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As we enter this new season, I am pleased to share several key developments that reflect our continued commitment to improving accessibility, reliability, and service while creating new opportunities for our nation and the wider Pacific region.

We are delighted to introduce our 14-day Advance Sale initiative for domestic travellers, providing more affordable fares for customers who plan ahead and strengthening connectivity across our provinces. This initiative supports families, students, and businesses who rely on our domestic network.

We also sincerely acknowledge the World Bank and the Ministry of Communications and Aviation (MCA), through the Second Solomon Islands Roads and Aviation Project (SIRAP2), for their invaluable support in providing additional ground support equipment to Solomon Airlines. This important investment enhances aircraft turnaround times, strengthens safety standards, and significantly improves our operational efficiency and passenger service delivery.

We are equally pleased to highlight our partnership with the Espiritu Santo Tourism Association (ESTA Santo) through a newly signed Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration strengthens tourism ties between the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, enhances regional connectivity, supports joint marketing initiatives, and promotes sustainable tourism growth that benefits local communities across the Pacific.

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As part of our international growth strategy, Solomon Airlines is expanding its regional network to better serve key leisure, trade, and business markets. From March 2026 onwards, we will re-establish services between Honiara



and Port Vila, launch a new link between Honiara and Port Moresby with onward connections to Asia, introduce direct Christchurch–Port Vila services, increase capacity between Auckland and Port Vila, and expand our Brisbane–Santo operations. These enhancements reflect our commitment to strengthening regional connectivity and creating new travel opportunities for our customers.

At the heart of Solomon Airlines is our people. Our pilots, cabin crew, engineers, ground staff, and corporate teams continue to demonstrate professionalism, dedication, and warm Solomon hospitality every day. Their commitment ensures your journey is safe, reliable, and memorable.

We remain deeply committed to supporting national development and promoting the Solomon Islands as a destination rich in culture, natural beauty, and hospitality.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, our focus remains on building and strengthening our domestic network to help the nation achieve its development goals and to ensure everyone in the Solomons Islands can travel safely throughout the nation. The importance of connections and interacting face to face cannot be understated as a crucial bond in the growth of the nation and we are proud that the airline plays such a critical role in achieving this. Internationally we will continue to drive forward with schedules designed to support tourism, commercial ventures and family connections throughout the region.

As you enjoy this edition of our inflight magazine, I invite you to explore the stories, destinations, and people that celebrate the spirit of our islands.

On behalf of the Board, Management, and staff of Solomon Airlines, thank you for your continued trust and support. We look forward to welcoming you again soon.

Tagio tumas,
Mr Matthew Findlay
Chief Executive Officer
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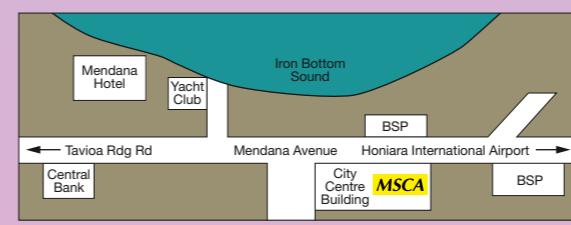
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WSSA puts Western Province's surf potential on show

The Western Solomon Surfing Association (WSSA) has wrapped up a vibrant end-of-year Mini Junior Surfing Competition, highlighting not only the region's emerging young surf talent but also the growing appeal of Western Province as a surf and adventure tourism destination.

Held over two days due to weather conditions, the under-16 event brought together 40 junior surfers - 20 boys and 20 girls - from Titiana Village and Paelonge Village. Set against the stunning coastal backdrop near Gizo, the friendly competition offered a glimpse into the natural surf breaks and strong ocean culture that

continue to draw interest from visiting surfers and travellers alike.

WSSA President Jeremy Baia said the event marked the final junior program for 2025, following months of training and development designed to build local skills and create future pathways in both sport and tourism.

"Despite rough weather, the turnout was very encouraging," Mr Baia said. "It shows the enthusiasm of our young surfers, and the potential Western Province has to host more surf-based events that can attract visitors and support local communities."

The competition was open to participants who had completed WSSA training programs throughout the year, including graduates of the

Women Make Waves initiative, which has played a key role in increasing female participation in surfing across Gizo communities.

Prize presentations will follow for standout performers, celebrating the next generation of surfers who could one day represent the Solomon Islands on a wider stage.

Mr Baia added that WSSA remains focused on grassroots development, using surfing as a tool to empower youth, promote gender equality, and position Western Province as an emerging surf tourism destination with strong community roots. ▶

Clockwise from top left: A dance performance kicked off the competition; Participants in the comp; Judges on the water; A winner accepting her prize.



Honiara's newest hotel is raising the tourism bar

Honiara's tourism offering has received a major boost with the opening of the Xiaos Henderson Hotel, a new multi-million-dollar accommodation development positioned directly opposite Honiara International Airport.

Designed to cater to both international visitors and domestic travellers, the 60-room hotel adds a high-quality, contemporary stay option at one of the country's key arrival points. Its prime location in Malango Ward, Guadalcanal Province, places it at the heart of the capital's growing visitor economy and reinforces Henderson's role as a gateway to the Solomon Islands.

The official opening was held in early January, and attended by Deputy Prime Minister Frederick Kologeto, who presided over the ceremony despite wet weather. The event marked the formal launch of the modern, colour-rich property, which aims to deliver comfort, convenience and a strong first impression for arriving travellers.

Representing the hotel's ownership, former Deputy Police Commissioner Walter Kola described the project as a milestone for tourism development, highlighting its focus on quality service and memorable guest experiences.

"This hotel reflects a vision of welcoming the world to

the Solomon Islands with professionalism and warmth," Mr Kola said. "It's about raising expectations for hospitality while contributing to the country's tourism growth."

The project was completed within a year with the support of both local and international construction partners, alongside financial backing from ANZ Bank.

Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Philip Sukibuka, said the hotel demonstrated the positive impact of private investment in strengthening tourism infrastructure. He noted that developments like Xiaos Henderson Hotel support job creation, skills training and improved visitor services, while aligning with national goals for sustainable economic growth.

With demand for quality accommodation continuing to rise, the Xiaos Henderson Hotel is expected to play a key role in attracting more overseas travellers and supporting the Solomon Islands' ambition to reach 100,000 visitor arrivals by the end of 2026. ▶



Clockwise from above: The opening ceremony at the Xiaos Henderson Hotel; A traditional performance was also held; The opening was celebrated with a meal; The new hotel was decorated for the opening celebration.



Avuavu Airport upgrade set to unlock tourism access in South Guadalcanal

Tourism access to South Guadalcanal is set to improve significantly with construction works now underway on the long-awaited upgrade of Avuavu Airport, a project valued at more than SBD\$8.8 million.

Funded by the Solomon Islands Government, the redevelopment forms part of a broader national push to modernise provincial airstrips and improve regional connectivity, an essential step in opening up new destinations to travellers, investors and tour operators.

Once complete, the revitalised airport will restore air access to an area that has been without a functioning airstrip for nearly two decades. The project is being delivered by local civil works company Sustainable Resources Management Limited (SRML), reinforcing the role of domestic businesses in building tourism-enabling infrastructure.

Construction is scheduled to run for up to eight months, with completion expected later this year. The upgraded airport is anticipated to support domestic travel, community-based tourism and easier movement between Honiara and the surrounding coastal and inland regions of Guadalcanal.

Before work commenced, a traditional chupu ceremony was

held in Avuavu, bringing together community leaders, elders, youth groups, women and children alongside engineers and contractors. The ceremony marked a cultural blessing for the project and highlighted the strong community ownership behind the airport's return.

Project engineer Desmond Sese, who previously played a key role in the successful redevelopment of Ramata Airport in Western Province, said the team was confident the work would be completed on schedule. ▶



Above: The Avuavu Airport is getting an upgrade. Right: The government has agreed to a SBD\$8.8 million upgrade of the airport.



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JUNGLE Autonomy

An ancient tribal group deep in the Malaitan jungle defends its right to cultural and ecological independence with help from the Australian Museum.

