



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM82 - HONIARA, MUNDA AND GIZO EXPLORER

6 nights SOFT ADVENTURE PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

This is a sampler package featuring Honiara and the Western Solomons.

In Honiara, choose from a menu of interesting day trip options to explore Guadalcanal Island outside the capital. In Munda, tour the Roviana Lagoon and local villages and visit the skull island.

The highlight of this itinerary is a scenic speed boat ride from Munda to Gizo through the stunning Vona Vona Lagoon. Surely one of the world's most picturesque water journeys.

The package concludes with two nights at a premier hideaway resort on a tiny island near Gizo where you can enjoy snorkelling and beach walking right in front of your waterside bungalow, and take a boat trip to visit local villages.

PACKAGE COST*: (per person, twin share, includes ground content only)

	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 4	Group of 6+
Standard 6-night package	USD 6300	USD 3900	USD 3400	USD 2900
Single supplement	---	USD 900	USD 900	USD 900
Airfare supp HIRMUA/GZOHIR	USD 400	USD 400	USD 400	USD 400
Extra night Munda (room only)	USD 140	USD 70	USD 70	USD 70
Extra night Gizo (room only)	USD 300	USD 250	USD 250	USD 250
Extra night Honiara	USD 160	USD 80	USD 80	USD 80

Prices subject to change but otherwise valid till end 2016. For package modifications, please enquire.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- meet and greet at Honiara, Munda and Gizo
- all airport transfers
- daily local guide for all travel and activities
- 2 nights 3.5-star twin share accommodation at Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel, Honiara (deluxe garden or ocean room), or equivalent alternative if the Mendana is full. Room only, pay as you go for meals, drinks and extras.
- Honiara day trip - as selected - by private air-conditioned vehicle with driver/guide. (All excursions are counted as equivalent value for packaging purposes).
- 2 nights 3-star twin-share accommodation at Agnes Lodge, Munda (Ibubu Cottage air-conditioned room with private bathroom), Room only, pay as you go for meals, drinks and extras.
- 3 x half day tours at Munda
- Scenic boat transfer from Munda to Gizo, with stops
- 2 nights 3.0 star twin-share waterside bungalow accommodation at Fatboys Resort, Gizo (or similar if Fatboys unavailable). Room only, pay as you go for meals, drinks and extras.
- 1 x half-day boat excursion ex-Fatboys Resort, including guide and bottled water only.
- return boat transfers from and to Gizo airfield
- tour monitoring and 24 hour assistance from our offices in Honiara and Port Moresby

NB Accommodation star ratings are indicative only. Solomon Islands does not have an official hotel rating system.

EXCLUSIONS:

- international airfares
- internal airfares (quoted separately)
- hotel meals, bar drinks, tips, souvenirs, personal items

ITINERARY

DAY 1



HONIARA (arrive and explore your surrounds)

Arrive at Honiara airport early afternoon on your flight from Port Moresby, Brisbane, Sydney or Nadi (a free visitors permit is available on arrival for most passports). Our local guide will welcome you when you exit Customs (look for somebody holding a sign with your name) and transfer you by private car or minivan into Honiara town. This will be a thirty minute drive on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon but up to an hour and a half during weekdays due to traffic congestion along the main coast road into town which runs past schools, shops, churches and industrial areas.

Check in at the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel, popularly known as “the Mendana” (named after the Spanish explorer). The hotel is located on the main waterfront with its own tiny beach, just a few minutes walk from the central business and shopping district known as Point Cruz. There are a number of Chinese restaurants and take-away food bars in the Point Cruz area. It is safe and interesting to stroll around the shops in the afternoons and early evenings - local people will greet you with a friendly hello or an “eyebrow flash” and will be happy to engage in conversation. Most local people speak and understand basic English although it’s fun for you to learn a bit of the local Pidgin as well.

Spend the rest of today exploring around the hotel and Point Cruz area or cooling off in the hotel pool.

Overnight 3.5 star Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel (room only, pay as you go for meals by cash or card).

Arriving flights

based on southern summer / northern winter schedules Oct-Mar. Flights between Apr-Sep may be different.

