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Thank you for flying with us and of course thank you for reading this magazine.

The 75th battle of Guadalcanal anniversary was run with great enthusiasm and precision. Many people from all over the world attended the numerous meticulously planned events. 

Our thanks go to Sir Bruce and Keithie Saunders, Rob Bochman, Jan Arrie Smit, John Innes and many other people whom I am unable to name because of a lack of space, for helping us all remember and celebrate an amazing event which changed the course of the war in the Pacific. Numerous hitherto untold stories emerged during the events, some of which are found in this magazine.

We value our community obligation to assist where we can. Solomon Airlines receives many requests for free flights and other services for charitable purposes. Despite what many people think, there is a significant cost to “free flights” which we absorb. We have been fortunate to assist with most of the requests received, all of which have made a significant impact to many people’s lives. We have assisted with the transport of donations which include school supplies, books, medical supplies and equipment, travel for school teachers, patients, doctors and other specialists. I would like to acknowledge the enormous role played by Rotary in many of these ventures and that of Joyce Boykin of READ SI for the National Literacy Campaign.

On a more sobering note, our staff bear the brunt of everyone’s frustrations when we have to cancel services. The reasons include runways being closed as a result of heavy rain, bad weather and the inevitable occasional mechanical failures experienced by all airlines. Cancellations and delays are clearly inconvenient for guests, the resorts and the airline. We would much rather deliver you to your destination on the same day because trying to fit the extra flights into the schedule the next day is inconvenient and often very difficult for all involved. None the less the safety of our crews, passengers and aircraft always come before commercial imperatives.

There have been numerous disruptions to our services around the Solomon Islands as a result of the closure of several airports such as Seghe and Ballalae. These closures were caused by the lack of general maintenance to the airports and the recent unseasonal heavy rains during what was supposed to have been the dry season. We are working with the relevant departments to repair the runways and improve the drainage to prevent waterlogging in the future. We are also working in a system with many constraints not seen in other parts of the world and appreciate your patience and understanding when there are delays.

We have signed a codeshare agreement with Fiji Airways. This latest agreement improves our connections with Fiji and the USA. Our Monday flight into Fiji will allow time to join one of the Fiji Airways flights to the USA. The Tuesday departure will allow connections from the USA all with minimal waiting around.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the trouble to let me know of problems and events which you have experienced. It is through knowing about problems that we can address them.

We look forward to seeing you on a Solomon Airlines flight soon.

Tengiu tumas.

Mr Brett Gebers
Chief Executive Officer
**The Pride of Honiara**

Our fully refurbished 100 rooms, 4 executive suites and 14 executive rooms, all boast splendid sea views, quality facilities and contemporary furnishings.

The New Capitana Restaurant offers international cuisine. Panoramic views of the historic Iron Bottom Sound can be enjoyed over drink and snack on the Raratana Terrace in front of Capitana Restaurant.

Traditional furnishings imported from Japan complete your dining experience at the popular Hakubai Japanese restaurant. Dine at the sushi bar or enjoy table cooking such as Teppanyaki, Shabu-shabu, Sukiyaki, and Yosenabe.

Our New Conference Centre accommodates from 20 - 150 people and is equipped with a modern communications system.
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Oct 2017-Dec 2017

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What's On When & Where
2017

SEPTEMBER
Lagoon Festival, Munda, West Province
Sep 11-15

OCT
Solomon Dive Fest 2017, Gizo & Munda,
West Province. Oct 2-6

NOV
Stunned Mullet Fishing
Zipolo, Hapu Resort, Munda

DEC
Christmas
Dec 25

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**Out & About**

**Guadalcanal’s festival of weavers**

It was a weaving affair when Guadalcanal Province, of which Honiara is located, hosted its inaugural Weaving Festival.

Held on August 1st to the 7th at the iconic Lela Beach, just west of the capital, the Festival attracted a lot of traditional weavers and many buyers – local and tourists alike.

Guadalcanal artisans used the event to showcase their authentic weaving skills using all kinds of bush vines and tree barks to create baskets, bracelets, traditional attire and many other intricate arts and crafts.

**RAMSI exhibition now open**

National Museum of Solomon islands -- located opposite the Information Office of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau on Mendana Avenue -- has boosted its collections with the opening recently of the RAMSI Exhibition.

The contemporary collection of mainly photographs provide a visual documentation of the work of RAMSI, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands that Australia led and funded in the country between 2003 to 2017.

The RAMSI Collection will be a permanent feature of the National Museum.

**Museum opens Monday to Friday 8am to 4:30pm, and 9am to 2pm Saturday.**
Market Street Café leads the way

In Honiara’s humid and busy streets, Market Street Café is a welcome haven with its working air-condition units and clean and new furniture.

Under the one roof, you have the choice of Hong Kong BBQ, Bistro Café or the Fast Food Corner. If you have your toddlers with you, they will be happily distracted by the children’s corner to one side of the café, equipped with slides, sea-saws and other fun toys.

“We were limited with space, so we created something to look like a market food court,” explains David Yee, who together with his sister Wendy Leong runs Market Street Café.

Market Street gets its name from its neighbour, the Central Market of Honiara.

Address: Central Plaza – 1st Floor (Next to Central Market of Honiara & Hyundai Mall) Mendana Avenue, Honiara.
Emails: thefreshfoodco@outlook.com, marketstreetkitchens@gmail.com
Telephone: (+677) 22029, 7596939
At AUD750, you and your love can have this islet all to yourselves for a night! It’s the latest attraction under construction in Gizo Harbour and will be called the Golden Cowrie Resort when completed. One beach bungalow is already available for guests, owned by Shane Kennedy, of Gizo Hotel and its Honiara-based sister hotel, King Solomon.

