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ISSUE 85

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# Solomon Islands PREMIUM LAGER BEER



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## Welkam oloketa (Welcome friends)

As we go to print with this issue, two hours away from Solomon Islands by air, our neighbour Vanuatu is in recovery from four extreme weather events, which occurred in early March.

Cyclone season is a fact of life for island nations in the Pacific. We expect them, we prepare for them, we experience them, and we move on. However, in the first week of March 2023 we encountered a rare and historic set of circumstances.

Initially, it was Solomon Islands being menaced by category 4 tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin. They moved past our country, making landfall in Vanuatu.

Cyclone Judy brought hurricane-force winds with the eye passing directly over Port Vila. Cyclone Kevin followed two days later. They swept through Vanuatu leaving widespread damage. In the same week, two earthquakes magnitude 6.5 and 5.4 also struck the Vanuatu island of Espiritu Santo.

At the end of March a third magnitude 6.0 earthquake occurred in the Coral Sea near Santa Cruz. There were no reports of damage or casualties although light aftershocks continued over several days.

Solomon Airlines is helping in a small way by sending a Twin Otter aircraft and flight crew to assist national carrier Air Vanuatu to restore vital domestic operations as soon as possible. They will be based in Port Vila where the airport is again functional.

Just eight weeks prior, I met with Joseph Laloyer, the newly appointed CEO of Air Vanuatu. Joseph has considerable experience and together we discussed future options for greater cooperation between our national carriers. I am sure neither of us expected those discussions to become a necessity so quickly.

As the national carrier of an island nation, Solomon Airlines is constantly vigilant to our own and regional operational requirements and opportunities.

Internationally, we work with our interline partners to make it possible for visitors from around the world to easily reach the Solomon Islands.

Our aim quite simply, is to encourage a new era

of regional airline co-operation between Pacific Islands carriers and; indeed, our Melanesian brothers.

Already we have adjusted departure times on selected services between Port Vila, Nadi, Brisbane and Honiara to streamline connections for travellers between Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Papua New Guinea and beyond.

Solomon Airlines is tremendously proud to be the first Presenting Sponsor for SOL2023 — the 2023 Pacific Games, providing SBD \$5 million value of air travel, air freight and promotional content via its own media channels to underpin logistics and promotion of the 17th Pacific Games.

Around 5,000 participants including athletes, technical officials and support staff from 24 countries will travel to Honiara for the games, while plans are also underway for 2023 Solomon Airlines Marathon in August this year, another significant event.

*Our aim quite simply, is to encourage a new era of regional airline co-operation between Pacific Islands carriers and; indeed, our Melanesian brothers.*

Both events present enormous opportunity for Solomon Islands to highlight the appeal of our country, air access to reach us, and our ability to welcome and host international visitors and media.

Meanwhile, with industry partners and tour operators we have relaunched our popular domestic 'lumi Tugeda Holidays' program, to offer a new range of affordable holiday packages across the provinces.

lumi Tugeda Holidays is Solomon Islands largest ever domestic tourism initiative.

Phase one includes holiday deals to 16 properties across Gizo, Munda, Seghe, Suavanao, Santa Cruz and Honiara. We will continue to expand as more operators join the initiative.

Already in 2023 we are seeing rises in visitation with repeat visitors and special interest travellers returning to our shores.

As a passenger on board Solomon Airlines, we thank you for your support and to the Government and people of Solomon Islands, Tagio Tumas for being party to our newly derived energy to move not only our national carrier forward but also the economy and wellbeing of our people, to better outcomes into the future.

**Gus Kraus MBE**  
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Out and About



## PEACE MARATHON RUNNING UP FAST

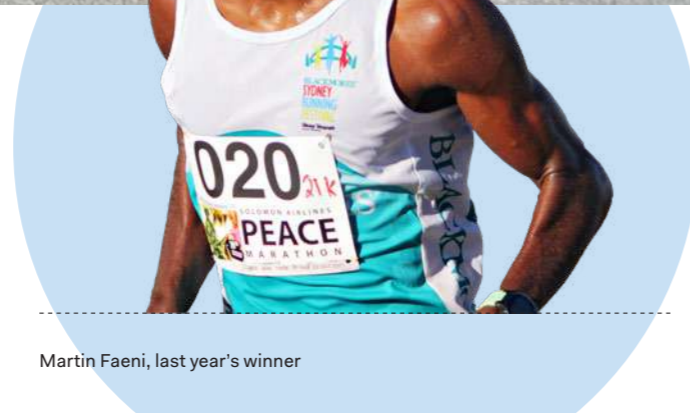
The Solomon Islands Peace Marathon is fast approaching, an event which is set to be an athletic precursor to the Pacific Games in November.

On June 26, around 1,000 runners are set to take the starting line for the marathon, which returned last year in a half-marathon format after a COVID-enforced break. This year, the event is even bigger with the re-introduction of the gruelling 42.2km full marathon.

Martin Faeni won last year's men's half-marathon event in a time of 1.15:47 and Diana Matekali the women's in 1.29:42, and come late-June both of these locals are expected to again be tough to beat.

There are also 2km, 5km, and 10km events to go with the marathon events, with community fun and laughs at the forefront of the event quite as much as elite performance.

Supporting health and fitness for both locals and visitors alike is seen as a key element to continuing to build on a



Martin Faeni, last year's winner

tourism industry already built on outdoor action. Water-based activities like scuba diving, surfing, swimming and snorkelling are already popular among locals and visitors alike, and the marathon shapes as another avenue for the Solomons to build on its growing reputation as a health and wellness destination — only this one is on the ground. Wellness-focused travel has been a key trend in the global tourism sector for some time but more specifically, marathon tourism is a real thing and a growing market. The Solomon Islands are an ideal place to stage a marathon, given the stunning landscapes, consistent weather and atmospheric buzz created by locals.

Solomon Airlines will once again be sponsoring the event, including the SI\$3,000 prize to the winners of the full-marathon event.

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.

## TOURISM CONTINUES TO BOUNCE BACK, ACCORDING TO STATISTICS

The Solomon Islands tourism industry continues to show signs of a strong recovery, following the release of visitor statistics for the fourth quarter of 2022.

A total of 4,207 international visitors travelled through Honiara International Airport from October – December 2022, representing a 69% increase over the total recorded for the previous quarter.