Culture

You could say matters reached a boiling point nearly a century ago, when the Solomon Islands' colonial masters decided to impose punitive head tax on the people of Malaita.

After Guadalcanal, Malaita is the next largest island in the Solomon Islands and the most populous, comprising a mix of various tribal groups split between coastal wane i asi or 'salt-water people' and wane i tolo or 'bush people' who live in the mountainous interior.

Of the second group, one stands distinct—the Kawai. These hardy, superstitious people share a history that reaches back some 5000 years, to when Melanesian

people began migrating across the South Pacific, developing their own distinct ethnic communities.

Although superficially explored by the Spanish in the 16th century, it wasn't until the mid-19th century that Western civilisation and the more remote Malaitans came face to face in earnest, beginning a chapter in history that is only now being resolved.

The flashpoint was what became known as the Tax Collection Massacre when, in 1927, a group of Kwaio led by

a fierce tribal elder or ramo, Basiana, ambushed a party led by William R. Bell, the Australian-born District Officer of Malaita, as they came to collect an unpopular tax imposed on them.

Main image: Kwaio men greet visitors from Heritage Adventurer.



Apart from this punitive levy, discontent had been brewing for years over rampant 'blackbirding' as well as general discontent at the encroachment of Western Christian customs on their traditional values and beliefs.

In response, the administration assembled a ragtag posse some two weeks later, comprising eager locals, government officials and some military sent from Australia aboard the warship, HMAS Adelaide. When the dust settled months later, at least 60 Kwaio, many of them innocent, were dead, and 200 supposed perpetrators, including Basiana, were arrested, jailed and tried. Basiana was later convicted and publicly hanged.



Thirty years later, celebrated Hawaii-born anthropologist Roger Keesing earned his PhD after living with and studying the Kwaio people intensively, ultimately publishing numerous papers and books, including the seminal *Kwaio Religion* in 1982. While he is mostly sympathetic to the Kwaio position, he is not without criticism, stating "the concept of 'résistance' is somewhat clumsy in its romanticisation of action directed to a collective cause", meaning that the series of conflicts resulting from the massacre was as much about intertribal feuds and hierarchy as it was colonial protest.

Academic debate aside, what is abundantly clear is that the Kwaio people strive for cultural and ecological independence to this very day, declining all but the most essential assistance from outside their isolated, mountaintop redoubt.

Clockwise from above: The sun beams down through the mist in Malaita; A delegation of the Kwaio people visit the Australian Museum Pacific Collection Stores; Representatives from the Kwaina'isi Cultural Centre perform a traditional song and dance; Kwaio tribe members.



The Kwaio people strive for cultural and ecological independence to this very day, declining all but the most essential assistance from outside their isolated, mountaintop redoubt.

For anyone venturing into their territory, the ascent into the highlands is demanding. The track is steep, frequently slick with mud, and the air oppressive with heat. Progress is uneven, broken repeatedly by river crossings and natural obstacles that disrupt any steady rhythm.

The trek takes around eight hours, and it is only in the late afternoon, as the highlands draw near, that the air begins to cool. The journey concludes—or perhaps properly commences—with a formal welcome to country. Participants don kapolato, the traditional dress fashioned from banana leaves, and the evening unfolds with ceremonial speeches, hospitality, and customary dances.

Several years ago, the Kwaio established the Kwaina'isi Cultural Centre in conjunction with the Australian Museum, creating a formal foundation for a sustained partnership with the Kwaio community. This collaboration was significantly advanced by Professor David McLaren of James Cook University, who continues to work closely with the Kwaio on public health initiatives.

In March of 2019, the Kwaio Conservation Alliance was formed in partnership with community leaders Chief Esau Kekeubata and Tommy Esau. Now operating as the Baru Conservation Alliance, the organisation has played a central role in guiding community-led, future-oriented conservation initiatives in the region. Its objectives include building research capacity at Kwaina'isi, documenting traditional knowledge, preserving cultural practices, and strengthening conservation strategies in Malaita's highland rainforests. A reconciliation ceremony held in July 2018, following decades of tension stemming from the 1927 massacre, marked a critical turning point and enabled the establishment and subsequent growth of the alliance.

Over the coming years, the Alliance is expected to support the expansion of designated conservation areas and the continued development of local and international networks. To strengthen cultural heritage and reinforce community values, additional cultural centres and schools are planned. Future initiatives will also prioritise improvements to village infrastructure, including accommodation, as well as the upgrading of access tracks within and between villages.

Beyond these activities, the Kwaio are cautiously venturing into tourism activities, providing exclusive and carefully controlled interactions with local operators and expedition cruise companies like NZ-based Heritage Expeditions, who offer a rare cultural exchange with passengers who must consent to wearing the traditional attire of the Kwaio, an experience few are likely to forget! ▶

The author travelled to Malaita aboard the Heritage Adventurer in 2022, meeting the Kwaio people. Additional material provided by the Australian Museum.

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From RIVER to TABLE

A culinary journey rooted in tradition

Words Regina Lepping Images Jason Gagame

Growing up, Debbie's earliest memories of traditional food are inseparable from travel. Long before roads reached her village of Suboko, journeys home meant paddling upriver, following winding waterways deep into the interior of Guadalcanal. Each Christmas and New Year, her family would leave town and make the journey home, a trip that could take almost two days.

"The river was our road," Debbie recalls.

Along the way, the family would stop and camp on riverbanks. With no pots or pans brought along, Debbie's grandparents cooked using only what the environment provided. Bamboo became cooking vessels, stones became ovens, and fish freshly caught from the river — kinao — were wrapped and cooked alongside taro, cassava and sweet potato. Meals were simple, slow, and shared.

It was during these riverbank stops that Debbie's love for traditional cooking took root.

"I loved watching my grandparents cook like that every time we went home," she says. "That's when it really caught my interest."

Those camps were not only places to rest, but places of learning. Debbie stayed close to her grandmother, absorbing techniques passed down through generations. She learned how to "motu", how to bonbon taro, and how to cook directly over fire. Her uncles would spear fish or set nets along the river, while her grandparents maintained

small gardens along the route, places where travellers could stop, harvest and eat.

Today, those childhood experiences form the foundation of MK Local Food, Debbie's business dedicated to reconnecting people with traditional Solomon Islands cuisine while offering visitors an authentic cultural experience.

MK stands for Manuiki, a combination of Debbie's name and her husband's, reflecting the family spirit behind the business. Through MK Local Food, Debbie offers food tours, traditional cooking experiences and catering that highlight indigenous methods, ingredients and stories.

Some dishes remain especially close to her heart. One favourite is Gatakake, pounded taro, a staple of her childhood. Taro can be boiled, cooked underground, or burned, but Debbie's preferred method is burning it before pounding. Afterward, grated coconut is roasted using hot stones inside a traditional wooden bowl known as a "Popo."



"There are different Popo for different uses," she explains. "Poponi gura, Poponi soni — each one has a purpose."

Another favourite is Ule, a comforting mixture of taro, pana, cassava or potatoes combined with leafy greens and mixed with fresh coconut milk in one large Popo. "It's everything together," Debbie says. "I love it."

For Debbie, traditional cooking is inseparable from traditional utensils. Her kitchen now holds a full set of Popo bowls, handmade by her uncle, something increasingly rare in Guadalcanal Province.

"When I cook traditional food in modern pots,

"It's your food, your culture, your utensils. When I showcase my culture like this, it fully represents who we are."

I'm not satisfied," she admits. "It doesn't feel complete."

Cooking and serving food in traditional bowls, she believes, adds another layer of meaning to the food, the experience, and her identity.

"It's your food, your culture, your utensils," she says. "When I showcase my culture like this, it fully represents who we are."

Visitors who experience MK Local Food often want more than a meal. They want to understand how the food is prepared and why it matters. To meet this interest, Debbie employs women from her village to help in the kitchen, giving guests the opportunity to cook alongside them using traditional tools.

Previous page: Debbie's passion is cooking traditional food. **Clockwise from above:** Debbie's business is dedicated to reconnecting people with Solomon Islands cuisine; food is cooked inside a Popo; pounded taro; how the food is prepared is almost more important than the taste; another sublime traditional treat.



