



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM82A - HONIARA, MUNDA AND GIZO EXPLORER SOFT ADVENTURE PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS 7 nights (ex-Brisbane)

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 the history, geography and lifestyle around the capital. In Munda, tour the historical Roviana Lagoon and visit the skull island and the ruins of the village cult fortress on Nusa Roviana Island, razed by British colonial forces in 1892. The highlight of this itinerary is a three-hour 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 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 EM82.

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 35,486	SBD 21,114	SBD 19,652	SBD 16,436
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 Agnes Lodge, room only	SBD 800 per cottage room (single or twin-share)			
Extra nights Agnes 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 and Munda 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.

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- 2 nights twin share cottage room at Agnes Lodge, Munda. Room only, pay as you go for meals.
- Full day Roviana Lagoon cultural tour including village lunch
- Water transfer from Munda to Gizo provided by Sanbis Resort
- 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)
- departure boat transfer 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 your guide shows you through the market. Late in the day the market is not at

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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: Honiara-style fish and chips (garlic-infused reef fish fried in batter with sweet

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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:

HONIARA / MUNDA

Your Honiara guide will transfer you to the airport for your morning flight to Munda - pickup time to be advised.

On arrival at Munda airfield you'll be met by a representative from Agnes Lodge. From the small terminal to the Lodge is only a five minute walk - porters from the Lodge will carry your bags.

Before sundown there will be time to take a stroll around tiny Munda township, one of the quietest little townships in the Pacific. 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.

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

DAY 4:

MUNDA: Roviana Lagoon tour

Today you'll take a full day tour of Munda and the Roviana Lagoon by motor canoe. The Roviana people were head-hunters in the pre-colonial days and you'll be taken to Skull Island where the bones of both ancestors and the unlucky are displayed, and then to Nusa Roviana Island where the head-hunting tribe lived in a fortified village that was razed 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 the time has as a mascot. On the island you'll visit a seaside village and be served traditional New Georgia-style cooking. On the opposite "mainland" shore-line you'll be taken to see the Holupuru Falls and bat cave, and a brilliant swimming and snorkelling beach with colourful coral gardens. Snorkelling gear is provided.

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

DAY 5:

MUNDA / GIZO

This morning you'll be transferred by sea-going launch from Munda wharf to Sanbis Resort on Mbabanga Island near Gizo town. The launch will depart Sanbis early in the morning and pick you up at approximately 08:00.

The water transfer takes about two hours and is one of the Solomons' most picturesque water journeys. 75% of the distance hugs the shore of Vona Vona Island and weaves through a myriad of tiny islands that lie in the Lagoon between Vona Vona Island and Kohinggo Island, both part of the New Georgia group. At the end of the lagoon you'll pass through a narrow passage between Vona Vona and Kohinggo then cross Fergusson Passage, a short stretch of open water separating Vona Vona from the Ghizo Island group, of which Mbabanga Island is one. The launch crew will be happy to make shore stops en route through the Vona Vona Lagoon if you would like to visit a village or do some snorkelling in any spot that takes your fancy. You'll probably never pass through such a beautiful part of the world again, so don't blink!

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Arriving at Sanbis Resort in time for lunch, the rest of the day is at leisure. Snorkelling, kayaking, swimming and exploring the island are all free activities at Sanbis Resort www.sanbisresort.com.

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. Gizo town is located on the much larger Ghizo Island - note different spelling for the island itself).

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. 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 hamper is at your disposal to transport you to your preferred activity 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. Apart from a packed lunch provided for excursions, pay as you go for any other meals and drinks taken at the resort and any additional motorised activities apart from the half-day activity included in the package.

A suggested half-day trip if you are not into water activities but like walking and meeting the locals, 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).

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.

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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\$).