Australians once again made up the bulk of the numbers with the 1,775 Aussie visitors an increase of 71% over from the figure recorded across Q3, and accounting for 42% of the Q4 total.

*“It’s great we can come here again and not worry about anything.”*

“We’d been coming here for about five years before the pandemic,” said Craig from Brisbane, who Fly Solomons spoke to in the departure lounge en route to Honiara recently.

“It’s great we can come here again and not worry about anything. There’s a big group of families that we go with, since the kids have been pretty young.

Family trips do take a bit of organising, and we felt confident enough this time that we’d be right.

“I’ll take the young fella out on a boat to see what we can catch, the girls love getting in the water, it’s the sort of place where there’s something for everyone”.



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## FELLOWSHIP RECOGNITION FOR SOLOMONS WOMAN

Solomon Islander and social entrepreneur Millicent Barty continues to go from strength to strength, having recently been awarded a prestigious fellowship to the Emerson Collective.

An Emerson fellowship is designed to encourage individuals of exceptional talent and creativity to advance bold new projects

in education, immigration, the environment, social justice, media, and health.

Barty, who has previously met with the likes of former U.S. President Barack Obama as an Obama Foundation Scholar, and Queen Elizabeth II, has turned her area of focus to climate change.

As a Kastom Keeper of traditional culture, Barty is using a collective and traditional approach to fighting a new issue.

"I'm so incredibly blessed to be elevating the traditional perspectives of our home in the climate actions space whilst tackling loss and damage of culture through Kastom Keepers," she said in a statement after receiving the fellowship.

"I am so humbled and thrilled to join the climate cohort of the Emerson Collective, along with other leaders from across disciplines, we are pivoting to an environment-focused body of work that illuminates our collective pathway to a healthier planet."

You can follow Barty on Twitter at [@millicent\\_barty](#).



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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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# SURE'S UP

for Women in the Solomon Islands



THE GIRLS GO SURFING PROGRAM

WORDS REGINA LEPPING  
PHOTOS ROGER BRADFORD DAKAMAE

**T**he Girls Go Surfing program launched recently in the Solomon Islands' Western Province, an initiative which is helping to turn the tables on surf's history as a male dominated sport.

On April 6th, the program was launched at Titiana beach, Gizo, Western Province, paving the way for a more inclusive surf culture and promoting gender equality in the country. Part of the Solomon Islands Surf Sisters initiative, the program aims to empower young women and girls, and foster strong communities, through surfing. With the support of local and international organizations and brands, the program is making waves in the Solomon Islands.

A strong crowd, mostly between the ages of 12 and 21, participated in the first session. The six-hour session covered topics such as surf confidence, mindset, and awareness in the water. The girls were provided with surfboards and sponsor swimwear from Salt Gypsy and were given gift bags to take home, but they also took with them a sense of camaraderie and excitement for the sport.

Titiana is the ideal place for a beginner to hone their craft, a gentle right-hander breaking over a deep reef. In sunny weather, the girls took on the challenges of the ocean, and a solid set of waves, while acknowledging the waves in their lives and the challenges of societal norms.

*The program aims to empower young women and girls, and foster strong communities, through surfing.*

"It was amazing to be out there, sharing the experience with other women and girls who were just as excited as I was," said young surfer Leah.

"Having access to the boards and coaches made all the difference, and I feel like I learned so much from the program.

"I can't wait for the next session to connect with the other female surfers in my community and continue to grow as a surfer."

The Girls Go Surfing program is a turning point for women's surfing in the region and the success of the launch will see it become a regular fixture on the Western Province calendar, bringing surfers together once a month. Local girls from nearby villages have also joined the program, creating a community of

support, both in and out of the water.

Zantia and Shanon grew up in a charming coastal village where the sound of the sea was a daily wake-up call, but despite their love for the water, they never had the opportunity to experience it firsthand.

**Opposite:** The Girls Go Surfing program is yet another step forward for surfing in the Solomon Islands. **Below:** Almost 20 participants turned out for the launch of the initiative, ranging from 12 to 21 years old.







*Promoting equal opportunity, having fun, and dropping judgment, with the belief that the best surfer is the one having the most fun.*

**Pictured:** The surfers were presented with boards and swimsuits.



“The Girls Go Surfing program has given us that chance, and it was so much fun! It was really cool to be out there with all the other girls, and I felt so empowered to be trying something new,” said Shanon.

“I have always been interested in surfing, but I never had the chance to try it before,” added Zantia.

Nagarita Baea is the Girls Go Surfing women’s surfing representative from Western Solomons Surf Association (WSSA).

“The Girls Go Surfing program is about promoting equal opportunity, having fun, and dropping judgment, with the belief that the best surfer is the one having the most fun,” she said.

“We are trying to empower women and promote gender equality through Solomon Islands Surf Sisters and transcend the principles of our platform and programs to have ripple effects on women’s empowerment and participation in other areas of societies, using surfing as a vehicle for change.”

With strong swell, a number of consistent reef breaks and an array of stunning beaches, the Solomon Islands have long been seen as a potential surf paradise. Local participation is on the rise, and



there are a number of surf camps and operators who can show you the best waves – both on and off-shore.

The program’s launch has been met with excitement from both participants and local representatives, with male surfers also showing their support for a more inclusive surf culture.

The initiative is an extension from the Western Solomons Surf Association, a network not only aiming to promote surfing, but to educate on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, the importance of a healthy ocean and to provide opportunities for the development of local communities. ▴

**Above:** The Solomon Islands have waves for both advanced surfers... **Below:** ...and beginners.

For more information or to participate in the Girls Go Surfing program, contact [solomonis.surfsisters@gmail.com](mailto:solomonis.surfsisters@gmail.com)





# ALL ACTION IN HONIARA

## Ahead of Pacific Games

We sit down with Chairman of the Games, Martin Rara, to see how things are shaping up ahead of the biggest sporting event to ever be held in the Solomon Islands.

**W**hen the *Fly Solomons Magazine* hits the seats of Solomon Airlines flights on May 1, there will be 184 days until the XVII Pacific Games kicks off in Honiara.

Since 1963, when the Games were first held in Suva, Fiji, they have represented not only the pinnacle of athletic competition around the Pacific, but a chance for friendships to be forged and an already close region to become even closer.

