

BUSINESS TRAVEL GUIDE TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

VISAS

One-month entry visas are granted on arrival to most nationalities but if you are unsure, check at the nearest Solomon Islands mission. Your passport must be valid for at least six months later than your date of entry, and a return ticket is required.

GETTING TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

The key Honiara–Brisbane route is well serviced by a combination of Solomon Airlines (www.flysolomons.com), Pacific Blue (www.pacificblue.com.au) and Our Airline (www.ourairline.com.au). Solomon Airlines also flies to Fiji (see also Air Pacific, www.airpacific.com, and Our Airline) and Vanuatu, while Our Airline flies on to Nauru and Tarawa. Air Niugini operates services between Papua New Guinea and the Solomons.

GETTING AROUND HONIARA

'Town' is the CBD area where corporate and government institutions are generally located. Fifteen minutes up the road, close to Henderson Airport, is the industrial area of Ranadi (pronounced 'Ran-andi'). The 'Chinatown' area is roughly halfway between the two.

In Town, taxis are ubiquitous and cheap (though generally shabby) and can be hired by the hour for travel within Honiara. For other trips, including outside of Honiara, you should negotiate your fare before you leave.

The trip to or from Henderson Airport (about 10 km from the centre of Honiara) costs SBD\$60. Your hotel can undertake your transfer for you for a similar fee, and will often be able to supply a superior vehicle.

Car hire

Economy Car Rentals (+677 27100) and the newly-established Budget (+677 39082) are two options.

Domestic flights

Solomon Airlines flies to around 20 locations on the main island of Guadalcanal and other islands. Services are subject to change, so be prepared to be flexible in your plans. Honiara's domestic terminal

is located close to the international one.

CLIMATE

The Solomon Islands has a warm and humid climate with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C (82F). The period from May to November tends to be drier.

TIME ZONE

The Solomon Islands is 11 hours ahead of GMT.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

'Pacific time' takes on a particular form in the Solomon Islands, where setting up business meetings is an informal affair. This can work both ways. The person you arrange to meet may not show up (so it is always best to re-confirm appointments). On the other hand, you can schedule meetings at short notice, and sometimes even just turn up without an appointment! Business attire is also informal—jackets and ties are dispensed with.

CURRENCY

The local currency is the Solomon Islands dollar (S\$), currency code SBD. As of 26 November 2009, the USD\$ was buying S\$7.83, with the AUD\$ fetching S\$7.29. There is an ATM in the arrivals hall of the airport and a bureau de change in the departures hall. There are several conspicuous ATMs around Honiara.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banking hours are 8.30am or 9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. Commercial hours tend to be from 7.30am to 12 noon and 1pm to 4pm, Monday to Friday, and also Saturday mornings. Government offices open from 8am to 12noon and from 1pm to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

ELECTRICITY

The current in the Solomon Islands is 240V AC 50Hz using Australian-style plugs.

SAFETY

Despite the social unrest in its recent past, the Solomon Islands is relatively safe by most standards. It is safe to walk around Town during the day but the usual caution should be exercised after dark.

HEALTH

Malaria is a problem, even in Honiara. Although many expat residents do not take anti-malarial medication, it is advisable. You should consult your doctor about two weeks before you travel. In any event, bring strong insect repellent and use liberally if outdoors at night. You should also ensure your immunisations against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A and B are up to date, and it is imperative to have comprehensive health cover. Australian-based AustAsia Health (www.webbpacific.com.au) is a specialist provider of corporate healthcare services in the South Pacific.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internet: Things have certainly improved in the last three years. Hotel business centres now offer a decent ADSL internet service, while Our Telekom also offers a wireless broadband service, including a 7-day rate of SBD\$250. There are several internet cafés around town too. **Mobile:** Although roaming has now been introduced, it seems to be limited in terms of which overseas carriers are supported. It is easy enough to buy a local SIM card and pre-paid credit however. At the time of writing, mobile services are rather patchy due to a large recent rise in the numbers of local subscribers. However, an imminent network upgrade by Our Telekom should ameliorate the situation.