"When guests come, they want authentic food," Debbie says. "Let's give them the experience they're looking for."

Looking ahead, Debbie dreams of hosting a local food festival that would bring together dishes from all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. It is an idea she has carried for many years — one rooted in preservation, education and pride.

"If we have a local food festival, the next generation will learn about the rich food we have," she says. "It will encourage healthy eating and appreciation for what is already ours."

MK Local Food also reaches beyond the islands, sending home-cooked local meals overseas for Solomon Islanders longing for a taste of home.

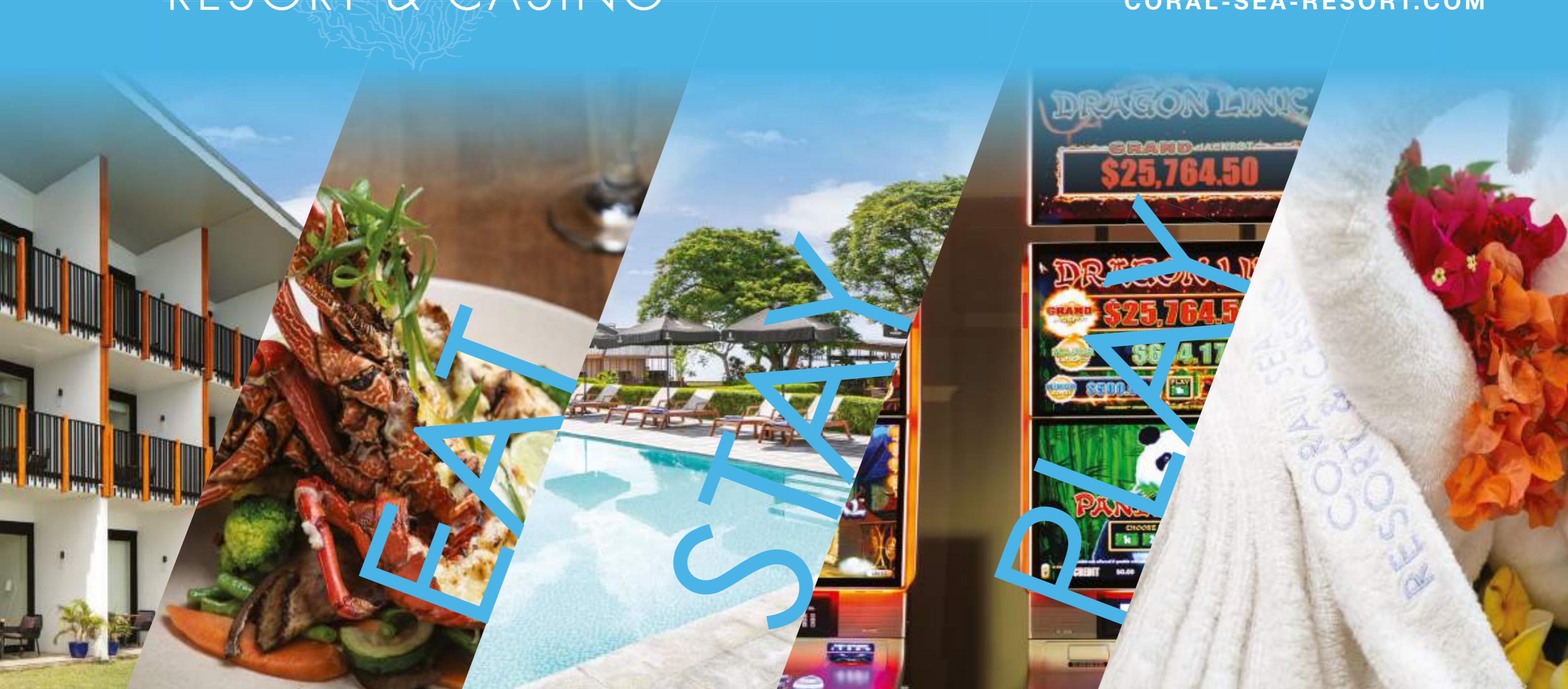
She is always busy! But if you're lucky, you can catch Debbie at the MK LOCAL FOOD HAUS A-13 stall at Local World, Henderson.

In many ways, Debbie is doing more than building a business. She is building bridges; between generations, between provinces, and between visitors and the land they travel through. ▶



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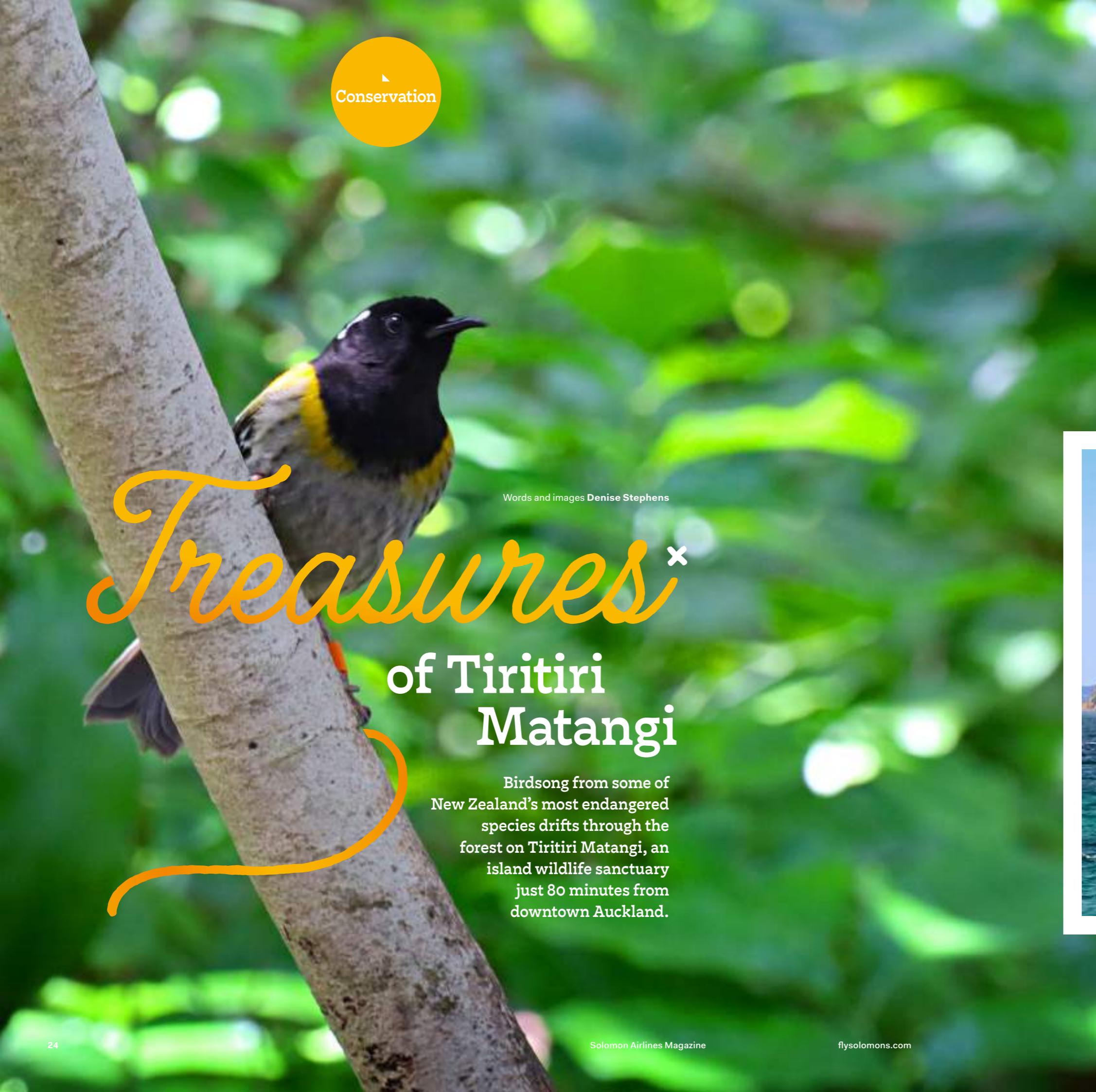
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Conservation

Treasures* of Tiritiri Matangi

Birdsong from some of New Zealand's most endangered species drifts through the forest on Tiritiri Matangi, an island wildlife sanctuary just 80 minutes from downtown Auckland.

