

ISSUE 95

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SOLOMON AIRLINES COMPLIMENTARY IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE

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across the Lau Lagoon

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We are excited to share this edition of our in-flight magazine, featuring the latest milestones and stories from 2025 that reflect our commitment to excellence, community, and the vibrant spirit of the Solomon Islands.

October marked the start of a new international schedule to strengthen connectivity between the Solomon Islands, Australia, and New Zealand. This includes more flights to Vanuatu and the introduction of a new Brisbane-Honiara service on Saturdays, providing convenient options for travellers and supporting regional tourism growth.

At Solomon Airlines, we strive to make every journey more than just a flight.

Our team is at the heart of Solomon Airlines. We celebrated Captain Patricia Avosa graduating with a Bachelor of Aviation with Distinction from Griffith University, a milestone that highlights her dedication, discipline, and leadership, values we proudly nurture within our airline.

We also marked the return and successful completion of our landmark FlySolomons Peace Marathon, promoting wellness, unity, and community cohesion, while highlighting the Solomon Islands' rich World War II heritage. Many participants from around the globe joined, showcasing the beauty and culture of our nation.



At Solomon Airlines, we strive to make every journey more than just a flight. From the moment you step on board, our goal is to provide comfort, safety, and memorable experiences. We hope you enjoy reading about the achievements of our people, the milestones we've reached, and the inspiring stories from across our islands.

The aviation industry is not without its challenges, and like many airlines in the region, we must continually struggle with the demands of operating in a high-cost, incredibly competitive market. This requires us to be flexible and always looking to improve our operation. We must also be mindful of the fact that the Solomon Islands' size and geographic spread place additional challenges not faced by airlines operating

in more populated areas. For these reasons, your support and travelling with us means so much more than just the value of the ticket; it's a positive endorsement of the airline and a contribution to help ensure the airline can continue to connect people of the Solomon Islands with each other and the world with our South Pacific Islands.

Thank you for flying with us. We are honoured to be a part of your journey and look forward to welcoming you on board again soon.

Wishing you all a warm and festive holiday season, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Tagio tumas,
Paul Abbot
Interim Chief Executive Officer
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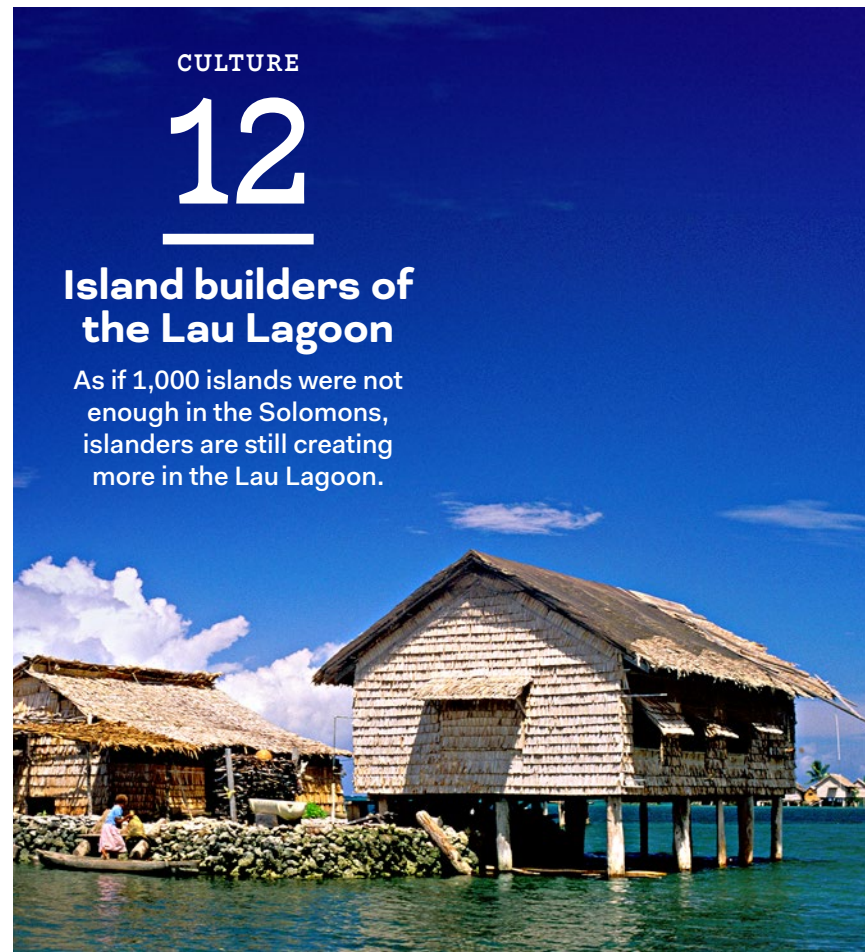
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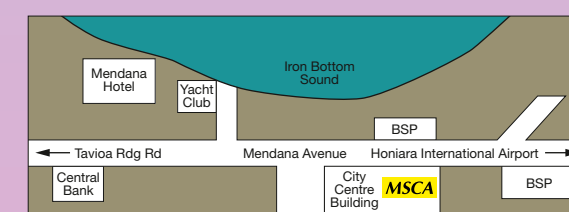
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Solomon Islands steal the spotlight at World Expo 2025

The Solomon Islands made a splash on the global stage at the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, as the nation's I Dig a Dream theatre troupe wowed audiences with a powerful mix of culture, storytelling, and ocean advocacy.

Performed during the Solomon Islands' National Day celebrations on October 2, the show transported visitors straight to the islands' turquoise shores. What began as a simple story of village life unfolded into an emotional call to protect the ocean,

blending dance, drama, and traditional rhythm in a performance that left crowds cheering and cameras flashing.

Backed by a passionate message about sustainability and community, I Dig a Dream not only spotlighted the Solomon Islands' creativity but also its deep connection to the sea, an element that defines both daily life and the country's growing tourism identity.

Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Peter Shanel Agovaka said the performance was a powerful way to share the Solomon Islands' story with the world.

"Through our culture and our people, we're inviting visitors to see

who we are, and to come experience our islands for themselves," he said.

The Solomon Islands pavilion (part of a shared Pacific, Caribbean, and African showcase) has drawn thousands of Expo visitors eager to experience island life through crafts, music, and storytelling. With the Expo's theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," the country's participation highlights its commitment to sustainability, cultural pride, and meaningful global partnerships.

As the applause still echoed through the Expo Village, one thing was clear: the Solomon Islands aren't just performing on the world stage, they're inviting the world to visit. ▴



Fatboys Resort makes a splash with new world-class dive centre

Fatboys Resort, the laid-back island escape just off Gizo in Solomon Islands' Western Province, has plunged into a new era of adventure tourism with the launch of its world-class dive centre.

The addition cements Fatboys' status as one of the Solomons' top spots for travellers chasing sun, sea, and serious underwater exploration. Guests can now enjoy professional instruction, guided dives, and all the gear needed to explore Gizo's famed reefs and wrecks.

