawa Islands.

It was this chance encounter with a 202 hectare patch of dirt in the middle of the Pacific, thousands of kilometres from his previous life, that he decided then and there that island life was to be the life for him.

After buying the island, Evanson set out to create his dream. He planted thousands of seedlings, befriended local villagers from the surrounding Yasawas and settled into a life where time was more elastic. When I was reading this, I couldn't help but think I shared the same dream, minus the burn out and all the corporate success.

The arrival of a film crew in the late 1970s gave Evanson a taste for entertaining guests on his patch of paradise. The idyllic blue lagoon of Nanuya Levu was the perfect location for the film of the same name and Evanson looked after a cast including Brooke Shields, as the film was shot.

Having enjoyed the experience so much, he opened Turtle Island to the public in 1980 and therein lies the secret to the resort's magic: the island bliss that existed had already been authenticated by the man himself first, before it was opened to the rest of the world.

Evanson was living a barefoot luxury life before the term was even coined and obscenely overused in modern travel brochures. It's now an entrenched legacy and a way of existence for the team that hosts guests at Turtle Island. There's no pool. There's no kid's club. In fact, for the vast majority of the year the island is exclusively open to adults (except for a few weeks of the year where families are welcome).

We crack the champagne and set up camp on the soft white sand of the aptly named Long Beach. It is absolutely perfect.

There's no buffet, limited internet or signal and certainly no screens, other than an outdoor cinema that shows *The Blue Lagoon* on repeat. But what it lacks in modern creature comforts, it more than makes it up in pure adult indulgence.

Pictured: Turtle Island feels like home, even if your home doesn't usually have someone handing you cocktails on arrival.



The Cliff House is Turtle Island's special spot with its own plunge pool on the edge of the lagoon. There are few better places in the world for an after dinner dip.

With a dedicated 'Bure Mama' (the island equivalent of a luxury hotel butler) you could quite conceivably see no one else but her, if you so choose. But to do so would be to miss out on the real charm of Turtle Island: its people.

Like most places in Fiji, evenings on Turtle Island invariably end up around a kava bowl, with resort staff and guests alike joining Arthur's guitar sessions. The guitar is passed around and shared as ceremoniously as said kava bowl.

Imagine being shipwrecked on a South Pacific island that also happens to be fully stocked with everything you could ever dream of, not least some of the friendliest locals imaginable.

Our first breakfast is on the beach at a long communal table. Most of the other ten guests join at their leisure.

There is a turtle-shaped blackboard in the sand with a list of the day's activities. Horse riding, scuba diving, game fishing, village visits and a list

Imagine being shipwrecked on a South Pacific island that also happens to be fully stocked with everything you could ever dream of...

of the island's 12 private beaches to choose from for a lazy day in the sun. Having decided Long Beach would be

