

“This place is fit for a king – the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge stayed here”

# Seduced by the SOLOMONS

Do some time travelling in the Pacific, in a chain of glorious islands where time has stood still, writes **Ginny Cumming**

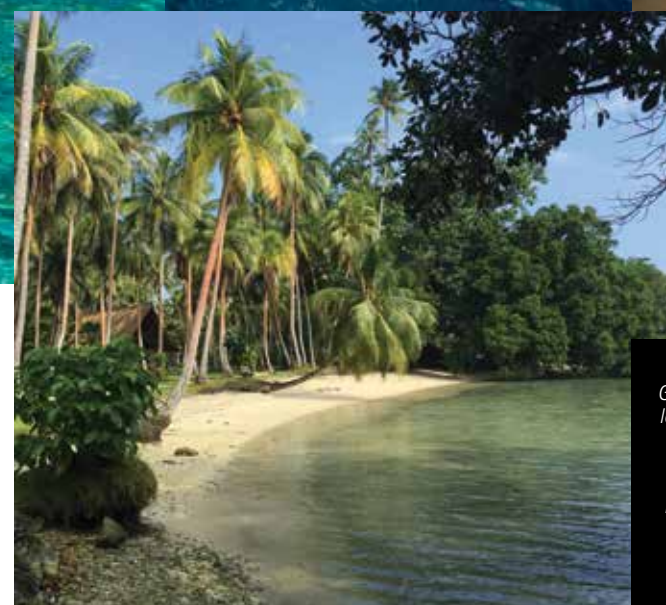
**I**t's always thrill when you discover a brilliant holiday destination. But when you find one that's gorgeous, supremely chilled and only around three hours from Australia (Brisbane), you've really hit gold.

The Solomon Islands are one such destination. This is a place of unhurried simple pleasures and astonishing natural beauty. The capital, Honiara, is definitely worth a visit, but let's be honest, a trip to the Solomons is all about escaping to one of the 900-odd remote islands that make up this nation.

We were lucky enough to call two of them home during our trip to this magical part of the world. First stop was Tavanipupu Private Island Resort ([tavanipupu.com](http://tavanipupu.com)), via a 25-minute flight on an eight-seater plane and then a 20-minute boat ride that made us feel as if we were the only people in the world. Located in the most beautiful, remote spot you can imagine, Tavanipupu is apparently the most luxurious resort in the Solomons. There are just 12

wooden bungalows, all with thatched roofs, vaulted ceilings and four-poster king beds. Instead of Wi-Fi, air-con or a TV you get a private porch with day bed, hammock and lagoon views. But even without mod-cons this place is still fit for a king – or a future king, anyway: the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge stayed at Tavanipupu during their tour of the Pacific in 2012. Rumour has it the heir to the heir, George, was even conceived here.

Romantic dinners for two are served on a private jetty in a setting that screams holiday fantasy, but the majority of meals are enjoyed in a tropical, open-air dining room. Walking there from your bungalow takes you past a little lagoon that looks like it's straight out of *Gilligan's Island* (there was no millionaire or movie star when we were there, but you can bet they come here in droves). Across from the lagoon, sitting above the water, is a tiny shack that you'll barely notice, but do not miss a visit here. It's the resort's spa – the setting is rustic,



Left: The Gilligan's Island lagoon (official trademark pending) at Tavanipupu Private Island. Above: The future king of England, Prince George of Cambridge, was apparently conceived in this bed! Above right: The open-air dining room. Opposite page: The SB bar at Sanbis Resort



## “Swim out just a few metres from the shore and it’s like *Finding Nemo* has come to life”

the view gorgeous and the massages heavenly. As well as pummelling and pampering you can go reef snorkelling in warm waters teeming with marine life, explore the island by bike, catch your supper on a fishing expedition, visit a traditional village on a nearby island, or head off for a gourmet lunch on a private sandy beach, just the two of you.

After four blissful days at Tavanipupu we head back to Honiara and board a flight to Gizo (in the Western Province), from whence it’s a seven-minute trip on a speedboat to the uber-chilled Sanbis Resort ([sanbisresort.com](http://sanbisresort.com)).

Life at this eco-friendly island paradise is lived on or over the water. There are just six bungalows, which all sit right at the water’s edge and have views across a lagoon from their private decks. The decor is rustic and simple (again, don’t expect any mod-cons – you won’t even find a power socket in your bungalow!). The sublime overwater spa will definitely

demand some of your attention, but the SB Bar, at the end of the jetty and overlooking the lagoon, is where you’ll spend most of your time at Sanbis. It’s the heart of the resort and the last word in laid-back loveliness. There’s Wi-Fi access and a big-screen TV if you need a fix of the ‘real world’, as well as the ‘only overwater woodfired pizza oven in the Pacific’ – what a brilliant claim to fame. They also serves the most incredible lobster (another thing the islands are famous for). It’s cheap, it’s plentiful and it’s *delicious*.

Snorkelling around here is seriously unmissable. You can step down from the SB Bar straight into waters filled with extraordinary fish, coral and a WWII relic, or catch a boat to nearby Kennedy Island, where it’s even better. This tiny uninhabited island is named after JFK who, together with his crew, was stranded here for a time during WWII. There’s not much to do on land, but swim out just a few metres from the shore and it’s like *Finding Nemo* has come to

Top left and above: Time will stand still at the seriously chilled Sanbis Resort, located on a secluded island near Gizo – relaxation guaranteed. Top right: take a boat to Fatboys Resort ([solomonislandsfatboys.com.au](http://solomonislandsfatboys.com.au)) for a meal in this legendary overwater restaurant that’s probably the most famous place in the Solomons

life. There are exotic rainbow-coloured fish, reefs festooned with colourful coral, starfish, shells... the only problem is you have to keep stopping to remove your snorkel and gasp excitedly, ‘Did you see that?’

Which is pretty much what you’ll be saying during your entire time in the friendly and oh-so beautiful Solomons Islands. **H**

// The writer travelled as a guest of Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau and Solomon Airlines.