

ISSUE 94

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SOLOMON AIRLINES COMPLIMENTARY IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE

SAVING REDOVA ISLAND'S GENTLE GIANTS

A global conservation
story quietly unfolds

EMBRACE THE SILENCE AT SUKI

A small, wild and
remote paradise awaits

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO SANTO'S BLUE HOLES

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Welcome Aboard

Welcome to this special edition of our Solomon Airlines Inflight Magazine —Issue 94.

As we reach the midpoint of another remarkable year, we take pride in reflecting on our journey both in the skies and as a nation. At Solomon Airlines, we remain committed to delivering safe, reliable, and uniquely Solomon Islands travel experiences, while continuing to strengthen our presence across the Pacific.

This year marks an important period of transition for our airline. The Solomon Airlines Board extends its sincere gratitude to Mr. Sean Te'o for his dedicated leadership over the past 14 months. During his tenure,

As we reach the midpoint of another remarkable year, we take pride in reflecting on our journey both in the skies and as a nation.

Mr. Te'o supported the launch and implementation of the 2024–2028 Strategic Plan, oversaw key route expansion and major aircraft maintenance projects, and successfully led the hosting of the Association of South Pacific Airlines (ASPA) Annual Conference in Honiara. His contributions have laid a strong foundation for our next chapter.

While the aviation industry continues to face global challenges, our leadership team remains confident in the airline's strategic direction. With the support of our stakeholders, dedicated staff, and loyal customers,



Solomon Airlines is well-positioned for continued growth and resilience.

I'm excited to join the team at such a pivotal period in the airlines history and working with a group of people whose desire to provide an efficient, safe and valuable contribution to the ongoing benefit of this great country is undeniable.

This issue also arrives as we celebrate the 47th Anniversary of Solomon Islands Independence—a time to honour our culture, our people, and the milestones we've achieved together. As your national carrier, we are proud to play a key role in connecting communities, promoting tourism, and representing the spirit of Solomon Islands to the world.

In these pages, you'll discover the stories, destinations, and people that make our islands so special. Whether you're flying for business, pleasure, or returning home, we are honoured to have you on board.

Tagio tumas for choosing to fly Solomon Airlines.

Warm regards,
Paul Abbot
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Solomon Airlines Limited

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Saving gentle giants

A global conservation story is quietly unfolding on Rendova Island.



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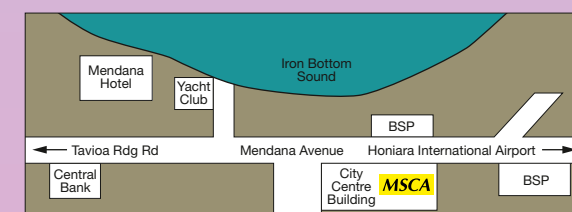
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Out and About

Honiara to welcome brand-new Emperor Divers centre

Bilikiki has been showing tourists the country's wonderful

dive sites since 1988 and has built up a great reputation worldwide for its quality service as well as the work it does within the Solomon Islands community. It became a part of the Emperor fleet in 2024.

Established in Egypt in 1992, Emperor has built a strong reputation for exceptional day diving experiences and high-quality PADI training. Over the past three decades, the company has grown into one of the world's leading scuba diving organisations and now also offers unforgettable liveaboard holidays across the Red Sea, Maldives, and Indonesia, as well as the Solomon Islands.

The new Honiara centre will provide both tourists and local residents with easy access to world-class local sites such as Hirokawa and Kinugawa Maru (otherwise known as Mbonege 1 and 2).

With their dedicated dive boat MV *Cobra*, Emperor can get guests to any of the numerous dive sites in the Florida Islands, such as Twin Tunnels and Ghavutu, plus over 20 WWII ship and aircraft wrecks.

As the only dedicated full-time day boat operation offering trips to Guadalcanal and Central Province, it offers an exciting opportunity to explore some of the region's most famous underwater locations without the need for extended trips.

And, in Emperor Solomons manager Dave Pearce, they have the only technical diving instructor based in the country, meaning guests will be able to develop their skills even further at the new centre.

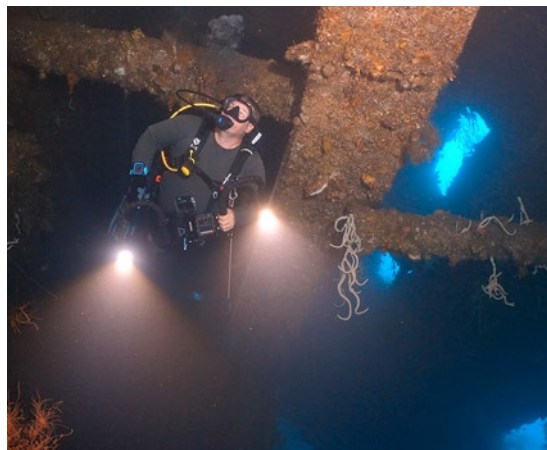
Alex Bryant, CEO of Emperor Divers, said: "This is an incredibly exciting project for both Emperor

Divers and the Solomon Islands.

"For us as a company, opening a centre outside Africa is a significant milestone. While we're widely recognised for delivering outstanding liveaboard experiences worldwide, and we're now thrilled to bring our dive centre expertise to a new audience.

"Dive centres are a key part of our history—the foundation on which Emperor Divers was built. It will be a fantastic development for us to share this expertise with a new destination.

"For the people of the Solomon Islands and its visitors, this centre will open a new way to access the incredible diving that surrounds



them. Being able to explore these sites on day trips has the potential to transform how both locals and tourists experience the country's stunning marine environment."

Emperor's Honiara dive centre is scheduled for completion by July, with plans to welcome its first guests in August. ▴

Bookings are already being taken and more information can be obtained by emailing honiara@emperordivers.com or phone / WhatsApp +677 715 5694.

Emperor Divers is proud to announce that work has begun on a brand-new dive centre in Honiara.

Located downstairs from the Bilikiki Cruises office in Point Cruz, the centre will be one of Emperor Divers' first outside Africa and complements their well-established local liveaboard vessel, *Emperor Bilikiki*.

Solomon Islands Stakeholders Unite to Shape National Coral Reef Action Plan

In a powerful demonstration of collaboration, shared commitment, and local wisdom, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has partnered with the Solomon Islands Government to conduct a series of workshops across four provinces.



Clockwise from opposite: Diving is spectacular in the Solomon Islands; the centre will welcome its first guests in August; coral conservation is important in the Solomon Islands; the workshop was primarily conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

"It's our turn to honour the legacy of our ancestors and protect our reefs for the future"

So far, sessions have been held in Tulagi (Central Province) and Ghaseali (Isabel Province), with upcoming workshops planned for Auki in Malaita and Lata in Temotu. These gatherings aim to gather community insight and traditional knowledge to guide the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for Coral Reefs, a long-term blueprint to protect and sustainably manage one of the Solomon Islands' most precious natural assets.

From technicolour reefs teeming with marine life to the cultural ties of Indigenous communities to these ecosystems, the workshops are as much about preserving a vital tourism drawcard as they are about environmental stewardship. Participants, including local leaders, resource owners, and government reps, have shared stories and solutions, highlighting the deep heritage of sustainable management passed down through generations.