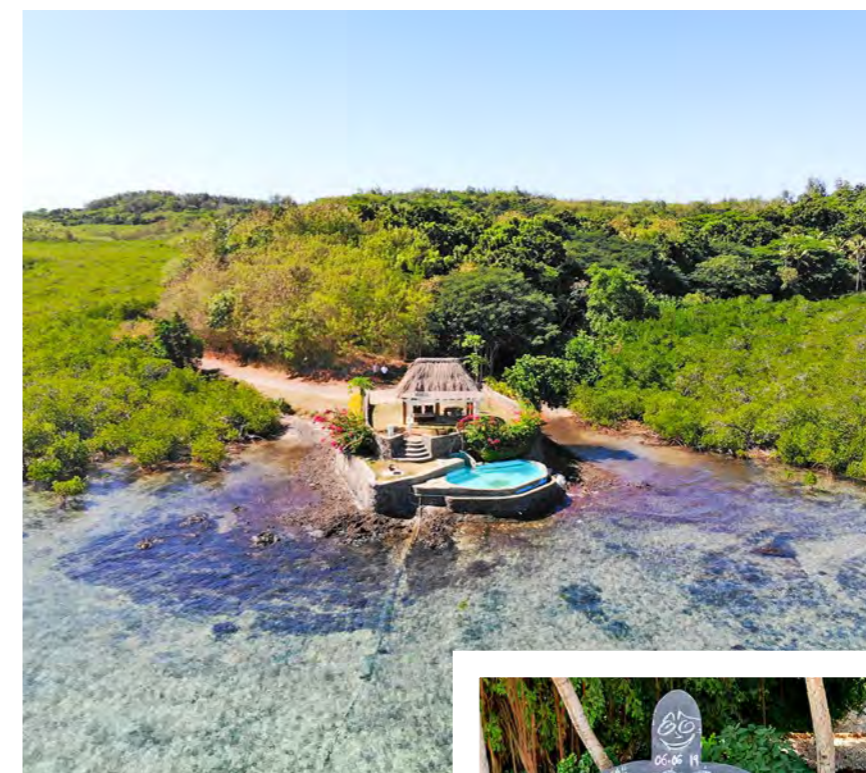
our destination for the day, we're on a golf cart with a smiling Fijian named Bill driving us through palm trees to our own private beach.

Smiley Bill stops to turn a coconut sign to 'occupied' just to ensure our privacy from the other smattering of guests who probably have their own beach as well.

He sets us up with a cooler filled with French champagne, beer, wine and a gourmet lunch. With a smile and a wink he disappears, crying out from the distance "Have fun Jay and Vicki!"

There's a hammock strung between two palms and an undercover picnic area with an outdoor setting and table. We crack the champagne and set up camp on the soft white sand. It's not difficult to see how Evanson fell in love.

In addition to the 12 private beaches, you can choose to dine on a floating pontoon, at the end of the main pier or in the comfort of your luxury oceanfront Bure. Ours happens to be equipped with an indoor spa.



I'm passed the guitar and much to the delight of the crowd I bang out a terrible version of Johnny Cash's Folsom Prison Blues. Kava, I discovered, is not great for finger picking.

"Bula Jay!" my evening singing buddies cry out with laughter, their teeth glinting in the night as bright as the stars in the sky above them.

ISLAND NEIGHBOURS

WHEN GOOD NEIGHBOURS BECOME GOOD FRIENDS

Separated by only a couple of thousand kilometres of the South Pacific Ocean, there are strong cultural and economic ties between Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

Such is the bond between the two Melanesian nations, the twice-a-week return flights between the two are under a codeshare agreement.

This means that the codes of both Fiji Airways (FJ) and Solomon Airlines (IE) are listed on both carrier's flights between Honiara and the Fijian capital Nadi.

Search flights schedules online at www.flysolomons.com/plan/flight-schedules

Pictured above: Typically stunning waters of the South Pacific, from above, and beneath the surface. Left: Dining is an experience in itself.

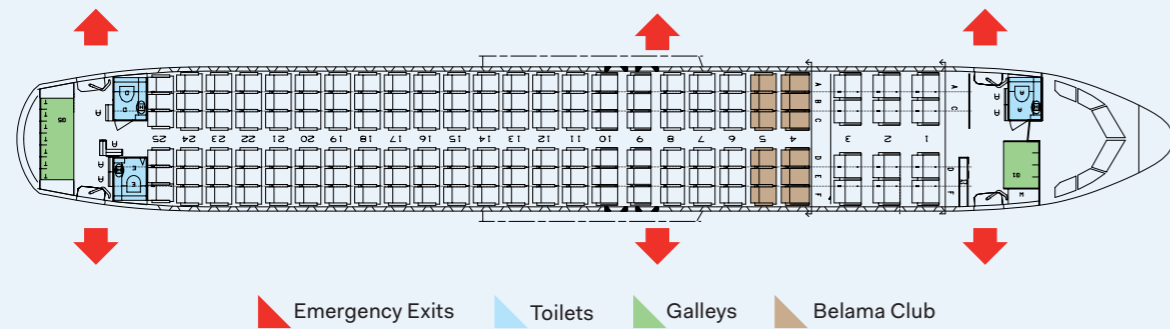


Solomon Airlines Fleet



A320

Registration	H4-SIB	Cruising Speed	830 km/h	Current Routes:
Length	37.57 m	Seating capacity	144	Brisbane, Nadi, Port Vila, Tarawa
Wing Span	34.10 m	Configuration:		
Range	3,000 nm	Business: 12, Economy: 132		



