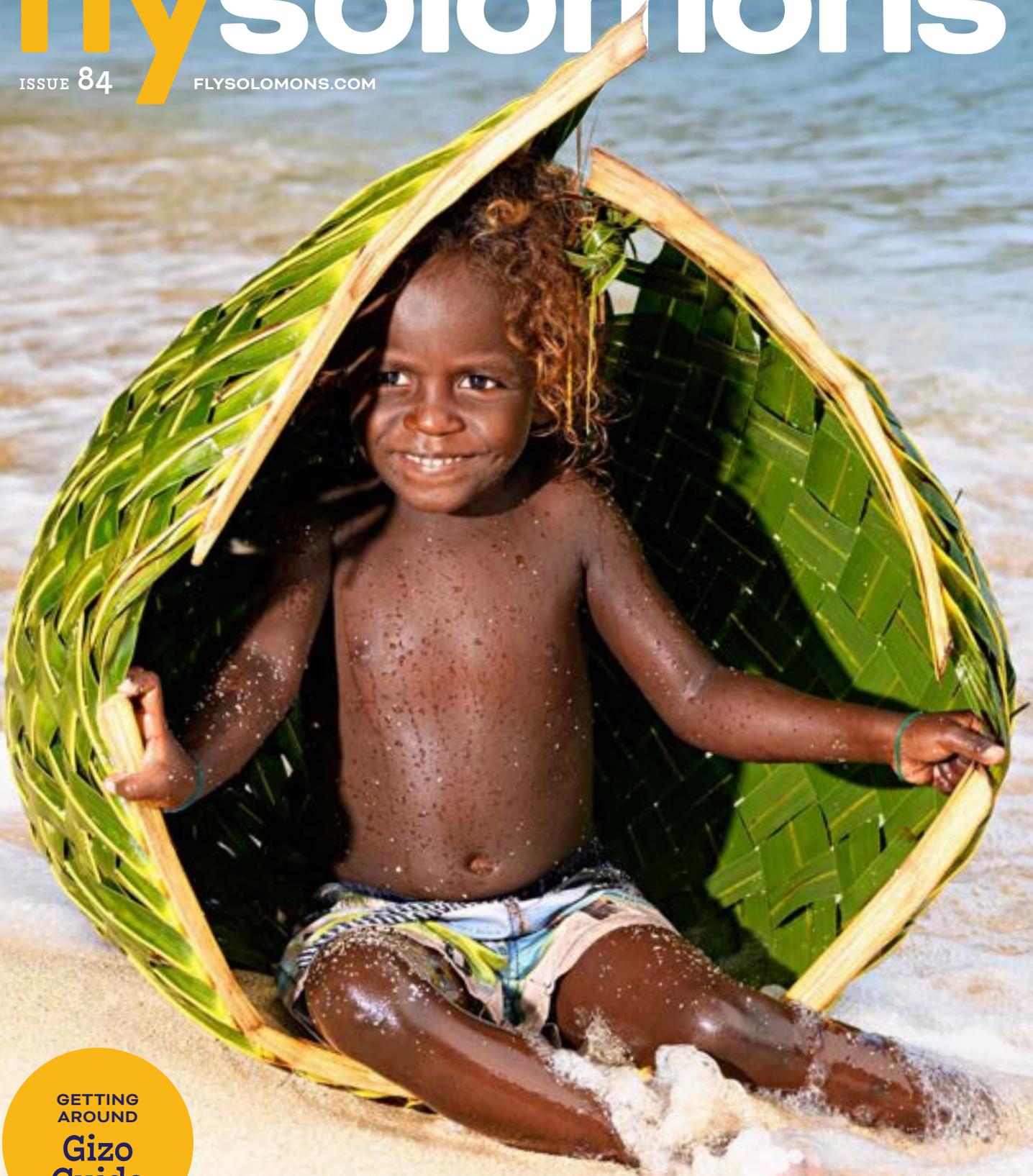


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ISSUE 84

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GETTING
AROUND
**Gizo
Guide**

The best family getaways this Easter

Why the Sollies' cacao industry continues to flourish

The festival bringing together women, cultures... and turtles



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Welkam oloketa (Welcome friends)

With 2022 now behind us, I hope that you have enjoyed a safe and festive season with friends and families, and have returned well-rested, as we commence 2023.

As is our tradition at the start of the year, on behalf of the Board and management of Solomon Airlines, I will share an update on the national carrier for our customers, stakeholders and staff.

I am encouraged to say that already we can see positive signs for Solomon Airlines, both domestically and internationally, and this augurs well for the year ahead in terms of passenger growth, and positive contribution to our financial stability throughout 2023.

Whilst we have had minor hiccups recently, and unfortunate timing during our peak season, overall our fleet and our domestic operations have performed exceptionally well.

In terms of international operations, we had an unexpected delay awaiting delivery of a part required for our Airbus, and this interrupted our schedule. Irrespective of this, our international operations have also performed very well, especially over the heavy season leading up to Christmas.

We also take this opportunity to apologise to any customers who were inconvenienced awaiting delayed luggage during the festive season.

In this unusual year, we received extraordinarily high volumes of excess baggage, particularly from seasonal workers and loved ones coming back to Solomon Islands after a few years of absence.

The huge volumes of luggage received on some days meant we simply could not lift it all on the aircraft at the same time, due to weight restrictions. There were a few occasions where excess baggage had to be put onto later flights, an unfortunately unavoidable situation given the overwhelmingly demand.

For this we apologise, and hope you understand that we always do the best that we can.

Now, as the festive season passes, we are already seeing more regular volumes from Brisbane which means all baggage and cargo from Australia can be uplifted as normal.

As I write this, we are awaiting the finalisation of our renewed Air Operators Certificate (AOC) application by CAASI (Civil Aviation Authority of Solomon Islands) which is our aviation industry regulator in Solomon Islands.

This essential certification will lead into an IATA Operational Safety Audit of Solomon Airlines – an internationally recognised evaluation conducted by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which sets global standards for safety, security, efficiency and sustainability.

Our existing codeshares will continue in 2023 and provide numerous options for our passengers to purchase seats in partnership with Qantas, Fiji Airways, Air Niugini and Air Vanuatu.

