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SOLOMON AIRLINES COMPLIMENTARY IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE

ISSUE 87

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**Pacific Games:  
here at last**

**An idyllic surf  
retreat near  
Honiara**

**A new era  
of air travel  
for Munda**

SOL2023:  
**Your  
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## Welkam oloketa/frens of Solomon Airlines (Welcome friends of Solomon Airlines)

As we enter the last quarter of 2023, I cannot think of a time which has been more exciting for aviation and tourism in the Solomon Islands.

Major developments and events during these months will shine an international spotlight on our country, opening the way for tourism and economic progress.

At the time of publishing, we have just completed our first major sporting event for 2023. The Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon was a resounding success again attracting some of the country's top runners, and raising funds for our LAEFLAEN – Wings of Change initiative.

As well as contributing to the community, the marathon provided an ideal opportunity for our athletes to meet, compete and build confidence in preparation for the 2023 Pacific Games.

For many months now, Solomon Airlines has proudly played a part in the mounting excitement for XVII Pacific Games – SOL2023, to be staged from 19 November to 2 December.

As presenting sponsor, Solomon Airlines has provided SBD\$5 million value of air travel and air freight as well as publicity through our media channels, to support logistics and international promotion of the Games.

We were delighted to have our staff representatives run the Games baton to a waiting plane to begin its 100-day tour through our nine provinces, along with a 1000-page signatory book collecting well-wishes for Team Solomon.

Over 5,000 participants, athletes, technical officials and support staff from 24 countries will travel to Honiara for SOL2023. As the world watches the spectacle of the Pacific Games, people will also learn more about our country as a travel destination - how to get here and what there is to see and experience in our beautiful Solomon Islands.

Being seen on the world stage like this, is a huge opportunity for tourism. I would like to wish good luck to all athletes competing at SOL2023.

A vital precursor to tourism growth is the development of airports and aviation infrastructure and on 10 October we celebrated the opening of Munda International Airport, a second gateway to Solomon Islands.

We successfully reopened the Munda Airstrip in 2019 with temporary airport buildings and commenced Brisbane to Munda direct flights, which unfortunately ceased with the onset of the Covid pandemic.

Four years later, we are delighted to be resuming service and celebrating the opening of the SBD\$60million Munda International Airport Terminal - a great leap forward.

The benefits of a second gateway to Solomon Islands are far-reaching. We will have two entry points to our country streamlining air access for tourism traffic, supporting easier cargo movement and contributing significantly to economic growth in the Western Province.

With the Munda airport open in time for the Pacific Games, we are restarting operations from Brisbane direct

***We are delighted to be resuming service and celebrating the opening of the SBD\$60million Munda International Airport Terminal – a great leap forward.***

to Munda. Brisbane is our Australian gateway airport and visitors from international markets such as Europe, USA and Asia fly via Brisbane to Honiara.



### SNEAK PEEK

Solomon Airlines has announced a major marketing collaboration with Illumination, one of the world's leading entertainment companies, for the release of its next original animated film, Migration.

Illumination, the creators of record-shattering *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* and blockbusters *Minions*, *Despicable Me*, *Sing* and *The Secret Life of Pets* comedies will launch their latest action-packed comedy, in cinemas on Boxing Day, 26 December 2023.

*Migration* takes the audience on a hilarious and thrilling flight into the unknown with the Mallards as they experience a funny, feathered family vacation like no other.

Solomon Airlines' newest A320 aircraft, registered H4-SAL, will also play a major role in regional promotion of *Migration*.

From November, the Mallard family will feature on the airline's A320 aircraft livery. Along the fuselage, will be Mack the anxious father, Pam the daring and quick-witted mother, Dax the confident and restless son, Gwen the innocent and loveable daughter and Dan an adventure-averse uncle.

for opportunities to work with and support like-minded Pacific carriers for mutual benefit and regional economic gain.

We are also working closely with Tourism Solomons to grow market potential for the Solomon Islands, with far reaching campaigns in the Australian market with the likes of SBS Australia and NBCUniversal during and beyond the 2023 Pacific Games, promoting the experiences and beauty our nation offers.

In closing, as this is our last magazine for the year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you sincerely for supporting us in 2023.

On behalf of Solomon Airlines Board and team, I wish you, your family and friends, good health, blessings, and safe and happy holidays in 2023.

Thank you for flying Solomon Airlines.

**Frank Wickham**  
Chairman of Solomon Airlines

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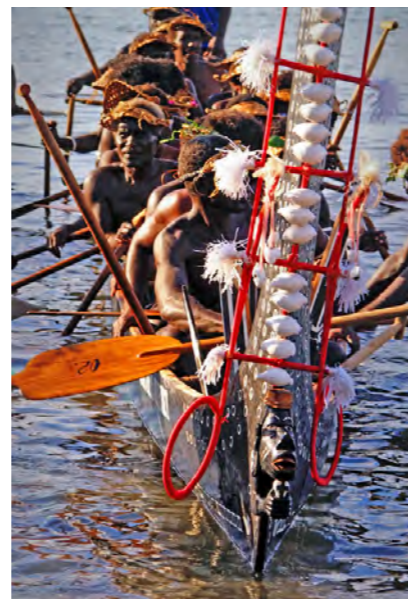


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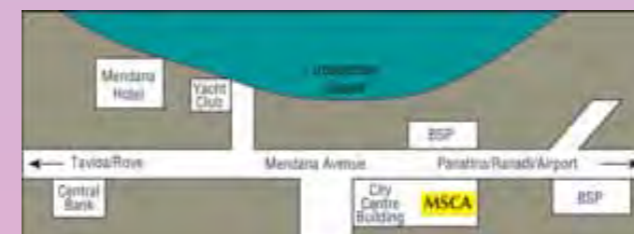
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Out and About



## KENNEDYS RETURN TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Caroline Kennedy, U.S. Ambassador to Australia and daughter of former U.S. President John. F Kennedy recently visited the Solomon Islands to mark the 80th anniversary of her father's great escape in Pacific waters.

Kennedy Senior was part of the PT-109 crew that was hit by a Japanese destroyer during World War Two, and subsequently forced to swim between Plum Pudding Island (now Kennedy Island), Naru Island, and Olasana Island in order to save his life and those of his crew.