Words and images Denise Stephens

The day began at Viaduct Harbour where we boarded the ferry in the shadow of Auckland's high-rise offices. We sailed out of the Waitematā harbour, the sea glittering in the morning sun and showing why the harbour got its name which means sparkling water. The ferry cruised past Rangitoto, a volcanic island at the harbour entrance, and then along the beaches of the suburban North Shore. The city finally disappeared in the last 20 minutes as we approached Tiritiri Matangi.



Opposite: You'll be listening to plenty of birdsong from New Zealand's most endangered species as you walk through the wildlife sanctuary.
Above: The ferry that'll take you to Tiritiri Matangi.



A Department of Conservation ranger was waiting for us when we disembarked. He welcomed us to Tiritiri Matangi, reminding us to check our bags for pests, and then we were free to explore the island. Visitors who'd booked a guided walk were divided into small groups of four to six and introduced to our guides.

Volunteers from Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi lead the walks to raise money for their ongoing conservation work on the island. We opted for the Kawerau Track, a longer walk through a pocket of original forest that promised more opportunities to see birds.

It felt cool under the tree canopy and bird song filled the air.

Our guide, Averil, began by telling the history of Tiritiri Matangi from farm to conservation reserve. After decades of farming ceased in 1971, native forest was expected to regenerate from the few remaining pockets of original forest. Because of the depleted soil, regeneration was slow until the 1980s when volunteers planted 280,000 trees to speed up the process. At the same time they trapped rats to make Tiritiri Matangi a pest-free sanctuary. The trees matured and now cover around 60% of the island, providing food and shelter for many bird species.



Clockwise from above: Once you get off the ferry, you're free to explore the island; You'll be spotting birds left, right and centre as you walk; There are also feeding stations positioned around the sanctuary; The trees now cover around 60% of the island, providing shelter and food.



After this we walked along Hobbs Beach where pōhutukawa trees lined the shore. In December these are covered with vivid red flowers that attract nectar-feeding birds.

The group turned inland and headed uphill. It felt cool under the tree canopy and bird song filled the air. We stopped to listen as Averil identified the sound of different bird species. In a small group it was easy to hear the birds as they continued singing, oblivious to the walkers below. Spotting birds was more difficult and we concentrated hard as we scanned the trees. A flash of black and orange feathers signalled a tīke but the little korimako and pōpokotea were not so easy to spot. Nevertheless, after nearly two hours, we'd seen about ten species in the wild.

We also learned about the plant life around us. A sweet, musky scent was a sign that the spring-flowering hange hange plant was nearby. Birds love to feast on its fruit in autumn. When we stopped to look at a kawakawa, Averil gently tapped the flower spike so a puff of pollen burst into the air.

In a small clearing near the end of the walk, birds flocked to feeding stations where we could see them more clearly. Hihi and korimako raced in to dip their beaks into sugared water before flying off into the trees.





The guided walk ended at the highest point on the island by the visitor centre. Takahē, one of New Zealand's rarest bird species, are usually found nearby around the lighthouse but they were hiding away that day as it was mating season. They're one of several endangered species introduced to Tiritiri Matangi because it's a predator-free haven.

Above: The sanctuary is a very peaceful place, especially on a clear and sunny day! Left: There are plenty of spots in the park for you to stop and take in the view (and the birdsong).

They have created an ecosystem where wildlife thrives today as it once did throughout New Zealand.

This has been successful in increasing the population of takahē, and also other birds such as kōkako, tīke and hihi. In summer and autumn, you may see fledglings starting to explore their surroundings.

After an energetic walk, it was time for food. You need to bring your own packed lunch because there are no shops on Tiritiri Matangi, although the visitor centre provides free tea and coffee. We ate our lunch at a picnic table and feasted our eyes on the sea view.

Departure time drew closer and we had to return to the wharf. This time we walked down the Wattle Track, the route of the shorter and less strenuous guided walk. A distant view of Rangitoto through the trees signalled our eventual destination.

We left feeling grateful to those who'd had a vision of what Tiritiri Matangi could become, and then put in hours of work to make it a reality. They have created an ecosystem where wildlife thrives today as it once did throughout New Zealand. No matter what season you visit, you will experience nature's sights and sounds. ▶

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A collage of images for Turtle Bay Lodge: a woman in a striped dress sitting on a beach, a person kayaking in the water, and a view of the resort's pool and tropical surroundings.

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Vanuatu

Listening to the water music performed by local women at Champagne Beach is a highlight.

A DAY ON Espiritu Santo

Words Kate Gazzard



The first stop on your busy but still relaxed day on Santo is Champagne Beach. No, it's not a beach made entirely of champagne (although wouldn't that be something?) It's called Champagne Beach because there's a spring nearby where the waves bubble up, giving the impression that someone's been popping bottles and shaking up the surf.

The water here is so clear you'll wonder if you've accidentally stumbled into a giant pool rather than the ocean, kinda like an Instagram filter IRL.

When you arrive at Champagne Beach, pop open a bottle of bubbly (or maybe a few, who's counting?), and let the sparkling surface tickle your toes as you wade into the water. Don't just dip your toes in though - go for a full-on swim.

This is the time to embrace your inner mermaid or merman, if only for a few hours. Sip, float, sip some more. Repeat. The only thing better than this water is the fact that you get to do it with a glass of champagne in your hand.





Next up, it's time to take a jaunt over to Port Oly. Known for its pristine beaches and laid-back vibes, this is where your day becomes less regimented and more of a pick-your-own-adventure.

Get ready to hop on a horse (yes, a horse) and ride through the water. It's as ridiculous and as fun as it sounds. Except, you're not just riding a horse. You're riding a horse in the ocean. Make sure to get those action shots for the 'Gram; your jealous followers won't believe their eyes.

After your fancy horse-riding adventure, you've probably worked up an appetite (or maybe just an excuse to laze about on the beach). But before you lay back and let the sun do its thing, it's time to channel your inner athlete and play volleyball with the locals. Don't worry if you've never played volleyball in your life, this is the place to learn, or at least, to fake it until you make it.

The locals are way better than you (obviously), but that's part of the fun. Volleyball here is more about community than competition, so just enjoy the game, and if you lose, at least you can say you were playing with the locals, not against them.



...you'll be scooping up every last bite while sitting on the beach, looking out over the water and thinking, "Yep, this is living."

Alright, now that you've burned off some energy, it's time for a little indulgence. And what better way to do that than with a massage? Book yourself a traditional pampering and get ready to be transformed into a puddle of relaxation. The soothing oils and gentle hands will work out all those volleyball-induced aches, and you'll feel like a brand-new human afterwards. You might even float off the table in a blissful daze...

Now, if you're not hungry after all that activity, then you've got something seriously wrong with you. But if you are hungry, prepare for the kind of seafood feast that will make your taste buds do a happy dance. The local seafood here is out of this world; think fresh fish, succulent lobsters, and whatever the ocean has generously offered up that day. Locally sourced, freshly prepared, and oh-so-delicious, you'll be scooping up every last bite while sitting on the beach, looking out over the water and thinking, "Yep, this is living."

And just in case you're wondering, yes, there'll be more champagne. You've earned it. Or why not try a bowlful of Vanuatuan kava?



Clockwise from opposite: You can go horseback riding through the crystal clear water; You might even get treated to a lobster lunch; How about a fresh coconut to wash all that seafood down?; Or perhaps some local kava; And why not finish off your day with a game of beach volleyball. **Next page:** Kayaking on Riri River is a must-do.



You'll glide through lush greenery and past tropical wildlife, basically feeling like you've stepped into a *National Geographic* documentary.

To wrap up your day of sheer paradise, it's time for a traditional canoe ride down the Riri River. You'll glide through lush greenery and past tropical wildlife, basically feeling like you've stepped into a *National Geographic* documentary.

