

# Best of the Solomons, Solomon Islands

## Itinerary - 10 Nights

- **Embarkation: Coral Sea Resort, Honiara at 18:00**
- **Disembarkation: Coral Sea Resort, Honiara at 09:00**

Transfer from Honiara airport or local hotels to Coral Sea Resort is provided free of charge on embarkation day.

Transfer from Coral Sea Resort to local hotels or Honiara Airport is provided free of charge on disembarkation day.

Guests arriving on morning flights, or departing on afternoon flights are welcome to relax at Coral Sea Resort, or can leave their luggage at the resort if they wish to venture into town.

### **Marine Kastom & Port Fees:**

- 250 USD per person

Marine park fees can be paid in advance, or on board.

### **Minimum dive certification and experience:**

Diving around Solomon Islands is generally suitable for all experience levels, although some sites can be challenging and unsuitable for entry level divers. We recommend guests have **PADI Advanced Open Water\* Diver** certification, or equivalent, with **40 logged dives**.

\*Advanced Open Water certification can be completed on board. Please ask our team for details.

You will be asked to show your certification card(s) and recent log book(s) upon boarding the vessel to prove your dive qualifications and experience.

Any guests who do not have the recommended certification and experience, or who our crew feel have insufficient experience or skills in certain conditions, may be denied participation in some or all dives.

It is a mandatory requirement for all divers to have insurance which covers scuba diving activities, including emergency evacuation and recompression chamber costs.

Participation in this liveboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: [www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions](http://www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions).

### **Number of scheduled dives:**

- Up to 34

Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the boat's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time.

**Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English. If you, or any of your group, do not speak or understand English, please contact us.**

The following is an example of the day-to-day itinerary.

Day 1: Embarkation from Coral Sea Resort at 18:00, followed by introductions, boat and safety briefings and dinner. There is no diving on embarkation day.

Days 2-9: Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive.

During this time, we will stop at some of the smaller islands, where you can enjoy some time on the beach or visit remote local villages. We will also visit Peava village where you will have the opportunity to view the local handiworks as well as take a tour of the elementary school and meet the children and their teachers. During visits the children come out to play and love our gifts of school supplies. Check out the Pack for a Purpose program to see how you can help at [www.packforapurpose.org/destinations/oceania/solomon-islands/](http://www.packforapurpose.org/destinations/oceania/solomon-islands/).

A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 3
- Relaxation
- **Land Tour or Late Afternoon Dive\***
- Cocktails & Dinner
- Cruise overnight to new location

**\*Night Dive may be offered on selected days**

Day 10: For your last full day on board, schedule 2 morning dives\* before the boat commences the cruise back to Honiara.

Day 11: Following breakfast on board, disembarkation is scheduled for 09:00.

\*We kindly request that guests check their flight departure times to ensure that they leave a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and their flight home.

Guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and for obtaining suitable dive insurance to cover all diving activities. We respectfully request our divers to stay within the bounds of their training, follow dive computer guidelines and make decompression stops where necessary.

Following is a sample of dive sites which we may visit during your liveaboard on Solomons PNG Master.

While we wish to show you the very best diving possible, a number of factors can determine which sites we visit. Weather, tides, currents and many other considerations influence the Cruise Director's decision of which route the boat takes and which sites are selected for diving. Specific dive sites are always chosen with conditions, visibility and guest safety in mind.

*We customize our itinerary each week to ensure you experience the best visibility, water conditions, wildlife, dive sites and weather available.*

## Russell Islands

### Hai Island - White Beach

This location was home to a major American supply base during WWII. At the end of the war, an artificial reef was created by dumping trucks, jeeps, tractors, bulldozers and large amounts of ammunition.

### Hai Island - Rainbow Reef

This reef is a large oblong saddle shaped seamount covered with fans, soft corals, and sponges. It's an open-ocean site which offers a gorgeous vantage from which to spot sharks, mobula rays, and schooling barracuda. The water clarity is normally excellent and there is so much going on, it's hard to know where to look. With a minimum depth of 17 metres (55 ft), your dive is sure to be over long before you're ready to ascend.

### Karamulon Point

Normally, patrolling white and blacktip reef sharks greet us here when they start their day cruising along the wall. White spotted eagle rays can also be found heading out in deep water.

### Leru Island - Leru Cut

One of the most iconic sites in the Solomon Islands; this 100 metre chasm cuts deep into Leru Island and offers amazing photography opportunities as the light bounces off the walls above and below the surface. Imagine yourself surfacing in the jungle, listening to the frogs call, before you descend down into this one of a kind cavern.

### Mane Island - Mirror Pond

Outside of the cut is a fabulous wall teeming with fish life. Nearby is **Mane Island** and the famous **Mirror Pond** with its many swim-throughs and **Bat Cave** with its resident bat colony.

Descend into this cavern and surface in the mangrove forest. Or if you prefer, spend your time cruising along a beautiful wall covered in fans and coral hunting for pygmy seahorse

### **Marovo Lagoon**

This World Heritage Site nominee is a double barrier reef and, at more than 100 kilometres in length, is the largest salt water lagoon in the world. The lagoon curls around Vangunu and Gatukai islands and has hundreds of small islands and reefs scattered throughout.