Together with local heroes Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana, Kennedy scratched an SOS message into the husk of a green coconut, with Gasa and Kumana delivering the message to the Allies who were able to rescue Kennedy and his men.

Caroline Kennedy and her son, Jack Kennedy-Schlossberg, were recently in the Western Province of Solomon Islands to recreate the swim, to commemorate the heroism and perseverance of the President, Gasa and Kumana.

"It gave me a renewed appreciation of the heroism of my father, his crew, and the Solomon Scouts. It was so meaningful to do this with my son, Jack," Caroline told Solomon Times.

"My son and I are honoured to be able to thank you in person for what your fathers did 80 years ago.

"My father owed his life to their courage, their willingness to put themselves at risk, and to serve their country in the battle for freedom." ▴

*"My father owed his life to their courage, their willingness to put themselves at risk, and to serve their country in the battle for freedom."*

Above: Caroline and Jack Kennedy.



## CHOIR VOICES SOAR TO NEW HEIGHTS

The inaugural Sing Above Yourself! (SAY!) choir event, organised by Dreamcast, was an extraordinary success, with Naha Regal Choir taking out the SBD\$15,000 cash prize, plus recording deal and music video production.

Naha faced off against Central Islands Province Choir and K2 Family Choir in a stunning finale at the Dreamcast Arts Hub, after competition was whittled down from an original 23 teams to just three.

The final criteria required each finalist to present two original compositions and an original rendition of Dreamcast's 'This Is Our Time' track, a song designed for

the 2023 Pacific Games and scheduled for release before the opening ceremony.

A panel of independent judges decided Naha's explosive performance was a winning one, but Dreamcast said the competition itself was the real winner.

"This first-of-its-kind event makes everyone involved—from participants and spectators to our devoted Dreamcast team—true winners," said Joey Manemaka, Dreamcast Artistic Director.

"All choir groups, including those who registered and participated from the start, have created their legacy as pioneers of this exciting initiative. We celebrate your tireless rehearsal hours, your dedication to being the best of yourselves, and your willingness to showcase your amazing talents." ▴

Above: Sing Above Yourself was an epic success. Image: Dreamcast Theatre.

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## MI SAVE SOLO EVENT A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Tourism Solomons hosted travel trade partners from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji recently as part of the first 'Mi Save Solo' tourism exchange since 2019.

Visiting both Honiara and Gizo, the international guests were predominantly comprised of wholesalers and dive travel experts, and met with some 26 Solomon Islands-based accommodation and tourism representatives in a series of face-to-face meetings.

As well as key networking and business events, the guests also took part in a village experience at Saeraghi Village, plus a visit to Kennedy Island, emphasizing the Solomon Islands' rich WWII history.

*“Rebuilding trust, partnerships, and those business relationships disrupted during the extended closure...”*

Tourism Solomons CEO (acting), Dagnal Dereveke said the targeted approach being taken with this year's event is seen as a significant step for the national tourist office as it looks to regain its pre-COVID international visitation numbers.

“Importantly, by taking our buyers beyond Honiara, 'Mi Save Solo' provides an opportunity for them to refresh firsthand with existing product and other developments that have taken place in the tourism sector since their last visit, particularly in our main tourism corridors,” Mr Dereveke said.

“Rebuilding trust, partnerships, and those business relationships disrupted during the extended closure are viewed as critical as we move to regain ground lost during the pandemic.”

**Pictured:** Solomon Airlines staff at the Mi Save Solo event.

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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.





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# Guide to the Games

Everything you need to know about every sport at the SOL2023 — XVII 2023 Pacific Games

**O**n 11 May, 2016, the Pacific Games Council awarded the hosting rights of the XVII 2023 Pacific Games to the Solomon Islands.

On 19 November, when the Opening Ceremony in Honiara welcomes over 5,000 athletes, coaches and guests from 24 countries, the wait will finally be over, and seven years of preparation will come to fruition.

It is one of the most accessible Games for attendees, with the vast majority of venues located no more than 30 minutes distance from each other.

No less than 3,000 trained volunteers will work at the Games, helping to ensure the event runs as smoothly as possible.

And by the time the Games Baton arrives at the Official Opening Ceremony in front of 10,000 people at the National Stadium in Honiara, it will have passed through all nine Solomon Islands provinces, making this a truly national event.

Let the Games begin...



## ATHLETICS



One of the premier events at any international sporting meet, the fastest, strongest, fittest and most athletic in the Pacific will be crowned over five days in the Games' second week.

**Last time:** Papua New Guinea dominated the medal count last time around, with 51 medals while Olympian Sharon Firisua took home the gold for the Solomon Islands in the 10,000 metre event

**Venue:** National Stadium, Honiara

**Dates:** 27 November—2 December



## ARCHERY

Archery has been around at the Pacific Games since 1971, but at SOL2023, para-archery will feature for the first time. Two types of bow will be used at the Games — Recurve bow and compound bow.

**Last time:** New Caledonia were the strongest at the 2019 Games in Apia, taking out 12 medals — four each of gold, silver and bronze

**Venue:** DC Park

**Dates:** 21—24 November



## BASKETBALL

Both standard basketball (five players on a court) and 3 x 3 basketball will take place at SOL2023, after the latter's introduction in 2019 (and at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics).

**Last time:** Guam, Fiji and American Samoa shared the gold medals last time around

**Venue:** Friendship Hall (basketball) and SIFF Academy (3 x 3)

**Dates:** 17—25 November (basketball) and 29 November—2 December (3 x 3)



## BOXING

'The Sweet Science' is always a drawcard, but especially so at SOL2023, given its status as a qualifier for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

**Last time:** Samoa dominated the boxing in front of their home crowd, with seven gold medals from 13 events in 2019

**Venue:** Friendship Hall

**Dates:** 27 November—2 December



## BODYBUILDING



As a competitive activity bodybuilding aims to display in artistic fashion pronounced muscle mass, symmetry, and definition for overall aesthetic. A one day event, held at Maranatha Hall, east of Honiara.