In terms of destination marketing this year, even though we are only at the very start, we have already begun work to re-establish our popular lumi Tugeda Holidays program, in partnership with the Solomon Islands Ministries of Tourism, Aviation and Communications, and Public Service.

The bigger picture in 2023 will see our partners in Tourism Solomons activate their international marketing plans to push for an increased awareness of Solomon Islands as an attractive and unique holiday destination.

2023 will also be a very exciting year with new opportunities to raise the global profile of our nation.

Media coverage and promotion associated with high profile events including the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon in August and later the 17th Pacific Games, will help to showcase Solomon Islands to the world.

In closing, the Board and management of Solomon Airlines send our compliments to all our hard-working staff and our sincerest thanks to our travellers and cargo customers for your ongoing support.

We place on record our praise for the Government of Solomon Islands in their foresight and diligence in 'chipping in' to support Solomon Airlines during the hardest three years the airline has endured.

I am encouraged to say that already we can see positive signs for Solomon Airlines, both domestically and internationally.

Together we all have kept Solomon Airlines flying against the odds and through the most difficult of times.

In 2023, we look forward to continuing to rebuild our tourism industry and our national carrier. We look forward to serving our customers and welcoming new visitors to our shores.

We encourage all of our visitors, regardless of your reason for visiting Solomon Islands, to stay a bit longer, to travel beyond Honiara and to see our provinces, to help create employment and positive outcomes in our tourism sector which is still recovering.

I wish you all good health, blessings and progress in 2023 and *tagio tumas* (thank you) for flying Solomon Airlines.

Gus Kraus MBE
CEO Solomon Airlines

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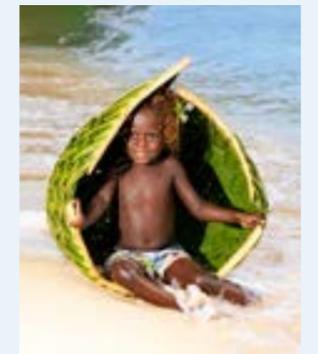
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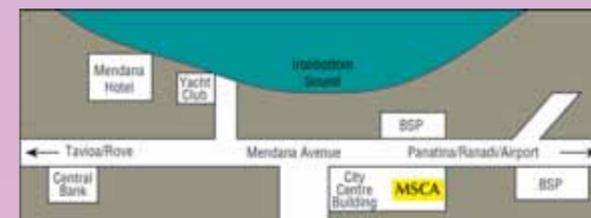
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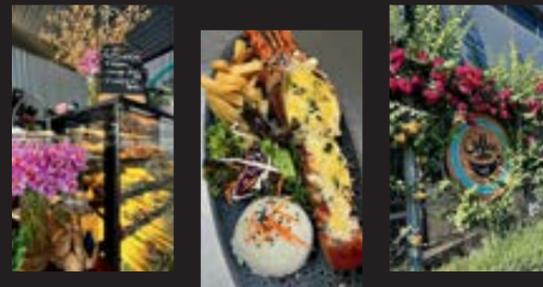
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Out and About



THE GAMES ARE ON THEIR WAY

Excitement is building across the Solomons as the 2023 Pacific Games continue to draw near.

The Games will be held in Honiara from November 19 to December 2, marking the first time Honiara has hosted the event.

And while there is still the athletic competition to enjoy when thousands of the Pacific Islands' best athletes descend on the city, the Games have already provided a significant boost to the country, even before a single race has been run.

"The 2023 Pacific Games attracted more than a billion dollars' worth of investment into the country's economy over the past eighteen months and is more than just a project," said Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare recently.

"It has become the centre piece of economic recovery."

Work continues on the National Stadium, which is due to be handed over to the National Hosting Authority in July.

'Solo' the Leatherback Turtle (pictured) has been chosen to be the official mascot of the Games. The Solomon Islands are home to the largest turtle hatchery in the Pacific.

MISS SOLOMONS TO TRAVEL TO SAMOA

It's not just athletes that are representing the Solomon Islands on the international stage.

Tiare Haro, the Our Telekom Miss Solomon Islands, has travelled to Samoa to contest the Miss Pacific Pageant, supported by Solomon Airlines.

Haro was crowned Miss Solomon Islands 2022/23 in December, which had the theme: *Celebrating Women Resilience in the Face of Global Crises.*

"First and foremost I want to express my deepest gratitude to the God Almighty for his abundant blessings and guidance throughout this life-changing experience and for anointing me with this responsibility," Haro said after taking out the event.

This strong group of women...we have shown to the whole of Solomon Islands and the Pacific; how hard-working, determined and resilient we are as a Melanesian country."

Now she is to represent the Solomons at the event, which was to be held from 29 January until 4 February 2023, in Apia, Samoa.

The Solomons' own Gladys Habu was the first runner-up at the last Miss Pacific Pageant, held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in 2019.



TOURISM SLOWLY RETURNING

The Solomon Islands continue to welcome back tourists to the country, recording better than expected results since reopening to the world in July last year.