Dive Shop Manager and Instructor Suellen Holland said the upgrade was driven by guest feedback. "People kept asking how we could take their diving to the next level—so we listened," she said. "If we were going to do this, it had to be world-class. Looking at it now, I think we've nailed it."

Built sustainably using local materials and labour, the dive centre is run entirely by Solomon Islanders and will also train locals for internationally recognised diving qualifications. ▴



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ISLAND BUILDERS *of the* LAU LAGOON

As if 1,000 islands were not enough in the Solomons, islanders are still creating more in the Lau Lagoon off the north-east tip of Malaita. Andrew Marshall visits the offshore haven.

Words and images Andrew Marshall

Using little more than a dugout canoe, an iron bar and more importantly, brute strength, the people of the Lau Lagoon, known as the *wane i asi* or Saltwater People, have for centuries collected coral rock from the ocean floor to build new islands on which to raise their children.

Originally forced into the shallow waters of the lagoon by fierce headhunting warfare, the Saltwater People have built more than 60 islands scattered along its 35 km length.

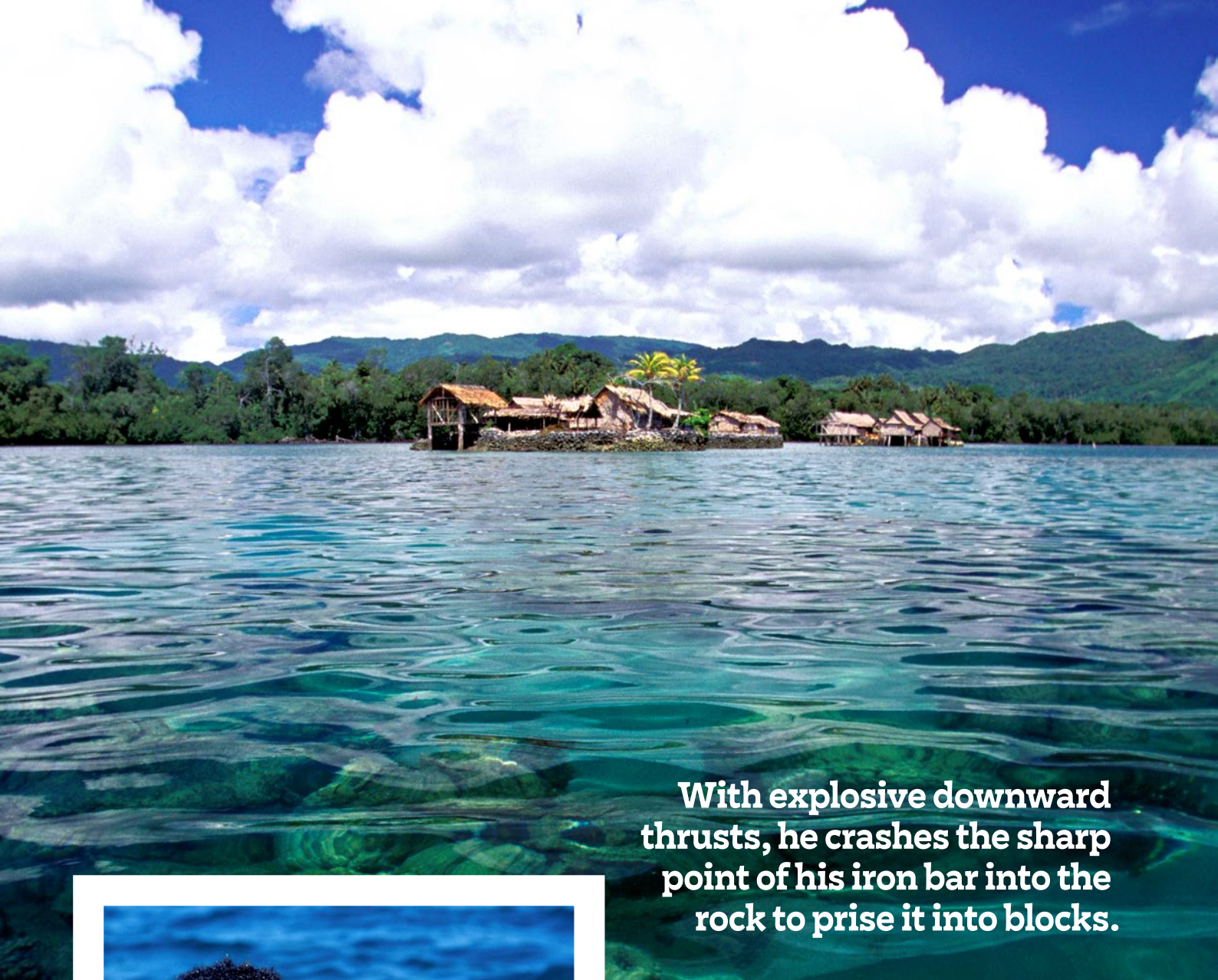
I had journeyed from Australia to Malaita's Lau Lagoon with the sole purpose of learning more about the Saltwater People and how the artificial islands are built. I'd first met my host, David Kabitana, in the back of a transport truck where the dirt road ends at the north end of the lagoon. When I'd discovered that

contrary to my guidebook, there was no accommodation for travellers, he'd kindly invited me to stay in his simple thatched home on one of the smaller islands. Although suspicious at first, the villagers soon opened up their hearts and welcomed me into their lives.

It's a typically clear morning on the lagoon's turquoise waters, and the island village where I'm staying is stirring into life. A woman leans from a nearby window and passes some betel nuts to her neighbour. In a sty, built on

stilts over the water, pigs grunt and squeal as a young girl tosses them a bucketful of scraps. A gang of giggling boys dressed for school in their blue shorts and white shirts crowd around the corner of Stephen Yeo's house, as they snatch daring peeks of a strange-looking white man with expensive camera equipment.

"I first learnt to build islands from my father, and so far, I've built four," 35-year-old Stephen tells me, raising a smouldering twig from a nearby fire to light his cigarette.



With explosive downward thrusts, he crashes the sharp point of his iron bar into the rock to prise it into blocks.

Today, Stephen has the arduous task of building an island for his uncle, and after waving goodbye to his wife Mary, he boards a dugout canoe directly from the coral steps beneath his house. He's on the lookout for large foundation stones for the new island's outer walls, and the floor of the shallow lagoon is paved with the perfect material: dense coral rock that has lain there for centuries.



These amazing islands range in size from the largest, Forau, with around 1,500 inhabitants, to dozens of smaller ones supporting maybe three or four generations.

I follow in his wake, precariously balanced in my borrowed canoe, paddling as best I can to keep up.