**Last time:** Not staged  
**Venue:** Maranatha Hall  
**Dates:** 27 November

## FOOTBALL



'The World Game' is one of five sports to kick off ahead off on 17 November, ahead of the Opening Ceremony, to allow time for all matches to be played. The final will be held at the National Stadium, and locals will be hoping the 'Bonitos' will be there.

**Last time:** New Zealand took home the men's gold, while Papua New Guinea claimed the women's  
**Venue:** National Stadium, SIFF Field 1, SIFF Field 2, Lawson Tama  
**Dates:** 17 November—2 December

## HOCKEY



Hockey makes a first appearance since Port Moresby in 2015. It is only the fourth time hockey has been staged at the Games, and Fiji have won the gold medal on every occasion. King George Hockey Turf is walking distance to the National Stadium, Dinning Hall and the Sports Village.

**Last time:** Not staged  
**Venue:** King George Hockey Turf  
**Dates:** 28 November—1 December

## JUDO



Taking place over two days at the SIFF Academy, there are six different weight divisions in both men's and women's judo, as well as a mixed-team event. The sport originated in Japan back in 1882.

**Last time:** New Caledonia fared well in 2019, winning 10 gold out of a possible 18  
**Venue:** SIFF Academy  
**Dates:** 20—21 November

## GOLF



Originally the site of a U.S. Army airstrip used during World War Two, Honiara Golf Course is now a picturesque 18-tee course which has recently undergone refurbishment ahead of the Games. Men's and women's tournaments are contested by teams of four golfers per country, and medals are awarded for individual and team.

**Last time:** New Caledonia took home all four gold medals in 2019  
**Venue:** Honiara Golf Course  
**Dates:** 22—25 November



## RUGBY



The national sport of many Pacific Nations, rugby will be contested in three different forms: Rugby 7s and Rugby 9s (each denoting number of players on the field) and Touch Rugby. Rugby 9s follows Rugby League in terms of rules, but with several key variations, while Touch Rugby is a contactless sport, as the name would suggest.

The Fijian men's team are the Rugby 7s world champions, and will be tough to beat in Honiara.

**Last Time:** Fiji took out both men's and women's golds in Apia for Rugby 7s and 9s, while Touch Rugby was not contested

**Venue:** National Stadium (Rugby 7s and Rugby 9s) and DC Park (Touch Rugby)

**Dates:** 20 – 22 November (Rugby 9s), 23 – 25 November (Rugby 7s), 27 November – 2 December (Touch Rugby).  
 Image: Fiji Rugby

## KARATE



Karate has then been contested in five Pacific Games; the latest in Port Moresby in 2015.

**Last Time:** Not staged **Venue:** SIFF Academy **Dates:** 23 – 24 November

## NETBALL



Netball is a beacon of athletic competition through the Pacific from a young age, and Pacific nations tend to fare well at netball, with six spots in the top 20 of the World Netball rankings occupied by Pacific Games nations.

**Last Time:** Cook Islands took home the gold medal, defeating Tonga by a single goal in the final, 44-43

**Venue:** Friendship Hall  
**Dates:** 27 November—2 December

## POWERLIFTING



Powerlifting; consists of three attempts at maximal weight on three lifts: squat, bench press, and deadlift. Across eight weight divisions, three days of intense competition will decide the most powerful athletes in the Pacific.

