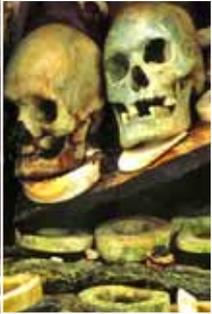


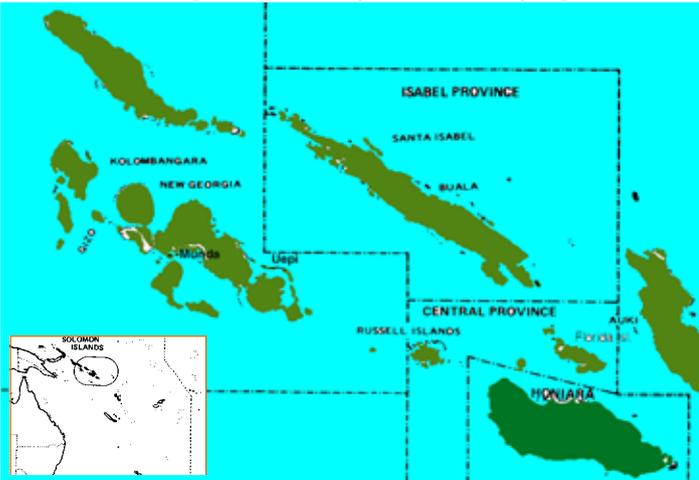
# Solomon Islands



**DIVE**   
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# Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands is considered the eco-tourism destination of the South Pacific. Untouched by the influences of today's modern world, this pristine and unspoiled paradise, offers the visitor a most unique and culturally diverse holiday experience.



Located to the north-east of Australia and extending 1,667 kilometres in a south-easterly direction from Papua New Guinea, the double chain of islands form the third largest archipelago in the South Pacific.

Honiara, situated on the main island of Guadalcanal, is the nation's capital and gateway to your Solomon Islands adventure.

**History:** During the Pacific Campaign of W.W 11, the Solomon Islands became a key turning point in the struggle by the allied forces to repel the Japanese advancement in the South Pacific.

One of the most fierce naval encounters of the campaign, The Battle for Guadalcanal, occurred on the 13th of November 1942. The battle resulted in heavy losses on both sides and the ocean floor, littered with war wrecks and relics, became known as "Iron Bottom Sound". These former machines of destruction, now covered with a kaleidoscope of colourful corals, form artificial reefs that attract a plethora of marine life.



**The environment:** Mother Nature has truly woven her magic thread into the tapestry of these islands, resulting in a variety of exotic landscapes.

The islands range in size from tiny, low lying coral atolls, to larger landmasses. Of the 992 islands

only 147 are inhabited. Most islands are covered with tropical jungles and low-land rainforests, while coconut palms line the sun soaked golden sand beaches and the tranquil blue lagoons.

**The people:** The majority of the estimated 560,000 population are Melanesian, while some outer islands are home to Polynesian and Micronesian people. Although the islanders appear shy they are very friendly. Most, live a subsistent village lifestyle, retaining many traditional "Kastoms" that may vary from province to province. There is at least 67 indigenous languages and 30 dialects. The most predominant language spoken is Melanesian and Pidgin English, with basic English used and understood throughout many of the provinces.

## Things to do:

The Solomons is renowned for having some of the best diving, snorkelling and fishing in the world. The dramatic outcrops of hard and soft corals, breath taking drop-offs, prolific marine life and WWII wrecks, coupled with the excellent visibility and water temperatures of between 27°C - 30°C, guarantees quality diving, year round.

Other popular activities: sea kayaking, canoeing, surfing and sailing. Cultural and Eco tours with experienced guides include; village visits, arts and craft viewing, WWII history tours, rainforest treks, bird spotting visiting waterfalls, volcanoes and cultural shrines.



## General information:

**Passport:** Travellers must hold a current passport with a minimum of 6 months validity plus a return or onward travel ticket.

**Visas:** Commonwealth, US or most EC visitors do not require a visa. Check with your consultant for updated information.

