

April - June 2020

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SOLOMON ISLANDS



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Solomon Islands

The hidden gem of the South Pacific Ocean

Spanning just south of the equator close to Australia lays a group of magnificent islands with towering mountain peaks, volcanos, lagoons, impenetrable forests, mangroves, coral out crops, mysterious cultures with very interesting traditions. Some of the most unspoiled and pristine dive spots on our planet covered with World War artefacts. One of the most beautiful and special places that you will ever visit, a place where time stood still for decades, often described as the “Islands that was Lost in Time”.



The 992 islands of the Solomon's forms the third largest archipelago in the Pacific Ocean and are fashioned in a double chain with neighbours Papua New Guinea to the east, Vanuatu in the south and Bougainville in the north.

The Solomon's islands are divided in 9 provinces, and New Georgia island that is located in the Western Province is one of the best diving destinations that the Solomon islands has to offer.

Solomon's is a diver and a traveller dream destination and it can be daunting to know where to begin to experience what this boundless country has to offer.

And the best way to explore the Solomon's is to choose an island and then start to do some island hopping to explore and dive its neighbouring islands.

And a why not start this adventure from Munda or Gizo that is situated around New Georgia Island what is surrounded by the largest salt water lagoon in the world.

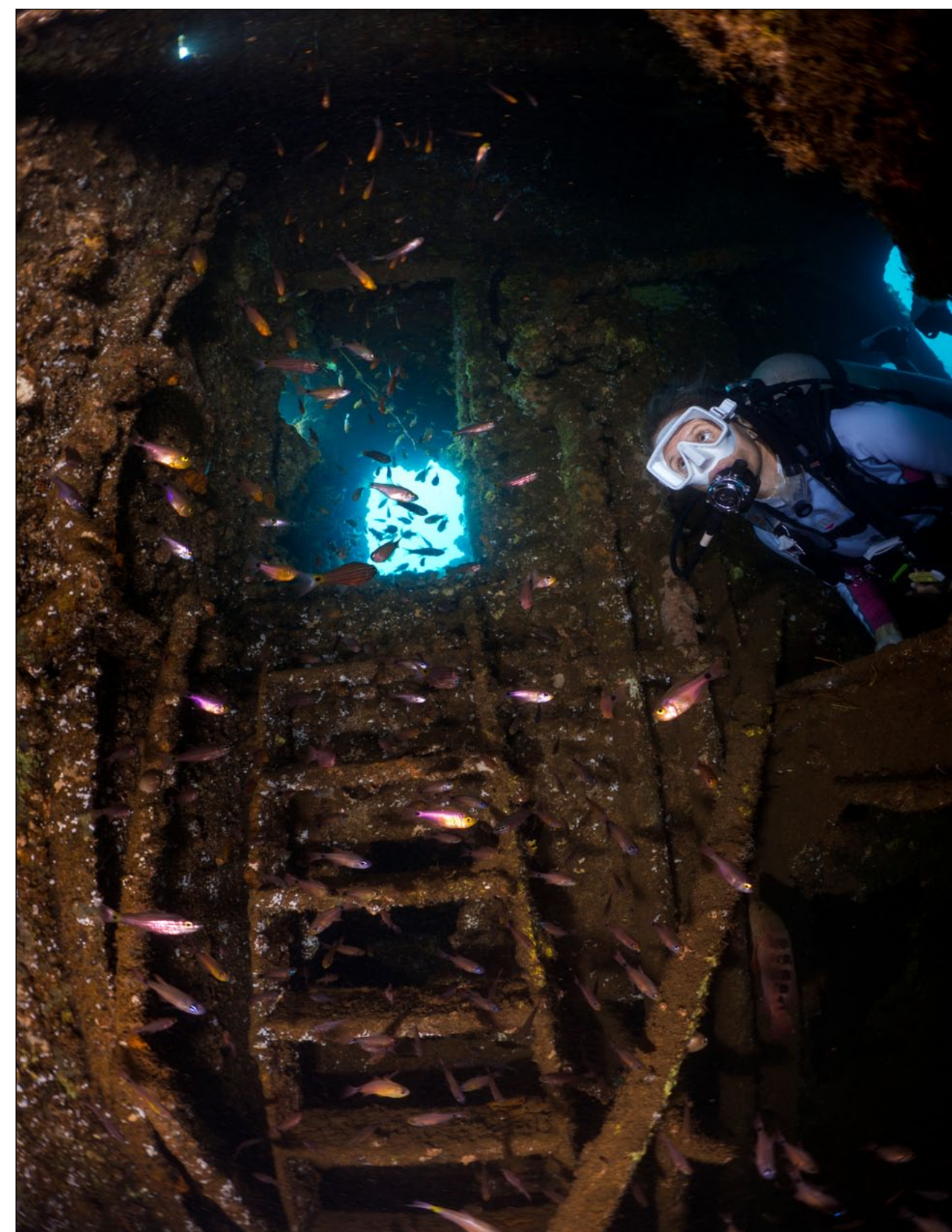
The Marovo Lagoon, is a World Heritage site