Depart Port Moresby

TUE FRI SUN at 10:00 on Air Niugini flight PX84, arriving Honiara at 13:20 (1 hour time advance)

Depart Brisbane

MON at 10:00 on Virgin Australia flight VA187, arriving Honiara at 14:00 (1 hour time advance)

MON at 10:00 on Solomon Airlines flight IE701, arriving Honiara 13:15 or 14:15 (1 hour time advance)

TUE at 10:00 on Virgin Australia flight VA187, arriving Honiara at 14:00 (1 hour time advance)

WED at 10:00 on Solomon Airlines flight IE701, arriving Honiara 13:15 or 14:15 (1 hour time advance)

THU at 10:00 on Virgin Australia flight VA187, arriving Honiara at 14:00 (1 hour time advance)

FRI at 08:45 on Solomon Airlines flight IE701, arriving Honiara 13:00 (1 hour time advance)

SAT at 09:00 on Solomon Airlines flight IE701, arriving Honiara 13:15 (1 hour time advance)

Depart Sydney

TUE at 09:30 on Solomon Airlines flight IE711, arriving Honiara 14:45 (1 hour time advance April to September only)

Depart Nadi

TUE at 12:30 on Fiji Airways flight FJ261, arriving Honiara 1500 via Port Vila (2 hours time retard)

THU at 09:00 on Air Niugini flight PX85, arriving Honiara at 10:00 (2 hours time retard)

THU at 11:00 on Solomon Airlines flight IE709, arriving Honiara at 12:00 (2 hours time retard)

SAT at 13:30 on Fiji Airways flight FJ269, arriving Honiara 14:30 via Port Vila (2 hours time retard)

SUN at 09:30 on Solomon Airlines flight IE703, arriving Honiara 12:30 via Port Vila (2 hours time retard)

DAY 2



HONIARA (pick a day trip)

Today a selection of excursions with our local guide is offered as part of your package. Please select your preferred excursion and advise your selection at the time of booking your package (you can change your preference up until one week before arrival if you wish).

1) Half day Honiara sightseeing tour (4 hours 08:00-12:00)

This tour by airconditioned private car includes:

- national museum, parliament house and cultural centre
- the central market
- the U.S. war memorial on Skyline Ridge
- the Japanese peace monument on Mt Austen
- Chinatown and Mataniko River (WW2 icon)

Includes bottled water. This is a half day tour - return to the hotel for lunch or explore lunch options at Point Cruz (we recommend the airconditioned Bamboo Café at the nearby King Solomon Hotel) and the rest of your day is at leisure. After lunch perhaps you may like to get on a public bus outside your hotel and go for a “bus ride” west to White River or east to King George School. The buses charge a small flat fare each way and it makes for very cheap sightseeing (no guide required) ☺.

2) Full day hike to Mataniko Falls (10 hours 07:00-17:00)

This excursion involves a guided 6-hour round-trip hike following the Mataniko River upstream from Honiara, plus transfer time and time swimming at the falls. The main waterfall is quite high and majestic even during the dry season. There is a big cave at the bottom which can be explored if you take flashlights. There are stalagmites, bats and birds in the cave, which was used as a hideout by Japanese forces after the American marine landings. The walking is challenging in the humid climate. Don't select this option unless you are quite physically fit. Includes bottled water and boxed lunch.

3) East Guadalcanal battlefields excursion (8 hours 08:00-16:00)

This day trip covers all main points of interest from the 1944 Guadalcanal Campaign including Henderson field, Hell's Point, Bloody Ridge, underground hospital, Red Beach, Koni field, Tetera Beach, and the little-known memorial to the crew members of the Austrian-Hungarian navy gunboat the SMS Albatros who were massacred by locals in 1895 (<http://mateinfo.hu/a-albatros.htm>).

As you drive along the east coast road, you may note straight sections of the road that are actually old fighter airstrip runways. Includes bottled water and boxed lunch.

4) West Guadalcanal village excursion (8 hours 08:00-16:00)

Villages and settlements close to Honiara town are all westernised and are generally populated by locals from other islands. To get to native Guadalcanal villages it is necessary to drive 2 hours from town, and inland from the coastal strip. From the hotel your guide will drive you out through Honiara's western suburbs of Rove (*Rovay*), White River and Kakabona, over the Poha River and out through the Mamara Estate coconut plantations to the north western tip of Guadalcanal past Visale Mission and the old Tambea Resort. Here you will be welcomed at a small native village where you will be able to see local lifestyle and customs. A traditional dance will be performed and local style cooked food and fresh fruit will be served for lunch with coconut juice to drink straight from the nut. Includes bottled water and lunch.