**Climate:** Tropical average daytime temperatures between 25°C – 30°C, and evenings 19°C. Seasons are not clearly defined however November to April are the wetter months when squalls or cyclones may occur.

**Health:** As with many tropical areas Malaria is endemic in the Solomon Islands. Appropriate anti-malarial medication should be taken. Consult with your doctor for information a few weeks prior to departure. Bottled water and the boiling of water is recommended for many areas.

**Electricity:** 240 volts / 50 cycle AC is available in Honiara and major resort areas. Many outer areas are powered by generator. In many outer hotels and resorts there is no hot water.

**Language:** Melanesian and Pidgin English is predominantly spoken. English is used and understood throughout most of the Islands.

**Culture:** Varies between provinces. Ask about appropriate behaviour and always seek permission before taking photos of people or places.

**Time:** 11 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

**Communications:** 24 hour telephone, fax, and limited internet services are available in provincial centres, major hotels and resorts.

**Business:** Hours are 8am - 12 noon and 1- 4pm.

**Currency:** Solomon Island Dollar. Banks are located in Honiara, Gizo and Munda; 8.30am - 3.00pm Monday to Friday. Credit card facilities are not usually available beyond main centres, hotels and resorts.

**Packing Hints:** Light casual clothing although not too brief when away from resort areas. Long sleeves and pants recommended at dusk. Don't forget a hat, comfortable shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen and torch.

**N.B.** Visitors should be mindful that as you move away from the main towns and centres, services and facilities become increasingly limited.



## Honiara - Guadalcanal

**Honiara**, the capital and gateway to the Solomon Islands is located on the island of Guadalcanal, overlooking Iron Bottom Sound. The commercial and business centre offers a selection of restaurants, clubs, banks, tourist information, shops and market places. The body of water between Guadalcanal and Nggela Islands is the resting place for many ships and aircraft lost in the 1942 "Battle of Guadalcanal".

**Activities:** Trekking expeditions to villages, flora and fauna, tropical bushland, rivers and waterfalls. Local tour operators are recommended.

**Diving:** "Iron Bottom Sound" contains a variety of wrecks including troop carriers, transport ships, submarines and planes. All wrecks are National Heritage listed and removal of any items is strictly prohibited.

### Some of the popular dive sites

#### "Hirokawa Maru" (Bonegi I) :

Japanese transport ship. 6,860 tons, length 155 metres. Dive starts at 3m plunging to 55m.

#### "Kinugawa Maru" (Bonegi II) :

Japanese transport ship. Length 132 metres, resting partly above water with the stern in 27m.

**USS John Penn** : An American troop ship covered in black coral lying on the sand at 60 metres. For experienced divers only.



Please ask us about other accommodation options in Honiara.

### Kitano Mendana Hotel

#### Kitano Mendana

Set amongst lush tropical gardens overlooking Iron Bottom Sound. Within walking distance to shops, restaurants and commercial area. The hotel offers 81 double rooms, 12 twin rooms and 3 suites with garden or ocean views. All rooms are air-conditioned and have en-suite bathroom, fridge, tea / coffee making facilities, IDD telephones, satellite TV and in-house video.

**Hotel Facilities:** Restaurant, café and bar, swimming pool, laundry, souvenir shop, safe deposit box, guest parking and function room.



### King Solomon Hotel

#### King Solomon Hotel

Situated on a terraced hillside with views over Iron Bottom Sound and within walking distance of the town centre. The hotel offers 23 deluxe hillside rooms, 30 sea view rooms and 7 self contained units. All rooms are air conditioned and offer garden or water views, private bathroom facilities, ceiling fans, fridge, tea/ coffee making, IDD telephone and satellite TV.

**Hotel Facilities:** Restaurant and nightclub with entertainment and live music, 2 lounge bars, infinity waterfall pool, 24 hour reception, conference centre, hair and beauty salon, conference facilities, wireless internet, laundry services, tour operator. A land based cable car provides access to the accommodation levels.