"It's our turn to honour the legacy of our ancestors and protect our reefs for the future," said Mary Rakeli of the Kubolota community in Isabel.

Each workshop dives into the threats facing coral ecosystems, the opportunities for regeneration, and how local communities can play an active role in shaping the future of reef conservation. It's all part of the broader Coral Reef Rescue (CRR) initiative, led globally by WWF and locally by WCS as the national technical facilitator.

For travellers and nature lovers alike, these efforts signal a hopeful future where vibrant coral reefs continue to inspire, sustain, and welcome visitors for generations to come. ▴



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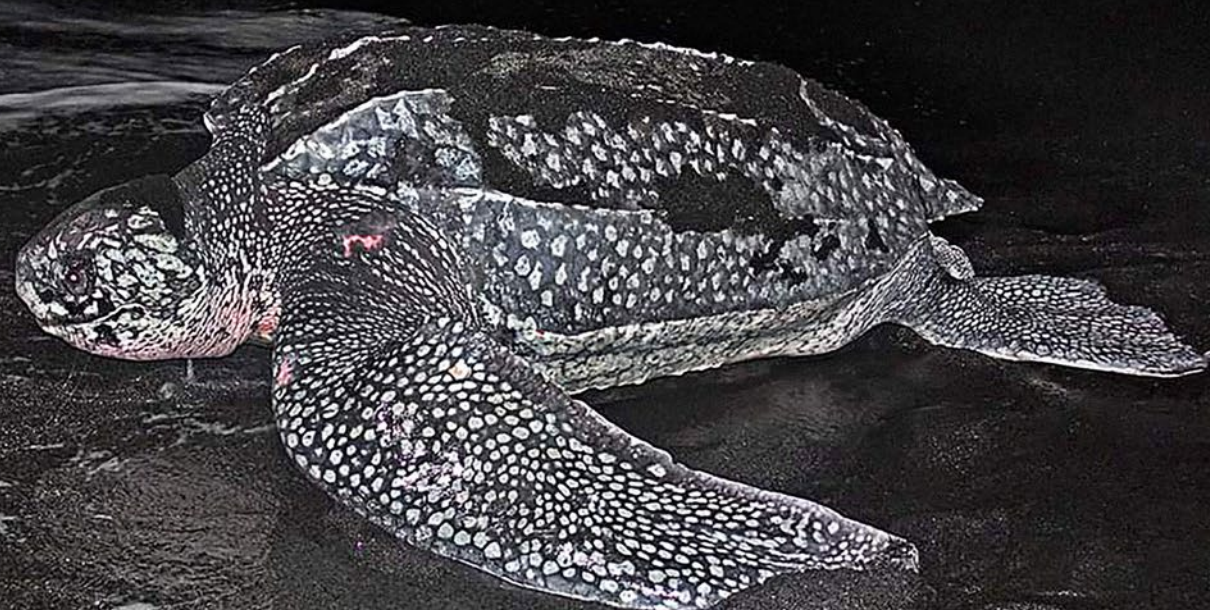
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Saving Rendova Island's

Gentle **GIANTS**

In the Solomon Islands, a global conservation story is quietly unfolding, and here's how you can be part of it.

Words **Zara Kent**



There's something otherworldly about watching a leatherback turtle emerge from the sea under a moonlit sky; massive, ancient, and moving with purpose. On Rendova Island, in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands, this magical moment happens every year.

But with leatherback turtles now critically endangered, each nesting season feels more precious, and more urgent, than the last. Leatherbacks are the heavyweight champions of the turtle world. Growing up to 2.5 metres in length and weighing as much as a small car, they are the largest sea turtles on Earth and among the oldest creatures still roaming our oceans. They've survived ice ages, meteor strikes, and the rise and fall of empires, but they may not survive us.

Threats like plastic pollution, climate change, poaching, and accidental capture in fishing gear have pushed many populations to the brink. In some parts of the Pacific, leatherback numbers have dropped by over 95% in just a few decades.



Clockwise from opposite: A female leatherback turtle comes ashore to lay its eggs; a beach on Rendova Island frequently used by leatherback turtles; leatherback turtle eggs.



This kind of meaningful travel doesn't just protect turtles, it empowers the communities working to save them.

Their nesting grounds are vanishing, their babies are often lost to predators or human interference, and their food sources are dwindling. Without action, they could disappear entirely.

Enter Rendova Island; this quiet, forest-cloaked island is one of the most important nesting sites for leatherbacks in the South Pacific. And thanks to the efforts of local communities, it's also one of the brightest beacons of hope.

Community organisations like the Tetepare Descendants' Association (TDA) have teamed up with conservationists to monitor nesting beaches, protect turtle eggs, and educate locals about the importance of marine conservation. Women in nearby villages have become leaders in this work, taking on roles as rangers and educators, reshaping their communities' relationship with the natural world. The message is clear: these turtles are part of the island's identity and their survival is everyone's responsibility.

Eco-tourism is playing a growing role in Rendova's conservation success. Travellers who come to the island during nesting season (typically between November and February) can join guided turtle watches, help with night patrols, and contribute directly to local efforts just by being there. Tourist dollars fund conservation programs, pay rangers, and support sustainable livelihoods, offering an alternative to practices that harm the environment.



Just as importantly, visitors leave with a deeper connection to the cause. They see firsthand the beauty and fragility of this ecosystem, and often become advocates long after they return home. This kind of meaningful travel doesn't just protect turtles, it empowers the communities working to save them.

Leatherback turtles aren't just fascinating creatures; they're essential to the health of our oceans. By eating jellyfish, they help keep marine ecosystems in balance. By travelling vast distances, they connect different parts of the sea, playing a quiet but crucial role in global biodiversity. But more than that, they remind us of what's at stake. These animals have survived for over 230 million years. If they disappear now, it will be because we let it happen.

Even if Rendova isn't on your holiday itinerary (this time), helping save the leatherback turtle is easier than you think.

Clockwise from opposite: A local man watches over some hatchlings; conservation efforts are increasing on Rendova Island; leatherback hatchlings making their way to the water; leatherback turtle eggs; a female leatherback turtle lays her eggs.

You can support conservation groups working in the Solomon Islands, reduce your plastic use at home, choose eco-conscious travel operators, and spread the word about endangered species. Every small action counts.

And if you do visit Rendova, know that your presence can have a real impact. You've moved from tourist to witness; you've become a supporter. And while you may only be one person, know that you're a small but powerful part of something much bigger.

Saving the leatherback turtle isn't just about saving a species. Together, we can help ensure that the next generation doesn't have to read about these gentle giants in history books; they'll get to see them, just like we have the chance to. ▴

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Embrace the SILENCE at Suki

A small, wild and hidden oasis on Rendova Island.

Words Kate Gazzard

It was in hour 2 of the seemingly endless and somewhat tumultuous boat ride from Munda to Rendova Island that my butt went numb. I'm not sure when it happened exactly, but the 78th time the boat lifted out of the water before smashing back down on a hard wave probably had something to do with it.

But, just when I thought my back (and my now numb butt) couldn't take much more, we rounded the corner of the island and I got my first look at Suki Wild. Or at least, my first look at its welcome sign.