There you have it, folks – the perfect day on Espiritu Santo. Whether you're riding horses through the sea, sipping champagne on Champagne Beach, or gorging yourself on fresh seafood, this is a day you'll want to remember forever. Just don't forget to pack your sunscreen. ▲

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A CANOE HOUSE THIRTY YEARS

in the making

Words and Images Meph Wyeth

How a chief's dream, rough seas, and global supporters brought Taumako's cultural school to life.

"Thank God for your safe arrival here..." people sang as we staggered ashore at Taumako Island's Takulu village. It was 11:00 pm on 25 September 2025, and what would normally be a 4 hour motor canoe crossing had taken us 6 ½ hours of rough seas, lightning, and strong winds.

Our group of eight, 2 from Papua New Guinea, 2 from Hawai'i, and one each from Fiji, Australia, California, and Micronesia, had come as guests of the Holau Vaka Taumako Association, to celebrate the opening of the organisation's new Hale Vaka (canoe house) and Cultural School, the culmination of more than 30 years' work by the Taumako community and supporters from around the world.



Clockwise from left: The new Hale Vaka and Cultural School, which includes accommodation for students from overseas; A voyaging canoe (Te Alo) on the beach at Takulu; The Rt. Rev. Paterson Nibeo, Bishop of Temotu Diocese, and Luke Vaikawi, Director of HVTA.



Over the intervening 29 years, Taumako's people have steadily worked at building and sailing their vaka and establishing their cultural school. Their voyage has not been easy.

It began in 1993, when sailor and anthropologist Dr. Marianne George visited Taumako and met Paramount Chief Koloso Kaveia, a traditional navigator. Chief Kaveia told her his vision to preserve and teach his people's ancient skills of building and sailing voyaging canoes like those that had carried his Polynesian ancestors across the Pacific and enabled them to colonise some of the world's most isolated islands. Kaveia named his endeavour 'The Vaka Taumako (a Voyaging Canoe for Taumako) Project'. This would later be renamed the 'Holau Vaka Taumako Association' (HVTA).

To realise his hope Chief Kaveia needed money for construction of a voyaging canoe, and he asked Dr. George to help him find it. She agreed to help and began making fundraising presentations to people in the US. After three years she returned with enough money to begin the work, and in 1996 the Vaka Taumako Project formally opened when Dr. George, Chief Kaveia, and the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education signed documents to officially start the endeavour.

Over the intervening 29 years, Taumako's people have steadily worked at building and sailing their vaka and establishing their cultural school. Their voyage has not been easy. A civil war, financial difficulties, government interference, and the deaths of many elders, including Chief Kaveia, have delayed them. Nevertheless, they persisted. On 27 September 2025 they celebrated the long anticipated official opening of the HVTA Hale Vaka and Cultural School at Takulu.

Guests included the Rt. Rev Paterson Nibeo, Bishop of Temotu, who consecrated the school, Dr. Marianne George, Sanakoli John of Papua New Guinea's Pasana



Above: Dr. Marianne George and the late Paramount Chief Koloso Kaveia in 1998. **Top left:** Taumako custom dancers performing at the celebration on 27 Sept, 2025. Photo by Mimi George. **Top right:** A pandanus mat made by ladies on the island of Basilaki, Papua New Guinea in honour of the 26-27 September celebration.



Group, and several longtime supporters from overseas. Many who were unable to make the physical journey have since watched video of the festivities on YouTube.

Documentation has always been an important part of VTP and HVTA's work. From the beginning Chief Kaveia insisted that young Taumako people receive training in modern methods of recording so that his people's knowledge could be shared with outsiders, especially those in English speaking countries. Video productions such as the two 'We, the Voyagers' films produced in 2020 have received awards and acclaim from film festivals, universities, and other venues around the world. They are freely available to anyone interested in learning more about Taumako, traditional voyaging, and how ancestral Oceanic knowledge can help people deal with climate changes and other twenty-first century challenges. ▲

To watch the films, visit www.vaka.org. Anyone wishing to learn more about HVTA and the new cultural school can consult www.holau.org

WHERE SURF MEETS SOLITUDE

Three boutique villas, endless waves, and a resort built with heart, not crowds.

Words Kate Gazzard

Seven years ago, a speck of green appeared on Google Maps, and a dream began to take shape. “It all started when Max (co-founder) spotted a remote island on Google Maps,” Reice, managing director of Na Finua Island Resort recalls. “We’d been exploring Indonesia for years, but we wanted somewhere different... somewhere untouched, off the beaten path.” That small dot turned out to be a hidden paradise: uninhabited (save for a caretaker) and brimming with possibilities.

The journey from discovery to reality wasn’t simple. “From the first idea to breaking ground, it took about seven years,” he explains. Covid paused everything, and for a while, the project was on hold. But once travel resumed, Reice threw himself into the business side: “I got more and more involved... trying to see if we could get some funding to help build it. That’s when we decided, okay - we need to build a resort here.”

But Na Finua isn’t a typical resort. With just three villas and a main building, each sleeping six, the team has deliberately kept it small. “We don’t want to get greedy as a business,” he says. “We want to preserve the untouched vibe. Otherwise, people come, and surf crowded waves,

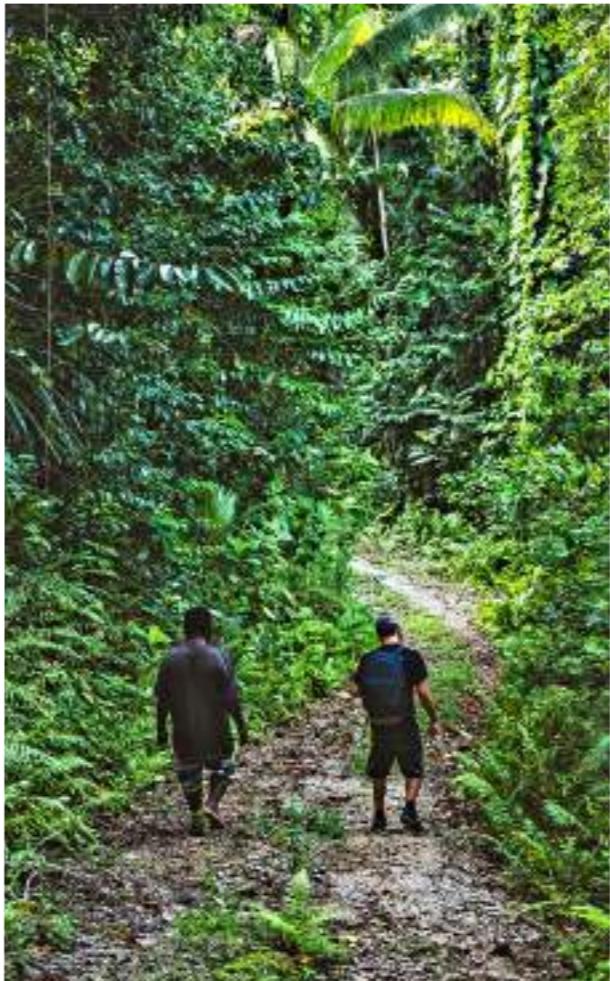
Main image, opposite: Two local kids going for a surf in the waters around Na Finua. **This page:** Na Finua Island Resort from the sky.



This way, guests get a rare front-row seat to the island's natural wonders. Paddling out to world-class surf is as easy as stepping out of your villa, and snorkelling with manta rays - recently discovered at a cleaning station right off the island - is an everyday delight. "We've been here four and a half years, and we've only just discovered it! Beautiful mantas come past every morning. It's amazing."

But the magic of Na Finua isn't just in the waves. Every aspect of the resort has been designed with the local community and environment in mind. "All the produce comes from local villages," he explains. "Even the timber for the bungalows is sourced and milled locally. We carry every piece through the jungle ourselves - no damage to the forest. It's all done by hand."

Clockwise from above: The waters around the resort are pristine; There's also plenty of forest trails to explore; The surfing is next level good here; The resort gives back to the local communities; You might even spot manta rays in the water when you're snorkelling!