Overnight 3.5 star Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel (room only, pay as you go for meals by cash or card).

DAY 3



HONIARA / MUNDA (Roviana Lagoon tour)

This morning your Honiara guide will transfer you to the airport for your morning flight to Munda, departing 08:00 or 09:30 depending on the day of the week. The flight operates via Gizo.

On arrival at Munda airfield you'll be met by staff from Agnes Lodge, located right on the waterfront. From the small airfield terminal to the Lodge is only a ten minute walk - your bags will be transferred by car if you want to walk with one of the hotel staff.

Check in at Agnes Lodge and before lunch take a stroll around Munda, a quiet little Pacific town. The air terminal is located right in the middle of town: the taxiway out to the runway actually bisects the town. Munda's 3000 metre runway is said to be the longest airstrip in the Solomons: it was originally built by the Japanese as a bomber strip during World War 2, and later commandeered and completed by the Americans. There is WW2 junk EVERYWHERE around Munda.

12:00 Lunch at Agnes Lodge (not included: pay as you go)

Afternoon excursion: Roviana Lagoon tour

You will explore the Roviana Lagoon by motor canoe stopping at one of the villages on the islands in the lagoon. Walk around the village with your guide and observe the local people's daily activities especially fishing, tending food gardens, cooking and repairing their houses which are predominantly woven from sago palm leaves.

The Roviana people were head-hunters in the pre-colonial days and on Nusa Roviana Island the head-hunting tribe lived in a fortified village that was burned by British colonial forces in 1892. The ruins are still there including the remains of a totem stone carved in the likeness of a wild dog that the chief of that time had as a mascot. Sometimes the ruins of the old fort are not accessible due to local land disputes

Overnight 3 star Agnes Lodge, Munda (room only, pay as you go for meals and drinks)

DAY 4



MUNDA (Munda township tour and Roviana Rivers tour)

Today two interesting half day excursions are included in your package, operated by Go West Tours which is based at Agnes Lodge:

Morning excursion: Munda township tour

Your guide will take you by boat to the satellite villages around Munda township and you will walk back (2 kilometres only) stopping at points of interest such as orchid gardens, Barney's war museum and a crocodile farm.

12:00 Lunch at Agnes Lodge (not included: pay as you go)

Afternoon excursion: Roviana Rivers tour.

Explore by motor canoe the Hura or Piraka River, home to virgin jungle, saltwater crocodiles, many native birds, wild orchids and giant overhanging rain trees. Real "African Queen" stuff.

Overnight 3 star Agnes Lodge, Munda (room only, pay as you go for meals and drinks)

DAY 5



MUNDA / GIZO (Vona Vona Lagoon boat transfer)

07:00 Depart Munda in the cool of the morning by motor canoe to Fatboys Resort which is located on a small island near Gizo town.

The boat trip normally takes about two hours non-stop and is one of the Solomons' most picturesque water journeys. Much of the route passes through the stunningly beautiful Vona Vona Lagoon, a sheltered body of water lying between Vona Vona Island and Koninggo Island. The two large islands lie parallel to each other creating a huge lagoon in the middle dotted with tiny islands, reefs and sandbanks.

Vona Vona Island is the last of the sprawling New Georgia group of islands lagoon and upon exiting the lagoon you'll cross a stretch of open water before entering the Ghizo Island group.

Today the transfer will double as a sightseeing tour so total trip time will be about four hours including stops.

First stop will be the Skull Island which is literally an island where the skulls of ancestors - and some unlucky head-hunting victims - are stored. The island is surrounded by a reef and can only be approached by boat at mid or high tides. Head-hunting and open disposal of corpses is no longer practised so all the bones on this island are quite old. The locals charge fees for visiting the island but your guide will pay the fees.

From Skull Island continue on through the Vona Vona Lagoon making stops at several island villages and snorkelling spots where you can snorkel over both natural reefs and those formed by coral growing on ship wrecks and other war relics. Your boat crew will be happy to stop at any spot that takes your fancy during the transfer through the lagoon, so that you can swim in crystal clear water, walk on beautiful little beaches and buy coconuts and bananas from people living on the islands. You'll probably never pass through such a beautiful part of the world again, so don't miss the opportunity to take it all in.