What hit me immediately after, was Suki's raw, untamed and relatively untouched natural beauty; the kind of beauty that makes you wish you had a better camera in which to take it all in (and then take it home with you).

Nestled on tranquil shores far away from the 'hustle and bustle' of Munda, Suki Wild Resort is a remote paradise that doesn't just offer a place to stay for travellers fighting

their weariness after a long day of travel (guilty), but an invitation to live out your disconnected dream.

Forget about the typical stuffy resorts because this place is nothing like them. Here, the real wildness is found in the unspoiled and quiet beauty of the nature that surrounds you the second you step off that dock and begin the short but beautiful trek toward your bungalow;

Above: Kayaking across the calm waters of Rendova Island.

...a remote paradise that doesn't just offer weary travellers a place to stay, but an invitation to live out your disconnected dream.

a trek that's guided by a path full of seashells and coral, painstakingly laid by the Suki Wild team for the ultimate tropical vibes.

Proudly owned and operated by locals from the nearest village, the resort started as a vision. The owner, Amy, was inspired by her great grandfather, who wanted to start a resort in order to give the local community the opportunity to learn new skills and secure employment.

Accommodation



Well, she succeeded, and now Amy and her familial team hire and train people in housekeeping, gardening, cooking and tour leading, and have plans to expand the resort to further make use of local skilled labourers and craftsmen.

The resort itself is in a boutique-style, offering the perfect blend of comfort and rustic charm (as long as you don't mind sharing your sleeping quarters with a few tiny crabs and spotted geckos). You're in for a true adventure out here, which, I quickly learned meant I'd be leaving behind my beloved Wi-Fi connection.

But I was fine with that if it meant the sound of waves gently kissing the shoreline was the lullaby I'd fall asleep to every night. Before I could even contemplate sleep inside my mosquito-netted bed though, I had a traditional, home cooked dinner to eat.

Served in the dining area (where all meals are served), I sat down to a feast of crispy whitefish in a creamy coconut sauce, accompanied by fluffy rice, perfectly cooked eggplant and a fresh garden salad. Sure, the rooms might be basic, but you'll never go hungry at Suki Wild — something the resort's host, Karen, reminded me of every time I left the table stuffed to bursting.

In the morning, I struggled with how to spend my first full day in the Solomon Islands, but I really didn't need to worry. It's not so much a question of 'what do I do now?', but rather 'what do I



...the sound of waves gently kissing the shoreline was the lullaby I'd fall asleep to every night.



Clockwise from left: Suki Wild's welcome sign; the bungalow accommodation; the island's pristine beaches; the coral lined pathway to Suki Wild; local kids from the nearby village; kayaking the waters off Rendova Island.

do first'? There's so much to experience here from hiking to a nearby waterfall to trying to spot native birds through the dense, green canopy. And I haven't even mentioned the water-based activities yet.

The clear turquoise waters surrounding Rendova Island are perfect for snorkelling and kayaking. You'll meet tropical fish, explore coral reefs so vibrant that they look like they've been plucked straight out of a Pixar movie, and maybe you'll even encounter a sea turtle or two if you're lucky. Don't worry if you're not, Suki also offers tours to the nearby Banita Village where large leatherback turtles lay their eggs every year.

These excursions are all guided, so you can take the plunge (literally) and leave the planning and logistics to the pros while focusing on soaking up all that marine goodness.

So, whether you're looking to unplug, recharge, or simply say 'yes' to something that feels a little bit wilder than your usual holiday routine, Suki Wild is the best place to do it. And while I knew my three wonderful nights here couldn't last forever, on the morning of my departure, I truly didn't want to leave. But that also could have had something to do with the 2 hour bashing I knew my butt was gonna take as we boated it back to Munda... ▴

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Words and Images **Justin Jamieson**

The small, twin-prop plane dips over a dense blanket of lush jungle as our eyes scan eagerly for signs of Papatura Resort. Below, tiny specks of sand-fringed islands studded with palm trees appear like emeralds scattered carelessly across a turquoise canvas.

We've left our suits and stresses behind, and we're now a motley crew of mates on a mission to rediscover adventure, laughter, and a little mischief in the Solomon Islands.

There's Kevin the engineer, already admiring the timber joinery of the bungalows before the plane's wheels have cooled. "The way they've used local timber and natural ventilation, bloody genius," he mutters, as if the resort's

structural integrity is his personal gift. Darrell the vet is eyeing off a local dog who must see castration in Darrell's eyes and scuttles quickly away. Richard, our branding whiz, is practically vibrating with excitement, muttering things like "untouched paradise," and "brand gold" while photographing palm shadows on timber decks. Kristian, the toy maker, has vanished into the lagoon within minutes of arrival, returning with wild tales of fish shaped like rubber ducks and an increasingly loud complaint that his eardrum has been compromised since the flight. "I'm basically a lightning rod for injury," he says, poking at his ear. Greg the lawyer has packed like a gourmet survivalist, pulling out a bottle of Grosset Riesling to accompany the tuna he intends to catch himself. And then there's Pete and Stik, the stressed-out execs who haven't smiled in months. It takes them one beer and five minutes off-grid to start plotting how to buy the entire island.



Clockwise from top left: The 'mancation' begins; en route to a sunrise surf; Greg serves up the Grossett; dinner has been hooked; Papatura hosts/legends, Pete and Marg; into the Blue Hole.

Papatura Resort emerges from the thick foliage like a mirage, a collection of simple timber bungalows perched on stilts, connected by raised wooden boardwalks, wrapped in jungle and fronting a pristine lagoon. There's no Wi-Fi, no emails, no pointless pings. It's just us, the sea, and the warm welcome of Pete and Marg Blanche, the owners of Papatura, who greet us like long-lost friends, with broad smiles and ice-cold SolBrews. It's like they can read minds.

Pete and Marg aren't just hosts, they're legends in these parts. Having run Papatura for years with a blend of island know-how and laid-back Aussie charm, they know the tides, the reefs, and every sweet spot on the island. Pete knows when the surf's firing and which reef will deliver the



and head for Blanche's Garden, one of the many remote sites few have ever dived. The descent begins in a technicolour coral garden and drops into a sandy canyon surrounded by coral bommies the size of four-wheel drives. Kevin can't stop clinking his tank, awestruck by the underwater formations. Darrell points out reef sharks like they're puppies at a park. Richard drifts like he's shooting a tourism ad in his head. Kristian gives enthusiastic thumbs-up while tapping his ear, still unsure if he's just amazed or about to explode.

They dive Dolphin Wall just five minutes from the retreat and straight out of a Jacques Cousteau fever dream. A 30-metre vertical drop with a surreal chute nicknamed the Elevator Shaft plunges through its centre. Unfortunately for Kristian, midway through the ascent, he signals discomfort, then surfaces wincing. "I told you my ear was dodgy," he groans later, wrapped in a towel and sipping beer through gritted teeth. We nod solemnly while secretly placing bets on how long before he's back in the water.

Each evening we gather barefoot around the wooden bar, salt-crust and sun-licked, to feast on freshly speared crayfish and grilled reef fish.