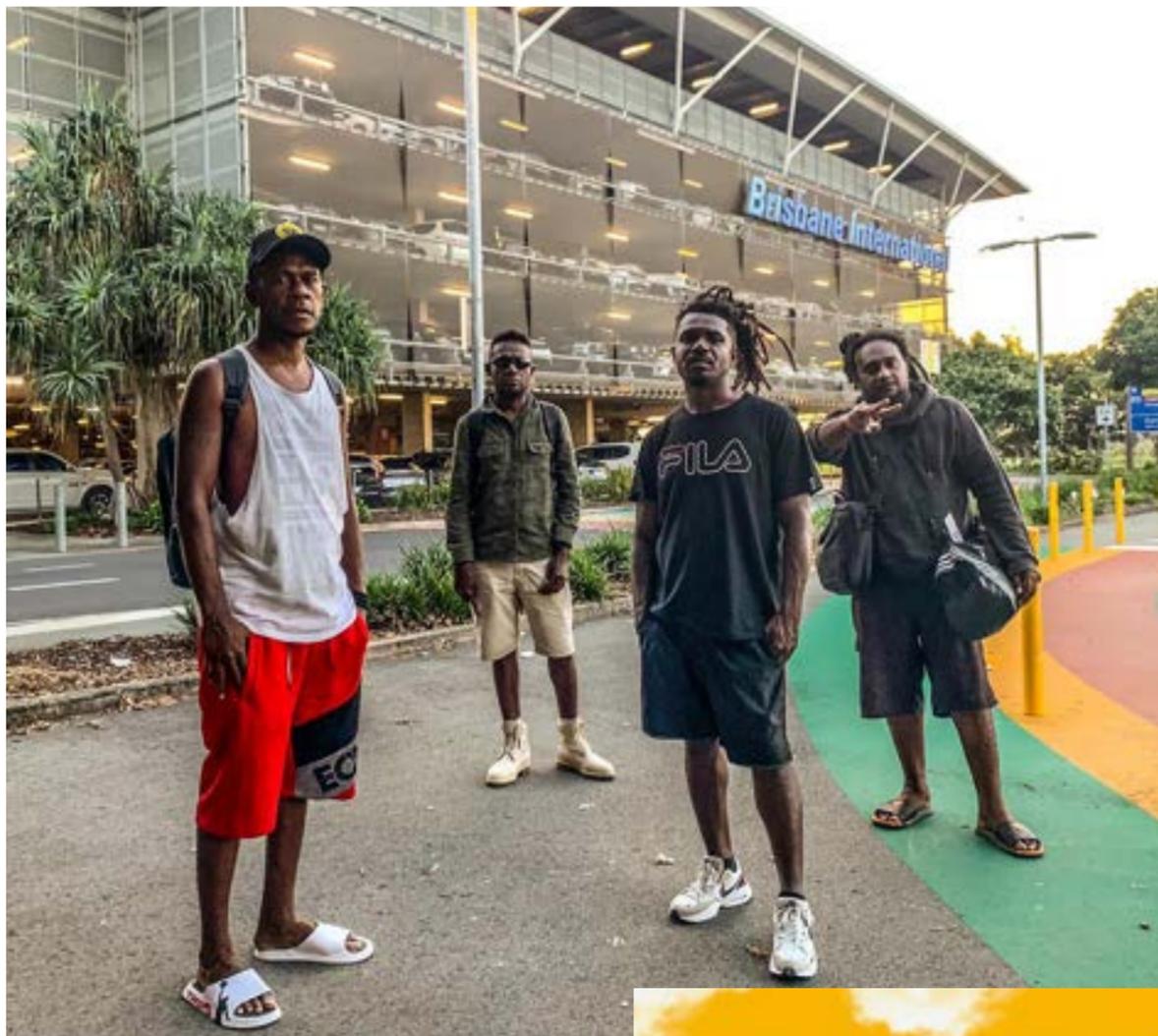
Prior to the pandemic, the Solomon Islands hosted around 29,000 international visitors every year, with Australian traffic the major market, forming around 45 per cent of the total visitation growth.

As with the rest of the world, tourism is slowly returning to the Solomons following an 800-day international lockdown.

An initial 2481 international visitors visited our stunning shores in Q3 in 2022, which constituted August to October.



More and more businesses around the island have readied themselves for the arrival of tourists, in encouraging signs for all in the travel sector.



SOLOMON ISLANDS GROUP SELLS OUT AUSTRALIAN TOUR

Talented reggae chillers Doorman's Project, or DMP, have returned to the Solomon Islands having sold out back-to-back shows on a tour of Australia's East Coast.

The band brought their inimitable vibes to shows at Brisbane's Shades Nightclub and the Albion Hotel in Sydney, with more Australian shows planned for later this year to promote new album *Long Way Home*, which was released in October last year. The album features the Solomon Islands' flag on the front cover.



DMP are signed to independent reggae label Ineffable Records. Head to facebook.com/doormansproject/ for info on upcoming shows, or how to listen to *Long Way Home*. ▶



2023
PACIFIC GAMES
SOLOMON ISLANDS

19TH NOV
2ND DEC
2023

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250 VEHICLES



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NAME IS
SOLO



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BED HOTEL



1,000
CONTRACTORS



CAR FLEET OF
50 VEHICLES

WHAT ARE THE GAMES?

The Pacific Games (formerly known as the South Pacific Games) is a continental multi-sport event of Olympic sports, with participation exclusively from archipelagic countries around the Pacific Ocean. It was renamed the Pacific Games in 2015 following the inclusion of Australia & New Zealand. It is held every four years and began in 1963.

VISIT [SOL2023.COM.SB](https://sol2023.com.sb)

SOLO is the Official Mascot for the 2023 Pacific Games.

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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Family Getaways

THE BEST FIVE PLACES FOR FAMILIES TO GET AWAY THIS EASTER

The beauty of the Solomon Islands is that there's a destination (and a getaway style) to suit every family—from the beach-loving and adventure-seeking to those just looking to relax. And there's perhaps no better time to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday home life than the Easter period.

Looking for inspiration on how to spend those coveted public holidays? Here are five places that are guaranteed to make for a fulfilling, unforgettable family trip:

1

SANBIS RESORT GIZO AIRPORT

A secluded paradise found just a few minutes from the Gizo airstrip, Sanbis is the perfect getaway for young families looking to rest, reset and rejuvenate.

At Sanbis, you can spend your days snorkelling and diving the crystal clear waters of the nearby coral reefs or head out on a fishing trip to catch your own dinner. But what makes Sanbis extra special is their commitment to sustainability, conservation and working with local communities. Good for your family and the world!

Accommodation



2

UEPI ISLAND SEGHE AIRPORT

This is one for the diving family. With its perfect coral formations and outstanding marine life, you can easily spend more time in the water here than out of it.

A classic raised barrier reef island, Uepi is approximately two kilometres long and 300 metres wide, and packed with sandy beaches, warm lagoon waters and lush tropical rainforest. Not to mention world-class diving sites, like 'The Slot'. Then, after a day spent exploring, relax in your traditional -style bungalows and listen to the sound of the ocean at your doorstep.