**Last Time:** Papua New Guinea and Nauru were best performing in Apia 2019, sharing six gold medals

**Venue:** Maranatha Hall  
**Dates:** 28—30 November

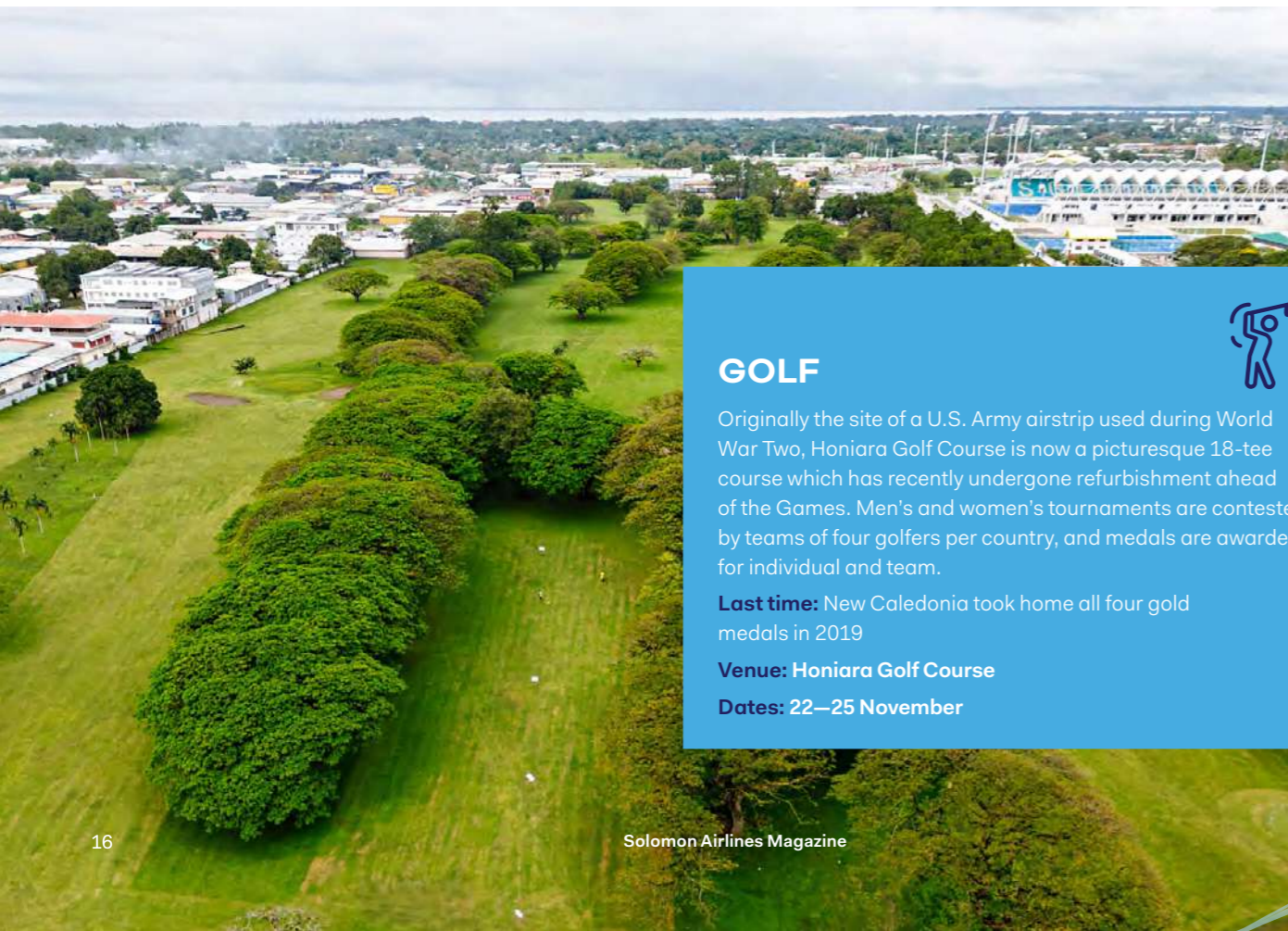
## SAILING



A key element of the Pacific Games since 1969, Sailing at SOL2023 will feature two separate classes: the one-person dinghy, and sailboard. Competition will run for almost the full two weeks of the Games. Australian Sailing recently sent 10 tackers boats to the Solomon Islands to help grow the sport locally.

**Last Time:** New Caledonia almost swept the count, winning five of a possible six gold medals

**Venue:** DC Park  
**Dates:** 20 November—2 December





## SWIMMING

Another core sport of athletic Games' competition, large crowds are expected at the Aquatics Complex to cheer on the Pacific's best swimmers. There is also an open water event.

**Last Time:** New Caledonia won 25 of a possible 42 gold

**Venue:** Aquatic Centre

**Dates:** 20–24 November

## TAEKWONDO

Both men's and women's individual competitions will be contested across eight weight classes, in accordance with World Taekwondo classifications.

**Last Time:** Australia dominated the medal count, winning 15 of a possible 18 medals. Fred Gwali and Emily Kwoaetolo won silver medals for the Solomon Islands

**Venue:** Aquatic Centre

**Dates:** 28 November–1 December

## TENNIS

Another staple since 1963, the tennis competition will run from the 17th of November right up until the closing ceremony on the 2nd of December, barring Sunday 26 November, which is a rest day for all athletes.

**Last Time:** Papua New Guinea and Northern Mariana Islands took home three gold medals each

**Venue:** National Tennis Centre

**Dates:** 17 November–1 December

## TRIATHLON

A 1.5km swim, 40km bike ride and 10km run awaits competitors in the triathlon – in that order. The swim component will take place at the Aquatics Complex, while the swim and run legs will take place nearby, through the streets of Honiara.

**Last Time:** Tahiti won five of the six golds on offer in Apia

**Venue:** Aquatic Centre **Dates:** 29 November–2 December

## TABLE TENNIS

Table Tennis has been played at every Pacific Games. It will run over the first week of the Games, and will serve as a qualifier for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games in Paris.

**Last Time:** Vanuatu won six gold, of a possible 11. Noela Olo of the Solomon Islands won bronze in the women's ambulant event

**Venue:** HCC Arena **Dates:** 17–25 November

## VA'A AND KAYAKING

Bringing a truly Pacific flavour to the Games is the Va'a Canoe. Races are in Va'a boats, unique to the Pacific, meaning these competitors are the best in the world at this chosen discipline.

**Last Time:** Tahiti are the team to beat, having taken the most medals every single year since the sport was first introduced to the Pacific Games in 1995, including in 2019

**Venue:** DC Park

**Dates:** 27 November–2 December



## WEIGHTLIFTING

Arguably the hosts' strongest event, given it yielded three gold medals last time. Athletes compete in two specific ways of lifting the barbell overhead: snatch, and the clean and jerk. Olympian Mary Kini Lifu took home the gold in 2019.

**Last Time:** While the Solomons competed well, it was Samoa who won 16 gold to top the medal count

**Venue:** DC Park

**Dates:** 20–24 November

## VOLLEYBALL AND BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Blessed is the Pacific and surrounding areas with stunning beaches, a special kind of athleticism is required for both indoor and beach volleyballers. The action on the artificial beach volleyball arena will make for thrilling viewing.

**Last time:** Tahiti, New Caledonia, Australia and Vanuatu all took home gold medals

**Venue:** SIFF Academy

**Dates:** 17–25 November (volleyball), 28 November–2 December (beach volleyball)



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# A celebration of tradition & unity

STORY BY REGINA LEPPING  
PHOTOS BY REGINA AND TREVOR LEPPING

**A**s the sun begins to cast a warm embrace over Langa Langa Lagoon in Malaita Province, a transformation is taking place, transporting visitors to a world where time seems to stand still.

The vibrant costumes of women adorned in grass skirts, and men donning bark clothing with intricate body paint, create a living tableau that breathes life into ancient customs. What binds them all together is the exquisite shell money that adorns their bodies – a timeless symbol of heritage and community.

I had visited the Lagoon on numerous occasions before, but this time I was privileged to witness the Shell Money Festival – an event that embodies the creativity, sustainability, and resilience of the Langa Langa people while celebrating a currency that serves as Solomon Islands' unique gift to the world.

The lagoon is a mere 20-minute boat ride from Auki, along the West Coast of Malaita Province, about 21km in length and just under 1km wide. The Langa Langa "lagoon people" have lived on small artificial islands built up on sand bars over time.

The Shell Money Festival was established in 2014 and continued every year until 2019 before the onset of the pandemic. In August, it resurfaced once more at Busu village.

As I stepped onto the festival grounds, I was transported

to a bygone era. Children, women, and men donned traditional attire adorned with intricately crafted shell ornaments that set the Langa Langa Lagoon apart from the rest of Malaita. Their performances held me captivated, whether through their contemporary renditions of traditional chants or their poignant dramatizations of the Langa Langa people's history.