One afternoon we head offshore for a bit of fishing, lured by the promise of the open water and the chance to catch our own dinner. The rods are barely in the water before Darrell hooks something serious, and within minutes we're hauling in a gleaming yellowfin tuna, followed shortly by two more. Kevin documents the entire

The stars wheel overhead. Laughter rolls down the beach. Stories grow bolder, injuries more heroic, waves bigger by the hour.

process like a construction site inspection, while Greg, who hooks a huge giant trevally grins like a man who's just won a legal case against hunger. We return to shore with our bounty, and Greg disappears into the kitchen to prep the sashimi pairing, waxing lyrical about acidity, minerality, and the perfect soy-to-tuna ratio. Pete and Marg serve up mountains of food with endless SolBrews. Greg cracks open the Grosset and announces the tuna sashimi to a round of cheers. The stars wheel overhead. Laughter rolls down the beach. Stories grow bolder, injuries more heroic, waves bigger by the hour.

Papatura's power lies in its simplicity. No frills, no pressure, no schedule. Just hammocks, reefs, and the shared joy of being wonderfully disconnected with a bunch of old mates. Time stretches, conversations flow, and silence becomes a welcome guest.

On our final night, we gather out on the jetty under a sky smeared with stars, the timber planks warm beneath our feet and the ocean gently lapping below. Lanterns swing softly in the breeze, casting flickering light over plates piled with tuna sashimi. Greg ceremoniously pours the Grosset, while we toast to perfect dives, perfect waves, and imperfect ears. The sea breeze carries our laughter out across the lagoon, mingling with the night like one final souvenir we'll never quite pack

away. No one wants to leave. Pete and Stik are half-serious about opening a rival resort on a nearby island. Kristian's ear still aches, but he's planning his next dive. The air is thick the kind of contentment that only comes from shared adventure.

As the tiny plane lifts off the next day, the resort shrinking into the jungle below, we're not just leaving paradise, we're carrying a little of it home. Sunburnt, salty, and bonded like shipwrecked brothers, we've found something rarer than a perfect wave or an untouched reef. We've found the time and space to remember who we are when the world isn't watching. ▴

best visibility. Marg keeps the kitchen humming and the vibe effortless. They're the kind of couple who feel like family the moment you step off the plane, quietly making magic happen while letting you think it's all unfolding naturally.

Days fall into a rhythm of waves, reefs, fire-cooked seafood, and sunset beers. We wake with the sun, fuel up on coffee and tropical fruit, and load the boat with surfboards and bravado. The nearby breaks are playful and powerful, perfect for a few of our mixed crew of gung-ho chargers and cautious cruisers. Wipeouts are frequent and hilarious, the banter relentless, and the camaraderie deepening with every set we paddle into.

Afternoons bring respite snorkelling in the legendary Blue Lagoon. The boat winds through coral alleys before emerging into a natural cathedral of colour. The lagoon is absurdly clear, revealing coral gardens teeming with electric blues, fluorescent yellows, and the occasional moray eel giving us side-eye. Giant clams pulse beneath us. Turtles glide past like slow submarines. We float for hours, sunburnt and speechless.

One calm morning, Kevin, Darrell, Richard, and a suspiciously confident Kristian strap on scuba tanks



Above: Evenings on the Papatura jetty. **Right:** Exploring this place's underwater world is a must.



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Explore

Fatboys Resort joins the Solomon Islands' world-class dive scene, and it's a game-changer.

Beneath the Surface

Words Talia Wren
Images supplied



Explore

There are dive spots, and then there are, “*holy-wow-was-that-a-manta-ray-flying-over-a-shipwreck,*” kind of dive spots. Fatboys Resort in the Solomon Islands falls firmly into the latter category.

Already one of the most beloved bolt-holes in the Solomons, this dreamy overwater retreat just got a major glow-up; it now boasts a fully certified SSI dive centre. That's right. You can now flop into a hammock with a coconut and explore some of the world's most biodiverse underwater sites before lunch.

Located on Mbabanga Island, a coconut's toss from Gizo in the Western Province, Fatboys is perfectly positioned to take advantage of a marine playground so wild it feels like nature showing off (because it is). We're talking kaleidoscopic coral gardens, vertigo-inducing walls, WWII wrecks straight out of a history book, and enough marine life to keep your GoPro overheating.

In case you're not getting it, the dive roster reads like a bucket list.

There's 'Grand Central Station'—not a train in sight, just a mind-boggling fish count (275+ species) all doing underwater acrobatics for your viewing pleasure. Or 'Joe's Wall', where you drift from gentle sandy shallows into an abyss so deep it makes your stomach flip in the best possible way. Then there's Kennedy Island, where a relaxing drift over shallow coral is ideal for newbies or those getting certified, just don't let the serene scenery distract you from the history under your fins.

And there's plenty for the wreck-heads. You've got the 440-foot *Toa Maru* Japanese freighter, an eerily intact American F6F Hellcat fighter in snorkel-friendly shallows, and a F4U Corsair that looks like it's been frozen mid-flight. All within easy reach of the dive centre.

Clockwise from above: A large sea turtle lays on a reef; a lone diver admires the stunning coral wall near Fatboys; diving expeditions take you to explore WWII relics; there's a myriad of marine life to see.

... the real magic of diving at Fatboys: it's not just what's underwater, it's everything above it too.

To make things even better, many of these can be combined into morning and afternoon dive combos, so you can pack in the action and be back in time for happy hour.

But here's the real magic of diving at Fatboys: it's not just what's underwater, it's everything above it too. The team here includes an SSI Divemaster instructor, two certified dive masters (with another in training), and two local boat captains who know these waters like their backyard, which, to be fair, it kind of is. It's all run with a sense of relaxed professionalism that puts even the most jittery beginner at ease.

Facilities-wise, Fatboys has gone all in. We're talking a fully stocked gear room with 20 brand-new dive sets, wash tubs, drying racks, compressors (with backup), and three dive boats equipped with first-aid, oxygen, and EPIRBs.

Even if you're a non-diver or just someone who prefers a snorkel-and-siesta lifestyle, you're sorted. The resort offers a smorgasbord of snorkelling tours that'll make you feel like David Attenborough on holiday. And when you're

done with the ocean antics, you can always swing in a hammock, order a cocktail, and watch the sun dissolve into the sea while local kids fish off the jetty and the scent of grilled seafood wafts from the kitchen.

Tourism Solomons' Acting CEO, Dagnal Dereveke, summed it up best: “Improved access to quality dive infrastructure like Fatboys is key to positioning the Solomon Islands as a world-class dive destination.” He's not wrong. The ripple effect is real; more dive visitors mean more local jobs, stronger business partnerships, and a whole lot of good vibes all 'round.

And in true Solomons style, there's a quirky origin story, too. Fatboys is said to be named after a gluttonous, nap-loving character from Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*. It feels weirdly fitting because whether you've spent your day diving with manta rays, exploring wartime relics, or doing nothing at all, Fatboys is exactly the kind of place where indulgence and serious relaxation go hand in hand. ▴

For more information on Fatboys resort visit fatboysresort.com | For more information on diving in the Solomon islands, visit visitsolomons.com.sb



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HEADING *to* HAMBERE ISLAND

Where adventure, WWII history,
and breathtaking beauty collide.