3

PARANGIJU MOUNTAIN LODGE HONIARA AIRPORT

An inland paradise, Parangiju Mountain Lodge—located in the hills of central Guadalcanal, just an hour from Honiara—offers up breathtaking rainforest and ocean views.

The lodge itself is built with sustainable materials and powered by solar energy, and is well-regarded for its commitment to preserving the environment. While staying here, don't miss a hike (roughly a four-hour return trip) to the incredible Tenaru Falls where you can swim in the cool pools, do a spot of birdwatching and explore the surrounding jungle.



4

ZIPOLO HABU MUNDA AIRPORT

Look up the word ‘bliss’ in the dictionary and you might just find a picture of Zipolo Habu, an idyll on the tiny Lola Island, in the Western Province’s Vona Vona Lagoon.

Accessible by a 20 minute ferry from Munda airport, the island is filled with tall palms and impossibly white sand – the sort you dream about from your office chair on a Monday morning. There’s no shortage of activities for both kids and adults; surfing, fishing, walking, kayaking, board games and more, Zipolo has been designed with families specifically in mind.

Look up the word ‘bliss’ in the dictionary and you might just find a picture of Zipolo Habu...

And while there’s plenty to do, there’s hammocks sprinkled throughout this slice of paradise in case what you feel like doing, is doing absolutely nothing at all.



VOLCANIC EGGS FOR EASTER

Speaking of Easter, and of eggs, the Melanesian megapode (which means ‘big foot’) has got to be one of the most interesting winged creatures on the planet. These birds actually lay their eggs in the ground, much like a crocodile. And on Savo Island, they lay their eggs in hot volcanic sand—letting the warmth of the volcano incubate the embryo. It’s a very ancient, very rare behaviour only found in a few bird species today.

Megapodes are a ground-dwelling species, about the size of a chicken, but their eggs weigh more than 100 grams and are far more nutritious than a regular hen’s egg. This means they’ve become prized in many communities, and are often harvested for food or used as a type of currency. Would you swap your chocolate for a megapode egg this Easter?



5

DRIFTWOOD SEGHE AIRPORT

A private residence, in virgin forest wilderness, surrounded by pristine ocean? It doesn’t get much better for a family getaway.

Driftwood is all about experiencing life in the Solomons—join the local villagers on hunting and gathering adventures, both in the ocean and on land; soak up the nature on one of the many island walks; or just chill out in your eco-friendly accommodation that’s 70% made from, you guessed it, driftwood.

The Driftwood mission is to encourage guests to take time out from modern day stress and digital overload, and reconnect with what’s important in life.

The Driftwood mission is to encourage guests to take time out from modern day stress and digital overload, and reconnect with what’s important in life.





Running towards fitness

AT THE SOLOMON AIRLINES PEACE MARATHON

With momentum building in the Solomon Islands as the host country for the XVII Pacific Games, a community oriented running event brings together local athletic stars alongside fun runners.

WORDS FIONA HARPER

Think about renowned running events and Athens, New York and Boston Marathons probably spring to mind. The Solomon Islands? Not so much. Race organisers of the 2022 Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon aim to change that perception. The Solomon Islands are known for their

striking natural beauty both above and below the sea, as well its cultural attractions and intriguing festivals. Now, fitness, health and wellness-focused travellers have a unique running event as an added incentive to visit this much sought after South Pacific holiday destination. This annual running festival is poised as a springboard for international visitors to combine fitness with fun.

Events

The event was first held in 2009 and, after a pandemic enforced hiatus, has returned fitter, faster and stronger. Since its inception the race has attracted local stars such as Chris Votu who holds the national record across the 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 metre distances.

Positioned as a both a competitive race along with social events in a fun environment, the 2022 Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon attracted a field of 500 athletes across distances ranging from 2km, 5km, 10km and 21.1km (half marathon). With a generous prize pool on offer, winners in the Men's and Women's half marathon each took home \$3,000, a gold medal and a domestic air ticket sponsored by Solomon Airlines. Martin Faeni won the men's event in a time of 1.15:47 while Diana Matekali won the women's event in 1.29:42. Matekali won fans around the world when she claimed the Solomon Island's first gold medal in track and field when she won the 10,000 metres race at the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games. Second place getter Sharon Firisua placed in the Top 15 of the marathon at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Men's champion Faeni also competed in the marathon at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, finishing with a very respectable sub-3 hour finish to place him as one of the Commonwealth's top 20 runners.

All events started and finish in downtown Honiara to maximise spectator participation, with the shorter 'fun run' distances attracting participants of all ages from

toddlers to the elderly. A community spirit of camaraderie meant that volunteers man the course handing out drinks, assisting runners and providing a supportive and festival-like atmosphere for all participants.

It's anticipated that the full marathon distance (42.2km) will be added to the program in 2023, which cements event as a significant regional sports event in the South Pacific region.

Coinciding with Solomon Airlines 60th anniversary while also marking the start of the countdown to the XVII Pacific Games, the community running event creates opportunities for local athletes to build their conditioning and preparation for the upcoming games. For international visitors the running event provides an incentive to combine a Solomon Islands holiday with health and fitness.



The event is part of a strategy to reignite tourism after the post-pandemic downturn and is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Culture & Tourism, Tourism Solomons, Travel Solomons and Solomon Airlines. It follows on from the tourism boards' 2021 initiative lumi Tugeda Holiday Specials program which encouraged Solomon Islanders to travel locally by offering massive holiday savings across 11 destinations in 8 Provinces.

Opposite: And we're off! The first wave of runners hit the pavement in the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon. Above: The Honiara community banded together on the day. Below: Running stars of the future.





This annual running festival is poised to be a springboard for international visitors to combine fitness with fun.



Pictured: Is red really the fastest? Runners came in teams dressed in all colours. Opposite: As well as all colours, they came in all kinds of costumes.