Even the island's wildlife is carefully considered. Frigatebirds swirl overhead at dusk like pterodactyls, and coastal erosion is managed with geo-fabric sandbags. "It's something out of Jurassic World," he says, chuckling. "Every evening, these birds appear from nowhere... a tornado of pterodactyls. But they don't poo on the island!"

Beyond conservation, Na Finua is about connection: connection to nature, culture, and community. "The culture is still so authentic, so original," he says. "We're the first resort in this province. Nothing else is down here. We have the chance to do things right, to build something sustainable, respectful, and meaningful."

And locals are learning new skills, from hospitality to entrepreneurship. "We've got kids coming up with business ideas, making bracelets, asking what we think before they sell them. You see them flourishing. It's really nice."

Adventure is everywhere. Surf ranges from gentle beginner waves to barrels galore for the experienced, with no crowds. Fishing, diving, and snorkelling reveal reefs that remain largely unexplored. Shipwrecks lie off the coast, and waves await discovery. "People can surf waves that no one else has ever surfed," he says. "It's just untouched. The last frontier of the world."

Beyond conservation, Na Finua is about connection: connection to nature, culture, and community.



This is a place where adventure, sustainability, and community coexist harmoniously, where each wave and dive feel like a private revelation, and where the locals are partners, not spectators.

Despite the isolation, logistics are a challenge that the team has learned to navigate with ingenuity and community support. "When the boat comes with supplies, everyone, from kids to elders, helps unload it, sometimes at night," he says. "They don't ask for anything. They understand how important this is." It's this kind of collaboration that allows the resort to thrive while staying true to its values.



Looking ahead, Na Finua isn't aiming for scale. "We might add one more villa, but that's it," he says. "We want to keep it boutique. It's about quality, not quantity." The vision is long-term: improve the island, support local villages, and showcase the Solomon Islands to the world. "The more people come here, the more we can help locals... schools, hospitals... everything. They've been so patient and respectful. It's a long-term thing, not overnight."

This is a place where adventure, sustainability, and community coexist harmoniously, where each wave and dive feel like a private revelation, and where the locals are partners, not spectators. "It's really special," he says simply. "We've created something unique here. And every day, you just get amazed by what you see." nafinua.com



Clockwise from above: It's hard to be sad/stressed/angry in a place where the surf's THIS good; The fishing is great on the island.



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How to wander your way down the BRISBANE RIVER

Words Caterina Hrysomallis

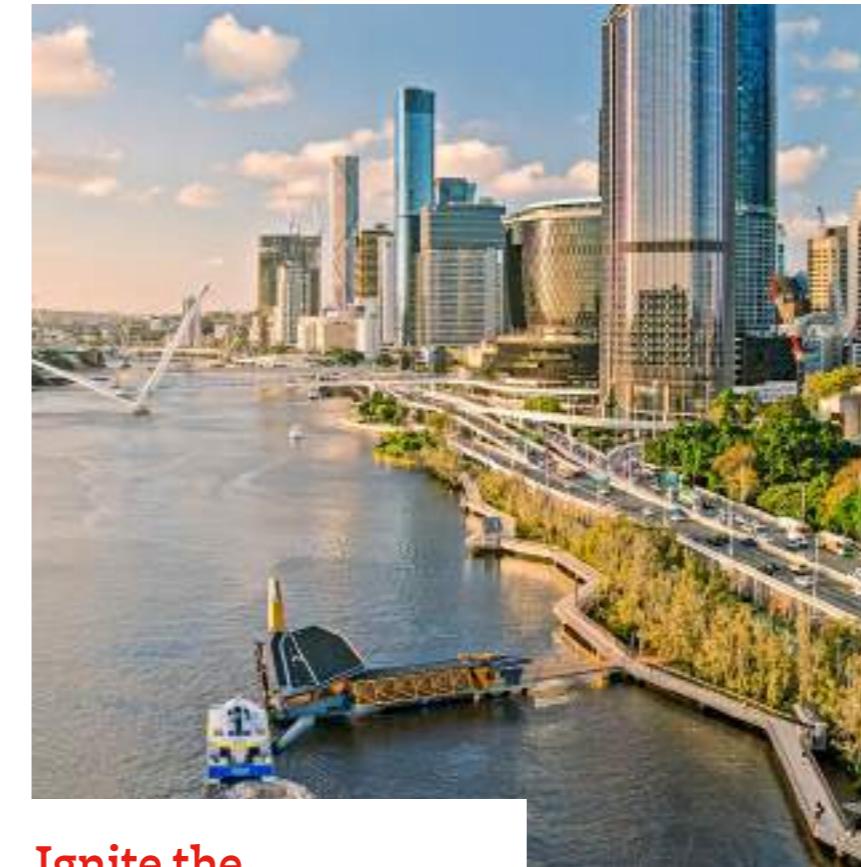


Brisbane is the gateway to Queensland, celebrated as Australia's 'sunshine state'. While plenty of visitors fly into Brisbane and immediately move on to another destination, we believe the city shouldn't be overlooked. It's creative, outdoorsy and so effortlessly welcoming.

Brisbane doesn't like people to rush. It invites you to meander, to drift.

Regardless of whether you have ample time in the city or only a day or two, one thing is for sure: following the bends of the Brisbane River is well worth any traveller's time.

Planning (or pondering) a visit? You can use these words as a base; the sites and experiences highlighted are listed from west to east, following the way the river flows. Then, simply customise to your liking.



Ignite the imagination at QAGOMA

The Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art are separate galleries, 150 metres apart, but are collectively known as QAGOMA.

The galleries champion works from the Asia-Pacific region, but of course host international exhibitions, too. It's home to more than 20,000 artworks.

The bonus? Both galleries are free to enter. The buildings are considered artworks in their own right, housed in two striking sandblasted concrete structures that overlook the river.

Find your bearings on the water

CityHoppers are free ferries that stop at eight key scenic spots along the Brisbane River. Starting at North Quay and ending at New Farm, it's incredibly easy to spot a CityHopper. Just remember, they're distinctly red. Their hop-on, hop-off nature makes seeing Brisbane at your preferred pace seamless.

CityCats and comparatively smaller, electric-powered KittyCats, are paid ferry services that stop at 22 terminals. Between these ferry options, you'll be well connected to the city centre and surrounding inner suburbs.

If the (commonly) warm weather allows, be sure to sit outside and take in some subtropical air. Along the way, you'll find Brisbane's alluring intersection of historical buildings and soaring skyscrapers.





Hop over to Kangaroo Point

To see one of Brisbane's most stunning natural features, head over to the volcanic rock cliffs at Kangaroo Point. Visitors can also enjoy one of the city's best panoramas from Joey's or Medley, two restaurants that flaunt what Modern Australian food is made of.

You can walk or cycle along the riverside paths. For those craving more adrenaline, you can even rock climb or abseil with the help of a local instructor.



Cool off at Streets Beach

If the day is a little too warm for your liking and you'd like to cool off, it's worth checking out Streets Beach – Australia's only inner-city manmade beach. This modern oasis is about a 20-minute walk from QAGOMA, on the same side of the river.

Admire the city skyline from a white sand shore and sparkling waters. Streets Beach is also a great option for those travelling with kids, with qualified lifeguards on patrol all year-round. Surrounded by the tropical greenery Queensland famous for, it offers a slice of resort life in the heart of the city. Amazingly, entry is free.

Finish strong at Howard Smith Wharves

As the sun sets, we'd recommend heading to this rejuvenated waterfront precinct, home to some of Brisbane's most exciting restaurants and bars.

Diners are spoilt for choice at Howard Smith Wharves, where they can treat themselves to local Brisbane beer at the famed a Brewing Co, modern Greek food at Greca, Italian at Ciao, Japanese at Yoko Dining or Chinese at Stanley.

As the night darkens, the Story Bridge gloriously illuminates, changing its colours depending on the time of year and special events on the calendar.



Bonus: want to meet a koala?

If you have a little more time to spare, you ought to know Brisbane is home to the world's largest koala sanctuary. Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, founded in 1927, is now home to over 120 koalas. Visitors have the opportunity to get extremely close and admire them chilling in the trees.

