

# Solomon Islands Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

Covering the Solomon Islands, Off the East Coast of Australia



**IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!**

Rev 2024.1 – Jan 5, 2024

We welcome updates to this guide!  
(especially for places we have no cruiser information on)

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## Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

Rev	Date	Notes
2024.1	05-Jan-2024	Update on the situation at Liapari
2023.2	21-Sep-2023	Update on clearing in at Nendo from SV Deinemeid.
2023.1	10-June-2023	Update on Roderick Bay from sv Tequila
2020.1	07-Oct-2020	New inputs from SV Escape II
2019.9	20-Sep-2019	Clearing out of Noro. West Coast of Vella LaVella updates. Indigo II anchorages from south of Honiara. More on tropical sores.
2019.8	07-Aug-2019	Kolombangara updates, many miscellaneous
2019.7	23-June-2019	Haulout info for Liapari, Sesape, & Avi Avi, updates on Munda and Noro
2019.6	13-June-2019	More Honiara info and visa renewals
2019.5	17-May-2019	Western Province stuff from Lorelei, updates from Soggy Paws on Russells, Tetepare, Marovo Lagoon, and Honiara
2019.4	13-Apr-2019	Updates on checking in, Shortlands, Stirling Island, Vella Lavella, Gizo, and Vonavona
2019.3	23-Mar-2019	More Screensaver, Sieling References, etc
2019.2	18-Mar-2019	More Screensaver & etc.
2019.1	21-Feb-2019	Shango's notes, Adina waypoints, various stuff from various sources
2018.1	15-Dec-2018	Bits from L'il Explorers. Notes on Gulf Harbor Radio (SSB section)
2017.1	11-Aug-2017	Info from Screensaver Blog
2017.0	04-Apr-2017	Info from s/v Field Trip's blog, Adina's waypoints, Carina's write-ups from SSCA newsletter.
2016.0	01-Nov-2016	Initial version, still very rough at this point!!

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# 1 Introduction

The original Compendium for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned while cruising the Tuamotus in 2010 and 2011. Now the idea has migrated with Soggy Paws, from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, Hawaii, the Cooks and Samoas, Tonga, Fiji, the islands between Fiji and the Marshall Islands, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia parts of SE Asia, and now the trip from PNG through the Solomons, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia.

If you haven't yet found our other 'Compendiums', they're available online at <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/>

This is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in places that the guides don't cover.

To compile this 'compendium', we have used all sources at our disposal, including websites, blogs, emails, and our own experience. We always try to indicate the source of our information, and the approximate time frame.

If your information is included in this guide, and you object to its inclusion, please just email us, and we'll remove it. But this is a non-commercial venture mainly to help cruisers from all of our collective experiences.

## 1.1 Organization of the Guide

I have chosen to organize this guide somewhat in the same order as Dirk Sieling's cruising guide. I have ordered the provinces in the order that he does, but then ordered the subsections from north to south within the province.

Dirk Sieling says:

"A difficult choice was faced by me concerning the order in which to present the various sailing areas in the Solomons in this guide. Yachts tend to travel in the Solomons from East to West in the case of American and New Zealand vessels. But Australian vessels tend to enter in the west, as do quite a few vessels arriving from the north. Due also to the double island chain formation of the Solomons, vessels criss cross considerably, and the ones spending more than a few weeks may wander all over the place. Province by Province layout was also not entirely satisfactory due to the scattered nature of the Western and Central Provinces.

Undoubtedly some sailors will be unhappy with the choice of Gizo as a starting place, but my choice was made on the grounds that the majority of yachts clear in at Honiara or Gizo, making both Santa Cruz in the east and Shortlands in the west less than ideal choices. Coupled to this was the consideration that the Western Province offers half of the described anchorages and the best sailing by far.

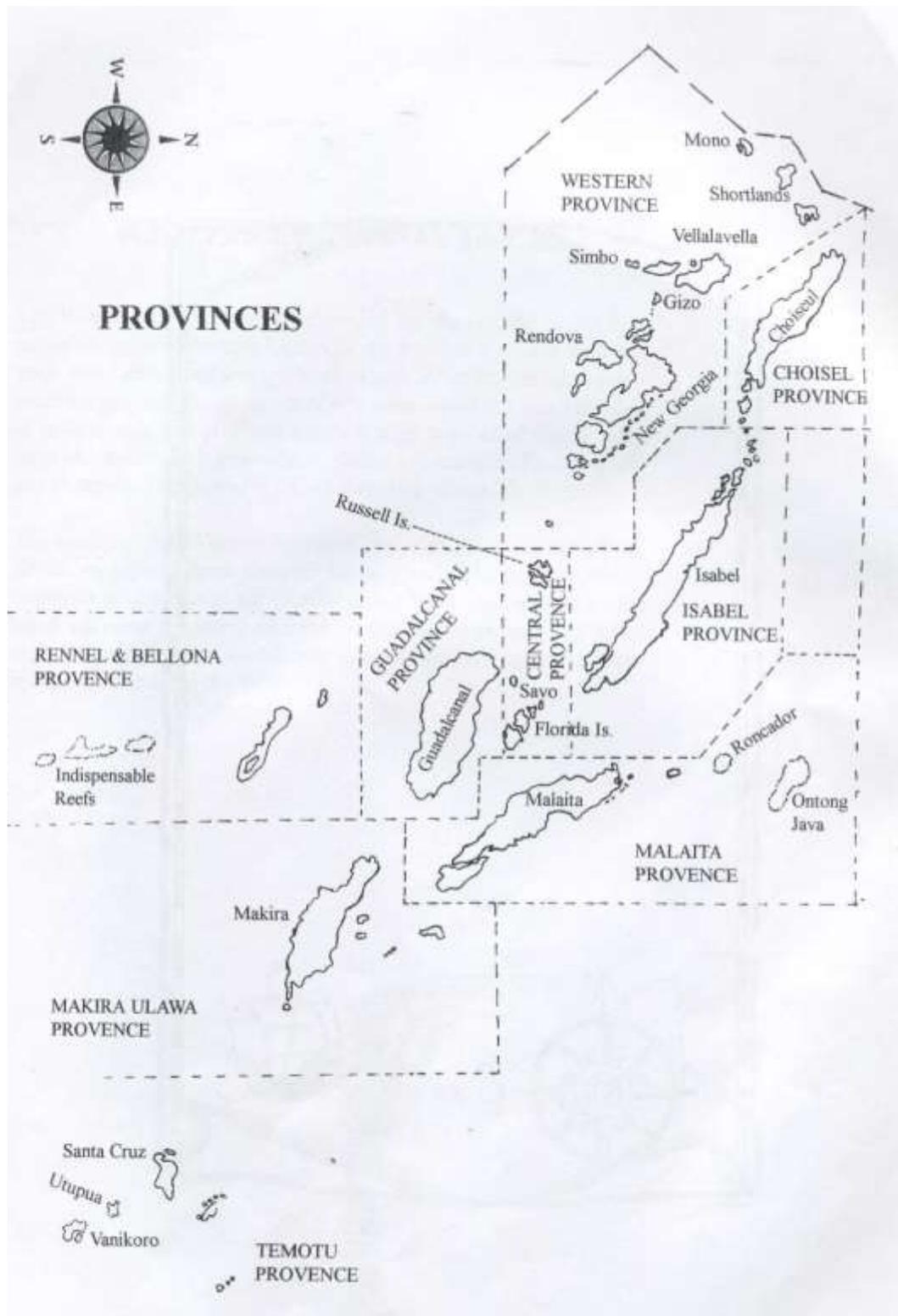


Figure 1-1 Provinces of the Solomons from Solomon Islands Cruising Guide (Sieling)

Note that this map is sideways!!!

## **1.2 Overview of the Area**

### **1.2.1 Charts**

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** The Solomon Islands cruiser has at his disposal a potpourri of mostly outdated charts from primarily three sources:

British Admiralty, US Defense Mapping Agency and the Solomon Islands Hydrographic Office. Copies of the antiquated HO series, which predate the DMA, are worth carrying as they examine numerous anchorages in large scale ignored by the later editions.

The Solomon Islands Land Survey sells topographic maps which can be quite useful, as most reefs are illustrated and they feature countless villages and landmarks ignored by the maritime authorities.

In addition Dirk, Commodore of the new Gizo Yacht Club at the Gizo Hotel and owner of a Farr 46 called 'Xkp', has published a handy cruising guide with emphasis on the Western Province and New Georgia.

No matter which chart is used, eyeball navigation soon becomes a practiced art here.

### **1.2.2 Navigational Cautions**

## **1.3 Time Zone**

The Solomon Islands are UTC +11.

## **1.4 Weather In This Area**

### **1.4.1 General Weather Conditions**

**Soggy Paws – 2019 – March-August Weather (Mostly Western Province):** When we arrived in March, and continuing into April, the weather was mostly sunny and very light winds. March the winds were from a NW sector, mostly. By late April, it had switched fairly consistently to S and SE, but still very light. In about mid-May, the wind started picking up a little from the SE, but there were still days of fairly calm winds. By mid-May we were down by Honiara, which is the northern border of the SE Trades. June, July, and August were fairly windy, usually from the SE. July and August were consistently rainy—the SPCZ seems to hang right over the island chain, bringing overcast and (usually) light drizzle for days. We'd occasionally get a 2-3 day sunny period and then the overcast for another week. Up in the Gizo area, sometime, when it got rainy, the winds turned northerly.

**Soggy Paws – 2017 – Historical Cyclone Data:** See cyclone tracks from 2011-2016 from Australian government website, under the Tropical Weather section below.

**Noonsite – 2013:** The Solomons experience high temperatures, and January to March are the months of heaviest rainfall. April to November is the season of the SE trades, while the rest of the year is the NW monsoon, which is also the cyclone season. Long periods of calm weather are not uncommon among the islands.

The Western Province is reputed to be safe from cyclones.

**Bosun Bird – 2010 – October-December weather:** The further to the NW we went and the later the year advanced, the weaker the winds became, thus we were still in strong trade winds (20 to 25 knots) in the Santa Cruz group and en route to Santa Ana, but from Honiara onwards (October) the winds began to die, moving more into the NE and N, and were often calm.

In November, however, squalls from the N or NW started to become more frequent. After mid-November would not be a good time to be in Honiara (which is exposed to that direction). Westerlies had not yet materialized in Western Province when we left in late December (we were told they were late).

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** The weather during our June-September (winter) visit was benign except for some scary electrical storms in late July. The trades usually arrive by June but the ones we experienced during 1996 in the vicinity of 'The Slot' were usually light to moderate east-southeast, with numerous calms and only a few fresh to strong days noted. At night the trades frequently died, replaced next to the larger islands by onshore breezes. The predominant driver seemed to be the strength and latitude of the Australian high.

#### **1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email**

**Soggy Paws - 2016:** In our transit through this area, what we used most of the time for watching the weather were these files (via the free service Saildocs):

Text forecasts:

Send `http://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/products/abpwweb.txt`

Send `fleet.nadi`

Send `Met.10ne`

Send `nadi.summary`

A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days

send `spot:07.1N,171.3E|10,6|PRMSL,WIND,WAVES,RAIN,LFTX`

A 'local' GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days, and included sea state information

send `GFS:6N,10N,173E,165E|.5,.5|0,6..144|PRMSL,WIND,HTSGW,WVDIR,RAIN`

A 'wide range' GRIB that watched conditions approaching us. The area we request while in transit was a pretty wide area on a 3x3 grid, for the next 10 days. This is about a 25K GRIB file. This provided a decent long range forecast.

send `GFS:0N,30N,160E,175W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN`

During times of tropical activity, we also found these sources useful for additional perspective  
RCC Pilotage Foundation - Nov 2008: Weatherfaxes...

Check these, not sure if they still apply

Australia broadcasts on 5100.0kHz, 11030.0kHz, 13920.0kHz, 20469.0kHz, 5755.0kHz, 7535.0kHz, 10555.0kHz, 15615.0kHz, 18060.0kHz and Japan on 3622.5kHz, 7305.0kHz, 13597.0kHz, 18220.0kHz.

### **1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice**

The best source of voice weather for the Solomons is the new **Gulf Harbor Radio** net, which is now on 8752 kHz or 8779 kHz or 8297 kHz. (In that order depending on interference).

The net operates Monday through Friday at 1915 UTC (07:15 NZST) from May 1 to 25 November.

David Sapiane (s/v Chameleon) is located in Gulf Harbor, NZ (or out cruising in the Western Pacific) and is easily receivable by boats in the western South Pacific islands, and enroute to/from NZ.

**2019:** The latest info on Gulf Harbor Radio scheds and frequencies is available on this website:

<http://www.yit.co.nz/gulf-harbour-radio>

If you register on YIT and send in position updates, when Gulf Harbor Radio is operating (cruising season, from May to November). David includes reports for places where boats have position reports on YIT.

### **1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet**

These are all the government office forecast products that I have found to be useful. (and a few non-govt sites)

Color Satellite View of Entire SW Pacific

<http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html>

It requires Flash (didn't seem to work on my IE installation, and may not on an iPad, but works well on Chrome).

**Surface Analysis from New Caledonia**

<http://www.meteo.nc/nouvelle-caledonie/observations/carte-analyse>

**Bob McDavit's Weather Blog**

<https://metbob.wordpress.com/>

**Fiji Met Service**

Home Page: <http://www.met.gov.fj/>

Morning Surface Map: [http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs\\_prods/0992.jpg](http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/0992.jpg)

Daily Forecast (land): [http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs\\_prods/10040.txt](http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/10040.txt)

New Zealand Met

Current surface analysis:

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-recent-latest>

Surface Forecast Series (30, 48, 72H)

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-future-series>

These are great maps in small (PNG) format--about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices' websites).

Australia Met

And here's for Australia. There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:

[http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/itb/dm/idcodes/tables/current/difacs\\_products.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/itb/dm/idcodes/tables/current/difacs_products.shtml)

#### **1.4.5 Tropical Weather & Cruising During Cyclone Season**

The Solomon Islands are covered by Australia's Met Service. Below is a capture from the Australian tropical weather page, showing cyclone tracks in the Solomons from 2010 to 2018.



Western South Pacific Cyclone Tracks 2010-2018

To check on individual storms, dates, or track variations by ENSO status, etc, here is the interactive page on the Aus BOM website:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/tracks/index.shtml>

**M/V Waverly – 2014 (from [Noonsite](#)):** Having recently arrived back on the east coast of Australia, after spending the 2013 cyclone season in the Solomon Islands, I was surprised at the small number of other cruising vessels we encountered in comparison to when we last cruised the area in 2000.

We arrived in Gizo in October & we only came across 10 other cruising yachts during the entire time - all of which were 'high tailing' it up to Micronesia for the pending cyclone season. The general consensus of the vast majority we spoke to, was that it was 'safer' up there in terms of safety from tropical cyclones, but almost all of them said they definitely would have liked to have stayed and seen more of the Solomons.

Now, after spending two cyclone seasons in the Solomons (one being a very active season), I was a little surprised by the skepticism of the Solomons as a safe place to spend cyclone season and decided to let other cruisers know about this viable alternative.

Also, given the unreliable winds at this time of the year, sailing the 860 odd nautical miles to Pohnpei in Micronesia from the Solomons seemed like a long way to go. The passage reports we heard from yachts on HF radio skeds confirmed this, with more than one yacht finding so little wind that they had to return to the Solomons to take on more fuel and have a second go at it.

So, I'm just saying, if you find yourself in the SW Pacific looking for somewhere to cruise and want to have the ability to sit out the cyclone season safely above 10 degrees south latitude, consider the Solomons. It's still quite remote, truly beautiful with good cyclone holes and great people.

What we didn't realise and stumbled across, was a little-known safe haven called **Liapari**, where a cruising boat can not only safely sit out the weather associated with a tropical cyclone in the Coral Sea as we did, but also have all the facilities to repair and haul out your vessel in a safe and secure area, where the proprietor is a good bloke to boot.

#### Cyclone Holes

As far as cyclone holes go, there are numerous other anchorages away from Liapari offering sufficient shelter and holding in the weather associated with passing cyclones. As a professional master, I would not hesitate to select the Solomons for a cyclone season in a well found vessel, adequately equipped with good ground tackle and some basic communications for early detection of pending cyclones to make sure you are in a good anchorage when the worst of the weather comes in.

A word of caution though, the Solomons is quite remote when compared to many other cruising destinations in the Pacific like Fiji or Noumea for instance. For this reason, it pays for the cruising yacht to be well equipped in way of spares and essentials that may not be readily available here.

## **1.5 Customs & Immigration**

### **Escape II – November 2019 – Checking In, Lata, Ndendo**

**Immigration Fee** \$500Sd = 45 days; 1000Sd for 90 day visa. After we had been in the Solomon Islands more than 6 months, we were charged 1000Sd for an extra 60 days

**Temotu Province tax:** 200Sd

**Customs:** \$18US per foot of length of boat to be paid in Honiara when you arrive (they charge you in US Dollars then convert to Solomon Dollars. The conversion rate is a flat rate determined annually

**Bio Security** 200Sd is also dealt with in Honiara.

Best anchorage is Shaw Point at Luesola Bay, in the bay next to the Agricultural College.

**Soggy Paws – July/August 2019 – Clearing Out Headed North:** We stopped in Noro to clear out of the Solomons, planning a short stop in Liapari and a short stop in the Shortlands, on our way out. Billy the Noro Immigration officer said that stopping for more than just a short overnight on our way out was illegal. There is now a Navy / Police patrol in the Shortlands, and they would be upset and charge us penalty fees if we were caught stopping in the Shortlands.

We asked if we could clear out in Tara, Choisel, but as of July 2019, there was still no Customs or Quarantine or Biosecurity presence in Choisel, and it did not seem possible to clear Customs in Noro and wait to clear Immigration in Choisel.

Our current plan is to perhaps clear out of Gizo after our stop in Liapari, and skip the Shortlands.

**Soggy Paws – June 2019 – Renewing Visas (Americans):** We happened to be in Honiara about a month before our initial entry visa was set to expire, so we went ahead and renewed our visas there, so we didn't have to make an effort to be in Munda/Noro when they actually expired.

It was a relatively easy process, but expensive (\$125 USD each). We got a form from Immigration, paid the fee at the designated bank, took the receipt for the payment, and the filled out form, and our passports back to Immigration, and 15 minutes later, we had new visas good for 4 more months (I think we might have been able to get up to 1 year, not sure). I think it is possible to renew at any Immigration office.

**Soggy Paws – April 2019 – Clearing in in Northern Solomons:** Here is what it cost us to clear in to the Solomons on April 1, 2019. We are a 44 ft (13.4 m) American Flagged boat with 2 Americans onboard. We did not get any visa in advance.

Immigration - \$500 SD (about \$62 USD)

Customs - \$2530 SD (about \$308 USD)

Biosecurity - \$200 SD (about \$25 USD)

We actually cleared in with Immigration in the Shortland Islands, because there happened to be an Immigration officer visiting there. He is normally based in Tara at the NW end of Chioseul,

but said he also covers the Shortlands. He gave us 90 days in our passports, but said the norm is to give 45 days unless you ask for more.

We did Customs in Gizo. The Biosecurity officer in Gizo was in training, and after 2 attempts to connect with her, we waved it off and asked if we could do Biosecurity in Noro, as we were headed that way the next day. It also took a little while to connect with the Biosecurity officer in Noro.

They have just initiated a once-a-week (on Saturday) direct flight from Brisbane to Munda airport, and the clearance officials in Noro and Gizo are handling that flight, so it has disrupted the schedule a little. One boat we met in Noro had been trying to clear Immigration (in both Munda and Noro) for several days, and had trouble meeting up with the Immigration officer. However, this was right around the big election time, which was a holiday, and many people went to their home village to vote.

Here are contact numbers we have acquired for Officials, so far in 2019. The numbers starting with 7 are cell numbers and the numbers starting with 6 are office numbers. The Solomons country code is 677.

Name	Location	Position	Contact Info
Benzily Kasutaba	Tara (Choiseul) and Shortlands	Immigration	712-3673 bkasutaba@commerce.gov.sb
Asley	Gizo (and sometimes Munda Airport)	Customs	745-9766
Gizo Biosecurity	Gizo	Biosecurity	749-3211
Gizo Police	Gizo	Police Office	60999
Noro Immigration (Billy)	Noro (\$500 SD if he comes to Gizo)	Immigration	761-4578 61011
Noro Customs	Noro	Customs	61097 (not always working)
John (Noro Customs)	Noro	Customs	756-2829
Noro Biosecurity	Noro / Munda	Biosecurity	748-8498

Immigration in **Noro** is directly inward from the market on the water, upstairs in a 2-story building. The stairs are on the left, facing the building from the road.

For Customs and Biosecurity, from the Noro yacht anchorage, you can see a red building on the hill with a phone tower. This is the My Telekom office. Stop in and get your sim card there! From that building, walk another 50 yards and turn left (towards the water) on a dirt road. About a 5 minute walk, past some houses on the left, you will find Customs on the right in a green building. There is actually a sign in front of this building that says Customs. Biosecurity is in back of this building, unlabeled. Office hours posted on the Customs building were Mon-Fri 8am-12pm 1pm-4:30pm

**Noonsite – Feb 2019 – Large Increase in Fees:** The Solomon Islands government has introduced a substantial increase in fees for visiting yachts. The cost of clearing in for a yacht has increased to over US\$100 with additional charges for weekend clearance and rubbish disposal. On top of this, there is now a US\$22.97 per meter Customs fee.

Depending on the size of the yacht, this means a cost of several hundred dollars just to clear into the country.

In contrast, nearby Western Pacific Islands, including Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu, have no clearance fees if clearing during normal business hours except for quarantine charges.

Despite the unspoiled beauty of these islands, this increase in fees has some yacht captains considering alternative cruising destinations. Public concern has been raised about the fee increase but at this point, fees are fixed.

**Sirius – March 2018:** We had very easy, positive experience at Noro last March. And you get the best priced, duty free fuel in the Solomons and Vanuatu, at the dock.

As we understand it there is no full set of clearance offices at Ghizo - when we were there the clearance officers would go by boat from Noro at the yacht's expense.

At Noro, anchor as per the instructions in the guides in one of the 2 holes inside the lagoon. The pass in is hairy and one marker was missing, you need good light. We preferred the second anchorage back from the market, a little quieter.

Tie the dinghies up with the local banana boats outside the local market. We didn't go in to find the authorities because that was when I was sick and was rushed to hospital arrival, so they came out to the boats. A wonderful Polynesian woman, Christina, is in charge of Quarantine. She was extraordinarily helpful with finding IV medicine for us. She's in the green building above the anchorage.

We felt very safe at a Noro, in fact becoming good friends with Isaac who is the security man for the land directly beside the anchorage. He's as black as the ace of spades, you won't miss him. He will watch over your boats.

The grocery shopping is very good, especially at Mozi Bocu (blue shipping container supermarket)

We cleared in in Ghizo previously. There is a risk of theft with lots of boats and eyes.

**Michael Foote (Noonsite) – 2017 - Ndendo:** We travelled north from Luganville in Vanuatu and were told there we could check in to the Solomons at Ndendo, but this is not the case. They do fly officers down from Honiara to meet cruise ships on a charging basis. It hasn't been possible to clear in here for three years now.

We also tried the provincial town of Kirakira and although the police were pleased to see us and took our details, we were told that Honiara, the capital, is the only port of entry going north.

**Seagoon – 2011:** Custom clearance: Gizo, Noro, Honiara

Immigration: Noro, Honiara only

Quarantine: Gizo, Noro, Honiara and Santa Cruz

What this really means is that there are only 2 places where you can clear in on the same day (Noro and Honiara). Immigration at Noro will come to Gizo by banana boat at a cost of 60 L - for outboard motor fuel (current price is around 10 SD per liter).

This year Customs charged US\$18 per meter, that is 10 times up on the price in 2010. They did tell me on my departure that they are working on a different rate for yachts and will just charge that big rate to cargo ships picking up timber logs.

Immigration fee is still SD\$ 300 p/boat

Quarantine fee SD\$ 160 p/boat

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Only at Honiara and Noro can you guarantee that the full range of officials – customs, immigration, health, quarantine – will be on hand. However, entry at Santa Cruz (Lata) is permitted, as long as you make a call on the police. Checking in and out at Gizo is usually possible, but you may have to pay for Immigration to come from Noro.

### **1.5.1 Pre-Arrival – Visa Requirements**

**Soggy Paws – June 2019 – Renewing Visas in Honiara:** We were able to extend our Solomons visa in Honiara at the Immigration office. We stopped in at the office in the morning and got the form, and the list of requirements, and then brought all the paperwork back an hour later. We were sent to a payment office to pay the \$1000 SD per passport fee, then brought the receipt back to Immigration and submitted it with our paperwork. (I think it was:

- Color copy of passport identity page
- Copy of incoming visa stamp in passport
- 1 passport photo
- Copy of boat registration & crew list
- Copy of Customs inward clearance from Gizo arrival
- Their form filled out

Once we submitted all that, the guy told us to wait, and half an hour later, we had our passports back with an extra 4 months (all we needed). As best I can tell, visa extensions are not just available in Honiara, as we saw the information about the fees posted in the Noro Immigration office as well.

In Honiara, there are 3 windows at the Immigration office (Passports, Long Stay Visa, Short Stay Visa). The short stay visa was the window we used, and had the shortest line.

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019:** We were told that visitors arriving by boat with no advance visa (as usual, this may be limited to a specific list of countries) can get up to 90 days on arrival, which is extendable (probably only in Honiara), with paperwork. The officer told us they like to do it in 45 day increments, but he went ahead and stamped us in for 90 days.

We have also been told that you can apply for an extended stay visa that gives you another 6 months, for \$1000 SD. I am not sure whether you can do this in the outer places like Noro. For sure you can extend in Honiara.

### **1.5.2 Pre-Arrival – Pre Arrival Notification Requirements**

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019:** Our cruising got ahead of our research and we were not aware of any pre-arrival notification requirements, so we did not do any, and nobody told us we should have.

### **1.5.3 Immigration**

The Solomons Immigration website is: <http://commerce.gov.sb>

It is not very detailed.

### **1.5.4 Customs**

See Customs contact numbers above.

### **1.5.5 Health**

### **1.5.6 Stopping Before Officially Clearing In**

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019:** Our intent in coming from Bouganville, PNG, was to clear in at Gizo or Noro, but we wanted to stop in the Shortland Islands and Sterling Island on the way by. We had heard that you could do this but you needed to stop in at the Police station and just let them know you were there.

When we stopped in the Shortlands, it just so happened that the immigration officer from Tara (Chioseul Island) was in the harbor there. He cleared us all with no extra fee. We didn't have any Solomons cash with us, so he took all our information, had us fill out his forms in duplicate (one for him and one for us) stamped our passports, and said he would email us an official bill that we would then present for payment in Gizo when we cleared in at Customs in Gizo.

Note: The Immigration officer said there will soon (by June/July 2019) be a full clearance port again in the Shortlands, as they prepare for Bouganville independence.

We told the Immigration officer that our intent was to stay in the Shortlands for a few days, and then to Stirling Island before going into Gizo to finally get fully cleared. He didn't object to this plan (verbally). But in an email to us, he said "I hope you all proceed directly to Gizo to finish your clearance". However, nobody in Gizo seemed upset that we had cleared out of Rabaul two weeks earlier.

Our planned defense was to say that "the charts are inaccurate, there are reefs everywhere, and we can only travel with good daylight". But nobody asked.

### **1.5.7 Pets**

**Soggy Paws – 2019:** We met a boat that had a cat aboard. I don't know what they went through to bring it in.

### **1.5.8 Intra-Country Clearances**

#### **1.5.9 Clearing In**

**SV Deinemeid – Sep 2023 – Lata, Nendo:** We checked in to the Solomon Islands in September 2023 at Nendo and had a great experience. We had to pay (only) 500 SD for immigration (2 EU citizens on board) and that was all. Nobody asked for any extra payments and they worked very professional. Customs came on board with us to finalize his paperwork. The whole process was smooth and professional; they had even received our documents that we had send pre arrival. The people on the island were very friendly and helpful.

There was no working ATM at the time of our visit, but we could change usd for sd for a tough rate (100usd for 500sd).

All the people seemed really happy to have us visiting their island. Not all of them speak English or Pidjin. Snorkeling in the 'pass' was beautiful and the town has 4g signal and SIM cards for sale at a reasonable price (100sd for 13gb). Also a market and some small shops are present.

**Escape II – November 2019 – Santa Cruz Island, Lata:** Clearance port is Lata

Fees: Immigration Fee \$500Sd = 45 days; 1000Sd for 90 day visa. After we had been in the Solomon Islands more than 6 months we were charged 1000Sd for an extra 60 days Temotu Province tax = 200Sd

Customs: \$18US per foot of length of boat to be paid in Honiara when you arrive (they charge you in US Dollars then convert to Solomon Dollars. The conversion rate is a flat rate determined annually

Bio Security 200Sd is also dealt with in Honiara.

#### **1.5.10 Clearing Out**

**Soggy Paws – August 2019 - Noro:** It took us a total of about 2 hours to clear out of Immigration and Customs in Noro. We had called both offices ahead of time to make sure the officers we needed would be in (they are not always there).

We had extra copies of everything, but didn't really need it. There was an aggravating amount of paperwork to fill out in both offices, but the officers were friendly and helpful.

Officially you have 24 hours to leave the country (according to Bill at Noro Immigration). And you are permitted to stop on the way out for a short overnight anchorage, but not go ashore. When we expressed our desire to stop in the Shortland Islands on our way north, Billy cautioned us not to do that. There are apparently regular patrols in that area now (with Bouganville threatening independence from PNG), and if we were caught staying any time, or going ashore, after clearing out in Noro "there would be heavy fines." We suggested that we clear Customs in Noro and hold our Immigration clearance until Tara at the NW end of Choisel, but Billy said we could not do that either. So we skipped the Shortlands on the way out (but did make a quick one day stop in Stirling Island).

### **1.5.11 Visas for PNG**

**Update – August 2019:** You can apply now for a visa in advance via the PNG website. Ocelot did this and they got the same 60 days on arrival that we did.

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** If you are headed north from Solomons to PNG, the best place to get a visa is at the PNG High Commission in Honiara. They quote a 5 day turnaround for the visas, but we looked puppy eyes at the girl at the desk and she said she'd try to get it done in one day.

Be sure to tell them you are applying for a yachtsman visa (slightly different requirements).

When applied for in Honiara, the visa cost nothing. (It's \$100 USD per passport in the USA).

Having a visa in advance makes it easier to check in at ports where there is no Immigration officer (ie Kavieng). See the PNG Compendium for more details.

## **1.6 Local Information and Customs**

### **1.6.1 Dress Code**

**Soggy Paws – August 2019:** We found dress not to be much of an issue. The Solomon Islands are now hooked up to the internet and are rapidly being corrupted by western values. We never wore anything but (fairly conservative) shorts and if getting dressed up, a polo shirt with a collar.

If you are further in the out islands (where cell coverage has not reached), follow the advice below.

**Noonsite – 2019:** The wearing of shorts or other scanty clothing by women is not allowed.

Dress codes, particularly for women, are modest and you will gain respect by dressing appropriately. In certain areas there are 'taboo' sites only visited by men.

Standards of dress and behaviour in Solomon Islands is conservative, and you should take care not to offend. Public displays of affection in public may cause offence and swearing may incur a fine.

The Islanders have many traditional "kastoms" which vary from province to province. Always ask permission before taking pictures of people or places.

Marovo Lagoon: Most islanders are Seventh Day Adventists so their Sabbath is from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, and visitors are not supposed to go ashore here during the Sabbath.

### **1.6.2 Security Issues**

**Soggy Paws – August 2019:** We spent 5 months in (mostly) the Western Province, and never had an issue (however, did in Bouganville, PNG). However, we took every possible precaution—buddy boats, bringing every moveable desirable object inside, locking all the doors and hatches EVERY night, asking locals and other cruisers what places to stay away from.

Our friends had a boarding and theft incident in the Tavanipupu anchorage. They came in after an exhausting overnight passage with

**Field Trip – July 2018:** After living 8 months in the Solomons and four months in Papua New Guinea, I thought I would share some general thoughts for future sailors heading this way.

There are three general categories of theft:

- Opportunistic 'Grab and Go' - Generally this consists of items stolen off the deck of boat left in plain sight and unsecured. This includes snorkels, masks, clothes drying on line, fishing rods, etc. This can occur at any time, but usually at night while the crew is sleeping.
- Forced entry - Breaking a lock and stealing something that is secured on the vessel.
- Violent theft - Using machete or other weapon to rob the boat while occupants are onboard.

In virtually all cases in the Solomons, the first category is by far the most common, and the easiest to prevent. In fact, we are not aware of any other type of theft taking place in recent years that were not opportunistic, and 100% preventable if the owners of the yachts used some level of carefulness.

During our 8 months in the Solomons we met several yachts that had items lifted off their boat. Most cases were in areas that known rascals were present (Ghizo, Florida Islands, etc). In all cases, the items were left unsecured on the boat. Two boats we met had laptops or cell phones stolen from inside the cabin. One theft incurred in broad daylight, while the other at night. In both incidents the salon doors were open, and the rascals entered and took the items he could grab, and paddled away.

Interestingly, in both cases most items were found and returned, other than one of two laptops stolen off a yacht in the Florida Islands.

We had our own issue, when a mask and snorkel were stolen off our boat in broad daylight. The offender was a kid, who climbed up and grabbed Sarah's mask and snorkel that we foolishly left visible on deck while off in the village. Some kids saw this rascal grab the mask and paddled over to tell us and the chief what happened. Needless to say, in short order the chief and I jumped in my dinghy, found the kid's parents (different village), recovered the stolen item and headed back to Field Trip. The kid was suspended from school for taking the mask.

Honiara was in the end a pleasant surprise (given all the bad reviews by others), and we still find ourselves missing the buzz and provisioning of Honiara. It was easy to get around, everything we needed could be found and the people were very nice. Maybe we were lucky, but I would like to think that taking simple steps to prevent casual theft kept us out of trouble, as it did with most of the other boats we met along the way staying in these same places with no problems or issues.

**Seagoon – 2011:** I have been sailing the Solomon Islands since 1993 and I can say I have never had any trouble on my boats, mind you I don't go ashore drinking till late at night in Gizo or Honiara or other places where there is a hotel.

This year I have spoken to a few yachts that had trouble and were robbed in Honiara.

A friend who lives in the Solomon Islands told me his dad has been robbed twice just walking the streets in Honiara by a mob of kids.

Munda is another place where kids like to steal from the boat at night, but only what they can get their hands on left on deck.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** At almost every anchorage, however isolated it may appear to be, locals will appear, as if from nowhere, looking to trade. We found it politic to do so, even when we were in no great need of coconuts.

Come prepared with trading goods (we found rice, flour, batteries, pens, exercise books to be most popular).

Like most boats we very rarely allowed anyone on board – only chiefs we had already met on land or, on a couple of occasions, carvers with whom we wished to negotiate. An informal poll near the end of our cruise, in Gizo, revealed however that approximately half the cruising boats had suffered some sort of security "incident" (none violent).

Typically they were boarded very late at night and surreptitiously, or items from the cockpit/on deck were pilfered when they were not on board.

Locations included:

Neal Island : (formerly Vulela Island resort).

Guadalcanal: There were at least five separate incidents of boarding/robbery here

Honiara: Tied up next to the Police dock, one boat suffered a robbery through an open port, in mid-afternoon.

Tulaghi Harbour, Florida Islands: Notorious for robberies and also extortion – with both “chiefs” and “officials” demanding USD \$30 or more per night to anchor.

Simbo (W. Province): A boat had its outboard stolen when they were on a guided trip on land; they recovered it after paying a “ransom”.

Marovo lagoon: We were boarded at 02:00 at Matikuri Island.

Balira (Rendova): A German boat was boarded and robbed. Locals warned us to beware Munda.

Ringgi Cove, Kolombangara: Dinghy and outboard stolen (not secured); dinghy recovered.

It is some years since any yachts have visited Malaita, on account of that island's poor reputation.

Precautions

It is advisable not to be off the vessel after dark, even in Honiara and Gizo. The dinghy should be hoisted out of the water or otherwise made difficult to steal. Cockpit and decks should be clear of valuables at all times. Close all ports and hatches and lock up whenever you leave the boat. A bright anchor light at deck level (not the typical all-round light at the masthead) is an excellent deterrent.

Do not leave fenders out at night; they only facilitate a silent boarding. Finding a secluded location is not necessarily advisable: several locals advised us that the best deterrent to idle/drunken youths was your being visible, in front of a settlement.

Treat the locals in a firm but friendly manner; doing at least a little trading, even if you are fully stocked, is good pre-emptive diplomacy.

One local recommended a can of Mortein (cockroach spray) as an excellent repeller of humans as well, when sprayed in the face.

### **1.6.3 Languages**

Due to the language diversity in the Solomons, Pidgin is the primary common language.

### **1.6.4 Betelnut**

**Endless Summer – 2011:** Betelnut is a slightly intoxicating and addictive root that they mix with lime and mustard and chew. Nearly everyone there, men and women alike, had red lips and red teeth from chewing betelnut and the ground is full of what look like blood stains because everyone spits it everywhere! It's not a good look!

### **1.6.5 Trading**

**Adina – 2015 – Trading in the South Pacific:** We found trading a great way to engage with the local people living on many of the islands we stopped at in the South Pacific. In the more remote islands trading with yachts has become a way for these people to source supplies they need but can't access. It is also a way for yachts to source fresh fruit and vegetables; at times we would be several weeks between main towns and therefore relied upon trading for our fresh supplies.

Our trading started in some of the remote islands in the east of Fiji, continued throughout Vanuatu and became a part of our everyday life in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (PNG). People would paddle out to Adina with fresh produce from their garden, whatever was in season at the time. In the Solomon Islands people also wanted to trade carvings and woven baskets and bags. At some islands we were able to "order" crayfish for trading. Sometimes we traded as we walked through villages. We never went short of fresh fruit and vegetables!

#### **HOW WE WENT ABOUT TRADING**

We always tried to make sure we traded fairly, giving back equivalent or more than we were being given. We looked at prices in shops and at the fresh market at the first town we arrived at in each country to gauge this. For example, in the Solomons we saw that a kilo of rice or flour cost around SBD15, whilst bundles of vegetables at the market were either SBD5 or 10 depending on the size of bundle. So if we were given a decent bundle of two or three different vegetables together we knew it was worth at least one kilo of rice.

We always traded with the first person to come to the boat in each place we anchored, even if we did not need or want what they offered. We felt this was the right way to start our relationship with the village.

We always asked the trader what they would like in return. In some places they would simply say "it's up to you" and in others they would be specific. If we had what they wanted we would give it. Sometimes this would mean we'd give them more than they'd asked for to ensure we gave a fair trade whilst others might get lucky, for example getting a t-shirt for a bunch of bananas. For the shy, we would prompt them with the types of things we had and if they still wouldn't say what they wanted we'd tend to give them rice and corned beef as we knew these were favoured items.

We would tell traders if there was anything we were looking for, to see if they had it or anyone else in the village did, emphasising the need for small portions "as we are only two people". In the Solomons we often asked for eggs and found that people wanted money rather than a trade, which was fine by us.

We always traded with children regardless of what they brought us. Sometimes this would be a pair of coconuts, a few oranges or as extreme as twelve papayas and a bird as we experienced at one anchorage! If the children brought a lot of produce, clearly from their parents' garden, we'd give something for them (biscuits, a ball, hair bands) and something for them to take to their parents (rice, corned beef). If there were lots of children in the canoe together bringing a small offering, such as a couple of coconuts between them, we'd give them a packet of biscuits to share. Unfortunately some children would throw biscuit packaging in the sea despite us asking them not to, so we started asking for the packaging back or gave the biscuits out one by one to each child to avoid giving packaging at all.

Another yacht we met said they made popcorn when there were many children coming to visit, but had the same issue with the plastic bags they used to distribute it. We found children the most entertaining traders, some returning multiple times with different produce to see what goodies they could get from us! In many places children were asking for pencils and exercise books for their school work which we happily gave.

Occasionally we did say no to adult traders. In some anchorages we were inundated and it would have been mad to trade for everything that was offered. In these instances we would politely tell the trader we already had more than enough, thank them for coming to see us and ask them to tell others we now had enough of the fruit or vegetable in question. We would also tell them if there was anything else we were keen to trade for.

**Making "tok-tok":** Some traders would come to the boat and simply want to trade, paddling straight back to the village. Others would want to stay and chat, or float a little way off Adina just watching us work or looking at things on the yacht. We never had a problem with this as we found people generally to be very well meaning and simply inquisitive. We would always make time to talk - you are curious about them, you should expect them to be curious about you and talking is an important part of life to the islanders.

We found that certain items would become popular in a particular village. For example, we would trade children's pants with one person and half an hour later have two more canoes at the boat asking to trade for pants too - it was as if word had got out that we had pants on board!

Packaging is precious! If someone gave us their produce in a plastic bag, no matter how small, we always emptied it and gave it back to them. Bags of any size are valuable in remote islands! We often gave our trade in a bag to ensure it would get to shore still dry. And we gave the larger rice/flour sacks away - these are valuable items for transporting produce from the gardens and in some places are made into shoulder bags and school bags.

We would always carry a few items for trading in our rucksack when we went ashore to enable us to trade if we met someone with vegetables. These items also doubled as potential gifts to give to a chief if it was our first time going in to the village.

Save some things for the next village. We found some villages would quite happily have traded until we were empty, but you always have to think there is another village ahead and people there who will also be desperate to trade with you. So be careful and save trading goods for throughout your trip.

Trading and not just giving. We followed this rule as we believe giving alone sets a bad precedent as islanders will then expect the next yacht to do the same and in time it could cause problems. Similarly we learnt not to hand things over for a trade on the expectation of the person returning with their trade as the few times we did it, they never returned. That said, we had a golden rule that if anyone genuinely needed medicine or school material we would happily give it to them.

#### WHAT WE TRADED

We carried a selection of items purchased specifically for trading. At times we also traded from items we had on board for ourselves. The list below is exhaustive; we've annotated the most popular items with stars.

Food items:

Rice\*

Sugar\*

Flour

Tea bags

Coffee

Corned beef tins\*

Salt

Powdered milk

Sweet biscuits\*

We would bulk buy rice, flour and sugar in sacks and re-bag into one kilo bags. Over the first three months of the 2015 season when we spent time in north Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and east Papua New Guinea, we traded approximately 60kg of rice, 15kg of flour and 10kg of sugar. We could have traded more sugar if we had been carrying it. To try to avoid issues with weevils

we bought the sacks of rice and flour at main towns as we went along, rather than buying it all at the start of the season.

Household items:

Washing powder for clothes\*

Matches

Cutlery

Cooking utensils (wooden)

Plates, bowls and mugs (plastic)

Stationery:

Biros

Colouring pencils\*

Pencils\*

Pencil sharpeners

Exercise books\*

Fishing materials:

Small hooks for trolling when paddling a canoe\*

Medium hooks for trolling from a banana boat

Fishing line\*

Small plastic squids (called "bait" in many islands)

Toys for children:

Small bouncing balls\*

Skipping ropes

Hair bands (in pretty colours)\*

Small toy cars

Swimming goggles\*

Balloons

Bubble blowers

Clothing:

Ladies t-shirts, shorts (to the knee) and sarongs\*

Men's t-shirts and shorts

Children's pants, t-shirts and shorts\*

Flip-flops

Small bottles of perfume for the ladies

We had a mixture of new and pre-worn clothes; people were perfectly happy to trade pre-worn clothes in good condition. We'd agree with the trader what type of clothing they wanted then show them a few options in about the right size to allow them to choose. This was particularly pleasing to the girls and children!

Solomon Islands only, for carvers:

Sandpaper of all grades\*

Superglue\*

Wood glue

Carving tools

Carving is big business in the Solomon Islands and we found these items to be things the carvers really wanted and actually seemed to expect yachts to be carrying to trade with them. We found we were able to negotiate combined money/trading item deals for the carvings we wanted.

#### SOURCING ITEMS FOR TRADING

Whilst the list above looks long, we found just a few trips to different shops enabled us to set ourselves up. We then topped up in main towns along the way if we needed to.

We bought clothing in budget stores in New Zealand. We bought food items in bulk from wholesale shops to get the best prices – BonMarche Wholesale in Port Vila, Vanuatu was our main source for this. The rest of the non-food items we bought from Chinese shops in Port Vila, similar to those you find in many main cities in the South Pacific countries.

When buying in bulk, as we often were, we would ask for a discount and were usually given 5% or 10% discount.

We also always keep any items we no longer want that we think might be useful to islanders and these became trading items, for example old fins and diving masks.

[www.yachtadina.co.uk](http://www.yachtadina.co.uk)

**Yawana – 2015 – Trading in PNG & Solomons:** I visited a number of isolated islands in PNG and the Solomon Islands in 2014-15.

I made a strong point of explaining to islanders that I am not a charity. I carried goods on board for exchange and trade only, and this helped to establish a feeling of mutual respect between us that led to many rewarding friendships. I exchanged the following goods for fresh food, woodcarving and locally made jewellery. I ate a ridiculous amount of fresh crayfish.

Apart from second hand clothes, T-shirts etc. I also brought:

- old spectacles found in the 2nd hand shops
- hats

- cooking utensils
- small garden lights with mini solar panel found in hardware stores (buy the good ones as the rechargeable battery lasts longer)
- diving goggles and fins (even old 2nd hand gear is very useful)
- old sails to be recut and used on the dugout canoes
- needles and whipping thread to sew the sails
- silicon and sikaflex to repair cracks in the canoes and rainwater tanks
- cheap fibreglass bog to repair larger holes
- small re sealable plastic containers (yogurt and mayonnaise etc.) to make waterproof storage for islanders who spend a lot of time at sea in exposed canoes
- woodworking tools (saws, chisels, rasps, hand drills and metal files). These can be found in junkyard sales and bought cheaply as we now live in the age of the power tool.

**Medical supplies:** Like antibiotic cream, is very useful and will go a long way. There are some medical officers on the islands, but they are poorly trained and have limited resources. Ringworm is rampant through these islands and if you can afford to buy bulk anti fungal cream then take plenty with you. I was often asked for aspirin and paracetamol, but they were eaten like lollys so I stopped giving them.

If you feel comfortable administering antibiotics and anti malarials then do, but if something goes wrong you may find yourself in a very difficult position. Consult with immediate family and the village chief and explain the risks beforehand.

**Food:** Goods like white rice in 1 kilo packets, white sugar, white flour, canned tuna, 2 minute noodles, and cooking oil were very welcome on the outer islands as these are very expensive for them to buy and make a change from eating yams and taro. This "cargo" can be bought cheaply in the larger towns like Rabaul, Alotou, and Honiara when you clear in.

Likewise, fishing hooks and line can be bought in bulk very cheaply, small diving goggles, dry biscuits, bush knives, submersible dive torches and flip flops (called "slippers") can all be purchased at the large Chinese run trade stores in the big towns.

**Children:** For the children take pens and textbooks, coloured pens. Don't take sweets if you expect to get any peace and quiet. I offered them biscuits instead. In exchange I would ask them to sing me a song in their local language, I recorded it on my iPad then played it back to them. They were mesmerised to see themselves on video and fascinated to watch clips of other children from neighboring Islands.

**Women:** For the women take soap and laundry powder, shampoo, brightly coloured clothes (not too revealing), sports bras, thread and needles, hair elastics and combs.

**Men:** For the men take board shorts, hats (they spend a lot of time at sea), strips of stretchy rubber for their fishing spears, any metal that can be fashioned into a barb for the spears, cigarette lighters, newspaper for rolling cigarettes (they grow their own tobacco), torches, head torches, and batteries.

Do not expect expressions of gratitude and thanks on the scale we give in our culture. Even a significant gift or service rendered to someone may be met with minimal response, and more than likely a request for something more is made. You are dealing with people of a different culture and they have their own ways. It was enough for me to be aware that I was helping these people in some small way.

I did not take any alcohol for exchange. I always refused if I was asked for it. I never allowed anyone to come on board after dark.

**Totem – October 2012:** (About PNG, but still useful information) In Panasia Island we began to experience the rich Louisiades trading culture. Islands actively trade together, and visiting boats are of interest for the goods they bring from outside. Where islands specialize based on their available resources- clay pots made on Utian, canoes from the wood on Panaeti, lime for betel on Sabra, shells for bagi (for currency and ritual trade) on Nimoa and Rossel- cruisers offer staples otherwise sourced from distant trade stores for exchange.

Small villages, with a handful of families, live in homes of wood frame and coconut frond thatching. Footpaths connect one village with another. Sailing canoes traverse between islands, and here at Panasia, from one side to the other: the water route is easier to traverse than the paths through very steep limestone slopes. Unlike the rest of the coconut run we have sailed, these islands do not have a cash economy. There is no ubiquity to modern infrastructure or stores; trading goods is the primary method to satisfy needs for anything that cannot be grown or made from what is immediately at hand.

When we arrive, we make a gift of fish to the family on shore. We're guests in their waters, and a "one for us, one for them" standard is used. Even though few families live here on Panasia, we have a stream of dugout canoes stopping by Totem. Seeing our sail as we progressed closer, they come in outriggers not just from the adjacent shore but around from the opposite side of the island, and an adjacent island where gardens are kept. Visitors bring what they have to offer: coconuts, papaya, sweet potatoes, eggs, cherry tomatoes, lobster. We're asked for clothing (especially for children), rice, sugar, or batteries to power the lanterns and radios at home.

We're learning from boats who have spent years here how this trading has changed as the number of visiting boats has increased. There is more of an expectation that cruisers will give without reciprocation from islanders- a break from their mutual trade tradition, "pem penpewa". It's easy to see how this happens. You may already have traded for more bananas than you can eat, but someone is offering more and they clearly seem to need the t-shirt being requested, why not?

Although we might think we're a little shabby, our boat and basic gear represent immense wealth to an islander- from their point of view, why not ask for something you need? Although trading is a way of life, so is "hol hol", the obligation between relatives to give what you have if it's requested of you (not surprisingly, most trade stores are not run by locals, but by Chinese or other non-local ethnicities who do not have to submit to this).

One enterprising man comes with a prepared list of desired items. He seems a little surprised when we ask what he has for us in return, but laughs and jumps into trading mode when we use the Misima dialect terms for his tradition- “u pem, ya pewa” (you give, I give).

We have our trading training wheels on, but are getting into the rhythm. One trade at a time, we are finding out how to balance being fair with being generous, and be respectful guests in this beautiful place.

<http://www.sailingtotem.com/2012/10/panasia-island-trading-101-in-our.html>

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** You're never alone in the Solomons. We were frequently visited by carvers hoping to make a big trade or sale. Morovo Lagoon has a carver under every coconut palm and is infamous for the hard sell -- keeping your sense of humour when traders call at sunrise and remain past dusk determines your enjoyment of these places, where pitch of trading grows so intense that yachtsmen bargain for hours over countless cups of coffee to acquire that `spirit of Solomons' masterpiece.

When carvings are absent other commodities promptly come to the fore. Shells, including the elusive Golden Cowrie, and produce of every description came to 'Kama Lua' in an endless convoy of dugout canoes which massed about our aft cockpit two to three deep, leaving behind a graffiti of paint scars on the topsides as canoes bounced and bobbed past our shield of ineffective fenders.

Solomon Islanders are clever traders. They often requested factory goods in lieu of hard to spend cash. We discovered a couple items in particular demand -- children's clothing and bed linen. Lollies and balloons were especially valuable, as were pencils, crayons and coloring books...

### **1.6.6 Malaria**

**Totem – August 2013:** Papua New Guinea has sobering malaria statistics. It has the highest incidence of malaria in the Western Pacific. Internal problems with infrastructure, resources and funding give malaria victims an unnecessarily high mortality rate. We'll travel from PNG to Indonesia, and continued endemic malaria: it's not like anything we've experienced to date.

So it might seem strange that we're not going to take any anti-malarial drugs in PNG and Indonesia during our journeys in the coming year.

If you know us, you know we're not big risk takers. We recently visited a travel doctor as part of our preparations. We brought our bias to avoid prophylactics and were expecting to have to “discuss” it. To our relief, was consistent the advice she gave us.

What are we doing, then? Lots of preventative measures.

**Screening:** Repellent-treated nets and screens (we got ours in Australia from Buzz Off) on our hatches and ports. We have the screens and nets, and will soak them in a solution of permethrin. The treatment is supposed to be good for about a year, and we have enough to re-treat if it seems necessary.

We have additional nets, also treated, to drape our bunks at night. The romantic Out of Africa look is a bonus.

**Repellents:** Chemical free is best. We have little ultrasonic devices that are the size of a thumb. Battery powered, they emit a high pitch sound which mosquitoes don't like. They don't have a big range- just 8 or 10 feet- but that's enough most of the time.

Good ol' repellent lotion. First line of defence is based on essential oils; we have several to use.

As much as I hate using chemicals, especially directly on our skin, it's a risk trade off with malaria that we have to weigh. If we aren't finding success with the natural repellents, DEET based lotion is stashed too.

Coils. Hate em.... but have them, just hope not to use.

**Smart Behavior:** Avoid areas with lots of bugs (anchor awaaaaayyyy from the mangroves!)

Choose light colored clothing, not dark.

No perfume/fragrances. Easy, since we mostly think they literally stink.

Stay put from dusk to dawn. This is when malarial mosquitoes are primarily active; we'll plan our activity to try and ensure being inside the well screened boat during those times. Since we'll be in islands without power, I don't think it will be hard.

**Testing and Treatment:** And if we think anyone even MIGHT have malaria, test. We have 20 test kits (these are from Buzz Off, too): if anyone shows a sign of fever, they get tested. It's a simple finger prick that you measure on a card. Pleasantly dummy proof.

TREAT. If malaria is indicated, we begin treatment. There's enough Malarone on Totem for multiple courses. In fact, it's probably an overkill quantity. I'm OK with that.

Take off! We'd head for a clinic the second anyone is diagnosed. Just because we can handle starting treatment doesn't mean we think we should play doctor. Our medical kit is oversupplied if anything; the bigger problem then is the distance to a clinic that will have trained staff.

I can't help worst-case-scenarioing on this. What if Jamie and I are both infected? I know from experience it can make you completely non-functional. It's one of the reasons we're hoping to find buddy boats who are also headed on this route, which is a big stretch from the beaten path.

\* 2013 update: no malaria, but a few test kits were used during our time in PNG.

### **1.6.7 Eating the Fish (Ciguatera!)**

Note: The Solomon Islands has a fairly low incidence of Ciguatera, but cruisers can't afford to take chances.

**From Wikipedia – January 2019:** Ciguatera fish poisoning, also known simply as ciguatera, is a foodborne illness caused by eating reef fish whose flesh is contaminated with certain toxins. Ciguatera Fish Poisoning commonly occurs in tropical and subtropical areas, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.

Symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, numbness, itchiness, sensitivity to hot and cold, dizziness, and weakness. The onset of symptoms varies with the amount of toxin eaten from half an hour to up to two days. The diarrhea may last for up to four days.

Some symptoms typically remain for a few weeks to months. Heart difficulties such as slow heart rate and low blood pressure may also occur.

The specific toxins involved are ciguatoxin and maitotoxin. They are originally made by a small marine organism, *Gambierdiscus toxicus*, that grows on and around coral reefs in tropical and subtropical waters. These are eaten by herbivorous fish which in turn are eaten by larger carnivorous fish. The toxins become more concentrated as they move up the food chain.

Any reef fish can cause ciguatera poisoning, but species such as barracuda, grouper, red snapper, moray eel, amberjack, parrotfish, hogfish, sturgeonfish, kingfish, coral trout, and sea bass are the most commonly affected. Ciguatoxins are concentrated in the fish liver, intestines, heads, and roe.

Ciguatoxins do not affect the taste, texture, or odour of the fish and cannot be destroyed by cooking, smoking, freezing, salting or any other method of food preparation. Outbreaks can occur seasonally or sporadically, particularly after storms. Not all fish of a given species or from a given area will be toxic.

Preventive efforts include not eating reef fish, not eating high-risk fish such as barracuda, and not eating fish liver, roe, or fish heads. There is no specific treatment for ciguatera fish poisoning once it occurs. Mannitol may be considered, but the evidence supporting its use is not very strong. Gabapentin or amitriptyline may be used to treat some of the symptoms.

The US Centers for Disease Control estimates that around 50,000 cases occur a year. Other estimates vary up to 500,000 cases per year. It is the most frequent seafood poisoning. It occurs most commonly in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea between the latitudes of 35°N and 35°S. The risk of the condition appears to be increasing due to coral reef deterioration and increasing trade in seafood. The risk of death from poisoning is less than 1 in 1,000. Descriptions of the condition date back to at least 1511. The current name came into use in 1787.

**Soggy Paws** - I personally know someone who got a severe case in the Bahamas—3 boats shared the same large yellowtail snapper at a potluck. By morning, they were all very sick, and a couple of people from each boat were so sick that they were airlifted off for immediate hospitalization. They spent at least a month recovering, and even a year later were reporting lingering symptoms. As the toxin is cumulative, they can never eat another fish.

In the Tuamotus, locals told us “bring us the fish and tell us exactly where you caught it, and we will tell you if you can eat it.” However, locals do get ciguatera too!

In the Gambiers, the problem is much much worse—even traditionally “safe” fish can be highly toxic. A friend caught a grouper on his way out of the W pass, and ate it for dinner. He was very sick for the next 3 days as he was sailing single-handed northwards to the Tuamotus.

**Jacaranda:** Linda from s/v Jacaranda has compiled a much more comprehensive look at ciguatera. You can download it from their website, here:

<http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff>

Look for "You Gonna Eat That Fish?" Info about Ciguatera

### **1.6.8 Crocodiles**

**Noonsite – 2019:** Salt water crocodiles are native to many parts of PNG, and there are regular sightings on beaches as well as mangrove-lined bays. On arrival in any new place, ensure you ask locals whether there are any crocodiles.

Local advice should be sought before entering unfamiliar waters, including lakes. One yachtsman was taken by a croc just while checking his anchor.

### **1.6.9 Malignant Tropical Sores**

**Soggy Paws – Mar-Aug 2019 – Life Threatening Skin Infections:** A big warning to all yachties cruising in the SW Pacific (and Micronesia). Ourselves and nearly every boat we have met has had at least one incidence of a tiny wound or scratch (usually on the lower leg or foot) turning into a feverish oozing mess, requiring a full dose of heavy antibiotics (sometimes several courses). On our boat alone, with 2 crew and 6 months in this area, we have had a total of 5 of these infections.

At least one yachty we know was airlifted home to NZ when, after a month of battling the infection, it looked like the infection was winning.

LOSS OF LIFE AND LIMB IS POSSIBLE if you let one of these tropical infections get out of hand.

Take EVERY tiny cut, abrasion, or bug bite seriously, keep it clean and out of the water. At the first sign of it getting bigger, and red or hot, start taking antibiotics (something strong and broad spectrum like Ciproflaxin). Keep it elevated, and keep it covered (bring lots of good quality bandaids).

As for what to put on it, the locals swear by Noni Root, so we tried rotating application of the local Noni Root concoction, Betadine, triple anti-biotic ointment, and an Aussie antiseptic cream called Savlon. We were given a small bottle of Noni Root by someone we asked about what they did for infections. We also saw it for sale at several local markets in small bottles.

However, the US Army medical guide to Bacterial Skin Infections says that topical skin medicines like triple antibiotic ointment have little effect for these kinds of infections. This 1994 guide recommends Dicloxacillin, or ...*"Erythromycin and clindamycin are suitable alternatives if the patient is allergic to penicillin. Cephalosporins or combinations of amoxicillin and clavulanate may also be used, but are much more expensive and seldom offer an advantage over antistaphylococcal penicillins."* They also state: *"Mupirocin is the only topical (put on the outside of the skin) medicine that has proven effective on mild infections."* And *"Debridement of the lesions is helpful but soaking in hexachlorophene or other antibacterial soaks retards rather than enhances healing."*

Another medical guide we have aboard also cautioned about daily use of hydrogen peroxide to clean the wound. Hydrogen peroxide is a good thing to use for the initial cleaning and disinfecting, but it will inhibit healing.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether your sore is getting better or worse... take a picture of it every day and compare results.

If it continues to get worse, and your surrounding skin is becoming hot and inflamed, or you are running a fever, it is getting to the dangerous stage. Seriously, even a tiny bug bite can become infected to the point where your life is in danger. Take it seriously!

Make sure you have several 7 day courses of Ciproflaxin aboard when cruising this area—even though there are hospitals and clinics in these areas, many times they have no available drugs. We found Cipro available over the counter in some pharmacies in PNG and the Solomons. Cipro is a heavy-duty broad spectrum antibiotic and should be reserved for use when nothing else is working.

A pharmacist in Honiara sold us packages of a 5-day dose of Cloxicillin 250mg (2 capsules 4 times a day for 5 days) for \$5 USD each package. He said to try that first, and then use Cipro (which is more expensive) if that doesn't seem to be working. I don't know if Amoxicillin would work, but if you have nothing else, it's probably better than nothing until you can get to somewhere with something stronger.

On our last round of infections, from small scratches acquired on a jungle hike to see airplane relics in Stirling Island, Solomons (Aug 2019), the Cloxicillin worked to start clearing up the sores within a couple of days.

## **1.7 Yachtsmen's Services - Overview**

### **1.7.1 Money**

**Soggy Paws – March 2019:** The currency in the Solomon Islands is the Solomons Dollar. Current exchange rate is approx 8 SD to 1 USD. ATM's are few and far between except in the major cities (Honiara, Gizo, Noro, Munda). So it is best to try to acquire some SD from other cruisers before you arrive. And when you are in a city with an ATM, hit the ATM's as many times as you can to accumulate money. (we could only get 3,000 SD out at a time, at a cost of \$45 SD per time).

