

Solomon Islands

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Best Historical Sites

- » US War Memorial (p321)
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- » Vilu Open-Air Museum (p327)
- » Skull Island (p333)

Best Places to Stay

- » Tavanipupu Private Island Resort (p331)
- » Tetepare Island (p335)
- » Uepi Island Resort (p330)
- » Sanbis Resort (p336)
- » Oravae Cottage (p335)

Why Go?

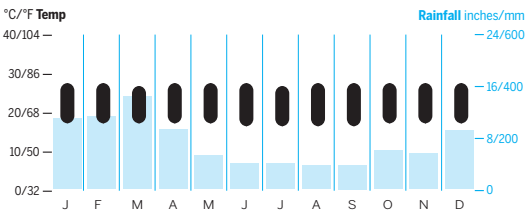
For those seeking an authentic Melanesian experience or an off-the-beaten-track destination, the Solomons are hard to beat. From WWII relics scattered in the jungle to leaf-hut villages where traditional culture is alive, there's so much on offer. Then there's the visual appeal, with scenery reminiscent of a Discovery Channel documentary: volcanic islands that jut up dramatically from the cobalt-blue ocean, croc-infested mangroves, huge lagoons, tropical islets and emerald forests.

Don't expect white-sand beaches, ritzy resorts and wild nightlife – the Solomon Islands is not a beach-holiday destination. With only a smattering of traditional guesthouses and comfortable hideaways, it's tailor-made for ecotourists. For outdoorsy types, lots of action-packed experiences can easily be organised: climb an extinct volcano, surf uncrowded waves, snorkel pristine reefs or kayak across a lagoon. Beneath the ocean's surface, unbeatable diving adventures await.

The best part is, there'll be no crowds to mar the experience.

When to Go

Honiara



Dec–Mar

Intervals of calm weather broken by storms makes for good reef breaks and diving.

Jun–Sep

Mild weather (but rough seas); good for hiking, less ideal for diving. Great festivity time.

Apr–May & Oct–Nov

The shoulder seasons are relatively dry and aren't a bad time to visit.

Connections

Solomon Airlines' domestic wing offers scheduled flights to about 20 airstrips throughout the archipelago. Honiara is the main hub. From the capital there are frequent flights to the main tourist gateways, including Seghe, Munda and Gizo.

There are regular passenger boat services between Honiara and Auki (Malaita). There's also a scheduled weekly service between Honiara and Gizo (via Marovo), but it's more erratic.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Go west! Skip Guadalcanal and the nearby islands (Savo and Tulagi) in favour of Marovo Lagoon, Munda and Gizo – the three unmissable destinations in 'the West'. Thanks to reliable interisland boat and plane services, they can easily be combined. That said, you won't cover more than two destinations in a week – Munda and Gizo are the easiest to tackle.

Two Weeks

Split your time between three provinces – Guadalcanal, Central Province and Western Province. Devote three days to Guadalcanal (four days if you're a diver), then catch a boat to Savo or Tulagi and settle in for a couple of days of relaxation. Grab a flight to Gatokae or Seghe for a few days of exploring Marovo Lagoon. Afterwards, fly to Gizo where two days can easily be spent messing around in and on the water. You might also make time for a hike on Kolombangara.

Three Weeks

Stretch the two-week itinerary into a saner 16 days. Use the extra time for a stay at Munda, which offers great diving options and excellent day tours to some must-see WWII relics, or book a back-to-nature trip to Tetepare Island. Fly back to Honiara and catch a boat to Malaita where you can chill out in Langa Langa Lagoon. Or you could round out your trip with a romantic stay at Tavanipupu Private Island Resort on Guadalcanal.

Resources

- » **Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau** (www.visitsolomons.com.sb) Official tourism site with oodles of information about activities, accommodation and services.
- » **Welkam Solomons** (www.welkamsolomons.com) Packed with loads of useful information about hotels, cultural sites, transport, history and activities.
- » **Solomons Travel Portal** (www.solomonislands-hotels.travel) Has a wealth of information on accommodation, with online bookings, as well as other practical information for visitors.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Solomon Islands dollar (S\$)
- » **Language** Solomon Islands Pijin
- » **Mobile phones** Local SIM cards are available and can be used with unlocked GSM phones.
- » **Money** A few ATMs in major urban centres.
- » **Visas** Not required for most Western countries for stays of up to one month.

Fast Facts

- » **Capital** Honiara
- » **Country code** 677
- » **Emergency** 999
- » **Land area** 27,540 sq km
- » **Population** 538,000

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	S\$7.00
Canada	C\$1	S\$6.80
Euro	€1	S\$8.70
Japan	¥100	S\$8.80
New Zealand	NZ\$1	S\$5.50
UK	UK£1	S\$10.90
USA	US\$1	S\$6.95

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » **Twin room in a resort** S\$1200
- » **Two-course evening meal** S\$180
- » **Ticket Honiara–Gizo (one-way)** S\$1380
- » **Two-tank dive** S\$1300