that is approximately 157 km long with 2 inactive volcanoes and over 300 islands of only 20 of these are inhabited by 50 odd villages. The islands are surrounded by white sandy beaches and tropical blue water and coral reefs structures as far as you can see.

All around the Solomon Islands you will find mysterious cultures, rich in local traditions and World War 2 history because the Pacific was the biggest battleground in the Second World War. Naval battles raged from Pearl Harbour down to the Solomon Islands up through the Philippines and ultimately culminated at Iwo Jima in Japan.

Distances covered were immense. Thousands of tons of ships and aircraft were lost in the Pacific by both the Americans, Australian's and Japanese. Six decades of corrosion and human expansion took its toll and today very few remnants of the War artefacts remain on land.

Underwater the Pacific is littered with wrecks. Most of them are in deep water out of view or not even discovered, but a few of them that was found lies within reach of divers to revisit the world war.

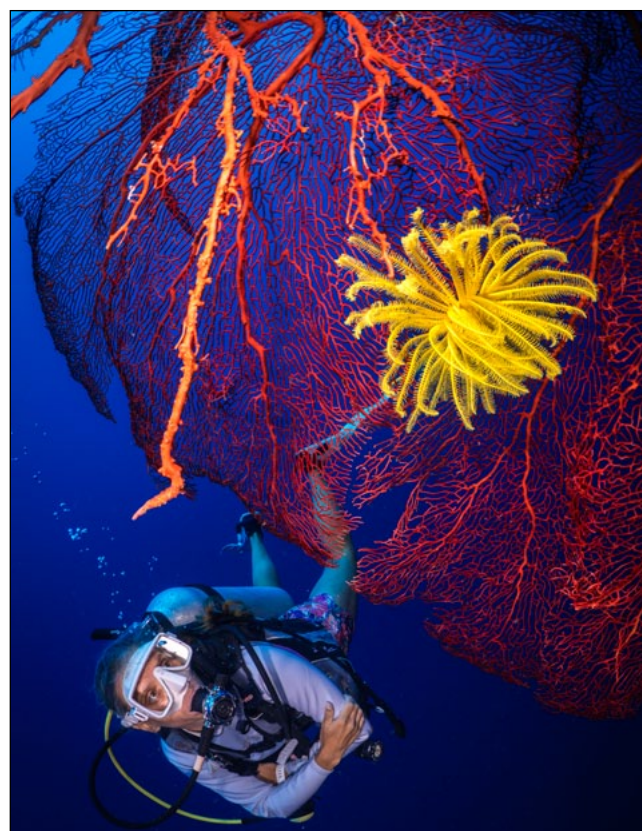


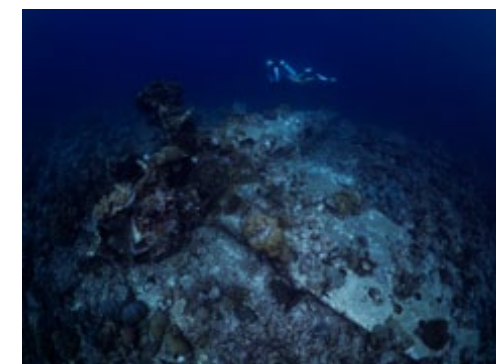
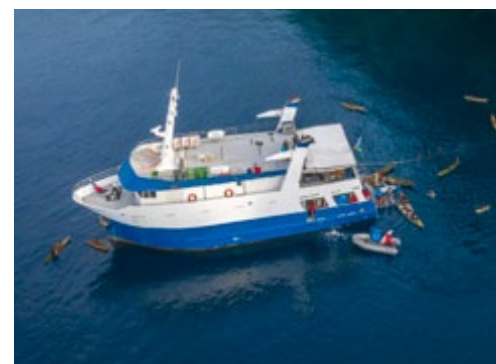
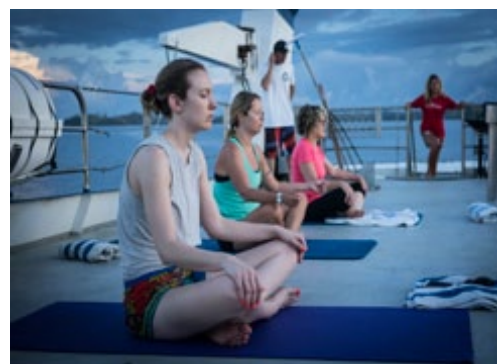
Solomon Airlines offers direct flights from Brisbane to Munda where you will land on one of the smallest international airports in the world. Arriving at the airport the locals welcome you with traditional singing and dancing while you go through customs, and then a short walk to Agnes Gateway Hotel and here we started our island hopping with Dive Munda a well-known dive operator in the Solomon's that offers fantastic service and even better staff.

Situated on the edge of the Marovo Lagoon with spectacular views over the ocean, especially sun sets. A place where you can just sit back and relax and enjoy what this special place has to offer.