Inflight Info

Business Class

Enjoy the comfort of our friendly skies onboard our A320-200 aircraft, with a full meal service and range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages available, personalised service and extra seat comfort, including 42-inch seat pitch and 27" of seat width, offering 30% more space than economy.

Business class passenger benefits include:

- 40 kg checked baggage allowance
- 10 kg cabin baggage allowance
- 7 kg sports equipment allowance
- Priority check-in and boarding
- Access to partner lounges including Fiji Airways Tabua Lounge and the Qantas Club Lounge in Brisbane

Economy Class

Our cabins are specifically configured for both space and comfort. Our inflight service offers a meal with a range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages included complimentary for international sectors, and on domestic sectors a snack and water is provided.

Economy Class passenger benefits include:

- 30 kg checked baggage and 7 kg cabin baggage allowance on international services
- 16 kg checked baggage and 5kgs cabin baggage allowance on domestic services
- 7 kg sports equipment allowance

Solomon Airlines Contact Information

Head Office

Henderson Airport
P. O. Box 23, Honiara,
Solomon Islands
p +677 20031

Travel center

Old Bemobile Building,
Mendana Avenue Point Cruz
p +677 20152
e sales@flysolomons.com.sb

Australia

Level 1 5a Grevillea Place Brisbane
Airport QLD 4008
p 1300 894 311 or +617 3860 5883
e reservations@flysolomons.com

Fiji

Nadi Airport, Office 27, First Floor
p +679 6722831
f +679 6722140
e solomon@connect.com.fj



Dash 8-102

Length	22.25 m
Wing Span	25.91 m
Range	2040 km
Cruising Speed	490 km/h
Seating capacity	36
Crew	3 crew including 1 cabin crew
Aircraft in Fleet	1
Current Routes:	
Honiara, Seghe, Munda, Gizo; Kirakira, Santa Cruz	



Twin Otter

Length	15.77 m
Wing Span	19.81 m
Range	1350 km
Cruising Speed	338 km/h
Seating capacity	16
Crew	2
Aircraft in Fleet	4
Current Routes:	
All airports in the Solomon Islands	



Twin Otter H4-S1C

Length	15.8 m
Wing Span	19.8 m
Range	1540 km
Cruising Speed	296 km/h
Seating capacity	19
Crew	2
Aircraft in Fleet	1
Current Routes:	
All airports in the Solomon Islands	



International Connections



General Sales Agents

CANADA
 Ph: (1) 800 985 4997
 Email: canada@apg-ga.com
 Address: 1100-1200 West 73rd Avenue,
 Vancouver, BC V6P 6G5, Canada

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 Jalan Nagasari, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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 Email: ben.hirsch@apg-ga.co.uk
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 TW6 2TA, United Kingdom