The Solomon Islands become the seventh country to host the event, with around 10,000 athletes, officials and visitors expected to hit Honiara's streets. The capital has been a hive of activity in recent times with the building of stadia, the promotion of clean, green games and athletic practice.

Martin Rara is the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Games, and Vice-Chairman of the National Hosting Authority (NHA), the body which oversees the various committees tasked to help deliver the Games. Rara is steeped in athletic competition in the Solomon Islands, given he also serves as President of the National Olympic Committee of Solomon Islands (NOCSI) which is the Pacific Games Association (PGA), responsible for selection of Team Solomon Islands.

If anyone knows how the Games are shaping up, it's Martin. We sat down with him to get an idea of how things are looking ahead of November.

**Fly Solomons:** Tell us about how preparation is coming along in terms of construction and building of stadia, athlete housing etc.

**Chairman of Games Organising Committee (GOC) Martin Rara:**

Preparations for the 2023 Pacific Games is on track. The facilities will be completed and handed to the National Hosting Authority (NHA) in August and then later in October to the Games Organising Committee (GOC), to give ample time for GOC to make ready the venues for the Games. The athletes' village is coming on really well also. Overall, everything is all on schedule and Solomon Islands will be ready to deliver the Sol2023 Pacific Games.



**FS:** Are there any events and sporting events worldwide that you have studied, and taken inspiration from, in the planning of the 2023 Pacific Games?

**A chance for friendships to be forged and an already close region to become even closer.**

**MR:** Prior to the appointments of the Committees for the Games, we have engaged a taskforce to visit and look at the different models that were used and done in previous hosts of the Pacific Games. The team had a look at the 2015 Pacific Games, 2017 Pacific Mini Games and the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. From visiting and talking to the various committees involved in these Games, it has helped us setup the 2023 Pacific Games.

**Opposite:** Athletics will be one of the premier events of the Games. **Above:** Chairman of Organising Games Committee Martin Rara. Credit: GOC.



**FS:** Do you think there is a specific Solomon Islands flavour that can be brought to the Games, that will distinguish it from previous Pacific Games?

**MR:** The last time Solomon Islands held a sporting event close to this magnitude was back in 1981 — The Pacific Mini Games held in Honiara. This year (2023)'s Pacific Games will be even bigger, and will be the first major regional event held since the COVID global pandemic. The first Pacific Games Solomon Islands will have hosted. We have brand new state-of-the-art sports facilities that will be used for the first time at Games time and provide us a legacy and the opportunity for hosting future events and competitions. We are expecting and anticipating mass participation from both athletes, visitors and the Solomon Islands public. We are expecting 5,000 plus athletes and officials and up to 8,000 plus visitors (the biggest Solomon Islands will have ever seen). We are very confident of delivering a uniquely successful Sol2023 Pacific Games.

**FS:** What has been the biggest challenge so far?

**MR:** The biggest challenge now is the weather we are experiencing in the capital at the moment that has affected our progress, otherwise we still have time on our side and as far as I am concerned, all preparations are on track and on schedule.

**FS:** What is the feeling around Honiara and the wider Solomon Islands for the Games?

**MR:** The general feeling of excitement and anticipation both in Honiara and in the provinces is centered around being hosts of the Pacific Games. Thanks to 'Solo', the official Games Mascot and the GOC's Community Engagement

Program, people are now well aware and anticipating the Games. Other programs that are on and will be rolled out include; The Ambassadors program (where we have engaged 10 both former and current athletes) going out to the provinces to share their experiences of the pathways that aspiring athletes can dream and work towards achieving, and also the Games Baton Relay which will visit some of the most eye-attracting locations and sites throughout Solomon Islands — all of which contribute to spreading the Games message and getting Solomon Islands (event to the village level) ready for the Games.

**FS:** What are you most looking forward to, as part of the Games?

**MR:** The Opening Ceremony is what I most look forward to. We have a great very dedicated team that's planning and organizing it — we are confident of giving the best Opening to the Games we can possibly give. Apart from that I am also looking forward to the opening of the Sports facilities. Above all, I very much look forward to seeing our own athletes compete and perform well in front of the home crowd.

**FS:** How many people is it estimated will come to the Solomon Islands for the Games?

**MR:** Athletes and officials, we are expecting more than 5,000 plus, visitors almost 8,000 plus — so there will be more than 10,000 additional people within Honiara during the two weeks of the Games. Around 3,000 volunteers will be required.

**FS:** What will this do for the Solomon Islands, in terms of its reputation among fellow Pacific countries? Will it boost tourism?



**MR:** Not only will it provide exposure for Solomon Islands, it has also attracted support from bilateral partners with infrastructure, policy upgrades for development, law and order, investor confidence and regional pride. It will also give us the opportunity to have top facilities in an island environment which is conducive and suitable for our islander athletes. This Games will also help elevate our country's economy to greater lengths.

**FS:** Is there a particular event or athlete you, personally, are looking forward to watching?

**MR:** Weightlifting, Track and Field, Bodybuilding, Boxing, Football are just some of the sports that I personally look forward to. My take on it? The strength of our team is in the individual events and therefore, we have so much hope for them and we will be cheering for them come Sol2023 Pacific Games. ▴

Above: The Solomons contingent at the opening ceremony of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Opposite: The main stadium for the Pacific Games, under construction. Credit: GOC.





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# HISTORY IN HONIARA

Exploring the Solomons' capital is a little like being in a captivating Netflix war documentary, if you know where to look.

Set against the wider theatre of World War Two, the Solomon Islands emerged as a surprising, but critical battleground during the Pacific War, a campaign which played a major role in the shift of power towards allied forces.

Moving around Honiara, history is in front of your eyes. We pick out five absolute must-visit World War Two experiences in the Solomons' capital.

1

## VILU WAR MUSEUM

A simple sign out the front of a long, winding driveway, with long grass either side, is all there is to indicate that this is not just any old plot of land; it is Vilu War Museum, an eerie walk through history in the middle of the jungle, about 12km west of Honiara.

The museum has been painstakingly curated by locals, collecting remnants from the war over the last few decades and piecing them together. Set amongst dense forest and the call of coucals, a walk through Vilu will reveal aircraft, weapons, equipment, and personal items used by both Allied and Japanese forces during the war. An American Douglas SBD Dauntless aircraft is in surprisingly good condition considering the life it's had, as are the row of cannons used by the Japanese that greet you near the entrance.