Diving around the Munda and Gizo area, you will find spectacular reef systems where the ocean currents and Mother Nature shaped the landscape and the underwater world.

With deep trenches and channels around the lagoon and islands, the tidal flows and diverse underwater topography contributes to the biodiversity and its treasure below. Today it offers you some of the most unspoiled





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Dive Munda is a multi-award winning SSI Instructor Training, Certifier and Extended Range Centre in the Western province of Solomon Islands committed to sustainable dive eco-tourism. Discover WWII history and Kastom culture and scuba dive unexplored reefs, hard and soft coral, cuts, caverns and caves along with pelagic life and shark action, all in one of the last wild frontiers left on planet ocean.

Direct weekly flights from Brisbane to Munda with Solomon Airlines

dive spots on our planet and this is why the Solomon's are part of the Coral Triangle of the world.

The Coral Triangle is composed of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and East Timor and is the heart of the world's coral reef biodiversity. The area got its name for the staggering number of corals (nearly 600 different species of reef-building corals alone), and the region nurtures six of the world's seven marine turtle species and more than 2000 species of reef fish.

Wall dives on the outside reefs can drop off to 2000 meters, channel dives between the islands on an incoming current yield rich pelagic sea life whilst reef dives range from hard coral cities to soft coral gardens and to top this off, you have the wrecks.

The lagoon was the ideal place to hide Japanese ships among the hundreds of islands till they had detected by the Allied forces and then made their final journey to the bottom of the ocean floor. And still today you can dive war ships, cargo ships and a

