



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM81A - HONIARA, AUKI AND GIZO EXPLORER SOFT ADVENTURE PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS 7 nights (ex-Brisbane)

This is a sampler package offering a taste of Solomon Islands' three major visitor destinations. In Honiara, take an introductory sightseeing tour then choose from a menu of interesting day trip options to explore the history, geography and lifestyle around the capital. In Auki, visit the shark callers and shell money makers of the famous Langa Langa Lagoon then take a day to immerse yourself in the Malaita village lifestyle. The package concludes with three nights at the Solomons' premier hideaway resort on a tiny island near Gizo where you can enjoy unlimited snorkelling and beach walking right in front of your waterside bungalow, or take boat trips to visit local villages or go hiking on nearby islands.

For an 8-night version of this tour that connects with Port Moresby flights, see EM81.

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

	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 3**	Group of 4+
Standard 7-night package	SBD 34,771	SBD 20,707	SBD 20,086	SBD 16,850
Extra nights Honiara (Mendana Hotel), room only	SBD 1200 per deluxe room (single or twin-share)			
Extra nights Honiara (Mendana Hotel) with day tour (private vehicle)	SBD 2800	SBD 1800 pp	SBD 1600 pp	SBD 1400 pp
Extra nights Auki Lodge, room only	SBD 800 per room (single or twin-share)			
Extra nights Auki Lodge with day tour (private vehicle or motor canoe)	SBD 2800	SBD 1800 pp	SBD 1600 pp	SBD 1400 pp
Extra nights Sanbis Resort (room only)	SBD 1500 per waterfront bungalow (single or twin-share)			

*To convert these costs to other currencies, use the exchange rates quoted on our website home page www.em.com.pg

** Accommodation for groups of 3 is 1 x twin and 1 x single. Triple share at Sanbis Resort may be available, please enquire.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- meet and greet at Honiara, Auki and Gizo airports
- welcome kit including maps, destination information, souvenir polo shirt
- all airport transfers
- daily local guide for all travel and activities
- 2 nights three-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.
- half day Honiara sightseeing tour by private air-conditioned vehicle with driver/guide.
- full day excursion option ex-Honiara, choice of Mataniko Falls hike, battlefields excursion or shopping trip (all options are counted as equivalent value). Includes lunch.
- half day Langa Langa Lagoon sightseeing tour by outboard canoe with guides, including Laulasi artificial island and shark cult, Busu Cultural Centre and custom dance performance. Includes lunch.

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- 2 nights two-star twin-share accommodation at Auki Lodge (standard air-conditioned room with private bathroom), or equivalent accommodation at Auki Motel or Rarasu Motel. Room only, pay as you go for meals, drinks and extras.
- Full day Auki village experience with private vehicle transfers. Includes lunch.
- 3 nights twin-share waterside bungalow accommodation at Sanbis Resort (OR Fatboys Resort OR Gizo Hotel if Sanbis Resort unavailable). Room only, pay as you go for meals, drinks and extras.
- 2 half-day boat-based activities ex-Sanbis Resort, including guide, equipment and lunch hamper (choice of scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing, local sightseeing, village excursion, island hiking)
- return boat transfers from and to Gizo airfield
- tour monitoring and 24 hour assistance from our offices in Honiara (ph +677-94273) and Port Moresby (ph +675-686 8917)

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

EXCLUSIONS:

- airfares
- bar drinks, tips, souvenirs, personal items
- meals specified as "pay-as-you-go (PAYG)" or not otherwise specified as included
- visa fees (PGK100 on arrival in PNG and free-of-charge on arrival in Solomon Islands)

ITINERARY:

DAY 1:

HONIARA

Arrive Honiara early afternoon on your Solomon Airlines or Pacific Blue flight from Brisbane (3-hour flight time plus 1 hour time advance).

On arrival at Honiara airport you will be welcomed by our local guide after you exit Customs (look for somebody holding a sign with your name). To make the best use of the remainder of the afternoon you will commence your city tour as soon as you leave the airport, with your luggage safely stowed in the back of your tour vehicle.

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-noughties after 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

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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 just keeps calling 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:

HONIARA: Day trip options

Today a choice of activities is offered.

1) Day 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 Tuaruhu suburb upstream and commence walking from there. Pickup at reception 07:00, dropoff 16:00.

2) East Guadalcanal battlefields excursion - this trip covers all main points of interest from the 1944 campaign including Henderson field, Hell's Point, Bloody Ridge, underground hospital, Red Beach, Koni field, Tetere Beach. As you drive along the east coast road, you may note straight sections of the road that are actually old fighter airstrip runways. Includes packed lunch. Pickup 08:00, dropoff 16:00.

3) Artifact and souvenir shopping - for those who prefer to stick closer to the hotel, this is a half-day activity that leaves you with a free afternoon to laze by the pool or sit on the little beach at the hotel, or do your own thing around town. The morning's shopping stops include the Mendana gift shop (shell jewellery and general souvenirs), central market (shell money necklaces and other crafts), DJ Graphics (souvenir T-shirts, island-style garb and local music CDs), BJS Agencies (ebony wood carvings, woven baskets) and Betikama High School (copper beatings, paintings by local artists). Your guide may know some other good shop-stops. Of course there's no obligation to buy anything... browsing is fun too. You won't see another tourist all day and shopping is a great way to rub shoulders with the locals. For lunch your guide will take you to a local café to join the workers and shoppers for a local-style lunch:

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Honiara-style fish and chips (garlic-infused reef fish fried in batter with sweet potato chips) or curry chicken and tropical vegetables on rice are the two most popular dishes. Lunch is included in the tour. Pickup 08:00, dropoff 13:00 (or later by arrangement).