## Tulagi - Florida Islands



The Nggela (Florida) Islands are a small cluster of islands located 35km north of Honiara. A boat transfer from Honiara Yacht Club across Iron Bottom Sound takes approximately one hour. Due to its deep water anchorage and central location, **Tulagi** was originally chosen as the colonial capital of the Solomon Islands. The Pacific Campaign of WWII changed this when on 7 August 1942, the Japanese occupation of the island was halted by allied troops, resulting in Tulagi being severely damaged. The number of wrecks in the area has made Tulagi one of the best wreck diving destinations in the South Pacific.

#### Diving:

Many wrecks lie in the harbour only minutes from Tulagi Wharf. Nitrox and limited mixed gas facilities are available for the technical and more experienced divers.

#### Some of the more popular dive sites

**Aaron Ward:** Discovered in 1995, is the only dive-able destroyer in the Solomon Islands. Depth 58 - 70metres.

**Sandfly Passage:** A beautiful coral garden studded with big red and yellow fans. An amazing diversity of coral and marine life. Depth 3 - 40 metres.



**Kanawha:** The 14,500 tonne American oil tanker was sunk on 7 April 1943, the same day as the Aaron Ward. Sitting upright on a flat bottom the deck is strewn with artifacts and debris. Depth 40 - 60 metres.



### Vanitas Divers Lodge

#### Vanitas Divers Lodge

Located on the waterfront next to Tulagi Wharf. Vanitas offers basic accommodation in single or twin dorm-style rooms with shared bathroom facilities. The 4 double rooms have private bathroom facilities. All rooms have ceiling fans and power.

**Lodge Facilities:** Restaurant and bar with indoor or outdoor dining, BBQ amenities.



# Uepi Island - Western Province



**Uepi Island**, sits on two and a half kilometres of barrier reef surrounding the beautiful Marovo Lagoon, on the south-eastern side of New Georgia Island. Comprising some 100 hectares of raised coral reef covered with lowland rainforest, the pristine environment is in an almost undisturbed state. The marine eco-system is extraordinarily diverse and the terrestrial eco-system quite unique.

Situated 10 kilometres from the nearest village and 150 kilometres from the nearest point of supply, the journey to Uepi Island is quite an adventure in itself. A 60 minute flight from Honiara brings you to the small airstrip at Seghe. Visitors are met at the airstrip by a representative of Uepi Island Resort and transported the 12 kilometres across beautiful Marovo Lagoon in an open 22 foot speed boat.

**Activities:** Spectacular snorkelling, swimming, sea-kayaking, fishing, bush walking, volleyball and cultural visits to nearby islands. Secluded picnic and snorkelling areas can be accessed by boat or by walking tracks throughout the rainforest.



**Diving:** Uepi Island Resort has a well equipped dive centre with a limited amount of gear for hire. The diving along Uepi Island passage and barrier reef drop-offs and bays is exclusively a coral reef eco-system. There are over 10 main dive sites with differing structure and bio-assemblage. These include: shallow 15 metre and 30 metre coral gardens with magnificent drop-offs, ledges and gutters, sharks, a diversity of reef fish and light game fish, turtles, mantas and eagle rays, all common sights, along with the seasonal and friendly hammerheads. There are no wrecks in the immediate area but excursions to the wreck of a P38 fighter plane and a fishing boat, approximately a one hour boat trip away, can be organised.



## Some popular dive sites:

**Uepi Point:** A near vertical reef corner coated profusely with hard and soft corals. At 30m a coral peninsula juts out into the deep blue and the walls plunge into the abyss. This provides the stage for a spectacular procession of pelagics including schooling barracuda, jacks, rays and sharks. At various times and tides the point area becomes a hunting and feeding ground. As a result the underwater action can be very exciting.

**Uepi Pier:** From flashing 'scallops' in a cave, directly below the pier, to 'shark bommie' in just over 30m and a 15m wall clustered with fans - this dive rates as one of the best shore dives yet!



**The Elbow:** Is an incredibly steep drop-off. The sheer wall drops to depths in excess of 600 metres and is covered with colourful hard and soft corals. Seasonal sightings of hammerheads.



## Uepi Island Resort

### Uepi Island Resort

The only property on the island is set along a sandy beach with the tranquil waters of the lagoon on one side and fringing reefs on the other.