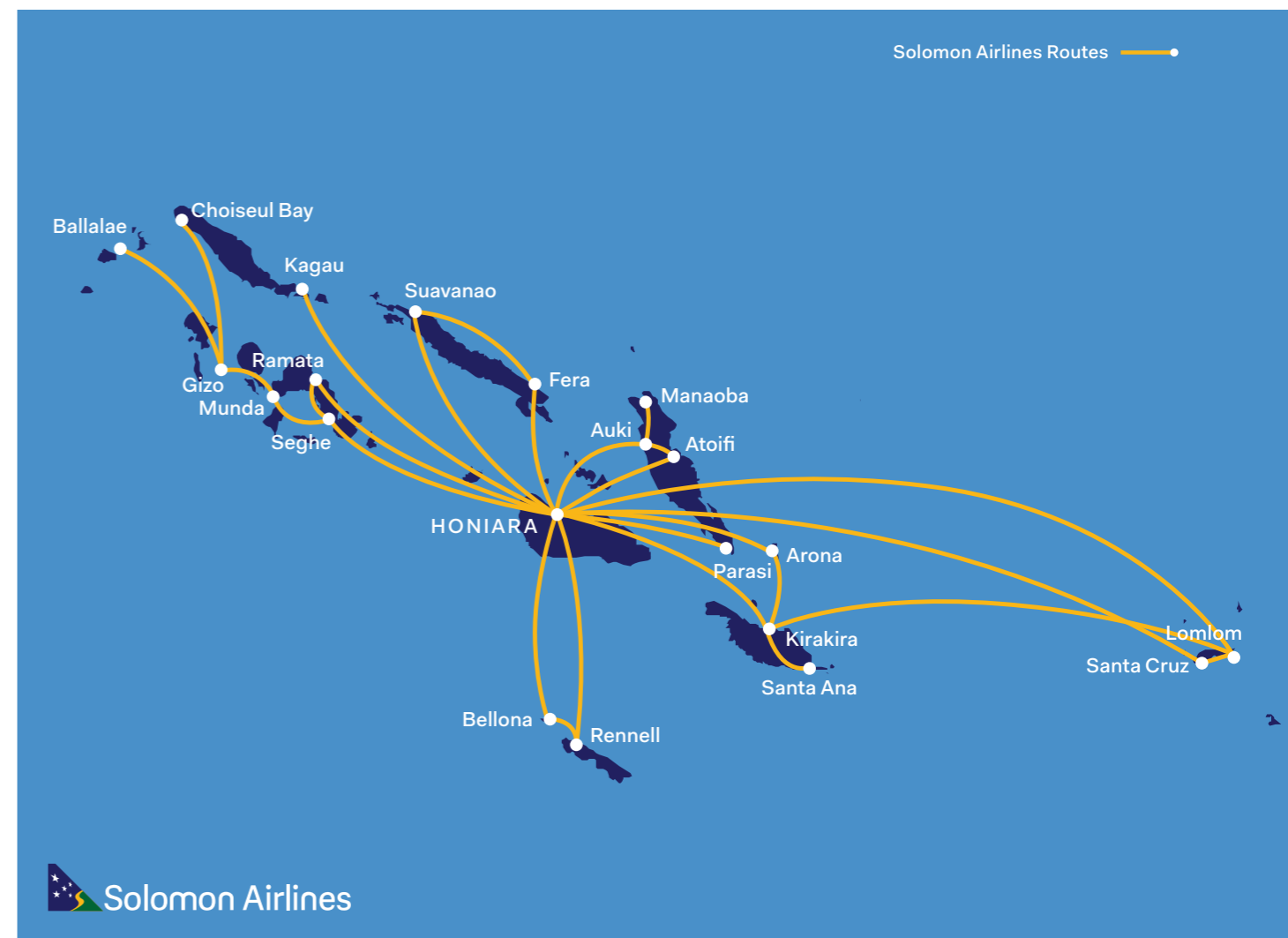
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 1209 Makati City, Philippines

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 Ph: + 65 6339 5500
 Email: singapore@apg-ga.com
 Address: APG Singapore Pte Ltd
 114 Middle Road #05-01
 Singapore 188971

TAIWAN
 Ph: +886-2-2508-4558
 Email: taiwan@apg-ga.com
 Address: 11F, No.111, Sec 2 Nanjing E. Road
 Taipei, Taiwan 104

Domestic Connections



Contacts

Solomon Islands Office

Head office: Tel (677) 20031
 Reservation: 177 (local) or (677) 23506

Outer Ports:

Santa Cruz: Sales & Reservations
 Ph: (677) 53159
Gizo: Sales & Reservations
 Ph: (677) 60173
Munda: Sales & Reservations
 Ph: (677) 62152
Kirakira: Sales & Reservations
 Ph: (677) 50070

International Offices

AUSTRALIA – Sales

Ph: 1300 894 311 or +617 3860 5883
 Email: reservations@flysolomons.com
 Address: Level 1 5a Grevillea Place
 Brisbane Airport QLD 4008

AUSTRALIA – Operations

Solomon Airlines
 Address: Level 1, International Terminal,
 Brisbane Airport, Eagle farm, QLD 4007

FIJI – Nadi

Solomon Airlines
 Address: P.O. Box 10229,
 Nadi International Airport, Fiji
 Ph: (679) 6722831

Cargo

AUSTRALIA

Ph: (07) 31192571
 Email: bneexports@pakfresh.com.au
 Address: Pak Fresh, 5 Cyperus Street
 Brisbane Airport Qld 4008

NEW ZEALAND

Ph: (64) 9 2758767 or 617 3860 5883
 Email: sales@gsacargo.co.nz
 Address: GSA Cargo Services NZ Ltd
 Level 1 AFCAB offices, George Bolt Memorial
 Drive Auckland Airport 2154

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ph: (677) 36592
 Email: cargo@flysolomons.com.sb
 Address: Henderson International Airport
 Mendana Ave, Honiara, Solomon Islands



MILESTONE

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS

CEO of Solomon Airlines Mr. Gus Kraus said Solomon Airlines' 60th anniversary year was especially significant given the most difficult period in the airline's history.

"Solomon Airlines has survived many challenges in the past, but none so difficult as the past two years and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Solomon Airlines will stay true to our mission
— providing safe and reliable air services connecting our provinces.

"Solomon Airlines will stay true to our mission — providing safe and reliable air services connecting our provinces, and focusing on the strategic role of the national carrier in the economic development of our country," he said.

Student activities, the Solomon Airlines 60th Anniversary Peace Marathon and a 60th anniversary cocktail event are all planned to celebrate the airline's legacy.

The history of the airline can be traced back to 1962 when aviator Mr. Laurie Crowley founded a small charter airline in Solomon Islands called Megapode Airways.

After a number of takeovers, in 1988 the airline's name was changed to Solomon Airlines Ltd as it is known today. ▶



ENVIRONMENT

COASTAL CLEAN-UP

Staff from Solomon Airlines, the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Environment, Travel Solomons, and Tourism Solomons joined forces at Eden Bay, Kakabona recently to mark the '2022 International Coastal Clean-Up Day'.

International Coastal Clean-up Day began more than 30 years ago when communities worldwide rallied together with the common goal of collecting and documenting the trash littering their coastlines. Today communities in over 100 countries participate in the campaign.

The Latest



ANNOUNCEMENT

DOMESTIC TRAVEL IS BACK

Solomon Airlines has ramped up domestic operations across Solomon Islands from following the return of the airline's Dash-8 aircraft.

The 36-seat Dash-8, Solomon Airlines' largest domestic aircraft, has been offshore for an annual scheduled heavy maintenance check.

"The re-introduction of Dash-8 has allowed us to increase capacity significantly to Munda and Gizo, and to improve the efficiency of our operation," said Solomon Airlines CEO Mr. Gus Kraus.