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

DAY 3:

AUKI: Langa Langa Lagoon tour

Your Honiara guide will transfer you to Honiara Airport to check in for your **Solomon Airlines flight** to Auki (pronounced *ow-kee*). Our local Auki tour guide will meet you at Auki airfield and transfer you to Auki town for check in at Auki Lodge. From there you will be taken down to the waterfront to board a motorised canoe for a half day tour of the Langalanga Lagoon. You will stop off at a number of villages located on the edge of the lagoon and on the various artificial islands which have been built up over centuries by piling up lumps of coral collected from the floor of the lagoon. Visiting the artificial islands of Alite (pronounced *ah-lee-tay*), Busu or Laulasi (*low-lahsi*) you will be shown local fishing methods, inspect the ancestral skulls, see how shell money is made and learn about the pagan shark worshipping cult. At Busu Cultural Village lunch will be served and you'll be entertained by a cultural group performing what the locals call a "custom dance".

Late in the afternoon on returning to Auki Lodge, enjoy a poke around in the Chinese shops nearby. Stop and chat to locals in the street or in the shops.

Overnight Auki Lodge (room only, pay as you go for meals and drinks).

DAY 4:

AUKI: village experience

08:00 Your local guide will meet you at the lodge reception and transfer you by private vehicle to a local village. Today you'll spend the day at a typical local village and have an opportunity to meet ordinary Malaitans and learn about their culture and lifestyle. Your host village will be either on the shore of the lagoon or a little way inland. This is a genuine *in situ* cultural experience and not a tourist show.

It's a lovely safe environment, with no snakes or other nasties to be worried about apart from the usual mosquitoes. With the guidance of your host family you can safely:

- paddle around in the lagoon by dugout canoe, exploring the mangrove labyrinths
- bathe in the freshwater stream
- bushwalk in the forest to see medicinal plants and bush foods, try to catch a glimpse of the frigate bird, the Malaita eagle and the wide variety of parrots
- visit the gardens to see how staple foods are cultivated and harvested
- watch how food is cooked in the smoke-house kitchen
- play soccer or volleyball with the village kids.

During the day you'll meet many of the villagers and share a little of their lives. You'll also learn about the Malaita culture, learn some pidgin and local language words. You will not be treated as royalty to be entertained but rather as a new member of the family being inducted into daily routine. After spending a day with your host family you will be able to say with confidence that you understand something of the lifestyle of Solomon Islanders living in rural villages.

Local-style food will be served for lunch, including unique local delicacies such as mangrove soup made from the grated propagules (fruit) of the large-leafed

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orange mangrove (*Bruguiera gymnorrhiza*), *kata* pudding made from indigenous nali nuts mashed with boiled taro and coconut cream, and *takuma* swamp fern cooked in coconut milk. Of course you'll also find familiar favourites such as pineapple, bananas and scones with butter and jam to wash down with a cup of tea.

Overnight Auki Lodge (room only, pay as you go for dinner, breakfast, snacks and drinks).

DAY 5:

AUKI / GIZO

Transfer by shuttle bus from Auki Lodge to Auki airfield to catch the morning or midday flight to Honiara with connecting flight to Gizo.

On arrival at Gizo airfield which is located on a small island in the Gizo Lagoon, you'll be met and transferred to Sanbis Resort www.sanbisresort.com which is located on Mbabanga Island, another little island in the Gizo Lagoon. Gizo town is located on the much larger Ghizo Island (note different spelling for the island itself).

Overnight Sanbis Resort, Gizo (waterfront bungalow, room only)

(NB If accommodation at Sanbis Resort is unavailable at the time of booking you will be accommodated at Fatboys Resort www.fatboysgizo.com which is located at the opposite end of the same little island, or at the Gizo Hotel. In this case, all water activities will still be provided by Sanbis Resort and free daily transfers provided between Sanbis Resort and your alternative accommodation).

DAY 6:

GIZO: Sanbis Resort

Half day water sports and/or sightseeing by boat ex-Sanbis Resort + half-day at leisure.

Your stay at Sanbis Resort (or alternative accommodation) is inclusive of accommodation and one organised half-day activity per day. The activities menu includes: scuba diving (including all gear), boat fishing, a boat trip to Gizo town or local villages, village-to-village hiking, being marooned on a desert isle with a picnic lunch, snorkelling offshore reefs, visiting John F. Kennedy's island. A boat with driver, water sports equipment and lunch or refreshment hamper is at your disposal for the half-day. Swimming, snorkelling, canoeing around the resort area and exploring Mbabanga Island are free activities available for the rest of the day.

Half-day excursions usually include a packed lunch. Pay as you go for other meals and drinks at the resort and any additional motorised activities apart from the half-day activity included in the package.

(A suggested half-day trip is a coastal village-to-village hike on adjacent Kolombangara Island. A boat from Sanbis Resort will drop you off at the Kukundu Mission Station with a guide, and you'll walk between pretty little villages along the picturesque coast until you get to Ghatere. The boat will pick you up at Ghatere and transfer you back to the resort. About 3 hours walking, plus stops to chat with villagers en route.)

Overnight Sanbis Resort, Gizo (waterfront bungalow, room only).

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DAY 7:

GIZO: Sanbis Resort

Half day water sports and/or sightseeing by boat ex-Sanbis Resort + half-day at leisure.

Overnight Sanbis Resort, Gizo (waterfront bungalow, room only).

DAY 8:

GIZO / HONIARA / BRISBANE

After breakfast, transfer by boat to Gizo or Munda airfield for your morning flight to Honiara connecting with your afternoon flight to Brisbane.

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\$).