*What binds them all together is the exquisite shell money that adorns their bodies — a timeless symbol of heritage and community.*



Clockwise from opposite: the Shell Money Festival celebrates the creativity, sustainability, and resilience of the Langa Langa people; a woman heavily adorned in shell money; dramatisation of Langa Langa history.



Culture

What truly stood out amidst the performances was the remarkable unity and coexistence of the Wala people from across Malaita Province who had settled in the Langa Langa Lagoon. A diverse tapestry of cultures had given birth to a unique way of life, where people lived harmoniously with each other and their environment.

And at the heart of this unity was the cherished "Akwala'afu" – an original gift – accompanied by the iconic red shell money currency known as "Tafuliae."

Amidst the festivities, an important scene unfolded.

Women in traditional attire sat in a long line, expertly demonstrating the intricate art of crafting shell money. This captivating display showcased the guardians of a tradition that had been passed down through generations, serving as a cornerstone of peace and harmony across the islands. Each shell threaded onto the money carried a deep-rooted significance, far beyond its aesthetic appeal. While many perceive shell money as a dowry, the creators of this intricate art see it as a "gift," a symbol of peace and a means to dispel generational animosities. This sacred presentation as a dowry is, in fact, a ritualistic embodiment of its true purpose.



**Above:** Small shells were historically ground down to the required size by the women. No more than were actually needed were made, and as the process was laborious and difficult, value was maintained. Inset: shell money.

One poignant display recreated a bride price ceremony. The bride, wearing shell ornaments, cradled a young coconut, symbolizing familial unity in marriage. As the gifts were exchanged, the bride was entrusted with her shell money crafting tools, a conduit through which she would shape future generations' traditions.

The festival's essence goes beyond mere tradition; it praises the fearless spirit of women who continue to champion these customs. In this realm, men and women understand each other's roles and contributions. Not just a homage to the past, but a nod to the current and future generations as well.

Another remarkable sight unfolded as the festival unfolded – the construction of artificial islands, a practice that has defined Busu village for years. Men and boys showcased the intricate artistry behind these creations, before the commencement of the canoe race. Women embarked first, followed by the men. There was laughter, camaraderie and competition in equal measure as canoes navigated, sank, and occasionally engaged in a friendly bout of pushing and shoving. Amidst this joyous atmosphere, people convened

to share their cultural tales, chew betel nut, and forge connections that spanned generations.

"The festival brings together shell money-making communities across the lagoon to exchange, learn, and embrace traditions and customs that risk fading amid the tide of globalisation," said Bernard, the festival's organiser.



*There was laughter, camaraderie and competition in equal measure as canoes navigated, sank, and occasionally engaged in a friendly bout of pushing and shoving.*

"Through tourism, we aspire to showcase the cultural heritage of the Langa Langa Lagoon to the world. Our culture remains unique, thriving, and resolute."

As the sun dipped beneath the horizon, casting its warm glow on the Langa Langa Lagoon, I felt a profound appreciation for the rich tapestry of tradition, unity, and resilience that defines this unique corner of the world. The Shell Money Festival stands as a testament to the enduring power of heritage, a beacon that illuminates a path for generations to come. In a world constantly evolving, the Langa Langa people remain steadfast guardians of their own legacy. ▴



**Clockwise from top:** the canoe race always becomes competitive; women in traditional attire; the Langa Langa 'lagoon people' have lived on small artificial islands.

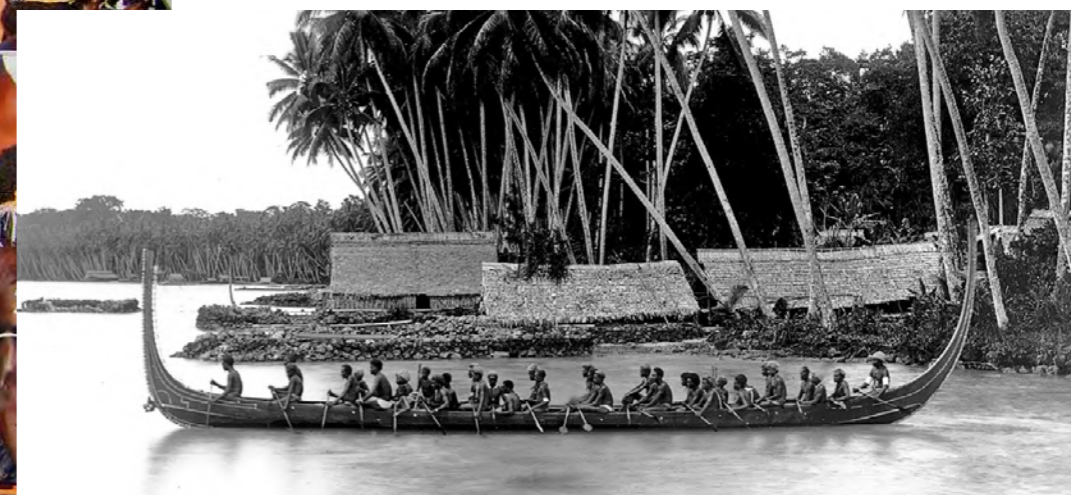


The Shell Money Festival is a two-day festival of cultural displays, demonstrations and entertainment performed by the people of Langa Langa Lagoon. It ran in August 2023 and is likely to run around the same time in 2024.

Experience a traditional village stay at Bataiasi Village in Langa Langa Lagoon by contacting Visit Solomons at +677 22442, or head to [www.visitsolomons.com.sb/about-the-solomon/contact-us/](http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/about-the-solomon/contact-us/)



*Paddling and steering the canoes was more or less an art form...*



# Rebuilding the Tomoko

How one region is bringing back a time-honoured tradition

WORDS DOROTHY WICKHAM

IMAGES PENNY GOLDFINCH, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM MEDIA

**T**he art of carving wood into intricate ornaments and everyday use items is a renowned skill among the Roviana people, known for their traditional war canoes, called Tomoko in their local dialect.

This knowledge has slowly begun to fade, as is the case with the cultures of many other nations, as modern techniques focused on efficiency have slowly begun eroded traditional cultural practices observed over many years. Efforts have begun in the lagoons of Roviana, in the Western Province, to revive this ancient craft.