Despite its namesake, there aren't just koalas hanging around. The sanctuary has more than 70 Australian species crawling, slithering and flying around. You can even feed a kangaroo while you're there.

There's a dedicated cruise that runs from the city centre to Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. It departs from the Brisbane Cultural Centre Pontoon once daily, seven days a week. We believe 75 minutes of scenic sail is by far the best way to reach the sanctuary.

A Quick Guide to Honiara

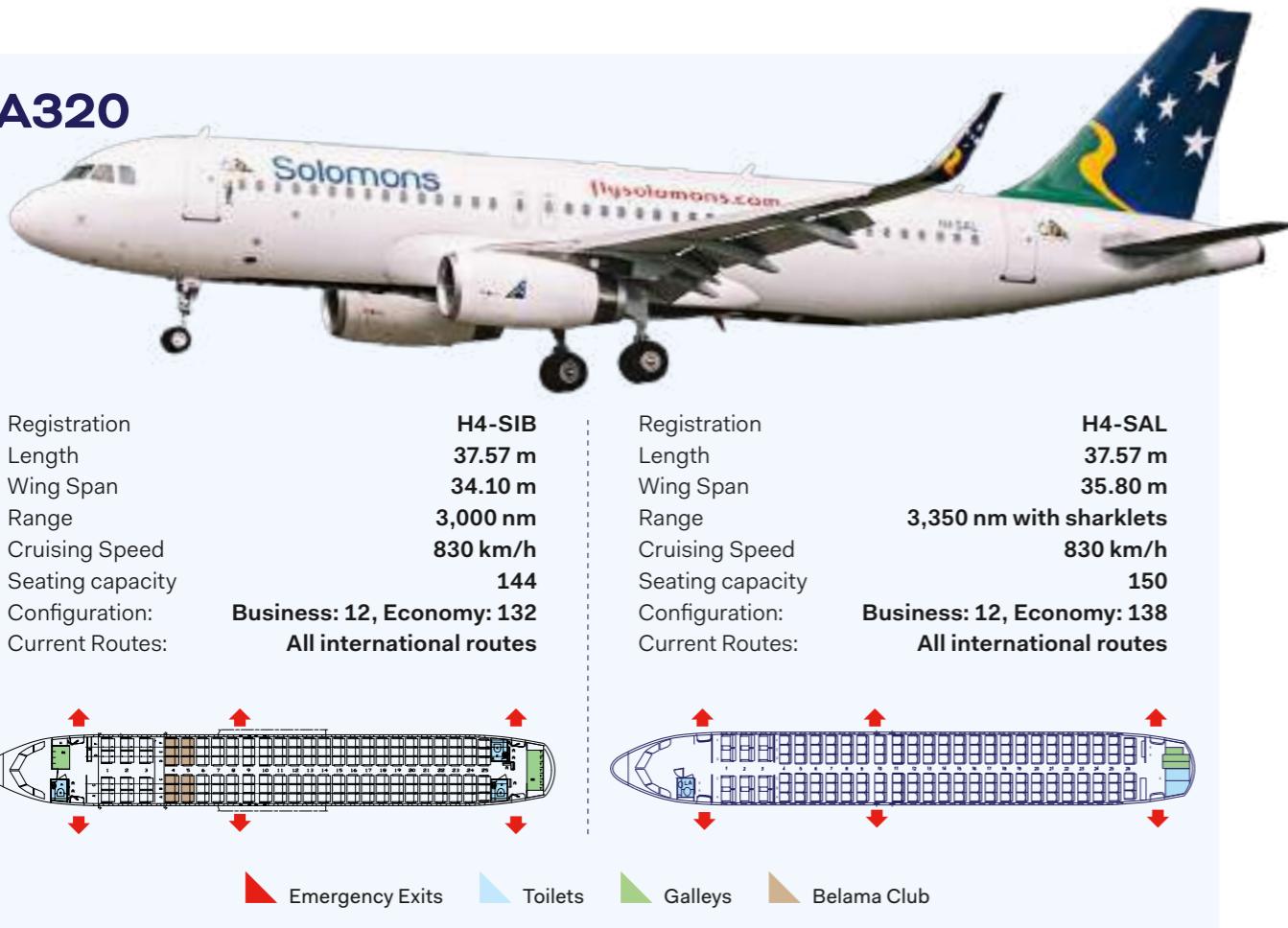
Conveniently positioned centrally within the South Pacific and embedded deeply in World War Two history and Melanesian culture, Honiara is not only the capital of the Solomon Islands, but a great base for travellers visiting the South Pacific.

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.



Solomon Airlines Fleet

A320



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
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Twin Otter



Length	15.77 m
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Seating capacity	16
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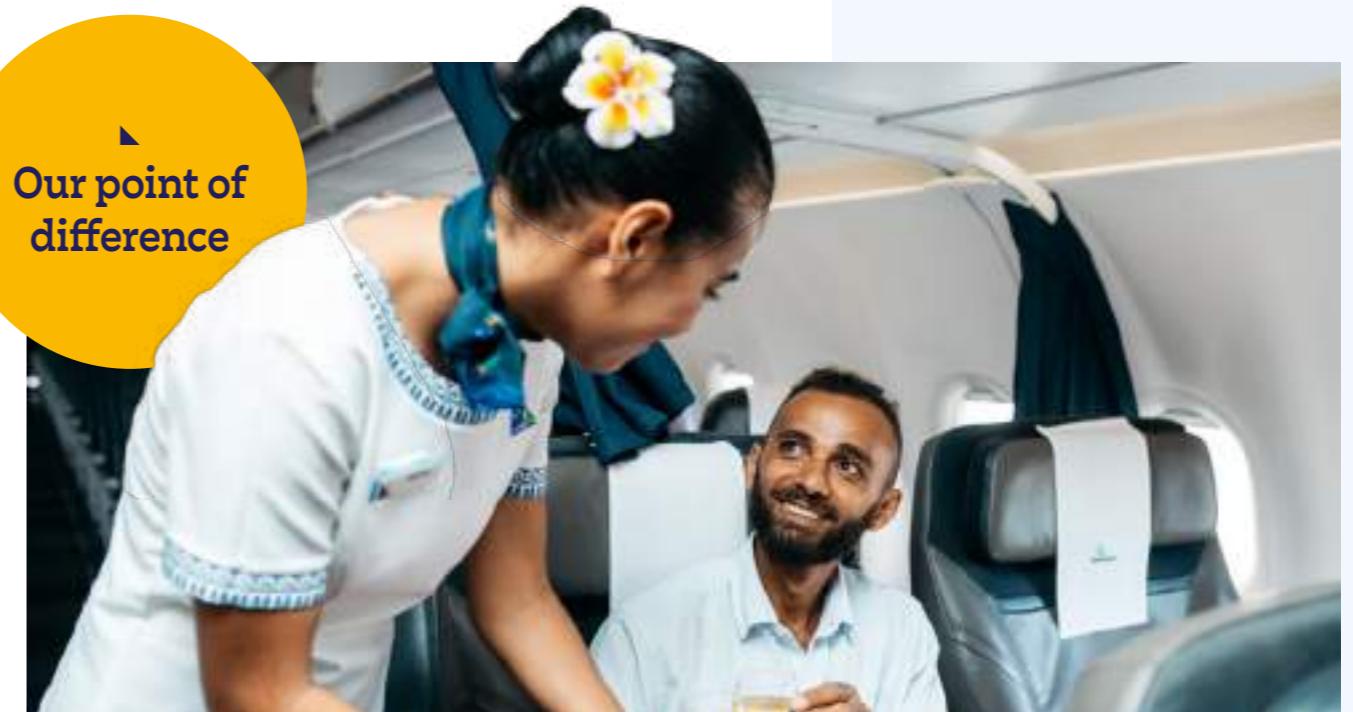
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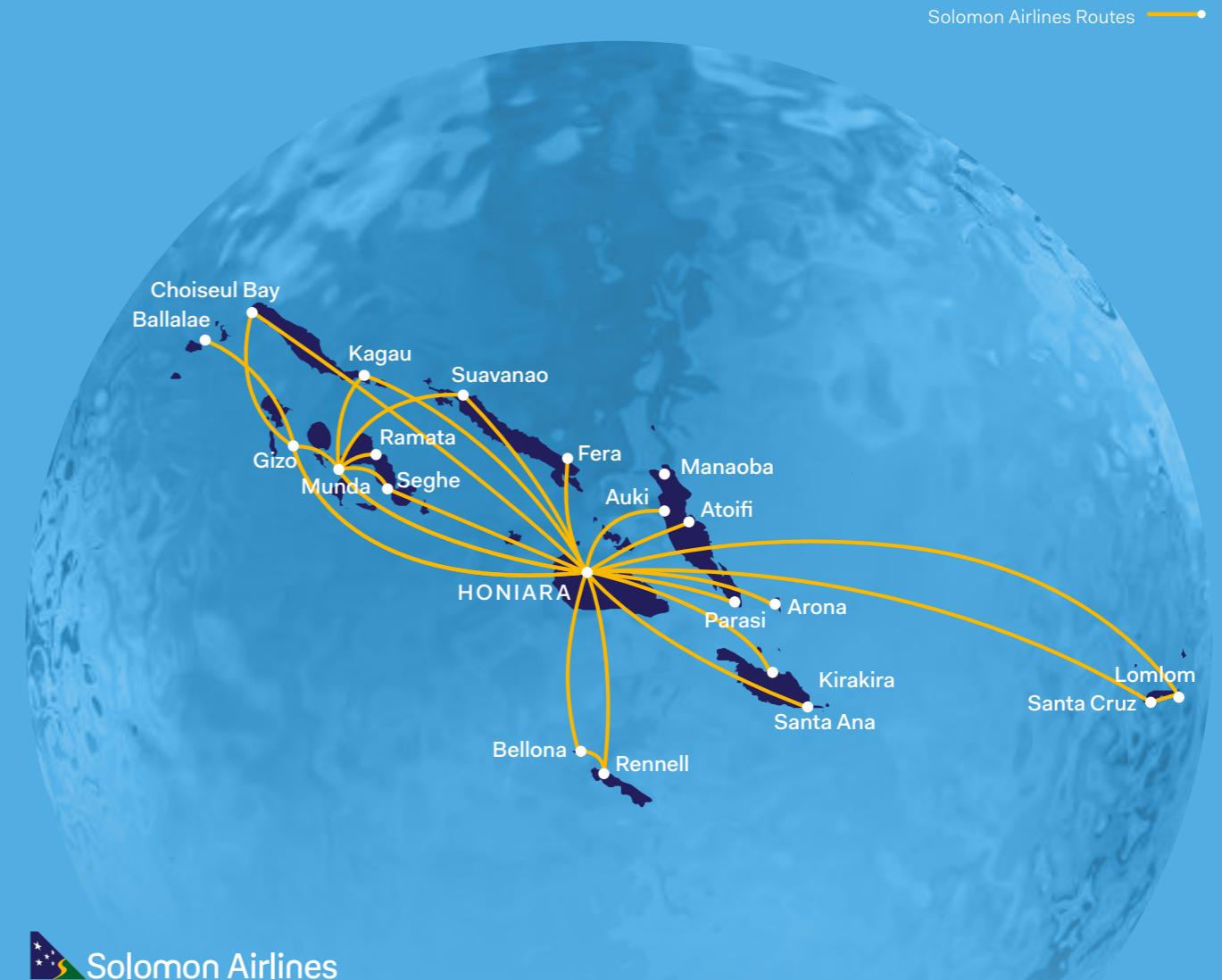
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Things to remember before your trip to the Solomons