The rest of the island is undeveloped and covered with tropical jungle. Catering for a



maximum 26 guests in a relaxed, informal atmosphere, the resort offers 6 private, timber bungalows with a deck area and hammock to enjoy the views over the lagoon or mountains. The 2 twin share units and 2 guest rooms each share a common wall and balcony. All rooms offer private bathroom facilities, insect screening, refrigerator, tea / coffee making facilities and a regular supply of fresh, tepid rainwater. Due to the remoteness of Uepi a meal package is compulsory.

**Resort Facilities:** Dining / bar area serving breakfast and dinner, lunch is delivered to your room; Library; 24 hour 240v power; Dive Centre.

## Dive Charter Vessels



### Liveaboard Vessels

The ideal way to experience the diverse range of diving in the Solomon Islands is aboard one of the 2 charter vessels operating out of Honiara. In addition to world renowned diving the Solomons offer a hidden wealth of cultural and natural wonders. During village visits you will be welcomed by the shy, friendly smiles of local people offering hand made souvenirs for sale. **Bilikiki Cruises** operates 2 live aboard vessels "M.V Bilikiki" and "M.V Spirit of Solomons". Both boats offer air conditioned accommodation, unparalleled space and comfort, immense sun decks, plenty of covered deck space. Each vessel has two 21 foot aluminium dive tenders to transfer divers to dive sites and to pick them up when they surface. There is no need for lengthy swims back to the vessel.

# Gatokae Island - Western Province



**Gatokae Island** is the most south-eastern main island of the new Georgia Group at the tip of the Western Province. Gatokae is situated near the renowned Marovo Lagoon. The local, lesser known protected reefs around Gatokae are uncrowded and as rich in fish and coral life, just waiting to be further explored. Nearby are the three wild and uninhabited islands of Bulu, MaleMale and Kicha, the 2,900 foot jungle-clad peak of Mt Mariu, Kavachi Volcano (the world's only accessible submarine volcano) and ancient fortified villages and ceremonial sites.

Situated near Paeva village and right beside a coral lagoon is **The Wilderness Lodge**. This eco-friendly lodge has been designed to blend



the atmosphere of the rainforest, ocean, and neighbouring small village with Western comforts and convenience and features traditional construction using sago palm leaf, wild bitinat palm and village-sawn hardwood with exotic timber and pandanus mat interior. Gatokae is a 50 minute flight from Honiara. Guests are then transported to the lodge by motorised longboat. Transfers can also be arranged from Seghe airstrip, Uepi Island Resort, Tetepare EcoLodge and Matikuri Island Lodge.

**Activities:** Snorkel off the lodge and nearby islands; freedive coral walls; go spearfishing, bluewater hunting or sportfishing; hike through lush rainforest, along coral beaches and coastal cliffs to villages, waterfalls, mountain streams, volcanic peaks and ancient ceremonial sites; go bird watching. Overnight village stays and river canoe tours are possible.

## The Wilderness Lodge

**At The Wilderness Lodge** you will find real Melanesian hospitality, unique local experiences and genuine adventures. The property can comfortably accommodate 12-16 guests. The Lodge has 2 rooms each with two double beds and single bunk and shared facilities, opening to a main living area with large table and benches.

The 2 Oceanfront Bungalows each have two queen beds separated by a privacy curtain and a foldout sofa bed, en-suite vanity and toilet, private outdoor stonework shower, kitchenette, personal fans, beachfront veranda with deck chairs and hammocks to enjoy the epic ocean views. Meals are included in your stay.

**Resort Facilities:** Dining / bar lodge area; solar power with 240v / 110v inverter; access to satellite phone and satellite internet for emergencies; deepwater jetty; small Dive Centre.



**Diving:** There are over 50 dive sites to choose from in the warm, clear blue waters surrounding Gatokae. Pristine unexplored reefs with caves, swim-throughs, abyssal drop-offs and an extraordinary array of fish life are a fixture on the points and coral encrusted walls.

The Wilderness Lodge has a small, fully equipped dive centre, with a limited amount of gear hire, offering daily dives (except on Saturday's - the Sabbath) and Try Dive and Open Water dive courses.