The Solomon Islands is ideally placed to capitalise on wellness-focused travellers. Health and wellness tourism was a multi-billion industry long before the COVID-19 pandemic, with travellers across the globe planning their holidays around fitness events and wellness activities. World travellers made over 900 million wellness oriented trips in 2019. The Global Wellness Institute predicts that "the wellness market

will return to its robust growth, with the wellness economy reaching nearly \$7 trillion in 2025." Encouraging and supporting health and fitness for both locals and visitors alike is a key element to continuing to build a tourism industry founded upon popular activities like scuba diving, surfing and island cruising. The revival of the annual running festival is just one more enticing incentive to travel to the Solomon Islands. ▴



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ATHLETICS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS?

Travel Solomons is the event manager for the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon, with the next event scheduled to take place in August 2023. Follow the Facebook page for information ([solomonairlinesmarathon](https://www.facebook.com/solomonairlinesmarathon)). Solomon Islands is the host nation for the XVII Pacific Games which start on 19 November 2023 and are expected to attract over 5,000 athletes from Pacific nations – www.oceanoc.org for more information on the Games.





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STEP OFF THE MAP AT PAPATURA

The real world doesn't seem to follow you onto Santa Isabel island, where swoon-worthy Papatura's endless surf breaks, fishing and palm trees lay in wait.

WORDS JOHN BORTHWICK

You look down on lagoons tinted with hypnotic inks and absurd turquoises. Forested islands sprawl across a sea of un-nameable blues, but almost too soon the spell is lifted as your Twin Otter aircraft glides down to Santa Isabel Island.

We land on a grass airfield at Suavanao that was carved out of the jungle 80 years ago during the desperate battles of World War II. A tanned bloke with a launch turns up, swiftly transfers our luggage and boards to the boat, and 30 lagoon minutes later we splash ashore on Papatura Island.

I feel like I've stepped out of the 21st century, which is no surprise because Papatura Island Retreat's motto is "Step off the map". Gladly.

A quick look around the resort shows that the bungalows are built from traditional

materials with roofs of densely woven thatch. The sea laps just metres away. It could sound like a *Castaway* mock-up, but there is also LED lighting, Wi-Fi, innerspring mattresses, mozzie nets, fans and 240v Australian power outlets. Then add a skilled chef, cold beer and warm greetings from the resort's founders, the Blanche family.

Former Gold Coast travel marketer Pete Blanche tells me, "People arrive here on day one and they're uptight. Day two they're unwinding. And by day three they're a different person."

I decide to skip the preliminary stages and go straight to day three, full laid-back mode.

This starts with daily boat trips out to a choice of the local surf breaks. These vary from easy-peasy to OMG, scary overhead peaks, depending on the swell. More than five surfers in the line-up here is considered 'a bit crowded' (there is generally a maximum of 14 surfing guests staying at Papatura).

Pictured: Give it three days, says Pete Blanche, and you'll be a completely different person to the one that set foot on the island.



Later, wave-sated, we head back to the resort where the resident barman serves up SolBrew beers, wine, coffee or juice, not to mention his own tall stories.

Papatura caters for non-surfing guests, of which there are many, with a wide range of activities from scuba diving, visiting Solomon 'kastom' villages, kayaking, hiking, turtle tag-and-release programs, snorkelling on wartime aircraft wrecks and family excursions.

Fishing happens here in every imaginable permutation; reef, river, night, lobstering and more. The lip-smacking, freshly caught feasts that turns up our dining plates each night might be coral trout, lobster or yellowfin, but never frozen, months-old trawler haul.

Nick, Pete and Marg Blanche opened the palm-shaded retreat in 2009 on 347 ha Papatura Island, a former coconut plantation. It has since grown to seven well-appointed bungalows, plus a four-bedroom budget lodge, with an overall resort capacity of 30 guests. The 'Papatura Family' also includes Kym the manager, indispensable local Solomons staff and guides, plus Tarzan the dog.

Most of the rustic luxe bungalows are connected to the main restaurant-reception building by winding walkways, while a

The more subtle side-dish is a technology detox, along with a quickly rediscovered art of conversation.

Love Nest honeymoon bungalow sits discretely apart. The accommodations, in both family and loft configurations, have large decks that face the Isabel mountain range and a white sand beach.

Above: Bungalows have been built using traditional materials, with dense, thatched roofs. Inset: Taking it easy.



Then there's the No Phone Zone. From the bar and restaurant you look out on a crystal-clear bay and very soon understand why this area has been designated as such. Dinner's catch-of-the-day could be crayfish or coral trout, wahoo or mud crab, with passionfruit pie for dessert, but the more subtle side-dish is a technology detox, along with a quickly rediscovered art of conversation.

Papatura is proud of its environmental stand and of the guests who have released hundreds of turtles bought from local villages. River fish are caught using easy-release nets; after a quick trophy photo op, guests then free almost all their catch. They also encourage guests, if they are able, to bring educational supplies for the school and medical supplies for the local medical clinic.

It might take a little while to "step off the map" but once you do, you'll quickly find you'll be happy to remain uncharted. ▶

Pictured: Whether fishing, swimming, snorkelling or surfing is your jam, there's always something for you to do at Papatura.