Words and images Kate Gazzard

If you're the kind of traveller who loves connecting with locals, delving into the South Pacific's wartime secrets, spotting rare and native birds (that can only be seen on the island) and eating stomachful's of fresh seafood, then visiting Hambere Island in the Solomon Islands should be at the top of your bucket list.



It’s basically your own rustic
Maldives without the infinity
pool, but with geckos.



This tiny slice of paradise, tucked away in the Western Province, has everything you need for an unforgettable off-the-grid experience: a cosy homestay, a jungle hike that will test your fitness (and your mosquito tolerance), and some absolutely jaw-dropping WWII history scattered across the island like it’s an open-air museum.

But first things first; the Hambere Village Stay is about as authentic as it gets. Don’t get it twisted; this isn’t five-star luxury. It’s about immersing yourself in local culture, which means staying in charming thatched bungalows built super close to water (it’ll be lapping at your doorstep come high tide).

It’s basically your own rustic Maldives without the infinity pool, but with geckos. Your host, a lovely chap named Venti, will feed you fresh seafood, show you how to live off the land (and sea), and possibly challenge you to a game of “how many coconuts can you open with a machete before you embarrass yourself?” Spoiler alert: he will definitely win.

And once you’ve had your fill of relaxation, you have the option of stretching your legs on a hike up Kolombangara mountain that’s both beautiful and super exhausting. The trek to Antarctica’s summit looks like a piece of cake compared to this bad boy.

The trail winds up through dense jungle, where you’ll quickly discover that the local wildlife has no concept of personal space. Expect butterflies bigger than you’ve ever seen them, birds that sound like they’re laughing at you (because they probably are), and an orchestra of insects providing a relentless background track to your adventure.

Main image, previous page: You’re guaranteed to feel the tranquil peace at Hambere. **Clockwise from above:** Traditional bungalow accommodation; Venti is your host and can lead on expeditions around the island; an unexploded bomb; relics of WWII remain on the island; the distant Kolombangara mountain.



At the top, you’ll be rewarded with a panoramic view of the lagoon, and if you’re lucky (and if you managed to carry a really good set of binoculars up with you), you might even spot a croc cruising through the water below.

If that’s all a bit too much, then there’s always the island’s WWII history to discover. And oh boy, does this island have some stories to tell.

During the war, the Solomon Islands were the site of some of the most intense battles in the Pacific, and Hambere still bears the scars. Rusting relics of the conflict are scattered across the island and the surrounding waters; everything from downed fighter planes to abandoned marine bombs. Locals will happily take you on a tour, sharing tales passed down through generations.

If you’re a history buff, this is the ultimate treasure hunt, and if you’re not, well... pretend to be, because it’s still seriously cool.

Apart from all of that stuff, Hambere is just a really great place to unwind. The sunsets are the kind that make you consider why you haven’t moved to a remote island permanently. The stars at night are unreal, like someone spilled a bucket of glitter across the sky. And the people? Some of the warmest, funniest, and most welcoming you’ll ever meet.

A stay at this place means stepping into a way of life that’s entirely different from your own, embracing the unexpected, and coming away with stories you’ll be telling around campfires and across BBQs for years. And if you leave without at least one hilarious machete-related anecdote, you didn’t do it right. ▴



History of the 'Are'Are Panpipes

Words **Supplied**

The 'Are'Are panpipes, known locally as 'au', are traditional instruments of the 'Are'Are people in southern Malaita, Solomon Islands. These panpipes are central to 'Are'Are identity, spirituality, and communal life, and are among the most refined in Melanesia.

Passed down through generations via oral tradition, panpipes were used in rituals, harvest festivals, spirit dances, and community gatherings. Specific melodies were believed to summon spirits or mark important events.

Unique to the 'Are'Are, panpipe music is polyphonic: players perform interlocking melodic lines, each contributing part of a complex whole. This requires close coordination and deep listening, akin to chamber music.

Traditionally taught orally by elder musicians, the music has gained global recognition, thanks in part to recordings by ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp in the 1960s–70s.

Today, groups like the Wa'uraha A're A're Panpipers play a vital role in preserving and promoting this musical heritage through national performances and international cultural exchange.

Clockwise from above: The Wa'uraha A're A're Panpipers in action; these instruments are traditional to the 'Are'Are people in southern Malaita.

History of the Wa'uraha A're A're Panpipers

The Wa'uraha A're A're Panpipers was formed in 2012, inspired by the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts (FOPA) hosted in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The group performed at the festival's Grand Opening and Closing Ceremonies, marking their debut on a national stage.

Driven by a desire to preserve the traditional panpipe music of the 'Are'Are people, seven tribes united to form the group. Their name reflects this unity, drawn from the initials of the founding tribes. Their mission: to learn, master, and share 'Are'Are panpipe culture with the world.

Since then, the Panpipers have become a pillar of cultural performance in the Solomon Islands, partnering with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Tourism Solomons, and various operators. They are regularly

Constructed from bamboo tubes of varying lengths, au panpipes are tuned to a local pentatonic scale.

invited to perform at ports, airports, hotels, and national events.

Their first international appearance came in 2013, at the Melanesian Spearhead Group Festival in New Caledonia. Although overseas opportunities were limited for years due to high competition, they remained active locally, appearing in the 2017 National Panpipe Festival, the 2018 Melanesian Arts Festival in Honiara, and performing for high-level guests, including Prince Charles.

Finally, in 2023, they got a break and were included in the Solomon Islands delegation to represent the Solomon Islands at the Melanesian Arts Festival in Vanuatu, followed by a prestigious performance at FestPAC 2024 in Hawai'i.

Looking Ahead

In July 2025, the group will represent the Solomon Islands at the 42nd Festival des Cultures du Monde in France. This marks a major milestone in their journey to share the spirit, sound, and soul of 'Are'Are culture with the world, celebrating unity, identity, and tradition through music. ▶





Vanuatu

A complete guide to Santo's
Blue Holes

The wildest, wettest adventure
you didn't know you needed.

Words Kate Gazzard

Espiritu Santo, nestled in the heart of Vanuatu, is home to some of the clearest, most jaw-droppingly stunning natural swimming pools known to humanity. Don't get it twisted, these aren't ponds, people. We're talking about crystal-clear, aqua-tinted, jaw-droppingly gorgeous natural pools straight out of your recurring tropical paradise dreams. So, let's dive (pun very much intended) into this island's must-visit blue holes: Nanda, Riri, and Matevulu.



Nanda Blue Hole

Let's start with Nanda Blue Hole; think of it as the Kylie Jenner of blue holes, always looking pristine, always photo-ready, and guaranteed to make you feel like you're starring in your very own tropical paradise movie.

With water so clear you'll be wondering if someone just dumped a whole lot of Gatorade in there, Nanda Blue Hole is a shimmering pool of perfection. The surrounding trees cast that dreamy, dappled shade, and the vibe is just magical.

If you're into diving, swimming, or even just floating while pretending you're a mermaid (no shame), Nanda's got you covered. Plus, it's surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees that practically scream, "Take a selfie, you must capture this moment."