However, at the outer places where cruisers usually arrive, the villagers are quite used to trading for what you want. We regularly used rice, sugar, coffee, and fish hooks as currency when trading for services (guides) or local fruits and vegetables.

The wood and stone carvers will usually take some trade goods, but almost always prefer to also get some cash as part of the deal.

By the time we figured in the ATM fee, the exchange rate in mid-2019 was approx 8 SD to 1 USD.

### **1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

**Soggy Paws – March 2019:** Gasoline is widely available, sometimes only as "premix", and sometimes at quite high prices in the outer regions. Many times when we have asked villagers to use their boats, it has been "but you supply the fuel".

Diesel is less available except in the major cities. In Noro there is actually a fuel dock that you can tie up to to take on fuel.

In Gizo, the diesel and gas rate was around 10 SD per liter. In Noro, we were able to fill up at the Markworth's fuel dock for about \$7.50 SD per liter (the listed price was less, but by the time we paid for more liters than we actually got, this is the true price of the diesel we pumped).

In the outer islands, the rate for gasoline ended up at 12-14 SD per liter.

### **1.7.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**Soggy Paws – July 2019:** There is a propane filling place in Noro. Easiest is to use the left-most gas dock, near the Noro Restaurant on the water. You drop your tank, they fill (usually within a couple of hours), and then you pay for what they filled.

We had bought a Solomons tank in Honiara. I don't know if they will fill foreign tanks.

Friends got their tank (Australian, or SE Asia valves) filled in Honiara, near the yacht club.

### **1.7.4 Groceries**

Decent provisioning can be done in Gizo, Noro, and Honiara. Munda, there are stores, but fairly limited offerings (just the basics). If you want imported goods, from Munda you can take a bus or taxi up to Noro. Seghe, in Marovo Lagoon, also has some limited stores (expensive, though).

See those sections for details.

### **1.7.5 Water**

**Soggy Paws – July 2019:** Liapari had water in rain tanks. The yacht club at Honiara also had water (source/quality unknown). John Ruka in Roderick Bay (Florida Group) has a pipe that comes down from a mountain or well, and will let you fill jugs.

April and May were fairly hot and dry but in June and July, it generally rained a couple of times a week, so water was not much of an issue. During times of drought, people may be a little less giving of their water.

### **1.7.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

There are some limited marine supplies available in [Gizo, Western Province](#). There are also a number of sources for marine supplies and hardware in [Honiara](#). For haulout options, see [Haulout](#) section.

**Soggy Paws – July 2019 – Outboard Motor Repair:** Jenky Wong in Noro +677 791-7888 or 716-7191 We did not use him, but he stopped by when Dave was fiddling with the outboard and said he could repair it. Good English, and seemed knowledgeable.

### **1.7.7 Medical**

**Soggy Paws – July 2019:** Fortunately, we never had cause to use a medical facility in the Solomons. However, a series of tropical ulcers while in PNG and the Solomons had depleted

our stocks of antibiotics. We were able to buy antibiotics (including Cipro) over the counter at a pharmacy near the yacht club.

### **1.7.8 Laundry**

**Soggy Paws – July 2019:** Liapari has a shower facility for cruisers that also has a nice waist high wash basin, and some clotheslines nearby. I think also there is someone there that would do the laundry for you for a reasonable price. You could probably get laundry done at Agnes Lodge in **Munda**, but maybe at hotel prices.

During June and July, it rained a couple of times a week, so we always had enough water to do our laundry onboard.

### **1.8 Embassies and Consulates**

**Papua New Guinea:** There is a PNG “High Commission” office in Honiara, where it is possible to get a PNG visa in advance.

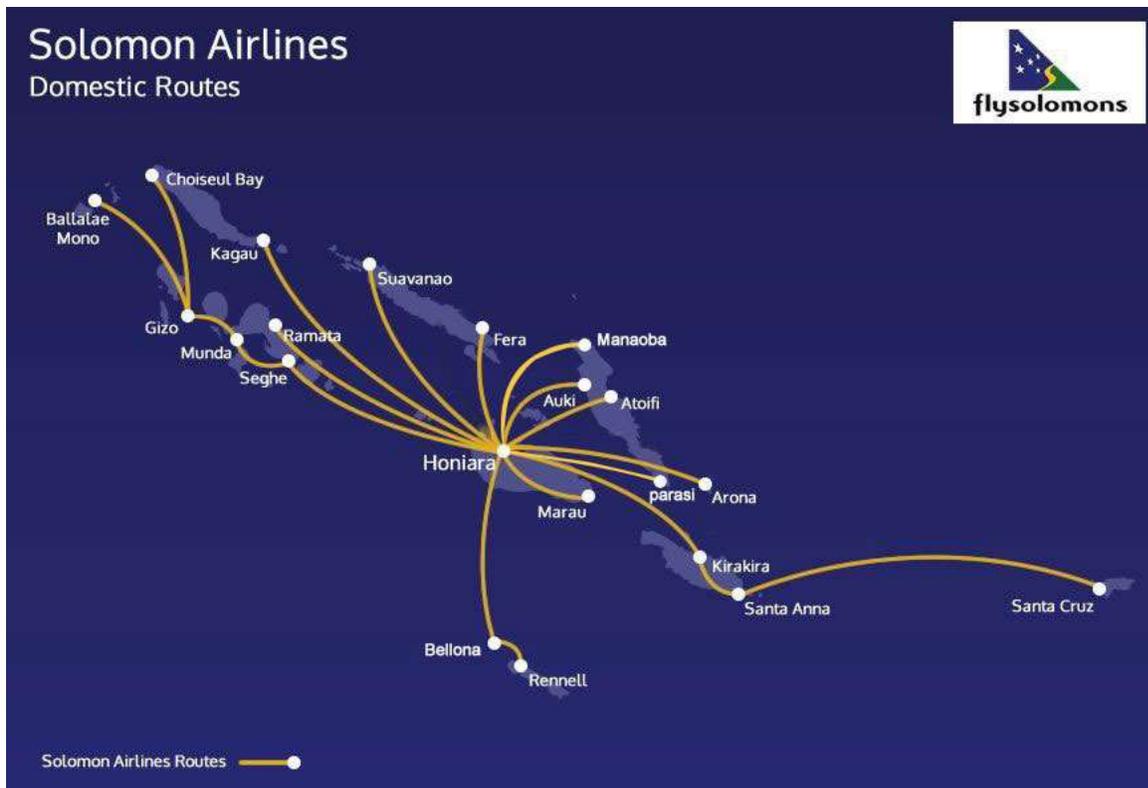
**USA:** U.S. diplomatic representation is handled by the U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea. The United States maintains a Consular Agency in Honiara, Solomon Islands to provide consular services.

**Australia:** There is an Australian High Commission office in Honiara:

<https://solomonislands.embassy.gov.au/>

### **1.9 Getting Visitors In and Out**

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** By air, the only player is Solomon Airlines, and all flights go through Brisbane and then Honiara, except they have recently initiated a direct Brisbane-Munda flight on Saturdays (not shown on this map).



**Lonely Planet (on the web) December 2018 – Getting in and Out of Solomons**

**By Boat:** The cargo boat MV Fair Glory offers a weekly service between Honiara and Gizo via Marovo Lagoon. The Gizo–Honiara trip costs SD \$480 in deck class (SD \$1490 per cabin) and takes about 27 hours. For Seghe, it's SD \$270. It generally leaves Gizo on Tuesday morning; check while you're here.

The cargo boat MV Anjeanette also offers a weekly service between Gizo and Honiara via Marovo Lagoon. The Gizo–Honiara trip costs S\$460 (S\$500 in 'first class'). It leaves Gizo on Monday afternoon.

A Rava shuttle boat connects Gizo to Munda (S\$250, two hours) stopping at various places en route. It usually leaves Gizo at 1pm on Monday and Friday. It also operates on Wednesday if there's a minimum of six passengers.

**By Air:** Solomon Airlines Has up to three daily flights between Gizo and Honiara (from S\$1380). There are also daily flights between Gizo and Munda (from S\$685), and three weekly flights between Gizo and Seghe (from S\$790). From Gizo you can also fly to the Shortland Islands and Choiseul. The airfield is on Nusatupe Island (boat transfer S\$60).

*Soggy Paws note May 2019: Prices for Brisbane to Munda were around USD \$540 r/t and to Seghe \$650 r/t, flights were mostly once a day, almost every day of the week.*

**Mokisha – 2013:** We left California March 17th on St. Paddy's Day for the Solomon Islands to return to Mokisha (left in storage at Liapari, at the south end of Vella Lavella Island). We flew into Honiara, capitol of the Solomons, without any drama.

Our next leg of the trip was to Gizo and ultimately Liapari. Options were certainly limited for getting to our destination. We ended up with 8 bags of boat parts so our “over” baggage was \$690 out of LAX. Yikes, the airlines got us this time. Still, cheaper than trying to ship everything. In any event, a prop plane to Gizo would have issues with the amount of baggage & would have cost additional \$\$\$\$ so we opted to go the ferry route. We got a cabin where we piled not only bags but a cooler of meat & several boxes of additional provisions. There was only a single bed in the cabin so we gave a new meaning to “spooning” on a tiny bed.

We arrived in Honiara on a Tuesday and the ferry left for Gizo on a Sunday. This ended up being pretty nice since it gave us time to rest up & provision. We were allowed to take everything aboard on Saturday night, which was a good thing when you see the pictures of the crowd! Arriving in 2 taxis we loaded everything into the room & went back for the night. The 10 am departure was smooth & worry-free. We set out for our 26-hour journey with 8 stops of various villages.

The ferry ride was enjoyable & we met some interesting people. Each stop was about an hour long and where bedlam ensued. The locals all know what they are doing & it seems to work.

Finally, Monday afternoon we were met in Gizo and were shuttled off to another boat for a 45 minute “canoe” ride to Liapari. Boy, these bags are getting a workout! Finally, we arrive back at Mokisha in Liapari. She was in pretty good shape on the outside but the usual coat of mold covered her on the inside from the v-berth to the galley. We were able to settle in one of Noel’s comfortable cabins which was a life saver.

## **1.10 Communications**

### **1.10.1 VHF**

**Soggy Paws – July 2019:** Hardly anyone in the Solomons (ashore or in small boats) has VHF radios. Channel 16 was problematic to listen to because of foreign boats talking on 16. We generally used Ch 74 as our cruising boat channel, and only dual watched on 16 when underway. Ch 74 was very quiet.

**General VHF Advice that applies to all areas:** Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are ‘tuned’ for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may ‘bleed’ over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you’re close enough). You don’t need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are 'duplex' channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated 'a', like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF's in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

### **1.10.2 SSB Radio Frequencies and Nets**

In PNG and Solomons, it may be possible to tune into the Gulf Harbor Radio net. Updated times and frequencies and other helpful information can be found here on GHR's website <https://www.ghradio.co.nz>

Here are some other radio comms information provided by Gulf Harbor Radio:

International Emergency Frequencies

2182 4125 6215 8291 12290 16420

NZ Maritime Radio monitors all emergency frequencies 24/7 see below for working frequencies

tel. 0800 MARITIME, 0800 627 48463 [maritime@kordia.co.nz](mailto:maritime@kordia.co.nz)

tel . 0064 (0)4 9148333

RCC NZ tel 0064 (0) 4 577 8030 [rcc@maritimenz@govt.nz](mailto:rcc@maritimenz@govt.nz)

Cruiser Nets

Gulf Harbour Radio 8752 (alt 8779 or 8297)) at 1915 UTC, 0715 am NZST. Also 6230, 12353, 12365

Mon thru Sat Weather summary for South Pacific cruising area on the half hour.

May 1-Nov 30 GHR email: [ghradio@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ghradio@xtra.co.nz) (off air other times)

Far North Radio 6516 at 1800 NZST. Position reports. Starts with Islands weather.

Northland Radio various frequencies so go to: <https://northlandradio.nz/frequencies/>

Tony's Maritime Net 14315 USB daily at 2100UTC, ham net

Pacific Seafarers Net 14300 USB at 0300 UTC, ham net [pacseanet@gmail.com](mailto:pacseanet@gmail.com)

JRCC Honolulu Tel 001 808 535 3333 [JRCCHonolulu@uscg.mil](mailto:JRCCHonolulu@uscg.mil)

NZ Maritime Radio SSB WEATHER

UTC UTC FREQ FREQ

0303\* 1503\* 6224 12356 \*warnings only

0333\* 1533\* 8297 16531

0903 2103 6224 12356

1003 2203 8297 16531

NavArea XIV includes: Islands- Equator to 25S, 160E to 120W

Subtropic- 23S to 40S, Australian Coast to 120W

Pacific- 25S to 55S, 170W to 120W

NZ Wx Fax Frequencies

5807.0 9459.0 13550.0 16340.1, Subtract 1.9 for SSB RX

(and 3247.4 between 0945 and 1645UTC at the 16340 time)

Noonsite – Pacific Nets – 2019: Possible Radio Nets:

**Comedy Net**, daily meeting on 7.087 MHz at 2040 Zulu (just after the Australian MSL wefax broadcast). Leans towards the irreverent and informal. Several land based regulars who'll help solve local problems. All licensed hams are welcome, esp. newcomers. It is a ham/maritime mobile net run on the 40 meter ham band 365 days a year. Most of the year we start at 2040 GMT (just after the BOM broadcast of the MSL chart) and always on 7.087 MHz LSB to start, moving off if too much interference is on that frequency.

We take emergency traffic, then position reports, then general check ins, with maritime mobiles taking precedence over land based stations. Typically these days we get 8-15 check ins each day, with about equal numbers of m/ms and land based... all licensed amateurs are welcome, and of course anyone can listen. We do not do any formal weather info, but pass along our observations and complaints. Typically we get coverage from Tasmania to Queensland and out to New Caledonia and Vanuatu, sometimes NZ. The range varies with the vagaries of the ionosphere and is suffering abit right now due to the low sunspot count, but a well developed relay system passes traffic pretty well.

The net was started by ZL1BTQ, Ron, a lighthouse keeper at Cape Brett at the time. Ron's been a silent key for some years now, but others have kept the net going. It was his idea that it should be light hearted, informal and welcoming and we've tried to keep it that way.

**Far North Radio** (NZ - Kaipara, Brett - Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu)

Provide an SSB (hf) service to vessels transiting to/from the Pacific and Tasman sea areas.

See Noonsite Report for more details.

1800-1900 hours New Zealand daylight time - 6.516MHz

1900-1930 hours New Zealand daylight time - 4.417MHz

**French Net**, 13940 kHz at 0300Z (French). - The frequency is still available and they also use 8335 kHz.

**Northland Radio ZMH292** - A private coast station located in Russell, New Zealand. A not for profit provider of SSBservices to cruising yachts completing ocean passages in the South Pacific, and coastal passages within New Zealand coastal waters.

<https://www.northlandradio.nz/>

**Maritime Mobile Net** (world-wide) 14300-14313 kHz 24h/day in different languages. Website [www.mmsn.org](http://www.mmsn.org)

**Pacific Seafarers Net**, (HAM) 14300 kHz at 0300(UTC). Informal chat followed by roll call at 0310(UTC).

The three nets that share 14300 kHz provide an outstanding safety net for cruisers. Whether you talk to the Pacific Seafarers Net, the Maritime Mobile Service Net, or the Intercon Net, all the net controls support cruising sailors (and other mobile operators), hand off well to one another, and have robust links to official responders. Website [www.pacseanet.com](http://www.pacseanet.com)

**Polynesian Magellan Net** - Daily at 1800Z and 0400Z on 8.173 USB - Covering all of French Polynesia.

**Vanuatu Net**, operates daily at 0730 Local time, 2030 UTC during cruising season - on 8.230 with a fallback frequency of 8.188

LIKELY STILL ACTIVE (LAST REFERENCE IN SECOND HALF OF 2015)

**Namba Net** (Local weather via French Net and email from Meteo Vanuatu. Yachts enroute to Australia can transfer to the Sheila Net as they near the Australian Coast.) 8,101 at 21:15. Sister net to Sheila Net: More to New Caledonia, Vanuatu & north to Solomons. operates during the cruising season May to about October at 0815 hrs local time Vanuatu (UTC +11). Last referenced Sep 2015

Pacific Maritime Service Net - Nets begin at 2100 UTC and close at 2400 UTC hours every day

<http://www.pmmsn.net/>

15 meter band wide area coverage on 21.412 mhz USB

Not limited to the Pacific Ocean

Felix Dudley - W4FDD - felixdudley@elmore.rr.com Last reference Nov 2015.

**Rag of the Air (Fiji)** on 8173 at 19:00. Run by Jim & Kyoko Bandy. Jim Bandy has stepped down but the net is still believed live.

?? Arnold's Net (South Pacific) 14.318 MHz at 0400 (UTC) Last reference 2013.

?? Coconut Breakfast Net, West of French Polynesia 12353 kHz at 1830(UTC) (English)

?? Harry's Net (W & S Pacific) 7.095 MHz at 2000 (UTC)

?? Pacific Island (South Pacific) 14,265 USB at 07:00. Last updated August 2013

?? Pacific Island Net (South Pacific) 14,135 USB at 00:00. Run by Gunther.

?? Tony's Net (ZLIATE), 14315 kHz at 2100UTC. HAM net - relays - weather. Noted in 2013 ref in Pacific Crossing Guide

?? VK Maritime (VK & South Pacific) 7,060 USB at 20:00 (UTC). Last ref 2010

**Soggy Paws – 2017:** Someone told us that Hans aboard Sea Goon hangs out in the Louisiades and keeps a net going on 8170 at 0800 Local for Solomons and PNG. This may only be during “cruising season” (May-Nov).

**Forza – 2010:** There is also a north Aust and Islands HF net, called the ‘Shiela Net’ at UTC +10 at 0800 every morning where you can hear the latest and check in. Sometimes we could receive and transmit but other times there was too much static.

### **1.10.3 Telephones, Cell Phones and Internet Access**

The Solomon Islands Country Code is 677.

Sim cards are not always available in the first place where you may find cell coverage, but usually you can find “top up” in these places. So on your way to the Solomons, ask passing cruisers who have left the Solomons if they have a cell phone sim you could have.

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** From the west side of Vella Lavella all the way down to Honiara and Roderick Bay, we had internet 3G or usable 2G all the time, using My Telekom. The noted exceptions were:

- In Viru Harbor (outside we had weak 3G, inside the harbor, nothing)
- In the Russell Islands, we had 2G signal but no real data
- Roderick Bay had up and down 2G and sometimes 3G
- Coverage was surprisingly good in Vonavona and Marovo. There are a few dead spots, but most places had coverage.
- The phones nearly always had a signal, and SMS would usually get through, even if no data would.

Friends working their way south from Honiara to Vanuatu reported a few spots where they had 2G that worked well enough to get messages through on Whatsapp, but not on Facebook.

**Topping Up:** My favorite online Topup sites—Ding.com and Recharge.com—both say they cannot do top-ups in the Solomons. So you are relying on local Topup facilities. We found them almost everywhere, even in small towns. However, many small towns have limited amounts of top-up.

Be careful of running out of your data package. My Telekom does send SMS’s at intervals as you deplete your data, but if you miss an SMS (I had my phone clothes-pinned on the topping lift to get a better signal) and run out of data, it will chew through \$100 SD worth of credit in about 10-15 minutes! What I ultimately did was keep the bulk of my credit on my husband’s phone (who didn’t do data), and only transferred it to my phone when I was ready to buy a package. That way I didn’t lose much credit if I forgot to buy a new package and accidentally ran out.

The best value in packages was the \$100 SD package which gives you 1.6GB of data good for 2 weeks. I NEVER ran out of time, always ran out of data. The longer running packages (some are good for a month) are not as good a value.

**From a wiki I found online – Mar 2019 (last update may be 2017):**

The Solomon Islands have two mobile operators:

Our Telekom (Breeze)

## Bmobile - Vodafone

Like many small island nations, the Solomon Islands rely heavily on satellite connections with long latency and slow networks at high prices. Currently Huawei is constructing a submarine cable link from the Solomons to Sydney, Australia. Scheduled to be finished in 2018, it will increase bandwidth and reduce latency. (*Soggy Paws Note: We met someone who was in the Solomons to lay fiber optic cable in Munda in July 2019, so it does look like this project is going forward, slowly*). This still leaves the issue of connecting the outer islands which is again done by satellite, if at all. Therefore more intra-island fiber optic cable links are planned.

Both networks are on 900 and 1800 MHz for GSM/2G up to EDGE and 850 MHz and 2100 MHz for 3G/UMTS up to HSPA. UMTS/HSPA is available only in larger population centers on the main islands and some distant islands aren't covered at all up to now. 4G/LTE has started in 2017 on Our Telecom in Hoinara.

Have in mind that most foreign phones set up for global roaming won't work in the Solomons because their local providers still don't have roaming agreements with many foreign operators. Exceptions are from Australia and Papua New Guinea.

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** It was at Seghe about day 5 that I found out all of the mobile networks were out, both carriers. No one really knew why. In many countries mobile services of any sort expire by date irrespective of use. So the 1.2GB of internet I bought for 14 days @ \$100SD was now expired. I left \$20SD with a shop in Seghe, and asked the girl to load it to my phone when the service comes back. The pessimistic all said I had wasted my \$20SD. Five days later when the service did come back, no load for my \$20SD appeared. When I had someone ask about it, word came back the load phone had been stolen--yea right. In the end, a local resolved it for me and all was good, although the service provided by the Telekom network is a bit like fishing in Malaysia (pretty useless). That said, the staff are not too bad and they try to do the right thing. Jimmy (at Telekom) gave me back my 1.2gb load.

### **1.10.3.1 Our Telekom (Breeze)**

**From a wiki I found online – Mar 2019 (last update may be 2017):**

Our Telekom or Solomon Telekom Company Ltd. is the largest mobile operator on the islands. It's 100% locally owned, after Cable & Wireless divested their stakes in 2014. Their mobile product was also branded as Breeze before.

#### **Network**

Their mobile network has reached most of the islands by now in all 9 provinces, but is available in different speeds:

2G on 900 and 1800 MHz is available through the islands. Data up to EDGE are available in all provincial centres. Some remote rural areas still don't have any data (not even GPRS).

3G on 2100 MHz is available in Honiara, Auki, Gizo, Munda and Noro up to 3.6 Mbps

3G on 850 MHz is available in Honiara up to 14.4 Mbps download and 5.76 Mbps upload

4G/LTE started in Nov. 2017 in Honiara on 700MHz (Band 28) and 1800 MHz (Band 3).

## Availability

Their SIM card is sold at Our Telekom's shops for SBD 20 with the same credit on it. You can use any of their SIM cards for 4G/LTE. You'll need to activate the prepay Breeze SIM by dialing 121.

Top-ups are sold by agents throughout the islands. Look for "MeTopUp" logo.

## Data feature packages

Default data rate is 0.99 SBD per MB. The following bundles are available:

Price	Volume	Validity
SBD 6	90 MB	1 day
SBD 15	225 MB	3 days
SBD 20	400 MB	4 days
SBD 50	765 MB	7 days
SBD 100	1.5 GB	14 days
SBD 220	3.6 GB	28 days
SBD 400	6.3 GB	28 days
SBD 850	13.5 GB	28 days
SBD 1250	20 GB	28 days

To activate a bundle dial \*155# and follow the menu. To all bundles add taxes.

*Soggy Paws Note: Taxes are now added when you actually buy top-up. If you buy \$100 SD of top up, you only get ~\$85 credit on your phone. So you need to buy more topup than you need to get the package you want, then you buy the package for face value.*

## WiFi Hotspot passes

Our Telekom runs some dozen public WiFi hotspots throughout the island. Locations and maps can be found online. For access these WiFi plans are sold:

SBD 6: 60 MB within 1 hour

SBD 20: 200 MB unlimited

SBD 35: 400 MB unlimited

SBD 50: 760 MB unlimited

SBD 100: 1 GB unlimited

To log on dial \*155#, follow the prompts, select (3) for internet, (1) for hotspot access and choose plan. After purchase you will receive an SMS with password and username. As network select "Our Telekom Wifi" and connect with the given data.

## More info

APN: internet

Website: [www.ourtelekom.com.sb](http://www.ourtelekom.com.sb)

**Soggy Paws – March 2019:** Another cruiser heading north had given us sim cards labeled “Our Telekom” and handwritten “Solomons”. As we were on the fringes of PNG entering the Shortland Islands, I was trying to top up my sim using Ding (ding.com or ding app), which we have used in the Philippines, Indonesia, and PNG. Unfortunately Ding doesn’t work in the Solomons (and neither does Recharge.com).

When I went into a tiny store at Nila in the Shortlands, the fellow there could top me up from his phone. Here’s what I know so far:

Check Balance: \*121# or \*155#, option 1

What’s My Number: \*777#

Purchase data: \*155# option 3

**Gaia – 2014:** Internet only in Gizo, Noro, Munda, and Honiara

Solomon apn : internet \*99#

### **1.10.3.2 Bmobile - Vodafone**

**From a wiki I found online – Mar 2019 (last update may be 2017):**

Bmobile launched in the capital city Honiara in 2010 as second mobile network. Like in Papua New Guinea they've signed a strategic partnership agreement with Vodafone in 2014 to have both their names co-branded.

#### **Network**

Their network uses 2G/GSM on 900 and 1800 MHz as well as 3G/UMTS 2100 MHz, no 4G/LTE yet. They currently operate in 4 provinces only, namely Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western Province and Central Province and expect to roll out their mobile network to additional provinces in the coming years. Their 3G has started only recently and is only available in the three urban areas of the Western Province.

As their coverage can't match that of Our Telekom and they offer only slightly lower rates, better make a coverage check before purchase.

#### **Availability**

Their prepaid SIM card is sold at their shops and sales points.

Top-ups can be found at many outlets.

Data feature packages Edit

Data by default are at SBD 0.99 per MB. These data bundles are offered:

<b>Price</b>	<b>Volume</b>	<b>Validity</b>
SBD 5	60 MB	24 hours
SBD 15	200 MB	2 days
SBD 20	360 MB	3 days

SBD 50 750 MB 7 days  
 SBD 90 1.25 GB 14 days  
 SBD 220 3 GB 30 days  
 SBD 500 7 GB 30 days

To activate, dial \*444#.

**More info**

APN: internet

Website: <http://www.bmobile.com.sb>

**1.10.4 Mail**

**1.10.5 News**

Here are some Solomon Islands News websites:

<http://www.solomonstarnews.com/>

<https://www.solomontimes.com/>

**1.11 Diving**

**1.12 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities**

**Soggy Paws – Aug 2019:** Another possible haulout facility if in the Gizo area, and Noel at Liapari cannot accommodate you, is the Kukundu “shipyard” on the west coast of Kolombangara. There is a small dock and a one-boat railway that is still operating, mainly for maintenance of SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) boats. We stopped in when cruising by, and confirmed it is still in operation, but I don’t have any contact info. Noel in Liapari may be able to help with contact info if you are desperate.

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** There are actually 3 haulout facilities in the Solomons (that we know of). We did a little “bommie” damage to our keel, and needed to do some maintenance on our saildrives.

We contacted all 3 shipyards and got verbal quotes to haul our 44 foot (14m) catamaran, and have her out for 5 days while we did the repairs we need. Here is approximately what it would cost:

	<b>Liapari</b>	<b>Sesape</b>	<b>Avi Avi</b>
<b>Location</b>	South End of Vella Lavella	In Tulagi Florida Islands Group	Near Tulagi Florida Islands
<b>Slipping Fee</b>	110/meter	350/meter	270/meter
<b>Blocking/Setup</b>		4000	3500
<b>Daily Fee</b>	72/meter/day	200/meter/day	175/meter/day

<b>Splash/Cleanup</b>	925		2500
<b>Insurance</b>		2.5% of ??	2.5% of ??
<b>Total for 14m/44ft for 5 days</b>	SBD 7,500 plus 10% tax	~SBD 19,370 plus tax?	~SBD 21,750 plus tax?
<b>Contact Info</b>	Noel Hudson <a href="mailto:Noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com">Noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com</a> +677 30441 +677 749-6021 (cell)	+677 32246 <a href="mailto:finance@sasape.com">finance@sasape.com</a>	<a href="https://aviavimarinaltd.jimdo.com/">https://aviavimarinaltd.jimdo.com/</a> Honiara: +677 30702 Tulagi: +677 29080 <a href="mailto:aviavihoniara@gmail.com">aviavihoniara@gmail.com</a> Slipway operation email address: <a href="mailto:aviavi@solomon.com.sb">aviavi@solomon.com.sb</a>

The two shipyards in/near Tulagi are commercial yards. Tulagi is a ~one hour (wet) outboard ride to Honiara, so getting supplies and repair materials is simpler. But neither location is very nice. Tulagi has a bad reputation for theft and boardings (though once up in the shipyard, there are probably guards/dogs)

**Liapari** is semi-commercial, but also a cruiser hangout. Noel and his wife Rosie have a nice area with a pavilion for cruiser happy hours and potlucks. With some forward planning, Noel can get stuff shipped in from Australia, or tell you where (if) you can find it in Gizo. They do have some basic cabins on the property, so you can live aboard or in one of their cabins (at extra cost, of course). Noel runs a shuttle to Gizo at least once a week.

Liapari has 2 slipways, one set up for monohulls and one for wider/bigger vessels up to 200 tons. The carriage on the big haulout is 24 feet wide, but there is a frame that can sit on the carriage and go under the bridge deck of a catamaran, to haul cats wider than 24 feet.

Power is available (240v) and water is nearby, out of a rain-fed tank (we used buckets as we didn't need much, but you could rig some kind of a hose if necessary).

Noel also has space at his dock for a few boats, and also a few moorings (anchoring space too, but around 50-55 ft deep). A number of cruisers have left boats with Noel for several months at a time. Liapari is above 8 degrees S, so theoretically out of the cyclone belt. The harbor is completely enclosed by 70% land and 30% reef, and would be fine to weather anything but a direct hit from a major cyclone (unlikely given its location).

### **1.13 Tsunami Information**

**Soggy Paws - March 2014:** The entire Pacific Basin is subject to tsunamis. Since we have been in the Pacific (5 years), there have been 3 significant tsunamis which have affected cruising locations (American Samoa and Tonga in 2009, South America, Galapagos & Panama in 2010, Hawaii & Mexico in 2011).

The tsunamis originate in various locations, but the worst origination locations were Japan and Chile, however, many 'tremors' happen in these locations that do not cause widespread tsunamis.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center website is located here:

<http://ptwc.weather.gov/>

If you have onboard email, it is a good idea to subscribe to tsunami warning emails while you are in the Pacific, which you can do on this website. It might be useful to first subscribe from your internet email for a little while, to understand what messages might be coming your way, and how often, before you chance clogging up your onboard email.

### **1.14 Cruising Information Sources**

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don't mind that we've gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don't have internet

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what 'a foot under the keel' means, for example.

Where it's important, we've annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

#### **1.14.1 Local Websites**

Here are some websites you should visit when you are looking for information on this area:

Sieling, Dirk and Brian Hepburn, Solomon Islands Cruising Guide; Island Cruising Association

- Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau: [www.visitsolomons.com.sb](http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb)
- Solomon Dive Adventures: [www.solomondiveadventures.com](http://www.solomondiveadventures.com)
- Zipolo Habu Resort: [www.zipolohabu.com.sb](http://www.zipolohabu.com.sb)

#### **1.14.2 Cruiser Reports**

For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser's websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of an SSCA bulletin. Much of the info has come directly from our cruising friends, helping to round out the information in our various Compendiums.

**Escape II – 2019-2020:** Escape II is a Perry 43 Catamaran - cruised from November 2019 - July 2020. Prices quoted in our comments are negotiable and will fluctuate, these prices are what we paid. Comments reflect this and are also our own based on our own experiences.

**Soggy Paws (with Ocelot, Berzerker, and Indigo II) (2019):** Cruising south from SE Asia in early 2019, and cruising as far as Honiara before turning around and heading back north. Berzerker

and Indigo II carried on to Vanuatu, and sent us back their anchorages and experiences.

<https://svsoggypaws.blogspot.com/>

**Screensaver (2017-2018):** Cruising south from SE Asia in 2017 and north back to SE Asia in 2018. Hunter monohull drawing about 6 ft. <https://screensaver49.wordpress.com/>

**L'il Explorers (2017/2018):** We are a family with five children aged 5 to 13 years old. Our boat is a 58' Kurt Hughes Catamaran with about a five foot draft.

Below you will find a write-up from our visit or Tikopia. We also visited Anuta (Cherry Island) in the Solomon Islands.

**Field Trip (2017)** – Field Trip is an Antares 44 catamaran, sailed into the Solomons in January 2017 from Vanuatu.

Adina (2015) -

**Westward II (2011)** - Westward II cruised through the Solomons in 2011, headed toward Vanuatu and Fiji.

#### ***1.14.3 Noonsite***

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

<http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/SolomonIslands>

#### ***1.14.4 Seven Seas Cruising Association***

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://www.scca.org>

#### ***1.14.5 Ocean Cruising Club***

The OCC is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a website and bi-annual publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. Membership is reasonable, and the publication is available electronically. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://oceancruisingclub.org>

## **1.15 Printed Sources**

### **1.15.1 Cruising Guides**

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).

**Solomon Islands Cruising Guide – Dirk Sieling – 2000:** Currently available as a reprint from Island Cruising Associations. Good but dated information.

**Cruising the Solomons – Alan Lucas – 1981:** We have a scanned copy that said it was reissued in 2000 by <http://CruisingBooks.com> I don't know if print copies are still available. We did find at least one area covered by Lucas that Sieling didn't cover (Sterling Island Group).

**Sail the Solomons – Dayle Smith – 1998:** We picked a paper copy of this up at a cruiser swap meet somewhere. It is a loose cruising guide, but does have some charts that we don't have in the other two guides, or in our current CM93 charts (Sterling Islands). The aerial photographs in this edition are unfortunately in black and white, so aren't much good for navigation.

**Bosun Bird – 2010 – Cruising Guides:** Alan Lucas' 30-year old guide is too outdated to be of much use; Warwick Clay's Pacific Anchorages has much more useful information (but he appears to be paranoid about what he terms "pestering").

The most substantial and useful guide is Dirk Sieling's Solomon Islands Cruising Guide, available through the Island Cruising Association in New Zealand.

**MV Waverly – 2014:** Don't go to the Solomons without getting a hold of Dirk Sielings 'Solomon Islands Cruising Guide' published in conjunction with the Islands Cruising Association. We met Dirk on our first trip to the Solomons and his guide, although quite old now, is still a fantastic source of information for anchorages (although we found some GPS co-ordinates were not to be relied upon).

### **1.15.2 Recommended Reading**

For background, we recommend the following books:

## 2 Passage Reports

### 2.1 *Sailing Here from Elsewhere*

#### 2.1.1 *From Micronesia*

A few boats a year make the trek from SE Asia or Micronesia down to PNG and the Solomons.

**Miss Behave – Palau to Ninigo – July/Aug 2014:** After clearing customs and immigration and paying the exit fees (many) we got underway at 11:11 am. Leaving Malakal Harbour (Palau) was the first hint that things were to be less than perfect with 20kts from the SW. Exiting the eastern channel was like jumping into a washing machine. 3m waves and 25 kts from the south. Currently we have a wisp of a Genoa up and a 2xreef in the main. Waves are 2-3 metres, wind is 180/15-20 steady. We are well and getting ready for a roughish night.

July 30: Well we woke to a calm day with 15 kts of wind on the beam. During the afternoon the wind has backed slightly and it is now 8 knots but we have averaged 5 kts most of the day. Clouds are building to the east meaning a chance of rain. A small low was forecast. I had a sleep at 2pm and just as I woke we had a double hook up of 2kg mackerel landing both. It was sashimi for a late lunch and we will BBQ grill the other this afternoon. We are still heading east as much as we can before the winds turn SE.

6 39.0'N:137 09.2'E 120|5kts|10|180, 170 nm ESE of Palau - Weather is good.

Aug 1: 05 29.0'N:139 40.0'E 130|5kts|5|130, 640 miles from Manus Island

It was an eventful afternoon. Out of the blue we saw a small house floating on it's lonesome. Sitting in the middle of nowhere was a hut on a bamboo platform. No one there, no radar reflectors, nothing. It contained a small bed and was likely a fishing platform. Not the thing you want to hit in the middle of the night. As we pulled away from it a lovely yellow fin tuna took our lure and ended up as dinner. The winds that had been coaxing us east stopped abruptly leaving us no option than to start the engine. After 15 minutes, the engine overheat alarm sounded. A pipe from the heat exchanger had popped off. I changed the raw water impeller and all is good.

Aug 2: 02 49.5'N:152 16.9'E 150|5|10|120, 300 miles

We had a great night sailing last night and tonight seems to be more of the same. Today we hooked a nice small tuna which we ate for dinner.

Kevin's advice to a friend via email: I think that the conduct of your passage here will be totally reliant on getting several days of favourable winds which seem unlikely so make sure you load up on diesel and have a reliable engine.

We sailed initially for Ninigo then Hermit then Manus then ended up back in Ninigo.

**Elizabeth Jane II – August 2014:** This is actually Palau to Solomons with a stop at Kapingamaranga.

Contrary to the weather forecasts that we were reading before leaving Palau, we were rocketing south and east and within 2 days we were being treated like royalty by the sea and enjoying the 2 kt east setting current at 140° longitude. Combine this counter current (so named because it runs opposite to the predominant current which sets slowly with the west bound trade winds) with 15-20kts of westerly winds and we were making an amazing 160nm a day which helped lift our spirits on this 2000nm journey to the Solomon Islands. The trip was not without its perils though; we were sailing through a low-pressure system that was forming into a tropical low further north. This meant that we were experiencing lots of squalls, some that we could see forming hours in advance and others that had the rigging singing before we know what was upon us. Most packed some hefty winds of up to 35kts, with rain and then they whipped up the seas often creating some mighty uncomfortable swell conditions. We used the wind vane steering feature on our auto pilot which made for some seriously lazy sailing, as our rudder would turn the boat when the wind shifted (which was extremely often and up to 1800 in the squally conditions) so we didn't have to continually gybe, which was handy when only one of us was on watch.

At 2am on day 5 the heavens opened and sent a torrent of rain that would have had Noah running for his raincoat and gumboots. The rain turned our deck into a swimming pool, ably caught to fill our water tanks. The 6 hour long deluge ended and took with it our spirits and the wind. But as the grey day emerged we saw that we had chipped away at our total passage distance by almost one third.

Day 6 marked the end of our fresh beef stores, we had been spoiling ourselves with beef stews, curries and stroganoff, the memory of Palau lingering.

Through the driving rain I could see a pod of dolphins having a right party in our bow wave and the swell. I imagine they did not want to pop their noses out of the ocean for too long, otherwise they might get a cold from the rain. The sea temperature was 29C, while the rain and wind made for a nippy time out of our nice protected cockpit.

Conditions? Well we had some reasonable swell, up to 3m and buffeting us from every angle. It made for an uncomfortable trip and had me slinking into corners with a green tinge taking notable shape on my face. Hugh's long hours of studying the historical weather patterns and daily viewing of the counter current location on the US NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) website had really paid its dues. Averaging 6 kts of boat speed plus 2-3kts of favourable current meant that we were getting through the long isolated ocean part of the journey at pace. The wind was always blowing, at between 10-20kts, but the direction varied almost by the minute. Relying on our wind vane steering made life a bit easier.

Day 8 saw the end of the low pressure system and therefore the strong winds. The wind was being extremely temperamental and only routing near squally storms could we gain some wind to propel us forward. The wind was so light and variable that the sails would flap and the boom would bang, while the chop from the swell would roll the boat from side to side. The easing up of the wind did not correlate to a more comfortable ride. So using the motor we would make some distance and sail when the wind decided to join us. We were also slowly making a bit of southerly heading and were approaching the unattractive equator and its notoriously hot and wind-free conditions.

A few fish caught made for some lovely fresh dinners.

On day 10 we bid the counter current adieu as it began to sweep northeast, weakening before disappearing below the surface entirely. Unfortunately our daily miles had dropped significantly to around the 100nm mark. The wind was still being fluky, but we were strategically planning our proposed arrival at Kapingamarangi Atoll, 250nm from the nearest atoll and 400nm from its mother-state island of Pohnpei (part of the Federate States of Micronesia), to ensure that we arrived at the best time of the day to make the tricky reef entry without incident. The atoll is a roughly squashed circular shape, an encircled lagoon ringed by reef with spotted sand bars located 1.5m above the high tide mark. We had some pretty poor information about the place and our maps left a lot to be desired.

The full moon and a spring tide would make for ideal entry conditions to the lagoon and on Day 12 we were 25nm away at 7am. It was a steady sail north to the atoll and we were getting very excited and apprehensive about our intended stopping point.

1200nm, 12 days at sea and this was our first sighting of land. Paradise found!

**Kapinga to Solomons:** Still glowing from the magical break we had had at Kapingamarangi Atoll we launched into our next challenge, the final 700nm to the Solomon Islands western province. We sailed east initially, aiming to get more easting before we got stuck in the south-east trade winds that blow up the northern coast of Solomon and Bougainville Islands.

We were located at around 1 degree north of the equator and as such there was not much wind and it was hot. My was it hot. It was also still enough for us to jump in and have a cool off swim into water that was so clear and such an intense blue it did not give away the depth of the water that our charts stated were 4000m. But nothing could shelter us from the squalls, as the sun slowly dipped below the horizon we sailed into darkness as thunderstorms raged off each quarter of the boat. The storms would bring intense short rain downpours proceeded by 20kt wind blasts and 100 degree wind shifts. At dawn light would glimmer on the eastern horizon and become a searing globe by 8am and leave dim markers on the western horizon by 7pm. Dramatic cloud formations would tower into the stratosphere, leaving a sense of foreboding about the night ahead full of squally rains and strong wind bursts.

We were trawling a line but not until we angled south and passed through the choppy Bougainville Strait did we pick up a mackerel for dinner.

The shifting winds moving every 20 minutes or so made for extremely tiresome sailing. We rigged all the sheets and launched the spinnaker only for the wind to puff out and a squall to gather off port, shifting the wind. We dropped the spinnaker. The wind would blast at 25 kts for 10 minutes then puff out and we would be left suffering the swell generated by the storm gone past. Finally we crossed the equator (passing a customary drink of rum to King Neptune on our way through) which boosted our hopes for favourable wind to take the final push south.

The last two days of passage wore us out with strong winds, big choppy seas and storms that would not let up. We hove to for 6 hours to try and let it pass. Pass it did as the 35kt winds slowly moved off to the west. This trip had really worked our patience and we were tired and snapping at each other. Probably a result of doing two long passages back-to-back with only a 3

day respite in the middle. As if King Neptune knew, to brighten our spirits we were gifted with a dolphin escort into the Solomon waters. Such a beautiful and welcome sight.

As we made our way to the north of Vella Lavella Island, we negotiated the tricky reef entry into Geva Harbour, slowly creeping our way over a shallow coral bar. But as we dropped anchor on the edge of the mangrove ringed cove, all we could hear was silence, interjected with a myriad of bird calls and the rustle of palm trees. Night was not far behind and lightning illuminated the sky as it flashed over the mountains in the distance.

Another Pacific Ocean stint, 700nm completed in 7 days. We were exhausted and very pleased to be in such a tranquil river to sleep off our long eastward passage - 19 sea-days and 2000nm from Palau. Welcome to the Solomon Islands!

**Amante – Chuuk to New Ireland (PNG) – Before 2014:** When people think of Doldrums they think of light winds. This afforded us a chance to try out our cruising chute, which had moldered for 2 years after we bought it off a boat in Tonga. It was very helpful in reducing our fuel consumption, which is good because diesel cost about USD \$4/gal in Micronesia. It worked well: we could go 7.5 knots in a 10 knot quartering wind, 4.5 with 6 knots.

For those who think the Doldrums are all light winds, be advised that squalls are common. Once we crossed to the south side of the ITCZ (Intertropical Convergence Zone) we started to get nasty stuff and adverse winds, so down went the chute and up went the "Iron Main", i.e. we started motoring for the last 2 days.

After about 5 days we arrived at Kavieng, at the west end of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea.

**Lorelei – June 2013 - Kosrae to Gizo:** We were visited by Kosrae immigration officials in the afternoon and were stamped out and required to leave by 6pm.

Just as we got back to Lorelei and had everything ready to go, Kosrae gave us one more taste of the volatile weather with a wild storm that came over the mountain and doused us with a lot of rain.

It hadn't let up by dusk, so we pulled the pin on leaving and went to bed. We left at 6am the following morning.

The route (in a direct line) was to be 815nm to the first Island in the Solomons and then an additional 80nm from there to Gizo, the capitol of the Western Province.

We motored down the protected side of Kosrae in the wind shadow of the high hills but once clear we set sail and took off. We were reaching beam-on in 14 knots and surprisingly doing over 10!! Turns out we had a 3 knot current assistance that we held for the first 3 hours. After that the current dropped a little but we did hold about 1 – 1.5 knots for the whole trip.

We managed to sail 172nm in the first day (24 hours) and did 160 and 162 for days 2 and 3. We were stoked – 2.5 days into it and we were already half way to the first landfall in the Solomons.

Slowly the wind died and by day 4 we were motor sailing and on day 5 it was all sails down and motoring along.

We sighted land at 10am on day 5 which was Choiseul Island at the top end of the country.

We had to motor 20nm through a wide pass that came up to 15m depth before dropping back to 100m and back up to 10m at the other end.

The trolling through that stretch was amazing and the best we have ever had. There were fish everywhere busting the surface and birds working the schools all around. We trolled with 2 rods and barely had time to set the 1st and start on the 2nd one before the 1st would go screaming off.

We experimented with different lures and tried to use bigger lures to get big fish and reduce the smaller fish hook ups but they still went screaming off within a few minutes with the bigger fish!! At one stage we had a double hook up on large Dolphin fish which proved to be fun. After 2 hours we had caught 7 different species and kept the medium sized yummiest ones while releasing all the others.

Once through the pass, we set sail again in light winds and flat seas for the 80nm run up "The Slot", around the extinct volcanic island of Kolombangarra and into Gizo.

The sail was relaxing under a full moon until about 3am when the storms hit dousing us with rain and squally winds. We simply dropped sails and motored the final 15nm to the pass which was next to Panapagha Island.

As we came into the very narrow entry thru the reef, we came up over a section only 10m deep and 20m wide. Out of nowhere a big marlin busted through some bait fish right in front of Lorelei with its head out slashing from side to side. It saw Lorelei and took off tail walking and jumping clean out of the water right past us. We were so amazed with the show we nearly ran Lorelei onto the reef surrounding Panapagha Island!!

Overall the passage was a pleasant one. We were able to sleep well, cook, eat and clean. Paul even spent 2 mornings polishing the stainless steel!

We sailed/motored a total of 937nm in 6 days and 3 hours.

### **2.1.2 From the Philippines**

**Soggy Paws – January 2019:** We left Davao Philippines on January 1, and arrived at the east end of Waisai in Raja Ampat (Indonesia) on Jan 12, where we met up with several buddy boats (Ocelot from USA, Indigo II from Australia, and Berzerker from England) headed for PNG.

From Waisai, we followed Gaia's advice below (see From Indonesia). We had following winds, seas, and current for the trip down to Waisai. We only had a couple of overnight runs, and dayhopped through NE Indonesia down to Waisai.

However, it would be easily possible to sail off direct to the Ninigos from Davao. In January and February, the N-NW winds would make this an easy sail.

### **2.1.3 To/From Indonesia**

**Soggy Paws – January / February 2019:** We followed Gaia's advice, leaving Waisai on January 14. We did mostly day hops along the coast in light following winds between Waisai and Biak.

We cleared out of Indo in Biak, and did a "last" provisioning. We day hopped across to the last Indonesian island east of Biak, and set out for the 3 day passage to the Ninigos from there. We spent a week in the Ninigos in mostly windy rainy weather (all from the W-NW). We day-hopped to the Hermits and spent about a week there. Then we did an overnight to Three Island Harbor, New Hanover.

We finally cleared in to PNG at Kavieng. There is no Immigration in Kavieng, but we applied by email ahead of time and received an e-visa on arrival, allowing Customs to clear us in in Kavieng. We cleared out of PNG in Rabaul, and then mostly day-hopped south and east to the Shortland Islands, Solomons. We were cleared into the Solomons by the Immigration officer who happened to be visiting, and we will complete our clearance in Gizo when we arrive there.

**Gaia – January 2014:** On January 5th this year we sailed off to Ninigo, PNG, from Waisai in Raja Ampat. We did a lot of research before we left. We read as much as possible on the internet, talked to as many people that might have info, and we investigated the weather.

Safety is a real issue. Overall you can say that mainland is a no go area for yachties. But on the internet is also a lot written about areas where we are very welcome. We've plotted them, and the ones we've seen so far has been the best of all places. Ninigo, Hermit, New Ireland, and right now we are in Atauu (last PNG atoll). After this we will continue to Vanuatu, in May.

But season is a different thing. There is only 1 moment you can travel from West to East, and that is during the NW monsoon season. And that season starts somewhere in December and ends somewhere end of April. The best months are Jan-March. During the season you will have the wind with you and also the current.

All the bad stories we read came from sailors that were sailing against the season. Especially if you want to sail to the East against the very strong SE season, which starts in mid May.

If you plan to go to Vanuatu, make sure you don't reach Vanuatu in the middle of cyclone season. The non-cyclone season is from the end of April till November.

#### **2.1.4 To/From PNG**

**Miss Behave – August 2014:** Well, after 5 days of less than fine sailing weather we crossed the border from PNG and arrived in Solomon Islands this morning. The last 2 days have not been pleasant. VLFTS (Very Large Fucking Thunder Storms), Engine Throttle cable failure, Engine Governor Hunting, Minor lightning strike which was fun since I was holding the safety rail at the time. I can say that lightning has a short sharp and sweet manner of attracting ones attention and telling you to get yer hands off that which can be conducted along.

The GRIB wind files for our route have all been wrong and in cases 180 degrees so and 10 kts of speed in error. Anyhow all in a days 'fun' sailing.

We passed through Bougainville Passage this morning at first light. We took the Eastern most passage. We had 3kts of 'good' current for 2 hours prior to entering the passage then averaged 2.5 kts till well out then hit an upwelling and eddy which ended the current abruptly. Very strange but well received assistance.

We tacked several times down the Bougainville Coast and since Kavieng have used more than 300 litres of diesel. All I can say is go as far east as you are prepared to go before heading for Ghizo.

**Mokisha – May 2013:** We have arrived in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. We left the Solomon Islands, for the second time, June 8th. We got beat up so bad in the first attempt we went back to Rendova to make some repairs and gather resolve. With the second attempt, on a good forecast, we got beat up again but we persevered. The second time was complicated by Colleen suffering the onset of Dengue fever. More subtle symptoms were gathering over previous days and the death of her Aunt Kathy but the real deal came on with the bad weather. We didn't see the sun for the next 2 days. The second night featured torrential rain and frequent ship traffic.

We arrived in the Louisiades at the SE end and entered the Calvados Group at Snake Passage. This 6 mile passage from sea was featureless and could not be seen until we were within less than a quarter mile. From there we sailed about 10 miles per day through the Calvados to Verdano and then checked in at Misima. At this point we were on the fast track to Port Moresby so we could be in the Sail Indonesia Rally to Kupang, Indonesia.

#### **2.1.5 From Philippines**

**Miss Behave – July/Aug 2014:** Miss Behave originally left from the Philippines in June, and stopped in Palau and PNG before heading for the Solomons. Philippines to Palau is pretty nice in June, but the subsequent legs were not so great at that time of year.

**Forza – 2000:** We left Surigao late July and had very light winds mainly from the SW, so we took 17 days with a lot of motoring. Initially current was south going before we picked up the equatorial counter current but south of the equator we ran into strong adverse current which we then battled all the way to the Hermit Isles and, in fact all the way to New Ireland.

If we did the trip again we would seriously consider staying north of the equator in the counter current until north of Kavieng, New Ireland then dropping down. We found the wind, swell and current combination meant we could make southing fairly easily but easting was a real problem. Boats following later in August had better wind from the sw but still found the same easting problems as they approached PNG.

Once south of the equator we experienced frequent heavy squalls with tremendous thunderstorms.

#### **2.1.6 From Vanuatu**

**Screensaver – July 2018 – Banks Islands to Vanikolo:** Another rough trip with seas 3-5m Seas and wind I don't think ever dropped below 25knts sitting around 30knts for most of the trip. Speed wasn't that much of a problem because the seas were pretty much beam on, but because they were high and steep, even Screensaver being as high as it is dumped more than a few at me in the cockpit.

**Field Trip – January 2017:** On paper, this was to be a beautiful sail - winds abeam or just behind the entire way, winds between 12 and 18 knots, and swell of about a meter from

behind. BUT... gibs aren't always accurate and passage planning is never a sure thing. If I've learned anything over the past 25,000 miles of sailing, it is this - never set your heart on what weather forecasts or route planners predict. Plan for the worst, and be pleasantly surprised at anything better.

Mark had high hopes to not run a motor the entire 28-hour trip, but within the first few hours, we were bobbing along with flapping sails at less than 2 knots. Where was that 12-18 knots? Motors ran for 8 hours total on and off and the sails went up and down during a squally night.

By 9 a.m. on the first day out, Mark realized that our fishing lines had been tangling for the past 2 hours. They were a twisted, knotted mess! We figured out a detangling strategy and took turns unspinning and re-winding the line on two hand reels. It was a tedious task, but doable given the light weather (I couldn't imagine sitting there examining knots in rough seas! Makes me ill just thinking about it!)

Finally, at about 2 in the afternoon, we got to a knot that was impossible to untwist and untangle. We had to cut and splice the fishing line, but Mark was glad to have saved the amount of line we did after his initial, less hopeful assessment. It kept us all busy and distracted, though. Even provided a few laughs seeing who could think up the best techniques. At one point, Elizabeth was lying face-up on the floor, making one spool orbit the other. Who needs iPads and movies when you've got tangled fishing lines to entertain you?

When we were an hour away from the entrance to Nnendo, a strong squall came across us bringing a torrential downpour that forcibly rinsed any saltwater off the decks and revealed a leaky hatch in the salon that would need to be fixed. It also brought a cool breeze that filled the sails and had us broad reaching at 120 degrees and speeding along the flat water at 8 knots. Not all storms are bad news...

There are two entrances to Graciosa Bay - one narrow pass on the southwest side between Mola Island and the mainland, and the wide mouth of the bay on the north side. It's always a tricky decision to make whether to navigate the pass or take the long way to the easy entrance. Many factors are in play now that we are in a very remote area. Fuel is a precious commodity, especially since winds here at this time of year tend to be light to non-existent. Motoring around to the top would be using fuel unnecessarily, perhaps. On the other hand, tide and current tables aren't very accurate for this region, and we've never been through this southern pass before. Would the current be with us or against us? How strong would it be? Mark looked at the satellite images, and traced a clear path onto the chart plotter, but we'd need good lighting and with these squalls coming through, there are no guarantees of that.

I tend to be the cautious one. I'd take the long way around. If we ran aground in the pass and damaged the boat, there are no marinas or chandleries within hundreds of miles. And certainly no coast guard or emergency rescue services! But Mark thinks in terms of efficiency. Why burn fuel to go around when there's a clear entrance nearby? Since I was at the helm, Mark said it was my choice. I do not make decisions easily. I put the engines in neutral while my mind plays all the possible scenarios on overdrive. Finally, I decide. It's not worth the risk - we'll go all the way to the north. But Mark has already put all the sails away and does not want to bring them

out again, which means burning fuel. I turn away from the pass entrance, prepared to take the long way anyway. Mark concedes, and heads to bed for some much-needed rest.

I sit idling, still not confident in my decision. I know what Mark would do. I don't want to be a wimp about it. Matt breaks my contemplative silence with a call on the VHF.

"We're going through the pass. These clouds aren't moving, and it looks good from here."

"Okay. You go first, and I'll follow you in!"

What a sheep I am! I turn the wheel back toward the entrance and say a prayer.

"Light is good. Reefs are easily visible and there's plenty of room. We've got 1 knot with us now," Matt updates from the pass.

I get Mark up, and tell him we're going through and I need him on reef watch at the bow. I know my indecision tests his patience, but thankfully he doesn't complain.

Matt gives another report. "No problem. Just leave the anchored boat to starboard and it's wide open."

The clouds loom over the nearby shore, threatening to block the sun, but they never do. We glide between the visible reef walls on either side of us, around the anchored boat, and out into the choppy water where the current meets the calm water of the bay. It sure was nice to have someone go first, though!

I relish the calm waters of the protected bay and the idea of entering yet another new country. What will this season be like? What adventures and challenges will it bring? What will the Solomon Islands teach us?

### **2.1.7 To/From Australia**

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** Late September, and we were sailing with moderate trades towards Townsville, Queensland. During the five days between Guadalcanal and Flinders Reef we luxuriated in consistent easterlies and settled seas. On day six the wind backed to northeast force 4, and our first contact with Australia came with the close flyby of Coastwatch Flight 162 who apparently photographed the yacht twice while interrogating me over the VHF.

Vigilance replaced complacency when strong northerlies coincided with our new moon baptism through the Great Barrier Reef via Palm Passage, a popular ship route. The risk was acceptable given current Australian charts, GPS, radar and a couple of strategically placed lights. We hurtled into the black void of foul night under full sail, a little wary and apprehensive and with a keen eye on the sonar.

Dawn, and stark naked Australia stood.

## **2.2 *Between Stops in Solomons***

### **2.2.1 *Between Treasury Islands and Shortland Islands and Vella Lavella***

**Soggy Paws – March 2019 – From Stirling Inner Anchorage to Vatoro Bay, Vella Lavella.** In March, we had light winds and sunny skies, with a light wind from the N and a little current from the SE. We had to motorsail this leg to get in before dark

**Soggy Paws – August 2019 – From Vatoro Bay to Stirling Island:** August in the Gizo area was mostly rainy and somewhat windy, with a few days scattered in that were beautiful sunny days with light winds. We picked a day to do this leg that had 15-20 knots SE forecast, 2m seas, and some rain. That's pretty much exactly what we got. It was a boisterous, fast sail.

### **2.2.2 *Between Honiara and Roderick Bay***

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** We did the passage between Honiara and Roderick Bay about 6 times, once for just a daytrip to pick up our passports from the PNG High Commission. We always had fairly changeable wind (wind speed and direction) due to the large island of Guadalcanal and the Florida Group. We mostly sailed this, but always ended up motoring in on both ends.

**Carina – 2012:** The GRIB files showed 8kn from the ESE and we were only going 29 miles, so we didn't worry too much about sailing slowly. Motoring out of the harbor and then almost due north on flat seas and with calm winds towards Nggela Sule ("GAY la SUE la") Island, we pointed Carina's bow to its north end at Sandfly Passage, off of which lies Roderick Bay, our destination.

A few miles out—perhaps out of Guadalcanal's wind shadow— winds suddenly increased to 20+kn so we shut down the engine and close-reached at a consistent 6.5kn under triple-reefed main and about half of our 120% genoa. The wind came with short-period, 2.5m beam-to waves that built very quickly in Iron Bottom Sound.

The passage was a bit like a carnival ride and we hung on and enjoyed it as our Monitor windvane steered most of the way across. Our crossing went very quickly—so much for worrying about a slow crossing—until we entered Sandfly Passage when a strong opposing current slowed our progress as we battled "noselily" katabatic gusts that varied from 10-37kn!

Luckily, we only had to motor into the wind and current for less than five miles before we turned the corner into Roderick Bay where four other sailboats were at anchor or moored.

### **2.2.3 *New Georgia to Santa Isabel***

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** We left from the NE corner of Vangunu Island / Marovo Lagoon, via Kokoana Passage, and headed east of Santa Isabel. Trying to go SE in SE trades is not exactly great sailing. The trouble is if you are coming from Asia or Philippines as we did, then you really don't have a choice, because SE trades run at least 80% of year to varying degrees. So faced with this, I usually sail as near to east as I can (in SE) and then as near to south as I can. So this leg and the anchorage was all about getting east, and hopefully sailing it.

The weather forecasts here have been worse than usual, and while I don't expect them to forecast squalls, I do expect them to forecast sustained 30+ knots, instead of 15-20 they forecasted for this leg. So as we three boats set off, I at least was expecting 15-20 maybe 25, but not 30, and dropping off early morning, probably leaving us motoring the last 5-10nm. The 30 did drop off slowly thankfully and by around 11:00am we were having a brisk sail.

The wind did back off in the afternoon eventually and to my surprise we got a good push of at least 1-1.5 knts. This anchorage wasn't in my planning, and hence I had no GE image. Internet had been broken for some time and credit had also run out. I emailed my brother (via HF) and asked if he could send me a small cut down image just so I had something else as a guide, so in the end we made it in good time.

#### **2.2.4 *Between Russell Islands and Honiara***

**Soggy Paws – March 2019:** We left our anchorage at the top of the Russell Islands at the crack of dawn, and had nice SW winds, we had a fast sail in the open water, but the wind dropped off as we neared the Guadalcanal coast. We had to motor the rest of the way in.

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** We left the east side of Russell Islands with an open mind, figuring we would either end up in the Florida Islands (i.e. East) or on Guadalcanal (SSE) whichever gave the best sailing line. As soon as we got clear of the Russell group, conditions were pretty bad with 30 plus knot wind gusts and short sharp seas. I very nearly turned back, but the weather forecast such as it was showed no sign of this, or anything changing.

Screensaver punched into more than I would like falling heavily on the next wave. There is a contour line along our route with 1200-1300m on one side and 500 to 800m on the other side. So effectively there was a 500-600m mountain beneath us. The ridge was right on our course, and while I tried running off, I would have had to go a long way off course to avoid it. In the end we punched our way through it and got to the NW tip of Guadalcanal where I had hoped we would find shelter behind the reef. But it wasn't to be and after 30 min I decided enough was enough. We ended up around 10 nm along the western side of Guadalcanal at Kole Point.