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2

## GUADALCANAL AMERICAN MEMORIAL

Located on Skyline Ridge, overlooking the city of Honiara, America's memorial to the Pacific War commemorates the sacrifices made by the US Marines during the Guadalcanal campaign, a turning point in World War Two.

The memorial includes a chapel, a museum, and a peaceful garden that provides visitors with an opportunity for quiet reflection. It also exhibits key moments in the Guadalcanal campaign, acknowledging the twists and turns that took place throughout the six-month long battle.







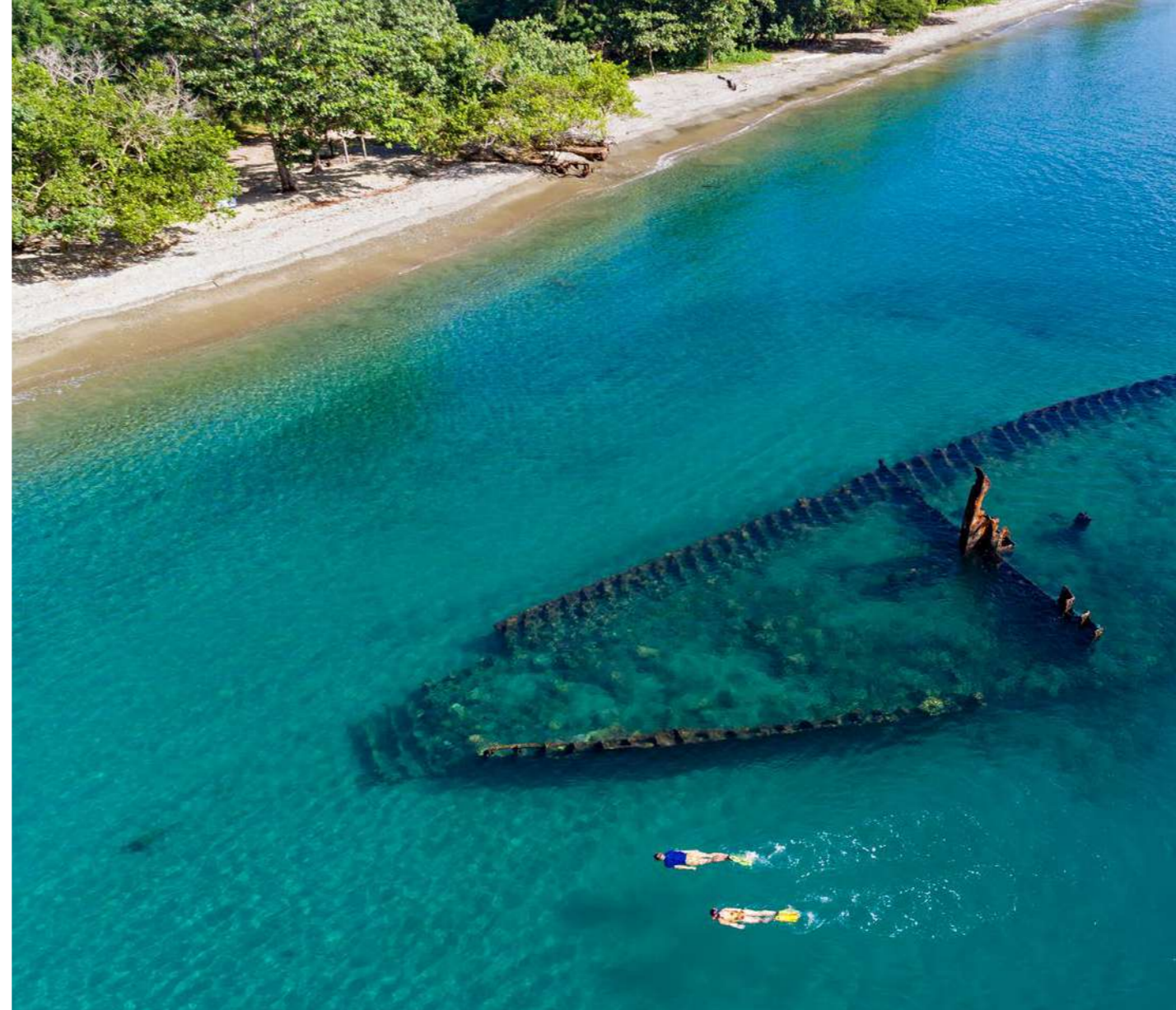
3

### JAPANESE PEACE MEMORIAL

From the American memorial, drive across the Mataniko River and uphill through little markets and street vendors, and you will eventually find Japan's dedication to the battle that played out in the Solomons.

The hills surrounding the Mataniko played host to a series of fierce battles, and from the vantage point of the top you can see Mount Austen, another critical location. Typically understated in terms of design, there is a feeling of tranquility at the Peace Memorial, which has been designed as much as a monument to peace as it is to Japanese loss of life.

The four-hour Eastern Battlefield Tour with Go Tours takes in both the Japanese and American memorial sites, as well as a number of other key locations. Visit [gotours.com.au/honiara-tours](http://gotours.com.au/honiara-tours)



4

### BONEGI BEACH

There is a surreal feeling that greets those who swim alongside the remains aircraft and boats that were sunk at Bonegi Beach, not far from Honiara.

A B-17 Flying Fortress bomber lies next to a variety of marine life, including colourful fish and coral, as well as a number of Japanese shipwrecks which are popular spots for locals, offering easy diving and snorkelling. There can't be many more memorable ways to explore a site of historical significance, which is located on this picturesque, palm-tree lined beach. Diving, swimming and snorkelling are all possible at Bonegi.

The shipwrecks start with *Hirokawa Maru* — or B1 — a 20-minute drive west of central Honiara.



5

### IRON BOTTOM SOUND

The USS *Aaron Ward* lived a brief, but dramatic life as a destroyer ship for the Allied Forces between 1942 and 1943, when it was brought down by three Japanese planes in a stretch of water known as Iron Bottom Sound.

It wasn't until 1994 that a team of divers located the ship, about 60-70 metres deep, and it is now a site for more experienced divers to take on. Numerous naval battles were fought along Iron Bottom Sound and as a result, dozens of sunken warships and aircraft lie dormant in the area.