The sole bungalow at Golden Cowrie can take two people comfortably, newly weds or honeymooners, its fully air-conditioned, and although the rate of AUD750 comes with meals, the bungalow also boasts its own kitchenette.

Bookings can be made at Gizo Hotel on telephone +677 60199

Coral View unveils 30 more new suites
Honiara’s newest top end accommodation, Coral Sea Resort & Casino continues its expansion with the opening last August of its new three level accommodation wing featuring modern suites.

Travellers can now book into the resort’s additional 30 new suites all equipped with the latest in creature comforts that included media hub with 40 inch TV, free wifi, tea/coffee making facility, in-room safe, natural Malin + Goetz toiletry products, all in cool air condition environment.

The additional rooms nicely compliments Coral View’s existing 5 seaside villas.

All are available for short or long term tenancy.

Guests now have greater choice in dining with the opening some time ago of Coral View Resort’s The Boardwalk Restaurant located by the waterfront next to the resort’s swimming pool.

Together with its signature Haydan’s Steakhouse, The Boardwalk specialises in Asian cuisine.

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For further information or long stays, please call +677 26 288 or email reception@coral-sea-resort.com
A MOVING ceremony on the anniversary of one of Australia’s worst wartime naval losses ended a week of commemorations of the World War 2 Battle of Guadalcanal in Solomon Islands.

In the early hours of August 9, 1942, the RAN heavy cruiser HMAS Canberra was severely damaged in the Battle of Savo Island, being hit 24 times in two minutes in a surprise attack by Japanese naval vessels. The attack left 84 of Canberra’s crew dead, including the captain (who died of wounds), and 109 men wounded. The US lost 939 men and three cruisers – USS Quincey, USS Vincennes and USS Astoria – that night.

Canberra was crippled and unable to be moved, so the order was given to abandon ship and the following morning she was scuttled by a US torpedo. One of 32 ships and hundreds of aircraft that went to the bottom during the Battle of Guadalcanal, she now lies more than 700m below the ocean off Savo Island.

On August 9, HMAS Success took officials and naval representatives from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Solomon Islands – including Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare – to the site of the sinking for the memorial service.
Canberra remembered HMAS Canberra sunk in Iron Bottom Sound during the Battle of Savo Island.

NSW Senator and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, said to those assembled in silence on the flight deck of Success: “We gather today to remember the lives lost; the many injured; the sacrifices made during the pivotal Guadalcanal campaign and throughout the Pacific war; and the hard-fought legacy of freedom and democracy which all of us continue to enjoy to this day.”

She acknowledged the presence of family members of those who had died and RAN veteran Bill Quinn (94) who, as a 19-year-old stoker on Canberra’s sister ship, HMAS Australia, watched the attack.

Also on board were Janette Wong, of Sydney, who was born four months after her father Douglas Grenfell perished on Canberra, and Julie Webb of Nerang, Queensland, whose uncle Alf Conners died.

Commander of the Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Stuart Mayer praised Canberra’s company and Captain Frank Getting: “He acted with selfless courage that is truly heroic.” Captain Getting had assumed command of Canberra just two months earlier and, as Senator Fierravanti-Wells said: “In the proudest traditions of the Royal Australian Navy, he remained steadfast on the bridge, refusing medical attention, and passed away later that day en route to Noumea.”

RADM Mayer said that such heroism formed the basis of today’s Royal Australian Navy. “There are no graves or memorials at sea, just the silent company of their sea mates below,” he said.

Anchored a short distance from Success were HMNZS Otago, USS Barry and the Royal Solomon Islands Patrol Vessel Auki. Their companies stood to attention on deck and saluted as Success’ flag was lowered to half-mast for the wreath-laying.

Wreaths were dropped into the water from Success, then 84 sailors, including six from HMAS Canberra III, threw into the water wooden crosses with messages from Australian schoolchildren. The ship’s warrant officer read the Naval Ode; the Last Post sounded then, after a minute’s silence, Reveille.

The ceremony concluded with the Naval Prayer.
We particularly would like to commend the following companies and individuals:

Sir Paul Tovua – Guadalcanal eminent statesman and chief
Milner Tozaka – Minister of Foreign Affairs
Andrew Nihopara – PS Tourism and Culture
Bunya Sivoro – Director of Tourism and Culture
Gabriel Manelusi – RSIP Deputy Commissioner Operations
Donald Malasa - Pro - Vice Chancellor (Corporate) Solomon Islands National University
Sir Bruce & Keithie Saunders
John Innes – WWII Historian
Rob Bochman – Bred Bank – Tour Guide for Battlefield Tours
Joy Basi
British High Comm - David Ward and Paul Dryden
Professor Martin Hadlow – Queensland University
Dorothy Wickham & Gloria Hong – Samedia - Filming & media consultants
Daniel Hunikera – Master of Ceremony
Michael Ben – Guadalcanal WW2 Veteran
Annie Kwai – PhD Candidate – SSCW Historian

Chris Cardone – Catholic Bishop
Aland McNeil - Lands Department
Emmanuel Mangalle – SSCW

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QQQ Wholesale
West Honiara Constituency
Lee Kwok Kuen
Solomon Telekom
AHC – Direct Aid
Solomon Airlines

Local Government Support
Symposium speakers (US, Aust, NZ, Solomon)
SINU staff
Archbishop Christopher Cardone and Holy Cross Cathedral
Ministry of Tourism, Ministry Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister’s office, Ministry of Home Affairs Government House
Royal Solomon Islands Police (escort services)
RSIF Band (ceremonies)
Parliament House

Thank You!

Solomon Airlines – its executives and staff – seek to commend and acknowledge the many people, companies and institutions that assisted with organising and managing the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal in Solomon Islands in August, 2017.

As noted by CEO Brett Gebers in his welcome message, the August event was run with great enthusiasm and precision.