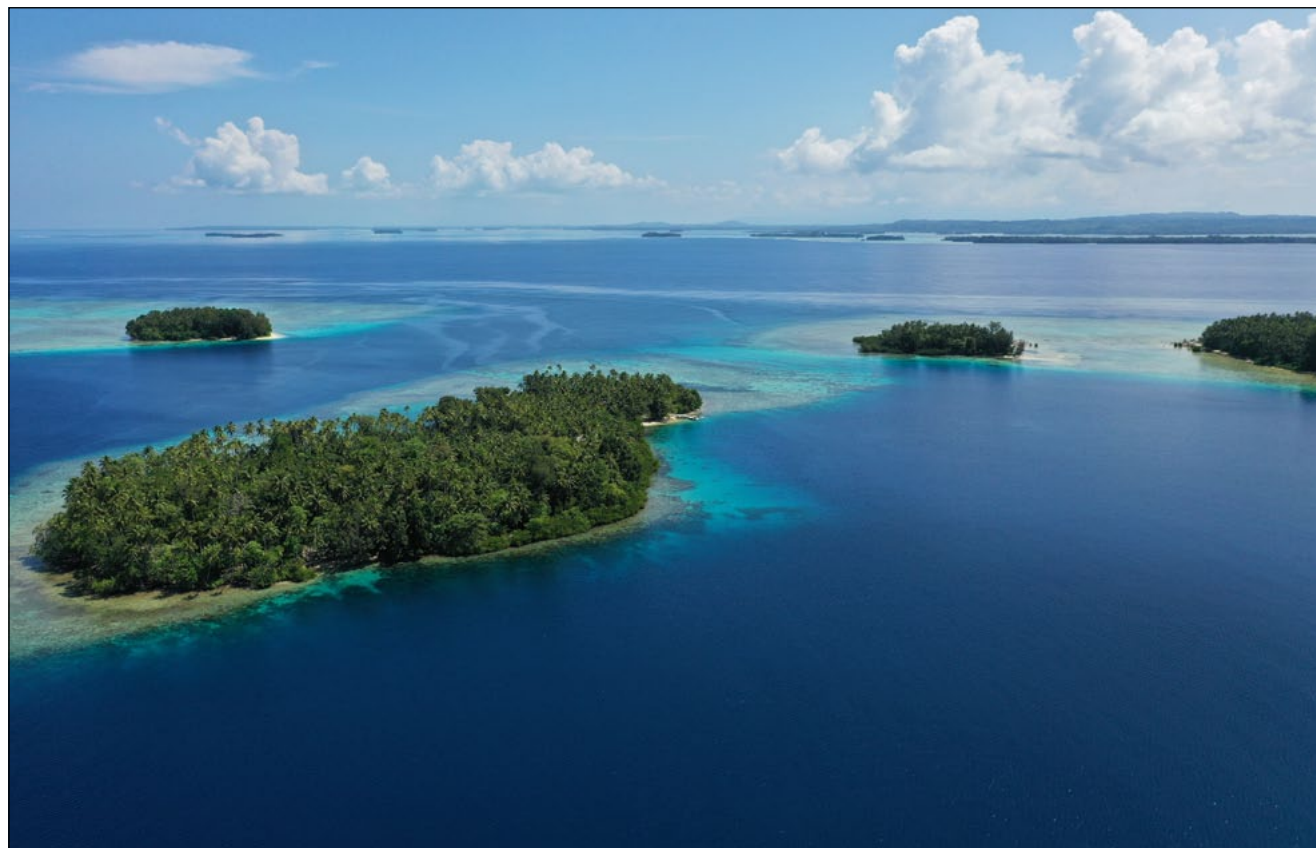
verity of plains from the World War 2 all around the Solomon's.

All around this area you can see Sharks, Eagle rays, Rays, Devil Rays and if you are lucky some Manta Rays or Hammer head sharks if you are there in the right season. Schools barracudas, Oceanic trigger fish, Potato groupers, Dogtooth tuna, Jacks, schooling King fish and Turtles are commonly seen around the dive spots.

As you are driving to your next dive spot or island through the turquoise waters in one of Solomon's traditional Banana boats you realise how beautiful this chain of islands are. Every island doesn't matter how big or small has its own story to tell.

So make sure that you visit some of the more interesting islands during your surface intervals or you can even stay overnight if you want.

And one that you have to visit is Tetepare Island that is about an 2 hour boat ride from Munda, a great place to escape from the real world to stay in an ego resort that is situated



on the largest uninhabited island in the south pacific.

The island was well known in the region where tribes still preform the tradition of head hunting and became uninhabited when a disease broke out and the local tribe's believed that it was their ancestors that was putting a curse on the island.