The return of the Dash-8 aircraft has allowed Solomon Airlines to build an expanded domestic schedule, so existing passengers can expect some variations to upcoming flights, including:

- Dash-8 aircraft will operate the majority of **Honiara to Munda** and **Gizo** services six days weekly, with daily services for the December to January period
- **Auki** flights to operate Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (Monday & Wednesday by Dash-8)
- **Kirakira** flights to operate Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (Friday by Dash-8)
- **Santa Ana** flights will operate on Monday
- **Seghe** flights will operate on Monday, Friday and Saturday
- **Kagau** flights will operate on Tuesday and Friday
- **Atoifi** flights will operate on Tuesday
- **Ballalae** flights will operate on Wednesday
- **Arona and Parasi** flights will operate on Thursday
- **Fera** flights will operate Monday and Friday
- **Suavanao** flights will operate on Monday, Tuesday and Friday
- **Rennell and Bellona** flights will operate on Monday and Thursday, with an additional **Rennell** flight operating on Wednesday
- **Santa Cruz** flights will operate Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (Monday & Saturday by Dash 8)
- **Lomlom** flights will operate Tuesday & Thursday
- **Choiseul Bay** flights will operate Monday, Wednesday and Saturday

Updated schedules are available on the Solomon Airlines website. For more information, visit flysolomons.com or contact Solomon Airlines Reservations teams in Honiara on **177 (local call)** or by emailing 177@flysolomons.com.sb or in Brisbane on **(+61) 07 3860 5883** or by emailing reservations@flysolomons.com ▶

Things to remember before your trip to the Solomons

Destination Guide

Climate

Tropically warm and humid with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C (82.4F). April to November tends to be drier and November to April wetter.

What to wear

Light and casual...take it easy!

Health

Malaria can be a problem. Take anti-malarial medication a week before arrival, once a week during your stay, and for four weeks after departure. Consult your chemist or doctor about an appropriate brand of tablet. Maloprin is usually recommended.

Immigration

Commonwealth, United States and most European visitors do not need holiday visas but need return or onward tickets. People intending to work must have work permit.

Honiara

Our capital is eight kilometres (4.97 miles) from Honiara International Airport.

Airport Tax

SB\$305 payable by passengers 12 years and over) boarding international flights, and these are generally added onto the cost of your air tickets.

Currency

The Solomon Islands dollar (SB). \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10, \$5 and \$2 Solomon Islands notes, while coins are \$1, 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c.

Business Hours

Government and business general hours are Monday to Friday, 8am to 4:30pm, with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturday 8am – noon.

Tipping

Not expected and not encouraged.

Banks

ANZ Banking Group open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. Pan Oceanic Bank Limited opens 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday, and Panatina Plaza branch opens 10am to 1pm on Saturday. Bred Bank Opens 9am to 4pm.

Transport

Taxis and buses are readily available in Honiara. Rental cars are also available from Avis, Economy, Travel Car Solomon and Zome.

Electricity

220-240 volts in Honiara and some outer island centres.

Telecommunications

Local and international calls can be made from Our Telekom public card phones which are available in prominent locations around Honiara, provincial centres and from GSM Mobile services. Telephone and Internet cards are readily available through shops, hotels and Our Telekom offices, bmobile and Vodafone outlets. GSM prepaid and postpaid mobile cards are available in Honiara, Gizo and in some provincial centres.

International Air

Solomon Airlines operate out of Honiara International Airport, while other carriers include Fiji Airways, Virgin Australia, Air Niugini.

Domestic Air

Solomon Airlines operate services throughout the country.

News Media

The country has a vibrant media landscape, offering choices in both English and Pijin. Radio services are offered by state radio, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, private operators and religious bodies.

Our Telekom relays BBC and other satellite TV networks while Island Sun and Solomon Star are the two daily news papers, with a few monthly business and lifestyle magazines.

Island Life

Unique festivals and celebrations you'll only find in the Solomons

Destination Guide

The Solomon Islands comprises of 992 islands strung like a green necklace between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

The majority of Solomon Islanders are Christian and as religious as they are, many communities still practice traditional rituals that go hand in hand with modern celebrations. For example, public holidays make for the perfect time to schedule a bride price or chiefly enthronement ceremony. Tourism Solomons' 2023 Calendar has events that cover both cultural rituals and modern celebrations.