It might be the most serene of the three, but it's still a total gem. Swim through the clear blue waters, and you'll catch glimpses of the fascinating aquatic life lurking beneath the surface. No need for rope swings or slides, just good ol' fashioned relaxation and a whole lot of stunning views.

Previous page: The clear, turquoise water of Nanda Blue Hole. **Clockwise from top left:** Snorkelling is just one of the many things you can do at Nanda Blue Hole; a traditional canoe ride is a great way to get to Riri Blue Hole; Matevulu Blue Hole provides the perfect relaxation spot.

Riri Blue Hole

Ah, Riri Blue Hole. If Nanda is the sultry Instagram star, Riri is the fun, adventurous one who shows up at the party with a bag of tricks. If you like a good swing (or two) to go with your swim, then Riri is the place to be.

The swings at this place allow you to unleash your inner Tarzan, especially since the swing looks like it's coming straight out of the surrounding jungle (practice your ahh-eee-yahyah's).

It's perfect for a good ol' dose of adrenaline before splashing into the refreshing blue water. And you get bonus points for style if you manage to do a dramatic belly flop on your jump (nobody's judging).

It's easy to feel the sweet burn of fun in your stomach here and once you hit that bluer-than-blue water, you're treated to a serene, quiet moment where the world disappears and you're just there, floating like a perfectly chilled coconut. Until your intrusive thoughts take over and you need another go.



Matevulu Blue Hole

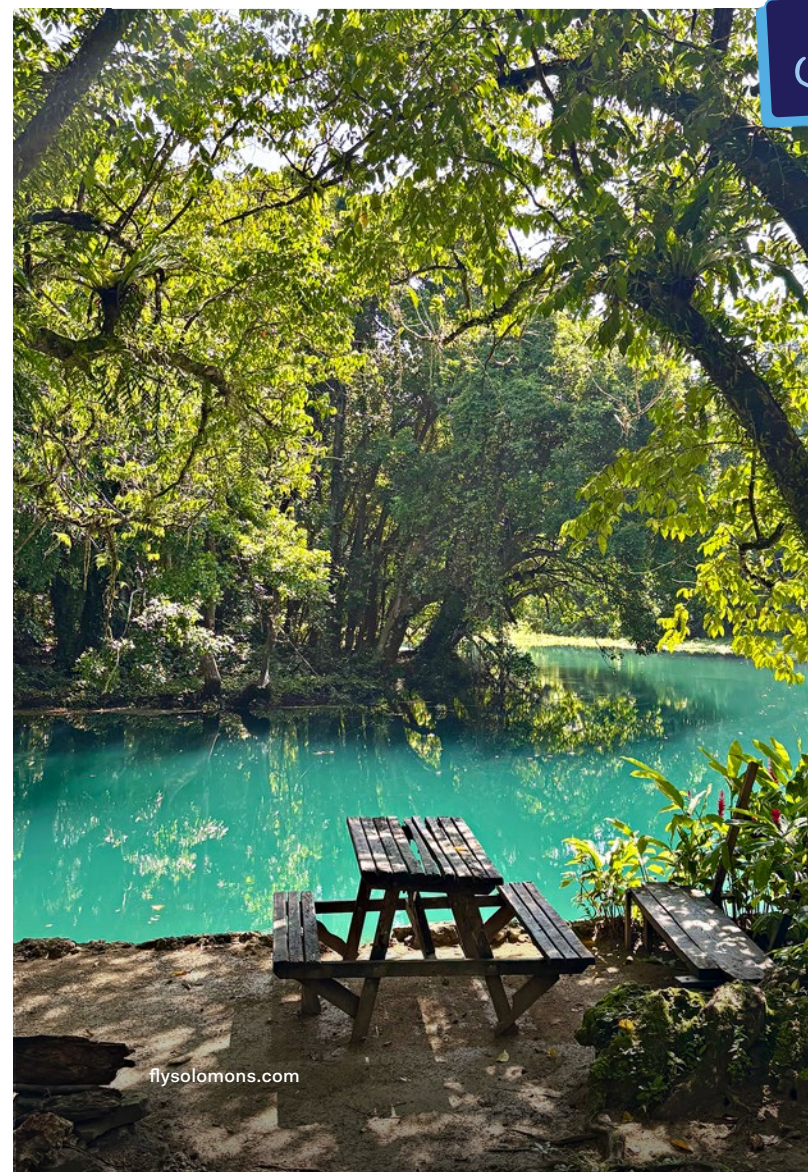
Now, let's talk about Matevulu Blue Hole. This blue baby comes with its very own manmade waterslide that'll make you feel like a kid again.

It's smooth, it's fast, and it's legendary. I mean, who needs theme parks when you can slide into crystal-clear, turquoise waters with a total lack of grace? The thrill of the slide will make you giggle like a 5-year-old who just discovered what a waterpark is. It's just as fun as it sounds.

But that's not all this magical spot has to offer. Matevulu Blue Hole has not one, not two, but three rope swings all designed to give you a serious adrenaline boost. My favourite? The rope swing by the old Banyan tree. You can feel as though you're in *Avatar's* Pandora while trying to perfect your double backflip. That's what we call a win/win.

And the water here is equally stunning, so, whether you're gliding down the slide or just lazing about in the warm water, Matevulu is nothing short of an experience.

I get it, it's hard to pick between the three; soaking in the serene vibes of Nanda, swinging through the trees at Riri, or sliding through the water at Matevulu. But regardless of which one you visit (how 'bout all three?), there's no wrong way to enjoy these stunning natural wonders. They're clear, they're blue, they're beautiful, and they're here to make your tropical getaway one you'll remember forever. ▴