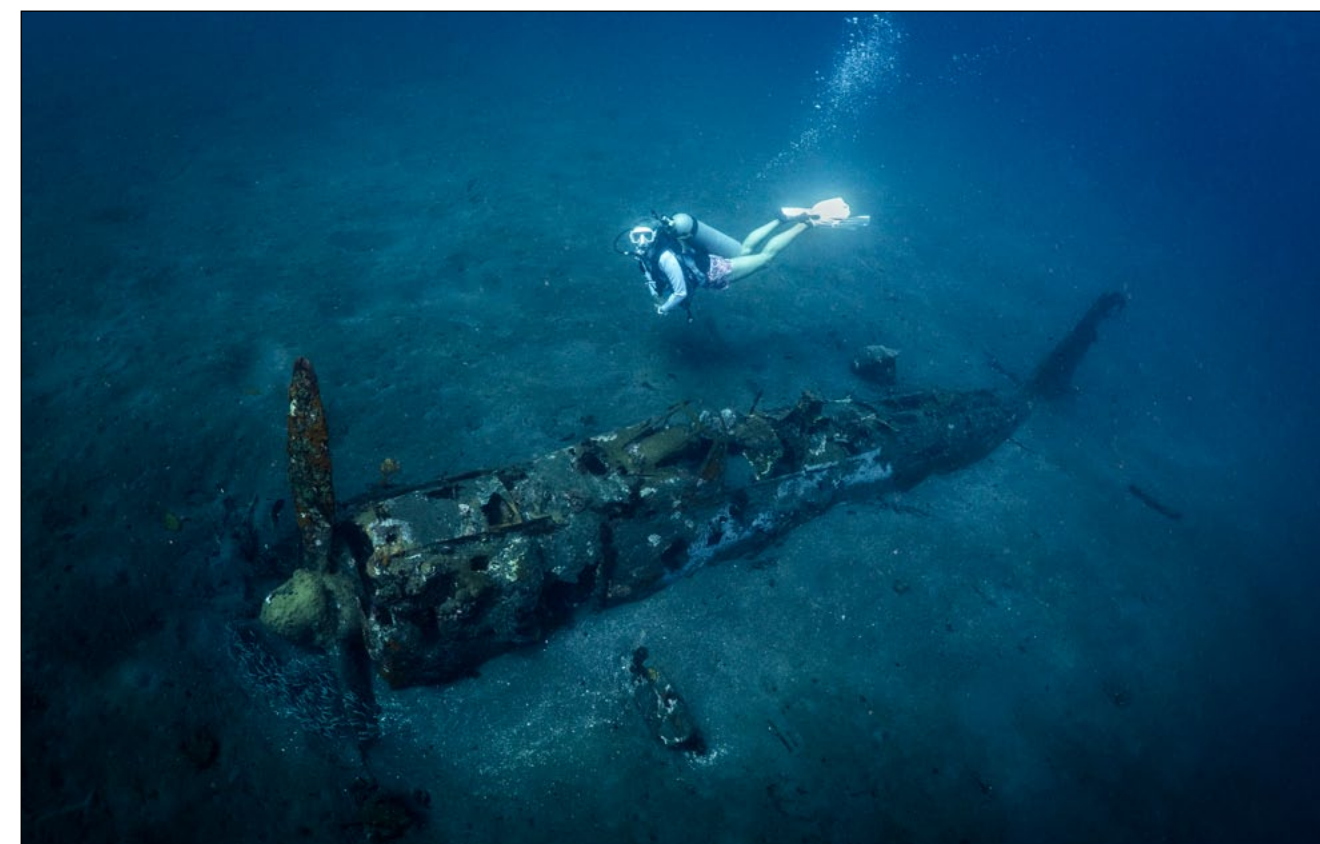
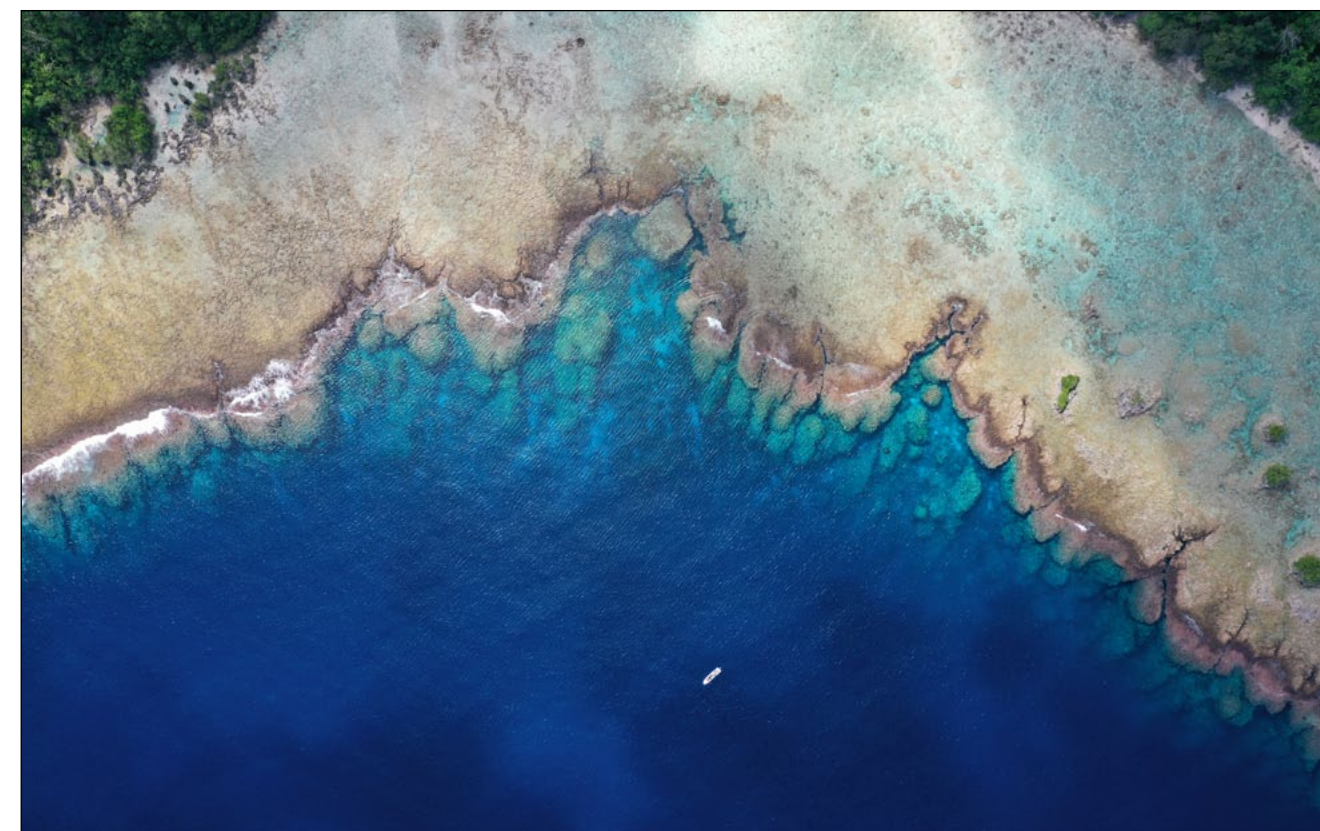
So everyone that was living on the island had to move to other islands. Today you can still find some locals of Tetepare Island all over the Solomon's.