WOGASIA

Wogasia is a ritual observed by tribes on a tiny island in Makira-Ulawa Province called Santa Catalina for which the traditional name is Owa Rigi.

A ritual of fertility, renewal and reconciliation, the community allow guests to partake in some of the activities. The REAL spear fights are the memorable aspect of Wogasia.

Throughout the year, public disputes are disallowed, disputing factions advised to wait until Wogasia to sort differences. This happens on the last day of the ritual, where the men meet on the beach, and have at it.

Today, spears are blunted, so there hasn't been fatalities in over a century. But even blunted, spears are thrown with ferocious intent, and can cause serious bruising if they strike their intended target.

Wogasia is possibly the longest running active traditional ritual in Solomon Islands, core belief of the Owa Rigi tribes who maintain it must be observed to guarantee a successful harvest season.

Wogasia takes place around the end of May or early June.



BUSU SHELL MONEY FESTIVAL

The people of Langa Langa are among the last to hold the knowledge and skill to produce shell money, a traditional currency that is still actively used in Solomon Islands today.

Used for Bride Price (dowry), and compensation in the settling of disputes, making shell money is a lengthy process. It involves collecting certain shells, breaking them into fragments, sorting by size, color and thickness, drilling a hole through, stringing and grinding them to the desired size.

Busu hosts the festival where the community celebrate shell money-making, as well as the culture that goes hand-in-hand with it. The festival was created by the late Thomas Dakero, and started as a small community celebration. Now it is organized by Thomas' son, Bernard, and draws attention from across the Solomons. The Busu Shell Money Festival will resume in August 2023.

ROVIANA LAGOON FESTIVAL

Located on New Georgia Island's south coast, Roviana was once home to feared headhunting tribes who would set out on raids in traditional Tomoko canoes, paddling as far as Santa Isabel Province and Central Islands Province.

Today Roviana is a tourism hotspot, offering beautiful scenery and some of the most spectacular diving in Solomon Islands.

Resuming in April 2023, Roviana Lagoon Festival provides opportunity to see Roviana Culture, a chance for communities to display pride in their ancestors and heritage. This vibrant festival runs for a week and showcases Roviana's traditions and cultural cuisines.



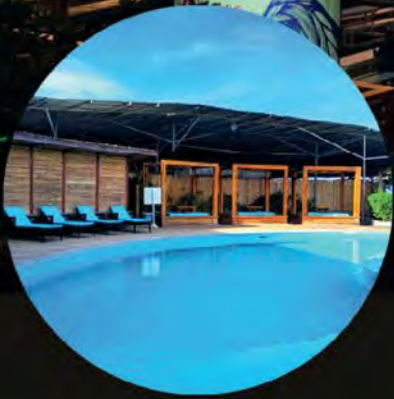
For more information visit Tourism Solomons website: visitsolomons.com.sb or email: info@tourismsolomons.com.sb

Solomon Is. Timeless RUSH HOUR



visitsolomons.com.sb

Honiara's Entertainment Hub



Welkam to Pacific Crown Hotel

Pacific Crown Hotel offers a convenient location just 5km from the International Airport & 3km to Point Cruise (Honiara's CBD).

Our suites include private balconies, lounge areas, mini-bar, WiFi, satellite television and air-conditioning.

Sip on cocktails and dine in our famous Garden Bar & Restaurant of Malaysian Chinese cuisine!

Let us show you the warmth of Solomon Island hospitality!

Support our talented local live bands from Wednesday to Saturday at canoe bar. Happy hour 4-8pm daily.

Try our motu (Solomon dish) on our cultural nights every Thursday and watch our beautiful tamure dancers share a mix of local and international dance stories.



PACIFIC CROWN HOTEL



(677) 45000



RESERVATION@THEPCH.COM



WWW.THEPCH.COM



PACIFIC CROWN HOTEL, KUKUM HIGHWAY P.O. BOX 1298