From there we made our way to Honiara the next day.

#### **2.2.5 *Between Russell Islands and Marovo Lagoon***

**Soggy Paws – May 2019 – Eastbound:** We left the nice Mbili inside anchorage almost in the dark

## 3 Western Province

### 3.1 Islands in the Bouganville Strait

#### 3.1.1 Oema Atoll

**Screensaver – August 2017:** 06 38.91 S / 156 06.43 E Anchor in 27m, sand/coral, Cell 2G PNG & 2G Solomon's Breeze. The trip down saw us burning diesel once again predominately due to lack of wind and only a small current against us. Oema is a nice stop with next to no sea action and no residence, so no canoes. Getting in was easy enough, but it is a deep anchorage. The beach was pretty cool and one could walk around the whole Island in about hour.

Like PNG & Indo many of these remote Islands have small huts and cooking camps where locals come out here to fish for perhaps several days catch there fish and return home.

#### 3.1.2 Fauro Island

**Screensaver – August 2017 – NW Anchorage:** 06 50.86 S / 156 02.14 E Fauro Island NW Corner: 13nm SSE, Anchor in 29m Sand/Coral, Breeze 2G (Some PNG 2G) Breeze or B Mobile which is Vodafone seems to have far better coverage up the top end of Solomon's and as yet I have not picked up Telekom the other carrier.

Oema Island seems uninhabited and hence an attraction but a couple of spots I tried to anchor were over 30m so we headed down through the channel between Ovau Island and Fauro. The current through here was heading SW with some determination. I tried a couple more spots to anchor but again they were all deep 30+m and some with 4knts of current only metres away.

Eventually we found a spot on a bit of coral knob and I just had to hope that we didn't pull the anchor of the hill we dropped it on. Just behind the beach is a lagoon not all that big, but it is said that there is a airplane in the lagoon from the war days.

None of us were that sure whether we wanted to potentially end up as food for someone's handbag so after some deliberation we decided the mystique of the plane and its history could remain unchallenged and hidden.

Instead we told ourselves any crocs would not travel the mere 100m from the lake and we stuck to the waters in the bay. The coral is definitely better than what we have seen further north. The water is noticeably cooler and as a layman to likes of underwater world I put the improvement in the Coral down to cool water temperature.

**Screensaver – Aug 2017 – Fauro Island West (Opposite Asie Island):** 06 52.93 S / 156 03.98 E Anchor 30m, Sand, 2G Breeze. With the expectation of some wind and rain being camped on a knob didn't seem to be a wise choice so we moved down the road a bit.

The water wasn't as clear here but the fish were much more friendly. Given they weren't being hand feed they still had no fear and were quite happy to come within inches, all be it they were mostly under 30cm.

**Screensaver – August 2017 – Fauro Island SW:** 06 55.84 S / 156 03.46 E Anchor in mid/sand 14m, 2G BMobile.

### **3.1.3 Balalae**

**Screensaver – August 2017:** 12m, sand/coral, no cell.

This has always been one of the places I liked in Solomon's. No one lives on the island and it seldom sees locals due to its wartime history. The beach and Island as a whole is pretty much how it would have been back in WWII I would imagine.

One has to go for a walk at this place as there is still lots of WWII stuff there. So we set off for the trek through the bush. After about an hour or so walking and stopping to ponder the assorted WWII mechanical bits we get to the airfield and then on further to a collection of planes under a covered roof.

On our return trip Kim and I decided to go back via the beach, while Ken and Isaac followed another track. I wasn't long after starting our return trip back when Kim and I came across quite a few trees that had fallen down partially blocking the beach, and we had to wade through the huge ( 12") Reef Shark infested (3 or 4 ) waters.

### **3.1.4 Shortland Islands**

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019:** We (4 boats in a fleet) came down from PNG, checking out of Rabaul, and stopping overnight at English Cove, New Ireland; Ramun Bay, SW Buka; and Torakina Harbor, W Bouganville. The entire trip was pretty much a motor, with very light and variable winds. Occasionally we had up to a knot of current against us. We had off and on 2G cell phone signal from Digicel almost all the way to the Shortlands, and I still received a couple of SMS's while in the Shortlands.

Arriving in the vicinity of the Shortlands after a 60 nm day, we had planned to stop at an atoll NW of Shortland Island (just because we didn't think we could make it the whole way into Shortland Island in daylight). The only name on the charts in this atoll is Tuluve Island.

The atoll, on the charts, had two small islands, and an inner reef. CM93 indicated it was shallow enough inside to anchor. However, when we arrived, we found 100+ foot depths, and only a couple of tiny pinnacles that were anchoring depths—but not really suitable to anchor. This atoll is at approx 06 58.5 S / 155 33.3 E.

At the same time, one of our boats had arrived ahead of the rest of us and anchored by themselves off the NW coast of Shortland Island, at approximately 07 00.5 S / 155 40.1 E. After an hour or so there, they were approached by 4 "banana boats" (fiberglass boats with 40HP outboards) with 8 guys total. These guys, some of whom were clearly drunk, were aggressive and hostile, saying that they shouldn't be anchoring there and they would report them to the officials. They tried to come aboard but our friends managed to keep them off. This harassment went on for nearly an hour, with drunken guys trying to come aboard (but no weapons visible) and this typical cruising couple trying to defuse the situation in any way they could. In the end, they offered the guys 200 SD (all they had), to leave, and they hauled anchor and left. One drunken guy was still standing in their dinghy and hanging onto the side of the boat after they got underway (for at least 10 minutes), and eventually had to be beat off with a winch handle. The boats followed them for a few minutes, but eventually peeled off and went

away. This couple subsequently made a report to the police in the Shortlands. They had gotten pictures and some video of the guys when they first approached.

This incident scared all of us (the rest of us had just arrived in VHF range as they were running away), and so we collectively decided to go all the way into Shortland Harbor that night, arriving around 11pm in the outer anchorage. We were fortunate that we had nearly a full moon and calm conditions, and pretty good satellite charts for this route (as the CM93 charts are quite a long way off in the Shortlands). There was quite an adverse current as we headed SE toward Shortland Harbor. We **anchored** that night at **07-04.83 S / 155-52.85 E** in about 40-45 ft, over what looked (on the fishfinder) like flat sand bottom.

The next morning, we were awakened by 2 police boats full of serious looking guys. They asked us a few questions, and then requested that all boats follow them into an anchorage in **Kulitanai Bay**. We dropped our **anchor** at **07-04.57 S / 155-51.41 E**. This is a large protected bay with a nice flat bottom in 45-55 ft, with very little current (unlike the area inside Shortland Harbor). The police living quarters are on the hill on the south side of the bay overlooking the anchorage, so we felt very safe there, and did not worry about leaving the boats unattended while we explored the area. It's a short dinghy ride around to Nila, where there is a Catholic Mission, and a small village (unnamed on our chart) across the channel from Nila.

It just so happened that an Immigration officer who covers the area between the north end of Choiseul (Taro) and the Shortlands, was visiting the area for an exercise involving the local police, visiting police from other areas, and a few visiting Australians. This is in preparation for whatever happens with the Bougainville Independence referendum that is planned for July.

Contact info: Benzily Kasutaba, Immigration Officer  
Cell: 712-3673 email: [bkasutaba@commerce.gov.sb](mailto:bkasutaba@commerce.gov.sb)

Benzily was quite professional, but also very helpful, promising to help one of our boats secure the Immigration letter they need to fly out and fly back in to the Solomons with no return ticket (always a problem in every country when flying back in to return to your boat).

We spent 3 days hanging out in this nice anchorage and seeing the sights.

On day 1, we met Father Stanislaus, a Catholic Priest originally from Myanmar, and he loaned us a local guide to take us up into the hills behind the church to see what was left of the Japanese WWII installations. Our guides were Manu and Francis, two very nice guys who knew where most of the good stuff was. Father Stanislaus asked for a donation to the church in return, and we gave him SD 30 from each boat, and gave the guides each SD 15 per boat. We were fortunate to have acquired some Solomons Dollars from other cruisers before arrival, as there are no banks or money exchanges until you get to Gizo. (Currently 8 SD per 1 USD).

On day 2, we arranged with John Kotaru of the Tuha Traveler's Lodge across from Nila, to organize a trip to Balalae Island, where the Japanese had a major air base. (Cell: 793-4498, but be advised that cell coverage is very thin in the Shortlands). After quite a bit of negotiation, we agreed on a fee of 1400 SD to cover a banana boat big enough to fit all 8 of us, and guides (to go 5-6 miles across to Balalae), fuel, the "council of chiefs" fee, and guide(s). Split across 4 boats, this came to about \$22 USD per person. It was a little high, but way less than what John

originally asked. We kicked around taking one of the big boats over, but anchoring in that area is a little dicey (too deep/too shallow, currents, and exposure to wind). And it was a bit far to go in the dinghies.

Balalae was pretty amazing. As we pulled up on the beach, there were airplanes! Apparently, most of these planes were originally located around the runway, which is a 15 minute hike through the jungle. But recently some Australian contracted with someone (it's not clear to us who) to haul these planes out of the jungle and ship them to Australia. So a team of 75-100 workers (hired from elsewhere in the Solomons) came and hacked the planes out of the jungle, transporting them manually on pallets made of bamboo (and some of these re BIG twin-engine Betty Bombers). Fortunately, the local people saw what was happening and stopped it before their WWII treasures were hauled off to Australia.

The beach where we landed is 0659.75 S / 155-53.13 E. There are about 10 plans in various stages of disrepair there. From there find the inland road and walk left toward the airstrip. There is one plane that made it halfway to the beach along that road, and then the buildings at the end of the airstrip. There are a number of airplanes in the jungle near the airstrip—get a guide if you want to see these. The airstrip is still in good shape, and is kept mowed every 2 weeks.

On day 3, we went searching for the seaplanes that we had heard were in the harbor. With a few waypoints from other cruisers, and a little help from Joseph, who had been one of our guides the day before, we found most of them. Though Dirk Sieling's cruising guide gives 2 definitive waypoints, we searched the one in shallower water and found nothing, and the other one was in 50+ feet, too deep for snorkeling. We understand that there have been at least 2 tsunamis in the area since Sieling's book was published, so the wreckage may have moved.

Here is the list of what we found, just snorkeling. All are somewhat visible from the surface in decent light:

Plane	Latitude	Longitude	Depth	Description
#1	07 05.331 S	155 51.782 E	15 ft	Airplane wing, off Nila Pier
#2	07 05.336 S	155 51.775 E	15 ft	Airplane float, off Nila Pier
#3	07 05.307 S	155 51.796 E	20 ft	Jake, upright, 1 wing, no tail
#4	07 05.298 S	155 51.811 E	10 ft	2 Trucks with tires, and one wing
#5	07 05.214 S	155 51.907 E	15-20 ft	Sort of a Trash Pile. H6K Mavis with 2 engines; rear fuselage and wing of Betty Bomber, with one engine. Large long struts.
#6	07 05.031 S	155 51.768 E	25 ft	Very large plane, H6K Mavis. One wing pontoon, big supports. 4 engines visible.
#7	07 05.161 S	155 51.562 E	15 ft	Jake, right side up
#8	07 05.585 S	155 51.689 E	6 ft	Pete float plane, 2 seats, no wings, no engine, 2 float struts. Fuselage and tail intact.
#9	07 05.210 S	155 51.499 E	15 ft	Jake, upside down

All are in pretty sad condition and are missing pieces.

There may well be others in deeper water. It is recommended NOT to anchor in the channel as you may be destroying a historical item with your anchor and chain.

There is quite a bit of current that reverses with the tide, best to go at slack tide, especially for the ones further offshore.

There is a small store at Nila where you can buy top-up for a My Telecom (Breeze) cell phone, but there are no sim cards (ask passing cruisers who have left the Solomons for their sims!)

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019 – Nuhu Village:** Nuhu is at the western end of Magusaia Island. You can reach it by either going out the south entrance to Shortland Harbor and around the s coast of Magusaia, or through the passage on the north side of Magusaia. When we were there, it was a week or so before a big election, and the passage was obstructed by a big banner across the channel at Nuhu, so we went the outside route, with Joseph (Remisio Eresi), the chief's son piloting us around (not absolutely necessary if you have good satellite charts, but fun anyway). Joseph told us he'd taken several monohulls through the inside route. We subsequently explored in the dinghy and found a few isolated patch reefs that are a little hard to see, but no less than 15 ft (and usually more) all the way through, if you avoid the patch reefs. We found that generally, the south side of the small islands was the best clearest route.

You can anchor in a large area inside the passage, just inside Nuhu Village, but because of the banner across the channel, we anchored outside, in a sandy area in about 12 ft, with some current. There is a pretty beach there and some large trees where mommas come to play in the shallow water with their kids.

There are some reefs to the south and west that provide some shelter from offshore waves, in the outer anchorage. But we had almost no wind the 2 days we were there, so don't know what it would be like in stronger winds.

Our anchor spot was 07-06.44 S / 155-47.75 in 15 ft. There is quite a big area of about 25 ft deep further out.

The current does reverse with the tide in the passage. There are no close tidal stations, but it approximates Gizo tides.

There is no cell signal here at all.

**Screensaver – August 2017 – Maleai:** 07 06.34 S / 155 50.57 E 15m Mud/Sand, some Bmobile, The channel through Shortland is quite navigable but one has to be careful.

I was here back around 2011 and poked around a fair bit in Screensaver and Mouse looking for the alleged clearance officials which didn't exist back then either. Anchoring in almost the same spot as I did back 6 years ago almost to the day, there was little visible change. And in fact, the same guy who sold us carvings back then (John) came to visit us.

**Screensaver – August 2017 – Faisi:** 07 04.4241 S / 155 51.9898 E 15m, Sand. BMobile during the day only.

The charts around the top end of Solomons can be 1/2nm out and on some of the cartography there is not a lot of information.

I had heard a rumour that you could check-in to the Solomons at Shortland Island, and I can tell you short answer is you can't. If you're lucky you might be able to clear customs, but immigration are not there. You can get fuel there, and some very limited supplies but that's about it. The very nice lady who runs the fuel station (shed on rock wall starboard side heading south) also has some new freezers and working it filling them.

We had hoped to pick up some SIM cards for our phones but no one sold them there. I did manage to buy 1/2 dozen very expensive beers.

A couple of locals turned up at our anchorage pretty much asking for freebie's and offering little. When asked if they had any SIM cards.... oh yes my mate has a Telkom one, you give us 4L of fuel so we can get home, we will go and get it and bring it back. So as I give him my very nice 4L jerry can with fuel I realize I should have poured it in his tank myself and kept my Jerry can. Anyway by around 9:00 pm its well dark pissing with rain and they actually returned with my Jerry can and a Telkom SIM. I was quite sure I had lost my jerry can and wasted the fuel, making for a very expensive SIM. But true to their word, they did as they said.

**Yawana – 2015:** Shortland Island was very friendly although heavily affected by logging. Shortland harbour is an excellent anchorage. Customs officers are present so you should report to them, but you can't clear in or out. I contracted malaria in Shortland, so precautions should be taken.

**La Gitana – Nov 2014:** 07 04.99 S / 155 52.11 E For WW2 stuff, if you get the chance, put in a stop in the Shortland Islands. A load of readily accessible airplane wrecks above and under water plus some interesting Japanese installations.

**Mokisha – April 2013:** The Shortlands are a remote island group, and nobody on the net knew where we were when we gave the island names. Few boats come up here. We can see Bouganville Island in PNG 10 miles away and we are about 5 miles from the border between PNG and the Solomons now.

The Shortland Islands and Mono (Treasury Islands, 25 miles SW) played an essential part in WWII although you rarely hear the history of these islands.

The Shortlands had been taken over by the Japanese, while Treasury Island was secured by the Allied troops – Americans, New Zealand & Australia after success in Guadalcanal. Both these islands proved to be fascinating with rich WWII stories and remnants of bomber planes, old equipment and piles of Coca-Cola bottles and Sake bottles. We've decided these rarely visited islands are the "Jewel of the Solomon Islands". Visitors rarely arrive in this part of the world so we encountered warm and friendly people happy to show us around & give us 'tours' of the old WWII sites. We spent an entire day with Jonathon who is a spry 81 year old. He told us stories of when the Americans came to Treasury Island and he was only 10 years old. His friend Roy, was 8 years old. Together they gave us an insight of what it was like to see a white man for the first time. What it was like for us to come in and bulldoze an island flat so they could bring in

supplies and make an airfield. The airstrip is about a mile and a half long – it was built in a week!

Besides the wonderful history lesson, we been trading for lobster and the freezer is full. Every time I put my fishing line in the water I'm catching something. In just a few days I'm up to one tuna & 3 Mahi. My largest catch, a 4'-2" Mahi we gave to Chief Benjamin at Treasury Island. Boy, did that ever go a long way with the chief.

We sailed back to **Poporang Island** in the Shortlands yesterday and we hired 6 kids to hike us to a hilltop where the Japs had 6 anti-aircraft guns, a large spotlight, two radar antennas, at least two 6" diameter guns still laying there and basically intact. There is also a motorcycle with a side cart that you'll enjoy seeing. Today we'll see Balalai, 5 miles away from where we are anchored. The japs had an air base at Balalai and there are jap planes there, all in good shape. What happened here they said is that the US had such momentum built after Guadalcanal that they went into the Treasury Islands and set their sites on Rabaul up in New Brittain so they could then deal with Philippines. The US literally just blew by the Shortlands and having cut off the Jap supply line these chaps starved to death on the island though occasionally they tried to steal food from the native's gardens. We have video-ed lots of conversations with witnesses to the war and plenty of pics, of course. I got some "bullets" and sake bottles that some jap drank out of. I was told that at Balalai there are many things laying around so I'll be on the hunt.

**Amante – Yr???** For the purists out there, the Shortlands are indeed part of the Solomon Islands. However, they are very remote.

This was the starting point for the infamous "Tokyo Express", which hauled supplies from here to Guadalcanal and elsewhere in the Solomons. The area was said to still be littered with Japanese relics.

These islands are seldom seen by outsiders because there is no way to get here besides yacht and there are no officials to check in yachts. It was at one time off-limits due to incursions of PNG troops looking for smuggled arms and gasoline being sold to the rebels on Bougainville. There were also accusations that the Solomons were aiding the rebels, since Bougainville is really a part of the Solomons and not PNG.

When we arrived there the next morning we decided to seek refuge at Gomia on the west side. Shortly after anchoring the admiral saw a high-speed Police launch with 8 people zooming towards us.

Fortunately, the Australian leader of the Police crew was quite nice and only wanted to identify us. He had gotten word that we would be arriving with tsunami relief supplies, which made our presence sort of OK. We could breathe again.

That evening the captain noticed a perfect cone-shaped mountain to the north. The admiral thought she saw smoke billowing from the top. Thus we "discovered" the very active volcano named Bagana.

The next day we proceeded to the village of Nila, on the island of Poporang. We had heard from friends that there was a Catholic mission there which could help us distribute relief supplies.

This was the first place we'd been that had suffered from the tsunami that devastated Gizo. Here they had waves of 3 meters pouring over their village and crops. They had gotten some supplies but they are very much at the end of the distribution line, with no shipping. Most of their crops and been killed by seawater. They needed everything.

This was our first foray into the disaster relief business. As the nice folks at FEMA would agree, it ain't all that simple. If you ask the victims if they need things, they will always say "yes". If you ask them to enumerate their losses, they will repeat them even when they have already received replacements. This may mean that some get lots of stuff, some nothing. It takes the wisdom of Solomon to sort it all out.

Fortunately we met the Solomon of the Solomons. He is a young Filipino priest named Father Jerome. He said they handed out assessment forms to every family. They would then track what each family received and ensure that they didn't get the same supplies twice. He then had to defend his actions to the various agencies and NGOs. We didn't envy his position, but we were happy to give our meager supplies into his hands for distribution.

This house is literally sliding into the sea. One of the luckier residences, it was not swept away as were many canoes and other structures.

One thing we wanted to do here was see war relics. Our guide was a prince of a guy named Joachim, who was 2 when the Japanese arrived. Our first display was a pile of old "Pete" biplanes. Nila was a seaplane base and apparently they simply left the Petes here to rot at the end of the war. Many of the villagers still use their wings as garden fences.

While touring relics we also visited the recent tsunami relics. One is what they called "tsunami camp". It is an old cattle station that they expanded with shelters. After the floods they were afraid to return for a month or more. This is where they all lived. Some still sleep here.

We were shown an anti-aircraft gun, maybe 90mm. It still has the ammo boxes lying alongside, along with beer bottles strewn about.

The next day we motored off to the notorious island of Ballalae. It was here that hundreds of British civilians from Singapore, along with POWs from same, perished while building an airstrip for the Japanese. This airstrip was used by their planes flying from Rabaul to Guadalcanal.

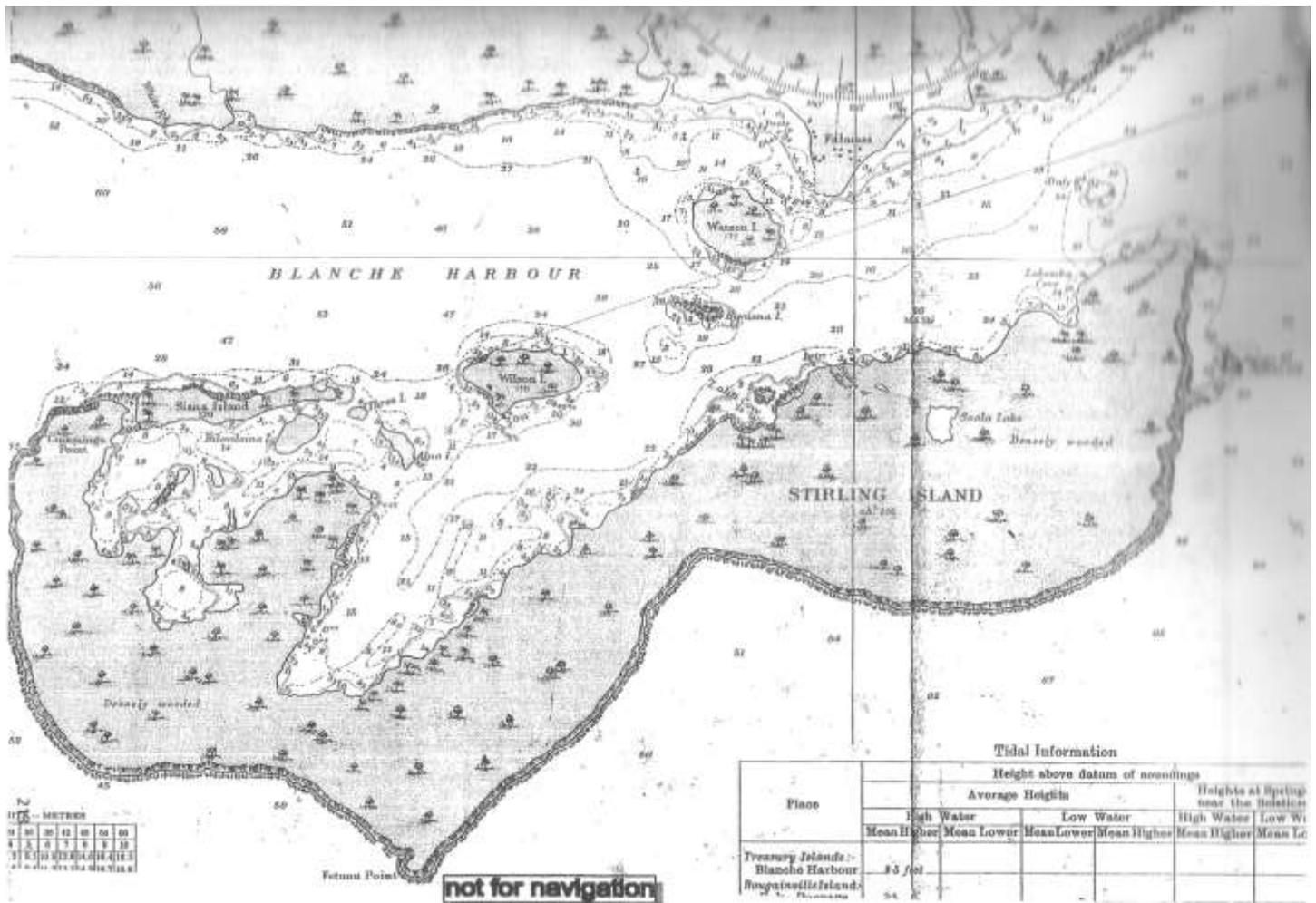
There are many plane wrecks that litter the island. We saw at least one on the beach.

The airstrip is still in use, at least in theory. It's pretty dilapidated. The grass on the strip is waist-high. One of locals is paid to mow it and has a tractor to do the job, but he doesn't seem to get around to doing the work. As a result, the airline will not fly in, thus forcing the inhabitants to take a dangerous ride in an open boat across 25 miles of open ocean to get to the field at Stirling Island. It's the islands, mon.

There is a memorial to all those who died here, erected to the POWs. The British civilians have been simply forgotten.

If you look hard you can find interesting stuff alongside the runway. There is a "Betty" bomber, still on its landing gear, but otherwise showing its age. The Solomons has declared war relics to be national treasures but are a bit remiss in treasuring them. The seats of the "Betty" have





*Figure 3-2 Mono and Stirling Island Charlet from HM Lark, 1883  
Soundings Probably in Fathoms*

**Soggy Paws – Mar 2019:** We sailed over from the Shortlands on a nice daysail, and anchored in front of Falamai Village in about 15-20 feet. The adults were all attending a political rally (regional elections are in a few days), but the kids came out in droves. The young ones didn't speak a lot of English, but they were happy to trade coconuts for cookies (biscuits), pens (biros), and lollies. Rice and sugar are also good trade items. One of our boats asked for eggs and a kid came back with one egg in hand.

Roy Junior, whom we had heard about from others, came out in his canoe. He said the political stuff would go on for a couple more hours, so if we wanted, we could either hang out to see the chief, or go ahead and anchor in Stirling Island and come back by dinghy. Which we did.

We did a full circuit around the inside of Stirling Island. There are a few shoals, but in half-sun, they were easily seen. The biggest problem is finding shallow enough anchoring in an area big enough for 3 boats, and with some wind. There is a good anchoring spot at the entrance, and where the westerly breeze blows down the channel. It is 20 ft deep but would be a little tight

for 3 boats. Where Adina anchored seemed to be a pinnacle, as we went by close and were in 75 ft.

We finally dropped our anchor at 07-24.75 S / 155-32.88 E in 40-45 ft. When we backed down, we found we were hanging over a pinnacle that was about 25 ft at the top, and maybe flat enough for one boat to anchor on.

**Adina – July 2015:** 07 24.600S / 155 32.883E 13m, sand and coral, uninhabited

Satellite images help to get in - entrance is at 07 24.7365S 155 33.4516E. Extremely well sheltered, beautiful place. Roy Junior will paddle all the way from the village and offer to show you the WWII airfield and other relics and walk around the village. He will probably bring out eggs as he knows yachts like them. Trading. Only downside - there are supposed to be crocodiles so no swimming. Lovely spot.

**Yawana – 2015:** I visited the Sterling Islands, plenty of excellent anchorages, WW2 relics, friendly people willing to trade for fresh fruit, veg & fish. Very well charted as this was a major base during WWII. The local chief has resisted advances from logging companies and Mono has some of the last virgin forests in the Solomons. The locals want to keep it this way.

**Amante – (YR??):** We needed to make headway towards Gizo and therefore set sail for Mono Island.

We met with the local chief, John Goldie. The village of Falamae was hit hard by the tsunami, with 4m waves that floated off all their canoes and many houses. The villagers built a new village far up the hillside where they sleep at night. Despite their hardships they gave us a warm welcome and made us feel very much at home for the few days we spent there.

We saw the grave of the previous chief and were amused at the decorative use of WWII beer bottles in the border. The villagers make much use of their relics. Many houses have US bomber fuel tanks for their water storage.

Mono has a much better runway, built without slave labor. It's the former US strip on Stirling Island. The locals keep it mowed with machetes and the airline flies in every Wednesday.

We saw a tail of a US Navy TBF Avenger. It's become a natural planter in the jungle. The US base at Stirling was built to harass the Japanese in the Shortlands and Bougainville. There's very little left beyond some strong American building foundations and the runway.

Our visit to Stirling was cut short by constant heavy rains. We really enjoyed the visit to Ballalae, however, and were most impressed by the friendly goodness of the villagers.

When we returned to the boat it was covered with plague of small flies. This was perhaps an ill omen for our next passage, which was back to Gizo.

### **3.2 Vella Lavella North Coast**

#### **3.2.1 Geva Harbor (N Tip)**

**Pura Vida:** 07-34.293 S / 156-36.697 E in 7-10metres. Very protected anchorage. Beware the crocodiles.

**Elizabeth Jane II:** After 6 days and 6 nights at sea, we made it through a tricky reef entry at the northern most point of Vella Lavella Island, Solomon Islands to a most spectacular and secluded anchorage. We sat and listened to the sunset call of innumerable jungle birds, insects and monkeys. Truly tranquil.

We are also anchored amongst mangroves and are warned that it is a bit crocy here. Hugh plans to go crabbing. Our last night of passage was not without challenges as we hove to through a 6 hour lightning and thunder storm bringing 30kts of wind, big choppy seas and seriously uncomfortable swell. We were very pleased to make it through the Bougainville Passage and into the Solomon Islands (even though we are bashing against strong trade winds and uncomfortable seas).

### **3.3 Vella Lavella West Coast**

#### **3.3.1 Vatoro Bay**

Sieling Pg 170-171

**Soggy Paws – March & Aug 2019:** We anchored here after a long slow passage from the Treasury Islands, anchoring almost at dark. The middle of the reef entrance is 07 41.51 S / 156 29.52 E. We anchored at 07 41.11 S / 156 30.24 E in about 55 ft. Perfectly calm. In March we had light NW winds, and in August (outside the bay) strong SE winds with huge swells offshore. Inside it was beautiful, quiet. The logging camp mentioned by Sieling is long gone. This is an isolated anchorage with no village ashore.

I had good 3G cell coverage just outside the bay, but inside, nothing. There is good coverage from Vatoro south along the west coast of Vella Lavella, and in to either Liapari or Gizo.

#### **3.3.2 Surepelo Point**

**Ocelot – March 2019:** We set out from the Shortlands to get to Liapari via the west coast of Vella Lavella. Our intended overnight stop was Vatoro Bay, but we arrived a little earlier than expected and decided to push on a little further.

We ended up anchoring at Surepelo Point in 45 ft at 07-45.13 S / 156-34.59 E. Tucked up in the bay behind a small island, we had good protection from the light westerly winds and it was a good overnight stop.

#### **3.3.3 Baga Island (Mbava, Mbaga)**

Singa Harbor - Sieling Pg 172-173

Inia Island – Sieling Pg 174-175

Somolo Harbor – Sieling Pg 176-177

**Inia Island Anchorage:** 07-48.87 S / 156-33.664 E in 55 ft sand. Looks open to SE but is quite calm and protected in here, even in 20-25 kts SE. Good 3G cell coverage from a tower just above the anchorage.

Sieling shows 3 anchorages in this bay, all are deep (if you want to get out of the coral). Ocelot who was anchored WSW of us near the mangroves, saw a 10' croc about 20 ft behind their boat one morning, so don't go swimming in here. There are several other anchorages in Sieling in this area, plenty of room for several boats.

The little Inia island near the northernmost anchorage has some old Copra-era ruins and a graveyard that were kind of interesting. Andrew has asked the villagers in the area to be nice to the cruisers (and he is married into the clan, and paying them for the privilege of diving on their reefs). Ask permission if someone is there to ask permission from.

There is a tiny village tucked back in the trees on the south side of the bay, a few people said hello but nobody bothered us.

While we were here, Andrew from Yawana Dive picked us up and took us diving along the north and west sides of Baga Island (see next section).

### **3.3.4 Yawana Dive and SW Coast Anchorages**

**Soggy Paws – Aug 2019:** We met Andrew from Yawana Dive while hanging out in Liapari. Andrew has a small resort/homestay located on the SW coast of Vella, just around the corner from Liapari (I'll give waypoints below). Andrew has a nice house on a cliff with a tiny dive operation and 2 nicely appointed bungalows, but no real anchorage (it's 250+ feet deep 100m off his dock). He's a former cruiser who sailed into the area on his sailboat, and never sailed away.

We wanted to stop and visit Andrew, so we went around the corner 1.3nm ENE into the bay and found a good sand spit to anchor on (Malasoba Bay). There is enough room for 2 friendly boats to snuggle in there in approx 35 ft sand, and it seemed well protected in the SE winds (would not be good in NW).

This spot is dinghy distance to Andrew's, but to get ashore at his place is a bit of a challenge unless there's no swell at all--rather than tying our dinghy on his concrete wall, Andrew swam it out to his buoy for us, where it sat until we were ready to leave.

We did a couple of days of diving with Andrew on the north end of Baga Island. We anchored in one of the Sieling anchorages on the east side of Baga, and Andrew came and picked us up every morning and took us to his dive spots. Pretty good reef/wall diving, and a Jap Zero in a snorkel spot for a surface interval. He gave us a "cruiser's discount" for diving, and is keen to have more cruisers stop by (partly, he's lonely there with his all Solomons-only family).

**Andrew's Place / Yawana Dive:** 07 55.146 S / 156 38.626 E Northernmost white house (one story) on this section of the island. Off soundings 200m offshore. He does have one mooring, but it's not big enough for yachts. Though there's a SE swell offshore, when you get in close enough, it's actually fairly calm just in front of his place.

**Malasoba Bay Anchorage:** 07-54.033 S / 156-39.164 E (Big visible sand area on ArcGIS, 35 ft, kids and people ashore in canoes, some 3G internet) 1.3 miles from Andrew's. We managed to squeeze 2 friendly boats in the sand patch for a day hike up to see the DC-3 crash site on the hill above Andrew's Place. Weak 3G cell here, better as you get further offshore (the tower is on Baga Island).

Andrew's best dives (approx. locations): Are Moran Point on the NW corner of Baga at around 07-47.4 S / 156-31.8 E and Puff n Stuff at approx 07-49.2 S / 156-43.7 E Both of these are pretty "currenty" dives and it is wise to have a surface support boat, and someone who knows the conditions. (ie Andrew). Andrew is also exploring for new dive locations, so we had fun doing an "exploration" dive with him. There's supposed to be a big US bomber that went down there, but no one has found it yet. We had a nice drift dive in that area.

He has a Solomon's style fiberglass boat that can only accommodate ~4 divers.

Andrew also took us to a Japanese Zero on the north short of Baga in shallow water.

Also, there is apparently a DC-3 crash site on the hill above Andrew's, also accessible from the Malasoba Bay Anchorage. If you arrange a guide with Andrew, he can meet you on the beach right there. Or ask for Victor in the village just south of the Malasoba anchorage.

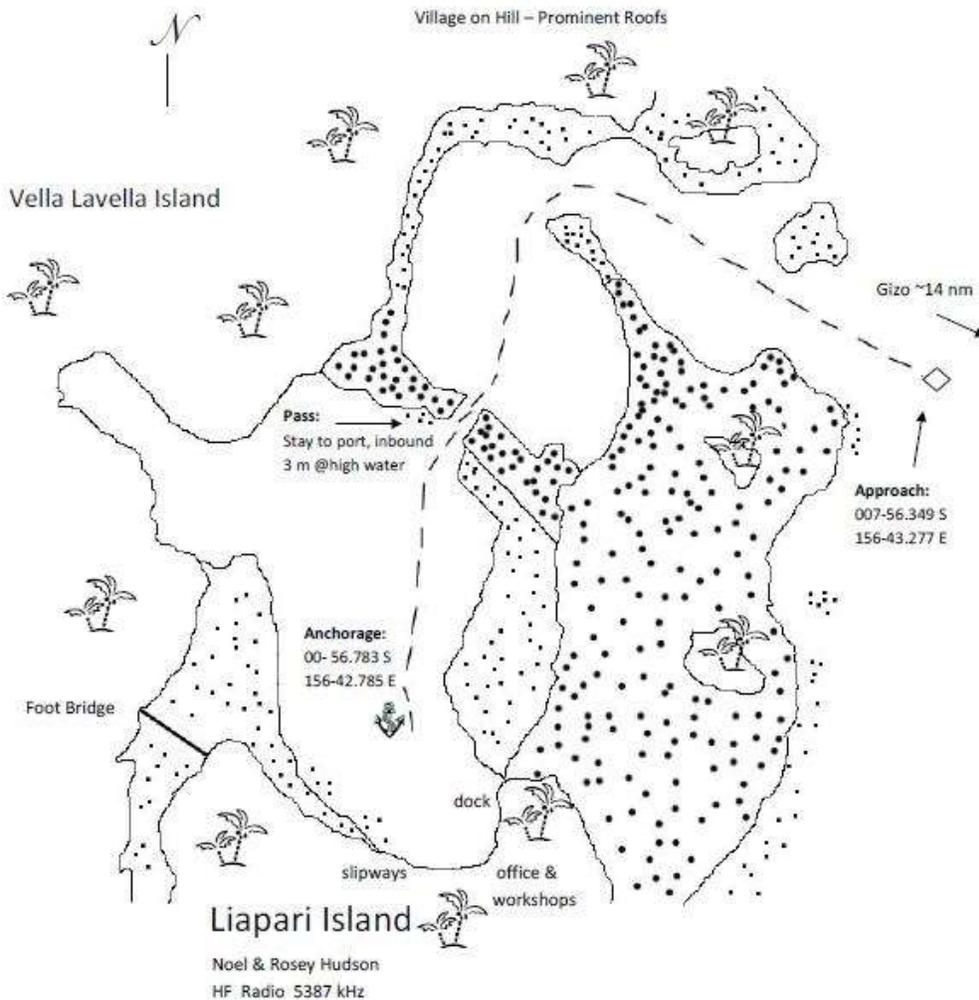
Andrew's place is pretty exposed during NW season, so may not be able to accommodate any diving during January and February.

### **3.4 Vella Lavella East Coast**

#### **3.4.1 Sorezaru Point (NE Tip)**

**Screensaver – September 2018:** 07 34.21 S / 156 37.53 E No cell service. I had never been up this side before and it would make the jump to Choiseul Island easier. Now it's all about getting some miles done. I typically average around 21nm per day over any given year, this year so far I'm down to around 8-10. The season will start to change soon, and it will make the tail end (the last leg back to Indonesia) much harder, so I need to make up some miles.

### 3.4.2 Liapari (SE Tip, Haulout Facility)



**Sea Flair – December 2023:** Liapari is still functioning as a safe place to be and, if required, also to leave a boat. Apparently there are lots of politics as Rose's family and Bobo (Noel's partner in the business who is based in Honiara) are embroiled in legal action. The staff are all on a 3 day week with reduced , and none of the staff really know what the future holds.

is still here but seemingly has dementia and is cared for by her sister. Both Cynthia and Levan told me that the staff all contribute food to her as she has nothing due to the ongoing legal action. It is a bit difficult to know where the real truth is amongst the stories, but for now, it is still a great place to be without being hassled by streams of canoes. We all feel safe without needing to lock things up when leaving the boat.

Cynthia runs the office and Levan seems to run the rest of the place and also does banana boat trips over to Gizo which are a lot easier than taking our boat to do provisioning.

**Soggy Paws – 2022:** Noel of Liapari has passed away. I don't have any new contact info. The info below is old.

Contact info for Liapari confirmed May 2018 (and Aug 2019):

[noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com](mailto:noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com)

Phone +677 749 6021

Noel no longer has/monitors the SSB, and I'm not even sure he has a VHF these days (he certainly doesn't monitor it).

**Soggy Paws – Mar-Aug 2019:** We stopped in at Liapari several times during our stay in the Western Province. In fact, we were only the second boat to haul out on Noel's new catamaran-capable slipway, in June. See our "Slipping in the Solomons" section, [here](#). Or our blog post with pictures, here:

<http://svsoggypaws.blogspot.com/2019/06/repairing-your-boat-in-exotic-places.html>

We enjoyed ourselves every time we stopped in Liapari. It is a pretty bay, and protected in almost any winds. Plus, it is nearly the only place in all of the Solomons you will find other cruisers (besides the ones you bring with you). And everything that others have said about Noel's capabilities (haulout, boat repair, storage, etc) are absolutely still true.

**Screensaver – Sep 2018:** Stern-to tie up, Telekom 3G. I crept in over the bar in the reef at Noels place on 3/4 tide with near enough to a couple of hairs under the keel.

Liapari is probably the best place to have and leave your boat in Solomon's. The only place that is near enough to walk on walk off, has some power and some water. Nice safe anchorage, some security, Sunday BBQ, sun downer drinks... and somewhere you can fix stuff. So it was nice not to think about anchorage, power, etc. Nice to be able to wander over have a beer with another boat, and chat between our boats. There are usually one or two boats passing through so you get to meet some nice people, tell a few stories get some other idea's etc.

An old French guy there was saying now is not the time to be going north and you can't check-in at Kavieng--only places that have international airports etc. Well I knew he was wrong about the timing, if anything I'm a little late. But as it transpires he was half right about check-in. Seems that very few place in PNG that can do VOA (Visa on arrival) or Board Entry Visa as they call it. Kavieng can't--oops. So most of the ports can check you in or out if you have a Visa already, but if not then you need a Border Visa entry. Buka being one, that I was trying to avoid.

Noel also has an interesting file on a lot of the wartime goings on here, and also the movie on PT109.

**Screensaver – August 2017 – Getting In to Liapari with a Deep Draft Sailboat:** I decided I needed real depth measurements and an exact course before going into Liapari with my deep draft. While there are markers there, these should only be treated as an indication of where the channel is if your draft is 7ft or more. I have an extendable boat hook which I have measured and marked exactly the depth of Screensaver keel. With my boat hook in hand I took Mouse ( the tender) and plotted the depth both length wise and cross wise, discovering for the most part it was between 10-20cm short of my depth never mind any clearance. I also discovered

that the centre was a good place to start (ie North-eastern end) but one needs to hug the port marker at the SW end.

It was about 1/2 tide, so waiting till about 3/4 tide would give me roughly 10-20cm under my keel if my tide information was correct. Noel who owns and runs Liapari, confirmed my tide data.

My expectation was that if all did not go well with luck I would have another 10-20cm of tide to help get me off anything looking to hang onto Screensaver. In the end all went well, but with nothing to spare. You need at least 0.62m above LW if your draft is 7ft, and don't go through the centre. If you are less than 7ft you should be fine in the centre after half tide. Once you're in, it goes to around 8m or more.

The jetty is in nice order that you can tie the stern to. You can't get quite close enough to put a plank between you and the jetty which is a bit of an issue, but at least you don't need to worry about falling off the plank after sun downers. It is well protected from any sea action and exposed wind-wise only to N-NNE.

Whenever Noel is running the generators, which is 80% of working hours, and from dinner time till around 8:00pm, you can have power as well. The rates are very reasonable and there is no doubt your boat is safe. Noel is in the process of adding a bar and some accommodation with the observatory on top. *(still not completed in mid-2019)*

They used to build all sorts of vessels here including some ships with a big tonnage and of course have a slipway to match. Noel's workshop has everything most of us might ever need, and what he doesn't have he can probably tell you where and how to get it. In my view the capabilities here are the best I have seen after departing Philippines and better than anything I have seen that you can take your boat to.

A Good GPS these days, with plenty of satellites to lock onto should get your position down to within 3-5m. Most who are new to sailing (and for you landlubbers) expect that if they then plot this Lat/Lon on a chart that it would be correct. It doesn't take long before you realize the charts typically are out by more than your GPS be they paper (for you die hards) or Electronic. To date I have been under the impression Google images, such as the ones below are every bit as accurate as the modern day GPS and much more accurate than any chart, given you understand their weak points. As a result, I might expect 3-5m of GPS error, + or - 3-5m of Google image error. So typically I don't expect to be out by more than 10m max. If you look carefully at the two images below, both of which have their own tracking system and GPS it shows I missed the channel by some 23m ?

Clearly Screensaver is not amphibious, and keel remains intact, nor did I drive across median strip (reef), plus my new Raymarine GPS usually runs around 3m accuracy and on the odd occasion slips out to 5-8m. So where did the error come from? Initially I began to wonder just how accurate the application is that overlays the images, then perhaps the conspiracy theorists that have suggested Google Earth & indeed GPS technology has an in built error to prevent you and me sending a guided missile to our favorite politician in the vain hope their replacement would do better. These thoughts were relatively quickly dismissed.

Then when I asked Watusi to check his track which reflected the same 23m inaccuracy and Ken commented perhaps this was as a result of the earth quake, which Noel had told us moved houses off their foundations. On checking it would seem in 2007, 2013 & 2016 this area has had quakes of a magnitude above 7.8. When I was checking this out, I also discovered there had been 6 quakes around 4.5 in the last 30 days while we were here. So given the Google image date is 2004 I am going to assume the earth quake caused the 23m shift in the reef, and cling onto GE still being correct. *(ArcGIS in 2019 is correct)*

I had ordered a few bits to come via Sydney to Liapari. This is always a bit hit and miss but I'm pleased to say they arrived in one piece and without any duty. A couple of hours later I pronounced myself a Microwave repair technician as it once again it produced my coffee. My handheld VHF got a breath of new life with a new battery, the low level bilge alarm once again beeps, make shift fuses were replaced with real ones, my Danfoss compressor now has two cooling fans, to name a few success stories. My HTC Mobile also had a dead battery and as seems to be a growing trend its battery replacement requires open heart surgery, with every organ built around the battery. Anyway Kim managed to complete the surgery and the patient lives for another couple of years I guess. Someone really should produce a programmable universal charger, to save all these batteries that we forget to cycle and often leave charging.

A new disk drive also arrived and was most appreciated as it gave our movie collection a complete new lease on life.

The Ice maker I had thought suffered a heart attack from my testing it on a square wave inverter. I am trying to set it up to automatically run when I have excess power. In fact it was alive and well after a small adjustment and ice cubes once again tinkled into the scotch, all be it scotch will run out in the next couple of weeks.

Every Sunday a BBQ brings whoever is around together to tell their stories, trade their secrets and bitch about something.

A wreck lays not far off the jetty in around 6-8m of water. For the snorkeler and those who haven't seen sunken vessels before it's an interesting diversion.

Noel also runs a shuttle services to Gizo, either on demand (which is not cheap) or as a pooled run every Thursday which isn't Sydney water taxi price. So we did the Thursday run to do a bit of shopping whizzing across the 10nm by fizz boat certainly makes a bit of difference. Then having your groceries sent out the back to the jetty also made life easier.

I decided to have a bit of snorkel through the channel between the lagoons figuring there might be some interesting life beneath feeding. Well I wasn't exactly wrong, but the long clear jellyfish tentacles feeding on me weren't part of my vision and I had no idea until it was too late. I yelled at Kim to get out of the water right now !!!! and headed for tender. By now my arm was swelling as were my fingers and track marks about 1/4" wide began to appear on back, arm and neck along with the burning sensation. Fortunately it wasn't worse and after drowning it in Vinegar in the shower and plenty of water I was only left with some racing stripes for a day or two. This was however my worst attack in 8 years. *Note: There is also at least one croc in the bay, usually in the area to the west of the anchorage.*

**Adina – July 2015:** 07 56.805S / 156 42.856E Mooring buoys, dockside, or anchoring

You should ideally have satellite images to enter the lagoon which is actually a double lagoon. The outer entrance 07 56.365S 156 43.298E is easy and marked by posts after which you need to head North West to 07 56.1888S 156 42.9385E before turning South to the second pass at 07 56.4137S 156 42.8788E.

The second pass is man-made and narrow/shallow although it is well posted - favour the left hand side. Best to enter 2 hours either side of HW. Call Liapari on VHF16 to check if ok to enter.

You can anchor near the second pass to wait to go in, then anchor, take a mooring buoy or go alongside. Kiwi Noel is welcoming and there is little he doesn't know or can't organise. Great place for any boat work with good prices. Transport available into Gizo. Facilities to hand wash your own laundry ashore. Small grocery shop.

**Yawana – 2015:** Liapari Island has an excellent slipway and a marine mechanic. Most works can be done here. This is a very secure place to leave your boat for weeks or months if you want to fly home for a visit. 24 hour security for less than AU\$10 per day. They do transfers to the airport and have accommodation in bungalows. It is also a very pleasant place to just stop and visit. Good walks around the island and diving outside the entrance.

**M/V Waverly – 2014 (from [Noonsite](#)):** Liapari is situated on the south-eastern extreme of Vella Lavella Island in the Western province of the Solomons. Although the paper charts for the area are poor, the google earth images used in conjunction with Open CPN or Maxsea are fantastic.

The harbour at Liapari is created by the natural lee of Vella Levalla, Liapari Island and the fringing reef and islets to the East. We sat here safely at anchor in more than one decent blow as a cyclone passed nearby and the holding was very good and the anchorage comfortable .

The Google Earth image clearly shows the only shallow spot, which is the man made cutting on the inner reef which carries around 3.0 metres at LW and there is no sea or swell at the cut because you are well inside the main reef.

The Liapari facility has two slipways, a well setup engineering shop, a timber workshop and welding facilities. There is a choice of anchoring in the harbour or Mediterranean style mooring for a small fee with a clean and tidy wharf, beautiful lawns and grounds and a laundry right at your stern. There is an open air bar at 'the round house' and plans for a new three story bar and restaurant with great swimming, snorkeling and bush walking ashore.

The proprietor Noel, his wife Rosie and Leah their dog, run a very efficient operation with local staff and having carried out work at the premises myself, I can attest to the fact that 'they do what they say they will do' and for a very reasonable price. Noel has 30 plus years in the islands and with his 'hands on' engineering background there is not much that cannot be done here to get any cruising vessel out of trouble.

We used Liapari as our cruising base for the whole of the Solomons and there were half a dozen yachts on long term layup (\$10AUD/day) at Noel's facility where he looks after your vessel for very minimal cost and security is provided.

Logistics

As for the logistics in this part of the Solomons, good clean fuel is available in large quantities only 40nm away at Noro, where we took on 3000 litres at similar prices to Australia. For smaller quantities you can buy from drums in Gizo or speak to Noel about availability at Liapari.

LPG refills and tender fuel can be sourced at Liapari or at Gizo where you will also find daily markets and a variety of trade stores where most things can be purchased once you know where to go. There is an ANZ bank with an ATM and Telekom shop for phone and data cards so you just throw it into your phone and you have cheap communications.

Gizo is 13 nm from Liapari and we cleared in and out here without problems and stayed for six months. The whole area around Gizo has great diving, fishing and surfing nearby and branches out into the whole Western Province which is well worth exploring. There are also some small resorts nearby like Sanbis, where you'll get a great pizza and a wreck dive just off the bar, Fatboys resort just a little further down the road opposite Kennedy Island where JFK came ashore and then Lola in the Vona Vona Lagoon.

There are two daily flights (morning and afternoon) from Honiara to Gizo and if you're at Liapari, Noel has a fast longboat and can provide a transfer service to and from Liapari - so for people leaving the yacht or for guests coming in its very convenient.

If you want to enjoy the Solomons but can't spare the time, think about leaving your boat at Liapari and flying in and out. Catch up with Noel and while you're there, go and have a pizza at Sanbis resort - its got to be the best I've tasted anywhere in the Pacific!

The fishing in most of the Solomons is exceptional and we caught marlin, wahoo, Spanish mackerel, tuna, coral trout and many more. The locals will happily trade for painted crayfish and reef fish for basic supplies like sugar and rice or kids clothing.

**Carina – August 2012:** We made a side trip for a short haul out to Liapari Island while at Gizo. Liapari, on the SE end of larger Vella Lavella, is home to warm, wonderful SSCA Cruising Station Hosts Noel and Rosey Hudson. We spent two days on their small slipway (65 tons max and 6m wide).

The large slipway accommodates 200 tons max and 7m wide.

We have rarely, if ever, had a more careful team haul us. They may be able to handle wider boats, including catamarans. It is necessary to bring your own materials for epoxy, fiberglass or antifouling (including brushes and rollers, thinner, etc.), but you can coordinate with Gisella at Noel's Honiara office to have materials shipped by landing craft that delivers to Liapari about once per month.

There is a full service machine shop and a wood shop and skilled labor for fabrication in steel and aluminum.

Noel and Rosey live on site, in addition to many of their crew. There is a guest bungalow. The grounds are beautifully maintained and the setting is lovely with views over the reef on the windward side.

You can hike around the island on the mown trail. A yacht club and restaurant are being built at the wharf and there is a brand new leaf-roofed round house with a huge BBQ in it where happy hour and Sunday BBQs are run.

There are no other facilities, except a few basic provisions in the store (rice, etc.) and a tiny local market on Fridays, though pretty, friendly Pauline will find you in her dugout to trade for veggies.

There is a weekly open passenger boat to Gizo—just over 14 miles SE—that costs \$100 SBD (about \$14 USD). There is no Internet coverage (though that is planned in the future) and cell phone coverage is limited.

We used Google Earth images converted to .kap file charlets to determine arrival and entry waypoints; most entry marks are missing. Reefs are evident on a sunny day. The inner lagoon is very well-protected and the blasted channel is well-marked; however, it is critical to stay east of the centerline to enjoy the 3.2m depth at high tide and about 1.8 at low tide. There is generally one high tide per day about 20 minutes after Gizo.

For those looking for an alternative cyclone haven, the Western Province is outside of the South Pacific cyclone zone, though in the area of cyclogenesis. Yachts may be safely stored at Liapari Island.

Liapari Ltd. - Noel and Rosey Hudson; contact: [noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com](mailto:noel.hudson.liapari@gmail.com) or

Tel: +677 841 9471

**Tropicale – 2012:** About 12 miles north of Gizo on the SE corner of Vella Lavella island is the little island of Liapari. This is very protected and anchorage is in about 40ft. Entrance is limited by draft to about 7ft. There are facilities to moor stern-to and in fact boats are left there in the care of Noel the king of this little domain. There is an engineering and woodworking shop. He is gifted at making do. He has this year completed a cradle to haul yachts up to 60 ton. He regularly does repairs on the inter-island vessels, including the big barges. The email address is h4kk@sailmail.com. Gizo itself is a very protected anchorage and being so far north it appears rare that they get more than very strong winds, usually from the west. We experienced this last year when in Gizo (about 50kts) and were never in danger.

**Compadre – 2011:** Why not spend the cyclone season in the beautiful islands of the Western Province of the Solomon Islands?

This is our third trip through the Solomons, first in 2005 and then again in 2006. We have returned with Compadre, our 55' cutter, and we are presently at Liapari Island, which borders the southern end of Vella Lavella Island. It is just 14 miles from Gizo, the second largest city in the Solomons.

Noel and Rose Hudson, of Liapari Ltd., have been operating a 200-ton slipway here for 26 years, and have recently built a 100 foot dock.

Presently a 60-ton slipway for yachts is under construction and will be completed before the end of 2011. They offer a first-class machine shop and woodworking shop, engineering services

and a trade store. The yard is currently rebuilding Corina-D into a 112' x 22' triple screw live-aboard motoryacht.

The channel leading to this marine facility has a depth of 11 feet at high tide. If you would like to store your yacht, he will look after it for a reasonable fee.

Transfers can be arranged to Gizo, which offers connections to Honiara's international airport.

Contact Noel at H4KK@sailmail.com

07 degrees 56.8' S

156 degrees 42.8 E

### **3.5 *Ranonnga Island***

#### **3.5.1 *Woi Island (N Tip)***

**Westward II – April 2011:** Anchored at 07 54.89 S / 156 31.79 E

#### **3.5.2 *Koriovuka Harbor (NE Tip)***

Sieling Pg 178-179

**Screensaver – August 2017:** 07 56.52 S / 156 32.67 E 8m Mud/Sand. Our original intent was to anchor on the western side of Vella Lavella Island, but Watusi, who left Shortlands a day ahead of me, had struggled to find something shallow enough and yet far enough away from reefs.

Our conditions were much better than Watusi had the day before and we managed to sail SE most of the way to Vella Lavella. It transpired that Watusi moved on trying a few more anchorages down the coast with not a lot of success, and hence ended up moving to Emu Harbour.

This is a nice anchorage well protected with plenty of room in water that wasn't really deep. The locals of course set upon us with their stone carvings.

In the end I did weaken and purchased a couple of items. Kim was quick to point out that for less than that price you could have had it in marble in the Philippines and she would be right.

Ken had an old laptop with some USB issues I managed to help with, and he gave it away, in theory to the local school, but given its fragile state it was to be managed by the school administrator ( the guy he gave it to).

#### **3.5.3 *Emu Harbor (NE Tip)***

Sieling Pg 178-179

### **3.6 *Simbo Island***

Sieling Pg 180-181

### **3.7 *Gizo Island***

### **3.7.1 Konggulavatu & Kololuka Bay**

Anchorage Near Toa Maru Wreck: The Toa Maru is a Japanese transport ship sunk in WWII, and it makes a nice dive. (Dive Gizo dives this wreck).

<https://www.pacificwrecks.com/ships/maru/toa2.html>

**Field Trip – 2017:** 08 02.725 S / 156 48.69 E This is a very protected bay, but deep (anchoring in about 30m). It is an easy dinghy ride around the corner to the divesite.

There is a nice small family village ashore just to the east. The main guy is named Cain, and he works at the SolTuna plant and is the head of Human Resources. We asked permission to anchor here and the family said no problem. Very nice people.

**La Gitana – Nov 2013:** 08 02.619 S / 156 48.472 E

**Lorelei – November 2013:** We couldn't believe that after 5 months in the country and we had only done one dive on the Toa Maru shipwreck.

So for our second last week in the Solomon Islands we decided to head 1 hour north to Konggolovatu Bay and spend a week diving the Toa Maru and other locations like Hot Spot and some new places we have never been to before. The weather was perfect so we decided on the more exposed locations first rather than the Toa which is in a protected bay.

The first day we did a double dive with the first being at Hot Spot. This is a small isolated reef that is out in the deep water and comes up to about 6m. The walls around the edge are covered in fish. This spot is a WWF protected area.

In the afternoon we did another spot that we had heard about but is rarely dived. It copped the full force of the Tsunami but you wouldn't know it. The regrown coral in less than 10m was diverse, colourful and in perfect condition. The soft corals at depth were equally stunning.

Then we concentrated on the Toa Maru. We did 3 great dives and concentrated on a specific section of the wreck for each dive.

The first dive we did the stern and the last hold. This is the deepest section of the wreck and is 30m – 38m deep.

For dive 2 we decided to explore the collapsed central superstructure which is now on the bottom at 33m after the Tsunami tore it off the wreck.

The dive has an element of risk as it has a lot of penetration through twisted and unstable sections that are very silty. The upside is we were the only divers on the wreck that day and there was no chance of anyone else coming in and silting the area up.

On the way back up we stopped in at the engine room and had a look around. This area is also a twisted mess as many of the engine room items have fallen because the wreck is lying on its side.

For our last dive on the Toa we decided to explore the 2 forward holds and the anchor locker.

The second hold has more relics than the other 3 combined and it is full of bottles, bullets, large artillery shells, lights and 2 tanks.

**Lorelei – July 2013:** From Gizo we ventured north to a new place for us – Konggulavatu Bay on Ghizo island. The inlet was long & thin and was very sheltered.

It was a very traditional area with mainly leaf houses and nearby gardens. Many pikininis came out in their canoes offering to sell fruit.

The inlet provided a perfect location to run out in the RIB and explore the areas most famous dive/snorkelling site and shipwreck – The Toa Maru.

The “Toa” is the areas’ most famous dive and was a Japanese WW2 freighter which is lying on its starboard side in a small protected bay on Ghizo Island. Prior to the earthquake/tsunami in 2007 it was fully intact but now sadly parts of the super structure and funnel has collapsed. Fortunately the hull, masts and gantry’s are still intact (aside from the torpedo holes in the bow from the fatal US plane attack).

We have dived it many times both before and after the Tsunami.

It was awesome to take George and Chez snorkeling on the wreck to experience a bit of WW2 history and come to a place that the both of us and Paul’s brother Rod have spent time diving.

### **3.7.2 Gizo Town (Port of Entry?)**

**Soggy Paws – April & July 2019:** When we first came to Gizo in April, we were aiming for the anchorages near Logha Island. The first place we checked is where we ended up, the anchorage we call “The Bathroom Stop”. (explanation later) It is located at 08-05.37 S / 156-50.54 E. We had 4 boats, one with no windlass, so we were looking for a fairly shallow anchorage that could accommodate all 4 boats. We went down to check out the Logha South anchorage (suggested by Field Trip in 2017). There were no other boats in either location. The Logha South anchorage was deep (60-ish feet), so we went back to The Bathroom Stop. It had reasonable depths, 35-40 feet and mostly sand, plenty of room for 4 boats.

The only downside to the Bathroom Stop (besides being a little far from town), was the constant coming and going of outboard boats. As best we could tell, these were boatloads of people coming and going from northern Gizo and Vella Lavella villages, possibly after a long boat ride, and they ran in for a quick bathroom stop before proceeding on to Gizo Town (where presumably there are no public bathrooms). Likewise, on the return trip, most boats would pull in for a potty stop on their way back north. There is apparently a girls path and a boys path into the woods.

So the next time we stopped in Gizo, we decided to try the anchorage just off PT109 bar. It is more off the path of boats coming and going from Gizo, and we had a nice dinner at PT109, where we could keep a close eye on the boats as we ate. We dropped in about 40 ft, looks like nice flat bottom. However, the wind here seems to come more from the E than the SE, and this spot isn’t particularly sheltered from the E. Winds were only 10 knots, so it was only a little choppy.