For more information on diving in the Solomon Islands, contact Tourism Solomons: [visitsolomons.com.sb](http://visitsolomons.com.sb)






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- Member of Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants
- We are locally owned

**CONTACT US TODAY** — PO Box 939, Honiara  
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Visit us on our website at [www.baoroandassociates.com.sb](http://www.baoroandassociates.com.sb)  
Visit our office located next to the Lime Lounge in Pt. Cruz, Honiara





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# A Discoverer at Bay

Why one man's wreck is another village's treasure.

WORDS AND PHOTOS JUSTIN JAMIESON

**A**t 4pm on April 30, 2000, Captain Oliver Kreuss hit an uncharted reef while navigating the MS *World Discoverer* and her 190 passengers through the Sandfly Passage between Nggela Sule Island and Mbokonimbeti Island. In an effort to ensure the passengers' safe evacuation and enable a potential salvation of the now sinking ship Captain Kreuss steered her into the calm shallow waters of Roderick Bay. With the damage extensive and the owners eventually going bankrupt, the MS *World Discoverer* was left to the mercy of the ocean. But, as the old saying goes, one man's trash is another man's treasure and with the ingenuity of a local villager, that wreck is now one of the best travel experiences within a couple of hours of Honiara.

On a clear day Savo Island and Nggela Sule Island are clearly visible from the shoreline of Honiara, and on a clear night you can even catch a glimpse of the lights of the former capital of the British Solomon Islands, Tulagi in the distance. Today is not very clear, and we can barely see the end of the pier

leading out from the shores of Point Cruz Yacht Club where I meet Matthew and Tome, my transport away from the hustle and bustle of Honiara and across Iron Bottom Sound to the peaceful Roderick Bay Bungalows, home to the wreck of the MS *World Discoverer*.

Pictured: The MS *World Discoverer*, where she has laid in the calm waters of Roderick Bay since 2000.



What should take a comfortable hour and half turns into nearly three hours as we navigate the waves, wind and lack of visibility. I'm lashed by the rain as we bounce over the swell, smiling broadly at Matthew driving the boat while Tome lies asleep beneath a tarpaulin. My only real worry is when Matthew asks if I have GPS on my phone...

The water is clear and dark blue in the depths with a crystal emerald over the shallow reefs. The wreck lies on its side baring the left of its keel at arriving visitors. Matthew takes us around the stern for full effect and the site of the pool deck, empty pool and Captain's Bridge is somewhat eerie.

Patrick tells me the story of how, once the *World Discoverer* was deemed unsalvageable, local villagers made use of what they could. This is therefore why there's a house in the village with the most excellent, ship-style windows.

There are carving stalls set up to showcase the local skills to the large groups of cruise passengers that come to ogle at the *World Discoverer*. Why is it that cruise passengers seem so keen to see the wreck of a cruise ship? It certainly doesn't work that way with aircraft.

Whatever the reason it has been a windfall for Patrick and his family. The cruise companies pay handsomely for their passengers to spend time around the wreck and Patrick and his family have set up myriad of experiences for them. There are local village visits, a hike to the aforementioned peak that Patrick tells me has some of the best views in the region. There's snorkelling around the wreck and the reefs nearby and you can even head out for a fish and exploration of the passage.

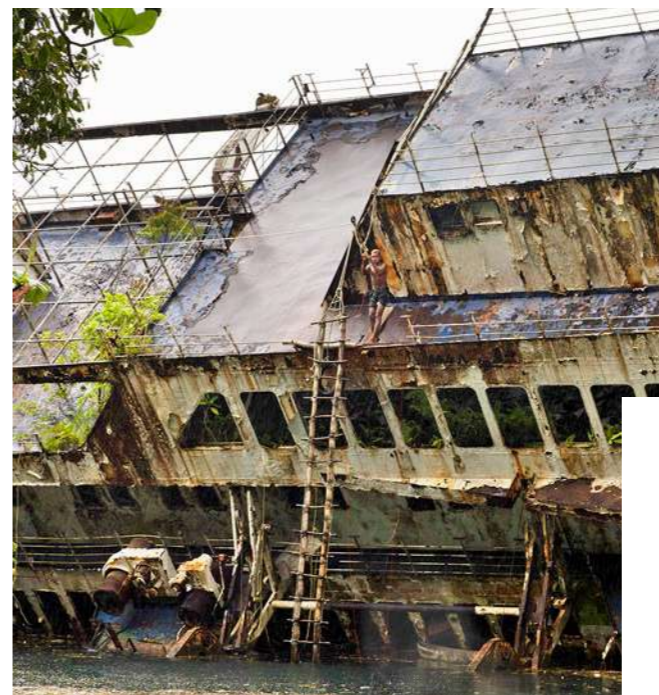
Exploring the wreck herself has been off limits for a while now with rust and decay making it quite dangerous to climb around in. It hasn't however stopped

Patrick Sara stands on the jetty waiting to greet us. His smile is broad. He no doubt recognises my expression, a common one of awe on new arrivals. It was Patrick's uncle who first set up Roderick Bay Bungalows. Family is at the heart of everything he does. I'm taken to my overwater bungalow which is simple, clean and takes in the cool breeze right off the water. The views are spectacular out over the bay with the looming wreck to my right.

## The Solomons is all about adventure and this is no exception.

but thankfully we spot Tulagi and orientate. The Solomons is all about adventure and this is no exception. That being said, I'm glad to round the western point of Nggela Sule Island and head into the calmer waters of the Sandfly Passage.

Excitement builds as we enter Roderick Bay. Captain Kreuss could not have found a more picturesque place to put the *World Discoverer* to rest. It is a deep half moon bay with a lush green peak to its east and scattered beaches with village huts peeking through the dense foliage.



### Where else in the world can you zipline off a shipwreck into open water?

Patrick (and some ingenious army guests) from rigging up a zipline from the top of the wreck to the island shore. Selwyn, one of Patrick's sons, scales the makeshift ladder up to the edge of the top of the ship. Without hesitation he leaps into the clear water below. It's easily a ten-metre drop. I follow him up and zipline out over the water, remembering to let go over the deep part, as Selwyn advises, right before take off. Where else in the world can you zipline off a shipwreck into open water?