### **Kokohana Passage, Marovo**

Sandy slopes give way to steep drop-offs, and nearly every inch is inhabited by hard and soft corals, huge sea fans, and anemones. The water can be a little green but, the nutrients it carries are what support the abundance of life in this wide channel. There's no need to go very deep as the reef starts just below the surface. Sharks and mobulas are typically spotted in the channel while crocodile fish, crabs and shrimp, nudibranchs, and pipefish can be found amongst the masses of coral.

### **Mbulo Island**

This island is surrounded by spectacular diving on all sides and six unique dive sites. A gently sloping wall covered in fields of hard and soft corals invites you for a lazy drift along the bottom. Along the island, long swim-throughs in volcanic lava tubes allow for amazing photography opportunities.

### **Cathedral**

One of the most ethereal dive sites of Mbulo Island, this meandering series of cracks, crevices, and caverns may not look like much upon first glance, but add bright sunlight, and you will find yourself bathed in dancing, darting rays. The site has four unique caverns, some larger than others, and the intensity and direction of the light rays will alter notably during the time you are in the water, so be sure to keep moving so you can explore each one.

### **Kitcha Island - Kavachi Korner**

All kinds of reef sharks hang out here, making for incredible diving. Listen for the rumble of Kavachi - an underwater volcano - that has been particularly active recently. Often, cracking and booming of explosions in the distance can be heard and felt underwater.

### **Njapuanu Island**

With sheer walls facing New Georgia Sound (also called the Slot during WWII), tuna pace back and forth hunting schools of rainbow runners and trevally along the reef edge while titan triggerfish protect their nests among the coral on the wall.

### **Wickham Island**

**Wickham Harbour** has a long and rich history as the home to one of the original families of missionaries in the Solomons (their descendants still reside there). This is one of the last villages in the country where cannibalism existed and host to the Japanese forces during WWII.

Around Wickham there are some beautiful dive sites with something for everyone including soft corals, huge sea fans, sharks and rays. It is also a great place for macro diving, with pygmy seahorses, cuttlefish, crocodile fish, snake eels and many different species of anemone fish. Moreover, there is the wreck of a large Japanese cargo vessel sunk by American bombers in WW2. This stunning, photogenic wreck is covered in black corals and visited by schools of trevally and groupers.

## Mborokua (Mary) Island

This small, uninhabited island is notable for an underwater point that commonly hosts schools of barracuda and trevally. Explore the cuts and caverns behind **Jack Point** or the **Coral Gardens** right below the boat.

### Barracuda point

Just adjacent to the most common mooring area at Mborokua (a great dive site of its own called **Mary's Bommies**), Barracuda Point is a submerged, current-swept peninsula that juts into the ocean. Enormous schools of jacks and chevron barracuda are commonly seen here, and a variety of sharks often patrol nearby, but be prepared to see almost anything - mobula rays, sperm whales, or even orcas.

This site is extremely weather dependent and conditions must be appropriate to dive here.

## Florida Islands

The Florida Islands are known for some of the most amazing WWII history dives including several seaplanes.

### Tulagi

**The Mavis** is a 4 engine Japanese Mavis Seaplane which sits upright at approximately 30 metres after being sunk in WWII. Lionfish and glassfish frequent the wreck along with a wide variety of pipefish. Divers need to watch their bottom time to avoid deco and also need to maintain good buoyancy as the bottom is soft and easily stirred up by careless fins. The wreck is reasonably intact except for the starboard wing which was lost (probably from bombing).

### Tulagi Island - Twin Tunnels

Twin Tunnels can be found on a seamount that rises from the seabed at a few hundred metres to a large sized plateau at 15 metres. A pair of tunnels that drop vertically from the top of the plateau into a horizontal cave at around 34 metres offer divers the opportunity to explore inside the reef. The cave has a large mouth which opens onto a dramatic wall which is current facing. Schools of pelagic fish can be found feeding along the wall. At least 8 varieties of anemonefish in hundreds of anemone homes can be found on the top of the plateau.

## Nggela Sule Island - Tanavula Point

This beautiful, steeply sloping reef and wall are covered with an innumerable variety of soft and hard corals and sea fans where the attentive diver can spot hundreds of nudibranchs and countless other critters. Bumphead parrot fish and a variety of rays are commonly spotted amid the diversity of coral and other marine life.

## Mbokonimbeti Island- Maravagi

This quaint village is home to approximately 100 local islanders. The bay in front of the village is the Solomons' answer to muck diving with coral bommies, patches of rubble and white-sand muck, boat wreckage, and a large bed of seagrass, all of which are inhabited by tiny creatures. This heavy-hitting macro dive delivers nudibranchs, sapsucker sea slugs, cuttlefish, seahorses, tiny crabs and shrimp and even such rarities as pugnose pipefish. All sorts of anemones can be found in this area as well, including one inhabited by true clownfish.

If the weather and tidal conditions are right, nearby **Devil's Highway** offers the chance for manta ray sightings while just around the corner, **Baby Cakes** is another good spot for cuttlefish and cruising reef sharks.

## Ghavutu Island - Mavis or Catalina

No trip to the Solomons would be complete without at least a glimpse of the devastation created during WWII. Ghavutu Island is home to at least 13 known Japanese Mavis planes and at least one Catalina (American) plane. The nearby wharf was a dumping ground for WWII detritus and has become a muck divers dream where we can find blue ribbon eels, pipefish, a variety of nudibranch and flatworms now hiding among the rubble.

Should you have any questions or queries concerning the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team at [dive@masterliveboards.com](mailto:dive@masterliveboards.com) who will be pleased to assist and advise you.