

# Solomons WWII Wrecks, Solomon Islands

## Itinerary - 7 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:**

- 175 USD per person

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

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

The WWII Wreck dives are mostly at the deeper end of recreational limits, often between 30 and 40 metres, (100ft-130ft). Therefore, **PADI Advanced Open Water** certification, or equivalent, is **mandatory**, with a minimum of **75 logged dives**. In order to fully participate in all dives on the WWII Wreck itinerary, Deep Diver certification (40 metres) is strongly recommended as is wreck diving experience.

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.**

## Notes:

- Although the wrecks on this trip are all within recreational limits, guests should be aware that many lay at the edge of those depth limits. Therefore, bottom times may be limited by your experience. We often complete two or more dives at a single site to ensure you have time to properly explore the wrecks.
- Penetration diving is always dependent on the condition of the wreck and will be limited to those with appropriate certifications and experience. No unguided penetration is allowed.

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 liveaboard 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 22

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 2-6: Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive.

Village visits, specialty dives, or land based excursions may be offered on selected days. 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 7: For your last full day on board, schedule 2 morning dives\* before the boat commences the cruise back to Honiara.

Day 8: 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.

## WWII History

The Solomon Islands were the scene for some of the fiercest WWII battles in the South Pacific; with names such as Bloody Ridge, Red Beach, Skyline Ridge, and Henderson Field remaining to mark the brutal combat areas. The wrecks in the area are in various conditions; whole, in pieces, or blown apart due to the damage suffered in battle.

Due to the important strategic location close to Australia, the Japanese invaded Guadalcanal in 1942. In reaction to this, the Allied Forces launched Operation Guadalcanal, better known as the Guadalcanal Campaign, and continued to fight them until the Japanese finally withdrew from the island in 1943.

Also widely known under the code name Operation Watchtower, this campaign turned out to be a significant strategic combined Allied victory in the Pacific theater. Along with the Battle of Midway, it has been called a turning-point in the South Pacific war against Japan.

Following is a sample of what you might experience on your trip.

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. As many of the wrecks are deep, we may limit bottom times or even participation in some dives for some guests.

## Florida Islands

### Tulagi

Tulagi was one of the most significant bases for the Japanese during World War 2 and the scene of several major battles as part of the Guadalcanal Campaign, which is considered the turning point of WWII in the South Pacific. We will dive both Japanese and American seaplanes, cargo ships, minesweepers, and heavy cruisers.

For more WWII perspective, we will visit the town of Tulagi to visit some of the battlegrounds, Japanese caves and bunkers, as well as a British colonial house.

### RNZN Moa

Moa was a minesweeper and submarine chaser of the Royal New Zealand Navy, and she played a pivotal role in the sinking of the Japanese submarine I-1 in 1943. Sinking as a result of a Japanese air strike while she was at the surface, the submarine now lies in 34 – 40 metres of water off Cape Esperance, in Guadalcanal. Depth charge racks at the stern and the 4" gun at the bow are key features of this wreck

### USS Minneapolis

This American heavy cruiser with 8-inch caliber guns was struck by two torpedoes forward of the number one mounts. The Minneapolis was towed back to the harbor of Tulagi where the damaged bow section was removed and a temporary bow constructed so that she could be sailed back to Pearl Harbour and the Naval Yards for a complete repair. The bow section lies at the back-end of the bay in 14 to 24 metres of water. The wreck was badly damaged by the explosions, but it remains a very interesting dive with lots of junk to explore.

### Catalina Airplane

The PBV Catalina is a US seaplane or 'flying boat' which went down in 1943, apparently after hitting a small boat on the surface in the bay, not far from Tulagi. She now sits the right way up at about 34m, as if someone has just (badly) parked her on the sea bed.

### USS Kanawha

The USS Kanawha was the lead ship of her class of replenishment oilers of the United States Navy. Following a Japanese airstrike, she was towed to the west side of Tulagi and beached but slid back into deep water and sank. This dive is at the edge of recreational limits even at its shallowest point, meaning bottom times are limited, unless divers have decompression training and certification.

### Ghavutu

This is an old wharf site and was home to the Japanese Navy at the beginning of the campaign. We can dive a landing barge along with aircraft wings, landing gear, and a variety of other war detritus.

A five minute tender ride away is the Mavis seaplane, which is another great dive site. Before the landing of the US Marines on the 7th of August 1942, an airstrike was conducted by the US Navy to eliminate the flying boats of the Imperial Japanese Army. As a result, several

Japanese Navy **Kawanishi H6K Mavis** seaplanes were sunk. There are actually more than 13 Mavis planes to dive in and around Tulagi but, our favourite lies just off Ghavutu Island.

The Mavis is a 4 engine aircraft which sits upright at approximately 30 metres. 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). A bucket of bottles and ammo cartridges have been lifted out and onto the fuselage.

## Russell Islands

### White Beach

White Beach was an American military base and key re-provisioning and supply area during WWII. When the troops departed at the end of the war, they pushed everything into the sea creating an artificial reef with plenty to explore; trucks, jeeps, tractors, bulldozers, large amounts of ammunition, and Coca Cola bottles are amongst the many war relics located between 5 and 30 metres. This is also a good day to take a break from history and explore some of the fantastic reefs of the Solomon Islands.

### Wreck of the Ann

The Ann is an island freighter that sank along a sandy slope between 9 and 31 metres (30-102ft) of water. She is now massively encrusted with corals and home to spectacular marine life. Coral groupers, skittish on most other reef sites, pose brazenly here. Blennies, sharpnose puffers, hawkfish, and grouper prowl amid the soft corals and gorgonias. Wide-angle shots along the bow, kingposts, and the wheelhouse provide vibrant color and dramatic texture. Even the sand slope is productive, with a great colony of garden eels, anemonefish, and shrimp gobies.

## Around Honiara

The Solomons' capital is conveniently located right on the Iron Bottom Sound. Originally called Savo Sound, the new name was given by Allied sailors for the great number of ships and planes that perished here during the Battle of Guadalcanal through 1942 and 1943.

Relive history and combine exploring wrecks of cargo ships, planes, and submarines underwater with a land-based tour of a very interesting outdoor museum full of machinery and remnants from the war.

### Bonegi I, II and III

These 3 Japanese ships are located close to Honiara shore. Each wreck is named after the beach she ended up on. **Hirokawa Maru** (Bonegi I) is a 156m (468ft) cargo vessel turned into a seaplane tender. **Kinugawa Maru** (Bonegi II) is a cargo ship, and **Kyusyu Maru** (Bonegi III) is an attack transport vessel.

## Hirokawa Maru

The Hirokawa was sunk in 1942 and has become an absolutely spectacular artificial reef. Colourful soft corals share space with anemones, fans, and branches of tubastrea while trevally corral loose schools of baitfish overhead. There's so much structure and life to photograph here that even if you're not a circular lens enthusiast, you may find yourself reconsidering.

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.