The Tomoko was once used during head-hunting days to transport war raiding parties and was recognized and feared by the people of the surrounding islands, including as far as Isabel Province. The canoes were sturdy, between 12 and 18 metres long, and crescent shaped. Traditional figurehead known as Nguzu Nguzu were affixed to the bow, used to indicate whether they were traveling in peace or war, as well as conveying information about the area, conditions or the island from which they originated.

In their chants, Roviana warriors would call upon Tiola, an ancient God, to bring them strength during raids. The Tomokos would travel swiftly and silently, carrying between 25 to 50 warriors in the largest canoes, depending on the purpose of their mission.

The canoes were long and black in colour, with high pointed bows and sterns. Paddling and steering the canoes was more or less an art form, and the warriors would chat and sing as they travelled at great speeds, as the Tomoko was designed to be light and fast.

In yesteryear warriors would raid villages, taking heads as trophies and capturing locals. In the early 20th century the last Tomoko were confiscated by the British, and so with it a decline in the knowledge of how to make them. This makes the efforts to rebuild the canoes all the more remarkable.

Nelson Boso, project coordinator of the Tomoko rebuild, revealed that there are now only a few people left with the knowledge to build these canoes, but that his project aims to revive the skill and ensure it is passed on to future generations.

"There is still a significant amount of work to be done in reviving the knowledge of building Tomoko canoes, but he is heartened by the support from the communities involved in the project," Mr Boso said.

"We're working diligently to make sure that the knowledge of building Tomoko canoes is not lost, but that the skill is revived and then sustained."

The newly built canoes are used for racing and showcasing during the Lagoon Festival in Munda. The festival brings together villages and communities from around the region to celebrate their saltwater traditions.

As the efforts continue, Boso

remains hopeful that the revival of the Tomoko canoes will not only contribute to Festival celebrations but also serve as a beacon of cultural resilience and pride for the Roviana people.

The communities are actively participating in the efforts to revive this traditional craft, recognising its cultural importance and value. ▴



The Roviana Lagoon Festival takes place in July each year.

Villages parade in show and style with floats both on water and land, with cultural and water based activities; arguably the signature activity is the Alick Wickham Swim, a swim across the lagoon in honour of the great Solomon Islander swimmer and diver.

Contact Visit Solomons at +677 22442, or [visitsolomons.com.sb/about-the-solomon/contact-us/](http://visitsolomons.com.sb/about-the-solomon/contact-us/)



**Opposite:** Tomoko at the Roviana Lagoon Festival. **Above:** Compare the length of a Tomoko from around the turn of the 20th century, compared to today (left).





# Serving up *surf* near the capital

Where else can you get uncrowded surf 65km from a country's capital city?



*If uncrowded surf and rustic bungalows sound like your idea of an adventure, then Olotsara is for you.*

There was only one sign we saw for the entire drive; the one for Olotsara Retreat (which we missed).

Ben Tavuata is a manager at Olotsara, with a vision to putting surfing on the map in Guadalcanal.

According to Ben, the retreat originated by default. He and his brother grew up in nearby villages, and the family were popular with diplomats, who often stopped in for a visit and a surf, and so the first bungalow was built. It wasn't too long before another was built and slowly, through word of mouth, bungalow stays at Olotsara grew in popularity. From its humble beginnings catering to extended family and friends, in 2016 Olotsara Retreat Center was officially established. There are currently five modern bungalows, including several completed recently.

**Opposite:** When you see your friend at the party.  
**Above:** Boat hire is available at Olotsara.

**WORDS** CLAIRE ELLEM  
**IMAGES** CLAIRE ELLEM & AELANLIFE

**T**here is no shortage of fanfare when it comes to Solomon Islands' well known surf breaks.

Most of these are located in the prime southeast swell direction favoured by Gizo, and north-facing swells that deliver to Santa Isabel, Malaita and Makira province. They've been attracting locals and internationals alike for decades.

But exploration and surfing have always gone hand in hand, and a small group decided to find out what else out there. Escaping the hustle and bustle of Honiara, we travelled 65km west to Olotsara Retreat Centre.

If uncrowded surf and rustic bungalows sound like your idea of an adventure, then Olotsara is for you, although the

drive there is not without its challenges. One hour in, our two-car convoy came to a grinding halt. A strategy meeting convened to navigate an old wooden makeshift bridge, with attitudes ranging from wary precaution through to 'send it'. We ended up in between: a hidden road was hidden behind waist high bush, and after watching a local in a small Toyota drive through without hesitation, the group landed on "she'll be right" and managed to proceed.

Along the way, we smiled and waved at children, who did the same to us. We traversed both picturesque coast and less glamorous dirt roads, both with palm trees fringing the road's edge.



Accommodation



There's also a camping site which includes tent hire and what can only be described as five-star water views.

Olotsara now offers board hire and transport to two main surf breaks which can only be accessed by boat. Sarovagi, a right-hander, is fifteen-minutes by boat north of Olotsara. Nughu Kiki Tiaro is a break for the goofy footers and is a more exposed break south of Olotsara, an area which attracts more southern swell, and then there's the Tangarare area — recently explored and new on the surfing map. Issues with permissions from landowners have historically been present, however Ben explains that continuing to build relationships is something that is derived from respect, and can continue to break down barriers when it comes to surf.

"There are more breaks south of Olotsara that we are still uncovering for guests. Surf exploration and approval takes time due to local land ownership," he says.

"It is quite political and relationships with landowners need to continue to be managed properly, and to be respected, to enable permission and more surf."

**Opposite:** Surfing in the Solomons is rustic and authentic. **Clockwise above:** Olotsara has five bungalows - two self-contained units and three bungalows. Or there's camping.



Accommodation



*"The aim is to grow surf in West Guadalcanal, so we can create a thriving local surf community..."*

Surfing as a culture and competitive sport in the country is still very new and still has a way to go. However, with local broader collaboration efforts from key provincial leaders, the sports pathway will evolve for surfers in the Solomon Islands over the coming years. The Western Solomons Surf Association (WSSA) found its roots in 2014 under the leadership of local legend Jeremy Baea, and now has 40 active members from three boardrider clubs across the Western province. Baea's passion for the sport led the Guadalcanal crew to the launch their own initiative—the Guadalcanal Surfing Association (GSA). In November GSA launch their first surf competition at Nuhu Beach, with Olotsara providing accommodation for the event.