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 thanks SIRAP2 at aviation handover

UPDATE

Solomon Airlines today acknowledged the continued partnership and support of the Solomon Islands Government and the World Bank as it officially received aviation equipment funded under the Solomon Islands Roads and Aviation Project (SIRAP). The handover ceremony was held at the Solomon Airlines Hangar on the 12th of January.

The event marks another key milestone under SIRAP2, the second phase of the project aimed at strengthening aviation infrastructure, safety, and operational resilience across the Solomon Islands. The equipment was formally handed over by representatives of the World Bank and the Ministry of Communication and Aviation (MCA), including Mr Richard Farrell, International Project Manager of the SIRAP2 Project Support Team, and Mr Alwyn Danitofea, Permanent Secretary of MCA. The SIRAP2 Project Support Team members present included Mr Aljay Tuhaika, National Finance Manager, and Mr Lawrence Nodua, National Communications Specialist.

Receiving the equipment on behalf of Solomon Airlines were the Chief Executive Officer and members of the airline's senior management team, including Mr John Wopereis, Manager Commercial, Mr Clement Ramoi,

With this equipment, our teams can continue to provide safer, more reliable, and efficient air connectivity services for our communities across the country.

Interim Engineering Manager, Mr Peter Omani, Cargo Manager, and Mr Daniel Bugotu, Manager Safety and Compliance.

Speaking at the ceremony, the CEO of Solomon Airlines said "this handover is a testament to our strong partnership with the Solomon Islands Government and the World Bank. With this equipment, our teams can continue to provide safer, more reliable, and efficient air connectivity services for our communities across the country."

The newly handed-over equipment includes advanced tools and systems that will directly support the airline's engineering, and safety operations, ensuring compliance with international aviation standards and improving overall operational efficiency. Passengers can expect safer, more reliable flights as the airline enhances its service delivery with this new support.

Solomon Airlines expressed its sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Communication and Aviation, the World Bank, and the SIRAP2 Project Support Team, reaffirming its commitment to safe, reliable, and sustainable air services for the people of the Solomon Islands. ▲



New routes, including more NZ–Vanuatu, for Solomon Airlines

NEW ROUTES



Solomon Airlines has announced a new international schedule with new routes and greater flight frequencies connecting Solomon Islands to key leisure, trade and business travel markets as the airline positions to create new opportunities.

"We are closely monitoring demand across our region and adjusting operations to meet opportunities, for new business, whilst serving our national interests at the same time," said CEO of Solomon Airlines, Paul Abbot.

"Under this international schedule, we will re-establish a weekly flight between Honiara and Port Vila, add flights from Honiara to Port Moresby with connections to Asian ports, and increase our operations to Vanuatu from both Australia and New Zealand," he said.

New developments being introduced progressively from 30th of March onwards include the following:

Honiara and Port Vila

— a weekly flight re-established effective from **30th of March 2026**.

- Port Vila-Honiara operating on Monday
- Connections from Auckland via Port Vila to Honiara
- Honiara-Port Vila on Tuesday
- Connections from Honiara via Port Vila to Auckland.

Honiara and Port Moresby

— a weekly flight launching from **31st of March 2026**.

- Honiara to Port Moresby and return on Tuesday
- Timed to allow flight connections with China Southern and other carriers to/from Asia
- Connections from Port Moresby via Honiara to Port Vila.

Christchurch and Port Vila

— new twice weekly direct flights Christchurch to Port Vila from **1st of July 2026**.

- Port Vila to Christchurch on Wednesday and Saturday
- Christchurch to Port Vila on Thursday and Sunday.

Auckland and Port Vila

— a 4th weekly direct flight between Auckland and Port Vila from **3rd of July, 2026**.

For period 29th of March to 30th of June 2026:

- Auckland to Port Vila on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday
- Port Vila to Auckland on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

For period 1st of July 2026 onwards:

- Auckland to Port Vila on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
- Port Vila to Auckland on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

Brisbane and Santo

— 2nd weekly service between Brisbane and Santo (in addition to current Thursday flight) has been introduced to operate on Saturdays **4th of April to 27th of June 2026**, and Tuesdays **7th of July 2026 to 26th of January 2027**.

There will be minor schedule adjustment to accommodate the new schedule flights and timings, and Solomon Airlines will contact any existing passengers with bookings which may be impacted. Alternative times or dates of travel will be offered at no additional cost. See the Solomon Airlines Conditions of Carriage Section 9 for policy. ▲

Solomon Is. Chill



GIVE IT A REST

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Our Values
Respect, Integrity, Care, Honesty

ENERGY FOR THE NATION

Honiara's Entertainment Hub



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

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

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

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

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

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



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