Island building is often a community event, involving the wisdom and supervision of the elders, the bulk efforts of the women and the muscle of the young men. But if a villager needs a new island built and has the means, he can employ the services of men like Stephen to do the hard work. Payment can be made in many forms, from live pigs and dolphins' teeth to shell money or the preferred Solomon dollar.

Standing shoulder deep in water, Stephen peers through his mask at a suitable slab of coral. With explosive downward thrusts, he crashes the sharp point of his iron bar into the rock to prise it into blocks. Then, with the strength of a weightlifter, he wrestles a huge chunk of coral to the surface and heaves it into his waiting canoe. Within less than an hour, he has a full load, and wading shoulder deep, he pushes his canoe to the island building site. At this stage, the new island is little more than a pile of rocks on the lagoon's floor. Stephen adds his latest load, being careful to place each stone in its correct position. As the wall breaks the surface, a new island is born. The corners of an island are always built first, followed by the walls, wide at the base and rising eight feet to clear the highest spring tides. Rocks are then tossed into the centre, and brittle branch coral will be crushed to fill in the gaps.

These amazing islands range in size from the largest, Forau, with around 1,500 inhabitants, to dozens of smaller ones supporting maybe three or four generations. Not surprisingly, life on an artificial island is cramped, given that every square yard is gained with backbreaking work.



Leaf houses built almost entirely from coconut palm stand side-by-side, almost one on top of the next. There seems to be little room for privacy, but then again, everyone is related and everyone is someone's cousin or brother's brother.

Although the Saltwater People create their own islands, they also own plots of land on the mainland for growing vegetables. Stephen's wife Mary spends her days working the meagre soils wrested from the grips of the rainforest, growing taro, sweet potatoes, yams and cassava. Fish caught in the lagoon supplement the diet, and any surplus is sold and traded at the weekly bush market, an important link between the Saltwater People and the bush people or wane i tolo who populate the hills of Malaita.

As darkness begins to fall on the lagoon, islanders return from their mainland gardens, canoes laden with produce. Under the warm glow of kerosene lanterns, villagers relax on the verandas of their island homes, chewing betel nut and smoking tobacco. As the moon casts a trail of silvery light, the dozens of artificial islands that sprawl out to the horizon appear suspended, like stepping stones across the reflected heavens. It's the end of another day in the life of Saltwater People of the Lau Lagoon. ▀

Main image, previous page: With an islander's agility, a boy punts home in his canoe. **Clockwise from opposite:** An artificial island rises from the tranquil waters of the Lau Lagoon; building a new house on an artificial island; traditional lau fishing method using a thick rope to round up fish into a spearing pond; Stephen transports a canoe load of coral rock to his building site; using brute strength, Stephen raises coral blocks from the lagoon floor into his waiting canoe.



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Words and images
Kate Gazzard

Find your Island Sanctuary at Leleana



Staying at Leleana Resort on Kolombangara Island in the Solomon Islands is like stepping into a world that's not quite like anything you've ever experienced.

Forget the glossy, ultra-polished resorts with their endless rows of sunbeds and poolside cocktail menus. Leleana is something else entirely. It's the sort of place that doesn't really fit the "resort" mould, and that's exactly why it's so special. There's no stuffy check-in process, no over-the-top lobbies (this is the Sols, after all), just a warm welcome from your host Lily and a sense of relaxation that hits you as soon as you set foot on the property.

From the moment you arrive, it's clear that nature is the star of the show. The resort is nestled in a landscape that could only be described as paradise; towering hills, dense jungle, and the kind of untouched, rugged beauty you only get in places that haven't been overrun by tourists.

You'll find yourself walking through sprouting orchid gardens and past pristine beaches with turquoise water so clear you'll swear someone spiked the ocean with a whole lot of blue Gatorade. But this isn't the kind of place where you need to worry about your Instagram aesthetic or whether your towel's been arranged just so by housekeeping. Here, it's all about embracing the wild beauty of the Solomon Islands and feeling completely at home in it.

The beach, just a short stroll from your door, is like something from a dream. The water is so clear you can practically see the fish swimming around you without even having to get your face wet.

If you're into snorkelling, then brace yourself for some serious jaw-dropping moments. The coral reefs are alive with colour, and the marine life here could make any aquarium jealous. Even if you're not the most experienced snorkeller, you'll find it

Left: The pristine turquoise waters surrounding Leleana Resort. **Above:** Butterflies flock to special trees across the resort.



One of the most surprising (and enchanting) features of Leleana is the butterfly trees. Yes, you read that right.

hard not to be entranced by the way the water shimmers and the underwater world reveals itself in a dizzying array of tropical fish and swaying corals. For those who prefer to keep things simple, a leisurely swim will feel like you've jumped into a natural pool built just for you.

But while the beach and the water might steal the spotlight, there's plenty to do around Leleana to keep your sense of adventure alive. Whether you're in the mood for a little light hiking through the nearby jungle or you want to try your hand at kayaking along the calm, glassy shores, there's no shortage of options. You're not just a visitor here - you're part of the natural world, surrounded by the sights and sounds of the Solomon Islands, and everything feels incredibly close and personal.

Now, let's talk about the food situation because, let's be real, food can make or break a holiday. At Leleana, it's a bit of a choose-your-own-adventure. Lily and her band of culinary wizards whip up delicious local dishes using fresh, seasonal ingredients. We're talking fish so fresh it

practically swam onto your plate, tropical fruits so sweet they'll make you rethink everything you knew about fruit, and island-style meals that'll have your stomach doing a happy dance. The beauty of it all is that you don't have to leave the resort to experience these flavours, just sit back, relax, and let someone else handle the cooking.

But if you're feeling a little more independent (or perhaps just in the mood to channel your inner chef), you're welcome to bring your own food and cook it yourself in the fully equipped kitchen. There's no pressure to eat exactly what's on the menu, it's your holiday, so you get to decide how you want to spend your meals. Whether you're cooking up something simple or going full-blown

Clockwise from above: Even the dock is vibrant and welcoming - that yellow colour? Those natural streamers?; each bungalow has a fantastic view of the ocean; the butterflies will follow you around the resort; nothing says you're on a tropical island like a coconut on arrival.



gourmet, you've got everything you need to make your culinary dreams come true. And don't worry, there's always a cold drink nearby to keep you refreshed while you work your magic in the kitchen.

One of the most surprising (and enchanting) features of Leleana is the butterfly trees. Yes, you read that right.

The property is home to these incredible trees that seem to be perpetually surrounded by butterflies. It's like something out of a nature documentary, but better because you get to experience it firsthand. These trees become your constant companions; their branches alive with vibrant butterflies fluttering in every direction. And if you stand still for a moment, you might find one of these delicate creatures landing on you, as if they, too, want to be a part of this surreal little paradise.

The best part about Leleana, though, is that it's not trying to be something it's not. There are no pretensions here, no endless activities trying to fill every minute of your day. Instead, it's a place that lets you slow down and simply be, whether that means lazing on your bungalow's balcony, diving into the crystal-clear waters, or just chatting with the local workers who are more than happy to share their stories. It's a place that encourages you to reconnect with nature and yourself, in a way that feels both adventurous and incredibly relaxing.