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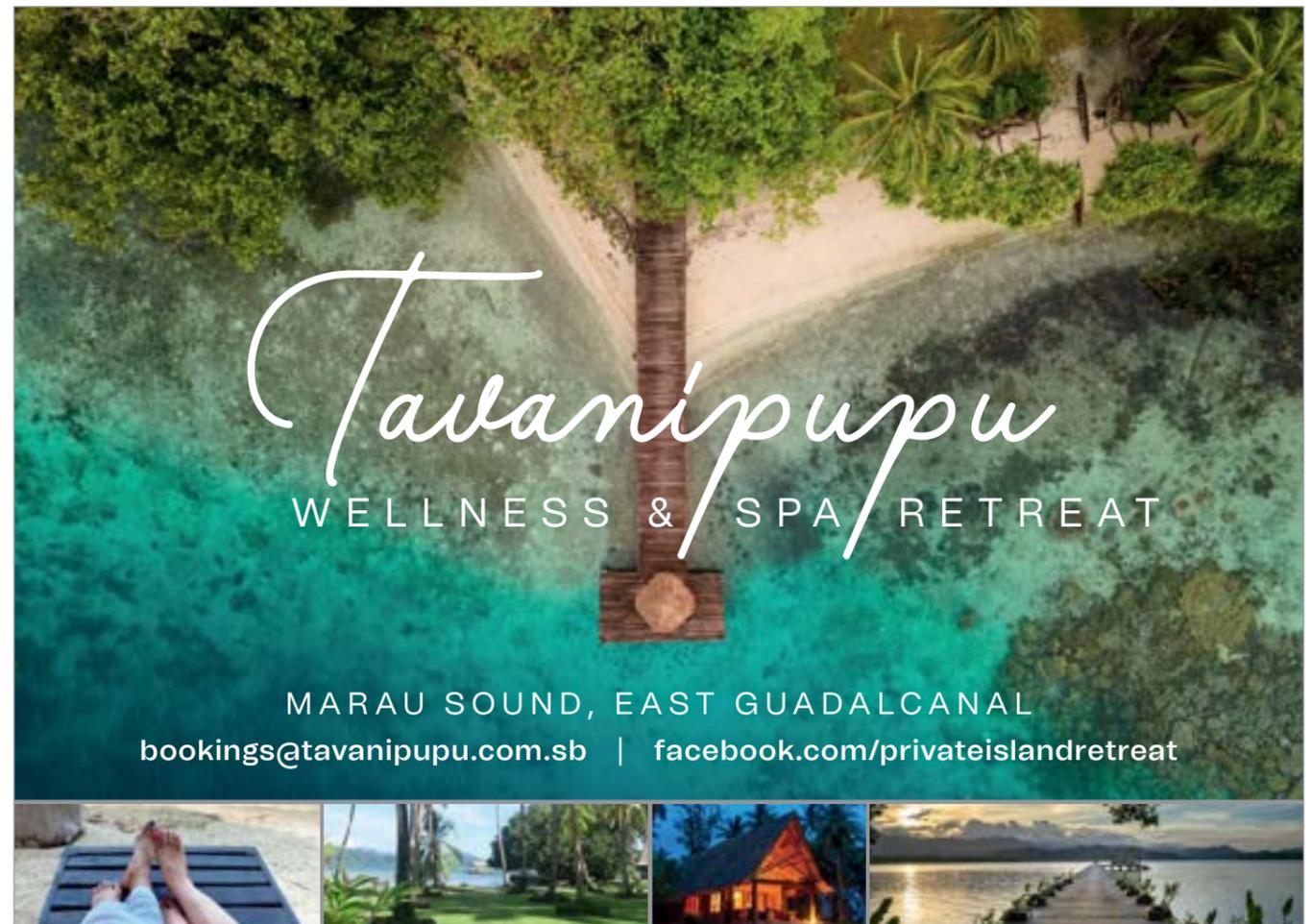
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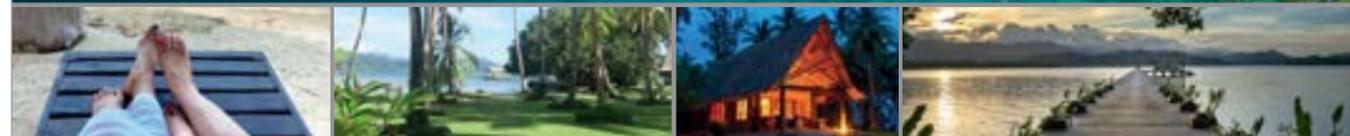
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Women of the Islands

This festival in a remote area in the Solomons' north is bringing together women, turtles and culture.

WORDS AND PHOTOS REGINA LEPPING

Forty women arrived on Kerehikapa Island in November, brought together to a paradise in the name of conservation. Most of them had never been away from their villages before, this representing the trip of a lifetime.

The women were there for the KAWAKI Cultural Festival, a coming-together of cultures, communities and provinces, all in pursuit of conservation – both cultural and environmental.

KAWAKI Women's network is made up of women from Katupika and Wagina in Choiseul Province and Kia in Isabel Province who are dedicated to conservation work. Their vision and mission is to unite women from Katupika, Wagina and Kia

to celebrate conservation, cultures, and a community-focused way of life.

Arnavon Community Marine Park (ACMP) is a special place - it hosts the biggest hawksbill rookery in the western Pacific and is one of the longest turtle conservation areas in Solomon Islands. Located in the Manning

Strait, the ACMP is an area that encompasses 157 square kilometres between Isabel Province and Choiseul Province.

Rich with diversity and uniqueness of the environment's isolation, the festival brought to life the purpose and importance of biodiversity.

Pictured: Traditional dance was one of many elements shared at the festival.



It is very clear these women are responsible for the survival of their identity and traditional knowledge.



There is no internet or any other real connection on the island to the rest of the world, and it's a place where you might find your faith tested. The Arnavon station gets its water from the rain, and with less than 10 water tanks, this writer was worried we might run out during the festival. Alas, there were showers just before arrival at the station, filling the tanks with rain water during the night. Clearly the locals in the area understand their environment.

Communities of women showcased their traditional weaved bags and mats, and displayed home-made body and hair oils and ointments. Works were sold and commerce took place but it was culture that was on display - from traditional food demonstrations to the weaving of traditional mats and unique

Pictured: Dance and singing differs across the islands. Opposite, top: The Arnavons, a special group of islands not far from Manning Strait, played host to the 40 women.





Pictured: Commerce and craft featured throughout, as did education when it came to turtle conservation. Hawksbill and leatherback turtles are among those to find themselves endangered.

dances and singing. It was a time to be appreciative and proud of your identity and it is very clear these women are responsible for the survival of their identity and traditional knowledge.

The whole event itself was full of traditional knowledge exchange, a cultural pride coursing through the veins of the event. To most of the women of Katupika in Choiseul Province, it was their first time seeing the culture of the Kia women and for the Kia women, it

was their first time to see how the Wagina women make their bags and tools out of coconut tree or how the Katupika women make their bark clothing. Young women gleaned information from their elders, different ages and communities weaving, singing and dancing eloquently together. It was a celebration of cultural preservation and the transition of knowledge and skills to the next generation, reserving enough praise for the environment, which has, after all, continued to provide for generations. ▴



RELEASE THE HATCHLINGS

In the drizzling rain, a group of female rangers led the KAWAKI women to the other side of the station to release hatchlings. It was a beautiful sight to see the women in their motherly love nature, releasing turtle hatchlings and ensuring their safe journey to the sea. Even when rain began to pour heavily, that did not stop them from making sure all the hatchlings make it to the sea.