Honiara City Council
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National Rugby Association, National Basketball Ass., NZ Police (sport coordinators)
Point Cruz Yacht Club

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Historical Military Tours (US)
McLauchlan Tours (Australia)
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Justin Taylin and group (US)
Moana Tregaskus and group
Japanese veteran tour group (13)
SIVB – reporters, publicists and photographers (US and Aust)
VIPs Australia (Minister+ 12 ) NZ (Commander Navy + 5) Japan (Attache + 4) UK (DA)

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Words and Photos: Niniu Oligao

Bravery of two Solomon Islanders during World War II has been recognised during activities marking the 100th birthday of John F Kennedy in Gizo last August.

Names of Biuku Gasa and Ronnie Kumana are engraved on a monument now standing on Kennedy Islet, not far from Gizo town in Solomon Islands' western province. The two men have passed on, but at the height of World War II, Gasa and Kumana evaded Japanese patrols to get help for the then young lieutenant in the US Navy, John Fitzgerald Kennedy and 11 of his crew.

The men were shipwrecked on the island after a Japanese destroyer rammed their small wooden torpedo boat, PT109, which split in half before sinking, and claiming the life of one of the American crew.

The young lieutenant led his remaining crew to swim first to what is now Kennedy Island, before they continued onto nearby Olosana Island, as it was much bigger and holds a lot more coconut tree groves to give his men plenty of room and covering from the prying eyes of low flying enemy aircraft.

Kennedy befriended Gasa and Kumana when they met by accident near a Japanese warship wreck. The two locals were actually volunteer guides for the US and British’s Coastwatchers. These are Australians and British men who stayed back in Solomon Islands during the war to assist the Allied Forces with local knowledge and information about Japanese aircraft and boat movements.

“In 1943, not far from where we stand today, then Lieutenant John F Kennedy, US Navy stood on the shoulders of giants. If it were not for the actions of Solomon Islanders, the United States and the world would not have had this leader,” said Commander Dan Balsinger, Defence Attaché at the US Embassy in Papua New Guinea. He represented his government at the unveiling ceremony of the monument on Kennedy Island.

“At great risk for their own safety, Ronnie Kumana and Biuku Gasa notified Allied forces of the crew, they carried the coconut on which Kennedy had written a message regarding their location.”

Each of the guests that were at the unveiling ceremony on Kennedy Island on August 2, 2017 got to see how the message of Kennedy was conveyed by Kumana and Gasa to the US PT base in Rendova Harbour.

Green coconuts served on the island had the message carved on them, ‘The native know where we are. We’re alive, need help, Kennedy.’

In interviews later, the two
heroes knew that the young officer they rescued during the war went onto become President of the United States. Gasa had said that shortly after his inauguration as the 35th President in 1961, word was passed onto him and Kumana that the new president would invite them to the White House.

That invitation however never came Gasa said, as another local went to the US to meet the new President instead. Gasa said he believed they were bypassed because of their limited knowledge of English.

The monument on Kennedy Island redirects recognition to the heroic efforts of the two local guides. Another local group, the Western Surfers Association also wants to immortalise the exceptional courage of Gasa and Kumana by planning an annual swim around Kennedy Island, retracing the swims the late JFK did for the sake of his surviving crew on that ill-fated night some 75 years ago.

Monument now stands on Kennedy Island, testifying to one of the most memorable heroic rescues of American soldiers by Solomon Islanders during WWII.

rescuers recognised
The Battles of Bloody Ridge
- Part Two

By Rob Bochman
World War II History Enthusiast

Of all the World War II battles in the Solomon Islands, the skirmishes at Bloody Ridge is the one that is the most famous. It was the first of two major battles that took place on Bloody Ridge as the Japanese Army attempted to re-take the airfield (Henderson Field) from the defending US forces.

The battle for Guadalcanal is recognised as the turning point of the Pacific War in the Second World War. In turn the battles for Bloody Ridge are seen as battles that saved Guadalcanal. As a result Bloody Ridge has achieved iconic status, fame and world-wide recognition.

It is for this reason that the Solomon Islands government took the decision to declare Bloody Ridge a national park. By preserving this battle area, future generations of Solomon Islanders, schools, students, overseas visitors and historians can walk and ‘smell’ the battlefield. The jungle, the foxholes, the barbed wire are still in place. The ambience of the battle surrounds the visitor. Three US Medals of Honour were won here. As much of the battlefield should be retained as is possible.

Already it is a drawcard for overseas visitors. An example of its special appeal was further demonstrated by the visit in 2016 of then US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who insisted on going to Bloody Ridge. Generals, Admirals, historians, enthusiast and thousands of others want to go to the Ridge. It is a special place that is treated with great reverence.

Rob Bochman continues from where he ended his Part I account of The Battles of Bloody Ridge in edition 75 of this magazine.

The Third Japanese Attack

October Battle of Coffin Corner

After their failure in the September (1942) Battle of Bloody Ridge, the Japanese assembled an even larger force for an October attack to win back the airfield. Using jungle cover and creating their own trails they would reach their final assault positions undetected. Hidden by trees US
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planes would not see them. By not using existing trails, local scouts would not see and report their approach.

A total of nine battalions consisting of 8500 Japanese soldiers were allocated to the task. Nine Japanese battalions were part of the 2nd Division (Sendai) comprising mainly two regiments, 16th and 29th. At the point of their attack they would enjoy a numeric supremacy of nine battalions attacking just one American battalion at a thinly held American perimetre. Concealment and surprise would overcome growing American air superiority. Like the September attack, the assault would be from an inland direction. That was the plan.

On October 12th 1942, Japanese engineers began to cut a 35 mile long trail starting west at the Poha River near Kokumbona. This trail became known as the Maruyama Trail so named after the attacking Japanese commander, Lt. General Maruyama. The trail cut inland behind Mount Austen, across the head waters of the Lunga River and then to its assault positions, attacking the American lines from the inland direction.