**Clearance:** It is still possible to clear in and out of Gizo, if you have time, and an extra \$550 SD to pay for the Immigration guy to come from Noro. When we arrived in April, we had (accidentally) met the Immigration guy in the Shortlands, and we cleared in Immigration in the Shortlands, Customs in Gizo, and Quarantine in Noro. Since it is only about 25 miles from Gizo to Noro, it's easier just to plan to go to Noro for clearance.

**Screensaver – Sep 2018:** 08 06.14 S / 156 50.62 E In 16m, mud, 3G. Gizo has not really changed much but there is some foreshore work going on for the markets and in the pictures this looks really good. A new supermarket is being built and a few other minor changes but otherwise, it is much the same.

A few years ago when I was here they were building a new Hospital so we all went there, J to follow up on his leg now much improved, but not right yet and I was after some antibiotics and some Solugel. It nice that you can buy much of what you want without going to get a prescription, so I restocked my medical supplies.

Went to immigration/customs there but they were closed, as they were every day when I went back. The phone number on the door didn't get answered, so I was losing interest.

We managed a couple of nice nights and afternoons at the Gizo Hotel. I left my thongs on the wharf, where all the boats come and go coming home that night. On my return about 11:30am the next day, there they were still sitting there, I was very surprised.

**Field Trip – 2017 – Logha South Anchorage:** We anchored at 08 05.68 S / 156 50.54 E This area is the best place to anchor in Ghizo. It is an easy dinghy ride to shore, and there have been no issues with theft in this area that we are aware of.

**Michael Foote (Noonsite) – September 2017:** We cleared out of the Solomons at Noro on the north western side of New Georgia, it's no longer possible to do so in Gizo as the lady officer there died quite recently and isn't being replaced.

**Screensaver – Late Aug 2017:** 08 06.01 S / 156 50.49 E In 16m, mud, 3G. When I first came here in 2007 nearly everything was cheap, ie well under half the price of Sydney during the same time period. Entry by yacht came with a very small fee.

Now by contrast prices here are equal to or more than Sydney with taxes at 30-55%. The guys at Liapari had warned us the rates are \$22USD per meter for the boat then of course there is immigration and cruising on top. Add to this boat passage (both ways) for the Customs officer to come from Noro to Gizo, tack on any out of hours charges and you could be forgiven for feeling like you were entering Australia. Of course they want to charge in USD but won't take USD, they want to use their own conversion rate back to SD.... in all a short sighted rip off.

I was worried about Immigration because according to the Solomon's website, Filipinos require specific written approval from the ministry before entry. I had emailed, faxed and even rang them a numbers of times, wrote letters etc, all fell into some empty hole. But as it happened nothing was said about Kim being a Filipina, and in fact I did the whole thing on my own without Kim, both of us ending up with 90 days Visa's.

This is by far the most expensive place for the yacht to enter and check into that I have been to. The drop off in yachts as a result of the price hike was obvious as files for yachts in each year

were stacked in shelves sorted by year. The year I first came was full, as was the year after that, then it plummeted. Looking at the stack I would estimate by 80% at least. Immigration are also pushing the come straight to clearance/entry do not stop outer Islands. If you are coming into the top end of Solomon's as we did, the rumours of being able to check-in at Shortlands are just that, rumours. If you hang around and work at it you may be able to get immigration done, but that's it at best.

Instead of going to Gizo, I would probably go to Noro. You can complete the whole process there, avoid customs travel cost plus get diesel pumped straight into your boat at around \$1.2AU.

I expected the prices to have changed over the six or so years since I was here last, but I wasn't expecting it disproportionately. Even the countries own beer (SB) is more expensive than in Australia. You can bet your life they are not paying anywhere near Ozy wages, nor are they having to comply with Ozy over-regulation, nor does it attract the 40-50% tax.

It is suggested by local westerner residence and those who know something about the country that the RAMSI , along with logging and misappropriated foreign aid poured money into western lifestyles and goods here hence allowing higher prices to be charged and paid. RAMSI has left, foreign aid out of Ozy and NZ is reducing, and ever so slowly a few greenies and locals are waking up to the damage being done by logging.

Otherwise Gizo doesn't appear to have changed much. They still have the same limit on ATM withdrawals of around \$3000 SD per day, Wifi and Internet hasn't changed bugger all, everyone sells chicken wings, but do you think you can buy chicken breast, not a hope in hell. I have no idea what they do with the breast--you won't buy them anywhere.

The markets for vegetables have not improved, and are pretty limited. There is a store that everyone calls Yamaha, it backs onto the water and front and the main street. If you're looking for western food/products , or half reasonable meat, this is probably the best place in Gizo. Just think Sydney high end pricing and you will be fine.

**Adina – July 2015:** We didn't stay here but went on Noel's boat from Liapari (and cleared out as customs/immigration don't come to your boat).

DO NOT anchor outside PT109 restaurant. Several robberies have been reported and we met a man who was robbed twice there.

Anchor outside the local market at 08-06.185 S / 156-50.644E . Market, shops, ATMs, hospital, fuel, airport.

**Yawana – 2015:** Gizo has an excellent anchorage and I did not hear of any reports of thefts from boats in the three months I was in the region. There is a strong police presence here. The waterfront bars are open until the early hours and play loud music, so you may wish to anchor in one of the bays further north if you like to sleep. Fatboys and Sanbis resorts welcome yachts.

Noro is now the preferred port of entry in the Western Province, as Gizo has been experiencing reports of theft, and the Immigration officer is extremely uncooperative and is rarely available.

**Sophie – October 2014:** Sophie dropped anchor in Gizo, Solomon Islands at 8:15 local time this morning.

Unfortunately, it's Saturday here, and the folks from Customs, Immigration, Quarantine, and Health are all gone for the weekend. Legally we need to stay on the boat under a yellow quarantine flag until Monday when they are all back in the office. We had pushed to get here on a Saturday morning because we had hoped that government offices here were open on Saturday mornings like they are in Vanuatu. No such luck. I went into town when we arrived and was directed to the local police station, where an officer named Hilton took me under his wing and walked me down the street to the customs office. Hilton was wearing an Australian bush hat and a sleeveless cowboy shirt. He had the deep, gentle voice of an English butler, and his teeth and gums were stained bright red from chewing the local leaf. After he tried the door to the Customs Office, he turned to me and politely said that we really needed to stay on the boat until Monday. I asked him if it was safe in the harbor for us to do so, and he apologized and said that unfortunately there are some bad boys in town and that if we stayed on the boat and kept it locked we'd be fine. This wasn't a surprise to us, but I was bummed that we were not able to head directly to the marina at Lamieng.

Hilton also said that if we needed anything from a shop this weekend, it was OK for us to come into town to get what we needed. That was nice to know. Every store on the main drag of Gizo had a sign for something called "SolBrew", the local beer, so I went into a bottle shop and asked how much did a cold bottle of beer cost. The response? "\$1". I asked how much was a case of 24 bottles. "\$24" was the answer. I smiled and bought a case on the spot.

Throughout the last 18 months, the price of local beer has ranged from \$3 to \$8 per bottle, depending on the country. SolBrew is far and away the most inexpensive local beer we've encountered on the entire trip. Once we got the case back on board we realized that it tasted like a real German lager! Jenna's verdict? "This is some of the best beer we've had!"

We are anchored off of something called the Gizo Yacht Club, which is also called the "PT 109 Bar and Grill" (JFK served here in WWII.) I spoke with the owner when I first arrived on shore, and he apologized that they do not yet have the capability to prearrange yacht clearance into the country. He had just bought the place and was trying to get it back on its feet. He also insisted that we all come in for dinner tonight, he would deal with any issues that arose from customs, and that Sophie would be perfectly safe while we were gone as long as we locked it. We are anchored 150 meters from his bar, and we are very much looking forward to a local meal on shore.

It took us all morning Monday to complete our clearance. By the time I was done we think the outside temperature was touching 100 degrees F with very high humidity. Much of that time was spent waiting in line at banks to get cash to pay the government and to buy diesel. By the time I finished up all of the government work and shoreside errands on Monday, it was too late to head up to Liapari. Jenna and Lauren hit the market while the kids and I hit returned to the boat.

One highlight of the weekend was buying stone carvings from dugout canoes that paddled up to the boat. Most were carved from river stone similar to the stone used for carvings in New

Zealand. Jenna and Lauren bought about 10 pieces between them, including carvings of the local fishing god (body of a man, head of a bird, tuna in his hand) and carved wall hangings of "Gasere", the local worship octopus that grabs your enemies to prevent them from harming you.

Our Gaseres must have worked, because we went into shore on Saturday and Sunday nights for dinner at waterfront restaurants and we were not bothered by the local gangsta boys on either night. Plates of local lobster ranged between \$8-\$10 at each restaurant, and they were delicious. We did, however, lock the boat up tight each night and slept soundly in the heat.

Yesterday while I was dealing with the government, Jenna was back on Sophie supervising the loading of 600 liters of diesel onto the boat. It was delivered in 200 liter drums on a long boat and then hand pumped into our tanks. During this procedure, Jenna's sunscreen must have sweated off, because yesterday was the first day in our entire 2 year trip where she got a sunburn. I thought she was impervious to that sort of thing, but she simply takes really good care of her skin and the Solomons climate got the better of her.

**La Gitana – 2014 – Diesel in Gizo:** We were there last year and obtaining Diesel is not a problem. The cleanest Diesel you'll find to the right of PT109 (the main yachtie hangout) where the big tanks are. At high tide you might even be able to pull up to the dock, but check first. If not, take your dinghy and purchase as many drums (sic!) as you need. They will get them to the pier for you and transfer them in your jerrycans. We even managed to get duty free fuel there, but it took a lot of sweettalking as well as some patience and running around. Situation might have changed.

If you need a lot fuel, you might also find somebody to come out to Miss Behave with a barge and a couple or more drums to pump right into your tank.

Should you need propane, you'll have to go to Noro, some 30 nm further east. Unless you purchase a local tank at a ridiculous price, no LPG is available. Next stops to stock up on LPG and fuel are Honiara, then Luganville and the most convenient Port Vila, where they have a dock for yachts. There you'll also get duty free fuel upon checking out. In between these stops, you'll find nothing of that kind.

**Miss Behave – July 2014:** We refueled yesterday. There is a chap called Rick Splinter, an islander who acts as an agent for fuel and laundry and will look after your boat if you want.

He will make himself known to you along with a plethora of canoes wanting to sell carvings. No secret to getting rid of them--just buy something and tell them to leave. Rick delivered 2 x 200L drums. Diesel is \$14SD a litre, he gets \$.50c per litre commission and charges \$70 delivery fee for a large canoe. They pump it. Insist on clean fuel, intact seals and payment after delivery. I filtered the first 50litres of each drum and it was clean, no rust nor water. Gizo is a wild west place, dirty.

Change your money at the Chinese shops that have a china man sitting high at the back. They give 7SD per USD which is better than the ANZ. There is an ANZ and an ATM.

Upon arrival, park at 08-05.4 S / 156-50.5E and don't rush to do immigration. Rosa is the only officer in town and she has gout and is rotund. Rick will give you her contact number, she is

nice, just lazy. Ring her and she may see you that day. Be prepared for a jaw dropping Customs charge of \$18USD per metre of boat length. It is outrageous and really takes the shine off the place. Quarantine is a joke but costs \$150SD, Immigration is the same \$300SD but the customs charge is mad and I am going to make a big issue of it with the forums and also with the Customs department since I have all their email addresses. One boss is an Australian. They charge the same rate as though we were a container ship whereas until 2012 it was a modest 10C per ton. Bastards.

Security is ok, just don't leave valuables, ropes, cans etc within easy reach.

Fresh food market is Sun/Mon/Tue with basic veggies. Fresh bread in a bread shop on the main street. No milk or fresh juice. Eggs are scarce but available. SolBrew beer is \$10SD a can and tasty.

**Carina – August 2012:** We passed into Gizo's reefs at Kennedy Island (markers are missing at entrance) and anchored off of PT109 Restaurant & Bar at 08°05.981S, 156°50.317E, in the protected bight on the north side of town.

PT109's Lawry is friendly and you can leave your dinghy securely at the dock there. They offer modestly-priced lunches and suppers and cold SolBrew. They will be hosting a Vakaitipu or festival of boats in September of 2013.

Gizo offers moderate provisioning opportunities at prices above Honiara or Munda, though the extensive public market offers abundant and inexpensive produce. The market grows even larger on Thursdays and Fridays. (Saturday is SDA Sabbath, so the market is much smaller.)

There are a few hardware stores, and the SSCA host in town, John Hutton, offers fiberglass boat repairs (he sold us some epoxy).

Along the main street are ATMs at BSP and ANZ, the Post Office and Telekom. There is 3G Wi-Fi service in the anchorage from Telekom.

The lovely Catholic cathedral, one block in from the main street, is worth a visit.

Fuel is available at GRP along the waterfront: gasoline was \$12.70 SBD per liter, while diesel was \$13.30 per liter.

Customs is upstairs in the large concrete building just north of Telekom. Willy is quite friendly. George is the Immigration contact, and at this writing he was laid up at home with a broken leg and we had to go into Gizo's hills to find him. By the time this is published, presumably he'll be back on the job.

There were no fees for checking out, though it is required that you leave within 24 hours of Customs clearance.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We approached Gizo via the pass just E of Kennedy Island (Plum Pudding Island on older charts).

Nearly all of the marker beacons approaching Gizo were as advertised. Before reaching Gizo (or as short day trips from Gizo) many yachts spend a night or two anchored off one of the two resorts on Mbambanga Island: Fatboys (anchor at 08°07.162S, 156°53.698E, 17m) and Sanbis

(08°06.862S, 156°52.830E, 13m). Both anchorages are coral-encumbered and can become uncomfortable in a strong northerly. The management of both establishments welcome yachts.

At Gizo, the popular area for anchoring in 2010/11 was off PT109; we anchored at 08°05.968S, 156° 50.394E in 15m. This is better protected than off the market and the staff at PT109 will keep an eye on your boat and allow you to land at their dock. For most of our stay, there was also a Police boat (RAMSI) moored here (until it broke its mooring...). This was manned 24/7 and afforded an additional measure of security. In 2010 there had been a total of two security “incidents” involving yachts in Gizo; in one case a fellow yachting was the prime suspect.

Launches buzz through the anchorage at all hours, often at high speed, but – after an initial visit to see if you wish to buy carvings - the locals will not greatly bother you. PT109 operates a very loud discotheque three or four nights a week; this can be heard all over Gizo!

There are a dozen or so Chinese shops along Gizo's main street and most staple items are easily available. Water can be a problem: the town water supply is in disrepair and most people buy from a tanker; ask what the situation is at PT109 and/or catch rain when you can. Diesel can be jugged from the fuel depot 200 metres west of PT-109; with care it may be possible to back your boat in to a small dock there to take on fuel. WiFi is available throughout town but patchy in the anchorage. Buy a “Bumblebee” card from the Telekom office. Restaurants: PT-109, La Masa and the Gizo Hotel. There is air service at least daily (sometimes twice) to Honiara.

Customs, Agriculture and Health all have officers supposedly seven days a week in Gizo, but during our stay the Customs officer was not always on hand. Immigration does NOT have an officer based here but he will come from Noro, by arrangement with customs. A USD \$100 flat fee applied, to cover his transport, so it is worth clubbing together with other boats if you wish to check in or out here (at the time of writing there were mixed reports about security in Noro). Customs will not check you out unless Immigration has also done so.

### **3.7.3 The Resort Anchorages – Sanbis & Fatboys**

The resort area is SE of Gizo a few miles, on Mmambanga Island. There are two resorts that are mentioned by cruisers... Sanbis and Fatboys. There may be more...

**Soggy Paws – August 2019:** We had anchored close in to Sanbis’s Pizza Bar dock in April when we came through and wanted to get out of Gizo late in the afternoon. We did not have the light nor the time to try to find a better anchorage. We dropped in about 65 ft at 08-06.82 S / 156-52.72 E. Variable winds through the night wound our anchor chain around a couple of deep bommies.

Coming back in August with fairly stiff SE winds, we anchored instead in the little cul de sac just north of Sanbis, at 08 06.687 S / 156 52.428 E in about 55 ft sand. This is a pretty little spot and does have some protection from the SE winds, plus some weak 3G. The only downside is a “friendly” guy in a canoe from the island just to the west who demanded an anchoring and beach access fee of \$125 SD per person. He just came up and handed us a bill. We had no intention of going ashore.

We argued with him, nicely, and demanded to see his paperwork before paying him anything. We also told him the Tourism Bureau in Honiara told us no one should be charging anchoring

fees. He said tourists didn't do anything for him. He came back the next day with some paperwork, which he never actually showed to us. We still refused to pay him, and he was angry, but we promised to leave. We left a few hours later. We did try to be friendly and offered him a bag of rice instead, as this had worked in many other similar situations. But he insisted on getting paid that amount. He got nothing from us.

The other downside of this spot is that the boats zooming from Noro and Vonavona to Giza pass close by at high speed.

I would recommend checking the shoreline just SE of Sanbis—may be able to find a sandy spot in not-too-deep water with some protection from the SE.

Sanbis's Pizza Bar was cozy, welcoming, and had pretty darned good pizza, though a little pricey.

**Screensaver – September 2017:** In 19m, sand/coral, 3G. Not the most protected place, but apart from the odd rain squall it is not too bad.

Not a lot has changed in the last six years, which is a good thing as this place is easy to take and the food and drinks were not unreasonably priced given the resort type environment. It is good to meet some of guests and exchange different stories.

The owners of these sort of places, in this case Hans, don't do it for the money, but for the lifestyle and location. Many have been here for 10 to 30 plus years.

**Mokisha – March 2013:** We're now anchored off a resort called Sanbis – an incredible place to finish organizing and continue projects. We can jump into the clear waters and snorkel when we get too hot, and we can enjoy the waterfront café at night.

We'll be here for a few days (with internet!) before heading off to the Shortland Islands. Although we both got a couple of colds in the tropics, they are running their course so we plan to do a couple of dives – including a 140 foot Japanese freighter that was torpedoed during the war, the Tara Maru. The trade winds seem as though they are arriving which not only cools things down but gives us the chance to sail.

Our dive trip: We had an amazing dive at "Central Station". Tons of fish, fans and sharks above our heads. The Grouper come here to spawn so there were a lot - most we've ever seen. The aggressive Trigger fish were also mating. There were Barracuda and Bat fish - great dive.

The 2nd dive was a old Japanese freighter the Toa Mara. Interesting old wreck at 280 ft. It was torpedoed & sunk during WWII. Tom got a great picture of the torpedo hole. There's even sake bottles that litter the deck. A beautiful reef now covers most of the wreck.

**Sweet Dreams – 2010 - Fatboys Resort:** New owner - Danny Kennedy. We have not been there this trip. Reported to be good but dining there is nothing special. Moorings now may no longer be secure. Exposed to NE through to S. Excellent spot to visit subject to weather - great snorkelling in the area.

### **3.7.4 Hunda Cove**

Screensaver – September 2017: In 11.6m mud no cell. Last time I was here they stole my outboard, the same one I still have today. It's a long story and if you were interested you could search Hunda on my website and find the story I'm sure.

So this time the outboard was chained up of course. The pastor who came out to visit remembered and the culprits are still around it seems. The village apart from that incident was good fun and while I wasn't quite sure about leaping into the water I instead stood in the tender tossing balls and frisbee back and forth with the Kids.

### **3.8 Kolombangara Island**

#### **3.8.1 Visiting the Cloudforest**

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** It is possible to arrange a trip up to the Imbu Ranu lodge up in the cloud forest on Kolombangara. This can be arranged through a tour company in Munda (or Agnes Lodge), but we did ours with "Billy" (Rina Billy) from [Boboe Village](#) on the edge of Vonavona Lagoon. Or you can go to Ringgi Cove yourself and try to arrange it yourself. You can do this as a day trip, or stay a few days at the lodge.

The lodge is a 45 minute drive on a rough road from Ringgi Cove (approx location is 08-01.96 S / 157-06.98 E) (ie too far to walk unless you are an avid hiker). You must arrange for transport, and the cost quoted to us was \$300 SD per round trip to the lodge. If you are arranging a day trip, be sure you know whether you will need to pay for 1 or 2 round trips. (We thought our \$300 was to take us up and bring us back, but when it came time to come down, they wanted \$300 for the trip up in the morning and \$300 for the trip down in the evening, because the person transporting us didn't stay for the day.).

There are 2-3 sleeping rooms in the lodge, and a small kitchen. If you want to stay overnight, you must bring your own food (not sure about cooking gas), and probably sheets and towels. There are plumbed bathrooms and showers. I do not know the cost, nor who exactly to arrange to stay here. It would be a wonderful respite from boat life for a couple of days here (cool and very very green).

There is a tiny bit of phone coverage at the lodge (I had to walk back down the road about 5 minutes to get a reliable enough signal to make a call. My phone showed Edge occasionally, but not really usable internet, but once or twice while hiking along the ridge, occasionally we would get very weak 3G coverage and Facebook notifications would alert us that we had internet.

The lodge has a beautiful view of the broken caldera, which is usually visible in the mornings. By afternoon it can be socked in with clouds, or charmingly semi-visible with clouds drifting by and through the valleys.

There is a map on a board near the bathrooms at the lodge, showing where the trails are, but there are no waypoints, distances, or walking times on the map. Part of our group went down to the river (but not to the waterfall), and their hike took about 2 hrs round trip including a stop at the river. This was a steep trail. The other part of our group went up the ridge to the

lookout (but we never found the lookout). We hiked an hour and a half to where there is a sign indicating that the trail splits and goes down to the river and loops back to the lodge (passing the lookout without seeing it, according to the map). Our guide discouraged us from taking the river trail—it looked like a steep trail down to the river, and we assumed a steep trail back up. So we turned around and came back down the same trail. The ridge trail was fairly level, but not a completely cleared path—lots of downed trees and branches. Wear appropriate hiking shoes. Each time we asked our guide (who didn't have much English) how far it was to the lookout, he would say "10 minutes". An hour later, still hiking through rough terrain, we asked the same question, and got the same answer! He whacked around in the bush where he thought the lookout should be, but we never saw it. Be forewarned.

The hiking board shows "huts" further up the mountain and theoretically you could hike to the summit and camp on the way. I think Agnes Lodge in Munda may have a brochure with more information, or there may be more info on the internet.

Billy's fees were \$150 SD for the boat ride over from Boboe Village, where we left our boats, plus fuel. The boat is owned by the village, and that fee goes to the village. We negotiated trade items for Billy's time. Billy organized a truck to pick us up at the Ringgi Cove dock and for a guide (both are required by the forestry company that owns the lodge). You should arrange this several days in advance. We arranged the night before and the arrangement for transportation got boggled up. There are several "Billy's" at Boboe Village (and indeed, in Noro and probably Munda). Ours was Rina Billy. He is a carver and an elder at Boboe Village. Cell# 743-6577. He was very helpful and reliable, and had very good English.

It is required that you take a guide with you if you go hiking anywhere. The guide fee is \$200 SD per guide per day. (We had a large group with diverse desires and ended up wanting to split up and go in 2 different directions, so we paid for 2 guides).

The lodge has a nice veranda that can be used to shelter from rain and have lunch, while enjoying the spectacular view, even if you are not staying overnight.

Two other contacts on the island, if you want to try to arrange things yourself:

Mason Nasai – KFPL Human Resources Manager – 763-0617

KFPL Office – 60230

### ***3.8.2 Vanga Point (NW Coast) (Mongga)***

#### **Sieling Pg 160-161**

**Soggy Paws – Aug 2019:** The CM93 chart is a little bit out, and very vague about Vanga Point (and most of the west coast of Kolombanggara), but as always, the satellite navigation charts we used (created using GE2KAP/Sat2Chart and SAS Planet) were very accurate. Going over the bar on entry, we saw a least depth of about 22 ft. We motored slowly in to the inner bay, and anchored in about 50 ft at 07-54.85 S / 156-57.56 E.

We hopped in the dinghy and went in to find Charlie (see Lorelie's account below). Charlie is now the principal of the school. There were a number of young men making furniture in the shed next to the dock. Contact info for Charlie: [cperavae@gmail.com](mailto:cperavae@gmail.com)

Late in the afternoon, two girls paddled out to trade some “water cress” for fish hooks. One boat coming in from outside the little lagoon circled us on their way in. Other than that, no one bothered us. Charlie did say that since the logging road passes by their village and school, that sometimes strangers come in the area, and we should lock our boat when we leave.

With the sun out for the first time in about 10 days, this is a beautiful anchorage, and nice and cool from the nearby mountain. Haven’t gone diving yet, but that’s on today’s agenda.

**Lorelei – May 2013:** *(Ed note: No waypoints given by Lorelei, but by comparing the satellite images with Sieling (and finding a vague Vanga Pt on CM93) I believe their anchorage to be at 07 54.86 S / 156 57.55 E)*

Our first stop after Gizo was Vanga Point which was highly recommended to us by other cruising/diving friends.

Vanga has a small little protected bay that was only really big enough for one or two boats and just perfect for Lorelei.

There is a small village, 2 schools and a Catholic College. The senior school teaches older teenage boys and young men farming & agriculture as well as things like carpentry & woodworking, mechanics, machinery maintenance, etc. The men attending the school have travelled from all parts of the Solomons and only return home twice a year in December and June.

The College up on the hill is set up for training mature students to become teachers in much the same skills as the school.

The small primary school is there to provide education for the teachers and local villages’ young children.

The best thing about this place is its very safe on all aspects, the people are so friendly and don’t have any need to come out to the boat. With the large agriculture set-up, they have loads of fresh food, eggs, honey, meat, etc, so you simply put an order in with Charlie the Deputy Principal and the next day it’s ready to pick up.

The big bonus of the area is the stunning 500m+ deep reef walls that are only 150m away from Lorelei. There is superb wall diving, reef & blue water spearing. It’s been so flat we can even do it from our kayaks! For over 3 weeks there was no wind or swell and we simply used the kayaks to explore the area both in the bay and on the outer reef drop-offs.

The only thing we had to be a little careful of was the crocodiles in the area. There is one resident one in the bay that is getting bolder as he gets bigger and is now starting to stalk and chase the local fisherman in their canoes. They have set a trap for it and hopefully it will be caught soon.

With the glassy conditions we were able to scuba dive from our kayaks. The kayaks have an aft well set up for a scuba cylinder but we had never tried it before and our tanks actually fitted much better than we had anticipated. It’s a little wild kayaking out to the deep walls, anchoring the kayaks on the edge and diving down the wall. We pretty much dived every day and we simply anchored the kayaks 150m past where we dived the day before and jumped in.

One day we dived a spur that stuck out off the wall that had current rushing around it. The soft corals that started at 15m were extensive with amazing amounts of different colours.

A few days later we dived on a point at the end of the north wall. The fish life was incredible! There were massive amounts of bait fish everywhere, turtles overhead, sharks below and schools of barracuda, tuna and trevally amongst other things buzzing around us. There were so many species we didn't know where to look. We couldn't even begin to try to photograph it so we turned the camera off and sat on the point at 28m and watched the spectacle, excitedly pointing at things in all directions.

On our last night at Vanga (well this time around – we will return soon – it's fantastic!) we were invited up to Charlie and Frieda's house for dinner along with fellow yachties John and Sue who had just arrived. They are off the Kiwi yacht 'Sir Francis'. John and Sue have spent a lot of time in Vanga and know the people of the area quite well.

Freida made a fantastic meal for us all and Lisa made double batch of golden syrup dumplings with custard which was a big hit for dessert.

We were in Vanga for 3 ½ weeks and during that time we put the RIB in only 3 times – twice to go to shore and once to go spearing a fair distance from the harbour. For all other times and for every scuba dive, we used our Kayaks. It was so great to utilize the kayaks for so many things.

**Lorelei – November 2013:** After a week of fantastic diving around Gizo and Kennedy Island, we took off across the Vella Gulf to our last destination and all-time favourite Solomons spot, Vanga, on the NW coast of Kolombangara Island.

It was our 4th time to Vanga and we mainly came to say goodbye to our good friends Charlie & Frieda and donate our timber dugout canoe to their daughter Alexis and the other Pikinini's in the village to share.

When we arrived we noticed some new buildings out on the point and discovered the community was building a small resort/village stay set-up for visiting guests. The views from the balconies were amazing. They were not completed but one was to lock-up stage and the inside was fantastic. Not bad for SD \$100 (\$17 Aus) per night.

That afternoon, they slaughtered 2 pigs and roasted one over a fire made from the timber off-cuts from the building.

The next day was a Sunday and we went for a picnic after church to another bay further north where we hung out, ate, spearfished, swam and played with the Pikinini's. It was a great day out and we took the RIB filled with all the gear & food while most of the people walked there.

Before lunch we went with Charlie and spearfished Vanga Point. Paul was spearing in the deeper water off the wall when a large Scalloped Hammerhead Shark came in to check him out. Paul managed to get above it and swam with it for a while.

For our last day at Vanga Lisa spent the day with Frieda in the garden and learned how to cook some traditional food. She came home with so much fresh F&V including 25 huge avocados, pineapples and stacks of other stuff.

### **3.8.3 Sansama Cove (W Coast)**

Sieling Pg 158-159

### **3.8.4 Varu (Lotu Harbor) (W Coast)**

Sieling Pg 156-157

### **3.8.5 Hambere Village (W Coast)**

Sieling Pg 154-155

### **3.8.6 Kukundu Slipway / Irie (Iri) Village (W Coast)**

Sieling 152-153

**Soggy Paws – August 2019:** We used 08-02.36 S / 156-57.18 E as our waypoint to enter this bay. The depth went from off soundings up to about 65 feet and then leveled off at about 60 ft, and then down to 50 ft around Field Trip's anchor spot. Looked like plenty of swinging room and a nice flat bottom. We didn't go in any further than the slipway. It was a nice tidy little place. The slipway is on the north side of the lagoon.

We didn't anchor, but nosed up to the docks next to the slipway and had a chat with a couple of guys working there. We met Cyril (mentioned in Sieling's guide). The slipway is still in operation, mostly servicing SDA boats. Cyril said he could accommodate a catamaran, given some notice to set up his trolley. He said that now there is a diesel engine that pulls the trolley up (in 2009 a yacht mentioned it was done manually!).

There was a ~50-60 ft small "freighter" up on the slip when we stopped by. There is a big sailboat at the dock—looked pretty nice until you round the boat that is hiding it, and it's sadly a steel boat in great disrepair. (However, there is lots of stainless steel tubing, a mast, winches, davits, and other sailboat hardware on that boat, if someone is in dire need, you might be able to make a deal, as it doesn't look like the boat is going anywhere anytime soon).

The water right alongside the dock was about 35 ft deep.

**Field Trip – 2017 – Irie Village: 08 02.1861 S / 156 57.4784 E** This was a very nice village. We came here to drop off some goods from another family, and spent some time with the village. The kids were great, and we did a dinghy excursion up the river. There are crocs here so be careful.

**Sweet Dreams - 2010:** Nice anchorage near slipway. Villagers will approach for anchorage fee - approx \$100SD. This was the only place we were approached for anchorage fees, which is a shame because it is unlikely the village will get many visitors with it. There is an all-inclusive fee for Walk to mountain from here (2 days) - cost includes anchorage fee, boat minding, tabu visits, hiking guide and carriers - approx \$700 - more reasonable, if that is what you want to do. Anchorage: 08-02.24 S / 156-57.29E.

Very poor reports in relation to using the slipway.

### **3.8.7 Ringgi Cove (S Coast)**

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** 08 07.19 S / 157 06.81 E 17m, 2G-3G. Kolombangara Island has the highest mountain in Solomons and beyond for many miles at around 1700mt. You can actually hire a guide and trek to the top, staying in cabins along the way. I did a day trek last time with a guide through the bush and came back down via the fresh water river coming from the mountains. Needless to say the water was very fresh (very cold).

**Auspray – Year Unk:** Easy entrance with markers – possible to do night entry if necessary. Good all weather protection – cyclone hole possibility. Canoes visit to trade fruit and veg. Carvers village across Blackett Strait. Check quality of carving carefully. Good carver – Job. Fix price after inspection even with pre-ordered items. One carver offers tour of Japanese Hospital Cave. Recommend such tours organised through Munda Go West Tours – near Agnes Lodge.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Bound north to Micronesia, we backtracked from Gizo first to Ringgi Cove on Kolombangara Island, anchoring in the eastern arm at 08°07.116S, 157°06.862E., 17m. The anchorage is very well protected but there are crocs around so swimming should only be done with care. The once very large logging operation is now at a very low ebb but there remains a settlement about 1km up the road from the obvious landing place on your right as you enter the cove. We found the locals friendly and willing to trade but in December a yacht had a dinghy and outboard stolen here; the police later recovered the dinghy. Locals (as everywhere...) blamed “Malaitans” - many of these communities saw an influx of Malaitans some years ago, when there were many jobs available, and they have not gone home, even though the jobs are now finished.

### **3.8.8 Jack Harbor (Mbambari) (E Coast)**

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** On the eastern shore of Kolombangara, fronting the Kula Gulf, Jack Harbour (or Mbambari) is also very well-protected; we anchored in the North arm at 08°03.264S, 157°11.349E, in 21m. The village on your right as you enter is Seventh Day Adventist. In the South arm, however, are the inevitable Mailaitans, who were noticeably rowdier and more nosy.

### **3.8.9 Bat Harbour (SE Coast)**

**Lorelei – November 2013:** The next morning we took off from Lever Harbor for a 40nm run to Bat Harbour on the eastern side of Kolombangarra Island in the Kula Gulf. We had been meaning to visit the area since we first arrived in Gizo 5 months ago so it was nice to finally make it.

The Kula Gulf was a major Japanese stronghold during WW2 and the Gulf was the scene for some of the fiercest sea battles in the Pacific. There are scores of sunken destroyers, freighters, PT boats and planes from both the Japs and the US littered on the seabed of the Gulf.

Sadly for divers, most of the Gulf is over 400m deep making diving on the wrecks impossible. There is however still a large amount of remnants on the land and some in the water and we wanted to check them out.

The anchorage in Bat Harbour was small and we had just enough swing room. It was very protected from the wind.

Our first full day there was a Saturday and the kids were home from boarding school so we linked up with 3 boys from the nearest 2 houses and went on a day trip in the RIB with them as guides.

The first stop was the 5 WW2 Japanese guns on the points protecting the harbour entrance.

From there we went to look at the old Japanese lighthouse. It has fallen into the sea and we could see the intact light through the clear water and vowed to return with dive gear and cameras to investigate.

Next stop was the Bat Cave from where the area gets its name. The tide was low and we had to paddle the RIB in over a shallow reef bar to get to a mangrove channel and lagoon which leads to the cave.

The cave system was far more extensive than we thought it would be. We had 2 powerful torches for us and we took 3 smaller one for the boys which they though was great.

We spent over 90 minutes inside exploring the different caverns. We even got lost twice and had to try to back-track out.

Inside there were 1000's of flying foxes and bats and we had them flying into us a stack of times.

The local families eat the flying foxes and the boys managed to get 5 by whacking them with sticks while they were flying around. We like the local food but declined on dinner that night!

That afternoon was a local community fundraiser, a "bring and buy" for the church.

Their church is Solomons Islands Uniting and because it is not a recognised brand in the western world, they don't get any support or funding like the SDA's, Catholics and Methodists so they try to do it themselves. Sadly the other ministers from the "brand name" churches are trying to shut them down because the minister is not properly ordained. But he can't get it because no one will help him from the outside. It is the only church in the area and services 6 villages.

We got changed and took the boys with us to the event and brought a stack of fresh food and a cooked lunch for all of us. We were the first white skinned people to ever attend one of the church's functions and were thanked many times for coming.

Our next big adventure was to pack up the RIB and head south for a day trip to Teme and Vila Harbour. The first stop was in a small bay were Joseph and his family lived.

They have a series of caves on their land that the Japanese used for many things such as a small hospital, ammunition bunkers, air raid shelters and accommodation.

The underground hospital was small but great to see and there were a lot of relics both inside and out.

The Earthquake/Tsunami in 2007 sadly destroyed a lot of the caves and closed a lot of entrances with soil and mud but it also open new ones that were previously undiscovered.

One was an ammo bunker that was stacked full of live ordinance. The NZ army was called in and most was taken and disposed but they left a few safe ones for the tourists to view. We also saw gas masks, helmets, digging tools, jacks and guns.

The next village down had an old Jap bridge over the water that had been destroyed by the US. From there we ventured south to Vila Harbour to try to locate a sunken Jap Submarine that was reported to be in the area. We asked many people at 3 different villages. Only some had heard of it and we got some dodgy directions but none of them were the correct location.

After 90 minutes of searching we talked to a young local spearo who knew where it was. We were dubious but he took us right to the spot and we were stoked – and so was he with his lollies and money as a thank you.

The last stop was the Fallen Jap lighthouse on the way home, which actually turned out to be a large searchlight in the shallows.

In the afternoons at Bat Harbour we would set the big screen up in the cockpit and have movies and popcorn for the 4 kids. Kung Fu Panda was certainly a hit!

The crabbing in the area is also good and we had a big buck with massive claws in one of the traps only 3 hours after we put them in.

The downside of the area is the crocodiles. We had one swimming around our RIB while at the church fundraiser in the next bay and one around Lorelei in the early mornings. Both were medium size.

After 5 days we left Bat Harbour and said our farewells to the 2 fantastic families in the inlet. Their children were the best natured kids we have met in the Solomons. Sadly two of the boys come from a poor family and don't go to school. It's a real pity because they is very smart.

**Pastime – 2002:** We'd read about interesting bat caves in the Lonely Planet guide and decided to cruise to "Bat Harbour" on the SE Coast of Kolombangara to visit them. Old machine guns still sit on rocks nearby as you glide into the peaceful harbour.

Solomon and Ellen Ngana live there and Solomon showed us the excellent caves and relics of the Japanese Occupation.

The bat caves are extensive, with many species and thousands of bats in every nook. There were a few screams from family members who were startled by wings brushing their faces!

Ellen generously cooked us lots of "Custom" food with ingredients from their extensive gardens. They used to receive many visits from yachts, particularly during the time of the Brisbane to Gizo Yacht Races, but these have ceased. They would like more yachts to visit.

Swimming in the natural harbour was discouraged by crocodiles, but there was excellent, safe diving and snorkelling on the reef to the south of Bat Harbour entrance. One caution ' there is an uncharted reef a few hundred metres off the SE Coast of Kolombangara. Fortunately, our scanning sonar picked it up during a tropical downpour with zero visibility. A crash gybe brought us to a stop in a boat length and we navigated around the treacherous reef when the rain abated. Navigate with caution in rain squalls! The reef is visible in fine weather.

### **3.9 Vonavona Lagoon**

Sieling Pg 81-87

The Vonavona Lagoon is a large protected lagoon that encircles Vonavona Island, and is in turn encircled by an outer reef. Once inside the lagoon, depths are shallow enough for anchoring, almost everywhere. The outer reef protection is good enough that, in moderate winds, you can throw an anchor out anywhere and have a good night's sleep.

We saw at least one big croc sleeping on the surface one afternoon, and there are lots of mangroves about. But Zipola Resort and Boboe Village both told us that it was OK to swim close to where they were. (Do so with caution, however).

Most of the lagoon gets some cell signal from Noro or Gizo. Lola Island has pretty good 3G. About the only place we didn't have good enough cell coverage for data was anchored at Boboe Village.

Sieling has some routes through the Lagoon, and I know of several monohulls with 6 ft draft who successfully followed Sieling's route through the lagoon. In good sunlight, depths less than 7 ft are usually visible. Google Earth's coverage isn't great in the lagoon, but mixing and matching (using Sas Planet) with ArcGIS imagery and Bing Satellite imagery, we had pretty good satellite charting through the lagoon.

**Lorelei – July 2013:** The Lagoon is a complex system of reef, shoaling areas and many small islands. You should only try and navigate through it on a sunny day between 10am & 3pm when the sun is at its peak so you can see the reef.

As Murphy's Law would have it, as soon as we crossed the bar (from the north) and entered the lagoon, a storm approached that looked ugly with black skies and strong winds. We had no option except to stop in some deeper water and ride it out before trying to go and further.

Fortunately the main front passed within an hour but there was more on the horizon so we made for the largest island and anchored at a spot called Pature Point. This spot is not on the cruising guides list of anchorages – and it showed. The friendly villagers came out and were amazed that we had anchored in their bay. They had never seen a yacht here before.

It turned out to be a fantastic place and by fluke it was friends Leva and Theresa's village who were home on school holidays as Leva normally works in Vanga.

They invited us to Leva's brother's wedding in 7 days time and we gladly accepted with Paul offering to do the photos.

The next morning we loaded up the RIB and spent a day snorkeling the islands and the inner and outer reefs of the lagoon.

From past experience we knew there was a WW2 plane in the area but couldn't remember where. It didn't matter we simply asked a local fisherman in a dugout and he kindly took us to it. The girls thought it was great following this super buff local paddling his canoe.

After a bit of a snorkel around George found it. It was a US Hellcat fighter that was shot down and is lying upright and intact in only 8m of water.

On the way back we decided to snorkel the reef areas. We first tried a drift snorkel but the coral was pretty average. We tried a second spot with the same results. We were just about to give up when Lisa suggested a spot close to an island that looked OK. OK was definitely an understatement.

The top of the reef was only 2m deep with stunning coral in perfect condition. There were a lot of things like gorgonian fans, nudibranchs, certain fish and invertebrates that we found in the shallows that normally live in much deeper depths.

We were even further amazed when Lisa called us over to the drop-off where there was a large field of beautiful coral and dense fish schools going from the surface right down to the bottom.

George and Chez said it was the best snorkeling they had ever done and it was definitely up there with the best we have seen.

### **3.9.1 Snake Island**

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** Sieling shows an anchor at Snake Island, in the north end of Vonavona. We checked it out and there are anchoring depths around, and if you had strong wind from a certain direction, it would provide some lee for one boat (it's a very small island). There are no villages there, but it's possible that someone in a canoe or banana boat will stop by.

Generally when we were in Vonavona, the wind was so light that you could heave an anchor out anywhere there were anchorable depths. And most of the lagoon is less than 50 ft.

### **3.9.2 Boboe (Boboy, Mbomboe) Village**

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** This village is named Mbomboe on Sieling's sketch chart on pg 85. He doesn't show a route in from the inside of the lagoon, but if you head approx ENE from Snake Island (shown as an anchorage in Sieling) in the north end of the lagoon, you can make your way out to the village from the inside with at least 20 ft depths. Sieling's chartlet is not very accurate, satellite charts would be helpful.

The village is located inside the outer rim, approximately midway across the N end.

The anchorage at Boboe Village is at 08-09.09 S / 157-05.62 E, in 45-50 ft sand and scattered coral. This is a 360 degree protected anchorage right off the village.

There are two ways to get to the village. One, the direct (outside) route from Gizo or Noro to Boboe is through a pass located at 08-09.0 S / 157-05.85 E. This is a "visual only" pass. We went out this pass and back in on a sunny day to make our track, and saw least depths of 8 ft. There is some current usually in the pass, but not outrageous. We came in and out on another sunny day at a very low tide (rocks showing in many places) and saw least depth of 6.5 ft

Many boats come and go through the pass off the village and this one, so pick your anchorage so as to be off the main route of boats coming and going. There is lots of room if you have a sunny day and can see the reefs.

There is 2G cell signal in the anchorage. Phone and SMS work OK. Sometimes you can get data through and sometimes not.

The other way into the village is from the inside, this route is fairly deep, but you need good Google Earth charts, and good sunshine to find your way in. From Gizo, I think the least depth all the way in to the village was 20 ft.

The village is a nice one, clean and neat and friendly. The villagers are SDA, so Saturday is their Sabbath day.

There are 4-5 carvers in the village, and they will come out to you in canoes, or you can arrange to meet them in the village meeting house (an open air covered pavilion near the stone dock, at approx 08-09.283 S / 157-05.533 E).

You can buy premix gas, and probably Top Up in the village. (Gas is a couple dollars per liter more expensive than at Gizo/Noro). It's not a far banana boat ride to Noro, so I am sure you could arrange a trip into Noro by boat, if you wanted to provision.

**Things to Do:** We spent several days anchored here, and Rina Billy ("Billy") arranged several tours for us:

- To the east side of Kolombangara to see the Japanese Hospital Caves
- To a spot SE of the village where there is a US tank in the jungle
- To a spot W of the village where there is a downed Hellcat (airplane) in 10m, and a nice beachy island with OK snorkeling.
- Across to Ringgi Cove and up to see the [Kolombangara Cloud Forest](#).

Though we could have anchored in a couple of these places, and made our own arrangements, we felt safe leaving the boats unattended off Boboe Village.

Billy's fees were \$150 SD for the boat ride per day, plus fuel at \$13 or \$14 SD per liter. We had several boats hanging out together, so we split this cost. The boat is owned by the village, and that fee goes to the village. You could supply your own "premix" gas, or have Billy supply it from the village gas supply at \$13 per liter (it's 10-11 per liter in Gizo/Noro). We negotiated trade items for Billy's time. There are several "Billy's" at Boboe Village (and indeed, in Noro and probably Munda). Ours was Rina Billy. He is a carver and an elder at Boboe Village.

Every visit to any item of interest in the area required a small "Custom" fee to the owner of the property. This typically ranged from a low of \$30 SD per person to a high of \$100 SD per person. This fee will be required for you to visit anything, no matter how you got yourself there. Sometimes these fees are negotiable (ie trade items vs cash). Sometimes not.

### **3.9.3 Lola Island**

Sieling Pg 81-87

**Screensaver – Sep 2017 - Zipola Habu Resort, Lola Island:** 08 18.40 S / 157 09.8781 E 5m sand, 2G if ya lucky. The Diamond Narrows (between Noro and Lola) is quite a nice passage and easy enough.

Looking back now to my first trip here I wonder how I did this lagoon without the Google images I used today. I guess for many of you it will be like wondering how you managed without your mobile that is now permanently connected to many of us at the hip.

The lagoon is a complex path for those with a deep draft. Even a good set of eyes and a clear day does nothing to get you through the maze and not come out at a dead end.

**Field Trip - August 2017:** This is a nice resort that is very friendly to yachts. It's also a nice break from Munda. Lots have been written about here by others. Good spot.

**Lorelei – July 2013:** After 3 hours of motoring from the northern part of the lagoon (and a few tense moments when the depth under the keel was less than 1 metre), we arrived at our destination Zippolo Habu Resort on Lola Island.

This small resort was on a beautiful island and was tastefully built in traditional leaf building and bungalows. We spent a few days relaxing, snorkeling, fishing and exploring the resort and island. One evening we even splurged and went to dinner at the resort and had a magnificent meal of crayfish.

**Shango – October 2012 - Nusa Pate & Lola Island:** We motor-sailed up the southeast coast of Rendova towards the Munda Bar. It was a forty mile trip and we knew we needed good light to cross the Lagoon. As we approached the Bar some very dark and threatening clouds were gathering in our path. We had marked a few places on the chart where we could bail out if the weather degenerated and it looked like we were going to have to use one of them. We made our way across the Bar and tweaked our course to improve our odds with the lowering light. With just minutes before the rain came we dropped the hook in a cleft at the north end of Nusa Pate Island. The spot was about as wide as a large garage but it was very well protected. We called it a day.

The next day, with only four miles left to get to yesterday's planned destination, we arrived fairly early in the much improved light. There was one other boat at anchor. It was, it turns out, a Dashew-designed power yacht from Tucson, AZ. called Avatar. We understood that there were walking trails ashore and we were in need of a stretch so in we went. The owner, Joe, is an American expat. When he learned that we were from the Boston area he asked if we wanted him to turn on CNN so we could see what was happening with Super storm Sandy, which had just hit New Jersey. After several minutes it became clear that the worst was over and that New England would be spared.

**Carina – August 2012:** From Munda, we followed Sieling and Google Earth .kap chartlets to Lola Island inside the Vonavona Lagoon. There are many good marks, all are in place in the lower Diamond Narrows (up to the entrance to the Vonavona lagoon anyway) and some are in place inside the Vonavona. Lowest water we saw was 19' into as far as Lola. Most shallows/reefs are evident.

Zipolo Habu resort is lovely and yacht-friendly. It's run by an American who is a former Peace Corps volunteer, named Joe Entrikin and his wife Lisa, and offers a wee bit of yacht-friendly civilization: restaurant/bar, Wi-Fi service, book exchange, mobile phone top-ups, tours to

cultural sites, deep sea fishing and hiking—all in the middle of nowhere. (Stay tuned, as Lola may become the newest SSCA Cruising Station.)

We anchored at 08°18.373S, 157°09.771E in sand.

One evening we heard voices and looked forward to see a small armada of dugout canoes that approached, passed us and then disappeared into the dusk, waving but never missing a note in their cheerful harmonious singing.

From Lola we passed through the Vonavona Lagoon, using a combination of satellite photos and mud maps from the Sieling guide. This route requires a sunny day and a bow watch. The lowest water we encountered on the recommended route was about 10' at low tide.

Since the water color along the shallowest stretches didn't seem to change much regardless of the depth, this gave the trip a high pucker factor.

We veered off course a wee bit and tucked into the NE end of Vonavona Island and anchored at 08°11.574S, 157°04.596E in sand. Before dark we entertained a few traders and then just after dark an inebriated man and his young son paddled up. He attempted to board Carina uninvited but backed down when Philip yelled at him. In the end we realized this guy meant us no real harm. We passed a quiet night and left following day as planned for Gizo, crossing the Katherine Bar in to the Ferguson channel at 08°10.052S, 156°56.901E.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We closely followed Dirk Sieling's map and directions from Nusapate to Lola Island, deep inside the Vonavona Lagoon. There are one or two sticks and no beacons proper but in good visibility the channel is reasonably easy to follow and is never shallower than 5m; as Sieling notes, you would need to be quite confident to actually sail it (first time, anyway). The "conspicuous church and village" on Repi Island are completely gone as is the beacon at its W end, but there is a bright white sandy beach on the W tip, that is highly visible. At Lola we anchored at 08°18.383S, 157°09.817E, 11m sand. This is a good place for a quiet, relaxing time. Local canoes pass by but do not bother you. Joe and his wife, at the resort, are very welcoming; the bar/restaurant is open every day; good fish and chips for 100SD, beer 20SD. There is a well where yachts are welcome to do their own laundry. WiFi (50SD for one hour) and cellphone coverage. There is a walking track around the island. Nearby is Skull Island, which can be visited once a "kastom" fee of 25SD is paid to the resort.

Sieling's directions and maps should be followed carefully when exiting in the west. It is highly advisable to travel on a sunny day, with the sun behind you. Meanwhile, you can anchor almost anywhere; we spent a night just off the main route at 08°06.862S, 156°52.830E, in 13m. There are no sticks or beacons anywhere on the route. Only in the far western section, just before leaving the lagoon over Katherine Bar, were we unable to find the direct route and had to make a loop to the south, around a large coral patch. We passed over Katherine Bar at 08°10.320S, 156°57.435E.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Approaching Diamond Narrows from the South, past Kuri Point, the first three beacons indicated by Sieling (two to port, one to starboard) were in place. Close to the starboard beacon we turned to port (W) to enter the Vonavona Lagoon. There was another stbd and another port-hand beacon before we turned into the lee of Nusapate Island. We

anchored in loose coral in 6m at 08°17.461S, 157°11.826E; next morning we had some trouble retrieving the anchor; with more time and better visibility it probably would have been possible to find a sandy spot. Nusapate is inhabited but we had no visitors.

### **3.10 Vangunu Island, Marovo Lagoon, and Nono Lagoon**

Marovo Lagoon and Nono Lagoon nearly encircles Vangunu Island. The normal approach to these sheltered cruising areas is, from Gizo/Munda/Nora via the Hele Bar, in the SW corner of Vangunu, or from Honiara or the Florida Group, via Mbili Passage on the SE corner of Vangunu.

**Screensaver – Sep 2017 – Vangunu Island West:** 08 38.93 S / 157 52.54 E 22m, mud/sand/coral, no cell service. With still no cell service on either network I was becoming suspicious my phone was at one with the gods, and would soon be at one with the sea, if it kept this up. I still didn't know that this was wider issue at this point (*it turned out to be an 8 day outage of all cell service across Solomons, both carriers*).

**Screensaver – Sep 2017 - Marovo Lagoon Contact:** While we were exploring Marovo Lagoon we came in contact with a very motivated local Mervin Kuve (cell 7488 8610 email [kuvemuven1@gmail.com](mailto:kuvemuven1@gmail.com)). Mervin has been around this area for many years and has actively worked to promote the general area and been recognised for his assistance and help with various groups at the time. I said I would help get the word out for him once I recognised that he was both genuine and not without some supporting proof of his work.

Marovo Lagoon is the eighth wonder of the world and one could easily spend a considerable time poking around in all its corners and still miss something.

Having worked with a number of different film tourism and eco groups along with Solomon's Tourism I have little doubt that Mervin would be your best contact in the area and what he doesn't know I expect he will try to find it for you.

If you're looking for the more traditional village culture accommodation traditions, etc., I believe this would align well with Mervin's intentions and he can help you find the local specifics you might be looking for.

Mervin is trying to organize tours, home stays, alignment with local events, assistance with travel arrangements and anything in the lagoon area. Mervin helped us, so if you are in this area give him a call send him txt, or try his email.

**Mokisha – May 2013:** Marovo is famous for its wood carvers. I don't know where I've found the room to store the stuff we've got but somehow, I did. We're also down to about \$50 Solomon's which is about \$7 U.S. so at least we can't buy anymore! We've got masks in-laid with Nautilus Shell, carvings & bowls. We've traded away old spear guns, masks, fins, clothes, rice, etc. - you name it, & we've traded it.

The lagoon is beautiful with clear water. It has been nominated for a World Heritage site in 1991 but didn't make it as the government still allows logging & mining within the lagoon, even today. Maybe one day they'll stop the plundering & it will become a World Heritage site. Unfortunately, most locals don't reap the monetary value of logging or money but the government does. In the meantime, Marovo struggles with practically no tourist infrastructure.

All of Solomon's in fact, struggle with attracting tourists & providing some sort of typical minimal infrastructure. There's next to no restaurants, resorts are usually quite basic and the entrepreneurial spirit of the local people is missing and yet it's also part of it's charm. We joke that they still live in the stone ages and if the world were to end tomorrow, it would be just a blip on their radar screen. They wouldn't miss a thing. There's no internet, although cell phone continue to become more popular. The government has yet to add cell towers to the 300+ islands. There's so many areas don't mobile service & probably won't in the years to come.

Highlight of the lagoon was Talina. A village of many carvers. Here we met, Rocky, a highly artistic carver. From him we got "custom" money which is very old bride money or valuable "money" from different tribes. "Custom" money was used before currency had even been thought of. It's made of shell & still highly valued. Rocky also carves red coral & I got a small dolphin from him.

From Lulu I got a custom-made shell fishing lure that his father made. These were used before fishing hooks were invented. It's actually quite beautiful. I traded it for some clothes and sunglasses.

We also met Vinyle who is the son of the most famous carver in the Lagoon, John Wayne. I joked with John when we met him that John Wayne was my most favorite actor....he got a laugh over that, but I'm sure it wasn't the first time he's heard that joke. John & Vinyle had incredible carvings (yes, we got more). Vinyle's most exquisite piece was a carving of the Solomon's history on a portion of a whale's jaw bone (see pic in the photo gallery). What an incredible piece of art. When the sun shone it lit up as if it had a light behind it. Wow. All in all, Mokisha now sits lower in the water with all the carving we purchased & traded for.

In any event, Solomon's has been a wonderful place to visit & we've enjoyed it very much.

**Carina – July 2012:** After a few pleasant days at Peava, we pattered out the pass into another breezeless day and followed the deep wide channel inside Minjanga Island to the Mbili (BILL ee) passage into the Marovo Lagoon. (Pass: 08°40.282S, 158°11.437E, Marker #1 missing, lowest water 32', current 2+kn eastbound about an hour into the flood).

The Marovo Lagoon is actually composed of three separate lagoons that surround Vangunu Island: Nono Lagoon to the west, Marovo Lagoon in the north and Kolo Lagoon in the SE, though collectively they are referred to as the Marovo Lagoon. Marovo Lagoon is littered with small islands, islets, coral bommies and shoals too numerous to be charted in most cases.

Markers exist, though they are few and some are missing.

### ***3.10.1 Mbili Passage (10 Miles North of Peava)***

**Soggy Paws – May 2019:** We stopped at Mbili for one or two nights but ended up staying for nearly a week, while we waited for a slow-moving, slow-developing Low to move away from the Russell Island/Honiara area. The Noonsite 2017 comments are pretty much spot-on. We arrived around noon, anchoring at 08-39.78 S / 158-11.13 E in 20-25 ft mostly sand with 3G cell coverage.

Nearly immediately Paul came out in his canoe from Sanihulumu and offered to arrange a carving showing at the clearing on his island. The only mistake we made was not allowing enough time for him to get word to everyone. (we gave him 2 hrs—a few more would have helped). At 2:30, our 3 boats converged ashore, and we eventually had about 5-6 carvers with some very nice stuff to show. Even though we had all bought all the carvings we thought we needed/had space for/could afford, we each ended up buying a few more.

There is a knack to dealing with the carvers. They almost always start with a price that is almost double what they will settle for. So make sure you negotiate, and when you can't quite close the gap (if you're inclined), offer to throw in a few trade goods. The "trade goods" part of the negotiation is usually concluded onboard your boat, with you showing what you have to trade, until everyone is satisfied with the deal. Some of the most valuable trade items asked for were: Mask/snorkel/fins, cell phones, and polarized sunglasses. But pretty much everything you might be able to let go of might be useful to offer—excess T-shirts, kids clothes, women's clothes, biros (pens) and other school items, toys, shoes, etc etc etc. We also kept a stock of trade food items (rice, sugar, coffee, cookies, canned meats), but these were mostly used in trading for other food items (fruits and veggies) or for rounding out a carving deal. Most people willing to trade always want a little cash if you have it.

The downside of not giving Paul enough time to get the word out was that for the next 2 days, we were visited by carvers in canoes who said they didn't hear about the "show" and wanted to show us their work. "We have different carvings." But by this time we were full of carvings and kind of sick of having to deal with them, so we admired what they showed us from their canoe, declined to have them aboard, and politely refused to buy anything. But, after a couple of days of saying "no", the canoes mostly quit coming.

There are a ton of good dives, both inside and outside the lagoon. At the time we were there, Lisa had dive guests and had room in her dive boat for only a couple of us. So she graciously showed the others an inside dive site near our anchorage that we could reach with our slow dinghy (we had our own gear) that turned out to be a very nice "critter" dive.

Our anchorage had quite clear water and a sand bottom, so we spent some time scrubbing the bottom of the boat. But, there are occasionally crocs in the area, so it is wise not to snorkel or swim on your own, and especially not at dawn and dusk or near the mangroves. At this point in time, the only crocs seen in our 5-6 days there were small ones, drifting by at sunset.

If you are interested in doing something other than diving, Lisa and John Lee (Lisa's Solomon Islander partner) can arrange expeditions to various places of interest nearby.

If you have guests arriving, it is also possible to have them come in by the once or twice a week ferry. The ferry we know about comes from Honiara I think leaving Sunday and stopping at Mbunikalo (a few miles south of Mbili passage) before going on to Gizo. The ferry returns on Tuesday evening, picking up passengers headed for Honiara, again from Mbunikalo. There may be other stops

**Noonsite – 2017:** On sailing overnight between the Russell Islands & Marovo lagoon, we arrived at Mbili passage in the early morning. Mbili village on Minjanga island opposite Gatokae is home to many talented wood carvers.

We anchored just inside the southern tip of Sanihulumu Island. It has been recommended that yachts ask the visiting carvers in canoes to view the carvings in one go either at the village community hut or on the beach. This can be organized by Paul John of Sanihulumu or by going to see Lisa at Solomon Dive Adventures (SDA) off the small island of Turupu next to the anchorage.

Chief Lutén & his family live on the northern peninsula of Gatokae & they will also show you carvings there.

The reason for asking for a showing ashore is so that all the villagers get a fair chance at selling their work, as some of the canoes can be rather insistent & all seem to come from the same family therefore monopolizing. If you are not firm you will get "canoed" all day every day.

There are several good dive sites in the area for which there is a Custom fee of SI \$25 pp per dive if you have your own gear, or you can dive with SDA & it is included.

Lisa at the Dive Resort was very welcoming, and helpful in explaining that the fee is meant to go into the community fund. Ownership is not always straightforward, so I recommend having a chat with her to ascertain who owns which dive site & we gave the fee to her directly as she puts it into an account for the village (rather than it ending up in one person's pocket).

Also be careful that you do not get asked for the fee by different people. We tried very hard to please everybody but it seems that there are some politics & greed that marred our time there. Any concerns & talk to Lisa!

Equally, I do not want to put anyone off going there because it was a lovely spot & the diving awesome. Mbilikiki liveaboard dive boat visited the same time we were there so the carvers all gathered together for their guests to view their art. Even if you are just looking, some of the carvings were spectacular & in a group setting, there is no pressure to buy like with individual canoes coming to your boat.

**Field Trip - February 17, 2017:** GPS 08 39.7S 158 11.3E

FINALLY, we moved to a new spot. It is about 10NM from our previous anchorage, inside the Marovo Lagoon. It was a busy afternoon after anchoring as we received a number of canoes with carvings to sell/trade. s/v Perry was with us and we requested that we do a show on the beach.

As seems to be typical for this area the carvings were very good. Similar in quality to carvings we saw in Peava, and in some particular cases even better. The hardest part is picking which ones to trade/buy as there are so many carvings and carvers that you want to buy something from everyone, and given there are no ATM machines here, it is rather difficult when cash is low. Generally they will trade for stuff without cash if you don't have cash, but their going in position is we are 'white guys' with 'money'...so this can be an obstacle. Regardless very nice people that are very skilled at carvings. Today we will look at some more carvings, see if we can fix the chief fiberglass longboat and engine...and maybe even get in a dive! WHEW, tired now even typing this! :)

**Adina – July 2015:** 08 39.824S / 158 11.200E 8m sand and coral, village

Ensure you have good satellite images to navigate your way in here as it shallows at the entrance (08 40.2894S 158 11.4809E) and can have strong cross currents. Well sheltered.