Visiting the Eco lodge on this mysterious island that only allow 12 visitors at any time is an experience that has to be done, Turtle tagging or as the locals call it Turtle rodeo is an exciting thing to watch, but for me it was the coconut crab, the coconut crab is a species of hermit crabs, also known as the robber crab or palm thief.

It is the largest land-living arthropod in the world. If birds or reptiles are your thing then this island is the only place you can find White eyed pitta bird and 2 blind snakes that was only discovered a couple of months ago.

Other islands in the area not to be missed is PT109/Lumbaria or JF Kennedy island that has a very interesting story where JF Kennedy was stationed during World War 2 and artefacts are still seen around the islands.

To meet the locals and see their traditions, a day visit to Rendowa island is brilliant where



Dive the World

Solomon Islands

the locals take you from Titiru to Ugele for a village and culture tour. Fat boys and Lola island some outstanding places, there is so many to choose from but also make sure that you stop at Skull island, where you can still see the final resting place for numerous skulls that was collected as trophy's when head hunting was still a tradition in the Solomon's.

But by far my favourite island was Ndoke Ndoke where the Cave of the custom shark is. A cave dive where you will take a short walk to a small hole on the island and start the cave dive through a narrow crack in the volcanic rock. As you go through the cave system it will take you back in to the ocean where you exit on a wall reef around 20 meters deep.

Exiting the cave on a wall that drops down to the unknown depths, with 100 plus visibility is amazing. This is a dive that is unique in the world and a dive that everyone that loves caves has to experience.

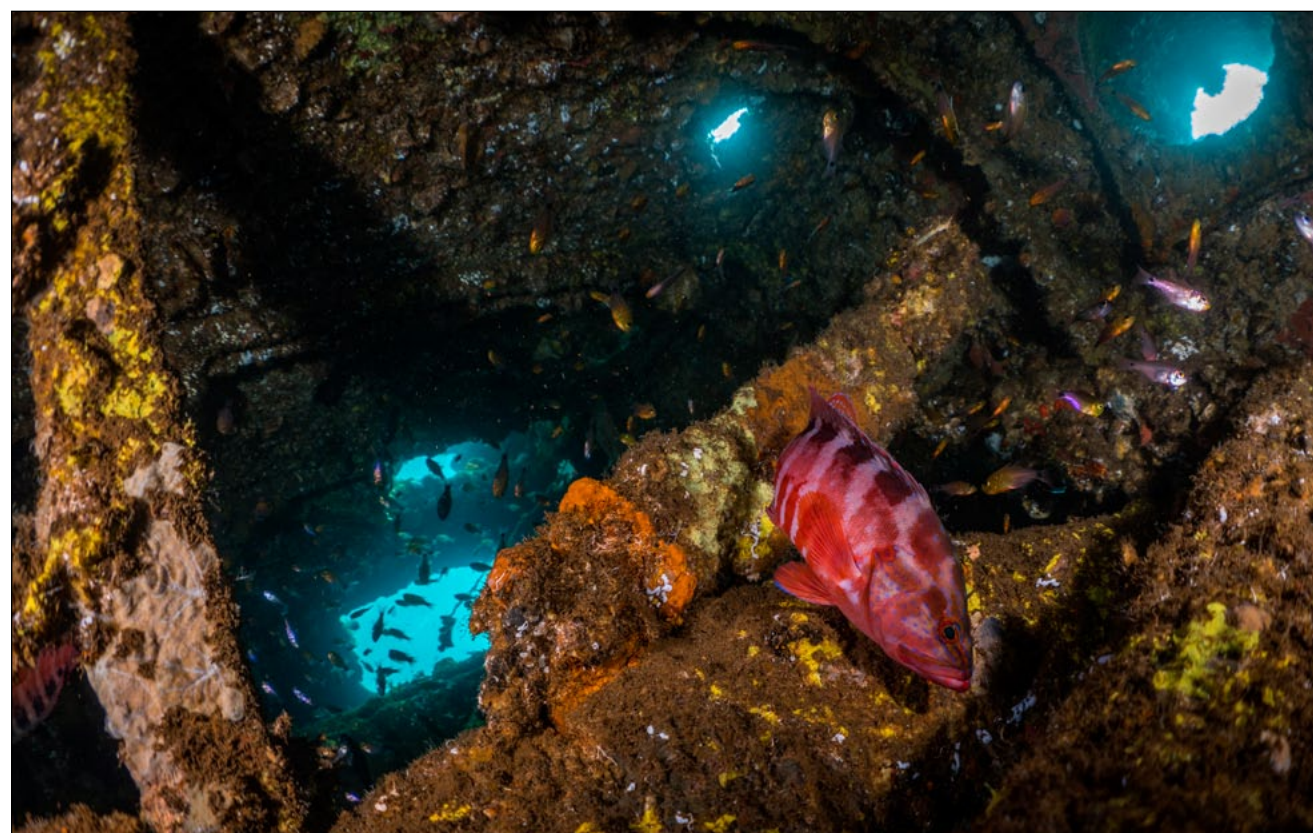
There is so may dive spots and islands around Munda and Gizo area to go and explore that will keep you busy for months