The Japanese operations officer, Col. Matsumoto, had briefly examined conditions on the proposed trail and thought they were better than they had previously believed. As it turned out conditions were much worse than they had previously thought. On 16th October Japanese assault troops began their jungle trek. Soldiers were told attack day was set for 20th October. Using the freshly built narrow trail each soldier had to carry an artillery shell plus his own pack. Artillerymen had to drag and carry their weapons over and through sharp ridges in enclosing jungle.

Almost immediately very difficult conditions slowed down progress. After a few days, artillery...
and shells were being dumped by exhausted Japanese soldiers. Forward movement was painfully slow. Attack day was put back to 22 October, deferred to 23rd, and again to 24th. Any hope of coordinating nine battalions in a united attack was missed as units lost contact with each other. On the evening of 24th October some leading units did reach the American perimetre and dutifully prepared to attack.

Facing them was one US battalion of the Seventh Marines (1/7) commanded by possibly the most famous Marine of all time, Chesty Puller. The Marines’ line was at the far end (inland) of Bloody Ridge. Its right flank rested on the Lunga River and its left flank stretched thinly two thousand metres east to a jungle corner where the line turned north. Here it was tied into the Army’s 2nd Battalion 164th Infantry.

About 1600 metres in front of the Marines’ line was an outpost manned by men from A Company with Sergeant Briggs in command. On the evening of 24th October, approaching Japanese moved passed this outpost towards the Marines’ line. Sergeant Briggs is reported to have telephoned Col. Puller reporting the presence of Japanese troops. Puller is said to have asked him “How many.” Briggs’s answer was “the whole f…..g Japanese army.” Puller said: “OK, that many.” He gave Briggs ten minutes to get his men out of the outpost before he called in artillery.

A few days earlier the line held by 1/7 had been manned by two Marine battalions. Not expecting an inland attack and perceiving the Japanese threat was from the west at the Matanikau, 2nd Battalion 7th Marines was withdrawn from the

US Marines at the 75th anniversary of WWII in Honiara. Photo: Australian High Commission, Solomon Islands.
line and moved away to Kola Ridge. Where there had been two Marine battalions there was now only one.

The Marine line now stretched from the Corner through to Bloody Ridge and then to the Lunga River. Could this thinly stretched line hold out against an attack by nine battalions?

Compensating for thinness of the line was firepower enjoyed by the Marines. It bristled with automatic weapons, 50 and 30 calibre machine guns, interspersed with 37 mm cannons firing grapeshot. In front of the line was barbed wire. 81mm mortars were registered to fall amongst any attacking enemy. Sitting further back in the American perimetre was artillery ready to provide additional support.

Assisting the Marines however was jungle. Its denseness prevented the Japanese coordinating their attack. When the attacks did take place the ‘fog of war’ took over and command of the Japanese assault became impossible and as individual units and battalions entered the battle piecemeal, American firepower decimated them. Despite heroic Japanese assaults the Marine line held. It held with added support from the Army’s 3rd battalion 164th Infantry who were fed into Marine positions that night fighting alongside 1/7. As depicted in the recent mini-series The Pacific, Japanese dead piled up in front of Marine Sergeant John Basilone’s machine gun that night. His deeds in that action earned him the Medal of Honor, arguably the most famous Medal of Honor won in the Pacific war.

The next night, Japanese soldiers again assaulted American lines, but to no avail. The Americans had further strengthened their line and employed even more artillery. Japanese soldiers once again bravely impaled themselves on American firepower. Japanese losses were even greater than the September battle. After the battle, there were so many Japanese being buried that a Marine is reported to have said “Gee if you were a coffin maker you would make a fortune here.” Hence that area became known as Coffin Corner.

The trail the visitors uses to get through to Basalone’s position follows the defensive line set up by the Americans. You pass alongside foxholes and fighting positions untouched since the war. The jungle conditions are the same as 1942. Here you can feel and sense the presence of those men who dug and manned these positions. All is silent now although the heat and mosquitoes are still there. Your imagination can add the noise, fear, smell, pain, and pulsating emotion of a kill or be killed battle situation.

Usually a foxhole is a position (hole) dug to usually hold two riflemen. When bullets and shrapnel fly about you want to keep as much of you as possible below the ground. At night one rifleman sleeps while the other keeps watch peering over the foxhole. Other nearby fighting positions may be larger to hold crews of machine guns, cannons or mortars. In a jungle these positions would be never be more than ten metres apart. The Japanese only attacked at night. So in the dark, the American defenders were nervously alert. If the Japanese were known to be nearby those nerves would be stretched to the nth degree.

This is a place that should be preserved as a place of reverence for those Americans and Japanese who fought here. A special place where present and future generations of Solomon Island and overseas visitors can also experience that special feeling.

The US government has offered its full support to the government of Solomon Islands in advising and helping the development of the National Park.

Millions of tourist dollars are already being brought to the Solomons as a result of WWII Tourism, with each year being bigger than the last. Many more tourists from the US and Japan will be guaranteed by the national park declaration. The resulting publicity from the declaration would bring added overseas interest especially from the US and Japan. It reinforces the knowledge that the Solomon Islands government is serious about conserving and promoting this most historic place. As a result of the National Park declaration, Bloody Ridge can also be listed and recognised as a World Heritage Battle Site bringing even more visitors.

Importantly the declaration ensures that Bloody Ridge will be retained forever as a special historic place for visitors. If it was allowed to be sold off for other purposes, all WWII tourism would die off. More importantly the declaration of Bloody Ridge as a national park honours those warriors from both sides who fought and those who fell there.
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From unveiling of a peace monument to a march through the city preceding the final farewell ceremony at Lawson Tana Sports Stadium that culminated in a huge firework displays, the country last June said farewell to RAMSI – the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

The Australian Government led and largely financed RAMSI, and its Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove was in Honiara to be part of the farewell festivities. He was joined by representatives of the other 15 Pacific Island governments that contributed to RAMSI – seconding civilians, police officers or soldiers.