So, if you're tired of the cookie-cutter resorts and you want something a little more real, a little wilder, and a whole lot more fun, Leleana is your ticket to paradise. It might not be your idea of a typical 'resort', but it is an experience that'll leave you with memories as vibrant and unique as the butterflies that flutter around the property. ▶

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Short break

72 HOURS IN HONIARA

Words and images **Daniel Scott**

Whether you are flying in from Brisbane (just three hours away) or from elsewhere in the Solomons or the region, the capital, Honiara and its surrounds, are made for a short break strong on culture, history and natural beauty.

Having evolved from WW2 after the Americans established a base here during the bloody Guadalcanal campaign against the Japanese, Honiara has become the Solomon Islands' main commercial centre with a burgeoning population of more than 110,000 and most of the nation's museums and important monuments within the thin coastal strip it occupies.

Over three days, there is time to take in both the city's attractions, mostly located around the central Point Cruz Peninsula, named by Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendaña, the first European to discover the Solomons in 1568, and a trip into the beautiful Honiara hinterland.



Honiara Central Market

9:00AM

Central Market & memorial

A great way to start any visit is at Central Market, located on the waterfront, which is the city's liveliest social hub, and all produce is organic. The market features a sizable seafood section, offering freshly caught reef fish, bonito (tuna), and shellfish for sale, as well as a large, colourful fruit and vegetable market. The stalls are piled high with taro, yam, watermelon, sweet pineapple, and bush limes.

Not far away on Commonwealth Street, beside Point Cruz port, is the Solomon Scouts' & Coastwatchers' Memorial. This commemorates the vital part played by Solomon Islanders in supporting the Allies during WW2, by reporting on Japanese activities, and by the servicemen who hid behind enemy lines, passing on information

DAY
ONE



by radio. In August 1943, the Scouts helped save future US President John F Kennedy after his boat was sunk by a Japanese destroyer.



11:00AM

Coffee, culture & crafts

Honiara has some excellent cafes, among them the Breakwater, right on the harbour, which serves the islands' best coffee and cakes. It makes for a lovely brunch or lunch stop with an all-day menu including chilly choy sum scrambled eggs.

For quality Solomon souvenirs, head next to the adjacent Craft Market Centre, with stalls selling local artwork and carvings. Within the market, the National Art Gallery (free, open Monday-Friday, 9am-4.30pm), also sells art and intricately carved objects, like replica dugout canoes.



5:30PM

Sunset & dinner

As daylight fades, make for the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel to enjoy drinks with sweeping views across Iron Bottom Sound, then settle in for dinner at its Japanese restaurant, Hakubai.

Short break

8:00AM

DAY TWO

Into the hills

Break up your time in the capital with a trip inland. About an hour's drive along a winding rural road from Honiara is the Paranjigu Mountain Lodge, in the hills overlooking the Guadalcanal coastline. Once there, you can take a guided 5.5km trek to Tenaru waterfall, following a trail through the rainforest and crossing the Belaha river before reaching the cascades. You can swim in a natural pool below the 100m falls before climbing back up to the lodge for lunch.

2:00PM

Cultural detour

Off the road back to Honiara, you can discover how Solomon families live off the land at Hotomai Cultural Village. Tours begin with a traditional welcome - by both fearsome warriors and local women doing a Kuko dance - and visitors are shown traditional skills like fire-making using only sticks, basketweaving and cooking on hot stones, before being farewelled with melodic tribal song.

Finish the day by visiting the Amazing Grace plantation, behind Tenaru Beach, which showcases how some of the world's most prized chocolate, produced on Guadalcanal Island, is harvested and crafted.

9:00AM

DAY THREE

History & reflection

The Solomon Islands National Museum, in central Honiara, is a good introduction to the nation's history and different cultures, emanating from Melanesian, Micronesian and

Polynesian ancestral roots. It has galleries dedicated to prehistoric migrations and archeological sites, and exhibits that reflect the islanders' heritage, living off the land and sea. Another gallery sheds further light on the Solomon Scouts and Coastwatchers.



1:00-6:00PM

Skyline views & a farewell feast

In the afternoon, spend some time absorbing Honiara's laid-back vibe beside the hotel pool before heading up to the American Memorial at Skyline Drive. This commemorates the Allied servicemen who died during WW2's Guadalcanal campaign, between August 1942 and February 1943, in which they battled to liberate the Solomons from the Japanese.

Back in town, after a busy few days, The Splash Bar and Grill, at the Heritage Park Hotel, on Honiara's waterfront, is the perfect place for last night drinks and dinner.



Solomon Airlines Magazine



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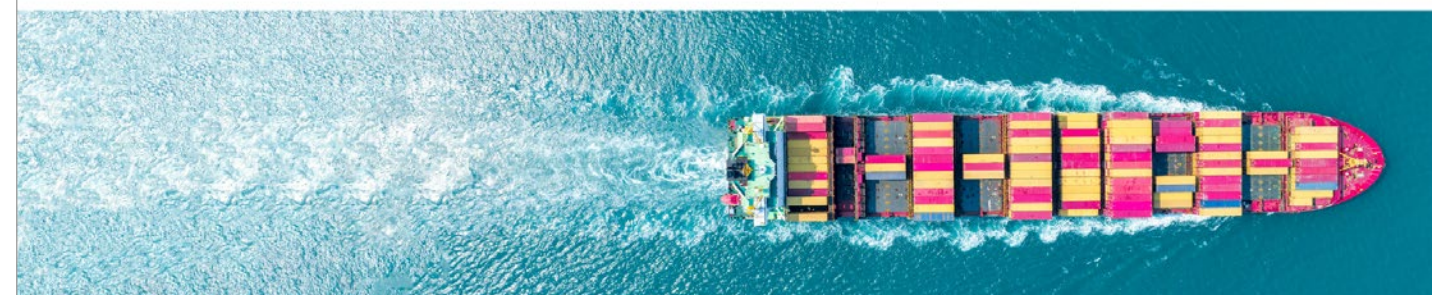
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Vanuatu

Into the MUD, the DARK, the DEEP

Words and images Justin Jamieson

It's the kind of rain that doesn't hammer down in sheets, but just quietly seeps into every fibre of your clothing, your shoes, your soul, and it's been falling all morning. By the time we pile out of the back of the rattling Ute at a clearing somewhere deep in Santo's interior, we're already damp, mildly concussed, and wondering what exactly we're in for.

"How old are your kids?" they'd asked.

"Oh, that's young..." they'd replied with what seemed a concerned tone.

We're here to do the Millennium Cave trek, a full-day adventure that locals describe as "challenging" and travellers describe as "a spiritual awakening with mud." I've roped in my two youngest daughters, Parker (13) and Charlie (12), both of whom have the energy of caffeinated squirrels and a high tolerance for danger. Luckily.