That night Patrick's brother John cooks a basic but delicious local feast — the fresh squid salad proving to be a standout. It's plentiful and after a day exploring the area I'm happy to relax on my over water balcony and listen to the night sounds as the moon rises.

From here Honiara, and life, could not seem further away. It is quiet and still as I retire to bed and I'm glad Captain Kreuss managed to save all 190 passengers. As the moonlight hits the sombre site of the decaying MS *World Discoverer* I wonder if Roderick Bay would be as popular with the ghosts of those that could have been lost. ▀

Opposite: Roderick Bay's overwater bungalows and palm trees are the stuff of afternoon office daydreams. Above: The MS *World Discoverer* might be the only place you can zipline off a shipwreck.





# FROM farm TO fork

LAUNCH OF COUNTRY'S FIRST AGRITOURISM PROJECT A DELICIOUS SUCCESS

It's the Solomon Islands equivalent of Willy Wonka's golden ticket.



*“I like seeing people’s faces when they try the chocolate because everyone seems to enjoy eating it, and it’s very healthy for you.”*

While ad hoc tours have taken place on a sporadic basis in the past, Fekau’s collaboration with the Australian-backed *Strongim Bisnis* program has seen the development of a genuine and unique agritourism experience that is set to become a must do for foodies and international travellers to the Solomon Islands.

The farm is located about 20 minutes north of Honiara, next to the picturesque Tenaru Beach. Black sand and palm trees blend seamlessly into a colourful garden and surrounding cocoa farm, with a modern structure in the middle serving as the fulcrum for tours. When *Fly Solomons* visited we were treated to not only a demonstration of chocolate making, but several taste tests which included a delicious chocolate tea.

WORDS TIM McGLONE

PHOTOS STOREROOM PRODUCTIONS, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Only, there are no Oompa Loompas or Slugworths here — just a humble chocolate maker by the name of Grace, who is quietly making waves in the chocolate industry at home and abroad.

Amazing Grace Boutique Cocoa and Garden Tours are the latest addition to Solomons Grandmother Grace Fekau’s cocoa business, which has gone from strength to strength over the past 20 years.

Fekau initially begun harvesting the abundant cocoa plants on her property as a means of income when her husband passed away in the 1990s. She now runs the farm by hand with two other women, and makes the all-natural chocolate herself.

“I like how I make it,” Fekau told *Fly Solomons* when asked why she doesn’t seek any help for the laborious process.

“We don’t have any special machines here, we just do it all with our hands and I think it’s better this way.”

“I like seeing people’s faces when they try the chocolate because everyone seems to enjoy eating it, and it’s very healthy for you.”



**Pictured left:** The tours give an overview of the entire chocolate making process — right from taking cocoa off the tree. **Top left:** A sweet-smelling basket of cocoa beans. **Above:** Grace Fekau imparting wisdom.





The tours see cocoa farming take place in front of their eyes, with traditional food and chocolate demonstrations, and a stroll through what is a genuinely stunning part of the world. There's also the opportunity to purchase a number of cocoa and cacao-based products to take home.

While chocolate is seen as a 'sometimes food', Fekau's approach means that her products, as with all cocoa and cacao products in the Solomon Islands, are completely organic and actually pretty healthy for you.

Tours opened to the public in early-March, and are limited to a maximum of 25 people per session. Amazing Grace's first official tour hosted members of the Solomon Islands Government, representatives of diplomatic corporations, Solomon Islands Tourism Board, and key tourism and private sector stakeholders.

"I want to acknowledge Grace's significant achievements," said

Australian High Commissioner, Rod Hilton who was present for the launch of the tours.

"Creating value-added products in Solomon Islands creates more jobs and more economic opportunity for Solomon Islanders. Mrs Fekau is leading the effort to make this shift to value-added products for her community."

"A big priority for Australia is working with Solomon Islands to strengthen our economic partnership by delivering jobs and economic growth for Solomon Islanders."

There is significant potential to boost rural economies through the link between tourism and agriculture — and help resilience in to build sustainable development in both. The tours are believed to be the first example of agritourism in the Solomon Islands, a branch of tourism which is continuing to increase in popularity across the planet. ▴

Above: Cooking demonstrations, and thankfully tastings, are a part of the tour. Left: The launch of Amazing Grace Boutique Cocoa and Garden Tours.

Tours of Amazing Grace can be organised by calling Strongim Bisnis on (677) 799 3290. You can also contact Amazing Grace directly at (677) 786 8422, or on email at [kokoatours@amazinggrace.com.sb](mailto:kokoatours@amazinggrace.com.sb)



# Invest in Solomons

There's never been a better time to invest in Solomon Islands

Opportunities exist in the following major sectors:

**Tourism / Agriculture / Fisheries /  
Mining / Infrastructure & Other Services**

## Register Online

[www.solomonbusinessregistry.gov.sb](http://www.solomonbusinessregistry.gov.sb)

✓ Foreign Investment

✓ Company

✓ Business Name



**InvestSolomons**  
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour & Immigration  
P.O.Box G26, Honiara  
Solomon Islands



Phone: (677) 20521

Website: [www.solomonbusinessregistry.gov.sb](http://www.solomonbusinessregistry.gov.sb)

Email: [investsolomons@commerce.gov.sb](mailto:investsolomons@commerce.gov.sb)

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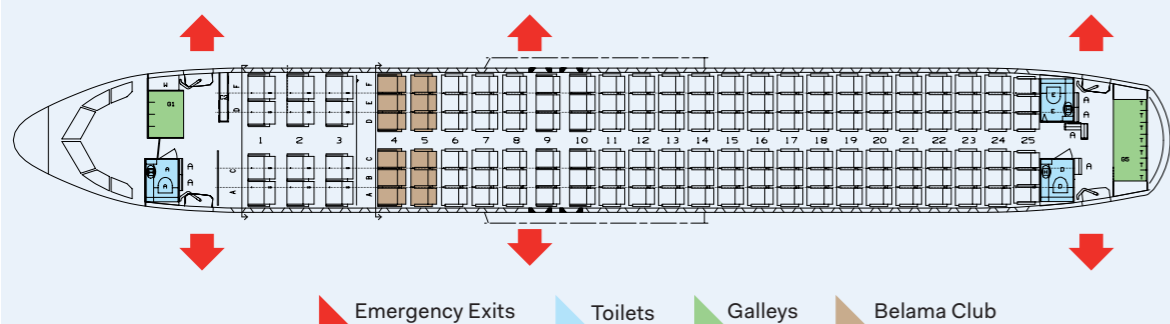