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A Quick Guide to Honiara

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

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

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



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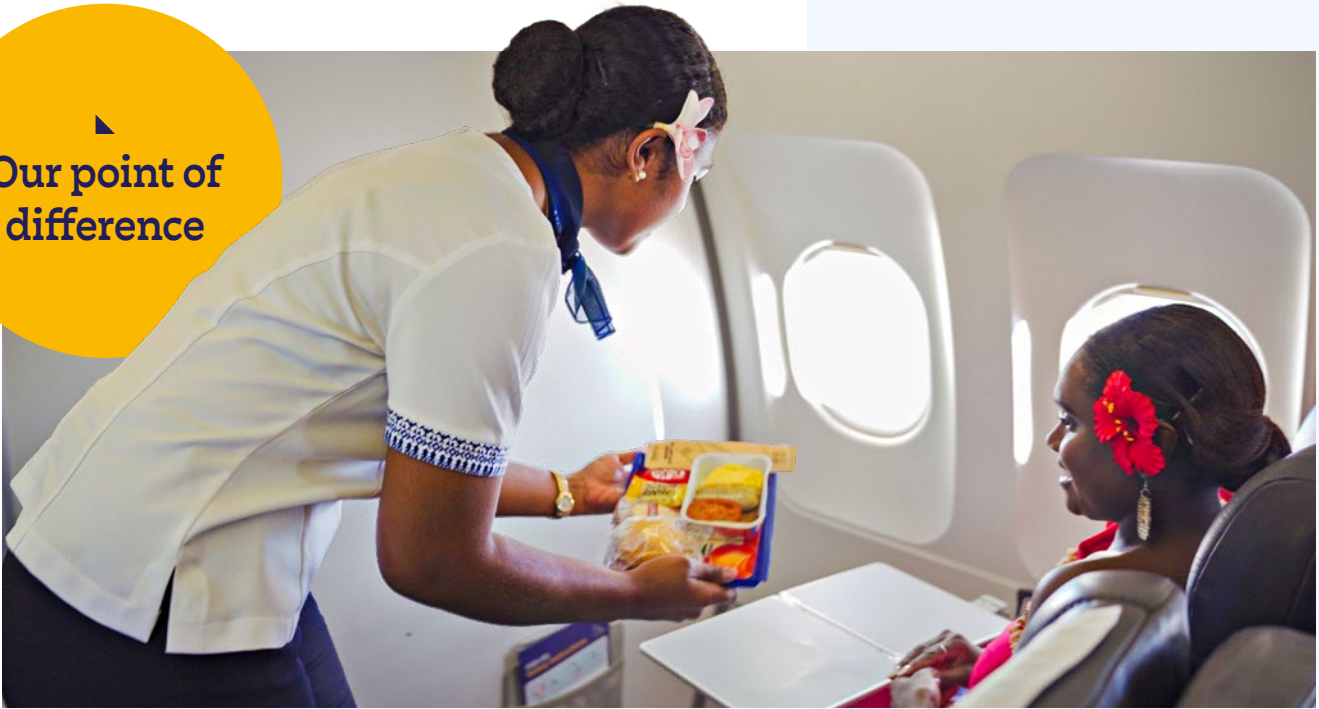
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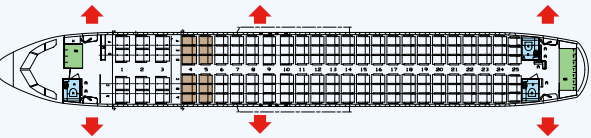
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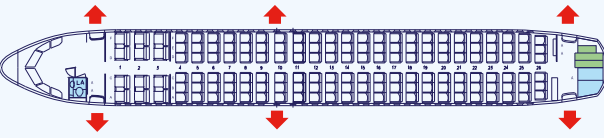


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Current Routes: **All international routes**



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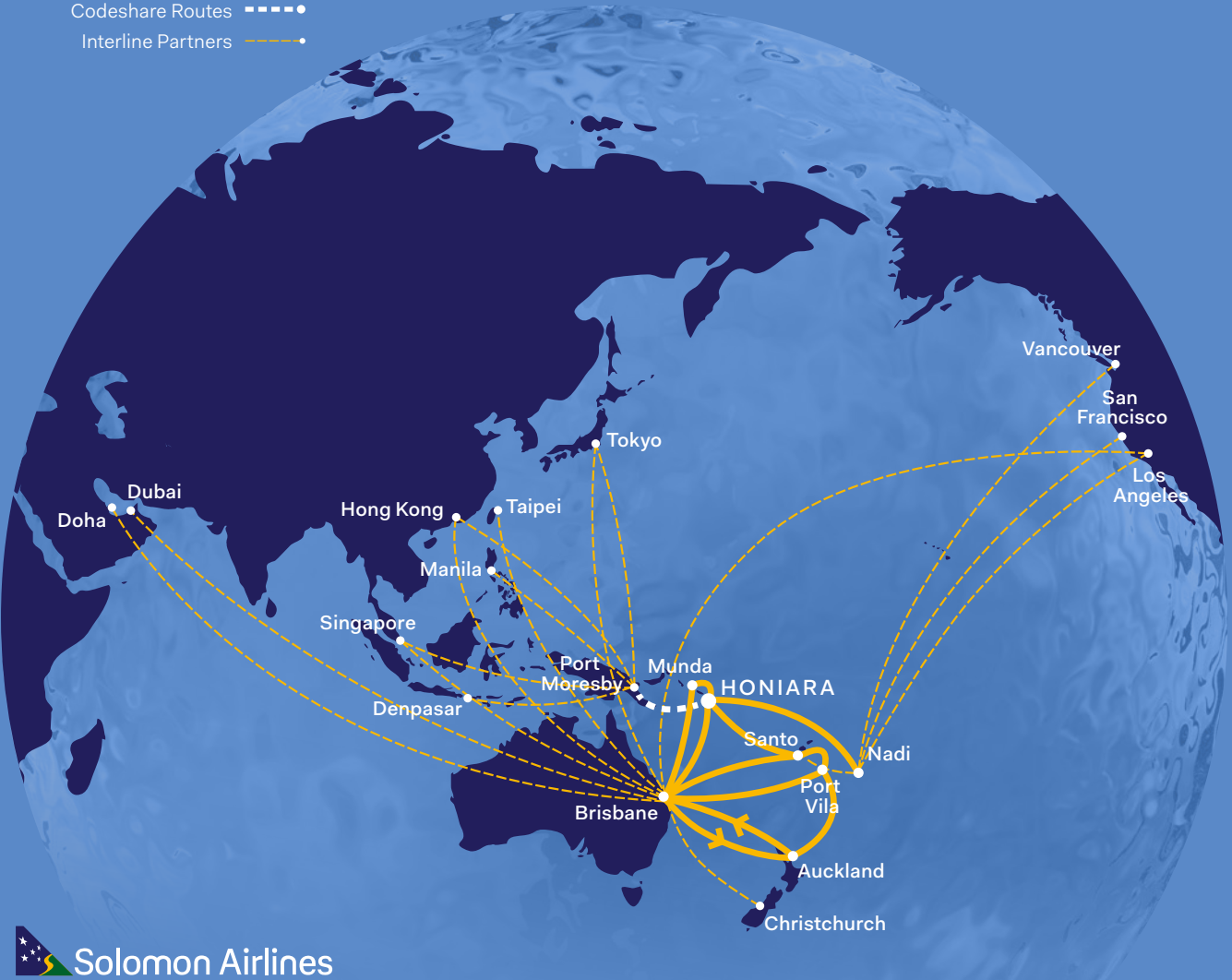
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Email: cargo@flysolomons.com.sb
Address: Henderson International Airport, Honiara, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

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.

ELECTRICITY

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

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.

Honiara Airport Taxi Association (HATA) also provides airport transfers, tours, car hire and general transport service in Honiara.

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 and Munda International Airports, 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.

TIPPING

Not expected and not encouraged.



Solomon Airlines pilots inspire future flyers

In celebration of World Pilots' Day on April 26, 2025, Solomon Airlines extended its message of inspiration beyond the runway, reaching the hearts of the next generation. As part of the global tribute to aviation professionals, the national carrier brought its pilots into local schools to share their journeys from classroom dreams to cockpit realities, emphasising the power of ambition, hard work, and determination.

The airline visited Woodford International School and Betikama Adventist College, reinforcing its commitment, not only to aviation excellence, but also to empowering youth across the Solomon Islands. World Pilots' Day is a global occasion that honours the remarkable individuals who connect people, cultures, and countries through the skies. As the national airline of the Solomon Islands, Solomon Airlines proudly recognises its pilots, not just as aviation professionals, but as mentors and role models for future generations.