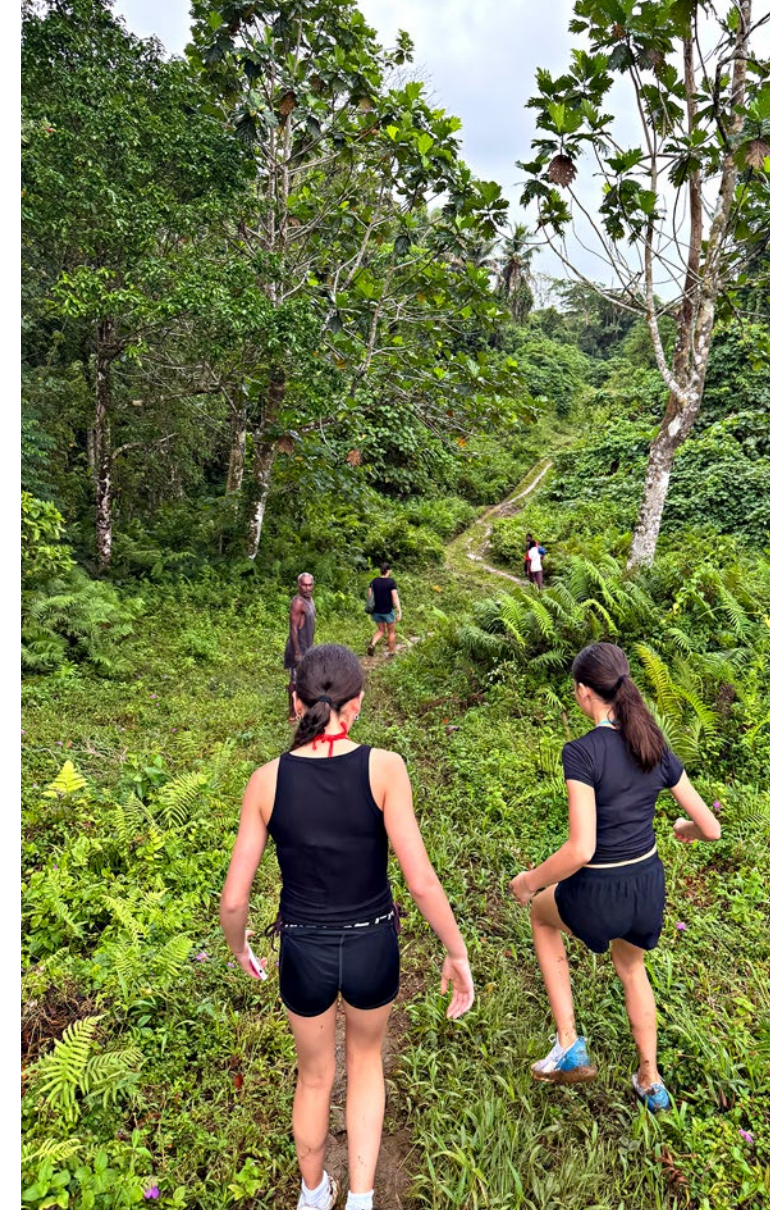
Our guide, Glen, is the barefoot son of the village chief. He greets us with a grin, no shoes, and an aura of calm that suggests this might not be his first rodeo leading soggy foreigners into the belly of Vanuatu's wild heart. He looks at our hiking boots and socks with mild amusement. "It's muddy today," he says, like that's something unusual, and then leads us through an hour of thick mud tracks as we wind our way up to his village.

Before we even begin the descent into the jungle, Glen finds us a dry-ish rock platform beneath a tangled banyan tree, and we break for lunch. Courtesy of the team at Barrier Beach Resort, where we're staying, we fuel up on crusty French baguettes stuffed with ham, cheese, and tomato. There's fresh-cut pineapple, banana cake, and cold bottled water that tastes like salvation. It's rustic luxury, and it disappears quickly, especially with Parker and Charlie devouring theirs like we've just crossed the Gobi Desert.

Fuelled up and dripping with enthusiasm (and also rain), we begin.

The trail is less "track" and more "vague idea of a direction." It plunges downward through tangled jungle, all thick vines, squelching mud, and roots conspiring to twist ankles. The rain has turned everything into a slippery slide. Charlie sinks to her shins in mud within ten minutes and screams with delight. Parker tries to stay clean for about twenty minutes before surrendering to the inevitable and sliding down a clay slope on her backside.

Clockwise from opposite: Heading into the deep, dark depths of Millennium Cave; Parker and Charlie were excited for the coming adventure; nothing says adventure more than a slippery jungle ladder.



"This is awesome," she yells, covered in jungle. We cross rope bridges, climb down bamboo ladders and crawl through the thick jungle. Glen barely touches the ground. His bare feet move silently over roots and boulders like they've grown from the earth itself. He doesn't sweat. He doesn't slip. I, meanwhile, am sweating like a rat in a weasel convention, and clinging to vines like a soggy Indiana Jones. After almost two hours of rainforest immersion therapy, we arrive at the mouth of Millennium Cave, and it is massive. A gaping cathedral of blackness in the limestone cliffs, echoing with the rush of a river that disappears into the shadows. There are no guardrails, no warning signs. Just Glen handing out torches and grinning like we're about to do something incredibly stupid. He's not wrong. The river runs straight through the cave, thigh-deep and icy cold. We wade into the darkness, torches clamped between teeth, stumbling over submerged rocks and ducking under overhangs dripping with millennia of mineral build-up. Bats flutter overhead. Parker's loving it until her hand rests on a pile of bat poo. Charlie keeps whooping every time she slips, which is often.

It's disorienting, beautiful and faintly terrifying. There's no light but our own, no sound but the rushing water and occasional squeals of glee from my daughters.

It's disorienting, beautiful and faintly terrifying. There's no light but our own, no sound but the rushing water and occasional squeals of glee from my daughters. I can't help but think of recent caving disasters and am more than thankful when we spot daylight finally in the distance. When we emerge, blinking into the light, we're not done. Now comes the canyon. We descend a series of ropes and ladders into a gorge so lush and overgrown it feels like we've dropped into Jurassic Park. The river becomes our guide. We scramble, float, and stumble through turquoise pools, over mossy rocks and down miniature waterfalls, all framed by sheer

Clockwise from opposite: The moss covered boulders scattered along the journey make it that much harder to remain upright; once out of the cave, a swim in the river is needed (and refreshing); the river is cocooned by lush jungle foliage, keeping the island's intense heat and humidity at bay.



jungle walls climbing up into the mist. I've walked the incredible slot canyons of Utah, and if you stripped back all the vegetation and painted it red, you'd almost be in the same place. But the lush green foliage provides a wildly surreal environment. At one point, Charlie floats downstream on her back, arms spread wide, yelling "BEST. DAY. EVER!" while Parker leaps from a rock with an action-hero scream. I glance at Glen, who's still barefoot and still unfazed. He nods like this is all completely normal.