This is the place for carvings! Tell the chief you want a display arranged on the beach at a fixed time (and no canoes at the boat). Many carvers will turn up - some wonderful carvings at very good prices. You can trade or pay cash. Haggle a little but not too much. Chief Paul is a bit surly and demanding. Ask for Elvin and his brother who have set up an Eco Lodge close to the anchorage - nice people.

**Lorelei – November 2013:** With the still glassy conditions we continued south to Mbili.

We had heard and read many things about the Mbili people and most were not so positive but the diving in the area is fantastic so we went there anyway but were a little cautious.

The anchorage was stunning and we quickly dropped the RIB in and went to visit Chief Lutan to pay respects and diving custom fees. He was 70, friendly, funny and great to chat to. But sadly he is going deaf and blind.

The big plus was the Bilikiki (Liveaboard Dive Boat out of Honiara) had just shown up that morning with 18 guests, and the locals were arranging a carving show for them that afternoon at 2 of the villages. We were also invited. We stayed long after the Bilikiki people had left to have a chat and to arrange some fresh fruit and veg for a few days time.

The next day we packed our RIB up with 4 scuba tanks & a picnic lunch and headed out for a day trip to the uninhabited outer island called Karunjou to do some wall diving. This place is truly remote and good weather conditions are essential. The first dive was amazing with great viz and stacks to see. In the coral gardens at the end of the dive, Lisa managed to find a Black Leafy Scorpionfish which was our first for the Solomons.

During lunch the Bilikiki turned up and anchored in a bay near us.

That afternoon, they dived the point and we elected to go further along the wall but we all ended up in the same coral garden at the end so we showed them the Leaf Fish and they were very happy.

Just as we were leaving, the Bilikiki crew called us over and said they were just about to start a shark feed with about 20 Black Tip Reef Sharks and we were welcome to jump in too if we wanted.

After a while most of the guests got out and left Paul and 2 other photographers in the water for 40 minutes while the crew threw Tuna and Wahoo frames on a rope and pulled them back in over their heads. It was awesome and Paul got some fun shots.

The following day we were diving again but this time at another location, Totolavae Island.

This small island is on the reef edge and totally exposed to the prevailing SE winds. You can imagine our luck when we woke to find unseasonal light W winds which meant it was offshore at the island.

The dive was just fantastic and our 2nd best Solomon's dive after Lumilehe Pass. The viz was 50m+, the coral was stunning and the fish life both big and small was immense.

Whilst we were talking to Chief Lutun, we found out that there was a crashed WW2 US B-24 Liberator Bomber Aeroplane that was located in the bush not far from the village. We just had to check it out, so we spent an afternoon doing that.

For our 4th and last dive we did Mbili Point. This dive has a great sloping wall with and lot of coral species in both hard and soft. We ended up doing a 106 minute dive as most of the time we were in less than 15m depth.

By day 4 the true colours of some of the Mbili people had come out. The 4 villages in the area are having problems with each other, the land rights are an issue and the politics are rife.

We had many visitors in canoes wanting us to give them “gifts” such as anchor rope, spearing items, Dremel tools, DVD players, lures, bait, etc. One guy was desperate for spear gun rubber and wanted it as a gift. Instead we agreed on a trade for fruit and veg. He never returned with the produce and we kept the rubber.

The wrecked plane custom fees were a big issue. We gave them to the chief who pocketed them without telling anyone. His brother turned up to Lorelei at 9pm one night wanting the fees and was angry when he found out his brother already had the money. The crazy thing was we find out the next day the land is not even theirs and belongs to a great guy from just around the corner. It was him that told us of the plane’s history and the crew’s rescue by his ancestors.

We had a young idiot local (who is the son of one of the village’s self-proclaimed chiefs) claiming to be from an NZ yacht company and said he is in charge of visiting yachts and wanted security & dealing rights and we had to notify him when we went to do an activity or contacted another village person. We told him bluntly to get lost.

In the end it all got too much and the next morning we left at 7am. All of the issues we had were with the 4 chiefs and their direct families. They are the ones having contact with the tourists and the boats and in our view are abusing the privilege.

It’s sad that the area’s reputation is tarnished because of the ones at the top. The local people are terrific and much better to deal with!

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** From Peava we proceeded to the Morovo lagoon, via Mbili Passage. For navigation in the lagoon, Solomon Islands Chart SI 07 is invaluable. C-Map is of some use, but latitudes require significant adjustment – for example our charted position at Seghe was 8°34.200S, but the GPS showed 8° 34.583S. Most of the charted beacons (painted steel posts with topmarks) are in existence, but at least the following (numbered from Mbili counterclockwise, as per the chart) are missing: 1, 17, 18, 19.

Most of the villages on the E side of the lagoon are SDA but Seghe is United Church (Methodist). Most villages in the E and N of the lagoon have carvers; visits are to be expected; the preferred mode of payment seems to be a combination of cash and trade goods; it is a good idea already to have priced carvings in Honiara.

### **3.10.2 Sanihulumu Island Anchorage**

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** We stayed one night at 08-39.73 S / 158-11.28 E Plenty of carvers here. A couple of nice local villages. Several guys visited. Lisa at the Dive Resort there seems to have a few problems with the locals. She has moved her operation twice within the lagoon.

**Shango – Oct 2012:** The Mbili Passage into Morovo Lagoon presented no problems. A local fellow named Alex showed us where to anchor and invited us in to see some carvings in the early afternoon. By the time of the showing both Shango and s/v Jenny were in attendance and made several purchases. The more involved negotiations continued out at the boats. When we arrived for sundowners aboard Jenny at 5:30 Jan and Eli were still sealing their last deal. The local carvers had been very impressed with Jenny's interior woodwork which was all done by Jan.

**Carina – July 2012:** We anchored north of the little island on the north of the pass as per Sieling at 08°39.828S, 158°11.209E, west of Sanihulumu Island and SW of the two small sea stack islands in 30' or so in mixed sand and coral.

This is a special place and the birdlife and sea life is amazing. There is a bina bird here (Blyth's Hornbill), an enormous black bird with a white head and a long yellow scimitar-shaped beak; the animal is so big that, when it flies by, its wings make a distinctive and loud whooshing sound. There were lots of parrots, raptors, herons and cranes flying about, plus baby blacktip sharks in the shallow water and a school of silly-looking squid resident under the boat.

Ashore Alex has a yacht book (about 25 yachts visit each year), but young Paul, his nephew and son of the clan chief John (not in residence) will look after you. Yachts are an important outlet for the local wood carvers and we felt the weight of the expectation that we would partake.

Competition to sell carvings is fierce and though carvers sit together and companionably work on their art, when it comes to selling they'll only speak to you in whispers if other carvers are around and jealously guard any sign of interest in their carving.

We asked that they meet on shore and had 8-10 men show their wares. We photographed and talked with each individual for two hours total and eventually settled on who would come to the boat for negotiations. No one was pushy, everyone was friendly, knowledgeable and fun to talk with. The prices are actually not that bad considering the quality and most want to have a combination of money (so they can tithe) and trading.

There is an American airplane wreck from WWII immediately ashore in the bay to the south of the pass. Inside one of its wing it says 766 B24-D. Luten Watts, a cousin of Alex, has a small eco-lodge on the bay, and he'll offer to take you down to it. His father helped hide the survivors from the Japanese. He wants a small kastom fee; we'd heard \$25 and when we balked he said "whatever" but laughed when we offered \$10 pp (the money figure Alex told us others have paid). Luten spent quite a bit of time with us, and we enjoyed his stories and came away pleased with the experience.

Once a week a boat called the Costco comes through and picks up a cooler (eskie) of fish to bring to market in Honiara. The fishermen offered to dive for lobsters for us the evening before, as they were already fishing for the expected arrival of the supply boat.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We anchored just north of the passage, in the well-protected spot recommended by Dirk Sieling, at 08° 39.84 S, 158°11.21 E, in 10m sand. Although the main village, Mbili, is a little distance away, visits are to be expected. There is a small one-family settlement on the S tip of Sanihulumu island, just east of the anchorage. Here, John is the boss. He seems to be on uneasy terms with his brother and neighbour Alexander. John's son Paul (who is very helpful) also lives here. All are accomplished carvers. John maintains a logbook for visiting yachts. One way of dealing with the many carvers is to ask them to organise a show on shore and let them choose the location. The community is nominally SDA but no-one has any qualms in fishing for crayfish (lobster) for you.

### ***3.10.3 Njapuchangomo Island***

**Lorelei – November 2013:** We left Sarumara and motored south towards the next pass. With the amazing conditions we found a terrific anchorage in 4m over white sand on the inside of Njapuchangomo Island.

The timing was perfect with the glassy conditions as it enabled us to get out to the outer island of Njapuana and do a few dives in our dinghy. This spot is remote and is only dived when the Honiara based dive liveaboard “Bilikiki” visits which is about 12 times a year.

On the way out we had a large pod of dolphins turn up so we stopped and jumped in and the pod came in close allowing us to get a good look at all the baby dolphins.

On the way home from the last dive we stopped in the mangrove lined inner pass and Paul had a drift though on the flood tide in the hope to find a small to medium size crocodile to photograph underwater and get some reflection shots of the soft corals under the overhanging mangroves and trees. Lisa stayed in the RIB on big croc lookout.

Sadly he didn't find a croc but did get some reflection shots that he was very happy with.

We did 2 great kayak expeditions (one north & one south of Lorelei) but we chose to do them after 3:30pm when things weren't so hot.

The highlights were the coral fringed small rock islands that are so prominent in this area.

Every time we stepped out onto the deck in the Marovo Lagoon anchorages we would see squid around Lorelei. We just left the rods with the squid jigs hooked up and had a flick around twice a day. We caught a stack and combined the calamari with the nearly daily offerings of Crayfish (bought from the locals) and the Spanish Mackerel & Coral Trout we speared ourselves.

We feasted on Seafood Paella, Seafood Laksa, Seafood Pasta, Sushi Rolls and anything else we could come up with.

### ***3.10.4 Mbatuna (Thursday Market)***

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** There is a good market here every Thursday morning at 7am. Anchor in the bay in 3-4m at 08-33.46 S / 158-07.42 E. If you don't get there at 7am, it will be over!

If you are looking for provisions, you should also find the Chinese store, about .8 nm south from Mbatuna Village, on the entrance to the passage behind the long island. Sorry, coordinates not noted.

**Lorelei – November 2013:** One other big plus of being at Njapuna Island was its close proximity to Mbatuna on the Mainland (well the big island in the middle).

It has a fresh food market on the Thursday which is the biggest in the area.

The Thursday we arrived turned out to be a special day for the SDA Youth Ministries and there were festivities, singing and lots of fresh and cooked food for sale.

The food was all sold out in about 15 minutes!

**Carina – July 2012:** We anchored at 08°33.452S, 158°07.439E, where we found the wharf and shipwreck noted in Sieling, though the wharf was mostly disintegrated and there was a new one built on the opposite side of the land.

The abandonment of the old wharf made the anchorage very quiet and safe and we had no worries of big boat traffic arriving at night. It was a surprisingly pleasant stop; a neat little town with a big vocational school and administrative offices of the SDA. There is a new hospital under construction.

There is a small store on shore with okay prices; 1 kg bags of rice for \$13 SBD (as opposed to \$11 or \$11.50 in Honiara). It offers the usual limited, but varied, array of goods—from food to flip-flops to fishing equipment and flashlights. A big Chinese shop sits about a mile south with big brown roof—locals pointed it out to us—but we didn't visit as we really only needed to restock on what we'd traded: sugar, rice and tinned meat. The landing craft LC Phoenix stops here, disgorging passengers and goods.

A baby cruise ship drifted by and canoes and boats went racing up to it for trading.

There were some carvers who visited, but fewer than at Mbili. We met Peter, who runs an eco-lodge at Matikuri Island nearby; he has a yacht book signed by many boats we know. Made us wish we'd ventured out there.

The weekly market is on Thursday. Locals told us it would start at 1000, but we already knew that most stuff would be gone by then, so when canoes began arriving from the north en masse at 0700, we decided to go ashore sooner. We were back at the boat with our load of veggies at 0900.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** From Mbili it is about 6 miles to the principal community in the E side of the lagoon, at Mbatuna. Anchor north of the village, good visibility and protection, at 08°33.431S, 158°07.475E, sand and coral, 15m. This is the regional SDA headquarters. There is a well-stocked shop and a good weekly market on Thursdays. It starts promptly, but check the time. We had thought 10:00 a.m. But in fact it was 09:30, and by the time we got there, there wasn't much left. Veggies may also be available at the SDA Vocational College up the hill. Fresh water from a tap on the stone jetty. Fuel (gasoline and diesel) may also be periodically available. The sawmill and airstrip mentioned by Sieling are defunct.

### **3.10.5 Matiu Island / Sarumara (NE Corner of Lagoon)**

**Field Trip – 2017 – Matiu Island, N End:** 08 28.19 S / 158 07.29 E This was a great anchorage and we could have spent weeks here. It's certainly one of our favorite places to just relax. The diving and snorkeling are great around the corner on the outer reef. It is very nice.

**Field Trip – 2017 – Matiu Island, S End:** 08 29.80 S / 158 09.02 E You need good light to enter this area and come across the reef. It was not hard, and there was plenty of water, but lighting is key. This is really nice as there are no villages here, and we just hung out between here and the northern anchorage to relax from all the busy villages. The diving is good as well around the corner on the north side.

**Screensaver – Oct 2017 – Sarumara (Matiu Island S End):** Anchored at 08 29.803 S / 158 08.969 E and stayed 3 days.

**Adina - July 2015:** 08 29.734 S / 158 08.96 E 6m Sand, good holding. Ashore: Uninhabited, No cell coverage. This is a lovely place to spend a few quiet days. The entrance to the lagoon is at 08 29.5593 S / 158 08.0878 E and then steer to 08 29.4950 S / 158 08.1612 E.

You need good light and MUST have a look out, it will get shallow.

Lulu and his wife from a nearby island may visit you with their yacht book. He trades and has eggs. You might get a carver visit but it is quite a way for them to come! Good snorkelling, nice beach.

**Lorelei – November 2013 – Sarumara & Kokoana Pass:** As we transited across the lagoon we passed many small islands with gin clear water and stunning surrounding reefs.

We had to negotiate a shallow line reef to get into Sarumara anchorage but once in, it was well protected with only 4m water depth over sand. It was a stunning anchorage and the best we have seen since being in the Solomons.

We were only 6nm SE of Lumilehe Pass, the diving however was very different. Both looked much the same as far as topography and layout but not underwater. Lumilehe had 40m viz, big walls and a huge amount of big fish and schooling fish action.

Kokoana Pass had sloping reef walls inter-spaced with sand ledges. The soft corals on the reef and macro life was amazing but it lacked the viz, big fish and shark action of Lumilehe and Uepi.

We did a stack of great dives and concentrated on fish and macro photos instead of wide angle. It was actually nice to dive something a bit different.

On dive 2 we found a point with 100's of rocks on the reef with palm fronds tied around them. All were tied the same way with the same knot.

We thought it was some ritual or tradition but a few days later we found out they were simply river stones turn into sinkers by the local fisherman.

Our last dive at Kokoana Pass was fantastic. The swell and wind had dropped and we managed to dive the outer west wall of the pass. The viz was a lot better and we had a lot of schooling fish and Tuna action.

One day we had a break from scuba diving and decided to explore the bay by kayak and also paddle out to Kokana Pass and spearfish with reel guns.

On our last night there it poured with rain but we woke the next morning to the most glorious day of no wind, sun and glassy conditions. It stayed that way for the next 10 days and conditions were awesome! The downside was the heat. 33-35+ degrees all day – and night.

**Westward II – April 2011 – Matiu Island SE End (Sarumara):** Anchored at 08 29.65 S / 158 08.67 E

**Sweet Dreams – 2010 – Matiu Island SE End (Sarumara):** Very peaceful bay. Lovely beach. Good snorkelling on outer reef. Well sheltered. It looks possible to careen here if you had to. No people living there - fishermen visit the reef. We had no canoes visit us.

**Shango – Oct 2012 - Sarumara Anchorage, Matiu Island**

The next morning we both departed Mbili Passage for the anchorage at Sarumara which we had read was quiet (read: uninhabited) and “unvisited by carvers”. This report was obviously several years old as the carvers have now added this stop to their list of destinations. Jenny spent only one night because she had guests she had to get to Gizo. We stayed for three nights at Sarumara. After receiving visitors the first afternoon and the following morning we saw no one. The snorkeling here was terrific so we drifted the nearby Kokoana Passage several times before leaving for our date with Uepi Resort.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** For solitude and beautiful surroundings, Sarumara Anchorage, at the S end of Matiu island, is hard to beat. The approach is only sketchily charted and requires some care. Approaching from the SSW (Mbatuna) steer to 08 29.510S, 158.08.150E to locate a 5m pass between reefs before turning to the SE and the anchorage proper at 08°29.746S, 158°08.9 51E, 5m sand. Very quiet; we had only one canoe (with fish to sell) in four days. Good snorkelling (fan coral; sharks) in nearby Kokoana Passage.

### **3.10.6 Kalivera Bay**

**Adina – July 2015:** 08 30.957S / 157 58.506E 7m sand

It takes a lot of reef dodging to get here so ensure you have good light, even the satellite images aren't great but are still better than nothing. This is the only place in the Solomons we didn't feel totally safe simply because we had a pushy raskal visit us from a nearby village on Marovo Island. Trading, lots of friendly kids.

**Carina – July 2012:** At buoy #12 on our approach to Kalivera Bay, the wind began to clock around to our nose and rain began to fall, all this at precisely the spot we planned to roll in the sail and motor through the labyrinth of shallows into Kalivera Bay, nearby to Sasaghana, Marovo Island.

Kalivera bay was well protected by reefs and shallows. We anchored at 08°30.88'S, 157°58.45'E on mud and coral in 38'. It was a bit of a puzzle getting in, but the lowest water we saw was 16' and our Google Earth photos were very helpful.

We met a man named Dennis, who lives on the western shore. He's a fisherman and, of course, a carver, but has also recently begun working for Save the Children. He assured us of the security in the anchorage, as he said that he and the other villagers have taken steps to punish any thieves. It was a very nice and very well-protected spot and we stayed an extra day enjoying it.

Later we heard from another yacht that crocs had been spotted on shore.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** From Sarumara we sailed west past Telina (the carving "capital" and home of John Wayne, whom we had met at Mbatuna) to Sasaghana, and anchored in Kalivera Bay, just to the SSW of the village. The approach requires some care, but the port hand marker reported as missing by Sieling (#12) has been restored. Position yourself to the S of Sasaghana, as if to enter the channel behind Marovo Island, before cutting across to Kalivera Bay. Anchor to the W of the three prominent wooden houses on Kalivera Point, at 8°30.955S, 157°58.520E, in 8m. The three houses have ceased to be a lodge and James Lam has passed away, but his son Moly J (sic...) is keen to reopen an Eco-Lodge here and will show you around. He is a carver and there are more in nearby Sasaghana (where we asked for a small show to be organised in the village hall).

No shops in Sasaghana but locals were keen to trade and one young woman did our laundry for us.

**Sweet Dreams – 2010:** Nearby Sasaghana village has petty theft crime problem but Molly J who lives where guesthouses are marked in book (James Lam now deceased) keeps a close eye on the boats that anchor there and won't let anyone visit the bay in canoe without them stating purpose. Molly J will want to visit. He is a good carver - made walking staves for us.

Snorkelling reef at mouth of bay is good. Domino has garden near bottom of the bay - a great bloke - nice for stories (and fruit and veg). If visiting Sasaghana, don't leave dinghy unattended.

### **3.10.7 Telina Village**

Sieling 132-133

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** John Wayne and Rocky are carvers here. We have been told that they are the two best carvers in Morovo. John was very helpful. We traded with him. Has good history and good stories. Anchorage at 08-31.40 S / 158-04.22 E

**Lorelei – November 2013:** From Uepi we transited up to and through Lumalehi Pass and into the main carving village of Telina.

To be honest we didn't really want to go to Telina as it is full of people trying to sell you wood carvings that we are not interested in.

However we had to pay our custom fees before going out and diving Kokoana Pass as the people of Telina are the traditional land owners.

We were lucky as when we arrived a French Catamaran was there (the only cruising boat we have seen in Marovo...) with loads of local canoes swarming around so it took the limelight off us.

We quickly had our RIB in and were on shore before we got bombarded.

First we went to Rocky's house and Lisa learnt how to make Cassava chips and his wife took us through the main village and to the small shop.

We were pretty desperate for some fresh food and as we wandered through the village she was calling to the local women to see if they had any spare fruit and veg to sell. It was pretty funny getting all these replies and asking us to come and have a look, most of which was still on the tree or in the ground. We simply pointed to what we would like, agreed on a price and it was picked for us.

As we looked out over the bay we could see the canoes around Lorelei just waiting for us to return. But we didn't...

Next stop was over to John Wayne's house.

John is the father of carving in Marovo and his carvings are amazing.

He also is the village elder who collected the custom fees for our diving.

Whilst with John we also had a look at his war canoe which is the only one left in Marovo Lagoon. John is very interested in traditional ways and teaches history and local traditions to the young villagers who are interested in learning. His war canoe has a lot of traditional traits to it and he has started to build a new one in the old methods.

We got back to Lorelei just on dusk still with canoes floating around but just as we got the RIB lifted onboard a rain squall hit so we went inside and they left.

We sailed out at 9am the next morning for the 1 hour run over to Kokoana Pass.

### ***3.10.8 Uepi / Uepi Dive Resort***

Sieling Pg 138-139

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 08-25.94 S / 157-57.28 E We anchored in the bay on the opposite side of the passage to the resort. It is a nice spot, but open to some wind if the wind is south or west.

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** 08 25.85 S / 157 56.72 E 5m, Sand,3G. Marovo Lagoon is a good test of ones' ability to navigate through a maze without carving your own dedicated track. Being the eighth wonder of the world is a bit of an incentive to give it a go.

**Uepi Island Resort** was our destination, not so much for the resort but more for the location anchorage and I wanted to check out the sharks again. Not that a cold beer and dinner out would not be unwelcome. Today was a little windy up around 20knts and a bit grey, so seeing some of the shallows would have been a challenge without my friend Google. We eventually made it, and I anchored where I did last time initially, but with this wind the anchorage wasn't ideal. After some reconnaissance we moved closer in which certainly helped when the 30 + knt squalls come through. 2<sup>nd</sup> Anchorage closer in: 08 25.72 S / 157 56.76 E

Last time the resort was far from welcoming, and this time it was a bit of a cold start but slowly it turned around and in the end our visit there went well.

Of course they have all the carvings there for sale to their guests, many of which were better than what we typically were offered by nearly every canoe.

We managed a dinner and drinks at the Resort this time which was more than we could achieve last time, so don't expect a welcome party. However once in, all was good and we were well looked after with good food and conversation.

Last time I was here we went snorkeling with the sharks which averaged from about 1.5m to 2.5m in length and there were typically 9 or 10 of them. I was then very cautious, doing all sorts of things one shouldn't do, while sitting on the jetty steps to see if they showed any interest in having me for dinner before my offering. I learn now they have stopped feeding the sharks at the jetty these days, so the thought of snorkeling with them took on a new twist. We looked from the jetty and saw fish only so Kim and I decided to get in. It wasn't long after getting in when Kim made for steps to get out after 2m one came up near her. The water wasn't clear either, I guess due to the rain and squalls we are getting so I still didn't get the good pictures I had hoped for. But we still have all our limbs and body parts, so all was well. These guys were all just under 2m I guess.

It was still nice to have a snorkel around even though conditions were far from ideal.

**Shango – Oct 2012 - Uepi Resort, Uepi Island – Diving:** We left Sarumara at 10:15 and headed out Kokoana Passage. We had seen two commercial boats go out this way over the last few days so we knew it was feasible. There was no wind so we motored up the outside of Morovo Lagoon for thirteen miles and headed in the Charapoana Passage, where Uepi is located.

We made our way into the anchorage and dropped the hook outside the mooring ball mentioned by Grant, the owner, who we had been in touch with over the previous month. In the afternoon we went in and made arrangements for diving the following day and Grant mentioned that attending the evening's dinner was still a possibility if we were interested. We didn't need to be asked twice. There were several Aussie's staying at the resort and over dinner they told us all the places we needed to visit once we finally get to Oz. Dinner, which was served buffet style, was wonderful.

Over the next three days we had five terrific dives. On Monday we dove Uepi and Charapoana Points, both of which were pass dives. We were accompanied on the first dive by David and Dinah who live in Honiara while she works with RAMSI (the coalition of Southwestern Pacific nations stationed in the Solomon Islands after the tensions.) Dinah is an avid amateur photographer and was thrilled with the day's finds. There were tons of fish, numerous sharks, garden eels, nudibranchs and lots of amazing barrel sponges. Closer to the Resort's dock were the largest giant clams I have ever seen, in a wonderful array of colors.

On Tuesday our first dive was on Elbow Ave. There were six divers along for this trip. In addition to us there were three hard core Aussies and a very personable Frenchman named Thomas who was visiting with his wife and three kids. Within five minutes of dropping in we saw three pygmy mantas and a scalloped hammerhead, simultaneously. Naturally I didn't get a shot of them. Our second dive was North Log and the structure there was great. On both dives I managed to find several nudibranchs without having to have them pointed out.

On Wednesday we dove Uepi Point again, this time with Jill, Grant's wife. Once again it was a beautiful dive. We hung over the point and just watched all the fish hover with us. It was like being caught in fish rush hour.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** At the NW end of Marovo is Uepi Resort, on the outer reef (approach not charted); there are however mixed reports as to the yacht-friendliness of the place and we passed it by. The resort arranges a weekly show for all local carvers. This could be a good way to do your carving shopping, but prices at the show are higher than you might otherwise pay.

Experienced divers rave about Uepi.

**Wunschtraum – 1996:** 08-26.0 S / 157-56.8 E 15 ft over coral. Anchorage closer inside in much better sand with little coral. We arrived too late in the afternoon to have proper light for anchoring. Uepi has a wonderful resort for divers, well worth the visit.

### ***3.10.9 Karikana / Lumalihe Island***

Sieling Pg 134-135

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** 08 27.72 S / 158 03.34 E 5m, sand, some 3g. We are still getting the squalls coming through at least once per day, and if they come at night I'm usually up just to be 100% sure Screensaver doesn't decide to go for a trip while I'm sleeping. We had met a French couple in Liapari who said Karikana was good spot, so the three of us all moved.

It definitely was a nice spot and with some care you can push in over the reef and get in quite close.

### ***3.10.10 Savae Island***

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 08-35.14 S / 158-08.27 Savae Island is a small island owned by Peter. He is trying to make this into a yachtie stop. His son Nelson was very helpful.

### ***3.10.11 Toatelave Island***

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 08-35.26 S / 158-09.72 E This was a very lovely spot. You need satellite charts to get in here. We saw a croc here!

### ***3.10.12 Mbareho (Bareho) (Nono Lagoon)***

Sieling Pg 142

**Shango – October 2012:** The trip south through Morovo Lagoon, past Seghe and into the Nono Lagoon was fairly straightforward. We watched the depth sounder and hoped for the best. The light was good and we had no problems. Our destination, Mbareho was the home of a woodblock print maker named Aldio Pito who we hoped to meet. We anchored in a very protected spot tucked between several islands and went ashore to see if we were in the right place. There was a man standing on the little coral dock and he introduced himself as we approached. It was none other than Aldio Pito. We spent a nice afternoon with him and his wife, Raylene and a variety of kids. Aldio showed us his finished work which was in short supply

because the motor on his paper making machine had expired. He was expecting a new one soon. He said that if we had canvas onboard he could work with it.

The next day we were discovered by the lolly hunters. Tons of kids came bearing flowers and a wide variety of vegetables in trade for candy, biros (pens), popcorn and anything else we could think of. Once free of them we made our way back in to see Aldio, bearing some canvas. I selected one of his remaining prints on handmade paper and Roger picked out a woodblock that Aldio would put on canvas for pick-up Saturday morning. After that it was back to the boat and the lolly hunters. Darkness was falling and we desperately wanted to shower (in the cockpit) but two of our more enthusiastic visitors, Zalita and Jesina, simply wouldn't go. Finally Roger had to make a glowering face and they said that perhaps it was time for dinner.

### **3.10.13      *Mindeminde & Mbuinutusu***

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The approach to the New Georgia Island anchorage just west of Mbuinutusu island is around the south end of the Mindeminde Islands. Two of the beacons in this vicinity (see above) are missing. Mbuinutusu is densely populated and the houses on its southern shoreline are visible from several miles away.

We anchored in the uninhabited mangrove-lined bay 1 mile to the NW of the island, on the "mainland" of New Georgia, at 8°29.259S, 157°53.896E in 9m. At the time of our visit, the water main pipe to Mbuinutusu had fractured so many villagers were coming to this bay for water – it was not as quiet as we had hoped and there were some moderately annoying children. Good quality fresh water runs abundantly from a pipe 50m inshore from the W side of the bay (landing place visible). We saw a crocodile here.

Six miles south, on the W shore of Njae Passage, is Seghe. Currents run at up to 2kts in the Passage.

### **3.10.14      *Seghe (Provisions, Airport, Cell Internet)***

Sieling Pg

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** We drove over Screensaver's anchorage and could not figure out why he anchored there (it looked corally, and lots of banana boat traffic), but after anchoring around the corner off the pier (north of the end of the runway), and trying to find gasoline and Top Up, we understand why Screensaver anchored where he did.

From the wharf anchorage, the wharf itself is too high to be a decent dinghy dock. But there is a pebble beach next to the pier that would suffice, if there isn't too much easterly wind (otherwise it would be a lee shore).

We looked at a small dock just south of the wharf, where it looked like there might have been a store. But if it was a store before, it didn't seem to be now. We ended up using someone's private dock a little further south, asking permission to leave our dinghy for a bit.

The market was not operating inshore from the wharf (unless you wanted beetlenut), and the store there was very thinly stocked. Looking for the post office, we were directed to the SDA store about a 5 minute walk north on the road (just past the hospital/clinic). The fellow there

was out of Top Up, but told us the lady at the Pharmacy could top us up (across from the hospital). There was a bit more stock in this store, but still pretty thin. There was a small table with ladies selling vegetables outside the SDA store. You could dinghy in to the SDA /hospital area directly—look for a canal cut into the shore (watch for boats coming and going), just north of the green building (which is a school), which is ~1/4 nm north of the wharf. There were 4-5 banana boats in this area, and it looked more like a communal dock than a private area.

But we found the best store(s) around the south side of the island. We were looking for petrol (gasoline) and found a bar (closed in the middle of the day), and two stores, a small market with more veggies than the others, petrol, and top-up.

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** We anchored at 08-34.35 S / 157-52.60 E. This is just another town, nothing special.

**Screensaver – September 2017:** 08 34.91 S / 157 52.59 E 17m, Sand/Coral, No cell service. Basically a stopover for any supplies, but one must not have high expectation, and be prepared for out-island prices.

In the 4nm trip from Vangunu Island, I caught one fish. Sadly our second catch was a banana boat whizzing across our stern. I was not amused and did a 180 degree turn to retrieve what was left, mainly for the lure, and of course I give him “the look”.

It was here at Seghe about day 5 that I found out all of the mobile networks were out, both carriers. No one really knew why. So the 1.2GB of internet I bought for 14 days @ \$100SD was now expired. I left \$20SD with a shop Seghe, and asked the girl to load it to my phone when the service comes back. The pessimistic all said I had done my \$20SD. Five days later when the service did come back, no load for my \$20SD appeared. Long story short the word came back the load phone had been stolen.... yea right.....in the end a local resolved it for me and all was good, although the service provided by the Telkom network is a bit like fishing in Malaysia (pretty useless) That said the staff are not too bad and they try to do the right thing. Jimmy (TeleKom) gave me back my 1.2gb load.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Currents run at up to 2kts in the Njae Passage where Seghe is located.

We anchored 150m north of the village wharf (which in turn is close to the airport runway's east end) at 08°34.579S, 157°52.792E, 7m sand and coral. In a strong northerly this could be a little exposed, in which case it would be better to cross the channel to the twin village of Patutiva.

Seghe has two shops (by the wharf) and a small market (also by the wharf – it does not function on weekends). The airport has regular flights to Gizo and Honiara and the Pelican Express passenger ferry calls here. There is a small hospital and also cellphone coverage. The town generator was “out” at the time of our visit so hoped-for cold beers and ice cream were not available. The village, which is United Church (Methodist) is of modern construction.

Divers often dive on a plane wreck (P38 fighter) just off the end of the runway.

### **3.10.15      *Matikuri Island (Nono Lagoon)***

This is often the first or last anchorage for people arriving or departing the lagoon area via Hele Bar.

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** We stopped here on our first night in the lagoon. Like Carina, we came in in the afternoon in the middle of a rain squall (expect rain in the vicinity every afternoon). We anchored in 55 ft at 08-39.73 S / 157-52.03 E. Slightly south of us, it was 45 ft, with, I think, enough swinging room. You could fit about 3 friendly boats in this lagoon together.

Apparently the longtime owner of the lodge, Benjamin, passed away in 2017, and his daughter and part of his family is running the lodge now. Joshua is the primary contact, and they are still friendly and welcoming to yachties.

We dinghied in at 4:30 pm and asked if we could come in to dinner that night (4 of us) and they had no problem accommodating us. There is a large communal guest lounge and outdoor dining area which sits over the water and looks out to the lagoon. (a little in need of repair, but still a nice spot). Dinner was served at 7:30pm, and it was plentiful and good, at \$100 SD per person.

Unfortunately, anchored within view just north of the lodge is a big cargo ship, loading logs (kinda spoils the view!). Benjamin's daughter mentioned that they don't do the river trip to the nearby river because logging has ruined that area.

If you don't feel like wandering around the lagoon in your own boat, they can organize trips to the various attractions in the lagoon, for \$150 SD plus fuel costs (from 15L to 35L, depending on how far the distance is). Current price for fuel in the out islands is about \$15 SD per liter.

We asked about "intruders" and they said they hadn't had any problems for a number of years. We took all our loose gear inside when we got to PNG, and lock up every night. We had no problems/no intruders.

**Carina – July 2012:** From Kalivera we made for Matikuri in the Nono Lagoon. The narrow passage near Seghe was a wind tunnel, but there were no serious issues with current as we pushed our way through. Once south of Seghe, ocean swell can be felt in the channel, but we tucked into the islands (using Google Earth chartlets) and anchored at Matikuri in 50' clay/mud/coral bottom at 08°39.687S, 157°52.070E.

Our last five miles or so was into blinding squalls and winds over 20kn, but as soon as we reached the anchorage at Matikuri all was calm. We could hear the surf on the outside and the winds 25+kn, whistled over the island, but we were snug.

We left Matikuri by passing back north and around the island and then between Matikuri and the island to its west. Very deep; no soundings after we rounded the northern tip of Matikuri.

We followed cm93 chart's deep water out to Hele bar and crossed a couple of coral patches to about 25', but otherwise nothing unusual.

We crossed the Hele Bar early in the morning with a light north wind (~ 5 knots) at the waypoint given in Sieling - 08°43.240S, 157°49.610E. From this waypoint we took the shortest

route across the shallows and saw 16' at the lowest. We had unusual NW winds in the Blanche Channel as some sort of front passed bringing rain and squalls.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We were given a very friendly reception by Benjamin at his low-key Eco-lodge on Matikuri Island.

Anchor in the bay on the E side, south of the southernmost guest house, at 08°39.723S, 157°52.011 E in 18m, coral (we had some trouble getting the anchor up). Good snorkelling on the W and N sides of the island, also on the N tip of neighbouring Kembe Kembe island (owned by Benjamin's brother) but Benjamin warned that crocs are occasionally seen at the yacht anchorage. Benjamin cooked us a fine, relatively cheap crayfish dinner.

We were here the victim of a nocturnal intruder/Peeping Tom, who boarded our yacht with great stealth at 02:00 a.m. and who was in the main cabin before we scared him off with much shouting. We were not able to identify the perpetrator but it was most likely a young man – Piasi - from the small nearby settlement on the mainland who had earlier given us a false name (Nicholas/Nick) when making two visits ostensibly for trading (with hindsight, he was likely casing the joint). This young man had earlier been responsible for the theft of some diving equipment from another yacht and is well-known to Benjamin and his staff. Benjamin took the matter seriously and reported the intrusion to the police in Seghe. Precautions recommended; Benjamin will supply a guard if you are off the boat after dark. The anchorage is just out of sight of the resort and is thus relatively "lonely".

We crossed the Hele Bar where recommended by Sieling and never had less than 5m under the keel; good visibility. The yellow buoy reported by Sieling has gone. There was some current-induced turbulence on the bar, but the position of several islands to the S means that, in S or SE conditions, you actually pass into calmer water when proceeding to the SW.

**Sweet Dreams – 2010:** Delightful anchorage but there was a serious crime problem (boarding and theft while asleep) when we were there. Check with resort caretaker - he knows the criminals and will advise if they are around - they are youths from Votana Point and not always there. We didn't stay here but would have liked to.

### **3.10.16**      *Hele Bar*

Sieling Pg 144

**Carina – July 2012:** We crossed the Hele Bar early in the morning with a light north wind (~ 5 knots) at the waypoint given in Sieling - 08°43.240S, 157°49.610E. From this waypoint we took the shortest route across the shallows and saw 16' at the lowest. We had unusual NW winds in the Blanche Channel as some sort of front passed bringing rain and squalls.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We crossed the Hele Bar where recommended by Sieling and never had less than 5m under the keel; good visibility. The yellow buoy reported by Sieling has gone. There was some current-induced turbulence on the bar, but the position of several islands to the S means that, in S or SE conditions, you actually pass into calmer water when proceeding to the SW.

### **3.10.17 Wickham Anchorage / Wickham Harbour**

Sieling Pg 120-121

Sail the Solomons Pg 151 (chartlet only, no verbiage)

Wickham Anchorage is on the south side of Vangunu Island.

**Field Trip – 2018:** 08 44.70 S / 158 04.26 E This is a nice anchorage with sandy bottom. From here you can dive wrecks around the corner and stage here for Tetapare. No villages here but you may get a visit from the village across the bay. All friendly.

**Westward II – April 2011:** We anchored at 08-44.70 S / 158-04.09 E

### **3.11 Nggatokae Island**

#### **3.11.1 Peava**

Sieling Pg 116

**Field Trip - January 31, 2017:** GPS 08 47S 158 14E

We sailed overnight - or motored mainly - and got to this new spot. It was about 120NM, and a very comfortable sail/motor. We had wind from all directions, but it was less than 12kts except for one squall where we saw 19kts. Thi-s is a very nice place and we are looking forward to some village time.

The crocs are in another area, so we are told there are no issues here. However, around the corner is a lake, and a young girl last year was eaten...so we still need to be careful.

(they stayed two weeks there)

**Adina – July 2015:** 08 47.168S / 158 13.848E 20m, sticky mud, good holding, village

The lagoon has a very narrow pass (15m wide) and you will need good light and light winds to enter. Satellite image helpful. Leave first post to port, second to starboard. Small lagoon with local village. Dive operation has gone. Ok.

**Wade Fairly (via Noonsite) – Sep 2015:** Peava is a recommended anchorage when entering the Western Province from Honiara. 8°47.342' S / 158° 14.208' E

The entrance is 5m deep and about 15m wide. At the time of writing is marked with pole float with red reflector marking port side of the entrance. This may have changed if the float is washed away or has been changed.

The passage is clearly visible to eye in high sun.

Inside the lagoon you will find good holding in 20m. Favour the north end slightly so as not to hinder and be disturbed by traffic that use the entrance. Good protection from prevailing weather SE and NW, however during the austral summer months, short but violent squalls from NE occur, so leave some room with this in mind.

Peava is the village that faces the lagoon. Very friendly village with a long history of visiting boats, though these days there are only a few each year. They welcome trade, particularly for fruit and vegetables but they are not pushy and in general leave boats in peace.

They have high quality wood carvers. I met a Canadian boat who spent some weeks there and had the internal wood form (beams and pillars) on their boat hand crafted.

**Mokisha – May 2013:** We did two excellent dives in Pavea (pa-A-va) which is about 7 miles outside Morovo lagoon. The reefs were teeming with fish, sharks and exotic fans and coral. Lisa, isw an American ex-pat owns the dive shop & we had a great time with her. We also joined in some soccer fun with the kids of the village. One of the things that they love is bubbles. Needles to say, out came the bubbles & lots of laughter. I also taught them the Hokey Pokey, what a riot to watch them sing & shake their booty!

**Carina – August 2012:** Our next stop heading west was at Peava, on Nggatokae Island (about 8nm SE of the entrance to the Marovo Lagoon at Mbili) which is entered through a narrow pass at 08°47.1430S, 158°13.9660E. Depths in the pass ranged from 11-12’.

From Honiara we traveled 26 hours, most of those under auxiliary power, passing north of the Russell Islands. Most vessels traveling up The Slot were well-lit, though only one deep draft vessel transmitted an AIS signal. Twinkling flashlights from small fishing craft were a bit disconcerting, though they seemed aware of our presence.

On approach, we came through the gap between Mbulo and Malemale Islands and it was deep and wide. The narrow gap between Malemale and Nggatokae looked okay on Google Earth, but it appeared to be full of serious tide rips and has swell breaking on the reefs on both sides.

Kicha Island is located just SE of Mbulo and does not appear on the U.S. paper chart 82015 (part of the Bellingham set). As per our radar it’s located at 008°47.5000S, 158°19.0000E, which agrees reasonably well with cm93. It gives a good radar return.

HAZARD: There is something that looks like a Fish Accumulating Device (FAD), with a light on it, at (approximately) 08°50.1163S, 158°25.9940E.

Peava was our first stop in the western province and our entrée into the world of abundant master wood carvers, all anxious to sell. We did eventually acquire one lovely carving at Peava—a large turtle carved with sea life on its shell, a scene called (generally) “the spirit of the Solomons,” which we traded for our old digital point-and-shoot camera, a file and a knife.

The Wilderness Lodge is here, though we’d heard they weren’t too keen on yacht visits. Pleasant Rosina on their staff escorted us to the village and introduced us to Siana. Siana is the brother and representative of the chief who is working as a lawyer in Honiara. We gave him a small bag of gifts: tinned meat, tea and biscuits, and chatted about whether and where we could anchor, sought permission to hike, visit, fish and snorkel, and inquired about tabus. Siana explained that the village is Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and that a Saturday Sabbath was strictly observed.

Our visit was short but included the normal interview of our origins and who we might know of former yacht visitors. We were delighted to find out SSCA’ers on the vessel Asylum had spent five months here and had made a favorable impression due to their work with the school.

Siana soon pointed us down the trail to meet Lisa, an American who runs Solomon Dive Adventures. Her establishment is a wee bit out of town on the shady coral-studded path—look for a tree that had been elaborately carved and painted, depicting a diver and sea life and reading “Welcome to Vuana.” Lisa, who has been in Peava for six years, has turned this little corner of wilderness into a scuba school. There is also a library and preschool on site.

Later that day we were visited by Kelvin, the manager at the Wilderness Lodge. His mission was to request we move, which we think was due to the fact we’d visited Lisa, with whom the Lodge has poor relations. Considering we’d been assured by Siana our anchorage was fine, plus the fact that we were actually north of the Lodge’s bungalows, and the bay was filled night and day with local canoe traffic, we politely declined. Kelvin was gracious and went away smiling, but the reputation of the Wilderness Lodge as being a wee bit cool on yachts was thus upheld.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We made landfall at Peava, on Nggatokae island. The anchorage is in a small standalone lagoon off the small village of Peava. It is not not evident on any chart, but is clear on Google Earth.

Entry into the lagoon is via a 60m-wide gap in the reef, at 8°47.1 43S, 158°13.966E (note that Dirk Sieling's longitude is thirty miles out!). When we entered, the starboard hand was marked by an oil drum-sized cylinder of styrofoam, the port hand by a smaller spherical buoy. There is room for four or five yachts.

We **anchored** in 22m at 08°47.165S, 158°13.857E. Visibility inside the lagoon is so-so but there is good snorkelling on the encircling reef. Shelter is also so-so. At mid to high-tides the chop outside made it over the reef and set us rolling. The village is very tidy and friendly and there are many carvers here but they are not at all pushy.

Like many of the villages in the Marovo Lagoon, this is a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) community, whose holy day is Saturday; visitors are asked not to snorkel on that day. There is a tourist lodge, here, the Wilderness Lodge, but at the time of our visit they were not in the least welcoming to yachties. Signs on their jetty warned that it was STRICTLY for the use of hotel guests. However, yachts are welcome to land their tenders at the second jetty (just to the S), which is owned by Lisa, an expat American who runs a dive operation here. The two tourist operations, for reasons to do with lurid soap- opera goings on, are not on speaking terms with each other. Good drinking water from a tap at the head of Lisa's jetty.

### ***3.12 New Georgia Island***

#### ***3.12.1 Wilson Harbor (N Coast)***

**Field Trip - 2017:** This was a very peaceful anchorage and good staging spot before heading NE. The logging company is now long gone. There is a village to the SW of here that has a chief. There is NO anchoring fee according to the chief, but there are some chaps that may paddle over and ask for a fee.

The fresh produce here was excellent. Better than the market in Noro so this is a good stop for getting fresh veggies.

### **3.12.2 Leva (Lever) Harbor (NE Coast)**

Sieling Pg 155

**Lorelei – November 2013:** After a full day's 60nm run from Mbili, we arrived at dusk for our overnight stop at Leva Harbour. It's a remote area and is a logging camp so it's rarely visited by passing yachts.

Lisa had a funny experience with the only canoe that visited. It was a seedy looking guy with a 12 year old son who thought he was 50cent with a big piece of metal chain as a necklace.

The first thing the father said to Lisa was, "You have gift for me?" and rattled off a list of expensive power tools, electronics, alcohol, drugs and porn. Well Lisa was all over it, quickly wrote him off and gave him a large list of gifts she wanted from him. He left with 2 band aids and we got a large ripe Pomello.

### **3.12.3 Noro (Port of Entry)**

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** Noro is a short hop from Lola Island, and we did a day trip provisioning run, loading a couple of other cruisers aboard for the day. Another time we spent a couple of nights.

**Diesel Fuel:** The going rate for diesel in this area is \$10 SD per liter, but if you go to Markworths on the shipping pier at Noro, and you purchase over 200 liters, you can get it for \$6.72 SD per liter!! You can either go by dinghy (go around to the north end of the pier for access by dinghy) and bring jugs, or you can bring your boat alongside.

Though they are set up for re-fueling the big fishing boats, they do have a smaller nozzle for yachts. It's a little tricky to use at first, but once you get the hang of it, it is no problem.

The only glitch in the whole process was that we carefully measured what we took on (most of what we took on went into jerry jugs of known quantities). When we finished fueling (some in the tank and some in jugs) we were presented with a bill for 396 liters, when we were quite sure that we didn't take on more than 365 liters. We complained to the guy who presented us with the bill, but he said there was nothing he could do. So, the effective price for what we actually got was more like \$7.30 SD. This is still a big discount from the going small-quantity rate of \$10 SD if you went anywhere else.

It took a little work getting in to the fuel dock. They will not let you fuel (even by dinghy) if a big fishing boat is alongside unloading, or a freighter. We got the contact number for Alf, the supervisor for the fuel dock, and hung out down at Lola Island waiting for an auspicious time to fuel. We called him several times to find out when we could come in to fuel. It took 4-5 days before he said we could manage it. Alf's office number is 61235 and his cell number is 740-5607.

**Dinghy Dock:** We bought 20 liters of gasoline from the northernmost small dock in the Noro anchoring area. The building is a wooden pinkish color. They have a decent little dock, and walking ashore from their dock, right there is the BSP ATM, a Chinese Grocery store (and one across the street that sells beer), a bakery, and a propane exchange. The fresh market and Immigration is a short walk south from this location.

When we bought the gas, we schmoozed with the guys selling the fuel, and asked them if we could bring our dinghy in to their dock. We tied our dinghy out of the way (don't block their dock) and they kept an eye on it for us. The local banana boats come and go all along the shoreline there, and there are a number of small docks selling fuel that the friendly people might let you use, if you buy gas from them and ask nicely.

Sometimes the small gas docks are out of "pure gas" and only have pre-mix. Make sure you specify what you want. Our little fuel dock ran out while we were there, but they just pointed us to another fuel dock to go buy it from. Gasoline is also around \$10 SD per liter.

**Outboard Motor Repair:** Jenky Wong +677 791-7888 or 716-7191 We did not use him, but he stopped by when Dave was fiddling with the outboard and said he could repair it. Good English, and seemed knowledgeable.

**Eating Out:** Right next to the dinghy dock we used is the Noro Kitchen. It is a small local restaurant on the water, with a nice breeze and a view of the harbor. It doesn't look like much, but the food was good, and prices were very reasonable at \$25 (for fish and chips) to \$35 (for chicken stir fry and several similar chicken, veggies, and rice meals). I think there is a more upscale place somewhere but we never made it there.

Also, in the big building just in from the market (where Immigration is housed), there is another restaurant around the right side of the building on the ground floor. We had dinner there one evening. They even had beer and wine on offer. Open til 9pm

**Getting around:** There are taxis hanging out everywhere—they have "taxi" signs on top. The only place we went by taxi was to Muzi Boko). The cost is \$20 SD each way.

**Internet:** Noro has decent usable internet via My Telkomsel. The Telekom office is a prominent red building on the hill behind the harbor. It's a short walk there from any of the waterfront locations where small boats come in.

**Customs and Immigration:** Immigration is upstairs on the left end of the 2-story building behind the market. To find Customs, walk from there to the My Telkomsel office, keep going past Telkomsel building (prominent red building on the hill behind the harbor), and turn left at the dirt road just beyond. The Customs building is 100 meters on the right (a green building). Quarantine is just behind Customs.

The officers seem to cover 3 locations with 2 officers (Gizo, Noro, Munda) and so are not always in the office. Some phone numbers for Noro officials are included in the [Customs and Immigration](#) section, in case you have to chase them down. The Noro Immigration guy will come to Gizo, but it will cost you \$550 SD for fuel (as of 7/2019). He said they are trying to get a full time Immig officer for Gizo, but hasn't happened yet.

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** 7m sand, 2G, some 3G, but poor.

The entrance to this lagoon anchorage is a little tricky and shallow for 7ft draft, but you can pick your way through. We ended up with 3 yachts in there which is a little tight but it worked. We came here mainly for diesel which you can pump straight in from the a wharf just North of lagoon. Give Charles a call 7400198 he will come and sort out your needs. Don't buy it from

various suppliers backing onto the lagoon as it will be much more expensive and of dubious quality.

There is a great **supermarket** here called Mozi Boko (spelt phonetically ). It's about 2k away NE. We walked there and the intention was to get a cab back but in the end the cabs were full, so much to our dissatisfaction we walked back like pack horses. Mozi Boko is full of imported products and by far the best I've seen since leaving Philippines. They have freezers & fridges full of imported meats cheese and a good selection of general supermarket items. They have just opened a wine store alongside which looks the part, but I am aware of one unhappy customer, so perhaps buy one and try it first. Our experience at Mozi Boko was very good and I have no complaints. The crew off Olivia reckoned it was worth it just for the air-con. I believe they have a store in Honiara as well.

So with our new supplies, some vegetables acquired at the local market and some very expensive beer, not from Mozi Boko I might add, we invited Watusi and Olivia over for sun downers.

I noted the day before a minor scratch on my calf muscle and typically as soon as I see anything where blood is apparent no matter how small I wash it in fresh water and just apply cheap everyday type of antiseptic, in this case Dettol. This practice as work well for the last 8 years, but this time 48 hours had elapsed, and now it was looking just a little angry (red).

**Michael Foote (Noonsite) – Sep 2017:** We cleared out of the Solomons at Noro on the north western side of New Georgia, it's no longer possible to do so in Ghizo as the lady officer there died quite recently and isn't being replaced.

You can get water and fuel on the main wharf at Noro and we weren't charged for coming alongside.

There is an overnight anchorage 300 metres away, but ask the port to show you the entrance as it's quite narrow and only marked with a stick. We just squeaked in over the reef with our 2.2m draft, inside it's quite sheltered in an otherwise windy bay.

**Yawana (from Noonsite) – 2016 – Munda:** I have been spending much time in Munda, Western Province.

Noro is now the preferred port of entry in the Western Province, as Gizo has been experiencing reports of theft, and the Immigration officer is extremely uncooperative and is rarely available. Munda is close to Noro and is situated in the picturesque Roviana Lagoon.

Munda is a small pleasant down on New Georgia Island. It has several grocery stores, a BSP bank with **ATM**, Telecom office, and a police station. There is a **fruit and vegetable market** on most days, the busiest day being Friday. There are daily flights to Honiara. Yachts can clear in at nearby Noro. **Fuel** is available at several nearby vendors.

A good **anchorage** can be found in front of Agnes Gateway Hotel in 8-10 meters, sandy mud, good holding. The hotel management welcomes yachts, has a restaurant and bar, and 24 hr security. I have stayed several months and never had problems with things going missing on my boat. No reports of theft from other yachts either.

There is exceptional diving in the area with pelagic wall dives and WWII wrecks. Dive Munda operates out of the Agnes Gateway Hotel. They have a special yachtie rate and do pick-ups from yachts. They also offer broadband wifi for divers. [www.mundadive.com](http://www.mundadive.com)

There are no detailed charts for Roviana Lagoon but Dirk Seiling's guide has good mud maps for getting around. Most of the reef markers were in place, but it's always a good idea to keep a good eye out ahead.

**Carina – July 2012:** Commodities are available at good prices in Munda; Honiara prices or better. Don't expect a lot of choice. There are at least two ATMs: ANZ and BSP. Fuel is available by jerrycan from the depot just west of town (look for a pink roof and dock). You cannot dock a keel boat, but it's okay for a dinghy. Derek will sell you diesel or gas at \$14 SBD per liter for diesel (looks clean), \$15 SBD per liter for gasoline. We had EDGE quality Wi-Fi from Telekom while in Munda.

We anchored in front of the Agnes Lodge in 25' of fine talc sand. Be careful when you anchor to stay east of the concrete dock where landing craft call. Land your dink inside the tiny breakwater at the Agnes Lodge. We heard there would be a dinghy dock fee, but no one asked, so we bought drinks in the bar to earn our keep.

Our anchorage 08°19.893S, 157°16.221E.

#### **3.12.4 Diamond Narrows**

#### **3.12.5 Munda & Munda Bar**

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** We really enjoyed hanging out in Munda. The Agnes Lodge is still welcoming to yachts. There is a nice, not-too-deep anchorage just off their restaurant, and they provide a safe place to put the dinghy and a place to dispose of trash. Just outside the hotel entrance is the local market, and small stores line the short road going toward the airport.

There is a BSP ATM (almost to the airport, turn right toward the My Telekom office, and it is just past the My Telekom building). We never found the ATM empty of money. Max 4,000 SD on our US Visa debit cards.

There is fairly steady 3G internet in the harbor, and the Agnes Lodge has a wifi hotspot right at reception (doesn't work anywhere else).

We did 3 days of diving with Dive Munda. Nice group, good equipment, and fairly well run. Aussie prices (ie shockingly expensive compared to Philippine diving).

**Transport to Noro:** If you don't feel like navigating up Diamond Narrows to Noro, you can leave your boat in Munda and get a shared van up to Noro—it's about a 20 minute ride up a good road. Cost is \$20 SD per person, one way. A taxi to Noro is \$400 SD R/T. We opted to rent a taxi for the day for \$600 SD and also explored the WWII sites that are just out of town. Agnes Lodge can call you a taxi if you want. We used Isaiah, his taxi was clean and had cold air, he speaks good English, and knows the places to go. Cell# 782-6761

See Noro section for details of what's in Noro (2 good hardware stores plus Muzi Boko (aka Blue Container Shop). Duty free fuel also possible.

We only needed a little fuel, so bought from a fuel vendor on the water (in jugs), about 400 meters west of Agnes Lodge. \$11 SD/liter, with a nice setup to dispense diesel.

Munda is a good place to have guests fly into—there's lots to do nearby (Vonavona Lagoon, Rendova, etc) no matter what the weather is. And Solomons Airlines now has a direct flight from Brisbane to Munda on Saturdays.

We had dinner several times at Agnes Lodge (it's about the only game in town if you want to eat out). It's fairly pricey for dinner, but the lunch items are also available to order for dinner (dinner selections from \$100-150 SD). Dave recommends the Seafood Fettucine for \$100 (large portion, consistently good, lobster, fish, and shrimp).

WWII Things to See: Dive Munda has 4-6 airplane and ship wreck sites to dive. Not to miss ashore is the WWII Museum kept by Barney (\$50 SD pp to see)

**Carina – July 2012:** From Eghelo we traveled directly to Munda, crossing the wide 24' Munda Bar, following the huge range markers. Once inside and following Sieling, the recommended track is almost due east, where you'll find a FAD of sorts with at least one dangerous line trailing from it at approximately 08°20.563S, 157°14.109E. Pass south of it. The rest of the way in is marked, though in the beginning marks are a wee bit far apart We saw about 15' at the lowest depth. NOTE: the very last mark is gone, but a fragment of pipe remains. It is dangerous. The location is approximately 08°20.0183S, 157°16.4700E. In the daylight it's no problem, but be on the lookout.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** From Balira we continued to the NW in the direction of Munda Bar. There is an excellent range consisting of two bright orange boards; contrary to Sieling, there is no buoy on the bar itself.

Approaching the bar from outside, there are two very conspicuous beacons – one a framework tower, the other a black and white concrete post – at the location two miles SSE of the bar, where the chart indicates a light. There is a large and dangerous tongue of reef (which could usefully be marked) 0.75 of a mile to the NW of this pair of beacons (we were not at all clear why there are two beacons so close together).

### ***3.12.6 Viru Harbour (SW End)***

This is a good stopover if the winds are blowing out of the SE and you won't make the pass into Marovo Lagoon in sufficient daylight. Sieling says this is very protected.

Sieling Pg 96-97

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** We spent last night in Wickham Harbor on the SE side of Vangunu, and this was an easy 30 mile day, mostly downwind.

By the time we approached the entrance, the SE wind had built to 10-15 kts, and there was a good 1.5m swell outside. We had pretty good sun, interspersed with light rain showers. It was fairly easy to pick our way in here. Not all the marks mentioned in Sieling are there, but with the swell, we could see the shoals on either side of the entry area, because of the breakers.

We opted to go pretty far in, to try to cut down on the canoe traffic—god knows we don't need any more carvings, and we are headed for Munda and Noro, so veggies aren't a priority.

We anchored near Bosun Bird's spot in 44 ft. at 08-29.422 S / 157-44.324 E.

I can see a cell tower in Tetemare (the village on the western shore), but we only have 2G (Edge) coverage and not much internet is getting through. We had better internet offshore today between Hele Bar and the entrance to here.

Exiting here in the morning was quite harrowing as the swell was right on our nose and quite steep at first. The forecast was for light winds < 10 kts but we had squally weather and winds 15-25 kts all day, and they stayed that way for another 36 hrs, with same light wind forecast.

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 08 29.97 S / 157 43.93 E 18m mud/sand. No cell. When our choice of anchorage for the day did not pan out, the only place I had any confidence we could stop at was Viru Harbour. I had some information on my chart but no Google image and the charts here with regards to depths are not accurate. To add to this we would be arriving in the dark which is against one of my rules for an unknown anchorage, with poor charts and no Google image.

Watusi usually goes quicker than Screensaver in medium to flat water using Iron horses, but in head seas and 25-30 knots I have the choice of setting fire to my wallet and cranking up 110 Turbo'd horses or not. The choice was to do that, arrive before dark, and leave Watusi behind or maintain his speed. In the end I decided given radar, two charting systems, and not being solo the right thing was to keep Watusi's pace. As it turns out the charts were pretty good and we arrived not long after dark to a very flat and well protected anchorage.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The entrance to Viru Harbour is between high cliffs. It is deep but could be daunting in a heavy S or SE swell. Entry waypoint: 08°30.716S, 157° 43.523E. There is a range consisting of two white-painted triangles, but the upper of these is 99% obscured by dense vegetation. The beacon that Sieling shows immediately in front of the range is missing, but there is a near-submerged green-painted beacon on the reef to starboard as you enter, and another red (port hand) beacon further in. There are substantial villages on either side of the entry channel, but the once-active logging operation that was based here is nearly defunct; a Korean company is still engaged in eucalyptus planting and harvesting. The Pelican Express calls in at Tetemare, on the W bank.

We anchored in the NE extremity of the inlet, which is very quiet and surrounded by mangroves; 08 29.333S, 157 44.524E, 10m. The water visibility is poor and there are many crocs about. The previous evening a croc had taken a dog in Tambe (E bank).

However, this is a well-protected location and would be good to ride out heavy weather from any quarter. Friendly locals traded veggies.

**Sweet Dreams – 2010:** Lovely approach and entrance. Well marked and easy to navigate to anchorage. Carvers here and they will visit but you can arrange to see a display of carvings at village (Tetamare). Prices are a little cheaper than Marovo still and are of high quality in general. Good trade for fruit and vegies. The women are interested in recipe swapping. Some contacts: Kingsley Ngai (school teacher) and Alex and Sharon Rikea. Alex is a professional runner for Solomons.

### **3.13 Rendova Island**

Rendova is a good stopover between Munda and Tetepare.