# Solomon Airlines Fleet



## A320

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



Emergency Exits Toilets Galleys Belama Club



## 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, 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-SIC

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	

# 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  
Ph: (677) 20031

## Travel Center

Solomon Airlines Building,  
Mendana Avenue, Point Cruz,  
Honiara, Solomon Islands  
Ph: (677) 44999  
Email: sales@flysolomons.com.sb

## Australia

Ph: 1300 894 311 or (61) 7 3860 5883  
Email: reservations@flysolomons.com

## Fiji

Nadi Airport, Office 27, First Floor  
Ph: (679) 6722831  
Fax: (679) 6722140  
Email: solomon@connect.com.fj

Our point of difference





# International Connections

- Solomon Airlines Routes —●—
- Codeshare Routes - - - -
- Interline Partners - - - -



## General Sales Agents

**NEW ZEALAND**  
 Ph: (64) 9 969 7602  
 Email: flysolomons@airlinemarketing.co.nz  
 Address: Airline Marketing NZ, Level 10 BDO Tower, 120 Albert Street, Auckland 1141

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

**FRANCE**  
 Ph: (33) 1 53 77 13 27  
 Email: solomonairlines.fr@apg-ga.com  
 Address: 66 Champs-Elysées, 75008 Paris, France

**GERMANY**  
 Ph: (49) 6031 737 630  
 Email: germany@apg-ga.com  
 Address: Leonhardstrasse 22, 61169 Friedberg, Germany

**HONG KONG**  
 Ph: (852) 2826 9228  
 Email: hongkong@apg-ga.com  
 Address: APG 10/F Tung Ming Building, 40 Des Voeux Road, Central Hong Kong

**JAPAN**  
 Ph: (81) 50 33882939  
 Email: japan@apg-ga.com  
 Address: 8F ATT New Tower, 2-11-7, Akasaka, Minato-ku, 107-0052 Tokyo, Japan

**MALAYSIA**  
 Ph: (603) 2141 2701  
 Email: malaysia@apg-ga.com  
 Address: Suite 1001, Level 10, Wisma Lim Foo Yong, 86, Jalan Raja Chulan, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**UNITED KINGDOM**  
 Ph: (44) 0844 482 1670  
 Email: uk@apg-ga.com  
 Address: 3 World Business Centre, Newall Road, London Heathrow Airport, Hounslow, TW6 2TA, United Kingdom

**USA**  
 Ph: (1) 888 468 5736  
 Email: solomonairlines@airlinepros.com  
 Address: AirlinePros, Suite 358-360, 420 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10170, USA

**PHILIPPINES**  
 Ph: (632) 8896 90 75  
 Email: philippines@apg-ga.com  
 Address: 2nd Floor, Lydia Building, 39 Polaris Street, Bel Air, 1209 Makati City, Philippines

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

**TAIWAN, CHINA**  
 Ph: (886) 2 2368 7828  
 Email: taiwan@apg-ga.com  
 Address: 11F, No.111, Sec 2 Nanjing E. Road, Taipei, Taiwan 104

# Domestic Connections

- Solomon Airlines Routes —●—



## Contacts

### Solomon Islands Office

Head office: (677) 20031  
 Reservations: (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 – Reservations

Ph: 1300 894 311 or (61) 7 3860 5883  
 Email: reservations@flysolomons.com

### AUSTRALIA – Operations

Address: Level 1, International Terminal, Brisbane Airport, QLD 4008, Australia

### FIJI – Nadi

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

## Cargo

### AUSTRALIA

Ph: (61) 7 3119 2571  
 Email: bneexports@pakfresh.com.au  
 Address: Pak Fresh, 8 Hibiscus Street, Brisbane Airport, QLD 4008, Australia

### NEW ZEALAND

Ph: (64) 9 275 8767 or (61) 07 3860 5883  
 Email: sales@gsacargo.co.nz  
 Address: GSA Cargo Services NZ Ltd, Level 1 AFCAB offices, George Bolt Memorial Drive Auckland Airport 2154, New Zealand

### SOLOMON ISLANDS

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





MILESTONE

# RECOGNISING OUR WOMEN ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Solomon Airlines has marked International Women's Day by proudly highlighting the diverse achievements of the airline's female staff.

The national carrier invited female representatives from various departments to take part in a public parade in Honiara on March 8, to celebrate and recognise the achievements of Solomon Islands women.

The parade and ongoing International Women's Day celebrations highlight this year's IWD theme of #DigitAll which celebrates learning, empowerment and protection of women in Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the world, through the advancements of technology.

The airline also confirmed it is a willing participant in the '25 by 2025' global initiative led by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to improve female representation in the aviation industry.

"We were proud to celebrate and to stand with other Solomon Islands women to highlight equality and also the important subject of equitable access to digital technology," said Solomon Airlines Human Resources Manager, Mrs Monica Utukana.

"It's time that we truly embrace equity in Solomon islands to ensure that women are fairly recognised in all areas, including in the home, in the community and in the workplace place," she said.

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day observed annually on 8th March, to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity and equal opportunity.

**Pictured:** Solomon Airlines staff, including Captain Lyndah Owen, celebrating International Women's Day.

The Latest

ANNOUNCEMENT

## ADJUSTING PORT VILA FLIGHTS TO ENHANCE REGIONAL AIRLINE CONNECTIVITY

Solomon Airlines is leading a new phase of regional airline co-operation between Pacific Islands carriers, to improve air access and flight connectivity between Pacific nations.

"We are seeing renewed and more comprehensive partnerships with our neighbouring Pacific Islands and other national carriers in our region, and as such we can maximise opportunities together," said CEO of Solomon Airlines Mr Gus Kraus.

"Regional connectivity is not easy to achieve, and requires longer term commitments, however it is very beneficial for our collective customers and brings operational efficiencies for airlines," he said.

Among the changes effective from 25 March until 28 October 2023, Solomon Airlines Port Vila services will shift from weekend operations to mid-week departures. The timings are planned to enable same day connections from Port Vila via Honiara to Port Moresby and onwards to other international destinations.