Eventually, inevitably, we climb. The jungle gives us one last kick with an uphill stretch that feels never-ending. Mud clings to our legs like wet cement. Every step takes convincing. But when we crest the final ridge and the village comes into view, there's a collective exhale. We've done it.

There's warm bush tea waiting. And delicious fresh grapefruit. The rain still spits, but it doesn't matter. My daughters are covered in mud, soaked to the bone, and laughing like lunatics.

Millennium Cave is wild and raw and just dangerous enough to make you feel alive. And walking back to the Ute, squelching in our shoes and beaming like idiots, I realise something rare: Parker and Charlie didn't just survive it, they absolutely loved it.

And me? I'm just glad Glen didn't laugh too hard when I faceplanted in the cave. ▴

We scramble, float, and stumble through turquoise pools, over mossy rocks and down miniature waterfalls, all framed by sheer jungle walls climbing up into the mist.

Words Christine Retschlag Images Pana Paza

VAKA to the FUTURE

An ocean voyage with one major message in its sails.

The Vaka Tepuke embarked on a six-day voyage from Temotu Province all the way to Honiara.



“This voyage is a declaration. Of peace. Of purpose. Of ancestral stewardship. We are the ocean. We are the guardians. We are the voice.”

It was a journey of 420 nautical miles, which began with a single soaring sail and carried a critical message to the world. One ocean. One people. One salt water.

The Solomon Islands' *Vaka Tepuke* outrigger canoe set sail from the remote eastern Temotu Province on August 29, carrying centuries of tradition passed down through calloused hands, and on a South Pacific wind whispering learnings from the past and bellowing hopes for the future.

The six-day journey, which started in the Duff Islands (known as Taumako) and ended in Honiara, represented a powerful environmental message to the 54th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders Meeting, which started on September 8, of “one ocean/wansolwara” that needs urgent protection.

The crew of 11, including one woman, was captained by Ambrose Miki, who ensured they reached the Reef

Islands on August 31 before sailing to Lata, where they were joined by a traditional Fijian canoe, Uto Ni Yalo and its 15 sailors from around Oceania (representatives of other Pacific Voyaging Societies crew).

In an exclusive interview with Tourism Solomons following the voyage, Miki, whose father taught him ocean navigation, said he used the stars, tide swells, and current to navigate the journey.

“Navigating the seas using local knowledge is a very important aspect in culture that we must keep and must be practised for today’s generation,” he said.

“The voyage is more than a journey – it is a symbol of prosperity, unity, and peace.”

Solomon Islands Tourism Marketing Head of Sales and Marketing Fiona Teama, who hails from Pileni and Nifiloli in the Temotu province, said people of her province were descendants of navigators and ocean voyagers “guided by each tide, current, wind direction, sun, moon and stars.”

“This is a remote province comprising of Melanesians and Polynesians of Vaeakau, Duff Island, Tikopia and Anuta,” Teama said.

“The canoe is traditionally built, every piece carved, woven, tied, using 100 per cent local materials and not even a single nail. It is quite special to us, used over generations with no guided maps or GPS.

“This year the voyage is to bring the message of Vaka Valo Tepuke together with Fiji’s Waka, Uto Ni Yalo (traditional canoe), with a message to the PIF leaders attending that we are one ocean...wan solwara, wan moana.

“We are the guardians of the ocean and leaders must take up this message from PIF to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November in Brazil.”

The Vaka Valo Association & Tepuke Crew said it was “not just a canoe but a living classroom” with an aim to highlight:

- A healthy ocean is essential for a healthy climate
- The Pacific is an ocean of peace and to resist militarisation and affirm Indigenous guardian ship
- A fossil fuel free Pacific and 100 per cent renewable energy future
- 100 per cent ocean management and 30 per cent Marine Protect Areas (MPAs) across the Exclusive Economic Zone and high seas
- Support for ratification and implementation of the

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction agreement.

“We sail in solidarity with the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu under the Motalava Treaty (signed in 2016 to establish a maritime boundary between both countries following more than 30 years of negotiations), honouring traditional connections and the shared vision for MPAs and managed areas,” they said.

“This voyage is a declaration. Of peace. Of purpose. Of ancestral stewardship. We are the ocean. We are the guardians. We are the voice.”

The annual gathering of Pacific Islands Forum Leaders attracted heads of government from all 18 member countries to deliberate on regional issues.

Leaders at the summit committed to a “Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration”, which has been hailed as a “landmark agreement” reaffirming the region’s commitment to peace, unity and co-operation.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele, who chaired the forum, said the declaration was a “reclamation of our sovereignty and shared destiny.”

“It is a solemn vow that our seas, air and lands will never again be drawn into the vortex of great power rivalry,” Manele said. ▀

Clockwise from opposite: A crowd came out to welcome the traditional canoe; there was one woman among the 11 person crew; captain Ambrose Miki said he used the stars, tide swells and current to navigate the journey.

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Conservation

Greetings from TURTLE TOWN

Solomon Islands' Arnavons are saving a species, one hatchling at a time.



“The Arnavons aren’t just saving turtles. They’re proof that sometimes neighbours can actually get along.”

Words and images **Justin Jamieson**

The Long Way Round

The Solomons don't do “direct.” To get anywhere you need patience, a boat, and a sense of adventure. From Papatura Resort I clamber into a longboat and we skim across water so clear it looks like we're flying.

We break the trip at Kia village, a tiny fishing community where life moves to the rhythm of paddles and roosters that crow with zero respect for time zones. The village skirts the shoreline with lush green forest spillin gup into the hills behind it. Kids race along sandy lanes, laughing as they shout “hello!” like we're old mates. The fish drying in the sun smells exactly like you think fish drying in the sun smells, but the smiles are as fresh as it gets. And even better there's a bar serving warm Solbrews where we stop to enjoy the surrounds.

A Sanctuary Born of Rivalries

Back on the boat, emerald smudges grow on the horizon, the Arnavons. They don't look like much, just low coral islands, but these are the beating heart of the Arnavon Community Marine Conservation Area.



In the '90s, hawksbill turtles were being hammered for their shells and meat. Three neighbouring communities, normally more rivals than friends, decided to call a truce and protect them instead. It was the Pacific's first community-managed marine park, and it's working. Turtles are returning, reefs are thriving, and the rangers patrol with the kind of pride that makes you want to hug them.

Clockwise from opposite: A local man helps the baby hawksbill turtles on their way; Kia village is a tiny fishing community right on the water; one of the families helping to save hawksbill turtles.



Sleeping with the Turtles

When the rangers suggest staying overnight, I'm all in. The accommodation? Let's call it rustic chic. Wooden huts, mosquito nets, and a chorus of geckos burping in the rafters. Dinner is freshly caught fish (not turtle, relax) eaten under a sky packed with the most sparkling stars I've seen since deep in the Australian outback.

