

# Guadalcanal and the Western Province, Solomon Islands

## 10 Nights Itinerary

### Honiara to Munda

- **Embarkation: Coral Sea Resort, Honiara at 18:00**
- **Disembarkation: Agnes Gateway Hotel, Munda at 09:00**

### Munda to Honiara

- **Embarkation: Agnes Gateway Hotel, Munda at 18:00**
- **Disembarkation: Coral Sea Resort, Honiara at 09:00**

Transfer from the local airport or your hotel to the embarkation point, and from the disembarkation point to the local airport or your hotel, are provided free of charge on embarkation and disembarkation days only.

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

**Marine Kastom Fees & local taxes:** 250 USD per person (payable on board only)

The applicable Kastom fees for your itinerary duration will be added to your invoice to be paid on board before disembarkation.

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

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

\*Advanced Open Water certification can usually be completed on board but needs to be pre-booked and e-learning completed via the PADI website. 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.

## Itinerary Details

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).

All guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and for obtaining suitable dive insurance to cover all diving activities. We respectfully request that divers stay within the bounds of their training, follow dive computer guidelines and make a safety stop at the end of each dive.

**Number of scheduled dives:** Up to 32 dives

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.

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

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

**Day 1:** Embarkation 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 land tour, sunset dive or a night dive. A typical 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** (night dive may be offered on selected days)
- Cocktails & Dinner
- Cruise overnight to the next location

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.

Solomons Master is a member of Pack for a Purpose supporting local communities and an advocate of the Solomon Islands Literacy League project. Find out how you can help here: <http://packforapurpose.org/destinations/oceania/solomon-islands/>

**Day 10:** For your last full day on board, we schedule 2 morning dives\* with the afternoon free to relax as the boat cruises towards the disembarkation location where it will remain at anchor overnight.

**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.

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 on each trip. Specific dive sites are always chosen with conditions, visibility and guest safety in mind. Following is a sample of dive sites which we may visit on the Guadalcanal & Western Province itinerary.

## Russell Islands

### Hai Island - [White Beach](#)

This area was home to a major American supply base during WWII. At the end of the war, trucks, jeeps, tractors, bulldozers and large amounts of ammunition were dumped in the sea, subsequently creating an artificial reef that today is teeming with life and scattered with interesting relics from years gone by.

### 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 spotted heading out to 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 into this one-of-a-kind cavern.

Outside of Leru 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.

## **Pavuvu Island - Custom Caves**

These volcanic caverns provide amazing photography opportunities as the sun beams through the rock. Lobsters and eels can often be found inside the caverns, while eagle rays can be sighted patrolling on the outside walls. The entrance is covered in soft corals and fans, offering brilliant macro opportunities throughout.

## **Mborokua Island**

Also known as Mary Island, this small, uninhabited island is a waypoint between the Russell Islands and Marovo Lagoon, but it's far from a boring stopover. Mborokua 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 and swim-throughs 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.

Diving at Barracuda Point is extremely weather dependent and conditions must be conducive for us to do so.

## **Marovo Lagoon**

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

## **Mbulo Island**

Located near the southeastern aspect of Marovo Lagoon, this island is surrounded by spectacular diving on all sides with six unique dive sites and possibly the best hard coral in the world. 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 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.

## Western Province

### 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 was host to the Japanese forces during WWII.

Around this island, there are some beautiful dive sites with something for everyone including soft coral points, 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 anemonefish. 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.

### Taiyo

Also known as the Upright Wreck or Nono, Taiyo is a 100 metre (300 ft) fishing boat which ran aground on her maiden voyage after hitting a reef in Nono Lagoon and subsequently sank vertically while attempts were being made to salvage her. Her bow is less than 2 metres (6ft) below the surface and, as you swim over it, you can look straight down the deck nearly 100 metres (300ft). It is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque wrecks in the world and is now home to a variety of anemonefish and a plethora of nudibranchs.

### The Abyss

A relatively new dive on our itinerary, this site was only discovered in 2019 and so you will be one of the few people to have dived there since its discovery. A short tender drive through a mangrove-lined river takes you to the entry point. You backwards roll in under a curving rock face and descend a twisted shaft lined with electric file clams. Swim through a rocky chasm filled with unique nudibranchs and you start to see the glint of blue light. Ahead the wall opens up and drops down well beyond your line of sight. This is the Abyss ... dark blue water, deep purple fans and cruising pelagics are all on display.

### Shark Point

Situated at the end of a reef protruding a mile out into the Solomon Sea, this 600 metre (1,970 ft) wall is a fantastic multi-level dive with plenty to see. Shallower depths starting from 10 metres offer pristine corals and large schools of fish, reef sharks, turtles and titan triggerfish that can be seen darting about as they protect their eggs from predators. Experienced divers can venture deeper to 40 metres, and beyond (if certified to do so) on the point itself. Species seen here include grey reef, black tip, and white tip reef sharks at all depths plus the chance of meeting great hammerheads and large silvertip sharks deeper down.

Depending on the time of day, currents can be strong, but that only brings in more fish action. Drift along on the current and take in the incredible Gorgonian fans, soft corals and whip corals.

## Airacobra

Discovered in April 2011, little is known about this American P-39 fighter, but she is believed to be one of two aircraft lost by the USAAF 68th Fighter Squadron during a raid on Shortland on September 6th 1943. She lies in about 27m of water on a sandy bottom and hosts schools of sweetlips, lionfish, coral trout and thousands of tiny baitfish.

## Haipe Reefs

Situated off the west coast of Rendova Island are the pristine Haipe reefs. Vast areas of hard corals along the reef tops play host to schools of small, colourful fish and provide a feeding ground for large numbers of bumphead parrotfish. Turtles are also often seen here while deeper down, soft corals, fans and sea whips are a stunning backdrop for encounters with grey reef sharks and the occasional visit from silvertip or hammerhead sharks. For critter lovers, there is a dazzling variety of crustaceans, nudibranchs and molluscs waiting to be discovered.

This is also a great location for a night dive and is the only site in the world where bioluminescent turtles have been captured on film.

## Visit to Skull Island

A 30 minute speed boat ride around Munda's scattered island gems in a secret location you will have the opportunity to visit a kustom skull island guided by a blood descendant of one of the heads left on the island. After visiting the small Skull Island, a short boat ride takes you to a nearby resort for some snacks and refreshments before heading back to the vessel.

For further information about our involvement in the Solomon Islands Literacy initiative, and to see how you can help, check out our Pack for a Purpose in the Solomons blog: <https://masterliveboards.com/pack-for-a-purpose-in-the-solomons/>

Should you have any questions about 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.