#### **3.13.1 Kenelo Pt (West Side)**

Sieling Pg 98-99

**Screensaver – Sep 2017:** 08 27.67 S / 157 17.02 E Sand/mud, 2G just Winding our way out of the maze of Vona Vona lagoon was much easier with a track to follow, and then we managed to motor sail to Rendova.

We are still getting regular squalls at the end of most days packing 30 knots, and a buckets of rain.

I had hoped to see something from the underwater volcano, but having sailed right over it I'm guessing this is long since dead. Some mud crabs were also on the list for here, however the trade off in the murky water along with being in what looked like crock territory to me was a disincentive to go play in the mud.

About 3k north there was said to Jap plane in the water so we trundled up there and had a bit of look. The water was not so clear and it was about 8-10m down, all just a bit deep given my in built-in floatation.

We met a couple of locals and they all have their own stories. On Ken's boat was guy telling his story while on Screensaver was another guy telling us he was the chief. In conversation I said to Ken over the VHF the chief is here and may come to see you, meanwhile the guy on Ken's boat had just told him that man on Screensaver says he is the chief but is not. Well the guy on Screensaver was really pissed off, and went from 0 to 10 quicker than Ken can skull a beer. He promptly produced a set of government papers' and letters declaring him Chief of security & lands. His role being one to keep the logging boats, people environmental aspects as they should be, and he was also empowered by the police. He was not Chief in the sense we were thinking, but that concept seems to have now diminished and has been replaced by the land holders group.

#### **3.13.2 Rendova Harbor (N Tip)**

Sieling Pg 100-101

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** We had reports from cruisers around 2010-2011 about some armed boardings in the middle of the night, near Rendova Harbor (specifically in Balira Harbor, referencing the village at Rendova Harbor, see next section for details). But inquiring with Dive Munda, before we left Munda, they didn't know of any problems in recent years.

So we anchored near the anchor in Sieling, just S of the west end of Kukurana Island, at 08-24.088 S / 157-20.135 E, in 45 ft. We did quite a bit of circling around, trying to find a spot that was not too deep and not too corally. We had weak 3G cell signal from Munda.

Our buddy boat anchored in 60 ft about 100 m to the north of us and ended up with a gnarly chain wrap on a coral head that took 30 minutes to get loose. With light winds and shifting currents, we had been spinning in circles for 24 hours.

We found the village ashore to be friendly, and FULL of kids. What's mostly visible from shore is a big yellow-orange building, which turns out to be the Catholic Church. The village is set back from the church, as they had a big tsunami in the past and it had washed the houses near the shore away. It is Easter week and they were out of school for the week, paddling around in their canoes, so they kinda drove us crazy with their "Hello, hello" (starting at 6:30 in the morning). But they were smiling and curious, not aggressive. We were invited ashore by Daniel, the recently-expired chief's son. We took a walk around the village. The village was well tended, clean and neat, and full of gardens.

Edward, mentioned in Sieling and by several cruisers, was not here this week.

We took a dinghy ride west to the island that supposedly has an eco-lodge on it, (Lumbari Island, aka Kennedy Island). It has a dock and a big sign stating that John F Kennedy and PT109 were stationed there for part of the war. There is a small building that has a few relics from World War II, including Coke bottles, mess kits, and several other interesting things. It currently isn't functioning as an eco-lodge, except for lunch on Tuesdays when Dive Munda comes by with guests. The new owners, Nicely and Quora, are hoping to reopen soon.

Kukurana Island is owned by a retired policeman from Honiara, and they are building a house now. This island was apparently occupied by US troops during WWII, and there are a few war relics there as well.

We didn't take the time to have one of the locals show us the location of the airplane mentioned in Sieling, and we didn't see it in a cursory dinghy exploration of that bay. Most of the landmarks listed by Sieling are no longer there (including Elliott House).

Gaia – 2014: In a briefing on the Solomons, Gaia, a monohull told us they anchored in the bay where Sieling shows the airplane, at APPROXIMATELY 08-24.571 S / 157-20.006 E. In 2014, Edward was there and showed them the location of the airplane.

### ***3.13.3 Balira Harbour (N Tip)***

Sieling pg 102-103

**Unknown Boat – October 2013:** I have a track from a boat that spent one night in Balira Harbor anchored at 08-24.095 S / 157-20.733 E.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** From Viru we sailed west to Balira Harbour, on Rendova, anchoring at 08°24.280S, 157°20.742 in 13m. Quiet and mangrove-surrounded, open only to the N. We had a quiet night but the next morning two locals came by separately to warn us that in this location, a month earlier, a German yacht had been boarded in the middle of the night, allegedly by youths from the Malaitan village in the bay immediately to the West. Notes from another yacht told us that they had to deal with "aggressive" youths wanting money and cigarettes when anchored in the N part of Balira, just S of Kukurana Island. Accordingly we decided to move on.

### **3.13.4 Egholo Bay (N Tip)**

Sieling Pg 104-105

**Soggy Paws – April 2019:** We drove into Egholo Bay, but looking at the size of the village on satellite charts, felt we'd be inundated with visitors. We ducked in to take a look, and then moved on to check out a less populated bay.

**Carina – July 2012:** Our next stop was at Egholo (Butterfly Bay) on Rendova Island. The entrance at 08°24.743S, 157°22.432E is narrow but deep and very easy to transit.

We anchored in the south part of the bay at 08°24.84S, 157°22.38E in about 50' of thick mud. The protection was great and the holding fabulous. There is an inner lagoon to the east, accessible by dinghy. There's also a mangrove river of ancient mangroves on the west side that's also fun to explore by dink. There is a WWII B-17 crash site here that is fully documented. The plane was called Stingaree, serial #41-9071. An American named Shane Elliot visited here in 2008 and installed a plaque. We had hoped to visit but the weather didn't cooperate.

Ngana Bozi is the village organizer; a very nice 80-year-old man. He will come calling; he is gracious, intelligent and interesting. We gave him a small gift of tea, sugar, biscuits and curried chicken. Kingsley will bring you a yacht book to sign. It goes back to the early 1990s and is good reading. Sieling was here apparently while writing his book, based upon the date and his comments. Included in the yacht book is a good mud map.

We saw dozens and dozens of big flying foxes and a bina bird flew over at close range. Crocs are reported, so the village will show you where to snorkel/dive should you desire doing so. Somewhere in the SE corner there's apparently a good place to wash clothes.

Carvers will come and call though they're very sensitive as to whether you wish to see their work. We told everyone we only wanted a bowl in rosewood or ebony and that's all they brought after a while. In the end we traded/bought the most exquisitely-inlaid rosewood bowl carving we've seen in the Solomons. It came with free serving spoons.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The anchorage at Egholo Bay, two miles to the E of Balira Harbor, may be less private but could be more secure.

### **3.13.5 Mburuku Village (East Side)**

Sieling Pg 106-107

**Tropical Soul – 2018:** There are lots of flies in the village, but otherwise good. We anchored in the hole at the head of the bay. 08-26.92 S / 157-23.91 E

### **3.13.6 Susuki Point**

Sieling Pg 108-109

**Morild – 2018:** Morild (a 45 ft steel monohull) anchored at approx 08 28.31 S / 157 24.40 E. Says there is fresh water in the next bay south.

### **3.13.7 Husuzo Harbor**

Sieling Pg 110-111

### **3.14 Tetepare Island / Tetapare**

Sieling Pg 112-113

The Last Wild Island (Book)

**From the Tetepare Conservation Website (2019):** Tetepare Island, in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands, is one of the conservation jewels of the South Pacific. This long, rugged island, cloaked in rainforest and fringed with coral reefs, is the largest uninhabited tropical island in the Southern Hemisphere. Home to the one of the Solomon Islands' leading conservation projects and a unique, locally-owned and managed ecolodge, Tetepare's natural abundance attracts visitors from around the world.

Uninhabited for 150 years, Tetepare is an island forgotten by time and swathed in mystery. There are many stories that explain why the island was abandoned – fear of head-hunting, ill health attributed to curses, even men being turned against one another by dangerous gossiping in the villages. But what makes this island truly extraordinary is that, in a country which has lost almost all of its forests to commercial logging, Tetepare remains untouched.

At the beginning of this century, when the threat of logging loomed over Tetepare, the island's traditional landowners rejected logging offers and came together to save this pristine wilderness for themselves and for future generations. An organisation made up of local community members called the Tetepare Descendants' Association (TDA) was created, to manage and protect the resources of the island as a conservation area. The history of the island and the formation of TDA are documented in the book "The Last Wild Island- saving Tetepare".

Tetepare has received international recognition for its conservation and archaeological significance. Experts from around the world, including renowned ornithologist and author Jarrod Diamond, have commended the work on the island. A dazzling variety of plants and animals make their home in the island's 120 square kilometres of primary lowland rainforest – some of the last remaining in Melanesia.

The island's beaches support nesting populations of three species of turtle including the endangered leatherback turtle. Other species inhabiting the island and surrounding waters include the dugong (*Dugon dugon*), the world's largest skink (*Corucia zebrata*), the endemic Tetepare White-eye (*Zosterops tetepari*), hornbills, tiny pygmy parrots, the endangered coconut crab, huge bump-headed parrot fish, schools of barracuda and pods of bottlenose and spinner dolphins.

The TDA welcomes yachts and sailboats to visit Tetepare, but asks that all people visiting Tetepare on sailing boats pay the \$20 Aust per person Conservation Fee and follow the TDA visitor code of conduct, including rules prohibiting fishing within the Marine Protected Area. Yachtspeople are also welcome to book accommodation at the ecolodge, and to hire local guides for on- island activities such as bushwalks, wildlife watching trips, kastom site visits and

snorkelling trips. Should you wish to stay at the ecolodge or hire guides, we recommend you contact us in advance to ensure rooms and guides are available for you.

<https://www.tetepare.org/>

**Tropical Soul – March 2019:** 08-43.19 S / 157-26.41 E Anchor in shallow clear sand area. Follow the channel in. Has a faded orange/red buoy to starboard, then a bigger black/white buoy to port. Use satellite pics to aid you in. Lots of fish life in the channel. Great trekking in the jungle with William as our guide.

**Gemma Ross – Dec 2018:** We visited Tetepare & enjoyed our time there immensely. We were very keen to get involved in any of their land based activities but there was not much going on at the time of our visit. We were able to hire a guide for walks/ hikes for SBD\$ 150 per day. We paid the Conservation fee of SBD\$ 100 pp - for which we were supplied supporting paperwork, then asked for SBD\$ 500 per boat to anchor. We queried the amount as we had not found evidence of the fee on the website or elsewhere. We maintained that we were happy to pay as it was supporting their work to protect the island but were surprised at the price. The manager said she would check with the boss in Munda & get back to us- we were never asked again.

Also at time of writing (Dec 2018) there was a settlement on the north side of the island that we passed when sailing towards the lagoon anchorage. On enquiry at the station, the village there is unauthorised & is currently being dealt with. The TDA & ranger's station were Not in support of the village, which was occupied by a family of descendants of the island.

#### **Field Trip – 2017:**

**Kate Glover (Noonsite) – October 2013:** After all the well-known stops in the Western province, we made our way to Tetepare Island, which was probably our favorite stop in the Solomons. We had trouble finding much information about anchoring, so thought we'd share some GPS waypoints.

Tetepare is the largest conservation area in the Solomons, and it seems to be effective. The snorkeling was fantastic—maybe even better than the hot spots in Marovo Lagoon. It's run by the Tetepare Descendants Association, and they seem to be doing a good job. It has its problems, of course, but the rangers working there are pretty excited about what they're doing. There is a research station and a lodge, and when the lodge makes money, they use it to provide scholarships for school fees for some of the villages that are involved.

There are a number of anchorages on the island, but the rangers would like you to start with the anchorage in front of the lodge, so that you can pay your conservation fee and they can tell you the rules for the area. The lodge is in the lagoon on the far southwest side of the island, just around the western corner from Waugh Bay. The pass into the lagoon is not super-obvious until you know where it is, though it can be seen on Google Earth. If you circle at the entrance for a bit, the rangers may come out and guide you in (they led us in and showed us where they wanted us to anchor).

**Pass:** The entrance to the pass is at 8°43.187'S, 157°26.125'E. You'll see a barrel (actually, it's just a mesh bag full of Styrofoam) ahead of you. As you enter keep the barrel to your right. The channel then is narrow, but it's plenty deep and pretty clear. It's pretty obvious where it starts

to get shallow. You will pass between two large bommies, and then you get to a shallow, sandy patch. That's where you anchor.

**Check-In Anchorage:** There is a strong current in the lagoon (and it's always going out), and it's a relatively small spot, so we set a stern anchor to keep from running into coral heads. It was about 10 feet deep, but a consistent depth in the sandy area. Our position was: 8°43.227'S, 157°26.398'E. It is exposed to the southeast winds, but the reef breaks the waves—we were there in fairly light winds, and it was great. Awesome snorkeling right off the boat.

If the wind picked up and got too strong, you could move over to Waugh Bay. It's an easy walk from Waugh Bay to the lodge (and Waugh Bay also has great snorkeling).

The fees, in 2013, were \$100 SBD per person for a conservation fee, and \$250 SBD for a mooring fee (though I'm not certain the mooring fee is the same for every boat). It's a one-time fee, and you can stay as long as you want. If there are no people staying at the lodge, there will be a couple of rangers, but you otherwise pretty much get the island to yourself.

There are some trails, and the rangers will take you for a guided hike. If there are guests around, or research projects going on, you may be able to tag along on some of the turtle monitoring or other projects. Unfortunately, the leatherbacks were not yet nesting while we were there, so we didn't get to see leatherbacks.

There are sometimes dugongs, but they have lost a lot of seagrass in recent years (they're not sure why), and the dugongs have not been around as much lately.

We saw lots of birds, had a great time just having the chance to walk among the big trees, fabulous snorkeling, and we saw a bunch of monitor lizards and a cuscus—the first non-bird land animals we've seen in ages!

**Waugh Bay Anchorage:** Once you've paid your fees, you can also go anchor elsewhere around the island, and are free to wander there, which we very much enjoyed. We anchored in Waugh Bay, in front of the sandy beach at 8°42.408'S, 157°26.904'E. We used fore and aft anchors to keep us from sliding down the steep slope. Saw a few crocodiles, but still had great snorkeling. Tons of bumphead parrotfish and great visibility. Nice walk to the crocodile lake.

The rangers can tell you about some other spots you can anchor as well. We loved Tetepare, and would highly recommend it. If you go to the islands nearby, make sure you tell them how much you liked Tetepare so they know it's bringing people in their direction (there seems to be some contention among the descendants because it's not possible to give all of them jobs or scholarships, so they don't all see the tangible benefits they want to see—it's good to let them hear you're interested in the leatherbacks and the standing trees).

**Shango – October 2012:** Tetepare is sometimes referred to as the “last wild island”. It is the largest uninhabited island in the Pacific and over the last ten years a couple of Australian environmentalists (husband and wife) have managed to get the descendants of the last inhabitants to agree not to allow logging onto the island or to re-inhabit it. You can now go and visit the island and stay in a basic cabin and learn about the flora and fauna. The only drawback from a sailboat perspective is that the Ranger Station and activities are mainly on the weather side of the island. We spent one night behind a tiny offshore island on the lee side which was

quite pretty but nowhere near the Ranger Station. On Sunday we motored along the coast to see if we could find an anchorage closer to the Rangers but had no luck. We poked our nose into the weather side “anchorage” but didn’t head all the way in because it looked decidedly shallow inside the reef. We headed back around to where we started and much to our surprise another sailboat had taken our place. We anchored about a mile away near a river mouth.

## 4 Choiseul Province

### 4.1 *Choiseul Island, SW Coast*

#### 4.1.1 *Taro*

**Screensaver – Sep 2018:** Anchor in 16m, sand and coral, 2G.

I had a great sail up the coast. The constant rain in the afternoon seemed to pretty much behind me, and the skies in front were blue. Off in the distance a large white with some red object could be seen.

I could not determine what it was even with my binoculars, so turned around and sailed SSW to find. WTF.... can you imagine hitting that at night doing 6 or 7 knots, or even worse the banana boat guys doing 15 or in some cases 20 knots.

I stopped at Taro for two reasons, firstly was a possibility they may have had board guys (which they did) but not for checkout, like in Shortland, this is the last tip of Solomon’s.

The Shortland Island guy was in Honiara, so this was my last hope. But I really needed to get some documents to Sydney via email. Anyway having anchored, the Police immigration etc all came to the boat.... ah I can check-out, nope it would seem not. So they asked me for all my details where I checked in, which I gave them including copies of papers, they said they would just check. My next port I told them was Buka. So I guess I expected they would be back. They didn’t ask if I had checked out, or where I would do this. Tempted to leave straight away I decided that just makes me look guilty, so no I stayed and the next morning departed for PNG.

#### 4.1.2 *Moli Island / Mangatarav Village*

**Screensaver – Sep 2018:** 06 49.2187 S / 156 31.2144 E Anchored in 5m mud, no cell. This is a great little spot that is well protected and a nice bunch of people, that came to visit but asked for nothing !!. I had never been to Choiseul Island before mainly because of safety stories, but I should have known better, the people I met seemed very nice.

#### 4.1.3 *Sanggighae Inlet*

**Miss Behave - August 2014:** Anchor Position: 06 57.4’S / 156 41.3’E 35ft of mud and sand with good holding and wide enough to be private.

We set anchor yesterday, entertained the horde of children and village elders then set about attacking my last bottle of rum. The canoes came back early evening so I turned the aft LED flood light on and directed it aft and half the village turned up to fish using our light. It is 1030am and no one turned up with a fish so I gather the light did not work that well. The

people here are friendly and welcoming. I posted the bay details in the blog but here it is again for you guys since you will be coming this way.

There are reefs each side so take the central entry. High ground to the east and only a W or NW wind would upset your rest.

#### **4.1.4 Poro Island and The Amphitheatre Anchorage**

Sieling Pg 192-193 "A very special anchorage is hidden in Choiseul Island immediately north of Poro Island."

#### **4.1.5 Ropa Island**

Sieling Pg 192 Anchorage approximately 07 22.2 S / 157 12.1 E 8m clear water over sand.

#### **4.1.6 Ondolou (Undolou) Island**

Sieling Pg 204-205 07-30.8 S / 157-43.7 E (mentions tying stern-to trees on the beach). Clear water, good snorkeling, nice beach, no people.

**Lorelei – November 2013:** After waiting a few days for the immigration lady to show up to work in Gizo, we finally cleared out and left the Solomon Islands. Our destination Kosrae, Micronesia – nearly 1000nm away.

Day 1 we went 60nm north across The Slot towards Choiseul Island. By late afternoon the wind had died, so we anchored up in a delightful bay behind the small Onodulo Island and stayed the night.

At dusk we were sitting on the deck having a drink watching a school of bait fish being hunted by Sharks in the crystal clear shallow water along the beach. When the fish subsided, there sitting on the surface right in the middle of the school was a large crocodile. We grabbed the binoculars and watched it for the next hour as it hunted up and down the beach chasing the fish and birds walking on the water's edge.

The next day it was raining and no wind so we decided to stay one more day. We looked out the back and sure enough there was the croc still hiding under the mangrove trees.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The anchorage here (as featured in Sieling) would be adequate with winds with a S element, but in the northerlies we were then experiencing, the recommended bay was quite choppy, exposed as it is to a three or four mile fetch, so we moved to Eretata Island.

#### **4.1.7 Eretata Island**

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Choiseul Island is hardly visited. We made our landfall from the South, west of Manning Strait and first checked out Ondolou Island. The anchorage here (as featured in Sieling) would be adequate with winds with a S element, but in the northerlies we were then experiencing, the recommended bay was quite choppy, exposed as it is to a three or four mile fetch. Accordingly, we headed straight to windward and anchored in a lee of the southern tip of

Eretata Island, at 07°29.458S, 157°43.777E, in 21m. This anchorage is subject to a reversing current of 1 to 2 knots. Although the setting is idyllic, in the morning we noticed two crocodiles basking on the beach. We were briefly visited by a Gilbertese man from the one of the villages that are visible to the E on Wagina Island, but otherwise this location is quite far from any settlement.

#### **4.1.8 Nggosele Passage**

Sieling Pg 194

**Pastime – 2002:** Another trip we won't forget was white-water rafting in Pastime ' or fairly close to it! Cutting across the bottom of large Choiseul Island is the Nggosele Passage which is like a narrow, winding river. It comes complete with rocks, shallows and reefs.

Our cruising guide said it was navigable. A school teacher from a village near the western end also gave us excellent advice, all of which was accurate. We spent several hours motoring through the spectacular area, with up to 6.5kts of assisting current, whirlpools, bends and plenty of jungle. Imagine our heart rates when Pastime rounded a bend at more than nine knots and the narrow channel split, with white water on a reef in the centre. Fortunately, a veer to port avoided the reef then a flick to starboard stopped us ploughing into the fast-approaching bank. The teacher was right!

#### **4.2 Choiseul Island, NE Coast**

#### **4.3 Vaghena Island (Wagina Island)**

**Field Trip - March 23, 2017:** GPS 07 32.51S 157 42.39E

We found a new anchorage that has crystal clear water and a sandy bottom. We are anchored in 18m, and can clearly see the hook. This is probable the clearest water we have seen in a long time, mainly due to the fact that we have been in lagoons for the past month.

Pastime – 2002: Wagina Island and village are firm favourites on our list of most-popular spots. This large village of about 1000 did not look accessible, with the chart showing no decent anchorages and the reef entrance was for "surfboards only", being three metres wide with breaking waves. However, a villager showed us a wonderful lagoon a few miles away. Charts indicated nothing useful, but after travelling a couple of miles North over supposedly dry reef, we anchored in a delightful, sandy, one-yacht lagoon.

#### **4.4 Hamilton Channel**

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** For passing through Hamilton Channel, (between Wagina and Rob Roy islands) careful study of the tide tables and of the current stations (marked on the paper chart) is advisable, but even so the current turned to run to the NW earlier than we had predicted and, by the time we were emerging from the NW end of the passage – three or four miles long - we were getting a lift of nearly four knots and significant turbulence and whirlpools were starting to develop. Heading to the NW, it is advisable near the NW end of the pass to take a jog to the N, leaving a clutch of low islands to port, so as to avoid a shallow rock that obstructs the

wider channel. Although the chart here is GPS compliant, you would not want to undertake this passage in the dark or in a strong wind against current situation.

## 5 Isabel Province

### 5.1 *Valavu, Santa Isabel*

Not sure where this is, so parking it here until I find out.

**Kate Glover – 2013:** We stopped first in Valavu, another spot where they don't get many boats. This was a good anchorage (better than it looked on the chart), as there is a reef giving you pretty decent protection. Lots of excited kids came out to visit us here. One of the kids, a 12 year old, asked me, "What's wrong with your nose?" I had to ask my partner, as I wasn't aware there was anything wrong with it. He looked at me, then laughed and said, "She's white! It's sunburned."

If you stop here, be sure you see the chief, and make sure you're clear on how long you are going to stay and what you want to do (i.e., snorkeling, diving, taking pictures). We had a good stop, and some really interesting conversations about some resource development issues the village is facing. They are eager for tourists to help them fend off the logging and mining proposals, but the chief seemed to prefer that boats only stay for a couple of days. Plenty of info in the Dirk Seiling guide for this area. A village nearby put on a festival at the end of September this year, but it didn't work out for our timing.

### 5.2 *Santa Isabel Island SW Coast*

#### 5.2.1 *Rob Roy Pt / Korighole Harbor*

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 8m Mud, No Cell. Trying to go SE in SE trades is not exactly great sailing. I usually sail as near to east as I can ( in SE) and then as near to south as I can. So this leg and the anchorage was all about getting east, and hopefully sailing it.

The weather forecasts here have been worse than usual, and while I don't expect them to forecast squalls, I do expect them to forecast sustained 30+ knots, instead of 15-20 they forecasted for this leg. So as we three set off, I at least was expecting 15-20 maybe 25, but not 30, and dropping off early morning, probably leaving us motoring the last 5-10nm. The 30 did drop off slowly thankfully and by around 11:00am we were having a brisk sail. The wind did back off in the afternoon eventually and to my surprise we got a good push of at least 1-1.5 knts. This anchorage wasn't in my planning, and hence I had no GE image. Internet had been broken for some time and credit had also run out. I emailed my brother (via HF) and asked if he could send me a small cut down image just so I had something else as a guide, so in the end we made it in good time.

In the morning, the three of us left pretty early. Sneaking out behind the Island looked like the way to go, but it very nearly wasn't.

We were motoring carefully out behind Finuana Island in the early hours on an overcast day, and visibility was poor. As we got towards the SE exit the depth sounder started screaming less than 9m and we had 20+ most of the way behind the Island.

Then comes 6m, 5m, 4m, 3m, Reverse reverse.....I pick up the VHF Mic and yell 2m in reverse.

Watusi is following me, and the others are behind him. Watusi sees 30+ on his depth sounder and simply and thinks are this is just Screensaver's shit depth sounder, and as luck would have it he passes on my starboard side, while I am going backwards.

Later I got the Google image saw what I was about to run into. None of it was visible to the eye until I was near enough to on top of it. I cannot over emphasize the usefulness and importance of getting satellite images and being able to overlay them on your navigation system.

### **5.2.2 *Nasi Bay***

**Vaa Nui – 2016:** We anchored in Nasi Bay (just N of Ghaghaolo Point) and met Simon, a WWII guy from a nearby village. There is a divebomber down nearby that Simon can show you.

### **5.2.3 *Ghaghaolo Point***

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 08 12.37 S / 159 15.97 E 26m, Coral/rubble, no cell. I also had no satellite image here, and next to no depths on the either charting system so I was going pretty quietly as we came in. Luck would have that it was all pretty deep and in fact we all struggled to find somewhere shallow enough to anchor.

It's well protected and very quiet, next to no locals with only a few logging workers traveling out to the ships which are dotted down this coast line. We have seen logging ships every 5-10 nm apart down this coast line, more here than anywhere else so far. There is also a noticeable lack of cell towers, and very few villages.

## **5.3 *Santa Isabel Island East Coast***

### **5.3.1 *Papari Village***

**Wiikirri – January 2009:** 08 24.0 S / 159 39.5 E (PA) Papari Village was not marked on any of our charts and it took another day of asking fishing canoes and pulling into suspected villages before we found Papari eventually sailing past it by nearly a mile before a canoe finally came out to wave us back.

The bay consists of several scattered villages, settlements and camps each containing an assortment of extended family groups. It is our understanding that people have only recently begun to resettle this section of Isabel, before many headhunting raids devastated and all but wiped out the original inhabitants but with the lucrative spoils from logging contracts people have returned to claim land with communities springing up in their wake.

Papari is one of the communities taking advantage of clearings, roads and basic infrastructure such as sawn logs left behind after no less than three logging companies had worked the area.

Normally we'd avoid such a destination like the plague but found ourselves here to bring supplies and catch up with Darren, soon to arrive for a short break from Honiara. His onsite friend also from Australia is funded to be here for 12 months to observe the effects that two Anglican churches are having on the communities. There are two churches of the same denomination, one from America the other Australia and barely 50m apart. The rivalry between congregations is visible even though they themselves deny it.

The North West monsoon arrived not long after us producing squally winds, regular thunderstorms and impressive near continuous rain for weeks. It was during this time Darren arrived with his young son Xavier determined not to let a little weather get between them and some fishing. Even long after Darren had left the weather remained patchy, Radio Australia issued warnings of deepening lows and cyclones - the season had now begun in earnest.

### **5.3.2 *Leleghia Village***

**Wiikirri – January 2009:** Eventually, our anchor set at the GPS coordinates provided by our friend Darren from Honiara, we sat back to admire our new surrounds. Enchanting dense jungle overhung meandering hidden beaches that disappeared around the bay, no villages could be seen in fact no evidence of human activity whatsoever. Where were the canoes that had been arranged to come out and welcome us to Papari? Something was wrong and we could feel it.

The sun was dipping the horizon when a distant motor canoe speeding past abruptly banked, eventually coming alongside in a bow wave wall of white water. Its occupants of three young men scanned the area nervously with fear in their eyes and urgency in their voice. "What are you doing here? You must leave this place. Only devils and crocodiles here. You must leave. Go now!"

Before speeding off however they felt they had just enough time to ask us if we had any spare cigarettes.

The GPS coordinates we were given had brought us to San Jorge Island, an island inhabited by Devils, rich in sorcery, swimming with crocodiles and 20 miles short of our eventual destination at Papari Village. Was it the work of Devils that lead us here? There was just enough time to sail across to the main island of Isabel and re-anchor out from Leleghia Village where the depth was a consistent 10 feet in every direction for hundreds of meters.

Ashore we asked to be taken to the chief's house to request approval to anchor. Villagers led us to the chief's house alright but nobody was home, indeed the chief had been away for some weeks. The locals were confused as to why we should want to see the chief's house and not the chief, a poignant reminder in the art of island communication for us. Other elders we met were only too happy for us to visit and even happier to accept the Barracuda we gave them.

A considerable amount of drumming came from Leleghia, so much so that we asked passing canoes what was happening. This wild energetic drumming was permitted only from New Year's till number 6 - number 6 being the 6th day of January. This allowed the misfits of the village to express themselves and like a tag team as one drummer burnt out another took over the drumming nonstop 24/7.

An Isabel Province thing - so choose your anchorages wisely if you value your slumber. Isabel Province is dominated by Santa Isabel, Solomon's largest island at 200km long and 30 km wide. Logging is a major activity, the island is rich in minerals but commercial mining is just beginning. Fishing and copra production are supplemented by coffee growing, cattle and harvesting Trocchus shell and Beche-de-mer. Foreign visitors are few and far between.

#### **5.4 Arnavon Islands**

##### **5.4.1 Kerehikapa Island (Marine Reserve)**

**Field Trip - March 16, 2017:** GPS 07 27.38S 158 01.59E

We made it to Kerehikapa island, and had a great trip (from Marovo). We had a lot of current against us, so it took us 12 hour hours to go 64NM, but it was worth the effort. We were fortunate and landed 5 fish, with the sixth fish getting away with our lure.

We checked into the ranger station here upon arrival and gave them a freshly caught tuna. They were happy, and showed us around the station. We will explore more this afternoon after school. Two nights ago they had a baby turtle hatch on the beach...so we will see if we can witness this tonight.

Mokisha – May 2013: OMG! Turtles galore – the best experience ever. The conservatory has 8 rangers who work one month on & one month off. Dixon, Victor, Lionel & Arthur were the 4 on duty when we arrived. They record, protect and help the hatchlings to sea. Once the mother lays the eggs, they count the eggs (if they find the nest within 24 hrs.), install a heavy duty wire on top the nest & label the nest with data. Natural predators for the eggs are the Megapode birds who will dig up the eggs and eat them.

We were lucky enough to witness a nest of turtles that were ready to come out of their nest & head for the sea. The turtles were so cute – I wanted to keep one. Only 10 out of a 100 will make it. As the turtles hit the water, a small black tip reef shark was waiting to dine on whatever little turtle he could find. It made me want to swim out there & get rid of that shark myself!

Our nest had 131 babies in it. Dixon & Lionel said it was a pretty big nest. The march to the sea for these little guys took about 15 minutes. None of them strayed from their path to the sea. Their compass was on automatic as they headed straight for the water. They will always come back to this island & the females will always lay their eggs on this beach. It was an amazing sight & one we'll never forget.

The other absolutely wonderful thing we did was snorkel the reserve's reef. It was a great snorkel in warm, clear water. The giant clams are wide open & you can actually see into the clam. Usually you only see the hole on the top of the clam. There was also a quite a bit of jelly fish. Thankfully, I had my dive-skin on but I got some good shots of those too. We also did a drift dive with our friends on Reflections. The weather had not been so good so the water wasn't all that clear but still, we enjoyed the dive. The only thing is, we didn't see any turtles!

We were there 3 days & enjoyed every bit of our time there. The guys don't get much variation in their diet so the last night I whipped up a pot of good ole American pasta & garlic bread. At the end of the meal it was all gone. They are all super guys and we learned so much from them. So thank you Dixon, Victor, Lionel & Arthur!!

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** Kerekikpa Island at Arnavon (Manning Strait), a new marine conservation area under full time ranger care, is making progress with turtles and giant clam repopulation.

The excellent coral free anchorage is sheltered from the trades so you can enjoy the escorted overnight walks along miles of beach to discover turtles laying their eggs.

The daily anchorage fee contributes to a good cause as this is a model project, supported by Nature Conservancy, to encourage sustainable harvesting.

#### ***5.4.2 Sikopo Island (Marine Reserve, No Anchoring Without Ranger Permission)***

Field Trip - March 21, 2017: GPS 07 26.31S 157 58.41E

We moved to a new island and anchorage yesterday. It is still part of the same marine reserve. Normally yachts are not allowed to anchor here, but if you get special permission from the rangers, and pay our anchoring fee (100SB) in advance, you can come up here. It is a beautiful spot. The biggest issues are crocs and mosquitoes. The rangers told us 'not' to swim here as there are many crocs. So, we spent the afternoon exploring by dinghy. We are being picked up today by the rangers to go and visit an island that is a nesting area for megapode birds.

## **6 Russell Islands**

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The Russells are a convenient stopover en route to Western Province. However, good anchorages are not as numerous as one might think from a first glance at the chart – most bays are deep and/or encumbered with coral. Pre-independence, the Russells were effectively owned and managed by Lever Brothers, as a vast plantation, employing 2000 or more people. Yandina was a western-style company town. The plantation then became a joint private/govt enterprise, but all activity ceased about seven years ago – on the one hand there is an ongoing dispute over pay and conditions, and on the other the main installations were burned down. As a result of this, there is some social discontent.

### ***6.1 Offshore Islands on North Side of Pavuvu Island***

#### ***6.1.1 Mbakui Island***

Sieling - Pg 242. Anchorage 08-58.0 S / 159 11.0 E

**Screensaver – August 2018 – Mbakui Island** (northern string of islands): 08 58.48 S / 159 10.98 E Anchor in 7m sand, 3G Telekom.

**Screensaver – October 2017 – Mbakui Island:** 10m, Sand, 2G. This spot is one of the nicest spots we have had in Solomon's. Why? No one lives on the island only a couple of fisherman

come and go, the water is lovely and clear, the sand is white and goes from the boat to the beach with no fringing reef in between.

Once you cross a small reef, you're inside pretty much 10m of sand with odd low level coral crops to gaze at from your transom and watch the fish swim by.

The water was pretty much like a swimming pool without the chlorine or kids.

The clams had not been raided and the fish, well at least 1 big odd looking guy got my attention

It's a great little spot, probably not ideal in strong southerly winds. It has little wind protection, but I doubt you would get much sea action.

Ken managed to trade cigarettes (which he buys for trading only) for crayfish without any problem, I think he traded 1 packet bought in Indo for \$2.00 au for 10 !! crayfish.

## **6.2 Northern Bays of Pavuvvu Island**

### **6.2.1 Pipisala Bay**

**Screensaver – October 2017 – Pipisala Bay:** 27m, Sand, No Cell. We had been told by a few people not to go here and there are some warnings on Noonsite as well, but it is a logical stopover location. If you are traveling in either North or South the Russell group is positioned such that you don't have to do an overnigher. I did the western side pretty much last time, and this time we did the NE corner.

Again we got all seasons weather thrown at us on the passage from Mbili, from a nice 12-14 knots breeze to start with at an angle that suited our course, through to gale force on the nose for the last 3 – 4 hours. I decided to punch my way through it and left Watusi behind, so that at least one of us would have an anchorage and be able to offer some guidance to the other, as it was shaping up to be a late entry. The spot I had picked out was at the NE corner of the bay, but at 40+ meters, that wasn't going to work. Eventually I found 27m in the SW corner and as luck would have it the locals told us just as well you anchored here as that guy over where you first tried to anchor, wants to charge you.... and these guys didn't ask us for anything.

### **6.2.2 Kilimolent Bay / Kekeghen Bay**

Sieling Pg 248-249

**Aurora Star – December 2013:** Anchored at 09 02.175 S / 159 06.481 E

### **6.2.3 Nggee Bay**

Sieling Pg 248-249

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** We came screaming into Nggee Bay in the late afternoon, hoping to find an easy anchorage at Sielings "12 meter" spot. We found a place in that bay that came up significantly—from 125 ft to 65 ft, and this is probably what Sieling anchored on. However, there was a mooring buoy right at that spot. We looked inshore a little bit, off the little beach, but it was 95 ft then 2 ft. No swinging room. So we crept down the east side of the bay,

looking for a coral knot we could anchor on that was not too corally, and not too close to the reef along the shore.

We finally dropped anchor at 09-02.547 S / 159-05.150 E in about 50 ft, of “smooth coral” (it was pretty grumbly on anchoring, but we had no problems with stuck chain in the morning). The wind was blowing right up the bay, so we were hanging parallel to the shore. It seemed we were on a direct line between the two villages... one at the mouth on the west bank and one just ahead of us on the east bank. There was a fairly steady flow of canoes in the evening hours, of course everyone altering course a little bit to look at us. But no one bothered us—just stares, and some smiles and waves. We locked up tight and weren’t aware of any problems in the night.

**Screensaver – September 2018 – Nukifero:** 09 03.10 S / 159 05.22 E Anchor in 15m mud rock, No cell. Really this was just a stop to take a bit off the next day. It took us sailing in next to no wind about 5 hours to travel less than 15nm. As we arrived the Navy was there and it looked like they were having a picnic day out and just to justify their existence they called me asking a bunch of typical questions. Having answered those they asked about the “other boat” that didn’t answer their radio and I simply said they are with me, and that was that.

Last time I was here was around 2011 and I rafted up to a friend’s boat, who clearly must have anchored in about 30+m, something I wasn’t keen to do. Having wandered around the edges there is not a lot of choice in spite of what the chart suggests and plenty of rocky things just waiting to grab your anchor. Of course if that is not enough throw in a few crocs just for good measure. However “Murphy” must have been on holidays and cut us break so all was good.

Skedaddle travels slower and allows more time so for tomorrow’s 62nm leap to Morovo Lagoon, they decided to leave around 2:00am. Cecilie is pretty much sailing solo now as the captain stays in bed and keeps off his feet in the name of recovery. So as I poked my head out the hatch around 2:30am as heavy rain came through there was Skedaddle heading out in the pissing rain, no dodger to hide under, easing out in the dead of night. As I crawled back to my nice warm dry bed Cecilie had my sympathy, not a nice way to start a long day on your own.

### **6.3 Sunlight Channel**

#### **6.3.1 Tillotson Cove**

Sieling – Pg 244: Anchorage at 09 04.02 S / 159 11.43 E in mud or coral in 6-11m.

#### **6.3.2 Hoi Island**

Sieling – Pg 246

#### **6.3.3 Linggattu Cove**

Sieling – Pg 246

## **6.4 East Side of Pavuvu Island**

### **6.4.1 Faila Island**

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** We checked out a couple of spots on the way down to Yandina. One on Faila Island west side. It amazes me sometimes where some people anchor. I'm not sure why anyone would stop on a point, on a sand bar unless you had to. So that island got a miss, there were other places better to stop.

### **6.4.2 Lolohan Island**

**Sieling – Pg 236-237:** Anchorage 09-06.8 S / 159-21.3 E 18m, coral and sand. Shelves steeply. Best in SE conditions.

### **6.4.3 Yandina (Groceries, Airport)**

Sieling – Pg 242: Anchorage is just past the center of town near a group of piles. Pass beyond the copra wharves and township to anchor NNW of a small row of old pilings, where the bottom comes up to 18m. Being just south of midchannel keeps a vessel clear of mozzies and provides some breeze. The copra smell is not so bad here as well.

Lucas – Pg 162-163

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** 1<sup>st</sup> Anchorage: 09-04.68 S / 159-12.84 E in about 20 ft, just on edge of shelf. The depth goes from 90 ft to 12 ft in a boatlength, and some massive very shallow coral heads dot the shallow water, so there's no swinging room in the shallow water.

We came in mid-afternoon and went in to approx where Sieling says to anchor, just off a big pier. We had John Ruka with us from Roderick Bay, and we were trying to make contact with John's nephew who works for the Yandina Police. John and Dave went ashore and located Albert, who suggested that we move our boat to right off the Police Station, where they could keep a close eye on us. There is a shoal ridge there that they assured us we could anchor on.

So we moved out to the mouth of the bay and anchored in 35 ft in mixed coral and sand. Were usually hanging in 50-90 ft. I snorkeled the ridge and it was fairly extensive. You could probably fit more than one boat on this ridge. If the wind is south of east, you are just behind the point. There is some tidal current in the bay, so when the wind drops, you may hang backwards to the wind.

2<sup>nd</sup> Anchorage: 09-04.51 S / 159-13.355 E in about 35 ft.

I had an "E" signal on my phone the whole time we were there, and occasionally something would get through, but we had no usable internet for the 3 days we were there. Phone and SMS worked OK, though.

We did not look for groceries, having recently come from Honiara and Roderick Bay. There seemed to be a market going on on Saturday near the outermost (main) pier.

The "company" that Sieling mentions is long gone, and this seemed to be a very sad little town.

While here, we snorkeled and then scuba-dived the main pier. Lots of years-old debris, including an old tractor, some bullets, and a more recent fishing boat upside down perpendicular to the east end of the pier. We also found some WWII vintage coke bottles in the debris. We forgot to ask about crocs of the locals, and we didn't see any thankfully.

We also hired the services of an outboard motorboat to take us around to various World War II sites. Arnold at the Police Station hooked us up with a local guy who was familiar with what their was to see (plus John Ruka had been here before with another cruising yacht looking at the same stuff). If you are a WWII buff, it would be interesting. For anyone else, it would be pretty boring.

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 09 04.63 S / 159 12.87 E 28m sand/mud, 3G if ya lucky. In the end we headed to Yandina thinking it would be bigger than it really was, with hopes of getting some more supplies. As Screensaver was fast becoming a dry boat I was getting desperate for some alcohol as all I had left was top shelf stuff. Some of the other minor basics were also getting low like milk, flour, neither of which we could get. I coughed up for an expensive carton of beer figuring it had to be cheaper than drinking JW Blue, or 30 year old Chivas and we found some eggs.

Only two market days a week, and the little street side stalls had nothing of interest. In all if you missed this place..... you missed nothing.

## **6.5 South Side of Pavuvu Island**

### **6.5.1 Lolohan Island**

Sieling – Pg 236-237 Anchorage at 09 06.8 S / 159 21.3 E in 18m with steep slope Good in SE.

### **6.5.2 Sau Island**

**Soggy Paws – June 2019:** WE visited this spot in an outboard motorboat, and it was surprisingly protected from the 15-20 kts of SE winds, and no swell. The little village has a nice looking beach, and looked peaceful.

**Adina – July 2015 – Sau Island (South Side of Pavuvu):** Anchorage: 09 06.542S / 159 07.490E 25m soft mud.

This is a very poor small island but with friendly welcoming people. Anything you give will be gratefully received - there is not even a school. Good trading. Anchorage is at a river mouth and you may drag very slowly through the mud - just need to re-anchor. Well sheltered. Crocodiles up in the river.

### **6.5.3 Harold Point**

**Bosun Bird – 2010 – Harold Point:** We initially attempted to anchor W of Alakon island (in the S of the group). Alakon is uninhabited and there is ostensibly reasonable shelter off its NW corner. The bottom was sand, but obstructed by large coral heads; although we were able to place the anchor in sand, we were not confident of remaining clear of the coral, and moved on. This would however be a pleasant day anchorage prior to making an overnight passage to

Western Province. Water visibility was excellent and there was a pod of friendly dolphins in evidence.

We then tried an anchorage north between tiny Tuul island and the big island of Pavuvu, about two miles west of the southern entrance to Sera Me Ohol (Sunlight) Channel. There was a small village on Pavuvu and huge logs on shore were evidence that this was once a log-loading ramp. However, the water was deep (20m plus), there was a W-going current of about 2 kts and the bottom looked to be very uneven, perhaps encumbered with waterlogged timber and/or industrial equipment. We decided again to pass. Fishermen in this vicinity were engaged in fishing for sharks, with very long unbuoyed net systems (2kms or more). A local boat warned us and asked us to make a long detour to avoid his nets.

We finally found secure anchorage in the southern end of the west arm of Sera Me Ohol (Sunlight) Channel, west of Hoi island, at 09°06.914S, 159°08.835E, 13m in sand and coral. There is a bommie with only 2m of water over it, about 100m north of here; C-Map seemed to be spot-on. Good visibility but there are crocs in the vicinity and locals warned us that last year two people had been eaten in the eastern Russells. One or two canoes passed, on their way from a village on Hoi island (not visible) to their gardens on Pavuvu. They were friendly, with good veggies to trade. Leaving the Russells, a canoe paddled out to intercept us from Taina Island. They were keen to trade and had another good selection of vegetables.

## **6.6 Mborokua Island (17nm W of Russells)**

Sieling Pg 248

**Gaia – 2014:** On the west coast of this island is a dive boat mooring. Gaia, great diving along here. Liveaboard mooring, plus small dive boat moorings. Tie to shore as well as mooring, or you'll drift away.

*Ed Note 2019: Someone who used to work on the Bilikiki Dive Boat told me they only ever used that anchorage mooring as a daytime stop only. When the diving was done, they'd take off east or west to another place.*

# **7 Guadalcanal Province**

## **7.1 Guadalcanal West Side**

### **7.1.1 Laovavasa (NW Tip)**

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** I had hoped we would find shelter behind the reef here, but we looked for a good spot in the heavy winds we had and could not find anything suitable.

### **7.1.2 Kole Point (NW Side)**

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 09 24.42 S / 159 36.34 E 5m sand, 2g just. We left the east side of Russell Islands with an open mind, figuring we would either end up in the Florida Islands (i.e. East) or on Guadalcanal (SSE) which ever gave the best sailing line. As soon as we got clear of the Russel group, conditions were pretty bad with 30 plus knot wind gusts and short sharp

seas. I very nearly turned back, but the weather forecast such as it was showed no sign of this, or anything changing.

Screensaver punched into more than I would like falling heavily on the next wave. There is a contour line along our route with 1200-1300m on one side and 500 to 800m on the other side. So effectively there was a 500-600m mountain beneath us. The ridge was right on our course, and while I tried running off, I would have had to go along way off course to avoid it. In the end we punched our way through it and got to Laovavasa where I had hoped we would find shelter behind the reef. But it wasn't to be and after 30 min I decided enough was enough.

About 10 nm around the western side of Guadalcanal was Kole point and a deep bay. While it was taking us further away from Honiara, I was pretty sure I would at least be able to drink my expensive beer in the calm of a nice bay. Of course having made that call and got going, the wind began to drop, and while I did get my beer and a swim in a very nice sandy bay it was possibly unnecessary. This was also the first place I got asked to pay to anchor. I just played dumb and ignored it, but the guy who approached Ken on Watusi was a little more direct. Neither of us have paid or typically do pay unless there is some service or mooring.

## **7.2 Marau Sound (Tavanipupu)**

**Escape II – Early 2020 - Tavanipupu Resort:** Anchorage: strong current on entry, sand 8M 9-49.634 / 160-56.192.

Joe, the yacht guide from the village will probably come out to help you find a good anchor spot. He will ask you to sign his log book, he will want to trade.

We found him to be very greedy. We had a disagreement the following day and left. He agreed to keep an eye on our boat while we went for a meal at the resort that first evening and we had stuff stolen. It is possible to anchor on the other side of the reef.

The resort is beautiful with lots of history but a bit run down. We had a meal there, it was very good and good value. Gus and Brian Kaumae (Dive Guide) friendly and helpful.

**Berzerker – June 2019 –Theft Warning:** We had engine troubles, and so had tacked onto anchor near the resort after an exhausting overnight beat south against the wind from the Florida Group. We were locked up tight against possible intruders, except for the main cabin hatch (nearly over our head) which had our wind scoop hanging in it. A thief in a canoe managed to get aboard without us hearing him, come down through the hatch, and steal a cell phone and tablet from our nav station (almost right next to where we were sleeping). We woke up when he was in our cockpit and chased him off with a spotlight, not realizing he'd already been inside and made off with a few of our precious electronics. With no dinghy in the water, we couldn't chase after him (and wouldn't have anyway, not knowing at the time that he'd already been inside and stolen stuff).

We did report this to the local police and the resort, but never recovered our stuff.

As the internet connection was so bad here (we could only sometimes get Whatsapp messages), we had a friend who was in Honiara change passwords on a few of our critical (email and Amazon) accounts.

**Indigo II – May 2019:** We anchored at 09 49.636'S 160 51.184'E in 3m sand

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 09-49.68 S / 160-51.18 E Anchor in front of the small village just below the resort. The resort and village are both friendly. It is a tight little anchorage, but we anchored in the center and swung around with no problems.

**Iolea - May 2017:** Beautiful area home to the two Joe's and two Gus's. The Joe's traded citrus, beans and stories for flour, soap, and clothes. The two Gus's run the Tavanipupu resort. We snorkelled off the resort and saw a devil scorpion fish that looked exactly like the dead coral around it, and the most amazing scarlet-orange anemone with two Spinecheek anemone fish.

**Tantalus – 2013:** Tavanipupu Resort was very welcoming, and a classy place.

Anchorage on the west side of Marau Sound, past Graham Point, was not good. We were pestered by locals for items to be allowed to anchor.

**Carina - June 2012:** From Santa Ana, we traveled along the north coast of Makira Island towards Marau Sound and Tavanipupu.

Tavanipupu Island sits almost exactly in the geographic middle of Marau Sound. We arrived at the “cormorant” entrance to the sound at midday, but high thin clouds obscured visibility through the water, forcing us to creep in slowly with a bow watch.

The anchorage at Tavanipupu sits between these islands in a tiny, deep circular pool, forcing most boats to anchor in deep water and to tie off to a tree on shore (this requires permission.)

We instead **anchored** in the narrow channel on the bar of the pass, in thick sand at: 09°49.789 S, 160°51.121 E. We stayed in this location for four days and thankfully came no closer than a half a boat length from the reef.

We were visited by Joseph, son of Justin, the chief of the village immediately onshore on Marau Island. Joseph came with the chief's yacht guest book. The following day, we landed our dinghy at the site of the original resort and walked to the new resort on the opposite side of the island. Paul is manager here and Pam is the owner. A lovely walking path circles the island and lunch was fabulous (250 SBD for two lunches with desert and one SolBrew), though the Wi-Fi was slow.

**Shango – Oct 2012:** After a peaceful night of motoring under a sky full of stars we arrived in Marau Sound, at the southeastern tip of Guadalcanal Island, anchoring in a little basin just southeast of a tiny Island called Tavanipupu. Tavanipupu is the home to one of the most well regarded lodges in the Solomons. It has been open for many years, surviving the “tensions” and still drawing guests from around the world. Their most notable guests of late were Prince William and his bride, Kate who visited in August.

Sadly there were no guests in residence the day we arrived so there would be no dinner served. We had a wander around then headed back to the boat. Because there was no dinner on tap and because we wanted to leave in the dark for our trip to Honiara in the morning we decided to move to a more straightforward anchorage around the corner, about one mile from the lodge. It was a quick trip and we ended the day in the cockpit with our sundowners. Joining us for the sunset was our first Solomon Islands crocodile. At first I thought it was something

floating in the water but upon inspection with the binoculars we discovered it was distinctly alive. It made a very slow semicircle past the stern about twenty five yards away. It took the entire cocktail hour for it to make a half moon around the back of the boat. It felt as though we were really somewhere quite exotic.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** At the east end of Guadalcanal is a complex area of small islands and channels known as Marau Sound, protected by an outer barrier reef. We entered through the SE entrance, which is marked on its western edge by a metal post (indeterminate colour); several other beacons mark a route northwards from here to Tavanipupu Island (the most popular anchorage), with red beacons to be left to port. The range markers which used to indicate the preferred line through the SE entrance are long gone.

We were not as impressed by the small pool east of the Tavanipupu resort as many people seemed to be. Space is very limited, meaning a stern-tie is necessary, to one side of the pool or the other; but the current can run at up to two knots through the pool, which can make tying up difficult; and the wind can blow strongly through the wide gap to the north, leaving you beam-on. Furthermore, the resort manager told us that there would be a fee of SD250 (USD \$30) for tying up – payable to the resort if “their” trees are used, or to villagers on the other side if theirs are used. Villagers later told us that they do NOT charge. But given all these difficulties we chose to go around to the N of Tavanipupu Island instead, and anchored in sand and coral on a 15m shelf at 9°49.343S, 160°51.334E.

Notwithstanding the fee requested, the resort management are reasonably friendly and, provided one asks in advance, will let you use WiFi (free) in the bar area. They will only serve drinks and meals if there are other guests in residence. We had an excellent lunch, including one beer each, for SD125 each. The resort is very beautiful and tranquil, with a fifteen minute walking track around its perimeter.

In an enclosure at the end of the main jetty are three hawksbill turtles – which would otherwise have gone in the islanders' cooking pots.

There is a small village opposite the resort. The Chief, Justin and his son, Joe, are friendly and keen that you sign their logbook. They will also let you know which areas are taboo for snorkelling. Trading is possible and there is a weekly market on the "mainland" at Conflict Bay (near the airport; about three miles away). Relations between the villagers and the resort management are not hostile, but we did sense some mutual unease. The resort management advised us to remain on board the boat at night and Justin confirmed that there had been cases of thefts from boats.

There was considerable trouble in this area in the "Tension" (1999-2003); the inhabitants of Marau Sound are of Malaitan descent and there was serious conflict, leading to several deaths, with natives of Guadalcanal Island. During this period the resort was closed down (but not sacked/destroyed as others were).

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** Our visit to Marau Sound rewarded us with a **calm** and private anchorage at the cul-de-sac at the southeast corner of Malapa Bay half a mile east of the immaculate Tavanipupu Island Resort -- our favourite. It's small and low-key. The setting

is classic and tasteful South Pacific motif. Art, collected by the owners, includes an interesting collection of wood carvings from African and Pacific island nations.

Alternative anchorages in close proximity offer either village life or total isolation depending upon your mood. With a relatively fast tender the Sound's environs offer a wide choice of day trips in sheltered waters flanked by sandy cays (like Gizo) and a few villages

### **7.3 Honiara (Port of Entry)**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage: 8M sand 09-25.689 159-56.760 In front of IBS Monarch Hotel, pull dinghy up on the stoney beach, go to reception and ask them if it's OK. We found them friendly, with nice meals, and security.

You can leave the dinghy in the man-made harbour at The Coral Sea Hoel. Ask permission, have a coffee and a meal, friendly. Can also leave dinghy at The Breakwater Café at the man-made harbour by the Point Cruz Yacht Club. Go and speak to Fred Douglas, the owner, an expat who is very helpful. They have good meals and coffee.

Can also pick up mooring or anchor outside the yacht club, and tie your dinghy to their wharf. But the harbor was congested and no moorings were available when we were there.

Locals to use as Dive Guides to travel with you on your boat:

John Pimo: 749 0862

Francis: 747 6718

See Fred Douglas at The Breakwater Café for other recommendations. 749 5415

**Soggy Paws – May/June 2019:** We made 3 visits to Honiara, spending a total of about 7 nights there. The first visit, we anchored off the Coral Seas Resort in Tropical Soul's spot (08-25.66 S / 159-56.80 E). At the time the wind was blowing from the west, and this anchorage became quite roilly in the afternoons, when the wind would pick up and swing to onshore (due to the mountains of Guadalcanal). Note, this happens at the Yacht Club too—even though the harbor looks protected from the SE trades, the afternoon winds can make the entire coast a roilly hell for a few hours every afternoon.

The resort seemed friendly and welcoming. There is a protected place to leave your dinghy (a shallow basin with a rock outer wall). The tides made it challenging getting in and out of the dinghy, and a stern anchor is required, but it was safe to leave the dinghy there. The workers at the waterside bar/restaurant were very friendly, and we made sure to ask permission to leave our dinghy there, and to have drinks and the occasional meal there. (too many yachties making free with the facilities would soon make yachties not welcome, so don't screw it up for the rest of us, please!)

Once or twice a week the resort has a local entertainment group come in after dinner for a performance, but rather than seeing local culture, this seemed to be imitating Hawaiian hula, not Solomon Island dancing.

Conveniently, there is a BPM ATM at the resort near the front desk. We picked up a tourist map at the front desk also. There are a few trash barrels near the gate to road, where you can deposit your small bags of rubbish.

**Getting around:** The resort makes the taxi drivers remove their (magnetic) taxi signs when they come in the parking lot, so you won't see any obvious taxis lined up in the parking area. However if you ask around in the lounging area, there may be one or two taxi drivers hanging out there. Regardless, it was usually easy to flag a taxi on the street. Taxi fare to within the main part of Honiara was \$10 SD, and some of them are air conditioned. Alternatively, there are shared ride vans going back and forth down the main drag that should cost \$3 SD pp. The ones that say "Central Market" go to the big open market about a mile SW of the Yacht Club/Harbor. These stop on the way by near the Yacht Club and near the port facilities.

It's also not a terrible dinghy ride from the resort anchorage to the Point Cruz Yacht Club in the inner harbor. There is now a dinghy dock there—it is high off the water, but there is (currently) at least one ladder to climb up (don't block the ladder with your dinghy, please). The YC dinghy dock is closer to the downtown area and so convenient for all your restocking activities.

**Reprovisioning:** Besides the main market, there are a million "Chinese" stores where you can buy the basics, but we shopped mostly in the "Bulk Store". There are now apparently more than one of The Bulk Store in Honiara, but we did most of our shopping at the one within walking distance of the Yacht Club. This store had LOTS of first world name brand products (mostly Australian-sourced at Australian prices), cheeses, AND veggies that are hard to find in the Solomons—real potatoes, onions, cabbage, carrots, and celery (sometimes).

**Sullivans/Numbawan Meats.** There is a Sullivans right across from the Bulk Store, but we didn't ask there about Duty Free Liquor. There is another Sullivans down in the Port area where it IS possible to buy duty free liquor, even if you aren't checking out right away. The duty free liquor is all top-shelf stuff and I believe only comes in case lots (some as small as cases of 6). But you can buy single bottles of a variety of wine and liquor at non-duty free prices, too. To get the liquor duty free, you have to put in your order and supply some boat paperwork, and it takes a couple of days for them to process your paperwork and finalize your order (we never did this, so I don't know if it can be expedited). Ask at the desk in the Sullivan's at the port for their Duty Free pricing sheet, it's several pages long. You MAY be able to email in an order and your paperwork ahead of time, and have it ready for pickup when you arrive. (Honiara in general is a terrible anchorage, so I guarantee that you will be itching to leave as soon as you arrive).

We ended up never staying in Honiara long enough to put in an order and wait for it. They had some boxed wine from Australia when we first arrived (at \$275 SD per 4-liter box). This was not on the duty-free list, and wasn't a great bargain, but it's the easiest to transport and store aboard. We bought all they had (about 4 boxes of each flavor), and they didn't have any more when we came back 10 days later. Beer wasn't a bargain at Sullivans, but just around the corner (at the port) was another "bulk" store that had SolBrew at reasonable prices per case (about \$50 SD cheaper than Sullivans!).

For meat and frozen goods, Numbawan Meat (a part of Sullivan's) was the place. They had first world meat products at first world prices, plus bags of a variety of frozen veggies. They will deliver to the Yacht Club if you buy a lot, but it is not a long walk back to the YC if you are buying just a few items. Numbawan Meat is right next to the Sullivan's liquor store at the port.

**Hardware items:** The best all around hardware store close in to town is ITA Hardware across the street from Hyundai Mall. (Hyundai Mall is just before the main Central Market). In Hyundai Mall there is a high quality solar place where you could find solar panels, circuit breakers, good quality wire, MPPT charge controllers, and batteries.

Another hardware store close to the YC is Bowmans. We bought some bottom paint there. They are at the port, past Sullivans, past Customs, all the way at the end of the road (the container storage has almost taken over Bowmans).

When we were looking for specific things, people kept referring us to Island Enterprises and Bishop Brothers out in the Renandi area, well east of downtown. You can taxi for \$50 SD or take the King George 6 shared van for \$3-4 SD per person. We got a new fitting put on our hydraulic hose for the watermaker by Bishop Brothers. There are a couple of other similar businesses out in the Renandi area.

**For Propane/Cooking Gas:** Just inland from the Yacht Club is a gas bottle exchange place. A block west on the main drag is an appliance store that sells gas appliances, and here we asked if they could fill our Asian tank. They could not, but were helpful in supplying a Solomon's gas setup so we could buy and use local gas. Other boats were able to get their more common tanks filled, with a one-day turnaround.

**Diesel & Gasoline:** Small quantities of fuel can be jugged from the gas station on the main road just inland from the yacht club. The yacht club has a sturdy hand truck that you may be able to borrow to facilitate transportation, or walk your jugs up and taxi them back. Both diesel and gasoline were about \$10 SD per liter at the gas station. For larger quantities of fuel, and the possibility of duty free prices, you can pull into a dock at the port to fill up from a fuel truck. You must arrange this ahead of time and schedule a time. The fuel pier is at the very far (west) end of all the piers at the port. It is a bit scruffy, so make sure you have good fenders. We inquired if we could anchor our boat close to the fuel pier and do the fueling in jugs, and as long as we were buying a minimum quantity of 200L, it could be done (but we decided we could wait til Noro, where the fueling facility is much better). Set up an appointment for the fuel dock at the Markworth's office (somewhere near Sullivan's at the Port—where the huge fuel storage tanks are). It is best to plan fueling at the port as early in the morning as possible, as the sea gets rough along the coast in the afternoons due to the sea breeze. If you are jugging, best to plan for high tide, as the lift down to the dinghy at the Yacht Club dock is a long way at low tide. Duty free diesel was quoted to us at around \$6.90 SD per liter, so there is quite a savings if you want to go thru the hassle and paperwork of buying it duty-free at the port. Again, minimum quantity is 200L. I don't know if you could do it in jugs WITHOUT bringing your boat around (ie hire a van for an hour to transport all your jugs).

