

Solomon Islands

WWII Wrecks Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary of dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari on the Solomons Master. We wish to show you the very best diving possible, however, a number of factors can determine which sites we visit. Weather, tides, currents and many other factors determine the Cruise Director's decision of which route the yacht takes and which sites are selected for diving. Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best in offering diving at alternate locations should we be unable to visit those sites listed below.

The diving day aboard the Solomons PNG Master has a typical schedule as follows:

Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
Full Breakfast, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 2
Lunch, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 3
Snack, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 4, where possible
Dinner

Guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and for obtaining suitable dive insurance to cover all diving activities. We respectfully request our divers to stay within the bounds of their training, follow dive computer guidelines and make decompression stops where necessary.

History

The Solomon Islands were the décor for some of the fiercest WWII battles with names as Bloody Ridge, Red Beach, Skyline Ridge and Henderson Field remaining to mark the brutal combats.



Due to the important location close to Australia, the Japanese invaded Guadalcanal in 1942. In reaction to this, the Allied Forces launched Operation Guadalcanal/Guadalcanal Campaign and continued to fight them until the Japanese finally withdrew from the island in 1943.

Also widely known under the code name Operation Watchtower, this campaign turned out to be a significant strategic combined arms Allied victory in the Pacific theater. Along with the Battle of Midway, it has been called a turning-point in the South Pacific war against Japan.

Dive sites we visit include but are not limited to:

Tulagi - Florida Islands

This island was a major Japanese military base during WWII and subject to frequent and ferocious battles. We will explore both Japanese and American seaplanes, cargo ships, minesweepers and heavy cruisers. In addition, we will visit the town of Tulagi to visit some of the battlegrounds, Japanese caves and bunkers.

Ghavutu

This is an old wharf site and was home to the Japanese Navy at the beginning of the campaign. Dive a landing barge along with aircraft wings, landing gear, and a variety of other war detritus.

A five minute tender ride away is another great dive site. Before the landing of the US Marines on the 7th of August 1942, an air strike was conducted by the US Navy to eliminate the flying boats of the Imperial Japanese Army. As a result, several Kawanishi Mavis seaplanes were sunk. The two main sites are in 30 metres of water and these wrecks are big enough to keep you occupied for an entire non-decompression dive.

USS Minneapolis

This American heavy cruiser with 8-inch caliber guns was struck by two torpedoes forward of the number one mounts. The Minneapolis was towed back to the harbor of Tulagi where the damaged bow section was removed and a temporary bow constructed so that she could be sailed back to Pearl Harbour and the Naval Yards for a complete repair. The bow section lies at the back-end of the bay in 14 to 24 metres of water. The wreck was



badly damaged by the explosions, but it remains a very interesting dive with lots of junk to explore.

RNZN Moa

Moa was a minesweeper and submarine chaser of the Royal New Zealand Navy, and she played a pivotal role in the sinking of the Japanese submarine I-1 in 1943. The submarine lies off Cape Esperance on Guadalcanal.

Russell Islands

White Beach

White Beach was a key American re-provisioning area and supply base during WWII. At the end of the war, an artificial reef was created by dumping trucks, jeeps, tractors, bulldozers and large amounts of ammunition. This is also a good day to take a break from history and see some of the fantastic reefs that are on display in the Solomon Islands. We will usually do 2 to 4 reef dives in the Russell Islands

Around Honiara

Solomons' capital is conveniently located right on the Iron Bottom Sound. Originally called Savo Sound, this new name was given by Allied sailors for the great number of ships and planes that perished here during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942-1943. Relive history and combine exploring wrecks of cargo ships, planes and submarine underwater with an on land tour of a very interesting outdoor museum full of machinery and remnants from the war.

I-1 Submarine

This Japanese submarine played a role in Pearl Harbour before being moved to the South Pacific. She was damaged and forced into the reef by the RNZN Moa in February of 1943. Code books were recovered from this wreck that helped complete the code and end the Battle of Midway.

A short, but fun dive is on the Flying Fortress - a B17 plane. It is a tiny wreck but very much in tact making it an interesting site.



Bonegi I, II and III

These 3 Japanese ships are located close to Honiara shore. Each wreck is named after the beach she ended up on. Hirokawa Maru (Bonegi I) is a 156m (468ft) cargo vessel turned into a seaplane tender. Kinugawa Maru (Bonegi II) is a cargo ship, and Kyusyu Maru (Bonegi III) is an attack transport vessel.

Wrecks on this itinerary are all within recreational limits and we often complete two or more dives at a single site to ensure you have time to properly explore the wrecks. Divers need to have an Advanced Open Water certificate or higher. Deep and wreck diving training and experience are strongly recommended. Penetration diving will be limited to those with appropriate certifications and no unguided penetration is allowed.

