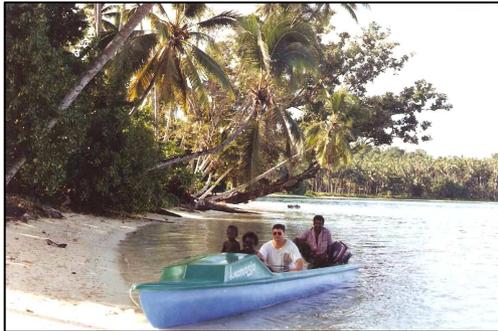




Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM82 - HONIARA, MUNDA AND GIZO EXPLORER 8 nights SOFT ADVENTURE PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS connecting with Port Moresby flights Sunday to Monday, Tuesday to Wednesday, Friday to Saturday



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

In Honiara, take an introductory sightseeing tour then 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 three nights at a hideaway resort

on a tiny island near Gizo where you can enjoy unlimited snorkelling and beach walking right in front of your bungalow, and take boat trips to adjacent islands for sightseeing.

For a 7-night version of this tour, see EM82A.

PACKAGE COST (per person, twin share, does not include internal air)

	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 4	Group of 6+
Standard 8-night package	USD 7850	USD 4850	USD 4000	USD 3600
Single supplement	---	USD 1350	USD 1350	USD 1350

*To convert these costs to other currencies, please enquire for a quote.

Prices valid till end 2015 but subject to change. For package modifications, please enquire.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS

- Honiara - all meet and greets, all transfers
- Honiara - arrival city tour
- Honiara - 3 nights 3.5 star accommodation at Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel (room only)
- Honiara - 1 x full day excursion as per options offered in itinerary
- Munda - 3 x half day excursions as per itinerary
- Munda - 2 nights 3.0 star accommodation at Agnes Lodge (room only)
- Munda - boat transfer to Gizo with sightseeing and snorkelling stops, refreshments
- Gizo - 3 nights 3.0 star accommodation at Fatboys Resort (room only)
- Gizo - 2 x half day guided boat excursions
- Gizo - departure boat transfer to Gizo airfield
- Throughout the tour we provide:
 - daily guide and assistant guide or driver i.e. 2 locals to accompany you or your group at all times
 - all fees and gratuities for local villagers, demonstrators and helpers

- all airport/hotel transfers
- all road travel by late model mini bus or four wheel drive vehicle
- all water travel by open speed boat, skiff or motor canoe with life vests supplied
- daily reconfirmation of flights and arrangements coordinated by our Port Moresby and Honiara offices
- 24 hour assistance from our Port Moresby and Honiara offices

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

EXCLUSIONS

- Airfares
- Hotel and resort meals
- Bar drinks and between meal snacks
- Excess baggage charges (your free allowance is 16kg + 5 kg)
- Personal items. Bring your own favourite munchies, favourite bath soap, favourite toilet paper, small quick-dry towel, personal medications, personal hygiene requirements, brimmed hat or cap, “amphibious footwear” (sandals or quick-dry canvas shoes), insect repellent, sunscreen, personal flashlight, battery-operated personal fan. Please note that pressurised aerosol spray cans are not permitted on some domestic flights - bring pump-action sprays or roll-ons.



ITINERARY

DAY 1: TUE, FRI or SUN



PORT MORESBY / HONIARA (arrival tour)

On arrival at Honiara airport pass through passport control and Customs and you will be welcomed by our local guide (look for somebody holding a sign with your name). To save time and make the best use of the remainder of the day you will commence your city tour immediately. Your luggage will be safely stowed in the back of your tour vehicle.

Beginning from Honiara (Henderson) Airport you will sightsee your way into town, ending up at your hotel.

TOUR NOTE: A brief tour of Honiara

Work on the main runway at Honiara Airport was first commenced by the Japanese in early 1942. American forces landed on Red Beach, near the airport, in August 1942 and completed work on the main runway and a number of parallel strips on the same site and further east. The Americans christened the complex Henderson Field, named after a naval aviator killed in the Battle of Midway earlier. For sixty years it was known as Henderson Field until the Solomon Islands Government dropped the name Henderson in the mid-2000s when the Japanese government sponsored major airport renovations.

From the airport you'll drive through the urban fringes, past schools and light industrial areas then turn inland through residential areas up a few steep hills to the Mt Austen peace park built by the Japanese government in the 1980s to commemorate their war dead. From the memorial there are panoramic views of the North Guadalcanal coastline, from east to west horizons.

Retracing your steps to the main road and passing many local landmarks (the hospital, the soccer stadium, Chinatown, the Mataniko River, you'll turn inland again and up another ridge, Skyline Ridge, to the U.S. war memorial. Here again there are excellent views of the town and harbour, and moving tributes to American forces killed in action during the Guadalcanal campaign.

Next stop will be the central market where all manner of fresh food and handicrafts are sold. Your driver will mind the vehicle and your luggage while your guide shows you through the market. Late in the day the market is not at its best so you might care to stop here again tomorrow if time allows.