Honiara to Port Vila flights depart at the new time of 2.20pm Tuesdays as IE722 arriving in Port Vila 4.20pm. Port Vila to Honiara will depart as IE723 on Wednesdays at 8.15am arriving in Honiara 10.15am.



Adjustments have been made to the timing of flight IE706 operating between Honiara and Brisbane on Wednesdays and Sundays, to now depart Honiara at 11.15am arriving Brisbane at 1.30pm allowing for improved connectivity via the airline's Brisbane hub. Domestic schedules to Honiara on these days will also be adjusted, to ensure connections are maintained to the retimed Honiara to Brisbane services.

Services to and from Fiji will also be refined, with the introduction of Saturday direct flights between Honiara and Nadi with flight IE702 departing at 2.20pm, arriving Nadi at 6.15pm. Nadi to Honiara direct flight IE703 will operate on Sundays departing Nadi at 8.15am arriving Honiara at 10.15am.

**For booking assistance, call Solomon Airlines Reservations on 177 (local Solomon Islands call), (677) 23506 or (61) 7 3860 5883, or email [reservations@flysolomons.com](mailto:reservations@flysolomons.com)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

## RELAUNCH OF POPULAR IUMI TUGEDA HOLIDAYS

Solomon Airlines recently confirmed the relaunching of the popular 'Iumi Tugeda Holidays' program, together with industry partners and tour operators, to offer a new range of attractive and affordable holiday packages across the provinces.

In collaboration with Tourism Solomons and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the national carrier has recommenced the joint-venture initiative to support local tourism operators as part of post-pandemic tourism recovery efforts.

Flight and accommodation packages from the outer Provinces to Guadalcanal are planned for those wanting

to travel to Honiara, and a range of accommodation-only offers in Guadalcanal and Central will be available for booking via Tourism Solomons.

"We are very excited to again be part of Solomon Islands largest ever domestic tourism initiative," said Solomon Airlines CEO Gus Kraus.

"Iumi Tugeda Holidays benefits all, creating a platform to grow the local economy through our accommodation providers and tourism operators, as well as offering our domestic market new opportunities to explore our own backyard through very attractive holiday packages" he said.

Prior to the impact of COVID and suspension of all domestic passenger flights from Honiara, Iumi Tugeda Holidays had recorded its highest ever volumes of travellers, with hundreds of Solomon Islanders taking the opportunity to see new parts of the country.

**For further information or to book Iumi Tugeda Holidays visit [flysolomons.com/iumitugeda](https://flysolomons.com/iumitugeda), call (677) 36362 or email [holidays@flysolomons.com](mailto:holidays@flysolomons.com)**




 Destination Guide

# Things to remember before your trip to the Solomons

## 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 to 12 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 the Hyundai Mall main branch opens 10am to 1pm on Saturday. Bred Bank opens 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday. Bank of South Pacific opens 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

## Transport

Taxis and buses are readily available in Honiara. Rental cars are available from Economy car rental and Elite Vehicle Rental Ltd.

## Electricity

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

## Telecommunications

Local, international calls and internet services are available through Solomon Telekom Company Limited (Our Telekom) and Bmobile networks. 4G network is available in Honiara, Auki, Munda, Noro and Gizo whilst all other provincial hubs are equipped with their 3G networks. SATSOL is also another internet service provider (ISP) in Honiara, other regional and provincial areas in Solomon Islands.

## International Air

Solomon Airlines operate out of Honiara International Airport, while other carriers include Fiji Airways and 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 Pidgin. 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.



# Magical Munda

Munda is located in the Roviana Lagoon in Solomon Islands Western Province, and is made up of five traditional zones of Lambete, Kindu, Dundu, Soe and Ilangana.

Renowned for its bloody World War Two history and once home to fearsome headhunting tribes, Munda is now a tourism hub offering world class diving and several accommodation offerings.



## Munda's Best Bits

### LEARN TO SCUBA DIVE WITH DIVE MUNDA

Multi award winning dive outfit, Dive Munda is located in the centre of Munda and is run by Belinda Botha and her friendly and enthusiastic staff of local dive instructors, including 'Chicks that SCUBA' Ambassador, Euna.

Learning to Scuba with Dive Munda is an amazing experience, swapping what would otherwise be boring introductory pool sessions anywhere else in the world for the magnificent reefs of Puta Qoqo or Susu Hite, which are just a few short minutes boat ride from Munda.

### VISIT THE PETER JOSEPH WAR MUSEUM

The museum is about a kilometer away from Munda's central district, and is named for Infantryman Peter Joseph Palatini, whose Dog Tag was the first ever find for the museum's owner and curator, Barney Paulsen, who came across the tag in 2002.

Paulsen has an impressive but somber collection of tags, weapons and personal items including model cars and medals belonging to troops of both the US forces and Imperial Japanese Army.

### TAKE A TOUR WITH GO WEST TOURS

Operating out of Agnes Gateway Hotel, Go West Tours has been in operation for over a decade. Managing Director Derek Kera often steps in as guide in his free time, happy to share his love and passion for Munda, it's history and its beautiful location.

Go West Tours offer World War Two programs, sunset cruises on the Roviana Lagoon, visits to Eco Lodges including Titiru Eco Lodge, and village visits to Ugehele Cultural Village. The company also offers excursions to eerie Skull Island, home to shrines and skulls harking back to the headhunting days.



## Where to stay in Munda?

Backpacker hostels, homestays, island Lodges, and even a large Hotel, just some of the accommodation options for Munda:

### CASTAWAY LAGOON RESORT

Located on Hobupeka Island in the Roviana Lagoon just a couple of minutes by boat from Munda, The resort offers four bungalows with private facilities and a lodge that can sleep twelve with shared facilities.

### QUA ROVIANA

Offering clean and comfortable rooms overlooking the centre of Munda Station – some with shared facilities and others with private bathrooms, the hostel is just a short walk for the airport, Qua Roviana is a great base for the adventurer looking to explore this beautiful region.

### AGNES GATEWAY HOTEL

The museum Agnes Gateway Hotel is the oldest accommodation provider in Munda offering a variety of rooms, from airconditioned units and bungalows to backpacker dorms.

The over water restaurant offers a mix of western and traditional Solomon Islands cuisine..

For more information contact Tourism Solomons, email [info@tourismsolomons.com.sb](mailto:info@tourismsolomons.com.sb) or call (677) 22442

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# 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