and Dive Munda and Dive Gizo can take you to all the best spots to dive and explore. If wrecks attract you then this is also the place for you, with number of seaplanes and wrecks scattered around the islands. From spy to surveillance plains to bomber plains and even a plain that the pilot Jim Dougherty that was in the crash in 1943 during the war came back to dive on the wreck on its 50th anniversary.

Also a well-known ship wreck in the area are the Kashi Maru, a Japanese freighter that was caught by USAF bombers on July 2 1943 while unloading a cargo of trucks and fuel to nearby troops based on New Georgia Island.

She lies Mboroko Harbour and are is easily accessible to all levels of diver and the wreck is filled with artefacts and one of the best and most preserved engine rooms in the world!

The wreck now hosts abundant of corals, clams, Moray Eels, Octopi and masses of juvenile tropical fish and crustaceans. This is a truly spectacular dive for World War 2 enthusiasts and wreck divers.



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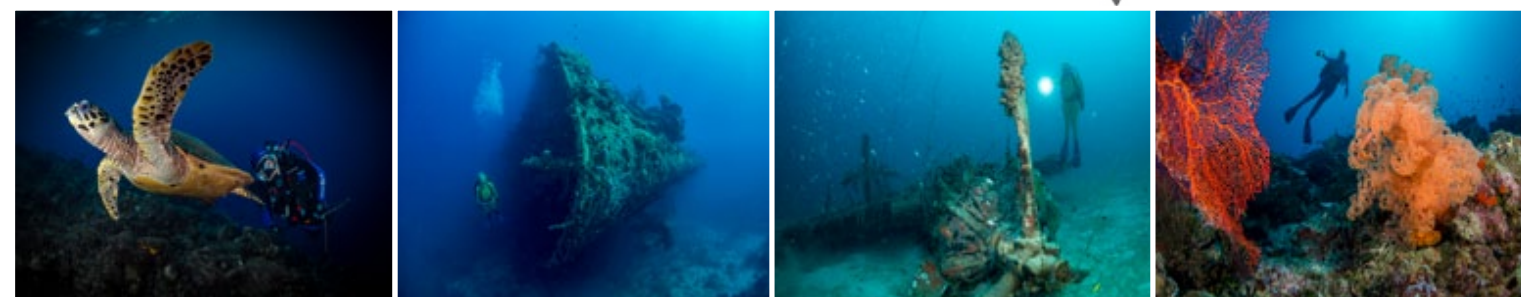
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Conditions : For one person, does not including meals and is subject to availability of flights and rooms. Competition ends 31 December 2020



Solomon Islands is a hidden gem that many travellers overlook, yet fortunately for all of us, over many years the Solomon's has received so little publicity and is still a relatively secret destination among travellers and divers.

There is so many things to say and do in the Solomon's that you can base an entire magazine just on these islands. It is a place where time stood still for decades, the "Islands that was Lost in Time".

Travel Information:

Traveling: Solomon Airlines does direct flights from Brisbane to Munda. For more information regarding flights around the Solomon's visit www.flysolomons.com

Passport & Visas:

All visitors to the Solomon Islands Everyone visiting the Solomon Islands needs a valid passport with a minimum of six months validity in their passports on day of travel to enter the country. But not everyone needs a visa. Most tourists are granted a visitors permit on arrival.

You do not need a visa to enter the Solomon Islands if you are a citizen of the

Commonwealth, a citizen of the United States, or a citizen from most EU countries.

Voltage:

220V Same as AU and NZ – Same plug fittings too.

Currency:

Solomon Islands dollar (1 Solomon Islands dollar = \$0.20)

Water temperature:

28° C - 30° C

Best time to dive this site: Solomon's can be dived all year round but January to March is normally the raining season.

Contact Details:

Solomon Tourism

www.visitsolomons.com.sb

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