A little further on is the main shopping and business area known as Point Cruz, so named because it is adjacent to a rocky promontory which juts out into the sea and was identified by Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana in 1568 as the only suitable site for a deepwater port along the whole north coast of Guadalcanal (the rest of the coastline is coral-and-black-sand beach). The promontory is now covered with the sheds and wharves of the Port of Honiara. Just past Point Cruz is the yacht club and the hotel where you will be staying. First established in the late early 1970s as the Mendana Hotel, this landmark also suffered a name change when bought out by the Japanese Kitano Corporation in the early 1990s and is now officially called the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel. However this is quite a mouthful so everybody still calls it "the Mendana". The hotel is located on the main waterfront with its own tiny beach in the lee of Point Cruz and a panorama of yachts and other small craft bobbing in the water. The hotel is just a few minutes walk from the Point Cruz shopping area, where there are a number of Chinese restaurants - it is safe and pleasant to stroll around this area in the evening.

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

DAY 2: WED, SAT or MON



HONIARA (day trip options)

Today a choice of activities is offered. You must select your preferred option at the time of booking this tour package:

1) Hike to Mataniko Falls - this is a 6-hour round-trip hike following the Mataniko River upstream from Honiara. Guides will walk with you and a picnic lunch is included. The waterfall is quite large and majestic. 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. The walking is challenging in the humid climate and requires reasonable physical fitness. You will first be driven half an hour from your hotel to the Tuvuru suburb upstream and commence walking from there. Pickup at reception 07:00, dropoff 16:00. Includes packed lunch.

2) East Guadalcanal battlefields excursion. 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. Pickup 08:00, dropoff 16:00. Includes packed lunch.

3) West Guadalcanal villages excursion. 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 quite some distance from town, and inland from the coastal strip. From the hotel you will be driven out through Honiara's western suburbs of Rove (*Ro-vay*), White River and Kakabona, over the Poha River and out through the Mamara Estate coconut plantations to the north western tip of Guadalcanal near Visale Mission and Tambea Resort. Here you will be welcomed at a small native village where you will be able to observe 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. Pickup 08:00, dropoff 17:00.

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

DAY 3: THU, SUN or TUE



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 five minute walk - your bags will be transferred by car. 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 by the Americans.

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

DAY 4: FRI, MON or WED



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.

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

DAY 5: SAT, TUE or THU



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.

TOUR NOTE: Munda to Gizo by boat

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 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. As you approach the Ghizo Island group there may be time to stop at Plum Pudding Island where John F. Kennedy was stranded in 1943 after his motor torpedo boat PT109 was rammed by a Japanese destroyer.



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 Fatboys Resort, Gizo (twin bungalow, room only)
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 activities at Fatboys Resort on day-visit basis.

DAY 6: SUN, WED or FRI



GIZO: Fatboys Resort (Gizo town excursion)

Today a half day boat excursion to Ghizo Island is included in your tour package. The Gizo town waterside market operates Monday to Saturday (Friday is an extra big market day) and there are quaint Chinese shops to explore which sell "everything except black cotton" according to one visiting travel writer. A guide from the resort will accompany you on your exploration of the town. A visit to Gizo town is not complete without climbing the hill to Paradise Lodge from where there are 360 degree views of the islands around Ghizo Island (if you are not feeling up to climbing the hill you can hire a local taxi to haul you to the top).



12:00 Lunch today is not included in the excursion - you can have lunch in town (eg sit down for lunch at Paradise Lodge or the Gizo Explorer Hotel, or grab take-away local style fish and chips from the Gizo Women's Association's food shop near the market) or return to Fatboys Resort for lunch.



In the afternoon you are again at leisure. Snorkelling, kayaking, swimming and exploring the island are all free activities or you can pay extra to hire a boat and gear for scuba diving, sport fishing or sightseeing to John F. Kennedy's Plum Pudding Island (meet people living on the island and hear the story of JFK's stay on the island).

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

DAY 7: MON, THU or SAT



GIZO: Fatboys Resort (Kolombangara villages excursion)

This morning another half day boat excursion is included in your tour package. Half an hour crossing time brings you to Kolombangara Island, an almost perfectly circular volcanic cone. On the south western side of the island, facing Gizo, are a chain of pretty villages dotting the coastline. Your guide will assist you to alight at one of the villages, walk around the village meeting locals (totally impromptu) and then follow the footpath along the foreshore to subsequent villages - all the villages are about 30 minutes or 60 minutes walking distance from each other. If you do not like



to walk, you can spend more time in the first village only. Your boat will shadow you and when you have had enough walking you can return straight to the resort.

12:00 Lunch at the resort (or lunch can be arranged at the last village on your coastal walk if you prefer - please give advance notice. A small extra charge may apply (pay at the village or at the resort - your guide will advise).

In the afternoon you are again at leisure to enjoy the free activities at the resort or pay extra for scuba diving, sport fishing or additional sightseeing).

Overnight Fatboys Resort, Gizo (twin bungalow, room only)

www.solomonislandsfatboys.com.au

NB Kolombangara villages cannot be visited on Saturdays due to religious observance so if Day 7 is a Saturday on your itinerary the Kolombangara villages excursion will be on Day 6 (Friday) and the Gizo town excursion will be on Day 7 (Saturday).

DAY 8: TUE, FRI or SUN



GIZO / HONIARA

This morning is at leisure at Fatboys Resort. Enjoy the free activities at the resort or pay extra for scuba diving, sport fishing or additional sightseeing. After lunch, transfer by boat to Gizo airport and check in for your flight to Honiara.

The afternoon flight to Honiara departs between 16:00 and 17:00 depending on the day of the week.

On arrival at Honiara airport, our local guide will be waiting to transfer you to the hotel by private car.

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

DAY 9: WED, SAT or MON



HONIARA / FLY OUT

Our local guide will drive you to the airport and assist you to check in for your international flight.

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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