"The aim is to specifically grow surfing in West Guadalcanal, so we can create a thriving local surfing community that contributes to the

overarching structure of a national surfing federation," said Ben.

"Grassroots development at a provincial level will also allow the national surfing federation to focus its efforts in better facilitating the Surfing in the Solomon Islands Surfing Strategy. This strategy aims to develop robust sports pathways that enable opportunities for talented local surfers from the affiliated provincial associations... as a flow on effect, this new structure will also open more doors to also grow surf tourism." ▴



A trip to Olotsara is a great weekend adventure or the perfect add on to an extended trip out to the other provinces. convenient return transfers from Honiara priced at around \$30 AUD, while work is going into a sea route by boat to Olotsara, promising a more cost-effective and scenic journey.

**Bungalows**

For a day, you can expect to pay SBD\$600.00 (around AUD\$80.00) per bungalow a night. Bungalows fit up to three people each.

**Camping**

If you are partial to roughing it or just want the best waterfront view available, you can opt to camp for SBD\$50.00 a night (AUD\$10) with tent hire included.

**Surf Transfers & Boat Hire**

Surf transfers are charged by both boat hire and fuel costs. To go for a surf, you will be charged per boat, not per person (max. 5 surfers). They charge fuel whatever rate it is going at the time. Boat transfer is SBD\$300.00 and fuel is around SBD\$200.00.

**Contact**

Bookings can be made through email: [retreatolotsara@gmail.com](mailto:retreatolotsara@gmail.com) Or on Whatsapp: **+677 74 96338**

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# A new dawn for the Western Province

International travel into Munda takes flight

**I**t may have been pouring rain, but Tuesday 10 October was a bright day for Munda and the Solomon Islands.

The first plane landed at Munda International Airport, newly refurbished after a SBD\$60 million upgrade. Flight IE716 arrived from Honiara, before travelling onward to Brisbane, celebrating the airport's stunning new terminal and recently acquired international status.

The upgrade included a renovations on the runway, taxiway, and apron, plus the construction of the new terminal building.

It was completed as part of the SIRAP and SIRAP 2 programs, financed by the World Bank and through the International Development Association (IDA).

"This is a long-held ambition for Solomon Airlines and for our government after we recognised some years ago, that the underutilised airstrip at Munda, which dates back to World War II, had the potential and was in the right position to be developed as a second international gateway," said Solomon Airlines Chairman Frank Wickham.

"The Munda International Airport Project was implemented by the Ministry of Communication and Aviation (MCA) under the Solomon Islands Roads and Aviation Project (SIRAP) supported by the World Bank.

"Munda is also officially designated as an alternate airport for airlines, in the case of needing a contingency landing point. This is for flight planning purposes and also gives extra flexibility for operations west of Honiara.

This designation enables us to develop further international air links in time. We are examining possibilities with MCA based on opportunities for tourism, trade, and benefits to businesses in the region."

The upgrade is a boon for Munda and for tourism in the Solomon Islands in general, not to mention international tourists who now have a direct route into the Western Province's beautiful beaches, stunning underwater diving, World War Two history, fishing, surfing and culture. ▀



**Above:** The grand opening of the new terminal. **Left:** Munda's stunning diving is one step closer to the world.



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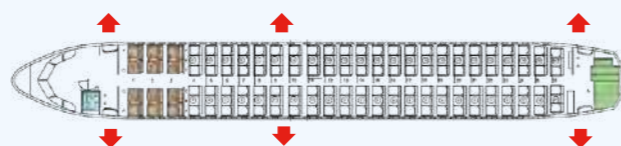
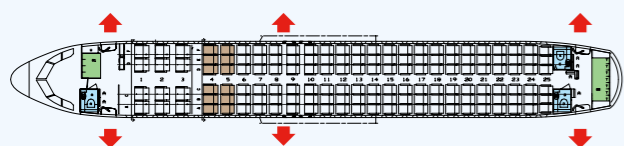
# Solomon Airlines Fleet



## A320

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

Registration **H4-SAL**  
 Length **37.57 m**  
 Wing Span **35.80 m**  
 Range **3,350 nm with sharklets**  
 Cruising Speed **830 km/h**  
 Seating capacity **150**  
 Configuration: **Business: 12, Economy: 138**  
 Current Routes: **Brisbane, Nadi, Port Vila**



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## Business Class

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Business class passenger benefits include:

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

## Economy Class

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

Economy Class passenger benefits include:

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

## Solomon Airlines Contact Information

### Head Office

Henderson Airport  
 P. O. Box 23, Honiara,  
 Solomon Islands  
 Ph: (677) 20031

### Travel Center

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

### Australia

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 Email: reservations@flysolomons.com

### Fiji

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 Ph: (679) 6722831  
 Fax: (679) 6722140  
 Email: solomon@connect.com.fj



## Dash 8-102

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



## Twin Otter

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



## Twin Otter H4-S1C

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

# International Connections

- Solomon Airlines Routes —●—
- Codeshare Routes - - - -
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# Domestic Connections

- Solomon Airlines Routes —●—



## Contacts

### Solomon Islands Office

Head office: (677) 20031  
Reservations: (177) local or (677) 23506

### Outer Ports:

**Santa Cruz:** Sales & Reservations  
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**Gizo:** Sales & Reservations  
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## International Offices

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### AUSTRALIA — Operations

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## Cargo

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 Destination Guide

# Things to remember before your trip to the Solomons

## Climate

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

## What to wear

Light and casual... take it easy!

## Health

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

## Immigration

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

## Honiara

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

## Airport Tax

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

## Currency

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

## Business Hours

Government and business general hours are Monday to Friday, 8am to 4:30pm, with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturday 8am to 12 noon.

## 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. For booking contact (677) 7773814.

## 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, with a few monthly business and lifestyle magazines.

## Tipping

Not expected and not encouraged.