**Pet Supplies:** Sullivans at the port (the liquor store) had Cat Food, Dog Food, and Kitty Litter.

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 08-25.66 S / 159-56.80 E We preferred to anchor in front of the Coral Sea Resort Casino. 8m good holding. There is a small rock breakwater to tie the dinghy behind. Friendly place. You can get a local bus out front into town, or walk the 1.5km.

**Screensaver – July 2018:** Anchor in 18m, churned mud, 4G. The trip up from Rya Sura was great--a bit of wind, that got a bit bigger and a lot of current going my way for two or three hours saw me doing 8 and 9 knots with minimal sail up and 3G internet was a bonus. It's worth noting that even if you have a 4G phone and in rangchoisele you must ask for it specifically to be enabled on 4G.

There are a couple of **moorings** in Honiara which cost around \$100SBD/day. Only one of which I would trust at any level run by the dive shop there. It's just a bit more exposed to an already roly exposed anchorage, so I personally chose to anchor.

Anchoring anywhere there has been a lot of anchoring in past means that the bottom is all churned up and soft or loose, so there is a good chance you will drag, or at the very least move a fair bit as your anchor burrows down. In my opinion, this place rates as one of the worst anchorages for a port or harbour. It is typically very uncomfortable. We got our timing right for being here and with the exception of about 7 hours, our 7 days was quite tolerable for a change.

Predominately the only reason you come here is to check in/out or get supplies. I was last here around October 2017 and after some 10 months and I'm pleased to report the alcohol I bought here then (excluding beer), will still be enough to get me through possibly till this Christmas.

For the next 2000nm the chances of getting half reasonable meat red or white will be significantly reduced, so I have placed a large order with Sullivans whom typically supply quite reasonable meat and if you're lucky, at wholesale prices. Unfortunately I got a little carried away and the 19kg of assorted meat I bought did not fit in the freezer. So as a result I have now I made a huge sacrifice and lost my drink fridge, now it too is full and now a freezer. Here's the contact info for Sullivans:

Nambawan Meat LTD

P.O. Box 3, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Email: [shipping@sullivans.com.sb](mailto:shipping@sullivans.com.sb)

Phone:

So a whiz around the shops getting everything one can, because this is the biggest place for the next 2000nm and a beer at the end of each day saw it fly past pretty quick.

The **Vilu War Museum** has been something I have been going to do for some time and the guys of Sanuk were going so I got to tag along. It's a good 1 hour cab ride and don't expect the driver to actually know where it is or for there to be a sign you can't miss.

If you turn up unannounced, then you will wake the caretaker up. There are Museums and there are those with plenty of land who collect old cars, aeroplanes, gold rush memorabilia and place them neatly around. Stefan had higher expectations and yea I would not call it a museum, either.

We declined the guide, figuring we would have a look first. As it turned out the caretaker/guide/curator was very knowledgeable about what was there, from where it came, what happened etc. In hind sight we probably should have had her accompany us and I believe the experience would have been better.

If you go as a part of a bus tour, all the signs around the various items are placed around. But given its outside they don't stay there so these were not there when we went.

I guess I thought the Americans or other Pacific countries might have thrown a bit of money at this given the significance, but clearly they haven't, and Solomon's don't have funds.

**Field Trip – 2017:** Honiara was in the end a pleasant surprise (given all the bad reviews by others), and we still find ourselves missing the buzz and provisioning of Honiara. It was easy to get around, everything we needed could be found and the people were very nice. Maybe we were lucky, but I would like to think that taking these a few simple security steps kept us out of trouble, as it did with most of the other boats we met along the way staying in these same places with no problems or issues.

**Michael Foote (Noonsite) – 2017 – Clearing In:** There was no customs charge here, but we had to pay about £200 for quarantine who didn't even visit the boat. If you're only staying in the islands for a short time, you may be able to negotiate a lower charge.

The Point Cruz Yacht Club in Honiara were incredibly helpful and allowed us free use of showers, toilets, even chilled our white wine and provided ice as our fridge and freezer had packed in. A large jug of beer is a very reasonable £5.00. Be careful when landing on the beach there as there are numerous rusting tins and broken beer bottles, no one seems interested in clearing it up.

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 15m mud/sand, 3G/4G good internet. Today was a complete reverse of yesterday, with clear skies and less than 6 knots of wind.

We caught a nice mackerel on the way around the top of Guadalcanal.

I never have liked Honiara as an anchorage and that view was only reinforced this time around. It is roly, and exposed, and there are often too many boats there and generally gets a squall through when you want to have sun downers. My advice is to make it as short a stop as possible.

All that said it was kind of nice to head to the bar and have a beer, have decent internet and do a bit of shopping. I had some bits coming from the US delivered here, and finally got a manual for my gearbox thanks to Noel at Liapari.

We did all the usual boring stuff, restocking what foods we could find, mainly at the Bulk shop, and a couple of small supermarkets.

Last time I was here I bought a decent amount of alcohol duty free from Sullivan's, a wholesaler for duty free alcohol and they also have a meat import section. I was keen to see how much pricing had changed because so far Solomon's prices have tended to match Ozy prices in many areas.

I am pleased to say Johnny Walker Red 1125ml was \$148 SD (\$24.23AU) and a 1L Vodka Smirnoff was \$92 SD (\$15.06 AU), so that really wasn't too bad compared to Ozy. However they wanted a week's notice for duty free, and I really didn't want to hang around here any longer than necessary. The cheapest carton of beer was \$258 SD ( \$42,24au), which is considerably less than the \$350 SD I paid at the outer Islands.

You can buy duty free fuel at Markwarth Oil if you book in advance. It was \$1.21au at the pump on the street and we paid \$0.91au at Markwarth's. I had thought they would want proof of our departure so given we had to return for the alcohol and meat we decided to leave it all till our return in a week or so.

We bought a few more lures, but given my record all be it its improving, I probably still would have been better off to buy the fish.

**Shango – Oct 2012:** We arrived in Honiara at midday. I had been dreading this anchorage since I knew we'd be stopping here. It is a small anchorage inside the arms of a reef that doesn't quite close enough to provide protection. The holding is awful and the wind seems to come up every afternoon, blowing directly into the anchorage. Your best bet if you want to keep from dragging is to drop your anchor in front of a rip rap wall and row two lines ashore (really long lines) to tie yourself in place. Needless to say this is a huge pain in the "neck". While we were implementing this arrangement a British boat arrived after an eleven day trip from Cairns. They were happy to tie up under any circumstances. After an hour we were at least nominally secure.

It was too late in the day to tackle Customs & Immigration so we locked everything securely on deck and went below.

The second unpleasant thing about Honiara is dinghy dock. Sadly there isn't one. This is not a problem if you have a clever, tiny, twenty pound inflatable with a two horse engine. Then you simply carry it up the beach, out of the range of the breaking waves. If you have a dinghy of any size your life is a misery in Honiara. The Point Cruz Yacht Club goes out of its way to be helpful to yachties, but a useful dinghy dock has not reached the top of their priority list just yet.

After making the circuitous rounds of Customs and Immigration we headed to the Papua New Guinea High Commission to get our PNG entry visa process underway. We understood that it would take five business days to acquire these beauties, but we were lucky because Barak Obama came to our rescue. In the High Commission office we bumped into the Visa Officer as he was going out the door. He's the fellow who probably goes out to lunch with local officials and generally gets to dodge the more mundane aspects of the office bureaucracy. He asked us where we were from and was pleased that we wanted to visit his country. What were our thoughts on President Obama? The Visa Officer was a longtime supporter and when he discovered that we too were fans he said that he would have our entry visas ready in 24 hours. Would George W have accomplished this for us?? I think not. We left the office with our fingers crossed.

In the a.m. we arranged for a tour of the local World War II battlefields for the following morning. We went to the Land Office, Map division and found that they close at noon on Friday

so no Morovo Lagoon chart for us. After lunch at a tiny Japanese restaurant called Norio's we went to the Hotel Mendana to get some more internet time and to wait for an appropriate afternoon hour to go check on our PNG visas. I left to scope out Wings, the "best" local supermarket while Roger tapped away on his computer.

Upon my return Roger said "our visas are ready". He explained that he had run into the friendly visa officer who was leaving the Hotel's restaurant and heading to Brisbane for the weekend. Sure enough when we arrived at the High Commission the woman behind the glass window turned over our passports with our very own PNG entry visas inside. In an ideal world we could have fled Honiara then and there. Unfortunately we still had to take our battlefield tour and do some provisioning which had to wait till Monday. We stopped at the Yacht Club and hefted two cold Solbrews in Obama's honor before returning to the boat.

Nelson from the Visitor's Bureau picked us up in front of the Yacht Club at 9:00 am and we headed off on our battlefield tour. Roger was up on all the high spots having read a variety of books on the Pacific War and Guadalcanal in particular. I had managed to finish *Lonely Vigil* by Walter Lord, which chronicled the work of the "coast watchers" of the Solomon Islanders, but I was a little foggy on some of the finer battlefield points. Among our stops were the American and Japanese memorials, Mount Austin, several ridges including Edson's, Henderson Field and Red Beach. As we stood in the heat it wasn't difficult to imagine the misery of these battles.

Nelson was a good guide and what he lacked in military knowledge he made up for in information about the "tensions" and other recent Island issues. The tensions, which caused extensive bloodshed ten years ago, were triggered by, among other things, the cultural differences between the neighboring Malaitan Islanders and the Guadalcanal Islanders. The people of Guadalcanal found the Malaitans to be aggressive and felt they were taking many of the jobs in Guadalcanal which rightfully belonged to the Guadalcanal people. Although the fighting has been over for some years it doesn't seem that the cultural differences have been bridged.

After our tour Nelson dropped us off at a "locals" lunch spot which we had asked him to recommend. We had a nice lunch and a good visit with Mary, the restaurateur, who was a very successful Malaitan. Both friendly and helpful, Mary was a big fan of the U.S. and would love to visit one day.

We found it interesting that while the Guadalcanal people complain about the "aggressive" Malaitans, the Malaitans complain about the "aggressive" Chinese in neighboring Chinatown. It was an educational day.

The next day was diesel fuel day. Amazingly the gas station in front of the Yacht Club was open on Sunday so we spent several hours lugging jerry jugs of fuel. It was a grueling job in the blazing sun and breaking waves.

Today was a good one on several counts. Not only did we finish our provisioning and find a chart of the Morovo Lagoon at the Maps Office but the Malaitan ferry, Bokoi I, which had dropped its anchor over ours the day after we arrived, departed in the afternoon. It was now quite likely that we'd be able to leave on Tuesday morning. Sweet.

**Carina – June 2012:** Arriving at Honiara’s sorry port at dawn, friends dinghied out to help us nuzzle our way into the crowded basin. We had no serious incidents while there, despite an overflow of boats anchored and Med-moored helter-skelter to riprap along the harbor’s eastern shore.

At the time of this writing, a new pier for commercial fishing vessels is under construction, which will further diminish the space for anchoring in this tiny harbor.

Thieves are active in the harbor so it is advisable to lock everything even if venturing off for a few minutes. Lock even your jerry cans and remove from view all tempting items such as shoes, gaffs or fishing poles.

**Checking in:** this is the first port of entry when coming from the east with a full complement of officials—and it proved to be expensive. Customs levied a “lights” charge of a staggering \$1,330 SBD for tiny 8-ton, 10m Carina. Immigration charged a \$300 SBD clearance fee (and stamped our two passports with a 90-day visa). Quarantine demanded an additional \$150 SBD and gave us a “Payment Advice” in lieu of a receipt (though it was stamped). The total for check-in fees amounted to about \$260 USD.

(Extending our two visas for an additional 30-day period later cost us \$70 SBD for each visa. Visas may be extended to a maximum of six months during any given year.)

NOTE: Some yachts negotiated lower Customs fees despite being significantly larger-sized vessels; others, like ourselves, paid in full.

Interestingly, when we checked out of the Solomon Islands, the Customs official in Gizo commented that he thought the lights fee was excessive and would deter visiting yachts who would, in his opinion, have a positive effect on the economy. He said he had passed his opinion along to his superiors and recommended the fees be reduced for pleasure vessels.

The open-air, semi-ratty, but friendly Point Cruz Yacht Club is the center of activity here, though its sad little beach—where dinghies land and can be safely left— almost washed away in a flood of mucky, disgusting, garbage-filled storm drainage water with each passing squall. Ask any of the ex-pats who hang out here for advice on such matters as medical care; they know their way around and are happy to help. There is an active youth sailing school. As a visiting yachtie, your membership is free.

Go right at Mendaña Ave at the YC to find the Visitors Bureau for a guide with map and then proceed further to the Post Office and Telekom where you can buy a dongle for 3G Wi-Fi (\$250 SBD for 500 MB) or a SIM chip (\$50 SBD).

ATMs can be found at Westpac, ANZ and BSP, though charges at the BSP are most modest.

Wings, across the street from the YC, is the big grocer, but also visit Aus-Mart (one block in, also across the street) and both Bulk Shops (one near Aus-Mart and one at the public market). Panatina Plaza out of town (take the KG6 bus for \$3 SBD) has a great deli for American products (and the only place to buy cat food) and on Fridays receives a delivery of fresh basil.

In this same little mall is Cruz Communications that handles ICOM radios. At Discount, further east of Panatina, there is a Punjas store with good prices on flour, peanuts, wash soap and it

offers Indian style roti for sale. Chinatown is full of shopping opportunities. The massive public market is open five-and-a-half days per week and is on Mendaña Ave. roughly four blocks east of the YC. Bring your own plastic bags and watch for pickpockets.

There's also a great selection of baskets and shell money sold here.

Meat can be obtained from Meatlovers across from the Pacific Casino Hotel (same KG6 bus) or from Nambawan with locations at Point Cruz and the Public Market.

Duty-free alcohol is available from Sullivan's on Point Cruz (next door to Nambawan meat and kitty-corner across the street from Customs). They'll give you a form and you place an order and they deliver free to the YC. They will sell you duty-free even if you are not leaving the Solomons immediately, though they will want your next international port of call. (No one asked about duty-free purchases when we checked out of Gizo.)

Propane refills (American tanks okay) is at the Origin gas store, a half block east of the YC on Mendaña Ave.

Antifouling can be purchased from the APCO office at Ranadi business park (Transocean self-polishing, call ahead to confirm stock, \$1,540 SBD for 4L), otherwise cheap hard antifouling can be purchased in any one of dozens of small hardware stores. Bowman's on Point Cruz has some International paint products including varnish.

Our stay in Honiara was like a reunion and our time there went by in a blur of visiting, provisioning and attending the Festival of Pacific Arts. Filling in the entire inner bay—and the yacht club—were the lovely Polynesian catamaran vakas of the Pacific Voyaging group and seemingly hundreds of zippy little island punts. What a festive zoo!

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** A popular stop for yachts heading west to Honiara has traditionally been Vululela Resort/Neal Island.

The resort was burned down during the Tension (and has not reopened) and there had been reports of several yachts recently being robbed at this anchorage, so we passed it by. More positively, the charted lights on the N coast of Guadalcanal (and on Rua Sura island) were all functioning as advertised, allowing for an overnight passage from Marau Sound to Honiara.

Anchoring/mooring options at Honiara are poor, but it is a quasi-obligatory stop for the completion of customs and immigration formalities. Point Cruz is a small promontory jutting out from the E-W-running shoreline. The commercial and ferry docks lie to its E, and the usual anchorage for yachts (in the SE season, at least) to its W. Another reef further to the W, however, restricts the space for anchoring while giving little shelter from westerly swells and winds, none at all from the NW. A red and a green buoy indicate the entrance channel to the bay.

There is sometimes one yellow mooring buoy available for use by visitors (inquire at the Yacht Club, at the head of the bay re payment); this and a couple of other private moorings occupy most of the available space and mean that swinging free at anchor is not an option. Instead most yachts are obliged to tie stern-to, to the wall on the E side of the bay, which is formed by concrete wave-breaking structures. It is necessary to leave sufficient space for vessels coming in and out from the Police jetty in the SE corner of the bay (off-limits to all except police boats).

There is usually space for five or six yachts tied in this way, with the anchor in 15 to 20m, two stern lines ashore.

Landing is best at the Point Cruz YC, at the head of the bay. The dinghy can be left here in reasonable security, though local members of the YC advise that it is best to return to your boat (wherever it may be moored) before dark. A neighbouring yacht was broken into in broad daylight, in the mid-afternoon, when its owners inadvertently left one porthole open.

The YC is open for drinks and meals every day and there are frequent social events; the meals are reasonably priced but of only average quality. Once you have introduced yourself to the security guard on the gate you will be free to come and go at will.

First stop for arrivals from the E will be **Customs**, located in the dock complex behind where the yachts tie up. They will likely wish to board the vessel; we were subjected to a short and politely-conducted search. Customs will then either arrange for **Immigration** and **Agriculture** to come down to the YC to complete formalities or give you directions for finding their offices. Both are about ten minutes' walk away. We were not asked how long we had already been in the country.

Honiara is dirty, typically very hot and not very attractive, but the shopping is reasonable. Duty-free alcohol is easily available from Sullivan's, close to the Customs Office. You make out your order, they give you a form to have stamped at the Revenue Office, and you return to pick up the items just before your planned departure (allow for weekend working hours when making arrangements).

The **banks** (several with ATMs) are five minutes' walk to the east, long queues on pay-day (Fri pm).

The **Post Office** is ten minutes to the west. There is an internet cafe at the Post Office.

**Diesel and gasoline** can be obtained at the gas station just behind the YC.

On the street behind the Post office (i.e. to the S) is the Ministry of Lands. On the ground floor is a separate office with the sign "Maps". Here you can obtain a number of relevant BA charts, plus some key locally-produced charts, notably SI07, of Marovo Lagoon (SD 150). If the office is down to its last BA chart, they will copy it for you (full-size, but b&w).

There is a small **museum** on Mendana Avenue but even the keenest culture-vulture may find it difficult to enthuse about it. There are a number of collapsing "kastom" houses in a garden, and one room with miscellaneous items that look not to have been renewed or dusted in thirty years. Entry is however free and the museum shop contains a surprisingly good collection of reasonably-priced carvings. A visit may be useful if only to give you an idea of how much such items (which will be encountered in Western Province) should fetch. There is also a good shop in the Mendana Hotel, adjoining the YC.

In the hills behind Honiara (45 mins walk or a minibus ride – frequent service) is an impressive US war memorial, with full details of all the major battles fought around here in WW2.

If you get tired of YC food, the Lime Lounge is an excellent alternative for light meals. Turn left out of the YC, down the main street for three or four mins, left again. It is painted a bright lime colour and very popular with expats.

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** Cruisers' opinions about Honiara range from 'rolly', 'dusty', 'history interesting', 'history poorly preserved' to 'little charm'.

However unanimous opinion regards the Point Cruz Yacht Club as well above expectations: a genteel island in a steamy jungle town. While the club is clean, modern and excellent for conversation the anchorage leaves much to be desired.

You either moor stern-to at a rip-rap peninsula, or anchor amongst local fishing and trade boats on a sandy shelf all but wide open to northern quarter winds. It's often crowded during the cruising season and the deep water makes a stern anchor a tenuous proposition.

Victualling at Honiara is convenient and the choice pretty the good -- but forget about the wine and cheese you savored at Port Vila. No French influence here. Sol Brew beer is as good as it gets. The farmer's market is a necessary pilgrimage to savour local ambiance and a good assortment of produce. Vendors and patrons alike conduct business bathed in searing tropic sun or tepid showers, on a grass and mud plot adjacent to a coral rubble beach. Produce lies in neat piles on hand woven mats at your feet. It's often wrapped in leaves or sold in baskets woven from palm fronds. The horrible plastic sacks which litter the earth are sold individually for 20c Solomon and up -- a good trend toward conservation. Even the plethora of betel (Areca) nut dealers package their lime and seeds into environmentally friendly leaf sacks, secured with a coconut fibre tie or lanyard to hang about one's neck for ready access; but the outcome, mixed with saliva and regurgitated by men and women of every age, is something we'd rather forget.

This market serves as an excellent introduction to what you'll often encounter, albeit on a smaller scale, when cruising the other Solomon islands.

#### **7.4 Bonegi Beach**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage: 12M sand, next to Bonegi 1 wreck. Pay fees ashore.

#### **7.5 Visale Village**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage in 22M sand at 09-15.082 S / 159-40.759 E could anchor shallower, but we arrived quite late in the day and didn't have time and light to fully check out the options. This is opposite the village. This is a wreck site of Japanese 1-1 submarine, which starts on the reef at 5m.

Anchor fee \$100Sd, \$50Sd per diver. Go ashore for diving information, friendly village.

#### **7.6 Tambea Resort**

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** The resort was burned down during The Tension. There are, however, still people living in this bay at the west end of Guadalcanal, including, apparently, the elderly former owner of the resort. There is a road to Honiara.

Approach should be from the north, giving appropriate clearance to Mary Shoal (to the E) and Paul Shoal (W). Steer for a prominent white-painted concrete block (a Japanese war memorial) on the black sand beach.

We **anchored** at 09-15.835 S / 159-39.858 E, in 10m, sand. Shelter is adequate in normal conditions, except from strong winds/swell with a northerly component. We only had one visitor, an annoying child who tried to persuade us to give him 100SD for anchoring. Later we were told that there is a sunken Japanese submarine in 20m of water, somewhere in this vicinity.

### **7.7 Rua Sura (Rya Sura) Island**

This island is a tiny island off the east coast of Guadalcanal.

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage in 15M at 09-30.076 / 160-36.096 Just a few fisherman here.

**Tropical Soul – 2019:** 09-30.10 S / 160-36.21 E This is a fair stopover coming up or down Guadalcanal. The anchorage is 20m but an OK anchorage.

**Adina – July 2015:** 09 30.034S / 160 36.343E 17m, sand and coral, no village  
Small quiet place, pretty, snorkelling, white beach. Just a few copra workers.

## **8 Florida Islands and Savo**

### **8.1 Nggela Islands**

#### **8.1.1 Uru Point**

**Screensaver – Oct 2017:** 22m, sand/coral, 2G/3G.

We set off from Honiara early (for me) and had the line and wind to sail... so we were off.

Sandfly Passage had a bit of current against us, but not too bad and we explored behind a few Islands before settling for the night. I liked the next little bay better than where we stopped, but we went with Kim's choice this time.

One needs to have some patience and tolerance for the constant stream of canoes. Some can be pretty persistent while others are very nice, but either way in the end part of being out here along with the culture is peace and quiet and being able to do what you want, when you want.

Chatting to a local he tells a story of the Telekom tower on Mkobonimbeti (Sand Fly Island) and explains how Telekom came and asked the land owners about putting a tower on their mountain to which they all agreed and contract was signed by all.

Three years later the land owners are said to have seen nothing and are fighting with Telekom in court to try and get what the contract agreed. Not long after the first stage of this battle. Telekom changed gate keys stopping land owners getting to their land, and then the land owners blocked Telekom from crossing their land to get up the mountain. So now Telekom fly in by Helicopter.... and the battle goes on. Sadly this is not an isolated case. We have heard this story many times in regards to mining and also logging. It would be interesting to hear the

other side of course and one can bet the story is different. I in fact sent the above text to a Telekom contact looking for their version, but as you might expect, no response.

We got some welcome rain to help top up our water supplies. It seems there are two rainy seasons here and it is said we are entering the second one, however from our prospective coming from PNG its getting dryer and we are seeing less rain, so who knows.

**Aita Pe'ape'a – October 2012 (From Noonsite):** The Roderick Bay yacht club, in Sandfly passage, is being resurrected. The inaugural week-long yacht festival around July 2012 received great reviews. It is more a “village stay”, but moorings have been established by the village and yachts are welcomed and reliable all-night security will be provided by the village. It's a complete all-weather anchorage. Like everywhere in the Nggelas, setting anchor informally overnight or longer in any seemingly nice place is a far riskier prospect, and invites exorbitant compensation claims or worse. But Roderick Bay is OK. Just pull up and go see the village next to the World Discover wreck. For more info check out this blog at <http://www.sailblogs.com/member/lovesongadventures/?xiMsgID=233989>

The Nggelas are situated about 25 NM across Iron Bottom Sounds from Honiara, looking north. Buena Vista is almost directly on a north-south axis with Honiara (take a 7 degree heading from Point Cruz) and is about 32 NM from Honiara.

### **8.1.2 Roderick Bay**

**SV Tequila – June 2023 - Solomon's Rodrick Bay Hideaway:** We had a great welcome by John Ruka and family at Rodrick Bay Hideaway, Ngella Sule, Solomon Islands (just 29 nm from Honiara).

As you turn into Rodrick Bay they are in the first village on the right, way before the MS World Discoverer wreck (9°0'58" S 160°7'26" E ). If you enter slowly someone will come out in a canoe to greet you. Many who have passed this way will also remember his lovely wife Lillian who sadly died two years ago.

John has a mooring just off his village which he offers for free (very strong, set by a yachtie, held our 12 tonne boat in 16knts no problem). He also invites cruisers into his village to share meals, walk to his amazing lookouts, enjoy the reef and learn all about life in the Solomon's. This was a wonderful experience. We are encouraging him to ask for contributions to his various projects ... he suffered lots of damage in a recent cyclone and is building it all up again. At the moment he is working hard to get solar panels and a solar water pump.

You can contact him on:

John Ruka +667 7107423 Facebook: Roderick Bay Hideaway

Messenger: Ismael Pou (John Ruka's son)

**Soggy Paws – May/June 2019:** We broke loose the outer mooring at Roderick Bay, so got a good look at the entire composition of the mooring arrangement.

Mooring composition: Small ball with small line to the down-line, which has a loop with a bowline knot in the top. The downline is 1" 3-strand polypropylene. This goes down to a splice,

which is 2 loops spliced together. At the bottom of the lower line is a spliced eye with a galvanized thimble. Attached to that is a 5/8" D-shackled, which connects the line to a 15 ft length of 10mm (3/8") G3 chain. This chain is in a loop connected at the end with a stainless steel 5/16" shackle. The loop of chain goes around a coral head. When we were there, we actually broke the coral head off and came adrift. Fortunately it was in the middle of the day with everyone around, and we had no issues with our boat.

Like Tropical Soul, we came for a few days and stayed 3 weeks. We were 3 boats together and had a nice time with John and family. There is slow but usable cell signal in the bay (better out toward the passage—sometimes we'd run out in the dinghy to get a better signal).

We wanted to see the rest of the Florida Group—especially the World War II sites, but were scared of the raskals and having to pay everywhere we went. So we hired John Ruka and his friend Willy to escort us around. We took John and Will aboard (we fed them, and they slept in the cockpit, to keep a lookout at night). The other boat took friends from the 3<sup>rd</sup> boat aboard, and we circled Nggela Sulu clockwise. We stopped at the Watering Hole and anchored overnight next to a half sunk ship. The next day we visited several spots including a sunk Japanese ship, and several bases. We anchored near the seaplane base the 2<sup>nd</sup> night, and in the middle of the night, John and Willy saw someone trying to climb aboard our friend's boat, but shined a spotlight on them and they went away. John's presence didn't do away with payments here and there to be able to stop and see, but he negotiated reasonable fees.

We did a mid-day stop at Makambe Island (which Willy owns) off Tulagi town, and dinghied in to the resort for lunch, and a walking tour of Tulagi under John's guidance, then late afternoon sailed back to Roderick Bay. It was a fast and fun tour of all of Tulagi with no raskols to bother us.

**Tropical Soul – Jan 2018:** 09-00.97 S / 160-07.38 E We came for a couple of days and stayed for 5 weeks! This is a small village with chief John. He is a very good guy with a nice family. Has 3 free moorings with ropes renewed in mid-2018. You can also anchor. It is 1 ½ hours by boat to Tulagi. John is a very good boat handler and will go with you for security.

**Screensaver – August 2018:** 09 01.34 S / 160 07.42 E Anchor in 19m sand, Telekom 3g.

Setting off from Honiara is always good because you know the next anchorage will be better. Today I left early and attempted to sail in 5 knots of wind. Not really going very far at this blistering pace I went below did a bit more internet work, slowly Screensaver began to lean and oh we are picking up some wind. Over the course of the next 3 or so hours it continued to climb and as Screensaver reached 10 knots (SOG) and I left Sanuk behind in my wake--it was clearly past time to reef. Peaking at 35 knots I was glad it was only a short distance and had a great sail across, anchoring in my usual spot just off the wreck.

The expectation of anchoring fee's and gifts is climbing. Sanuk did a few simple things for these guys and then as they were leaving someone was sent out asking for anchoring fees, Stefan wasn't impressed and wasn't paying.

There are two Johns there one John Ruka with the mooring in the bay before the wreck and another John in the back with the wreck. A little rivalry exists along with some different stories.

I made it clear I had been here many times before, done things and given things here, and I would not be paying any anchorage fee. He said yes I remember, its ok.

Skedaddle got the sympathy vote as Jeremy's leg gets worse and Cecilie runs around trying to be all things to all people as the local witch doctor cast down on his leg natural bush medicine. But in all seriousness, John Ruka who has the mooring and has some yacht experience was very good and kind to Skedaddle.

Watusi gave John Ruka his old generator and I should have realized that this would come back and bite me. Anyway a few beers and hours later I finally got it to run so John was happy.

**Field Trip – January 2017:** GPS 09 00.97S 160 07.41E We are still in Roderick Bay. We have had great weather, and a good time with the locals here. We fixed three of the four moorings, and Johnny is very happy. You MUST inspect the moorings to be sure you are safe and secure. The mooring lines appear OK, but be careful. Anchoring is also an option.

There is very fast 3G here as well, which makes this a great place to get caught up with family and friends while relaxing outside of the Honiara hustle.

**Adina – July 2015:** 09 00.953S / 160 07.363E Mooring buoys

This is a 'Must Stop' place mainly for the reason that Jonny and his family love having yachts to stay. They have four mooring buoys, but be warned these are just tied to coral blocks. 21 tonne Adina was fine in winds up to 16 knots. Jonny will move you into the mangroves if there are strong winds forecast.

From here you can take a private boat to Honiara and bypass the risk of security issues of staying there. Fresh water and laundry available from Jonny's family. Ask to do a meal with Jonny and his family and ask the boys to play their pipes. A great place to linger a while.

**Carina – August 2012 (SSCA Commodore's Bulletin):** A couple of days after the 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts closed in Honiara, we untangled ourselves from its crazy riprap Med moor, with lines criss-crossing everywhere, and set out on what seemed to be a calm, sunny day.

GRIB files showed 8kn from the ESE and we were only going 29 miles, so we didn't worry too much about sailing slowly. Motoring out of the harbor and then almost due north on flat seas and with calm winds towards Nggela Sule ("GAY la SUE la") Island, we pointed Carina's bow to its north end at Sandfly Passage, off of which lies Roderick Bay, our destination. A few miles out—perhaps out of Guadalcanal's wind shadow—winds suddenly increased to 20+kn so we shut down the engine and close-reached at a consistent 6.5kn under triple-reefed main and about half of our 120% genoa. The wind came with short-period, 2.5m beam-to waves that built very quickly in Iron Bottom Sound.

The passage was a bit like a carnival ride and we hung on and enjoyed it as Bud, our Monitor windvane, steered most of the way across. Our crossing went very quickly—so much for worrying about a slow crossing—until we entered Sandfly Passage when a strong opposing current slowed our progress as we battled "nosierly" katabatic gusts that varied from 10-37kn! Luckily, we only had to motor into the wind and current for less than five miles before we turned the corner into Roderick Bay where four sailboats were at anchor or moored—Tribute, Kalalau, Stella and Love Song.

We were quickly hailed by Love Song, already anchored, who told us that there was a mooring available that was recently abandoned by a catamaran; a mooring they'd used during previous visits and onto which they had installed a new top-rope. Lucky for us! A dugout canoe even came out from shore with sons of the local clan chief to assist us. We liked this place already! We were very surprised when David and Robert (our helpers) asked us "Is Carina coming?" We said, "We ARE Carina," and they whooped and shook our hands. Apparently our coming had been foretold to the Ruka clan by Tenacious, Jubilee, and Love Song (last year, earlier this year and just recently!). We felt very welcome and at home.

We also expected 3 other boats to join the armada, which would make eight boats in all. All of us were here to participate in the first annual Roderick Bay Hideaway Yacht Festival.

Once settled, we realized we were a wee bit whipped from the crossing, so we planned to stay at home and tidy up. Soon, clan chief John Ruka visited us in his dugout canoe to introduce himself and his family and his corner of this lovely bay. Little did we know we'd spend 11 days at Roderick Bay and that our stay would be eventful; more on this later.

The following day we went ashore in our dink, and motored slowly towards the beach near the beautifully carved, painted and varnished Roderick Bay Hideaway sign. Children and adults ran along the paths paralleling the bay as we approached and landed, and they all pitched in to help pull the dinghy up and to tie her to the old growth branch above on the shaded coral sand beach. John, the chief who had visited us the previous afternoon, introduced us to his wife, Lillian, and seemingly dozens of sons, brothers, nephews and grandchildren, who were milling about. We were quickly enveloped in their warmth, toured the village commons, walked through their neatly tended hibiscus-arch-covered pathway and well-tended gardens of bananas, betel nut and flowers. Above us flew brilliant parrots and enormous butterflies. Of particular note were the two guest huts under construction and the elaborate circular arena of sand, surrounded by benches under roofs of sago palm and decorated with wisps of palm.

This was the stage that was set for the forthcoming festival and we could tell that the villagers (with the help of Jubilee, Tenacious and Love Song) had spent a lot of time preparing and were indeed fully prepared to present a cultural festival. Later we settled on John and Lillian's raised porch, barefoot, while we helped the village's young girls to make necklaces of flowers and bright tropical leaves to be given to guests of the festival, i.e., we yachties, a couple of resort guests, and some dignitaries.

The following day, word came from the beach that we were to wait until the signal was given that the village was ready before coming ashore. Most of the fleet crowded into Stella's cockpit and sipped coffee, tea and nibbled sweet biscuits. Finally, hailed to come, we piled in our dinghies for the very short trip ashore and were greeted by "warriors" dressed only in tapa loin cloths and with their richly colored skin decorated in patterns made from bright white lime (calcium), a paint derived from coral. The paramount chief of the surrounding region, Ben, was dressed similarly.

Armed with clubs and shields, the whooping warriors charged us as we landed on the beach, while the chief stood back and watched. Smiling warmly, Ben stepped forward and explained that the Nggela warriors were asking if we came as enemies or friends. "Friends!" we

exclaimed. Ben smiled and said that to secure our pact, we must come forward and touch his staff to confirm our commitment to friendship and then we could enter the village. Passing Ben (and of course touching his staff) we were directed to an arch where young women in kastom dress adorned us with necklaces of flowers and leaves. (These looked familiar.) The girls then offered us fresh drinking coconuts decorated with hibiscus flowers and presented with earth-friendly bamboo straws.

After escorting our group to the pavilion and ensuring we were seated in the shade, Ben marched in followed by the local women awash in shell money, grass skirts and pandanus leaf bras, and then by the local boys of the pan pipe band. Sipping fresh coconut juice, our group was treated to welcome speeches, a blessing, singing, dancing and then a concert by the local boys and their pan pipes. A lunch of local food - bananas, watermelon, kumala and yams - artfully presented on woven palm plates, led next to a relaxing and enjoyable village and garden tour.

The Ruka clan village at Roderick Bay stretches along the western shore of the small bay on a narrow strip of flat land below Susupu Hill (named for a local soup) and is composed of sago palm raised floor homes with porches. Homes are small and simple but are comfortable and dry even during torrential rains. (Interestingly, sleeping mats are protected by mosquito nets provided by the government in their aggressive, and mostly successful, malaria eradication program.) Walking the path, worn into the sandy soil by the bare feet of generations, we came upon a strange looking thing—a rag, cut in thirds and strung between two posts on a small line. Peter, a cousin of the clan chief John Ruka, explained that this is an ancient symbol used to indicate to those who may not read or write that it is tabu (“TAM boo”) to enter this plot. It is essentially the symbolic equivalent of a “no trespassing” sign.

The plots thus labeled were the areas used to grow economically valuable crops: betel nuts and copra on Nggela Island. We paused on our tour at the betel nut grove and a young boy used a loop of cloth to crab his way up the tall thin green trunk to dislodge betel nuts that rained down to the earth at our feet. The brave amongst us (Philip was brave, Leslie was not) stepped up to try the local intoxicant. “Pppppffftth!” Philip exclaimed as he bit into the bitter nut, scrunching his eyes at the astringent taste. Locals quickly stepped up with matchbooks filled with lime (akin to lime used to help balance soil pH) and scooped out a buffering dollop with a snap bean, which only made Philip’s betel turn a bright red. Let’s just say what followed wasn’t pretty...betel nut spit...bright red and voluminous. There seems to be no chance Philip— or any others in our group—will be giving up rum for betel nuts.

Later in the day we were shown how local crafts are made. Shell money is an important commodity here in the Solomon Islands. The people from Malaita Island (“MAH lie TAH”) are known for shell money, but if you ask the Ngella people, the currency originated here. It is still essential for buying a bride.

Buying a bride? Yes, a young man who wants to acquire a bride—even when the bride is quite willing to wed the prospective groom—must obtain and bring to the bride’s family about 75 fathoms of shell money. If we are doing our calculations right, that’s 450’! All that being said, shell money’s value varies by its quality (uniformity, smoothness) and its color, and we cannot begin to understand the subtleties of the value given to a bride as measured in shell money.

When we asked what the bride's family does with the shell money, we were told that it is used for the sons of the family to, in turn, buy brides. In practice, we saw beautiful and numerous strands of shell money on women that had been given to them by their husbands for their wedding. In Nggela, dolphin teeth are also included in artful strands of shell money as, historically, dolphins were part of the diet for the native people.

In addition to a discussion of shell money, we learned how to weave food platters, sleeping mats, baskets, plus the sago palm roof and wall panels used in construction here. As the afternoon wore on we had had the opportunity to shop and purchase carvings, shell money, shells, baskets, crafts, locally grown vegetables and even WWII war relics from villagers from around the entire area, including from villages on Sandfly Island to the north. At this bazaar we spied a lovely Triton Trumpet shell that we fancied for a horn for Carina. It wasn't until the following day, after much deliberation and discussions with those who knew exactly where and how to cut a hole for the mouthpiece, that we obtained our foot-long, perfectly-formed, natural musical instrument. To be honest, we're still learning to produce a clear note.

On day two we received an equally warm and elaborately staged welcome, and were treated to lovely traditional dances and pan pipe performances. Following that was the much anticipated dugout canoe racing, undertaken under conditions of high winds and choppy seas. This was a delightful and hilarious event during which Dinis—an ebullient Azores-Portuguese Canadian immigrant, and pretty soft-spoken Cindy of Distant Shores—took not just one but two dunkings in the sea. Then Allen and Kathy of Love Song—as lithe and fit as any Americans you'll ever meet—struggled vainly to keep up with the older couple, chief John Ruka and Lillian who have seven children, as scores of locals and yachties hooted from the shore. Leslie took a spin with Willy, the chief's nephew, as Philip was feeling a bit under the weather, and she reports that without Willy she'd have dunked too. Keeping these dugouts from overturning requires practice! Perhaps that's why you see kids who can barely hold a paddle, tootling around in their parents' canoe.

After another hearty lunch of island fare and a brief respite, dozens of people huddled around for a dramatic session of storytelling about historic events in the Solomon Islands—warring tribes and head-hunting. The story was ably narrated while the chief and warriors enacted the events, including an impressive demonstration on building a fire without matches and the showing of ancient enemy skulls—normally stored in a kastom house off limits to us outsiders—that were sufficiently disfigured to have suggested that the men suffered from violent deaths.

Later we toured a village kitchen and biki or earth oven, and were shown how traditional puddings of cassava, kumala and yams are prepared for a feast. The rich puddings, some flavored with roasted coconut and ground nuts, were sampled by all. A leisurely afternoon of visiting, plus the viewing and purchasing of crafts and carvings, was followed by yet another session of traditional dancing, singing and pan pipes, this time performed by a group—with women clad in banana leaf tops—from neighboring Sandfly Island. As the sun set, we were treated to the presentation and blessing of our feast, where a squealing live pig was carried in on a pole along with the cooked meat of the feast pig wrapped in palm leaves, plus puddings in gorgeous, elaborately decorated flower and palm leaf vessels. The bountiful food was shared by

scores of visitors and locals alike as darkness fell. Full of food and warmth, we all reluctantly departed the shore for our yachts.

The two-day yacht festival at Roderick Bay was one of the best festivals we attended in our nine years of cruising around the Pacific Ocean. John and Lillian, and their large, extended family organized and implemented a truly-memorable cultural festival and we feel so lucky to have had the chance to experience the rich culture of the Nggela people right in the heart of their village.

After the festival, we stayed at Roderick Bay to take the opportunity to enjoy its peace and organize our existence after months of constant traveling. While there, amongst other activities such as repairing Lillian's sewing machine, jury rigging our outboard's broken shift mechanism, strolling through the lush surroundings and touring by dink the cyclone havens, we began to plan for Philip to travel abroad for medical care since he had been suffering symptoms that were unmistakable.

**Stella - October, 2012 (From Noonsite):** On our recent trip from New Zealand to the Philippines, we had the pleasure of attending the Pacific Arts Festival in Honiara. This was well attended by yachties.

After this festival we went to the first-ever yacht festival held at Roderick Bay in the Florida Islands. Seven other yachts attended from several countries. John the chief and his helpers put something very special together as they danced and sang, cooked for us and shared their traditional way of life with us.

I have heard nothing but bad reports from the Florida Group and yes, most yachts are not safe here. However, John is trying to change this image and offers a very safe and secure place for yachts to travel to in these beautiful islands. He has even put in some moorings. The coral is very much alive and you will be made to feel very welcome here by John and his family.

The festival is going to be an annual event held in July or August.

- Roderick Bay: Bonina Vale ni Vaka Seloga festival, Solomon Islands Ministry of Culture & Tourism, Lilly Tinoni, contact: [lillym\\_tinoni@yahoo.com](mailto:lillym_tinoni@yahoo.com) or Tel:+677 763 7667

### **8.1.3 Maravagi Resort**

**Escape II – 2020:** Mooring ball at 08-57.015 S / 160-03.403 E in 10M. There are 2 moorings in bay, check them before using. (The Bilikiki liveaboard sometimes uses mooring). See John at the resort. Diving the Devils Highway, strong currents, manta rays sometimes.

### **8.1.4 Anuhu / Vatunum Island**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage: SW of Vatunum island, 18M – 09-00.111 S / 160-13.633 E. Some trading with locals.

We were followed out of the anchorage by a Banana boat with 3 men aboard, demanding money. We hadn't been approached by anybody previously. We gave them \$100 SD and they were happy. But they said that they would have asked \$100Sd a day.

### **8.1.5 Siota School/Village**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage: 8M sand 09-03.790 S / 160-18.566 E Friendly see teachers for a tour of the oldest Anglican Missionary school in the Solomon Islands. Johnson was one of the teachers we met.

### **8.1.6 Water Pump, Quoin Point**

**Escape II – 2020:** Anchorage: 4.6M – 09-07.774 S / 160-16.457 E. Chief John, visit the Bat Cave (bit of a climb up a steep hill), can take on water, from the water pump that was left over from the war--ask first.

**Soggy Paws - May 2019 – Day Anchorage: 09° 07.6416' S / 160° 16.8012' E** Wind SE 10-15. John Ruka directed us here to visit the water system and caves at Watering Point. John accompanied us to the village to ask permission. We left one of John's people on board for security while we were hiking (all afternoon).

60-65 ft flat bottom, 3G Telekom. (no data coverage north of here in the passage). Village to ask permission of and get guides from is just SW of here.

After anchoring, we jumped in the dinghy with John Ruka and went to ask permission of the chief here to go into his cave system. We took a good quantity of food gifts (rice, sugar, coffee) and did not have to pay a fee. Chief is a wantok of John's. The chief and several young men guided us into the cave (tough scramble up the hill then wet muddy and dark in the cave). There is also a waterfall near the village somewhere.

## **8.2 Tulagi**

**Pacific Wrecks – 2017:** Tulagi Island is part of the Florida Island Group, north of Iron Bottom Sound and Guadalcanal. Tulagi Harbor is the anchorage to the east and Macambo Island. Japanese called the location "Tsuragi".

**History:** The British colonial government was based here prior to WWII, fleeing before the Japanese arrived. A small number of Japanese worked on Tulagi prior to the war, in Marine industries. There was a strong suspicion of Japanese "yellow peril" leading up to the war and what the Japanese were doing in the mandated islands so the British watched them fairly closely. A coast watcher, Gordon Train (married to Vera Atkinson) stayed behind on Tulagi and was lost on a flight to the Shortland Island, to warn of the imminent invasion.

The Japanese 3rd Kure Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF) landed on Tulagi to establish a seaplane base there (on the adjacent islands of Gavutu and Tanambogo) without resistance on May 3, 1942 and garrisoned it, and established a seaplane base at nearby Gavutu (also referred to as Tulagi Seaplane base) in the area.

There was a prewar seaplane base used by RAAF and British. Occupied by the Japanese, liberated by Marines.

American missions against Tulagi: May 4 - August 7, 1942

Liberated as the first phase of the Guadalcanal campaign, by the US Marine Corps on August 7, 1942 meeting fierce resistance from the Japanese defenders. By nightfall of the following day, Tulagi was declared secure, but for several days, individual Japanese and small groups continued to be flushed from hiding places and hunted down by patrolling Marines.

Three U.S. Cemeteries were established on Tulagi: USN & USMC Cemetery #1 (White Beach), USN & USMC Cemetery #2 (Police Barracks) and USN & USMC Cemetery #3 (Chinese Barracks). Later, these graves were exhumed and transported to American Cemetery Guadalcanal.

**Today:** After the war, the colonial government moved to Honiara to utilize the infrastructure left by American forces. Tulagi became a quite provincial capital. The facilities left in the area by the US Navy are still used to this day, with pontoons and overhaul areas on the island still used for small craft.

**Rehua - February 2017** Anchored in front of Raiders Hotel. Probably the most protected anchorage in the entire area and the diving here is amazing. Our favourite was the Twin Tunnels but we also did some great wreck dives, all organised by Raiders (who also do superbe meals)

**Field Trip – January 2017:** GPS 09 06S 160 09.2E We picked up Sarah in Honiara and are now in Tulagi. We are anchored in about 30m of water off the resort. It has been overall very calm weather, with sunny days and afternoon showers. While hot at times, it is overall good. The biggest issue here is there are crocs in the area, so we have to be careful when swimming. They rarely come over to this side, but at night they have been spotted roaming the waters in the anchorage...so we are VERY careful.

Our plan is to head towards Morovo Lagoon next week...probably on Tuesday when we have some wind. Too hard to tell now if it will be close reaching or reaching, but so far looking good to get rolling NW.

**Mokisha – April 2013:** There is some theft here, be careful. Anchor in front of police station, see chart. We hiked into the hills for caves and WWII stuff, into caves, plane wrecks

Clear water, no dive shops.

You should try the Port Purvis channel passage. SE of Tulagi thru island to Mobili

**Aita Pe'ape'a – October 2012 (From Noonsite):** The Florida Islands, now known locally by their traditional name the Nggelas (pronounced with a silent N), are known for their beautiful cruising grounds and safe all-weather anchorages. Unfortunately in the last decade they are also known for the regular acts of piracy against visiting yachties. Politics and community governance in the Nggelas in general are fragile, and there is no reliable, centralized law and order, but visiting yachts can cruise there safely with a bit of local knowledge.

The Sesape shipyard, in Tulagi harbour, has been undergoing a multi-million dollar refurbishment in recent years, that is now largely complete. It offers international-standard shipyard services, overseen by a NZ shipwright and engineer, including a 500 tonne slip, and a 65 tonne crane and hardstand area. As usual in the Solomons, it is best to confirm pricing in writing before going too far out of your way. Email [kim.hamilton@sisl.com.sb](mailto:kim.hamilton@sisl.com.sb) for further

information. You can anchor in Tulagi harbour safely if you speak to Kim first and follow his advice.

**Sunshine Daydream – August 2011 – Theft in Tulagi!** On 13 and 14 August 2011 while at anchor in Tulagi Harbour and adjacent harbour, my yacht "Sunshine Daydream" was boarded at night and 5 x 20 litre fuel drums were stolen off the deck.

The next morning I reported (the burglary) to the police at Tulagi Harbour township.

That night I was boarded again and someone came inside as I slept and removed a laptop with all my nav programs.

**Noonsite – 2009:** While in the Solomons (arrived 13/10/08 and left 31/03/09) we heard of 16 robberies in the Florida Islands, specifically Tulagi, all with people on board and at night with knives and clubs.

We were robbed at gunpoint, war club, and bush knife in Avi Avi (slipway), near Tulagi, at 0345 in the morning (we were sleeping on deck). A couple of days later the police came out. Were friendly. I gave them my report and they said it had to be on their form (which I then filled out). I asked them if they would send me three copies to the yacht club, but this was never done. I even went to the main police station in Guadalcanal twice (but they) refused to follow up. I heard through the yacht club that they had arrested the four guys. The police let these guys go and still have our things.

In October, Dave and his wife (Koreans on a cat from Australia) were robbed at knifepoint to their throats and had binoculars stolen (later recovered by offering reward). They ended up hiring a local guard.

On December 2nd, Tody from New Zealand arrived in Liapari with a broken motor. I went over to help and was advised the week prior he sailed into Tulagi, anchored off the police station, and that morning, early, he heard people on deck and shouted "who is on my boat". He opened the hatch, a large tall man placed his shoed foot on his hand and threatened to chop it off with a meat cleaver. They had bush knives and war clubs. They knocked all his front teeth out and proceeded to steal everything. He begged them to let him keep his credit card which they did. From his description, (it was) the same four guys who robbed us.

Our friend Frank from Holland was robbed of everything at the Point Cruz yacht club on December 2nd. (The yacht club is a) nice place, nice people, very interesting expatriate community, however poor anchorage, no security and (I suspect) someone is giving inside information for robberies of people anchored and tied to the wall. All robberies here no one was on board. We were told in the beginning to not anchor by the yellow buoy as you will surely get robbed.

Shawn and Lulu from Australia, nice people, they went back to their vessel and approximately 8000 AUS dollars had been stolen (computer, pactor modem, monies, pictures, etc). I mentioned this to a local expatriate and he found out who the thieves were and made arrangements for the people to buy their stuff back for approximately 50 per cent. Needless to say they were fed up, leaving direct for Australia, and would never go back.

Take pictures of every canoe that comes to your boat. Honiara now has a new law...no canoe within 15 feet of a yachtie. Of course, no one cares and not enforced. The week prior to our robbery a man in a canoe went around our vessel at least three times, eying everything on board, no eye contact at all. I should have started taking pictures. Keep your valuables on your person (passport) or take them to the yacht club where they are safe.

**Kuna (From Noonsite) – December 2008 – Armed Boardings at Night:** The Solomon Islands is a fabulous cruising destination.

However for now (Dec 2008) I suggest keeping Tulagi in the Florida group off your itinerary.

Over the past 5 months I've known 6 boats that have been boarded there - including ours, Kuna.

These began as fairly innocent and the villains were easily chased off. However the past three, the skippers told me the villains, (I assume bolstered from their previous successes and apparent little response from Police despite the presence of the multi million dollar Australian led RAMSI: Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands) are much bolder, and have been armed with bush knives and possibly even a gun. The skipper who told me of the gun is a retired US Marine so I figure he knows a gun when he sees one.

Stay away from Tulagi is my advice. This is a shame because the area offers good anchorages, particularly outside of the SE season and there's a ship yard there too.

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** The Florida Group lies a day sail from Honiara across Iron Bottom Sound. There are fine anchorages there in addition to some slipways. I inspected the recently installed 200 ton rail at the historic Taroaniara Shipyard owned by the Church of Melanesia. Sited at the Anglican Mission station on Nggela Sule, the yard features engineering workshops nested in a former coconut plantation surrounded by great scenery of adjacent jungle clad islands. A few local women sold a bit of produce under the shade of a banyan beside a sandy beach handy to land a yacht's tender or dingy.

### **8.3 Buena Vista Island**

**Screensaver – August 2018:** Anchor in 29m sand, 3g. Skedaddle and Screensaver were going to go to dinner here in a nice small local style resort, but Jeremy still has trouble with his leg and gods decided I needed a bath so dumped a heap of water on me, so that wasn't to be.

Next morning I was pulling up the anchor and clearly I have have hooked something as my winch struggles and there is much groaning going on--in 29m of water. I promised my son I would not dive beyond 10m until I had my PADI certification, so that wasn't really an option. Eventually I got it to within 8m and could see I had hooked a very heavy chain.

At a guess I would say it was 12-15mm chain, on the second attempt I manage to get a rope loop around the chain secured to Screensaver to take the weight of the chain, then let anchor down a couple of meters and unhooked it from under the chain. I am lucky I was able to winch it up from the bottom otherwise I would have been in real trouble. I'm guessing it was what used to be the bow line of the yacht that has been there for some years.

So somewhat later than expected I was off to the Russell Islands MBakui

## 9 Malaita Province

### 9.1 Malaita

#### 9.1.1 Lau Lagoon

**Kate Glover (Noonsite) – 2013:** We stayed for two nights in Lau Lagoon, anchored just in front of the village of Gelaulu. The pass into Lau Lagoon was well marked. We came in just before dark, and dropped the hook in the first sandy spot we found at: 8°18.238'S, 160°45.216'E in about 10 feet of water. We used fore and aft anchors to make sure we didn't go dry, but the holding was excellent and we had no problems.

The locals told us you could anchor in deeper water (60-70 feet) in the channel, which might be a better option during low low tide events. There are other places to anchor further in the lagoon, but we'd suggest starting in Gelaulu and talking to Chief Paul Tuita right away.

Also note that, when we stopped here this year (2013), Gelaulu had recently established a **marine conservation area** very near the spot we anchored. They are serious about the conservation area, and there are fines for even passing through it (fines go to a community fund). You'll see a couple of buoys on your left as you enter the lagoon. We set our stern anchor right next to one of them, not realizing what it was. Be sure you do not anchor within the conservation area!

We came to Lau Lagoon to look for dugongs (we saw one, but they are still eating them in the lagoon, so there aren't many of them anymore), but found it was the locals that made the trip worthwhile. They hadn't had a boat there in many years. When we went to shore in the morning to bring a gift to the chief and ask permission to anchor (note, he really likes tea), we were greeted by a really excited village. The old folks were out, tattooed head to toe, with betel-nut stained teeth, and when we pulled out photos from home, everyone gathered around to take a look. A young man, in the category you might think was up to no good, smiled broadly and scurried up a tree to grab us some coconuts.

Later, the chief came out to the boat to "story" with us about the area. We learned a lot. Chief Paul said he'd arranged to have a canoe come paddle around our boat all night for security, but it was too windy out, so he offered to sleep on deck instead. We declined, and said we'd keep a careful watch ourselves instead, but we had no trouble. We did have one visitor in the middle of the night our first night there, before we'd been in to visit the chief, but we think he actually just came to leave us some fish. The chief assured us he'd made sure his village understood daytime visits are okay, but not nighttime. He also chatted with us for a long time about local customs, tabu sites, the artificial islands, troubles in Malaita (from "time befoa" and today), and all sorts of other things. It was all quite interesting, and worth the visit. Note that the chief did lament that men and women wear the same clothes these days—he strongly believes that women should wear skirts or dresses, not pants, so it's not a good spot to push the boundaries.

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** The Lau Lagoon at the northern end of Malaita also has much to recommend it. The 1« mile winding pass is deep and clear but should only be

attempted at low tide as it is poorly staked. Sadly this deters yachts -- we were alone and were told visitors rarely come to this remote corner of the Solomons.

It's worth the trip to view the hand-made islands and Taqua Village women's market nestled in the bush.

Carl hired the Gwou'ulu Village Band Pipers, a youth group, to give a private performance and we were so impressed we offered to sponsor the entire group to visit Honiara on Guadalcanal for next year's Trade Fair. This is a big cultural show held each July which features music, dance and agriculture. It's where the many cultures and ethnic groups merge into celebration and sharing ideas and also where the South Pacific Arts Festival will be held in 1998 -- a worthwhile item on your cruising itinerary.

### **9.1.2 *Bitama Harbour***

**Kate Glover (Noonsite) – 2013:** From Lau Lagoon, we sailed back around to Bitama Harbor. Bitama is an excellent anchorage with protection from any direction. We anchored in two different spots and both were great. The first time, we tucked into the small cove on the right as you head in. The second time, we anchored at the southern head of the bay. A couple of locals did tell us that if you go in too far toward the head of the bay, you'll get to the coral. We were in about 40 feet and did not get tangled on anything. They told us they used to get boats here, but haven't had any in a few years, and they desperately want the boats back.

We anchored just as the school bell rang and had kids full of canoes out at the boat pretty much constantly. But, they were all very polite, and when we told them we needed to do something, they would leave (until a new batch came out). The chief, Derek, told us not to let anyone on the boat, so we told the kids no one was allowed on board, and they didn't push back. Although, as far as we could tell, there are really no security issues here, the chief paddled his canoe around our boat, fishing, most of the first night to be sure we were safe. When we came ashore, he appointed one of his sons to watch the boat for us. We had absolutely no trouble. The whole bay is the same village, and the chief is determined to make sure it's safe for yachts.

In Bitama, there are lots of cultural sites you can see if you stick around for a bit. They have traditionally done a dolphin hunt in the bay—they call dolphins through a traditional kastom, and then kill them. They eat the meat and use the teeth for brideprice. They have just recently worked with a conservation group and agreed to stop the dolphin hunt. Instead, they are going to try to turn live dolphins into tourist dollars and share their kastom with visitors. We met the "last old man," a 109-year old man who is the last man who knows how to call the dolphins through the traditional ceremony. He also fought as a scout in WWII, and he has quite a story to tell and some scars to show you. There's much to tell from Bitama, but these are their stories and it's best to let the people of Bitama tell them.

## 9.2 *Ontong Java & Roncador Reef*

**Wikipedia – June 2018:** Administratively Ontong Java belongs to the Solomon Islands. As an outlying part of Malaita Province, it forms the northernmost tract of land of this state, over 250 km north of Santa Isabel Island. The closest land, however, is Nukumanu Atoll, which lies only 38 km due north of Ontong Java's northern tip and, though historically closely related to Ontong Java, is now under the administration of Papua New Guinea.

Ontong Java is roughly boot-shaped. The entire size of the atoll is 1400 km<sup>2</sup>, but there are only 12 km<sup>2</sup> of land, spread out over 122 small islands. The islands are mostly low-lying coral formations, the highest elevation being 13 metres.

Approximately 2000 people live on the atoll. There are two main villages where the population is concentrated with 1,386 on the island of Luaniu in the eastern end and 689 on Pelau in the northeast.

The islands were first inhabited by Polynesians approximately 2000 years ago. The main cultural and commercial exchanges took place with the inhabitants of neighboring Nukumanu Atoll, with whom Ontong Java people share many cultural affinities.[4]

It is likely that first European sighting was by the Spanish expedition of Álvaro de Mendaña on 1 February 1568. It was charted by them as Bajos de la Candelaria (shoals of Our Lady of Candlemas in Spanish).[5][6] The following verifiable sighting by Europeans was by Abel Tasman in 1643 who named it Ontong Java; however, it wasn't until 1791 that Europeans set foot on the islands, when Capt. John Hunter (later Governor of New South Wales) named it Lord Howe Atoll. In 1893 the islands were annexed by Germany and ceded to Great Britain in 1899.

Today the atoll's inhabitants make a subsistence living by means of coconut and taro (root) cultivation, as well as fishing. Until a ban in 2005, the primary source of income was beche de mer and trochus shells, which were shipped to Hong Kong. The inhabitants are also involved in copra production. It also has a prolific number of sea birds, including the black-naped tern, which uses Ontong Java Atoll as a breeding site.

Ontong Java is a Polynesian outlier. The inhabitants retain a Polynesian character despite their location in the Melanesian Archipelago of the Solomon Islands. In former times both men and women wore elaborate tattoos all over their bodies.[7] Two dialects of one language are spoken in this atoll, Luanguia and Pelau. This language belongs to the Polynesian stock.[8]

Ontong Java was visited by English missionary George Brown in mid 19th century. Brown described the population as Polynesian[9] and referred to the place as Lua Niua. He recorded the existence of a two-class system in Ontong Java and, based on it, inferred that it was probable that exogamous classes formerly existed in Samoa as well.[10]

The first detailed research on Ontong Java's inhabitants, however, was conducted by German ethnographers Ernst Sarfert and Hans Damm, during a German scientific expedition of the Southern Seas that took place in 1908-1910. This expedition visited both Ontong Java and neighboring Nukumanu Atoll, where they also carried out their research. Their work, "Luanguia und Nukumanu" was published in 1931. Sarfert and Damm claimed that both names of the atoll, Lord Howe and Ontong Java, were incorrect and called this atoll Luanguia in their works.

Jack London first called this atoll "Oolong". Later he would write in one of his novels:

Nobody ever comes to Lord Howe, or Ontong-Java as it is sometimes called. Thomas Cook & Son do not sell tickets to it, and tourists do not dream of its existence. Not even a white missionary has landed on its shore. Its five thousand natives are as peaceable as they are primitive. Yet they were not always peaceable. The Sailing Directions speak of them as hostile and treacherous. But the men who compile the Sailing Directions have never heard of the change that was worked in the hearts of the inhabitants, who, not many years ago, cut off a big bark and killed all hands with the exception of the second mate. The survivor carried the news to his brothers. The captains of three trading schooners returned with him to Lord Howe. They sailed their vessels right into the lagoon and proceeded to preach the white man's gospel that only white men shall kill white men and that the lesser breeds must keep hands off. The schooners sailed up and down the lagoon, harrying and destroying. There was no escape from the narrow sand-circle, no bush to which to flee. The men were shot down at sight, and there was no avoiding being sighted. The villages were burned, the canoes smashed, the chickens and pigs killed, and the precious cocconut trees chopped down. For a month this continued, when the schooner sailed away; but the fear of the white man had been seared into the souls of the islanders and never again were they rash enough to harm one.