### Some popular dive sites:



**Kicha West Point:** hear the underwater sound show of distant Kavachi submarine volcano as curious grey reef sharks, schools of surgeonfish and midnight snapper drift along this coral covered vertical point. Sit in the edge of the current and watch huge resident schools of bigeye trevally, a procession of spanish mackerel, dogtooth tuna, barracuda, batfish, turtles (all the big stuff)

- occasionally silvertip sharks, hammerheads, even sailfish and a lot of nervous fusileers.

**Malemale West Point:** an epic, long drift dive with several corners allowing you to tuck in out of the current and check out the deep clefts and overhangs full of life - massive fans and the richest soft corals. Lots of pelagic action - sharks, barracuda, spanish mackerel, GTs, trevally, and some of the biggest dogtooth tuna. Only 5 minutes from the Lodge.

**Charapae:** a reef and rainforest point dive off Bulu Island. Descend

along a series of overhangs and caves packed with life. Drift around the deep, vertical point covered in fans, corals and invertebrates. Hanging off the point are large schools of fish. Silvertips and hammerheads may come in to check you out. A deep cleft cuts back into the rainforest. End the dive on a rich coral wall with overhanging rainforest canopy.



# Gizo - Western Province



**Gizo**, the capital of Western Province, is a 90 minute flight from Honiara. This tropical treasure trove of sun drenched blue lagoons, coral cays, lush forests and pristine waters is surrounded by hundreds of small tropical islands. With a population of approximately 4,000 people, Gizo enjoys a mixture of "friendly" native customs and cultures. It's impossible to believe that throughout the 19th century the people of this peaceful and scenic region, specialised in the gruesome sport of head-hunting. Embedded in its history are also the memories of the heavy fighting that occurred here during WWII.

The stories about the rescue of John F Kennedy, (who later became the President of the USA) and the PT 109 crew, the aerial battles that occurred over Vella Lavella and the "Tokyo Express" steaming down The Slot, still abound today.



**Activities:** swimming, snorkelling, canoeing, sport fishing, surfing, island tours, nature hikes to waterfalls and volcanoes, picnics on deserted islands, cultural village visits and WWII historical tours.

**Diving:** The waters around Gizo are renowned for their spectacular and diverse dive sites, 28°C water temperatures and the excellent visibility. Dive on WW II wrecks, off-shore reefs, spectacular coral formations and plummeting walls covered in marine life. Depending on the dive sites visited, a dive day may include a picnic or BBQ lunch to be enjoyed on one of the many surrounding islands, including Kennedy Island.

## Some popular dive sites:

**Toa Maru:** The 6,700 ton, 140 metre long Japanese transport ship is lying on her starboard side in 10 - 37 metres of water. This dive site is worth several visits. You can explore the ships holds containing ammunition, saki bottles and even a two man tank.

**Plum Pudding Island:** A historically interesting site, where the late U.S. President, John F Kennedy and his crew of the PT 109, were shipwrecked.

**Japanese Zero and Float Plane:** Located in Gizo Harbour these wreck dives are easily accessible.



**Grand Central Station:** One of the best fish dives in Gizo. Park yourself on a 18 metre deep "bench" and watch the multitude of fish life pass you by. Rays, sharks, kingfish and porpoises are all present. Colourful corals are in abundance.

**Hot Spot:** A deep water pinnacle starting at 5 - 6 metres. This is a concentrated fish dive and home to 7 species of anemone fish, located at the safety stop.



## Gizo Hotel

**Gizo Hotel** Centrally located on the main street, overlooking the harbour and just a 5 minute boat ride from the airport.



The hotel offers a range of different room categories. The Garden Wing rooms are fan-cooled. The Poolside rooms and Seaview rooms are air-conditioned and have a private balcony. All rooms have private bathroom facilities, fridge, tea/coffee making and IDD phones.

**Hotel Facilities:** The restaurant and bar is located upstairs in an open air Leaf Haus with views over Gizo Bay. The downstairs bar is a popular local bar. There is a swimming pool, laundry/ ironing service, on-site shops, tour desk and wireless internet use.