In a grand show of appreciation, Solomon Islands Governor-General Sir Frank Kabui bestowed medals of honour on leaders of RAMSI including all of its past and current Special Coordinators.

A peace monument now stands in the grounds of Central Police Station on Mendana Avenue to commemorate RAMSI’s contribution to restoring peace in the country.

Its inscription reads:

“Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

24 July 2003 – 30 June 2017

In commemoration of the thousands of police, military, civilian advisers and diplomats from 15 Pacific Islands nations that rescued Solomon Islands from lawlessness and reversed the country’s descent towards economic collapse and state failure. Operation Helpem Fren, led by Australia, stopped the violence and rebuilt the nation so that Solomon Islanders could regain control of their country, lives and future. RAMSI returned hope and stability to the Hapi Isles.

This monument was unveiled on the eve of RAMSI’s departure in the presence of Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to acknowledge the region’s enormous contribution to the reconstruction of Solomon Islands and as a reminder to future generations of Solomon Islanders that the trauma and mistakes of the past must never be repeated.

“That men should brothers be, make nations see.” – extract from the National Anthem of Solomon Islands.
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Destination

By Priestley Habru

Tirotonga village, located just a few kilometres inland and uphill from Isabel’s provincial township of Buala is fast becoming a hub for birdwatching.

The major drawcard for tourists are the rare species of birds like the Black-faced Pitta, Solomons Frogmouth, Fearful Owl, Imitator Goshawk and Sanford’s Sea-eagle. Other birds tourists want to see include the Woodford Rail, Solomon Boobook and Myzomela, according to owner of Mae Holo Bird Watching Roger Manehage.

Mae Holo and Bubuli Bird Watching owned by Gerard Kidia are currently the two birdwatching ventures at Tirotonga Village.

One of the sought-after birds to watch is the elusive Black-faced Pitta which is only endemic to Isabel and Choiseul Islands in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, now part of Papua New Guinea.

According to the 2016 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, the Black-faced Pitta was reasonably common at a time, at least on Bougainville. Forty specimens were collected there before 1938. But since then, no recording was made until 1994 when three birds were heard calling at Tirotonga on Santa Isabel. Searches and interviews on Choiseul and Bougainville were unsuccessful until as late as 2014 when it was recorded in Choiseul.

In its latest assessment, IUCN stated the conservation status of this species is not well understood: It is categorised as ‘Vulnerable’ on the basis of its very small known population, but if research shows its population is falling, this would warrant the bird to be reclassified in a higher threat category.

More than 10 tourists have come to the hilltop village of Tirotonga so far this year either through Mae Holo or Bubuli birdwatching arrangements. Apart from these two birdwatching businesses, fellow villager Freda Pooti offers descent accommodation with four rooms, kitchen and laundry facilities for tourists and guest alike who wish to visit Tirotonga Village.

Situated along the mountain range above Buala Town and surrounding coastal villages toward the east, Tirotonga Village is a picturesque home with mostly sago-palm thatched houses and few iron-roofing hamlets overlooking Maringe Lagoon that includes Fera Island which hosts the local airstrip toward the western tip.

The Maringe Lagoon which consists of Jhokau, Tasia, Fera and Sulei islands are surrounded by beautiful coral reefs, mangroves...
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and a few pockets of white sandy beaches especially around Fera Airstrip.

‘Visi’ Fishing Technique

Whilst in Buala Town or birdwatching at Tirotonga Village, tourists can listen to stories, experience or even witness a traditional fishing technique still practised by the nearby coastal village of Nareabu.

No tourists or guests have actually been invited to see this fishing technique let alone document or film ‘visi’ as it’s called, but by paying a courtesy visit to the chief and elders of Nareabu Village, you can be allowed to see the preparation and might even be invited to the actual fishing method that only uses traditional vines and coconut leaves.

Narebau Village chairman and Chief Reuben Tatemana said ‘visi’ is a fishing technique that has been passed down from their ancestors and can only be done on special occasions such as a huge church gathering, wedding or during Christmas.

Tatemana said preparation for the ‘visi’ usually takes place two to three weeks before the actual fishing expedition.

“Men, women, young people and basically the whole Nareabu community partake in the preparation on an allocated day as agreed by the elders. What happens is that we will plait fresh coconut leaves along a 200 to 300 metre vine using ropes extracted from a local tree,” he explained in his local ‘Cheke Holo’ language of Isabel Province.

Whilst the coconut leaves are sewn into the long vine strip, women and girls are not allowed to step or stand over it. Up to two or three 200m-300m fishing net-like coconut leaves would have been prepared before the ‘visi’ fishing day takes place. Only men and boys are allowed to perform.

On the selected day for the ‘visi’, one or two canoes with outboard motor powered engines would load the traditional net and transports it to the preferred location within the reefs of Maringe Lagoon. It can only be done on certain periods of the day and night when it is between low and high tides.

A person referred to as ‘jahoi’ would pull the first end of the vine, whilst the other end is tied to a canoe and the rest of the men would help in pulling the traditional net starting from the deep end of the reef toward the shallow part.

At the shallow part, a group of men and boys would be standing with a ready-made hand woven net made from local vines to block the fish been chased ashore and surrounded by the coconut leaves net-like pulled at both ends and in the middle by the rest of the men.

Both ends of the traditional coconut leaves net would be pulled closer and closer so as to narrow the gap for the school of fish to be caught in the middle, blocked also by the woven net held steadfast by the other party in the shallow part of the reef.