Airline  
Nius

## 2023 PEACE MARATHON RESULTS

### 42.2KM MARATHON

#### Male

- 1st Place Prize**  
SBD\$3,000 & Gold Medal won by **Andrew Kukuti**
- 2nd Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,500 & Silver Medal won by **William Runa**
- 3rd Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,000 & Bronze Medal won by **Tazman Bain**

### 10KM RUN

#### Male

- 1st Place**  
won by **Edmond D**
- 2nd Place**  
won by **Stebbert R**
- 3rd Place**  
won by **George Tarui**

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

## 2023 SOLOMON AIRLINES PEACE MARATHON

The 2023 Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon proved to be the biggest yet, as the nation has top runners and amateur runners hit the streets in Honiara. No less than 55 volunteers provided by the Pacific Games Organising Committee supported the smooth-running of event logistics, proving a handy test run in preparation for the Pacific Games.

This year's marathon also raised funds for Charity Project, "LAEFLAEN" – Wings of Change, an initiative to raise funds for the Pikinini Referral Clinic at China Town and the SIRC School of Children with Special Needs at Riffle Range, West Honiara.

The event wrapped up on Friday 29th September with Solomon Airlines congratulating winners and sponsors at a cocktail celebration event at Heritage Park Hotel.

### 21.1KM HALF MARATHON

#### Male

- 1st Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,500 & Gold Medal won by **Kenson Taro**
- 2nd Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,000 & Silver Medal won by **Thomas Fitzpatrick**
- 3rd Place Prize**  
SBD\$1,500 & Bronze Medal won by **Lenny Namoka**

#### Female

- 1st Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,500 & Gold Medal won by **William Runa**
- 2nd Place Prize**  
SBD\$2,000 & Silver Medal won by **Joylyn T**
- 3rd Place Prize**  
SBD\$1,500 & Bronze Medal won by **Philistus Folia**



#### ANNOUNCEMENT

## AIR VANUATU PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES TO GROW

Solomon Airlines has confirmed a further expansion of its partnership with Air Vanuatu, with an increase in weekly flights effective from 2 November 2023.

Together the airlines will increase Port-Vila to Auckland flights to two Solomon Airlines operated services weekly, expanding Air Vanuatu's New Zealand schedule to 4 x return services weekly on the Port Vila to Auckland route.

Solomon Airlines will also operate 2 x return flights weekly between Brisbane and Port Vila with streamlined connectivity via Port Vila to New Zealand. The new services are also timed to provide an additional weekend departure for Vanuatu

bound leisure passengers travelling from Australia.

The existing Monday service operating from Honiara to Port Vila as Flight IE722, and Flight NF050 Port Vila to Auckland will also shift to an earlier departure time from Honiara, starting at 9:00am.

"Our investment in a second international aircraft has immediately allowed us to significantly expand operations both for Solomon Airlines and our partner Air Vanuatu opening new commercial tourism opportunities for both countries," said Acting CEO of Solomon Airlines Napoleon Padabela.

"This is an example of how deepening partnerships between brother airlines in the Pacific can build co-operative regional networks to create economic benefit.

"Pacific airlines share similar issues and aims, and can benefit mutually from economies of scale, through asset sharing and streamlined operations."

The announcement coincides with the recent appointment of Solomon Airlines as Air Vanuatu's General Sales Agent in Solomon Islands, with the airline's Point Cruz Sales Office in Honiara now servicing both airlines' clients.



ANNOUNCEMENT

# MIGRATION COMING SOON

Illumination, the creators of record-shattering *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* and blockbusters *Minions*, *Despicable Me*, *Sing* and *The Secret Life of Pets* comedies will launch their latest action-packed comedy: *Migration*, in cinemas on Boxing Day, 26 December 2023.

*Migration* takes the audience on a hilarious and thrilling flight into the unknown with the Mallards as they experience a funny, feathered family vacation like no other. As they take off and make their way South for the winter, their well-laid plans quickly go awry.

Solomon Airlines has partnered with Illumination, and will play a major role in promoting the film regionally.

"With our newest A320 joining the fleet, and our Brisbane to Munda direct service re-launched, we could not imagine a better time to partner with Illumination to promote in a creative way, the life-changing experience of travel," said Solomon Airlines Acting CEO, Napoleon Padabela.

"With the our country increasingly recognised internationally as an off-the-beaten-track and untouched leisure destination, we hope to create curiosity about journeying to our own tropical paradise.

"*Migration's* family-holiday story is very funny, action-packed and a bit like the journey many long-haul travellers might make halfway around the world to discover the Solomon Islands."

The unexpected and intrepid experience of travel, inspires them to expand their horizons, open themselves up to new friends and accomplish more than they ever thought possible, along the way learning more about each other, than they ever imagined.

More information can be found at [flysolomons.com/news](https://flysolomons.com/news)

ANNOUNCEMENT

# SOLOMON AIRLINES INTRODUCES NEW PREPAID EXCESS BAGGAGE POLICY

Solomon Airlines has announced the introduction of a new excess baggage policy effective for departures from 1 October 2023. The airline will introduce different rates for pre-paid excess baggage, and for excess baggage that is checked in and paid for, at the airport on the day of travel.

Solomon Airlines said the separate rates would allow customers to decide how they want to handle their luggage, and provide greater flexibility, convenience, and the opportunity for savings if planning in advance.

"By encouraging passengers to plan their baggage requirements in advance, the airline can optimise its aircraft operations, potentially reducing unnecessary weight on

flights, and also help minimise its carbon footprint over time" said Solomon Airlines Acting CEO, Napoleon Padabela.

Passengers who prefer to pay for excess baggage at the time of check-in can still do so at a designated rate.

Travellers who wish to pre-pay for their excess baggage, can save time at the airport and also around 20% off day-of-departure baggage rates by booking their tickets online at [flysolomons.com](https://flysolomons.com) and purchasing excess baggage as part of the transaction, or by booking through Solomon Airlines' Reservations and Sales Offices.

More information can be found at [flysolomons.com/baggage](https://flysolomons.com/baggage) or by contacting the airline at (+61) 7 3860 5883

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# Honiara's Entertainment Hub



## Welkam to Pacific Crown Hotel

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

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

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


Let us show you the warmth of Solomon Island hospitality!


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


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




# PACIFIC CROWN HOTEL

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