The Arnavons is the first women's-led ecotourism venture in the Solomon Islands, providing women and girls access to training and skills development that enables them to be rangers in the area, and play a critical role in turtle conservation that is taking place.

Hawksbill and leatherback hatchlings were released, two species that have made the Earth's oceans home for millions of years but which now find themselves critically endangered.

This would not be possible without the help of the communities of Indigenous users of the Arnavons, and the support of global environmental guardians The Nature Conservancy.



Pictured: Turtle hatchlings make their dash to the water, aided by KAWAKI women and rangers. Inset: A baby hawksbill.

THE Freshest Chocolate IN THE WORLD

Why Solomon Islands cacao industry is winning awards, and how it can continue to get better.

WORDS TIM McGLONE
PHOTOS OONAGH BROWNE

Cacao may not be the first thing that pops into your brain when someone mentions the Solomon Islands.

It's much more likely to be pristine beaches, stunning outdoor adventures and beautiful people, and yet the cacao industry is continuing to draw attention both locally and worldwide — especially in the lead up to Easter.

Oonagh Browne is the founder of The Cacao Ambassador, and works with cacao producers worldwide to develop industry and improve trading conditions.

She says some of the produce you can taste in the Solomon Islands is among the best anywhere on the face of the earth.

"It's the freshest chocolate in the world," she says of the produce you can try, like at Cathliro, a boutique Chocolate factory in Honiara.



Some of the produce you can taste in the Solomon Islands is among the best anywhere on the face of the earth.

"The beans come in, they are fermented and sundried, and then turned into chocolate within a matter of days.

"A lot of the chocolate you might have from supermarkets or wherever, it's been shipped around the world for months and months. When you have chocolate from super fresh beans though, it's on another level."

As well as Cathliro, travellers and locals alike would do well to consider a visit to Amazing Grace at Tenaru Beach, Guadalcanal. Grace Fekau takes people on tours of her stunning cacao farm and tells of her story, her connection to the industry and makes beautiful, cacao-based food.



Above: Cocoa beans following harvest. Inset, clockwise: Bean grinding at Cathliro, Grace Fekau and Oonagh Browne, 100% organic cocoa powder. Opposite: Beans are fermented and sundried, before turning into chocolate, in a matter of days at Cathliro.



It's one of the healthiest things you can eat... when you have it on its own.

While chocolate might be considered a 'sometimes food' on the charts of most dietitians, Browne says the benefits of raw cacao are underutilized.

"It adds total balance to a diet," she says.

"It's one of the healthiest things you can eat when you have it on its own. You get iron, magnesium, beautiful chemicals for the brain, things that you actually get from the benefits of betel nuts, but without any of the drawbacks."

Cocoa plants respond well to relatively high temperatures, making the Solomons' tropical climate an ideal location. Many cacao farmers in Solomon Islands are smallholder farmers, who grow their produce on small plots of land alongside other crops such as coconut and banana.

While many large-scale operations worldwide might have to scramble to tick the boxes required to have their chocolate considered organic, producers

in the Solomons have no such problem; that's because all of the chocolate made in the Islands are considered organic.



Pictured: Grace Fekau's tours of her farm at Tenaru Beach, Guadalcanal are one of the absolute must do's in the Solomons.

Beans in the Solomons are developing a reputation on the global stage. Cathliro's beans were recognised at the recent Pacific Chocolate and Cacao Awards, and no less than five New Zealand chocolate makers won gold at the New Zealand Chocolate Awards — each using Cathliro's beans.

While the products have a considerable potential for economic development, Browne's role also includes the promotion of a local market over importing cocoa-related products.

She says goods with this sort of quality should be enjoyed by those who are lucky enough to have it on their doorstep, first and foremost.

"Solomon Islands is my champion, it's where my heart's space is. I fell in love with the place.

"This (cacao) is something that grows around house and grows in villages.

"Part of my work is about educating, showing how it can be used, how to make own drinking chocolate, their own paste, their own cocoa tea.

"It's something really special, and it should be for family and community first." ▴

Fresh from the Ocean



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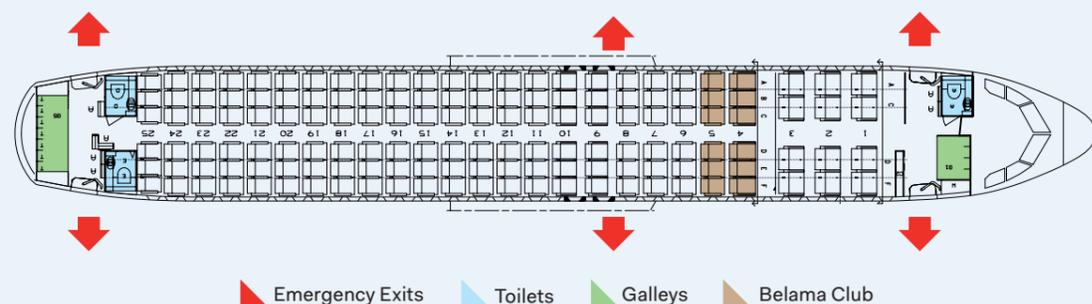


Solomon Airlines Fleet



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		



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, Auki, 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	

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

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Domestic Connections

- Solomon Airlines Routes



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

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Email: reservations@flysolomons.com

AUSTRALIA – Operations

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FIJI – Nadi

Solomon Airlines
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ANNOUNCEMENT

SOLOMON AIRLINES HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH AIR VANUATU FOR

CLOSER TIES

Solomon Airlines CEO Mr Gus Kraus met with newly appointed CEO of Air Vanuatu Mr Joseph Laloyer in Port Vila last weekend, for two days of discussions to further their Melanesian ties and discuss greater cooperation between the national carriers.