Varieties of fish would be trapped inside the small space as the nets closed in. The men would then pick the fish trapped inside the space surrounded by both the net-like coconut leaves and the woven net. Fish caught through the ‘visi’ are actually terrified by the sound of the coconut fronds been pulled ashore and trapped as the men pulled and narrowed the long vine with coconut leaves toward the shallow reef.

The first canoe load of fish back to Nareabu Village would be shared amongst fellow villagers. The ‘visi’
would continue two or three times into the day even during the night and the early hours of the morning. These later catches would then go toward the stock of feeding hundreds or even thousands of people coming for the special occasion they have organised at Nareabu.

A pre-dominantly Anglican Church followers on Isabel Province means Nareabu Village celebrates Saint Barnabas as its Patron Saint around June each year, so you might be lucky to see the preparation of ‘visi’ or experience it yourself if you seek the permission of Chief Tatemana.

Contact:
Bird Watching: Mae Holo Bird Watching –Roger Manehage Mobile: (677) 7564911
Email: wmmaeholobdwatch@gmail.com
Bubuli Bird Watching: Gerard Kidia – (677) 7259744 • Fred Pooti Accommodation: (677) 7802783
Visi Fishing: Reuben Tatemane: 7113997 • Godfrey Tafolehe: 7253414

To book a flight to Fera or Suavanao, Isabel Province, log onto www.flysolomons.com

Fred Pooti’s accommodation in Tirotonga.

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Panpipers of A’re A’re

By Priestley Habru

Panpipe, music, or Au’ for the A’re A’re region of Malaita Province has been part of its culture for centuries.

Panpipe music is created when the player blows into an arranged bamboo pipes which produces beautiful tunes and melodies. It is the music A’re A’re people in the southern region of Malaita Province, the island lying immediately east of Guadalcanal, play and perform.

“Panpipe Music is the main highlight of different types of gatherings for our people that continues to today,“ John Hata said. He is a member of the Wa’uraha Cultural Panpipe from A’re A’re. “During feasts the type of panpipe music we play is called ‘kiro’ which has a lively beat to it,” he explained.

A’re A’re panpipe performers usually play two types of panpipe music – Taka’irori and Au Rerepi to produce a ‘kiro’ sound.

“During funerals, Nanarata tunes are played. Nanarata is a sad tune that reflects the sad occasion. Usually, this sad tune is heard during funerals of people with status such as chiefs, wives of chiefs, respectable elders, Hana Su (priests), and the Ramo.”

Hata took from his bag of panpipes a rerepi flute and played a nanarata tune which resembles the mourning of women during funerals. He reiterated that there are eight types of A’re A’re panpipe music.

The first consists of the most traditional and old panpipes. These are the Au Rerepi, Auni Tahana, Taka’irori, Au Rawaru, Keto, Auni Mato and Aahai. The eighth panpipe is the most common, which is called Auni Haka or the contemporary panpipe music. This is a very recent invention of the 1960s and 1970s by an A’re A’re man called Houmawa’i.

Today, you can still see A’re A’re panpipe groups performing in the country and sometimes invited to perform in festivals in the region and also around the globe.

Find out more about Wa’uraha A’re A’re Panpipe Group through their

Facebook page:
Wa’uraha A’re A’re Panpipers.

Phone Contact:
(677) 7121215/7762710.

Email:
jktaamora@gmail.com
Ballalae

Stone Carvers of Ranongga Island, near Gizo

Tulagi, Central Province – first capital of Solomon Islands, great dive site

Tenaru Falls, Guadalcanal Island

Marovo Lagoon, north of Vangunu Island (near Munda)

Kavachi submarine volcano, south of Vangunu Island

Kennedy Island – off Gizo, where JFKennedy was rescued from Japanese forces

Gizo

Munda

Ramata

Seghe

Guadalcanal

Honiara

Choiseul

Suavanoa
Langa Langa Lagoon, Malaita – home to artificial island builders, shipyards and shell money factories.

Pan pippers – ‘Are’Are Lagoon, Malaita.

Wogosia Festival, Santa Catalina, Makira Uluwa Province.

Lake Te’Nggano, Rennell Island.
The lost tribe of Alafe

Since 2013, a missionary has been helping a small tribe that lives high up in the mountains of East Kwaio on the island of Malaita. Comprising no more than 200 men, women and children, this tribe near Alafe prefers to live the way their ancestors have lived for thousands of years; deep inside the jungle, without clothes and in leaf houses with no floors. Taking a shower is frowned upon, as they believe water and soap wash their skins away and marijuana plants are grown as natural repellents against pests in their sweet potato gardens. This is Pastor Apisai Nawai's story, as conveyed to magazine editor, Samisoni Pareti in Honiara in July 2017.

I am originally from Nasukamai Village in the district of Nalawa, in Ra province on the northern region of the main island in Fiji. I am a missionary with the Assemblies of God Church and was posted to Auki, capital of Malaita in 2012. My contacts with the tribe in East Kwaio started not long after my arrival. They were trying to build a school for their children and they asked for my help.

The first time I made my trek up to Alafe, I was intrigued that in this day and age, there are people who still prefer to live with nature. Clothes are only worn when they need to come down to the school, or go to the coast to trade their sweet potatoes with either smoked fish or shell money. Otherwise men and their wives simply don a leaf or small piece of clothing to cover their privates. Unmarried women wear nothing at all.

Their leaf houses have roofs that reached close to the ground on either side. There is only one door and no windows. The earth is the floor, and the family sleep with no blankets or mats at nights. Sometimes their favourite pigs sleep with them too. All they have for warmth in the cold nights is a lit fire inside the house.

As they live right up on the mountain, there is no river here. So spring water is mainly used...
for drinking, not for bathing. They believe soap and water erase the skin and having dirt on your body protects it from diseases. Meals are only two times a day, and it’s usually the same menu for breakfasts and dinners – roasted sweet potatoes and water in the morning and similar diet for the evenings.