## Fatboys Resort



**Fatboys.** Located on the waters edge of Mbabanga Island, a 10 minute boat ride from Gizo Wharf. The resort consists of 4 traditional leaf and hardwood bungalows and a self contained unit.

2 bungalows contain a queen and 3 single beds while 2 contain only a queen bed. Each bungalow offers a large veranda, private bathroom facilities, DVD player and tea / coffee making amenities. The 2 bedroom self contained unit has kitchen facilities.

**Resort Facilities:** Fatboys Restaurant and Bar is situated at the end of a 100 metre jetty, perched out over the crystal clear waters.

## Sanbis Resort

**Sanbis Resort** Surrounded by coconut palms this eco-friendly property overlooks a tranquil lagoon. The 6 secluded, beach-front bungalows have views over the lagoon. Each bungalow has a private veranda, modern ensuite bathroom with hot water and solar power. The newer Lodge is a private 2 bedroom complex with a separate main living / entertainment area and private jetty. (The resort does not cater for children under 12 years).



**Resort Facilities:** Private beach, restaurant and bar.

# Munda - Western Province

**Munda** is a destination for adventurers who like exploring "off the beaten track places". Located near the junction of the Roviana and Vona Vona Lagoons, on the north-eastern corner of New Georgia Island, Munda is a 1 hour flight from Honiara. Munda was an important military airfield base



during WWII and relics from this period are scattered throughout the region. The Roviano people have a colourful cultural history of animist religions and tribal wars. The area was once the centre for head hunting and some "eerie trophies" from this by-gone era are still visible on Skull Island.

**Activities:** Snorkelling, diving, fishing, canoeing, treks to waterfalls, bat caves, WWII relics, island picnics, village visits and cultural tours.

**Diving:** The diving is relatively unexplored with new sites being discovered regularly. Majestic wall dives and virgin reefs are specialties. The soft coral overhangs of Mushroom Island, the 4km drop off at Shark Point and the amazingly colourful corals of Rainbow Passage are fast becoming renowned as *world class dive sites with intense big fish and shark action*.

## Some popular dive sites:

- Casi Maru:** A 700 tonne Japanese freighter lying at 16 metres.
- Mushroom Island:** (Tomba-Tuni) is perched on an extinct volcano with soft coral overhangs, fantastic visibility and big fish action.
- Custom Shark Cave:** An amazing cave system that extends from a fresh water pool at the centre of the island to a cavern that opens onto an 800 metre reef wall that's ablaze with soft corals, whips, sponges and a myriad of fish life.
- Rainbow Passage:** A colourful dive with an array of corals, gorgonians and invertebrates teeming with fish life that includes sharks and turtles.
- Douglas Dive Bomber:** This historical wreck lies intact in 12m of water.



## Agnes Lodge

### Agnes Lodge

Over-looking Roviana Lagoon, Agnes Lodge was originally a guest house for travelling government officials.

Accommodation ranges from budget to private cottages.

The cottages contain double or twin beds, private bathroom facilities, lounge area and balcony. Twin share rooms have an en-suite bathroom. All rooms have ceiling fans, tea / coffee making facilities and a small fridge. The budget rooms have shared facilities.

**Resort Facilities:** A traditional leaf house building situated on the waters edge houses the restaurant and lounge bar.



## Zipolo Habu Resort

### Zipolo Habu

Situated on Lola Island in Vona Vona Lagoon, a 30 minute boat ride from Munda. This is your classic, desert island getaway with swaying palm trees and white sand beaches. The quaint, individual, rustic bungalows are made from traditional Sago palm leaves, Lawyer Cane and Wild Betel Nut tree. All bungalows have a kitchen with gas stove, fridge / freezer, cooking utensils, tea / coffee making facilities and electric fans. Hot shower and bathroom facilities are housed in a separate building nearby. The 2 Deluxe bungalows on the beach have en-suite bathroom facilities.

**Resort Facilities:** Waterfront café and bar facilities.



## SOME OF OUR OTHER POPULAR ADVENTURE DESTINATIONS



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