“Joseph is not new to the post of CEO for Air Vanuatu and whilst he has only just returned to that office, we had very useful discussions. It was also a great pleasure to meet in person again, with a dear friend and stalwart in the airline industry,” said Kraus.

“Solomon Airlines and Air Vanuatu are neighbour national carriers, with similar responsibilities, aspirations, fleet size and workforces. It makes sense for us to work together,” he said.

“This is our first round of discussions, and we will meet again in the near future to map out our longer-term joint aims and to progress to a planned MOU,” he said.

CEO of Air Vanuatu Joseph Laloyer confirmed that in the interim, and subject to approvals by CAAV, Solomon Airlines would provide support pilots for the airline’s domestic fleet.

“In terms of immediate assistance Solomon Airlines has agreed to help tide us over as we seek to employ pilots to fly our Twin Otter aircraft,” Laloyer said.



“The shortage of pilots is an urgent priority for us, as it is affecting our domestic services. “We thank Solomon Airlines and look forward to that assistance which is planned by the end of this month,” he added.

It makes sense for us to work together.

Mr Kraus and Mr Laloyer also fully supported the position of ASPA (Association of South Pacific Airlines) that regional airline co-operation is key to regional economic gain and to meeting industry challenges ahead. The airline leaders also paid tribute to Mr George Faktaufon, Secretary General of ASPA.

“As George prepares for his retirement, we wish him well and thank him sincerely for his leadership, and significant contribution to aviation development in the Pacific region, for over 30 years.”

Pictured: CEO of Air Vanuatu Joseph Laloyer (above) with Solomon Airlines CEO Gus Kraus.

MILESTONE

CONGRATULATIONS CAPTAIN LYNDAH OWEN

Solomon Airlines’ own Lyndah Tito Owen was recently promoted from Dash 8 First Officer to Captain of the national carrier’s largest domestic aircraft.

Captain Owen’s achievement was marked at Honiara Airport with official presentation of her Captain’s epaulettes, and a water cannon salute to mark the occasion.

Since achieving her air transport pilot licence (ATPL) and joining Solomon Airlines 13 years ago in 2009, Mrs Owen first flew as a full-time captain of the 19-seat de Havilland Twin Otter aircraft type.

In 2019 she qualified to become a First Officer on the 36-seat de Havilland Dash 8 aircraft, which today operates between Honiara and key destinations including Auki, Munda, Gizo, Santa Cruz and Kirakira.

Most recently she qualified and was promoted to Captain in command of the Dash 8.

Her first flight as a Dash 8 Captain in Command took place on Tuesday 3 January, on the Santa Cruz to Honiara route, operating with Captain Geoff Posala.

“We warmly congratulate Lyndah on her hard

work and achievements in order to reach her command position as a senior captain with Solomon Airlines,” said CEO Gus Kraus.

“We are tremendously proud of her, for her record of flight performance and for the example she has set for other young women and men, who may aspire to a flying career.

“Her promotion with the ranks of Solomon Airlines is also pleasing as we have a commitment to developing our people and our workforce

in a way that generates employment opportunities within the Solomon Islands.”

In 2017, Owen (Twin Otter Captain) and First Officer Patricia Avosa made Solomon Islands aviation

history when they operated Solomon Airlines first flight under command of an all-female crew.

They flew a Twin Otter turbo-prop aircraft on some of the carrier’s busiest domestic services — the first time in the country’s aviation history. ▶

We are tremendously proud of her.

Pictured: Captain in Command — Lyndah Owen (centre) with fellow staff following her first flight as Captain, arriving from Santa Cruz.



SPONSORSHIP NEWS

THE GAMES

Solomon Airlines is set to be the Presenting Sponsor and preferred Games Relay Partner of the 2023 Pacific Games, following comprehensive discussions with the Games Organising Committee. Support will focus on enabling the essential movement of passengers and cargo critical to the success of the games.

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 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.

Getting around Gizo

Gizo in the Solomon Islands' Western Province is the second largest town in the country and with its concentration of tourism accommodation, facilities and activities is the destination's main tourism corridor.

Home to world class dive operations and some of the best fishing spots in the country, the area boasts several surf breaks, WWII battlefields, an intriguing cultural mix and historical sites.

When visiting Gizo and its beautiful surrounds, these are just some of the highlights of this bustling and very traditional South Pacific town offers its visitors.

FATBOYS RESORT

is named after Joe the Fat Boy from Charles Dickens' Pickwick Papers. Located on Mbabanga Island, the resort has two over-water couples/ honeymoon bungalows and three bungalows that cater to groups. The over-water Bar and Restaurant is an easy place to spend a day observing the technicolour tropical fish that live beneath the bar and local commuters travelling from Roviana to Gizo and back, many in traditional dugout canoes.



GIZO MARKET is the pride of the town. It is very progressive when it comes to being environmentally friendly with a ban on sale of single use plastic bags. Instead of plastic bags, shoppers can purchase a woven coconut basket at a very reasonable price. The market is packed with beautiful tropical fruit, vegetables, nuts, root crops and fish.

SANBIS RESORT is also located on Mbabanga Island, just ten minutes boat ride from Gizo Airport. Small bungalows and the larger 'The Lodge' offers modern facilities and luxuries including a spa pool in quiet seclusion with dining facilities including a renowned pizza menu, at the adults-only preferred resort.

ORAVAE COTTAGE located on a private island 15 minutes by boat from Gizo. The open plan family bungalow has a beautiful large deck with hammocks that overlook the lagoon. Simple and honest, the bungalows are clean and comfortable and the Baea family are wonderful hosts. Oravae is family friendly and offer a number of activities that appeal to all ages.

SAERAGI VILLAGE

is 20 minutes by boat from Gizo Town. Alternatively, you can drive from Gizo via a coastal track in a 4WD. The area offers the opportunity to visit several villages where you can experience very rural and traditional day to day activities such as village men making a canoe or kids surfing. Saeragi is a village of just over 100 people, has a wonderful long strip of beach.

DIVE GIZO sits on a pretty seafront property in the town. Danny Kennedy and his team are always ready to show divers some of the best dive sites including Grand Central Station which has the fourth densest fish count in the world.

For more information contact
Tourism Solomons, email
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.



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