There's no Wi-Fi, no signal, and no chance of sleeping through the cicada soundtrack. But lying salty-skinned under the Milky Way, I can't imagine anywhere better.



Snorkelling in Liquid Glass

Mask on, fins up, I tumble into water so clear it makes Fiji look like a dirty fish tank. Coral bommies rise out of the sand, glowing like psychedelic lava lamps. Neon fish swirl past in gangs. A turtle the size of a coffee table glides by, gives me the side-eye, then flaps lazily away into the distance. There's shining blue giant clams and the odd reef shark cruising somewhat closer than what feels comfortable. I've snorkelled plenty of reefs. None beat this.

Hatchlings on the March

Later, the rangers summon me to the beach. A clutch of eggs has hatched, and suddenly I'm crouched in the sand watching dozens of thumb-sized turtles flap their way to the surf.

They tumble over shells, face-plant into the sand, get smashed by waves, but they just keep going. I cheer for one particularly feisty little guy who seems determined to win some kind of reptile Grand Prix.

It's impossible not to get emotional. Only one in a thousand will make it, but thanks to this sanctuary, those odds are a little less cruel. Watching them vanish into the surf feels like hope itself is wriggling into the future.

"It's like watching hope itself crawl into the sea."

Dawn Patrol

At sunrise I wander back to the beach. Hatchling tracks from the night before are still etched in the sand, tiny highways leading straight to the Pacific. It hits me that these little islands aren't just another "pretty stop" on a South Pacific itinerary. They're living proof that when locals take charge, incredible things can happen.

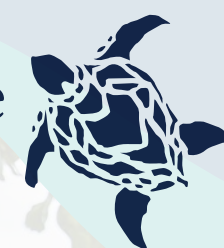
For me, it's snorkelling in the clearest waters I've ever seen. For the turtles, it's survival. For both of us, it's the adventure of a lifetime.

Because sometimes paradise isn't a poolside cocktail with an umbrella. Sometimes it's a turtle hatchling the size of your thumb, stubbornly flapping toward the future. ▀

Clockwise from above: Snorkelling around the Anarvon Islands is a delight for the eyes; the cutest sand covered baby hawksbill turtle you ever did see; go, baby turtles, go!

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Words Karen Michelsen

The Solomon Airlines FlySolomons Peace Marathon is more than just a race. It's a gathering of runners from across the world, united by passion, discovery, and a celebration of peace — all set against Honiara's coastline and the lush mountains of Guadalcanal.

This year's event brought remarkable stories. Polish social media star Anna Skura celebrated her 10th marathon in her 10th country, while her compatriot Wojtek added the

Solomon Islands as the 180th stop on his extraordinary 249 Challenge Project.

American ultra-runner Brent Weigner notched his 215th global location here, while I, after years in Canada's Covid command centre, finally turned my long-followed dream into reality — finishing adorned with a handmade Solomon Islands lei.

Others came for adventure and surprise. Birdwatcher Joe Church joined the race by chance and still managed to spot one of the country's rarest species. Yvonne Dubois made a last-minute decision to fly in, placing third in the women's division. From Germany, Dieter took part, and from Britain, Dan proudly completed the half-marathon.



Each story carried across the finish line spoke of resilience, connection, and joy.

And of course, our local runners brought energy and pride, reminding us that this event is also about community at home.

Each story carried across the finish line spoke of resilience, connection, and joy. Together, we embodied the spirit of peace, proving that in the Solomon Islands, running is more than sport. It is a step toward friendship, adventure, and paradise.

As the Solomon Islands' national carrier, Solomon Airlines is proud to connect the world to the FlySolomons Peace Marathon, where running meets paradise, and every step is a step for peace. ▶

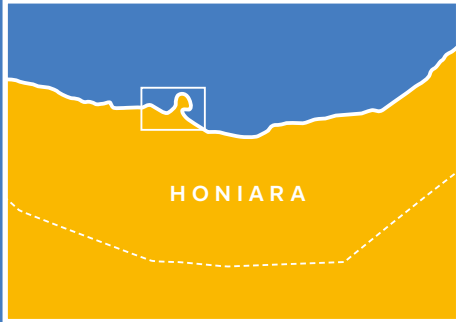


Clockwise from opposite: Get ready to run! Each finisher is given a medal; the kids are ready to go; eager runners waiting their turn; community spirit is high after the race; people of any age can participate... and finish.

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.



The pride of Honiara



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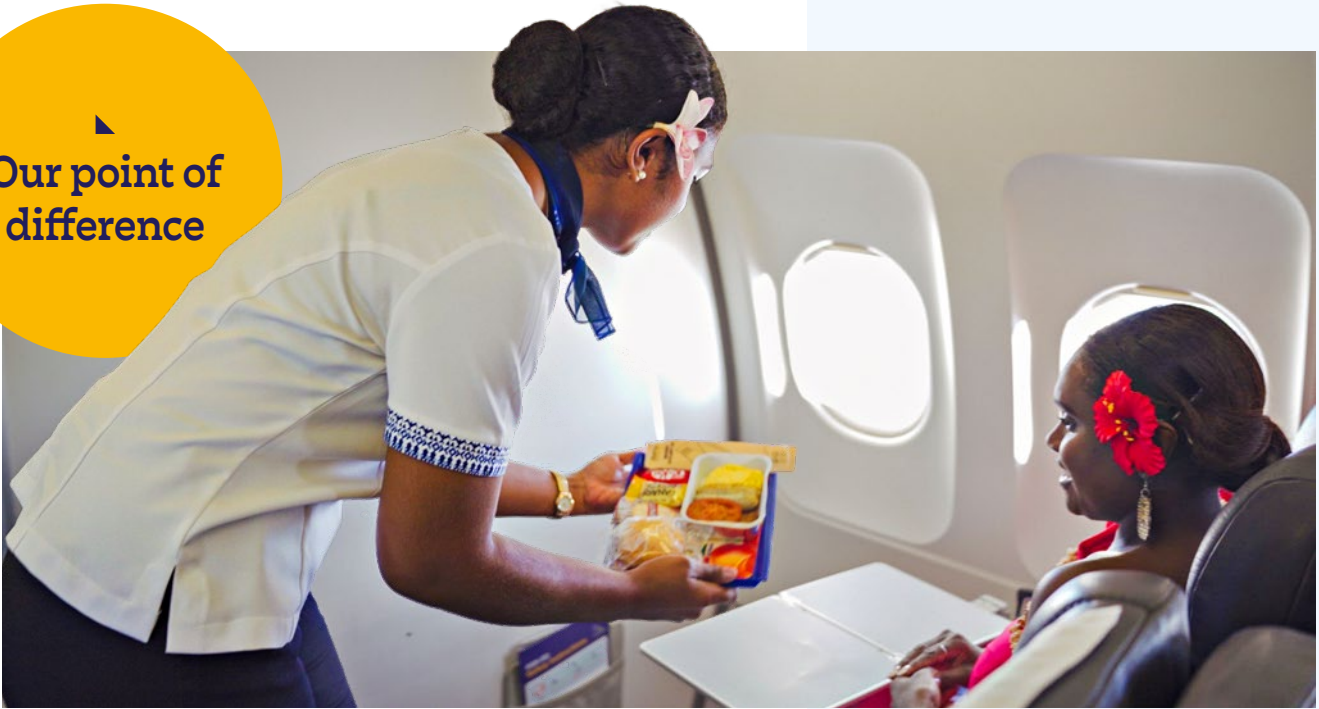
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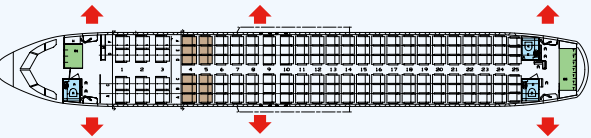
- 30 kg checked baggage (or 40 kg if booking flexible economy) and 7 kg cabin baggage allowance on international services
- 7 kg sports equipment allowance
- 16 kg checked baggage and 5 kg cabin baggage allowance on domestic services