Media: The Solomon Star is the local daily newspaper, and is available from the major hotels, Lime Lounge café etc.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation situation in Honiara has improved immensely with the opening of the **Heritage Park Hotel** (www.hph.com.sb) in September 2009 (see page 13). Not only does it provide a genuinely international standard hotel (and long-stay apartments) but it has also raised the bar in terms of the local hotel market.

Two other centrally-located hotels are the **Kitano Mendana** (try to stay in the new wing), and the **King Solomon** (www.kingsolomonhotel.info)

Other options a few minutes from Town are the Pacific Casino (the suites are good value) and the Honiara Hotel (see below).

Nonetheless, be aware that there is a shortage of both hotel rooms and long-term accommodation at present.

RESTAURANTS

There are plenty of decent dining options in Honiara.

Heritage Park: The new hotel's restaurant has a large and eclectic menu, including several stylish Indian dishes.

Honiara Hotel: Boasts two very good restaurants. Upmarket French-style cuisine at Le Boucanier (French chef) and excellent Chinese at The Mandarin.

Mendana Hotel: It is no surprise that it is home to an excellent Japanese restaurant. There's a passable Western restaurant as well. The friendly **King Solomon Hotel** also has a good international menu. There are also plenty of reasonable Chinese restaurants around town (eat in or take away) as well as the **Taj Mahal** (Sri Lankan and Indian), just before the airport (www.sol-lanka.com.sb).

CAFÉ/SNACK

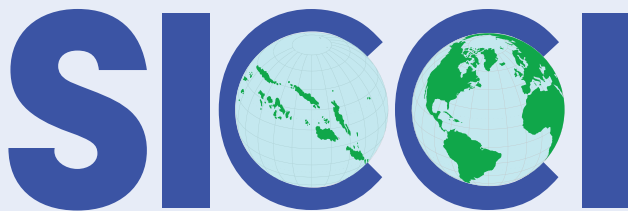
Lime Lounge (7am to 5pm weekdays, reduced weekend hours) is a heavily air-conditioned expat hang-out in the centre of Town, serving great coffee and comfort food.

SUPERMARKET

The best-stocked supermarket is at **Panatina Plaza**, Honiara's main retail centre, close to the airport. If you can't get there, then there is another option: **Wings**, in National Provident Fund Plaza, opposite the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel. The main market in Town is the best bet for fresh fruit and vegetables.

BARS/NIGHTLIFE

Away from the larger hotels, many call in to the **Point Cruz Yacht Club** for a beer after work. Visitors can just sign in. The **Honiara Golf Club**, just out of town, is also well-regarded.



The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The country's leading private sector organisation and the focal point for the private sector in the Solomon Islands. Contact our office for membership options or visit our website.

www.solomonchamber.com

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Opportunities on the horizon

The Solomon Islands is a land rich in natural assets, many of which remain untapped. As such, it provides a wide array of opportunities for foreign investors across a range of sectors.

The Foreign Investment Division encourages foreign investments that will bring tangible benefits to the Solomon Islands in terms of economic development and prosperity.

The Foreign Investment Division provides a full advisory role and support services for investors. Typical activities include the following:

- Attend to investment enquiries, consultations and advice
- Disseminate information for investors
- Conduct promotion missions, seminars and tours
- Identify investment opportunities and prepare project profiles for joint venture or total foreign investment
- Receive and process investment applications
- Liaise with private sector and relevant government bodies in the facilitation of investment
- Evaluate applications for Registrar of Investment consideration
- Record and Register investors information
- Monitor the establishment of registered investment projects
- Ensure approved investment projects comply with the terms and conditions of their registration
- Assist with newly established investment projects
- Review investment projects
- Register investment activities

We look forward to welcoming you to the Solomon Islands!



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