There is no salt or sugar in their meals. But I enjoy the way they cook their food. Sweet potatoes are harvested from their well-kept gardens, cut into slices and using a piece of bamboo stem, the sliced potatoes are filled into these bamboo sticks and laid in a burning fire. Once its cooked, the bamboos are split open with a knife and its contents devoured to a heart’s content.

For someone who is used to having a good, three hot meals in a day, the diet of this Alafe tribe certainly takes some getting used to. I have to say though that in all
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Email: investsolomons@commerce.gov.sb
and a second teacher to the Department of Education in Malaita Province, as well as to the national government in Honiara.

Many have asked me why I persist in helping the tribe of Alafe. Getting there is not for the faint hearted. In an open truck from Auki, the journey takes about 15 hours. The truck departs Auki around 10 in the morning and we don’t arrive in Auvasu village until 1 o’clock the next morning. After a four-hour rest, I begin the long trek up the mountain at 6am and I don’t get to Alafe Primary School until nine hours later.

I persist because I view this as part of my calling. The tribe wants to build a school for their children. I feel for them because they needed help and I am available to lend a hand.”
Parangiju is a lodge

Parangiju Inland Mountain Lodge - high above the plains of Guadalcanal.

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Diary of a Shop-a-holic

Where & when you can get bargains & good value for your money in Brisbane

Brisbane shopping experience has changed a lot since we moved here over 10-years ago. Thanks to the opening of the direct factory outlets (DFO), extended trading hours and online shopping, shopping in Brisbane has become really competitive and affordable.

If you are in town for a holiday, work, study or are living permanently and like me who shops and help our families back home, you can be guaranteed that Brisbane will offer you a shopping experience that is affordable and will suit every budget.

You don’t need to have a big budget to enjoy shopping you just have to be a smart shopper. Know what you want, what price you willing to pay and when and where to buy.

Direct Factory Outlet (Brisbane Airport, Harbour Town Gold Coast & Jindalee locations)

I love shopping for brand names but unfortunately, don’t have the bigger budget to pay full price so if you’re like me than DFO is the place to go for brand names at discount prices. Brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Mimco, Oroton, Coach, Adidas, Nike, BLK, Sheridan, Novo, to name a few. It’s simply a one stop shop for brand names. You will never pay full price and discount can easily range between 30 – 70%. You can also get similar bargains at TK Maxx but they stock mostly American brands. The reasons for big discount is simply because they are clearing out their last season stocks from their shop selves making room for their new stock.

Words: Ena Tokiyawa

Left & right photos: Jonathan Dass Photography
Queen Street Mall - Located right in the middle of Brisbane City

Brisbane shopping will be incomplete without a visit to the Queens Street Mall. A huge one whole street of shopping for everything from big brands like Chanel, Tiffany to Big W and Kmart. You will find the latest fashions and what’s new to the market here so don’t expect to get discount, but if you have time to look around you can surely find some good bargain. Whether you find bargain or not you will surely enjoy the experience. Extended trading hours until 9pm on Fridays. Easy access by public transport.
Destinations

**Westfield Shopping Centre’s – Carindale, Chermside, Indooroopily & Garden City**

Very family friendly and convenient to every shoppers. Everything from fashions, sportswear, electronic, homeware/ décor to groceries under one big roof. You can find both mixtures of what’s new and the last seasons stock here so look for bargains. Gadget and electronic lovers, don’t forget to check out shops like JB Hi-fi, Apple Shop, Samsung to name a few. Easy access by public transport. Extended trading hours on Thursday nights until 9pm.

**My Shopping Tips**

If you don’t mind taking your own bags and packing your own shopings, then Aldi is definitely the place to go for cheaper groceries.

I love the convenience of longer trading hours at Woolworths and Coles and also their “click & pay” option which allow shoppers to shop and pay online. They will text you when its ready for pick up. Also like Aldi, these shops sell pretty much everything from groceries to some over the counter medicines. Woolworths’ Brisbane Airport opens 24 hours, something that I really love.

I love Costco full stop. If you have a chance check it out

Unless the latest trends is a must have, wait. What’s new in fashion now and very expensive will be 30-50% less when something new comes into the market 3 or 4 months later or when the season changes.

Don’t be afraid to walk into big departmental stores like Myers and David Jones and walk straight into their sale racks. You will be surprised at what you can find and how affordable it is.

If you visiting Brisbane for shopping or live here and have been saving up for big ticketed items – if you can wait, the best time to shop is during the End of Financial Year (EOFY) Sale. You can really get good bargains during this time especially if you are a cash buyer. Good time to buy electronics. Don’t forget to ask for further discount and also make reasonable offers. Christmas sale is not really a good sale. Wait for after the Boxing Day sale.

**Quick Tips:**

✓ Most shops offer online shopping - check them out. Love their fast delivery & easy return/exchange policy.

✓ If you haven’t been to Kmart lately please do so. You’ll be surprised.

✓ Check out your local shopping centre first.
SOLOMON AIRLINES FACT SHEET

AIRCRAFT: A320

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration:</th>
<th>H4 - BUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current Routes:</td>
<td>Brisbane, Nadi, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Fiji
Nadi Airport
Office 27, First Floor
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Fax: +679 6722140
Email: solomon@connect.com.fj

AIRCRAFT: Dash 8-102

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

AIRCRAFT: Twin Otter

Length: 15.77 m
Wing Span: 19.81 m
Range: 1350 km
Cruising Speed: 338 kph
Seating capacity: 16
Crew: 2
Current Routes: All Ports in the Solomon Islands
Aircraft in Fleet: 2
Your national airline, Solomon Airlines has played a major role in enabling a donation of much needed medical equipment to reach the National Referral Hospital in Honiara.