"These pilots are more than just professionals; they are living proof that no dream is too high and no ambition is too bold," said Captain Alex Takola, Domestic Fleet Captain. "Like many of the students they met, they too once sat in school desks, wondering about their future. Today, they fly aircraft across our skies, and they're here to show that with hard work, passion, and belief in yourself, even the sky is not the limit."

Among the visiting pilots were Captain Salome Agiomea, First Officer Gorepitu Alependava, Captain Lyndah Tito Owen and Captain Bernard Tebaia. Each of them shared personal experiences and encouraged students to pursue their dreams in aviation, regardless of the challenges they may face.

CELEBRATION

Captain Salome Agiomea reminded the students that their dreams are valid, regardless of where they come

from. "You don't have to come from a pilot family or a big city to become a pilot. All you need is a dream, discipline, hard work, and the drive to make it happen," she said.

Captain Lyndah Tito Owen, the first female Dash 8 captain for Solomon Airlines, took the opportunity to advocate for gender equality in aviation, stating, "Girls can fly just as well as boys. The sky is not the limit; it's just the beginning." Her powerful message reflects Solomon Airlines' ongoing commitment to diversity and encouraging women to pursue careers in aviation.

First Officer Gorepitu Alependava, a Twin Otter pilot, shared his personal challenges and journey into the aviation industry. He spoke about the two years he spent waiting after graduating from flying school before joining Solomon Airlines. "There were doubts, delays, and many people who didn't believe in me, but my family did. You don't need everyone to believe in you. Believe in yourself, stay focused, and trust God," he shared.

This initiative highlights Solomon Airlines' broader mission to support youth development and create opportunities for young Solomon Islanders to pursue meaningful careers.

"As we celebrate World Pilots' Day, we are reminded that every great journey begins with a dream," said Monica Utukana, Human Resource Manager of Solomon Airlines. "Today's school visits go beyond mere discussions; they are a catalyst – a powerful spark we aim to ignite within our students, fuelling their ambition, purpose, and self-belief. To our pilots, past, present, and future, thank you for your unwavering dedication, skill, and passion. You are not only the backbone of our airline but the wings that carry the spirit of our nation. Today, we honour and celebrate you." ▴

ASPA at 79th General Session in Honiara

Solomon Airlines was privileged to host the 43rd Annual General Meeting and 79th General Session of the Association of South Pacific Airlines (ASPA) in Honiara from 21 to 23 May 2025. This pivotal regional event convened airline executives, technical experts, and strategic partners from across the Pacific under the theme "Enhancing Regional Air Connectivity and Infrastructure," fostering collaboration, innovation, and sustainable development within the aviation sector.



Delegates arrived on flights operated by Solomon Airlines, Air Niugini, and Qantas, marking the commencement of a comprehensive three-day program. The agenda featured keynote addresses and panel discussions led by esteemed industry organisations, including the International Air Transport Association (IATA), WTW Global Aviation & Space, Gallagher Aerospace, the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and Textron Aviation, among others. These sessions addressed critical topics, including aviation safety, digital transformation, infrastructure development, and global industry trends, equipping stakeholders to

UPDATE

navigate challenges and enhance regional cooperation.

The 79th General Session officially opened with remarks from the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Hon. Jeremiah Manele, and delegates from the Prime Minister's Office.

Sean Te'o, Chief Executive Officer of Solomon Airlines, expressed his gratitude in hosting the event, stating, "As Solomon Islands' national carrier, we were honoured to welcome ASPA colleagues and industry stakeholders to Honiara. Hosting the 79th General Session reflected our dedication to advancing regional aviation and fostering innovation across the Pacific."

Solomon Airlines extended its sincere gratitude to its major sponsors: the Ministry of Communication and Aviation,



the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Tourism Solomons, Solbrew, Heritage Park Hotel, Kitano Mendana Hotel, Our Telekom, Revel Pacific, Australian Direct Suppliers Ltd, and SolTuna for their generous support. The airline also acknowledged the valuable contributions of its supporting partners: DJ Graphics, Kokonut Pacific Solomon Islands, Blue Water, Island's Own, SolAgro, and Cathliro, whose involvement was instrumental in ensuring the event's success.

By uniting Pacific aviation leaders in Honiara, Solomon Airlines reaffirmed its commitment to shaping a connected, innovative, and resilient future for air travel in the region. ▴

Solomon Airlines & Delite partner to help communities

PARTNERSHIP

Solomon Airlines is pleased to support a partnership with locally owned manufacturer Delite Industries Ltd, reinforcing the airline's ongoing commitment to supporting Solomon Islands businesses and strengthening community wellbeing.

As the national carrier, Solomon Airlines continues to champion local enterprise by promoting high-quality, locally made products. Through this ongoing partnership, Delite's popular biscuit is featured onboard Dash 8 domestic flights and served in the Belama Lounge at Honiara International Airport, offering travellers a genuine taste of the Solomon Islands while proudly showcasing and supporting local industry.

"Supporting local companies like Delite is more than just business, it's about strengthening our economy and

"We are proud to partner with a brand that shares our vision of national development through local empowerment."

directly benefiting the communities we serve," said Edna Tapuika, Operations Manager at Solomon Airlines. "We are proud to partner with a brand that shares our vision of national development through local empowerment."

To mark the ongoing efforts of the partnership and as a gesture of goodwill, Delite has generously donated six (6) wheelchairs to Solomon Airlines. These wheelchairs will be used to enhance mobility assistance for passengers with special needs and will be distributed across key Airport locations, including Munda Airport and the domestic and international terminals at Honiara Airport.

"We believe in giving back to the community that has supported us for so many years," said Veronica Alondres of Delite Industries Ltd. "By contributing these wheelchairs, we aim to improve the travel experience and comfort of passengers who require extra assistance, while also celebrating our partnership with Solomon Airlines."

This partnership is a testament to the power of collaboration between local businesses to create a positive social and economic impact. Solomon Airlines and Delite look forward to continuing their shared journey of promoting Solomon Islands-made products, uplifting communities, and building a stronger national economy. ▴



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Our Values
Respect, Integrity, Care, Honesty

ENERGY FOR THE NATION

Honiara's Entertainment Hub



Join us on the rooftop for breathtaking sunset views while sipping on delicious cocktails. Then, indulge in an unforgettable dining experience at our renowned Garden Bar & Restaurant, home to Honiara's finest Malaysian Chinese cuisine.

Unwind with Happy Hour from 4PM - 8PM daily at the famous Canoe Bar. Enjoy live performances by local bands from Wednesday to Saturday.

Every Thursday, experience the vibrant traditions of the Solomon Islands with our Cultural Night—featuring mesmerizing Tamure dancing and a taste of our traditional slow-cooked Motu.


Pacific Crown Hotel offers accommodation for every budget, with modern amenities including air-conditioned rooms, free Wi-Fi, a fully equipped gym, conference facilities, and 24-hour security & reception.

Pacific Crown Hotel is located inside Supreme Estate, where you will find shops, restaurants, and a doctor's clinic. Everything you need is within a 2-minute walk. Just 3 km east of Honiara's CBD, our location offers both convenience and accessibility.

Let us welcome you with the warmth of Solomon Islands hospitality!



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