A320

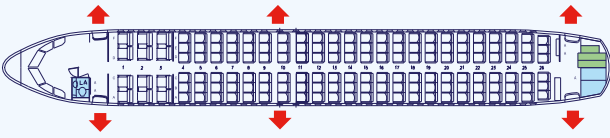


Registration **H4-SIB**
Length **37.57 m**
Wing Span **34.10 m**
Range **3,000 nm**
Cruising Speed **830 km/h**
Seating capacity **144**
Configuration: **Business: 12, Economy: 132**
Current Routes: **All international routes**



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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: **All international routes**



Dash 8-102



Length **22.25 m**
Wing Span **25.91 m**
Range **2,040 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, Lomlom**

Twin Otter



Length **15.77 m**
Wing Span **19.81 m**
Range **1,350 km**
Cruising Speed **338 km/h**
Seating capacity **16**
Crew **2**
Aircraft in Fleet **3**
Current Routes: **All airports in the 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 increases Vanuatu services

UPDATE

Solomon Airlines has announced a new international schedule effective from the 3rd of October 2025, with a focus on the airline's operations from Australia and New Zealand to Vanuatu, to meet developing tourism demand.

Solomon Islands' national carrier stepped in to introduce flights from Auckland and Brisbane to Vanuatu last year following the withdrawal of Air Vanuatu international services. Now with established operations and Air Vanuatu domestic flights within the country, international schedules will be streamlined to optimise connections for tourists and travellers to, from and within Vanuatu.

"We are designing operations to best meet customer demand, especially for tourism development, which means schedules that allow a 7-night stay at primary destinations," said Solomon Airlines Commercial Manager John Wopereis.

Under the revised schedule, Solomon Airlines will re-implement a Brisbane-Espiritu Santo-Brisbane service on Thursday in both directions. The flights are timed to allow for 7-night stays in Santo, optimal for divers and holidaymakers.

"With Air Vanuatu now restoring domestic service, we will also step back and withdraw Solomon Airlines flying the route between Santo and Port Vila," Mr Wopereis said.

The following changes will also be implemented under Solomon Airlines' new international schedule:

- Auckland-Port Vila flights will increase to 3 x return services weekly
- From the 5th of April 2026, a second Brisbane-Santo Espiritu service will be introduced on Saturdays
- A new Brisbane-Honiara flight will be introduced on Saturdays, providing a new departure date option for customers and improved cargo carriage opportunities

- Brisbane-Honiara Sunday services will cease
- Brisbane-Auckland services currently operating on Fridays will now operate on Sunday, maintaining a direct transit connection from Honiara
- The popular Auckland-Brisbane-Munda-Honiara service on Fridays will remain unchanged
- Honiara to Nadi service on Saturday and Nadi-Honiara service on Sunday will remain unchanged
- Flights on the Honiara-Port Vila and Port Vila-Honiara routes will no longer be operated by Solomon Airlines effective from the 1st of October, 2025. Solomon Airlines will contact any passengers affected by this change with existing forward bookings reaccommodated to codeshare flights operated by Air Niugini.

"Designing an optimal airline schedule is ongoing; it is a case of responding to customers' needs and wants across the leisure, VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives), RSE seasonal workforce and business traveller markets," Mr Wopereis added.

"We are working closely with our stakeholders and especially our partners at Air Vanuatu, Espiritu Santo Tourism Association (ESTA), Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO)".

"Santo, for example, is a very popular tourism destination out of Brisbane and with strong collaborative efforts between us, we have planned ongoing promotion of this route," he said.

Solomon Airlines now offers same-day flights, schedules allowing 7-day itineraries and by April 2026, the airline will launch a second service in time for the 2026 Easter period.

The airline is also experiencing strong demand for flights to Port Vila, a popular tourism destination out of New Zealand and only 3 hours from Auckland, offering a tropical beach destination close to home. ▴

Solomon Airlines Captain Patricia Avosa soars high

Solomon Airlines proudly congratulates Captain Patricia Avosa, who has graduated with a Bachelor of Aviation with Distinction from Griffith University on the 28th of July 2025, marking another significant milestone in her exceptional career.

Captain Avosa is no stranger to making history. On the 30th of March 2017, she co-piloted a scheduled commercial Twin Otter flight (H4-FSI) alongside Captain Lyndah Tito (now a Dash 8 Captain), becoming part of the first all-local female flight crew in Solomon Airlines' history: a groundbreaking achievement for the nation.

Her accomplishments have continued to take flight. In June 2022, she was promoted to Captain in Command on the Twin Otter fleet. In 2024, she was also recognised by Griffith University with an Academic Excellence Award for her outstanding academic performance, which further highlights her commitment to excellence both in the cockpit and the classroom.

Most recently, on the 9th of June 2024, during a formal "Presentation of Wings" ceremony in Honiara, Solomon Airlines recognised Captain Avosa as one of its Training Captains, having successfully completed Category D Flight Instructor Training.

"With distinction comes responsibility and opportunity, and her success marks the start of a career that will lift others, lead crews, and shape the future of aviation."



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With her degree earned with Distinction, she now joins a proud community of aviators committed to excellence. I wish her God's blessing in her future endeavours with Solomon Airlines," said Fleet Captain Alex Takola.

Captain Avosa's achievement reflects her commitment, discipline, and leadership values that Solomon Airlines proudly supports and promotes. Her success continues to inspire young Solomon Islanders, especially women, to reach for new heights in aviation.

From the entire team at Solomon Airlines, we congratulate her and wish her safe landings as she returns to join the team and take flight once again in our Hapi Isles. ▴

CELEBRATION



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Photo: Pana Paza

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