After arriving at Fatboys Resort on Mbambanga Island near Gizo in time for late lunch, the rest of the day is at leisure. Snorkelling, kayaking, swimming and exploring the island are all free activities at Fatboys Resort.

Overnight 3 star Fatboys Resort, Gizo (twin bungalow, room only, pay as you go for meals and extras)

www.solomonislandsfatboys.com.au

NB If accommodation at Fatboys Resort is unavailable at the time of booking you may be accommodated at another resort or hotel at Gizo and offered similar excursions and water / beach activities.

DAY 6:



GIZO: pick a day trip

Today take a half day boat trip in one of the resort's motor boats with a resort guide, then spend the rest of the day at leisure at Fatboys.

Suggested boat excursions:

1. Circumnavigate Ghizo Island by motor boat stopping at a couple of villages on the tiny offshore islands, villages on the white sandy beaches around the main island, Titiana (pron: sisiana) Gilbertese village (people resettled from Kiribati in the 1950's) and spend some time exploring the chinese shops in quaint Gizo town and market. Return to Fatboys for lunch or have lunch in Gizo (market food, local food bars or the Gizo Hotel) and return to Fatboys later in the afternoon.

2. Kolombangara villages. Boat crossing to Kukundu Mission Station on Kolombangara Island then disembark and walk with a guide along the coastal footpath through pretty local villages between Kukundu and Ghatere - the boat will shadow you as you hike along the coast, stopping at villages to chat to local people and see what they are doing. Once you have had enough walking (between 2 to 4 hours walking is available), the boat will pick you up and transfer you back to Fatboys for lunch, otherwise you can buy local snacks at the village markets as you walk through (bananas, smoked fish) and return to Fatboys later in the afternoon.

3. Kennedy Island. Throw a few coconuts and a mask and snorkel into the boat and head for Plum Pudding Island which was re-named Kennedy Island in WW2 after it played host to John F. Kennedy (future American president) when he washed ashore there following the sinking of his motor torpedo boat PT109. The locals are every happy to tell visitors about JFK's visit even though those who were alive at the time have all now passed on. Return to Fatboys for lunch or buy fresh fruit from the locals at Kennedy Island (ask for soursop fruit for a real exotic taste) and return to Fatboys later in the afternoon.

Design your own excursion if you wish but if extra gear is required like scuba diving equipment, catering or extra fuel for long distances, this will be at your own expense.

Overnight 3 star Fatboys Resort, Gizo (twin bungalow, room only)
www.solomonislandsfatboys.com.au

(NB Extra nights at Gizo are available if you wish to stay longer for boating, scuba diving, fishing, sightseeing etc.)

DAY 7



GIZO / HONIARA / FLY OUT

After breakfast, transfer by boat to Gizo airfield for your morning flight to Honiara. Morning flight times vary from day to day on the flight schedule but generally depart between 8am and 10am, arriving in Honiara between 11am and 12:30pm - sometimes direct flights and sometimes via Munda. These morning flights from Gizo are designed to connect with outbound international flights to Brisbane and Port Moresby (minimum 1 hour connection time is needed).

TRIP NOTES:

1. This tour involves travel to remote areas where medical facilities are not available.
2. This tour involves calm-water lagoon travel in motorised canoes that may not be carrying a full set of safety equipment and is not recommended for non-swimmers.
3. This tour may involve travel in vehicles without seat belts.
4. Water provided for drinking in village areas is piped from mountain springs and is clean and safe to drink. However, boiled water can be provided on request.
5. Solomon Islands is a high rainfall area year-round and your daily program will have to be flexible. Rain in the morning means activities will be postponed till afternoon and vice-versa - rain all day means some activities will not proceed unless you are happy to get wet. There is no partial refund available for day trips or components thereof that are not availed of or which cannot proceed due to inclement weather or other circumstances beyond the control of Ecotourism Melanesia or the local tour operators and guides who provide these services on our behalf.
6. Solomon Islands is a malarial area - bring your mosquito repellent and make sure you are up to date with your malaria medication. Monitor yourself for malaria symptoms for several weeks after returning from this trip.
7. Automatic teller machines are available in Honiara, Auki and Gizo. You can use your credit card to withdraw cash advances in local currency (Solomon Islands dollar SBD\$).

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