The donation, which includes a vital bacterial incubator, is thanks to the efforts of Brisbane-based medico, Dr Claire Heney along with Brisbane-based Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology staffs, scientist Wendy Jackson and Dr Michael Harrison.

Ms Jackson alerted Dr Heney to the availability of equipment following the closure of a Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology branch laboratory in Brisbane.

And she in turn contacted Dr Harrison who gladly donated the equipment providing it could be moved within a few days.

Dr Heney promptly contacted Solomon Airlines’ cargo representative in Brisbane, Mr Rob Barton of Aircraft Loaders and Packers, who organised for the close to 400 kilos of equipment to be flown to Honiara where customs clearance and delivery was handled by Sebastian Ilala of the BJS Group of Companies and DHL Couriers.

Honiara-based Rotarians, Sir Bruce Saunders and Wayne Morris also contributed assistance and sponsorship in enabling the shipment, including refrigerators, a water bath, computers, printer, scanner and chairs, to reach the hospital.

Solomon Airlines CEO Brett Gebers accompanied by the airline’s Manager – Commercial, Colin Sigimanu visited the laboratory to inspect the new equipment.

The hospital’s Head of Microbiology, Hilda Zoleveke said while most of the equipment will be used in the microbiology section, one fridge will be used to store specimens in the biochemistry lab, the water bath will be used by the haematology section while the computers and printer will benefit everyone.

“The Microbiology lab has transformed and our need for years has been met,” Ms Zoleveke said.

“We have shared fridges with other departments and the incubator, vital for growing bacteria at a correct temperature and environment, and fridges have been cleaned and are already functioning.

“Thank you to everyone involved for this great help for our nation.”
IT’s out of sight but never out of mind

Our IT Division may prefer to be out of sight but out of mind is definitely out of the question. With our entire reservation and ticketing systems depending on the work of the airline’s computerised system, IT and its continuous high performance is paramount and is the one thing that is constantly in the mind of everyone in the airline, more so for the head of our IT division, Mrs Ila Tura.

By the year’s end, Ila and her team hope connectivity with their overseas offices will extend to the airline’s major domestic offices.

“Our two offices in Munda and Gizo are ready to go with the new system,” explains Ila. “They can process e-ticketing and Munda especially can also do electronic check-ins because the office is located at the airport. Gizo poses some sort of a technical challenge because the airport is located off island, and we would need good and reliable internet to allow for electronic check-in there.”

Apart from Munda and Gizo, the airline operates three other branches and an additional 18 stations in airfields around the country. Depending on Internet connectivity, the airline plans to bring all these out-stations online.

OASIS of Belama Lounge

Belama is local word for the frigate bird. It therefore makes a lot of sense for flyers to call on Belama Lounge before a flight.

Beatrice Umea is your wonderful hostess. She will be the first to meet you at the door and will introduce you to all that the lounge has to offer; from a cold drink in the bar to some snacks including cakes and sandwiches. Showers with fresh towels are available to those that come straight off work to the airport.

Attention to detail is what some of you may find delight in. A strand of tiger face orchid in the bathroom to immaculate wall carvings, each depicting cultural totems of islands that make up Solomon Islands complete the interior deco.

There’s satellite TV for those who want to catch up with what’s happening around the world, and the different wall clocks offer that ticking reminder of the various time zones Solomon Airlines’ Airbus 320 flies its guests to.
Your Guide to the Solomon Islands

Things to know as visitors to our shores:

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

What to wear … Light and casual. Keep brief beachwear for the beach.

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 a work permit.

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

Airport Tax … SB$100 payable by passengers (12 years and over) boarding international flights, and these are generally added onto your air ticket.

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.

Currency … $100, $50, $20, $10, $5 and $2 Solomon Islands notes. Coins are $1, 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c.

Business Hours … Government and some business offices open Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturday 8am – noon.

Banks … Bank South Pacific opens Monday to Friday 8.30am to 3pm; ANZ Banking Group open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. Pan Oceanic Bank Limited opens 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday, and its Panatina Plaza branch opens 10am to 1pm on Saturday.

Telecommunications … Local and international calls may be made from Our Telikom public card phones which are in prominent locations in Honiara and provincial centres or from GSM Mobile services. Telephone and Internet cards are readily available through shops, hotels and Our Telikom offices and bmobile and Vodafone outlets. GSM prepaid and postpaid mobile cards are available in Honiara, Gizo and in some provincial centres.

Tipping … Not expected and not encouraged.

Transport … Taxis and buses are readily available in Honiara. Rental cars are also available from Avis, Economy, Travel Car Solomon and Zome.

International air … National airline, Solomon Airlines operate out of Honiara International Airport. Other carriers include Fiji Airways, Virgin Australia, Air Niugini and Air Nauru.

Domestic … Solomon Airlines operates services throughout the country.

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

News Media … The country has a vibrant media business offering choice in both English and Pidjin languages. Radio services are offered by state radio, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation and private operators PAA FM and some religious bodies. Our Telikom relays BBC and other satellite TV networks while Island Sun are the two dailies, with a couple of monthly business and lifestyle magazines.

The Solomon Islands are divided into nine provinces as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Highest Point</th>
<th>Capital</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>5,336 km²</td>
<td>141,403</td>
<td>2,447m</td>
<td>Honiara</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1,000 km²</td>
<td>27,928</td>
<td>510m</td>
<td>Tulagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>5279 km²</td>
<td>81,214</td>
<td>1661m</td>
<td>Gizo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaita</td>
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<td>159,923</td>
<td>1,303m</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24,412</td>
<td>923m</td>
<td>Lata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choiseul</td>
<td>3,294 km²</td>
<td>25,870</td>
<td>1,060m</td>
<td>Taro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rennell &amp; Bellona</td>
<td>276 km²</td>
<td>3,025</td>
<td>220m</td>
<td>Tingoa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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email: saragoldsolomon@gmail.com

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