**Field Trip – July 2018:** Satellite images have changed sailing dramatically. Roncador Reef [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roncador\\_Reef](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roncador_Reef) is a perfect example. While looking at the satellite images months ago and planning our stops on the way to PNG, Mark noticed a small reef just between Ontong Java and the Arnavon Islands. Zooming in, he could see a clear entrance to the circular reef, and that was the tipping point. This little spot in the middle of nowhere suddenly found its place on our agenda.

It reminded him of Minerva Reef, the remote reef between Fiji and New Zealand where many cruisers stop for a rest if the weather permits. Fish and lobster are abundant and enormous, the water is crystal clear, and the diving is pristine. These are places that you won't find on a travel brochure or in any cruise itinerary.

Our trip here was not a long one, but it was tough. I think I'd lost my sealegs after months hopping between the Solomon Islands, and unfortunately, I was sick the entire way. The southeast trade winds have kicked in, and for the rest of our trip to PNG they will be comfortably behind us, but to get here, we had them on our beam.

Initially, the idea of anchoring in this remote reef with no other boats around kind of freaked me out. I imagined someone needing stitches or worse, and my mommy mind started spiraling into the abyss of fear. Flashes of the huge tiger shark our friends had seen in Minerva Reef riddled my mind. Mark couldn't wait to hop in the water and explore, while I was just trying to handle us being here at all! The familiar mantra replayed in my mind as it has many times along this journey, "do not fear. be still and know. choose gratefulness and joy."

The seas were calm as we entered the pass, and the sun high in the sky made reefs easily visible and avoidable. Mark had shown me the track he planned to take before we entered, so I could reference what I was seeing as I spotted for reefs on the bow. Slowly, we navigated to our proposed anchoring spot, and all looked good. We dropped the hook in 23 meters of water,

clear of any obstructions. Ahead of us loomed a massive ship sitting high up on the coral reef, wrecked. Mark called to the kids, "Hey guys, check that out! We've got to go see if we can get on deck and explore that ship while we're here!"

"Not exactly the thing you want greeting you as you anchor in a rarely visited remote reef!" I retorted under my breath. Again, scary scenarios began to fill my mind and I fought back, willing myself to join Mark and the kids in the excited anticipation of a shipwreck expedition. How many people get to do this, right? I looked around us, amazed that we were here. Sure, it's the middle of nowhere, but oh my, it is the middle of nowhere!! This is what it's all about! Think of what the stars will be like at night? Think of what kinds of fish and beautiful reef creatures we'll see! Look at that 360 degree view! This is truly amazing.

1<sup>st</sup> Anchorage: 06 16.82S 159 20.88E Weather: 40% cloudy skies, 27C, 1007.5 baro, 12-16kts SE

2<sup>nd</sup> Anchorage: 06 10.93S 159 22.27E - The visibility up at this end of the reef was not great compared to the southern end. We had about 30m of visibility up here vs. 50+m on the southern end.

**Fellow Traveller – 2012:** I was only there for 3 days, and was rather ill with the flu at the time (my justification for stopping). Officially, one cannot stop there without first visiting Malaita, the region of the Solomons it is a part of, and getting permission. Fees were quite high, I now know. But, upon arrival, no one knew the US/Solomon exchange rate, so no one knew what to charge me. I offered \$20 US and gifts of food that I had been given in Fiji by those sailing on to Australia where they figured it would be confiscated, and the locals were happy.

**Approach & Entry:** The light ships are not in positions indicated by C-maps, but there are some there. Lots of fishing boats in the region as well.

I entered the atoll via the pass at S 5° 31' 48" X E 159° 37' 48". The pass seemed to be a few seconds east of where shown on Google Earth. This pass was very wide (watch for two shallowish areas you pass between, with 75 feet in the pass, shallowing to 50 feet once inside the lagoon). There was no noticeable current, either when I entered or when I left.

**Anchoring:** The shallows behind the island of Luaniua are 20-30 feet deep along the outer area, but with many coral heads scattered about, including some that did not appear to have adequate depth over them. Anchoring here involves finding a nice sand patch with no shallow coral heads in the swinging area. A Bahamian moor might be wise to keep from wrapping or hitting heads. Wind stayed E-NE the 48 hours I was there.

**Clearance:** The whole shore of the island here has houses built along it with plenty of trees around, but the main village is at the S. end of the island, visible as a gray area that stretches across the island in the Google Earth photos.

I had developed a pretty strong case of flu a few days after leaving Vanuatu, and thus my "reason" for stopping (unfortunately, completely valid) was the need to rest and gain strength. I went to the village the first day and sought out Chief Willy, as I had been directed to do. He does not speak English, but the just retired representative to the Malaita provincial government translated and helped. I was told that my reasons for the stop were fine, no one inquired or cared about any clearance with the Solomon Islands government, but I was informed there was

a SI\$500 anchoring fee imposed by Malaita, and that a yacht is supposed to have cleared in Malaita before proceeding to Ontong Java, but they really did not seem concerned. Since I did not have SI money, I was told other equivalent “gifts” would be accepted. I was told to come back the next day when the “house of chiefs” would be meeting.

The next day the secretary from the “house of chiefs” came out to the boat, asked a few questions, then told me I could come in and meet with the chiefs. I was told there are approximately 23 chiefs, but at the time, only a few were in the village as others were off harvesting their copra on the other islands.

Upon arrival, I was escorted to the house of chiefs, introduced to everyone, and offered a seat. I showed them the “gifts” I had brought: rice, dried beans, milk and juice I did not need. They seemed very pleased with this. Then the “fee” came up, but no one had any idea what the exchange rate was. I had brought a single \$20 US bill, and offered that, and they accepted it and again, seemed pleased. As it turns out, this is well short of the official fee, but I got the impression that, while they wanted to collect as much as they could, having few sources of income, they also were by nature, very welcoming to visitors in the Polynesian tradition.

**Security:** I was warned (by the brother of Chief Willy, one of the first people to stop by) to not allow two young men aboard as they had stolen from yachts before. I also, after meeting with the chiefs, noticed that there was a canoe tied up to my boat. I quickly went out there, and found two guys on the boat waiting for me. I quickly checked to make sure that they had not tried to break in, and was very curt with them, explaining that it is considered very rude to ever go onto a yacht without permission. I refused the coconuts they offered...I was rather upset!

**The Locals:** I had a number of canoes visit the boat, and most wanted to trade coconuts for other stuff. I traded a little, but really have no use for dozens of drinking coconuts.... So, this is not a good place to trade for veggies, etc, and I saw no indications of traditional crafts to trade for either.

Everyone was very polite, even the two who went aboard without permission. No one seemed pushy or aggressive, and everywhere I wandered in my short time on the island, people seemed pleased to see me and eager to practice their English and chat a little.

I was definitely the only boat to visit Ontong Java this year. I heard figures from 1 to 4 years as to when the last boat was there. Clearly, few boats venture here.

**Conclusion:** Basically, I would say Ontong Java merits much further exploration should someone desire to visit someplace off the beaten path. People were very friendly and welcoming, in traditional Polynesian style. I was told there was a lot of coral in the center of the lagoon: thus, there could be some excellent snorkeling. Around the anchorage by the village, it was not so good. Mostly, it is nice to know that there are still islands in the Pacific that are not over-run with yachts, Aussie tourists, or other signs of development. However, to visit this and the other nearby atolls properly (with governmental clearances) would involve some rather tedious sailing between the area and the nearest ports. This is no doubt one reason so few boats come this way, and would probably suggest an extended exploration would make the most sense.

**Kama Lua (from OCC Newsletter) – 1997:** Ontong Java, a remote northern atoll, is not recommended prior to proper Solomon Islands clearance though no special permission is necessary (contrary to what some will tell you). Yachts rarely visit and negotiations with the chief's council for landing rights took five hours and consumed buckets of coffee and much tobacco from our trading supply of Winstons.

At the time of our arrival Ontong Jama was suffering from a tobacco shortage, so once the formalities had concluded and villagers were permitted to visit the yacht we were inundated by an armada of canoes whose occupants came to trade anything imaginable for a butt -- one cigarette bought two drinking nuts; two cigarettes bought four shells.

Soon we had a month's supply of nuts and enough shells for a museum. The shelf life of a husked coconut is about two days (unless refrigerated), so while Diane traded on starboard I distributed free nuts to children on port.

We found the beaches world class (no tourists at all) and the villages tidy and prosperous where the living standard is boosted by substantial 'beche-de-mer' and copra harvests. We witnessed local men free diving to depths exceeding 30 metres to fetch the black carcasses. Conservation is practiced and enforced by the council.

Surprisingly fibreglass canoes have all but replaced their hand carved ancestors, although on a couple of occasions we witnessed traditional wooden sailing canoes fishing.

Breadfruit trees were~ scarce compared to the Micronesian atolls which might account for the plastic canoes here.

Nearby Roncador Reef, which the Ontong Java chiefs consider their own, gave Carl thrills spearfishing among (limitless) sharks -- and the fishing was superb. Anchor on a sandbank near the reef flat as the lagoon is mostly foul and deep.

## **10 Makira Province**

### ***10.1 Santa Ana Island***

**Escape II – Late 2019:** Anchorage: Port Mary in 13M, sand 10-50.221 / 162-27.124 - Port & Starboard markers on entry into bay, 2 buoys mark isolated bommies.

Chief John of Gupuna village very helpful will organise transport to visit the other side of the island to visit the Spirit House. Chief Peter of Natagero village will guide you on a tour of the spirit house. Only men can enter inside, women have to stay outside, but can still see from a short distance away.

**Indigo II – June 2019 – Ghupuna Village:** We anchored at 10 50.210'S / 162 27.1525'E in 13m sand. We stayed 2 nights here.

**Field Trip – 2017:** Nice village with Chief John a great carver. There are about 1500 people in the village. Kids are many and that was the hard part as they were on the boat all the time and after a while it was challenging. We were glad to leave for some peace and quiet....but please

note we were here during the holiday season and school was out of session. I believe there would be less kids when school is open.

**Adina – July 2015:** 10 50.189S / 162 27.100E 21m, sticky sand, good holding. No cell coverage.

Well protected lagoon. Entrance at 10 49.8899S 16226.7723E, satellite images help. Lovely place. Ask for Chief Stuart who is a friendly person, speaks perfect english and will show you around and take you to the 'Kastom Spirit House' on the other side of the island. Lots of playful happy kids. Trading, snorkelling, no crocodiles in the sea (but don't swim in the lake). Safe.

**Carina - June 2012:** From Vanikoro we sailed 300 squally miles to Santa Ana and anchored just to the west of the village of Gupuna in 67' sand bottom at 10°50.204 S, 162°27.095 E.

The C-Map93 chart of the bay is inaccurate and our paper chart even worse, but we determined an entrance waypoint using a satellite photo and had no trouble finding the deep water passage into Port Mary's protection from trade winds and ocean swell.

Santa Ana is primitive, but it does have a tiny airstrip and is connected to Kirakira and Honiara by air service and a rickety cargo ferry.

The chief at Gupuna village is John Wapua. There are two other chiefs on the island in the other villages. John's domain includes the bay and surrounding reef and it is important to seek permission specifically from him.

Across a line in the village lands you'll find the Kuper family holdings. Early in the 20 th century, a German man bought a large tract of land here, married a local girl, and his descendants are still known as the Germans. The Kupers seem to own most (if not all) of the enterprise on the island and live in Western-style homes. Laura Kuper came to trade immediately after we dropped anchor. She also provided laundry service.

We stayed at Santa Ana six glorious days, walked across the top of the island to Natagera in company of James, John's son-in-law and deacon of the evangelical church.

Natagera is the location of the last kastom house in the Solomon Islands. A kastom house contains the skulls and bones of former chiefs and other deceased villagers and is the center of the traditional religion. Most have been destroyed at the encouragement of the Christian churches vying for the souls of the people. A representative of the chief in Natagera, Peter, asked for a kastom fee for the tour of the kastom houses and village.

We paid with our smallest bill, a 100 SBD bill (SBD=Solomon Dollar), worth roughly \$14 USD, for our party of six yachties. The kastom house was well-cared for and worth the hike.

While in Santa Ana we acquired the first of our Solomon Island carvings, a fish float and a walking stick. Carvings from the Makira province tend to be of light colored hardwood, acquired locally, but colored in a dark, semi-glossy finish and decorated with nautilus shell inlay.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Off the eastern tip of the large Makira (San Cristobal) Island lie Santa Ana and Santa Catalina Islands, separated from each other by the two-mile-wide Paraghawa Strait. On a strong ebb we experienced a two to three knot east-going current here which, as it met the swell kicked up by the tradewinds, created steep and breaking waves. There is a good

anchorage on the W side of Santa Ana, formed by a curve in the coastline and two arms of reef; favour the N end of the bay when entering. We anchored at 10°50.210'S, 162°27.087'E, in 20m.

This is an interesting, densely populated island, with three villages; Gupuna (on the bay) and Nafinuatogo and Natagera on the east side. Chief John of Gupuna welcomes visits and it is advisable to check in with him. He is a carver; the carvings of Santa Ana are distinctive but not as finely executed as those of the Western Province. They are also expensive; several times a year, small cruise ships call in here and keep the prices high. John specializes in carving a half man/half shark figure, which depicts an episode from a local legend. There are more carvers on neighbouring Santa Catalina Island, but this lacks a good anchorage.

John keeps a logbook for passing yachts, and so does Katie, who can arrange fresh bread, laundry and other services. Katie is a member of an interesting local family descended from a German trader, Heinrich Kuper, who arrived in these islands in 1912 and married a local girl. Other members of the family in residence when we visited included the very helpful Greta (Katie's cousin) and Greta's brother

Henry, who has a 20ft sailboat that he periodically sails over to Makira or the Three Sisters. Henry has a small shop.

Gupuna has piped running water of good quality. Ten minutes' walk away through the woods is a large freshwater lake, excellent for swimming; there used to be crocodiles here, but no longer. The path to the east coast leads over the top of the island, past the secondary school, to Nafinuatogo, then Natagero. There is a very interesting "kastom" house at the latter village, which you can visit after seeing the chief (men only; contribution of 15/20 SD expected). This contains old miniature canoes in which the bones of former chiefs are buried, many carved dishes for offerings, and the bones and skulls of village elders. Photography is permitted.

Cellphones do not work here; the nearest tower is at Star Harbour, on Makira Island; locals often paddle to Star Harbour to make calls. However, Santa Ana has an airstrip with weekly flights to Honiara.

The two charted lights on the N coast of Makira (Kirakira Bay and Wangoraha Point) were not functioning at the time of our visit.

## ***10.2 San Cristobal / Makira Island***

### ***10.3 Three Sisters Islands (Tres Marias/Olu Malau).***

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We intended to anchor here but found the obvious anchorage (Mosquito Bay) had been rendered inaccessible by a buoyed shark net all the way across its entrance. We briefly considered a N-S running enclosure in the reef about one mile to the N but decided that there was insufficient swinging room. There was no other obvious place to anchor.

### ***10.4 Uki Ni Masi Island.***

**Escape II – Early 2020 - Selwyn Bay:** Anchorage: in 9M, sand 10-17.018 161-43.351

There was a school here, and the teachers and pupils were very friendly, worth a visit. Trading.

**Indigo II – June 2019: Selwyn Bay, Ugi (Uki) Island** We anchored at 10 17.035'S 161 43.5592'E in 9m sand

**Adina – July 2015:** 10 17.028S / 161 43.554E 11m, sand, good holding.

Big school nearby that will welcome you if you visit. Snorkeling. Nice enough.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** We found good anchorage towards the southern end of Selwyn Bay, in good visibility over sand at 10° 17.033S, 161°43.553E, lying in 23m. In case of a NW blow, shelter might be found in the NE extremity of the bay. Above the anchorage and a little to the N of it are the relatively modern buildings of a large secondary (boarding) school. Pawa. Distinguished alumni include Fr Walter Lini (first PM of Vanuatu); formerly run by the Church of Melanesia, the school is now run by Makira Province and could do with some new investment. It is interesting to chat to the teachers and older students, who come from all over the Province.

There are small one and two-family villages along the shoreline, hidden by the trees, with the main village at the N end of the bay, where Lever Brothers formerly ran a plantation; trading for vegetables and fish was possible. Local coasters call at the island quite frequently, so be sure to use an anchor light. There is cellphone coverage here and "top up" cards reportedly available at the school.

Fair snorkelling.

## ***10.5 San Cristobal / Makira Island***

### ***10.5.1 Wanione Bay***

**Indigo II – June 2019:** We anchored at 10 30.025'S 162 02.299'E in 9m silty sand, near the river mouth. We snagged a huge root with the anchor – had trouble getting free.

The next day we moved to an anchorage off the Catholic Boarding school (much better anchorage than further in – less affected by swell). We anchored at 10 29.174'S 162 02.850'E in 8m sand. We stayed a few days in this anchorage, repairing stuff and waiting for a good weather window to head further south.

**Adina - July 2015:** 10°30.026' S / 162°02.256' E 11m Mud, good holding. Ashore: Village, school  
Cell: No

Seldom visited, not used to visitors. Large school and many of the school boys will paddle out and hang around at your boat. Pretty bay.

### ***10.5.2 Star Harbour / Namuga Village***

**Escape II – Early 2020:** Anchorage: 5M In the river, leads and beacons guide entry.

Village has one store, very limited. No fresh food or internet. It may be possible to trade with the villagers. We were hassled by a young local policeman for alcohol at 4am when he was drifting around our boat without his engine on. He tried to get me to go to the Police Station with him at that early hour. I made my excuses and we left immediately. Bad experience!

**Screensaver – Nov 2017:** Anchored overnight at 10° 49.206' S / 162° 17.082' E

### **10.5.3 Kira Kira**

**Escape II – Early 2020:** Anchorage: Kira Kira Harbour in 9.3M at 10-27.195 161-55.058.

Village has a market and a few shops, and a Telekom Office. We found it a helpful and friendly place.

### **10.5.4 Maro'u Bay**

**Escape II – Early 2020:** Anchorage: 10M, sand 10-12.258 161-19.499.

Friendly--traded with locals. The logging camp that was there has now closed down.

**Indigo II – June 2019:** We anchored at 10 12.256'S 161 19.515'E in 11m and some swell. We only spent one night here.

### **10.5.5 Oneibia Village (NW Tip)**

**Unk Source – Unk Date:** 10° 20.25' S / 161° 21.26' E 12-14m anchoring depth. Along the coast to the west first by dinghy then by walking. To deliver goods to someone.

## **11 Rennell and Belona Province**

### **11.1 Belona Island**

### **11.2 Rennell Island**

**Shango – Oct 2012:** 11 41.62 S / 160 17.49 E (This plots pretty far offshore..., and waypoint has a comment, "William will lead you into the reef and show you where to drop your anchor" We had planned to anchor at Indispensable Reef, but waved that off and headed for Rennell. After sailing back and forth outside of Kangava Bay on the west side of Rennell till the sun rose we made our approach. The seas were pretty roly and we were anticipating the worst. In the distance, off our starboard bow we could see a small open fishing boat. It eventually occurred to us that this boat was waiting for us. When we were in range the helmsman waved in a way that suggested we should follow. On the bow was a woman wearing a pink pareo. She was quite lovely in the sunrise. At some point we passed into the protection of the southern headland and all the swell disappeared. William, our friendly fisherman, led us past several patch reefs and into a beautiful area of white sand. His hand signaled "drop here". And we did. After formal introductions were complete we accepted their invitation to come in for a visit later in the afternoon. Showers, leftover pasta and naps soon followed.

Rennell was a gem after the disappointment of Indispensable Reef. We spent the next week sharing our days with William and Esther, their grandkids and an interesting cast of local characters. The setting was amazing. William and Esther's property is the quintessential tropical paradise with two small houses, one of which is an accommodation for tourists (which I don't think they get many of), overlooking a white sand beach. There is a picnic table where dinner is served, a cooking shed, an outhouse and most exciting, a freshwater stream which

runs into the sea. A bather's and laundry-doers dream. The gardens which grow throughout the property provide much of their food with William catching the rest out in his open boat. In addition to William and Esther there is an array of critters which inhabit this idyllic spot. A dog, a cat, a large number of chickens (one of which Esther is particularly fond of and occasionally carries with her) and a tame pacific heron named Nemo. The property is backed by very tall cliffs which make the spot quite private. If you want to leave the property by land you are definitely in for a climb.

Roger made it his daily habit to go fishing with William at 5:30 a.m. Over a span of three days they caught about sixty bonito which Esther dried in the umu (earth oven). These would eventually make their way to the market (dried fish and coconuts only) in the "town" of Tingoa. The day after we arrived we visited the neighbor village of Lavanggu to walk around and meet the relatives. While there Roger helped to boil ring cakes (donuts) over the fire and was rewarded with several samples. In the afternoon we headed back to William's with three grandchildren in tow. Vanessa, Cindy and Dina were three of the five who would eventually join us over the next several days. Amongst the locals turning up at the homestead was Dick, whose story we never quite figured out. He usually turned up at dinner time and was unfailingly pleasant. For several days we were joined by the Chief of one of the villages near Lake Tenganno. He and his helper were going to paddle a newly built dugout canoe back to their village and were waiting at William's place for the appropriate weather. The Chief found our Moon Guide to the South Pacific to be extremely interesting and spent hours reading it in the shade of a palm tree. On several evenings we shared potluck dinners at the picnic table overlooking the beach. These gatherings were amazing feasts. Esther and granddaughter Vanessa would stoke up several umus to cook all of the food. One night there was even a chicken sacrificed in our honor. Our most popular contribution was a tray of particularly fudgy brownies. These evenings were very casual with us turning up at the appointed time only to sit down to dinner three or four hours later. Much "storying" (chatting) went on at these meals with William always at the forefront.

We knew that at some point in the not too distant future we were going to have to make our way towards Honiara and officialdom but it was very hard to leave. On our last morning William packed up the grandkids and carted them back to Lavanggu, waving goodbye in his wake. Esther came out bearing hand woven bags as a departure gift, as did Dick, strangely enough. It was a very sad farewell but we were very glad to have stumbled upon this wonderful spot.

### ***11.3 Indispensable Reef (Rennell Island Ridge)***

**Wikipedia – December 2018:** The Indispensable Reefs are a chain of three large coral atolls in the Coral Sea. They are located about 50 km (30 mi) south of Rennell Island, separated from it by Rennel Trough. The chain stretches over a length of 114 km (71 mi) and its average width is 18 km (11 mi).

Administratively the Indispensable Reef belongs to the Rennell and Bellona Province of the Solomon Islands.

The ship Neptune struck Indispensable Reef on August 3, 1868 and was lost. The crew was rescued by the SS Boomerang.

During the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 7, 1942, two Japanese carrier attack planes B5N2 (EI-306 and probably EI-302) flying reconnaissance mission from the carrier Shokaku ditched on Indispensable Reef due to lack of fuel.[2]

In the 1980s the Solomon Islands Government apprehended a vessel from Taiwan that had been poaching the giant clam stocks of Indispensable Reef. Corals and endangered fish species are also being plundered for the aquarium trade.

**Pacific Wrecks – December 2018:** After the Battle of the Coral Sea two Japanese aircraft B5N Kate EI-306 and B5N Kate EI-302 ditched onto Indispensable Reef. Both crews survived and were later rescued.

During late 1942 used by the Japanese as a temporary base for seaplanes to harass. E13A Jake seaplanes refueled by submarine operated from Indispensable Reef for two or three days at a time to search "Torpedo Alley" south-east of San Cristobal used by Allied shipping bound for Guadalcanal. Quickly the US Navy caught on, and sent aircraft and ships to patrol the area to deprive it from the Japanese.

**Shango – Oct 2012:** On the fourth day out from Espirito Santu, Vanuatu, we reached our destination. Indispensable Reef is actually made up of three reefs which, combined, are approximately sixty miles long and eight miles wide. Other than some breaking waves in the distance there was nothing to see, it being a reef. It was a sunny day and we looked forward to heading into the "anchorage" after sailing up the west side in relatively calm water. As they say, the best laid plans... When we reached our meager set of waypoints at two in the afternoon the sun had started to duck behind some clouds and the wind had begun to pick up. A stiff chop set up inside the reef and the area where we were to anchor took on a rather menacing appearance. The depth went from off soundings to thirty feet within a matter of yards and the waypoint seemed to be unpleasantly close to a nasty patch reef. It's possible that in more benign conditions the spot might have had a certain allure but with twenty knots of wind and lowering visibility it absolutely didn't. We decided to take a pass. For us it would be one more night at sea while we backtracked to the northeast and the island of Rennell. Northeast was not the ideal direction from a sailing perspective as the wind was coming out of the east but it was only seventy miles and it would be over quickly. That being said it was a longish night due mostly to the fact that we had hoped to be soundly asleep instead of out at sea. Also preying on our minds was the possibility that the anchorage at Rennell might be lousy. At least, we thought, there was an actual island there that would provide some shelter from the wind if not the seas.

## 12 Temotu Province

### 12.1 Vanikoro (Vanikolo) Island

**Indigo II – June 2019:** We anchored in Ramboi Bay, Vanikoro at 11 41.546'S 166 53.712'E in 12m sand.

**Screensaver – July 2018:** Vanikolo (Solomons) 11 41.677 S / 166 53.67 E Anchor 14m mud, no internet. Another rough trip with sea's 3-5m Seas and wind I don't think ever dropped below 25knts sitting around 30knts for most of the trip. Speed wasn't that much of a problem because the seas were pretty much beam on, but because they were high and steep, even Screensaver being as high as it is dumped more than a few at me in the cockpit and Skedaddle of course being lower were worse off. None the less we all arrived safe and wet, but very glad to have a nice flat anchorage with next to no wind.

Sadly it seems Malaysia has started logging here and what's even worse is they are cutting down very old kauri tress planted by New Zealand many years go. The locals are far from happy and tell stories of corrupt land owners living in Fiji whom have paid off the government in order to achieve this. The locals have tried hard to stop them at first the right way, and then by setting fire to their equipment and other fairly extreme measures, but sadly this has not worked.

**Carina – June 2012:** Our next stop after Tikopia was Vanikoro, about 120nm further west, an island group enclosed in a broken coral reef. Coincidentally, Vanikoro means to gather to seek shelter, in Tikopian. Do not make the mistake of calling it by the misnomer Vanikolo.

The easiest entrance to the group is through the NE Hays Channel. The charts proved reasonably accurate and we had no trouble entering.

The anchorage at Numbuko Bay—a bight off the main harbor and miles away from the nearest village—is deep and all around the edges are coral shelves that rise abruptly from deep water and loom ominously as you enter. A river or two enters into the bay and so there are crocs around (though we saw none).

We **anchored** in 82' at 11°40.088 S / 166-55.796 E where we were snug, as squalls arrived from different points of the compass.

Supply vessels apparently make very infrequent stops at these outlying islands of the Santa Cruz group. It is for this reason that the villagers are quite eager to trade with visiting sailboats for the types of goods that they cannot make, grow or retrieve from the sea.

If their fruits and vegetables aren't worth enough for a trade, they are very willing to buy things with Solomon Island dollars, never quibbling about the price. For our part, we wished only to trade or give gifts, but ended up sometimes selling for cash since there were only so much trading items we could use.

Paramount Chief Chris Albert Ramoli, a warm friendly man with a quick smile, visited us twice with an entourage, bearing long lists of villagers' wants/needs and their cash or trading items. Some of the goods we sold or traded were clothing, towels, gasoline, stove alcohol, mineral spirits, matches, kitchen knives, forks, rice, popping corn, sugar, tea, coffee, jam, flour, a USB cell phone charger, sunglasses, handbags, nail polish, clothes washing soap, bar soap, shampoo, D-cell batteries, bright floral baseball caps, a coconut scraper, a watch, utensils, supper plates, and our very last Carina T-shirt.

In return we got a little cash, island cabbage, eggs, papaya, oranges, grapefruit, green onions, chili peppers, yams, primitive jewelry and carvings, a fine set of wild boar tusks, and delicious mangrove oysters.

One tantalizing story about this island is the legend of the existence of the kakamora, described as “short, shy, very strong, hairy humanoids” that live deep in the bush in caves on the sides of the mountains. Chief Chris insisted they existed and claimed to have seen them many times. We never saw a kakamora despite our careful observation with binoculars. When we got to civilization in Honiara, we looked up the kakamora on the Internet and read some interesting stories there.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** This is a high island with an encircling reef and eight coastal villages, which communicate with each other only by dugout; sailing canoes are still in use. There is no secondary school but most of the villages have primary schools. La Perouse's Boussole and Astrolabe were wrecked on the south coast (near Pallu Passage) and have been investigated by divers with the support of the French Navy.

The best anchorage is in Manieve (or Mangadai/Manevai) Bay, on the northeast corner of the main island, where Tevai Island adjoins Vanikolo. Approaching from Vanuatu the logical entrance to Manieve is via the narrow but navigable Dillon Passage, at the west end of Tevai Bay. The narrowest part of the channel is marked by a red beacon and a green, but not on the sides one would expect: the red is to be left to starboard when entering from the east. In normal tradewind conditions there was no swell in the passage and we did not observe depths less than 3m.

Very protected lake-like anchorage can be found in either of the two arms of the mangrove-ringed head of the bay, but fringing reefs (visible in normal conditions) should be given a wide berth. We anchored at 11°40.184S, 166°55.823E in 22m. The water is not particularly clear and diving to check the anchor is not advisable; the mangroves are inhabited by crocodiles. Landing is not practical here. The nearest village is Puma (Buma) on Tevai Island, about 3 miles away, but canoes will likely visit you all the same; locals were friendly and more than willing to trade, as the supply vessel is infrequent. There is no airstrip on Vanikolo and no cellphone coverage.

C-Map and GPS appear to coincide almost exactly.

Exiting to the north, via Hayes Passage, red beacons should be left to starboard.

## **12.2 Utupua Island**

### **12.2.1 Sabeen Bay / Basilisk Harbor**

**Indigo II – June 2019:** We anchored in Basilisk Harbour at 11 15.3516'S 166 31.1333'E in 10m mud.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Utupua Island is about 30 nm to the NW of Vanikolo and is normally visible from Vanikolo. It also has a fringing reef. Normally entry is made at Ringdove Pass on the SW corner of the reef, although there are several other uncharted passes on the western side. Approaching from Vanikolo, two large black rocks are visible on the outer reef, about a mile before the pass is reached. A little way inside the reef a steel post with a red topmark indicates

a tongue of reef jutting out, it should be left to port. The pass leads directly into a long, wide inlet and to the center of the island, Basilisk Harbour.

The island's main village (Nemboa) is at the entrance of the inlet, on the N side. On the S side a prominent white cross marks a mission of the Melanesian Brotherhood. Where Basilisk forms into a Y-shape, considerable care must be taken to avoid the fringing reef and two isolated patches. Anchorage is best in the northern part of the Y, Sabeen Bay, which, as at Vanikolo, is mangrove-ringed and where it is not practical to land: 11°15.441S; 166°31.166 E, 17m. Several years ago, in front of his horrified wife, a Swiss yachtsman was here devoured by a crocodile; his (few) remains are buried in the village.

This hazard may be avoided by anchoring at locations between the main island and the fringing reef, where the water is clear and there are no mangroves. These areas are uncharted but the locals may be able to give advice. There are also dugong in Sabeen Bay.

As at Vanikolo, there is no airstrip, no cellphone coverage, and the friendly locals are keen to trade.

There are no government officials here but the Reverend Patterson said he keeps track of passing yachts and as at Vanikolo there is radio communication with the provincial government in Lata (Ndende/Santa Cruz Island).

Large mud crabs and mangrove oysters are available.

C-Map and the GPS coincide closely.

### ***12.3 Ndende/Ndendo/Santa Cruz Island***

**SV Deinemeid – Sep 2023:** We checked in to the Solomon Islands in September 2023 at Nendo and had a great experience. We had to pay (only) 500 SD for immigration (2 EU citizens on board) and that was all. Nobody asked for any extra payments and they worked very professional. Customs came on board with us to finalize his paperwork. The whole process was smooth and professional; they had even received our documents that we had send pre arrival. The people on the island were very friendly and helpful.

There was no working ATM at the time of our visit, but we could change usd for sd for a tough rate (100usd for 500sd).

All the people seemed really happy to have us visiting their island. Not all of them speak English or Pidjin. Snorkeling in the 'pass' was beautiful and the town has 4g signal and SIM cards for sale at a reasonable price (100sd for 13gb). Also a market and some small shops are present.

#### **Escape II – November 2019 – Checking In:**

**Immigration Fee** \$500Sd = 45 days; 1000Sd for 90 day visa. After we had been in the Solomon Islands more than 6 months, we were charged 1000Sd for an extra 60 days

**Temotu Province tax:** 200Sd

**Customs:** \$18US per foot of length of boat to be paid in Honiara when you arrive (they charge you in US Dollars then convert to Solomon Dollars. The conversion rate is a flat rate determined annually

**Bio Security** 200Sd is also dealt with in Honiara.

Best anchorage is Shaw Point at Luesola Bay, in the bay next to the Agricultural College.

Trading with Hilda (one of the teachers at the college), Moses one of the teachers is also very helpful.

**Screensaver – 2018:** My check-in at Ndendo wasn't exactly flash--they wanted to charge all sorts of varying rates (from \$300sbd to \$1500sbd), this is on top of Honiara, we had no way of getting money there to pay and yeah it really doesn't work for entry.

But we got our stamps etc. So coming time to checkout, after a number of phone calls, visiting the office a dozen times that was closed, a txt message direct to find the guy is on holiday for 2 weeks, I decide enough is enough. I have tried, I'm leaving.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** This is the largest island in the group, and the seat of the provincial government for Temotu Province. It is of some historical interest in that in 1595 Alvaro de Mendana attempted to found a Spanish colony at Graciosa Bay; it failed and the exact site is not known, but a local told us that his name lives on in that a disproportionate number of the island chiefs have names beginning with "M" (!). There is an airstrip at Lata (today's principal settlement, on the W shore of the bay), with regular flights by Dash-8 to Honiara; Lata also has the province's only secondary school.

Graciosa Bay is large and wide, and generally very deep; unlike Vanikolo and Utupua it should NOT be considered as a possible cyclone refuge.

There is a concrete wharf at Lata, by the side of which lies the large and semi-submerged wreck of a white-hulled inter-island freighter. The wharf is not practicable for use by a yacht except in very calm conditions; the prevailing winds blow directly onto it and there are 2 to 3 miles of fetch.

We attempted to anchor in 12m to 15m on a shoal in the S end of the bay, marked on the chart, but could not get the anchor to hold. We then moved to the extreme SE corner of the bay, where a river debouches into the bay. Here we found adequate anchorage at 10°45.587'S, 165°49.368'E, in 23m.

There are rocks to the starboard and the river bar to port, both of which are swinging constraints, but the river's outflow seems to hold the boat in the right position, even when the winds fall calm.

We were advised that a further possible anchorage is south of Shaw Point, about 2 nm to the north of here, on the E shore of Graciosa Bay; this would offer better shelter should the wind turn into the N. However, it is a much longer walk to town; the old sawmill is no longer active.

On shore to the S, a friendly local called Titus will allow you to land your dinghy. In the past he has maintained a "yacht club" (i.e. bar) here. He has spent a number of years working on large American tuna boats in the Pacific. However, we had a stainless steel shackle stolen from the dinghy when we left it here. Locals will come by dugout to trade but there is a small veggie market in Lata.

### **12.3.1 Lata (PORT OF ENTRY)**

**Adina – July 2015:** Anchoring off Lata town is not advised as it is deep and foul ground. Best is to hang off and have someone go ashore at the town jetty (10 43.2396S 165 48.1286E) and find customs - ask people, they are friendly and will show you the way to the office a short walk into town.

Customs and Quarantine will either come to your boat or meet you at Shaw Point later. No Immigration but you should register with the police who are supposed to contact Honiara Immigration - ask for proof.

The normal good anchorage is at Shaw Point.

**Indigo II - June 2019:** It's not possible to get any cash out in Lata as our international credit cards were not recognized by any of the available EFTPOS machines. However, Alistair Lemoba, the owner of PZTR, a Service Station and Grocery Store located in Lata, allowed us to purchase diesel, petrol, marine gear oil and groceries totaling Solomon \$7144 (equivalent to Aus \$1385.27), which we paid for by international bank transfer using the Bumblebee hotspot available from the Telekom office at the top of the hill. You have to be patient – it took about ten minutes for the bank website to come up on our laptop and allow us to complete the funds transfer.

We had cleared out of the Solomons in Honiara, so don't know about clearance options in Lata.

**Noonsite – May 2016 - Clearance:** Only Customs and Quarantine clearance can be completed here as there is no Immigration Officer. Immigration can be flown in, but at your own expense. If you are lucky and a cruise ship is in port, Immigration will be present.

Once formalities with Customs and Quarantine are completed you should report to the police station and inform them where you intend to check-in with Immigration (Honiara is the closest).

They should notify the officials – make sure you ask for proof this has been done as cruisers have encountered problems in the past.

Customs - Tel +677 7730058

Quarantine - Tel: +677 7865296

**Screensaver – July 2018:** Anchorage at Shaw Point, inside, 16m, 2g Telekom. 10 44.2141 S / 165 49.7689 E. I did a bit of a sail by the town and wharf on the way in, as it would be much more convenient to stop there, but as suggested there really is nowhere to anchor there due to seas, wind and depth of water.

A quick look directly opposite revealed a couple of very nice spots, one just before the recommended anchorage I would have taken if I was on my own, nice beach, clear water, sand but deep and I would have tied Screensaver stern to a tree. However we ended up a bit further in, where most seem to go.

The only reason one would come to Ndendo is to clear in or out, or as I did the first time to break up the route between Vanuatu and Solomon's. There are banana boats going from this

anchorage back and forth to the town and I am 99% sure if you flagged down one of the morning runs carrying the locals you could do the trip for much less than the \$50.00sbd we paid. But for that he hung around came and went when we wanted, so all good.

So first stop would be an ATM.... yeah ok forget that, it does not exist... ok a bank agent of which there are at least five for two different banks.... ah forget that, none of the 5 different cards we had between us were accepted anywhere... So where does one get money here, the search continues.

This cannot be a new problem so we will find the clearing in services. There is no way you will find any of the clearance services on your own other than immigration and even with half reasonable directions it will be a challenge. But there is sure to be a local there whom sees some blank looking westerner to help and in our case he asked for nothing but Skedaddle bought him a very nice large fish.

**Quarantine** was simply and basically a small dog leg of the end of the wharf will have you filling in some paper work and he did not seem to be phased by our lack of money or in ability to pay his fee.

I complained about the totally irrelevant questions on some 5 pages to customs, that need to be completed twice due to lack of copying facilities the very nice lady said, well it was one page until you Ozy's came and told us how to do it....this combined with a Canadian killing his wife is why it is so. Anyway as she chewed her Beetle nut we completed her paper work underneath her house on a picnic table.

Eventually it seemed Tom (said to be an American resident here ph 53190) was the guy to see for money up the top around by the church. Cecile (Skedaddle) had \$50au and I negotiated with Tom an exchange rate that was meant to be slightly in our favour until we could check the real rate, but in fact was grossly in our favour. I'm unsure what rate Google gives you buy or sell but it said \$1aud = \$6.2sbd. Tom and I did 1 to 8, initially, and the next day I corrected my exuberance of our exchange. Bottom line is Tom is just a flush western local, making 1% on the way through.

**Immigration** and port clearance was interesting. She asked Skedaddle where they had been for the past few weeks given they cleared out of Vanuatu some 2 weeks ago and she stated it only takes a couple of days to get here. Knowing my clearance out was at least 6 weeks ago I interjected and explained that it cannot be done in 2 days and we got stuck in Vanuatu due to bad weather. Typically they don't care if your extended/lost time is in the other country.

Then we got into the fees. It would seem they are trying anything they can and also quite happy to provide a receipt. They asked us to pay a Provincial harbour/anchoring tax. I simply said I'm not paying Provincial government and Honiara government, and land owners and besides we have no money. In the end we walked away with a bill for \$300sbd having paid nothing. The next boat (1 day later) got a bill and paid \$150sbd, the one after that, a French boat \$1500sdb.

There was no hardware or supply shop to make a new whisker pole, so it was up to whatever MacGyver talents I could summon.

Next stop Santa Anna, some 200nm west and it's been a while since I have done a solo overnighter.

**Adina – July 2015:** Anchoring off Lata town is not advised as it is deep and foul ground. Best is to hang off and have someone go ashore at the town jetty (10 43.2396S 165 48.1286E) and find customs - ask people, they are friendly and will show you the way to the office a short walk into town.

Customs and Quarantine will either come to your boat or meet you at Shaw Point later. No Immigration but you should register with the police who are supposed to contact Honiara Immigration - ask for proof.

**Bosun Bird – 2010:** Lata is reached via a hot one-hour walk on a good track, which passes through a number of small villages. Few vehicles pass but when they do it is usually possible to hitch a ride; if doing so, check in advance if money is expected in return.

In Lata, notwithstanding signs on the contrary, there is NO presence of customs or immigration. We were told that although this remains a Port of Entry (if a cruise ship comes in, officials will fly in from Honiara to clear it) there is no budget to house the respective officers. There is however a presence of the Ministry of Agriculture and, if the lone official is not out of town, he will give you quarantine clearance (fee 150 Solomon dollars); he may ask to come on board but is understanding of the difficulty of coming alongside in Lata and in our case he did not insist. You should also check in with the Police; they will ask you to fill in a form with the details of your yacht, and they say that they send it onwards; however, in Honiara no-one knew of us.

The visit to the Agriculture official may be useful in that, in case of any later difficulties, the paper clearance he gives you is proof that you made every effort (the police do not give you any papers).

Although there is a bank in Lata and even an ATM, the former does not change money and the latter had been empty of cash for some time. We were instead directed to Russ Hepworth, who runs a small store and who is the only white man in Temotu (!). He will change modest amounts of the usual currencies (USD and Australian dollars) into Solomon dollars (exchange rate about 8 SD to 1 USD).

Russ is interesting to talk to. His parents decided to "get away from it all" , and sailed from California in 1948 aboard an old Brixham Trawler; they settled in the nearby Reef Islands and, although the boat was subsequently lost in a cyclone, have been there ever since. Russ suggested there was secure anchorage in the Islands and said that an increasing number of yachts visit; however, the chart is poor and we passed on this; with more information this could be interesting stop.

There is a small daily market in Lata, five or six small shops and a hospital. Bread is usually available at the market. There is a gas station near the wharf, where diesel and gasoline can be obtained. There is a Telekom office where you can buy SIM cards and/or make long-distance phone calls. There is cellphone coverage in the area of Graciosa Bay and also internet access at the Telekom Office (and, in school hours, at a school on the road from the anchorage). The villages along the road all have piped water.

Exit to the west is most conveniently made through West Passage, South of Te Motu Island. A steel post with a red topmark marks the southwestern extremity of a reef that partially blocks the eastern entrance to the Passage; it should be left to starboard; charted beacons indicating the southeastern extremity of this reef and the southwestern tip of Te Motu Island are missing.

### **12.3.2 Shaw Point**

#### **Indigo II – June 2019 - Luesalo Bay (Shaw Point) anchorage (13 – 17 June 2019)**

10 44.193'S 165 49.741'E anchored in 16m on presumed coral/rock rubble bottom.

This is a great little bay, well sheltered from the dominant south-easterly winds that can make Graciosa Harbour very choppy. It is possible to arrange transport in a local speedboat from Luesalo Bay across Graciosa Harbour to the provincial capital Lata.

Teachers at the Luesalo Rural Training Centre made us welcome – Moses Tanna, Agricultural Science Teacher, organized boat transport to Lata for us and arranged for our laundry to be done by local women. Hilda Jou Kola, Electricity Teacher, generously provided some meals of local food. She was delighted to receive kitchen implements in return. Brother Elliot took us to Lata in the Brothers' speedboat and waited patiently all day for us to complete our purchases of fuel and supplies and then arrange payment by international funds transfer. We paid for this service by filling his fuel tank with petrol and buying gear oil for his outboard engine.

There is a clear freshwater pool behind the beach opposite the village, fed by a spring. Best used at low tide, it is a great place to bathe and do laundry, keeping the suds out of the pool.

**Adina – July 2015:** 10 44.233 S / 165 49.703 E We entered through the pass on the west side of Ndende Island (10 42.3633S 165 47.2411E) with good light. There is a reef in the middle and we passed to the south of it.

Anchoring off Lata town is not advised as it is deep and foul ground. Best is to hang off and have someone go ashore at the town jetty (10 43.2396S 165 48.1286E) and find customs - ask people, they are friendly and will show you the way to the office a short walk into town.

Customs and Quarantine will either come to your boat or meet you at Shaw Point later. No Immigration but you should register with the police who are supposed to contact Honiara Immigration - ask for proof.

The Shaw Point bottom is rock and coral so try to get your anchor to hook on something! On the positive side it is very well sheltered from wind. Titus is the man who looks after yachties and will canoe to you. He is a good person and will look after you wanting nothing (but clothes or a gift are appreciated).

The town of Lata is across the lagoon, about 2nm, and has diesel, gasoline, phone cards, market, small stores, LPG.

Anchorage Location: 10 44.233S / 165 49.703E 25m Rock and coral

**Adina – July 2015 – SE of Shaw Point:** 10 45.578S / 165 49.348E 23m mud, good holding.

This anchorage is closer to where Titus lives (see above) and also provides access to a fresh water pool where the locals get their water. Downside is it is further from Lata town than Shaw Point. Locals will catch lobster if you pay for their fuel - join them, it's good fun.

### **12.3.3 Ndendo South**

**Screensaver – July 2018:** 10 45.8647 S / 166 00.4456 E Anchor in 18m mud, no internet. I have had enough of this high wind always around 30 knots so when I spotted a break of 5 –10 I thought this will for sure end up being 10-15 or more, so I left for Ndendo. Of course I got what they predicted which was a bit of first, as they are typically 5-10knts under. So I ended up burning some diesel, whereas Skedaddle left the next day and they had a very good sail.

This anchorage has no name as far as I can find but it is a small harbor located on south side of Ndendo just NW of Toemotu Noi. A little deep in places but well protected and the SE swell does not appear to get in there.

I had a weird GPS problem on coming in this time. Eventually it resolved itself.

### **12.3.4 Mau Lagoon**

**Indigo II – June 2019:** We anchored at 10 44.035'S 166 07.001'E in 16m sand. Just spent one night here.

## **12.4 Reef Islands**

**Escape II – Late 2019:** Anchorage: Mohawk Bay in 17M, sand, possible to move closer to the reef – 10-17.906 / 166-17.836. No internet unless you climb to the top of a hill

See Ben Hepworth, expat who owns Pigeon Island. The Chief from the largest village on Fenolova is named Chris.

**Field Trip – April 2017 – Mola Village Reef Islands:** When we picked up anchor and moved to another portion of the Reef Islands, we were pretty 'villaged' out, meaning we'd been spending a lot of time trading, fixing, teaching, and tok-tokking. It is such a privilege and adventure to come to these far-away places and see such remote communities who welcome us with open arms, but it can be overwhelming and exhausting, too. It is pressure, knowing we are representing a community of cruisers and possibly forming ideas and assumptions in the minds of these people of what all foreigners are like during the few days we're here. We are careful to leave a good impression, show kindness and share what we can with them.

We try to smile at each canoe that comes along offering more shells or coconuts or snake beans to trade (even though we've had to throw so many papayas overboard after dark, because we can't eat it all fast enough!) When they come to trade and are not asking for something without offering something in return, then we want to honor that effort, so even though we're turning orange from all the pawpaw, we still trade for a notebook or a pen or bath soap because we have what they need and it isn't a lot, is it?

Now, some guys come by asking to trade green beans for a dive mask - and we say no. I know they need the dive masks desperately for spearfishing, but I also don't want to create inflation and unreasonable expectations either. The next cruiser who comes along won't appreciate

that. We also say no to those who request alcohol of any kind. It's just not a contribution to their community we feel good about making.

Trading is just plain tricky. But we try to do right by them and by those who may come after us. We won't please everyone, but we will do the best we can.

Trading isn't the only thing that's been tricky during our time here. We've spent a lot of time with our friends on Perry and Rehua - celebrating Marky's b-day, snorkeling, playing Mah-Jong and Minecraft. It's been fun! But I realized today the price of that time - the lost connection with the locals. These people are some of the kindest we've ever met, and the ones we've taken the time to chat with are genuine, warm, curious, and interesting. Our time is always enriched when we spend it with the people who live in these places and can teach us new things. But here, we've been sucked in to the cruisers club. The kids, even when we're on the beach with local kids around, will stay to themselves and not invite the others to play. I get it, it's hard and uncomfortable sometimes to reach out to new people, especially ones who don't speak your language, but it is necessary and right.

Mark has commented about how annoyed he gets at the cruisers clique that happens when we go ashore. We have come to visit the village and end up in comfortable conversation with each other while the local folks sit on the outskirts. The adults aren't much better than the kids, actually. What kind of legacy are we leaving? Mark has tried to force the interaction (which hasn't worked every time, but does get the locals excited) like not allowing the white kids to play on the paddle board, but instead giving the local kids rides behind the dinghy. Or when he started a game of "catch, catch" (aka tag) with the local kids which turned into me playing PE teacher and facilitating about 6 games of Sharks and Minnows and numerous Relay Races with all the village kids and some of the boat kids. It turned out to be a fantastic afternoon, and even the teacher came paddling out to ask when we'd be coming back again. It matters to these people. They desperately want to talk to us, to interact with us, to be seen by us. Don't we all want that?

But we haven't done well this time. It was clear today when our family went to shore in two villages. In one village, a teacher, Lily, said she'd heard about my game day with the kids and was so excited that I'd finally come back to say hello! She walked with me and we talked about our travels and about her life. She kept saying how lucky I was to see so much of the world and seemed genuinely interested in my story. While we talked, another woman brought a bowl full of **namembo**, the breadfruit pieces they preserve here by drying and then eat plain or by dunking it in their tea to reconstitute it. She smiled broadly when I tasted it and liked it, and hurried back to her hut to fetch more for me to take back to the boat. I said we'd munch on them tomorrow while we sailed to Santa Ana. The ladies were surprised. "You are leaving tomorrow???" they asked. And I regretted not giving them more of my time.

In the other village, we sat with Alice and Hutley. Alice is a woman who paddled out with her family and the 2nd chief, Winston, on the day we arrived. She boldly asked to come aboard and see our home, which kind of rubbed us the wrong way right off the bat. They came aboard and I showed them around on deck. I know they wanted to see inside, too, but Mark and I had already decided to keep the inside off-limits for various reasons. Instead, we talked in the cockpit for a while and she made sure we knew that we could come to the village any time we

wanted to come! They were so excited to have ships in their lagoon! I realized that they didn't know quite how to act or what the etiquette was, and I should have explained it to them for future reference, but how?

We promised to come into the village later in the afternoon, and when we arrived, she humbled me with her hospitality. She had snacks (fried banana chips, sweet potato fries, fried plantains) and fresh coconuts ready for all of us and woven mats set out on the ground. I hadn't even offered her a glass of water on our boat!!! Anyway, I hadn't come back to the village since, although Mark had gone in to work on more machines. And we'd even moved over to another part of the lagoon to get closer to a dive pass without thinking about how the village might interpret it.

Turns out, the chief had been very worried that he'd done something wrong, that we'd left because he hadn't taken good care of us. He told someone that he was responsible for us while we were anchored near his village, and he feared he may have run us off. I hated hearing this. We'd moved to get closer to the reef for diving, and hadn't realized we should have told him why we were moving. Ugh. I felt awful. I still feel bad! We explained when we went to say goodbye that we were sorry and we didn't understand the expectations. It matters to these people! I want them to know that they matter to us.

**Field Trip – March 2017:** We've anchored at a place of which little is written in the few available cruising guides, no recommendations from friends, and virtually no information at all except for the satellite images that showed a plausible anchorage here. The images from space were exactly what brought us here, though. It looked too beautiful to miss.

Reef Islands... the little group of islands surrounded by reefs just north of Santa Cruz is reminiscent of the Tuomotus with the bright turquoise shallow water inside the lagoon. Yet also similar to Fulaga, Fiji where we saw our first mushroom-shaped coral islets capped with shrubs poking up from the sea. I am captivated by the view from the bow as we drop anchor in 20 meters of water. The water is every shade of blue and green imaginable as the depth changes from extremely deep to barely covering the sand near the shore.

The canoes begin to surround us quickly- all of them full of smiling, curious, naked children wielding paddles. After introductions I hand each child a pumpkin cookie. They are so careful not to bump the boat with the dugout wooden canoes, and can steer skillfully close enough to reach out a hand and politely take the cookie from me with a shy giggle.

Denzel comes out, too, a young man in his twenties in a fiberglass canoe. He kindly offers to guide us through the reefs to a place where we can easily walk ashore. Kids line the beach and the nearby cliffs whooping and waving a warm welcome, and then the crowd follows us up to the center of the village. Many of the adults are seated, their mouths full of the red, juicy spit produced by chewing a betel nut/lime powder concoction that is infamous here. They seem happy to see us, but also unsure of what exactly to do with us. We aren't the first visitors they've had, but they don't get many!! There is a discussion among the prominent men and we're not sure exactly what they are trying to decide, although I imagine they are contemplating an anchoring fee or donation request. In the end, they asked if we could donate some school supplies to the kindergarten. No problem!

Everyone is kind, but shy. I meet the teacher of the kindie and Mark asks if we can please see the kindie classroom. It's walls are layered pandanus leaves, with a row of windows just below the eaves of the roof. The floor is sand, and there is a row of papers hanging up to showcase counting and coloring work. Along one wall leans a large piece of particle board on which the teacher has written with chalk. It is starkly bare, an indication of how remote they are here. The supply ship comes monthly if they're lucky, but the last one came quite a while ago.

Mark promptly offers up help to fix things, and as he walks back to the dinghy, one-by-one people come and ask in hushed tones for help with things - an outboard engine that isn't working, a sewing machine that needs repair. His project list for the following day quickly fills up.

Everyone is hot and exhausted, so we say goodbye with promises that Mark and Matt will return in the morning with their tools. Elizabeth, Michael, Conrad and Mark are excited to get back to the boats. It happens to be Michael's ninth birthday, and we have some flan to eat and Xbox to play!! Yes, he requested flan, steak, and Xbox - who is this kid!? I'm prepared, though, as I'd happened to find a flan boxed mix in Port Vila a few months ago and have saved it just for this occasion. It's not quite like the real thing, but my Argentine flan recipe requires multiple eggs, which are now a precious commodity.

We all gather on Field Trip, fire up the grill, and enjoy a birthday celebration with friends. Michael told me earlier how thankful he was that his friends, Conrad and Mark, are here to make his birthday a 'real' party. There have been few kid boats around lately, so the timing could not have been more perfect.

### **12.5 Tikopia**

**L'il Explorers – December 2017:** We arrived in Tikopia after a pleasant two day sail from the Banks in Vanuatu. We used Google maps to pick out a sandy anchorage where there is a large indent in the Reef. We anchored in about 65 feet of water on sand with good holding.

Within an hour we had a handful of dugouts offering various fruits and vegetables for trade.

We have heard about there being an anchorage fee, so in the hope of avoiding this we put together a nice gift of a bush knife, rice, shirt, and Raman soup for the chief. We met with the chief and had a fantastic visit with him. At the chiefs house we were introduced to some of the customs and history of the island.

There are four chiefs on the island, each managing a section of the island. The houses are built on the ground with entryways only big enough to crawl through. Whenever entering a house you must crawl to show respect for the owner, and when departing you must crawl backwards never showing your "stern" to the people inside the house. Exiting a house was always a fun activity as our five young children backed into each other as they pushed and squirmed to be the first out outside.

We were there for Christmas and had a truly delightful time going with the church choir singing carols at many of the houses, and watching the local Christmas dance.

We had a truly delightful time at Tikopia, with a very secure anchorage, an easy dingy pass through the reef, soft sandy beaches, and wonderful people.

We were not asked for an anchorage fee, though some of the people asked if we had been asked for a fee. Even when we visited Anuta later we were asked if Tikopia had collected a fee from us.

**Carina - June 2012:** We finally arrived at Tikopia at midday on a Wednesday in early June, after a 16-day passage from Majuro. Thus began our satisfying Solomon Islands sailing season.

Tikopia is an extinct caldera covered in lush jungle and is populated by roughly 1,000 people of Polynesian descent. (Moana is the word for ocean here.) Little more than one mile in length and located just over 100 miles NE of Vanuatu, Tikopia has no electricity, public utilities, cell phones, outboard engines or even a regular supply boat.

Tikopians have an ocean-going history and Wharram, of catamaran design fame, built a catamaran for the islanders—Lapita Tikopia. The boat is still being used to connect the remote islanders to the provincial center at Lata, 200 miles downwind.

Tikopia's Ringdove anchorage is a small, deep, bommie-studded bight in the coral along its western shore. It's an open roadstead exposed to westerly winds but safe during stable trade wind conditions. Williwaws are common. We **anchored** in about 70' of mostly sand at: 12°17.602S, 168°49.116E.

Four chiefs rule absolutely here. Their names are Kafika, Tafua, Fangarere and Taumako. Dissent is not an option in this feudal, though benevolent, society. If you visit, bring at least four equivalent sets of gifts for the chiefs. We only met chief Edward or Te Ariki Tafua, the number two chief in Matautu on the anchorage, but left gift bags and personal notes for the other chiefs when we departed quickly ahead of impending weather.

We were the first boat to visit in nine months. As such, we were treated one afternoon to a personal performance by the Marotosi dance club (for which we gave a donation, in USD since that was all we had).

Dancing to the rhythms created by a simple overturned canoe-cum-drum and their own chants, two lines of dancers emerged out of the breadfruit trees into the clearing. Clad in lava-lava made of either tapa (for women) or pandanus (for men), most dancers were painted with swaths of bright orange turmeric in coconut oil on their cheeks and shoulders and wore crowns made of bright yellow turmeric flowers. For perhaps a half an hour, they danced in perfect coordination, never once stopping to rest, just smoothly moving from one dance to another until finishing with a lively staccato dance of spinning bodies and clashing wooden sticks.

### ***12.6 Anuta / Cherry Island***

**Lil' Explorers, January 2018:** We arrived at Anuta Island from Tikopia Island. Somehow we managed to catch and land an 8 foot Marlin. We used the halyard and winch to get it on deck. After filling our fridge and our freezer, we put the other 2/3's with ice in an ice box. We kept everything including the head and tail for the great people of Anuta.

The anchorage is easy to spot with google images as it is the sandy spot easily seen from the satellite images at the south western area of the island. Anchoring is easy in about 30 feet of sand with good holding.

The first few days the waves were small enough that we could take the dingy in, but after that it was best with just the kayak. Our children loved playing in the surf with the local kids, and boogie boarding/body surfing.

This was our favorite place to visit with five years of cruising under our belt. The people were just fantastic, and so giving. Every day when we would come to shore someone would invite us to their home where there would be a meal waiting for us. They also would make crowns and lei's for us to show how Welcome we were. They even had an initiation ceremony for us where all seven of us were stripped down to our waists, (Shannon was able to keep on her tank top). We were then dressed in Lap Lap's and had our chests painted with turmeric.

This is a very remote island, and everything you donate will be greatly appreciated. They will not ask for anything though. One thing that is quite useful though is paint, as they use their dugout boats daily, and appreciate being able to protect their boats from the elements.

## 13 Cmap Chart Offsets for OpenCPN

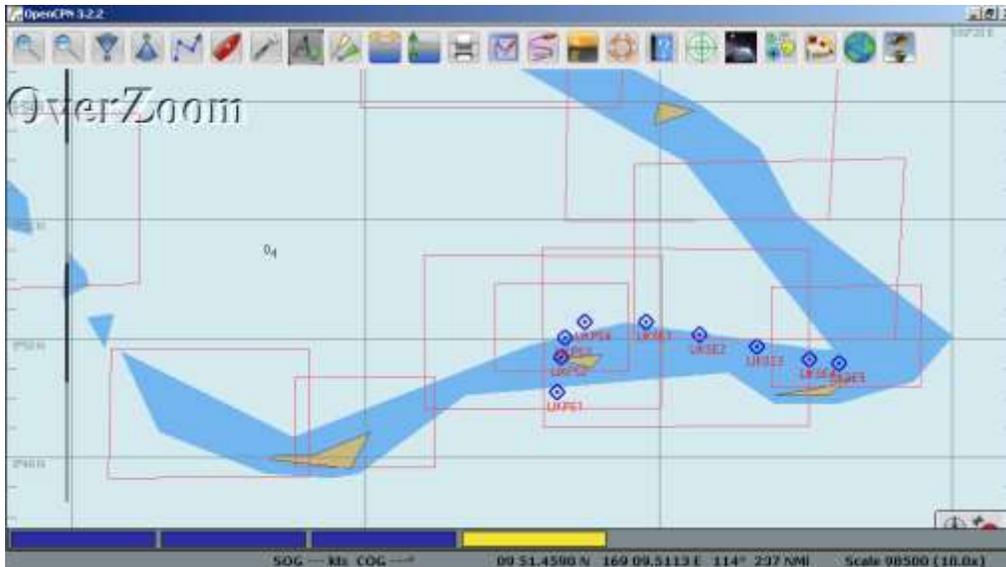
### 13.1 Variations in Chart Sets

The CM93 Edition 2 chart that cruisers commonly use with OpenCPN or Maxsea can be very accurate in places and can be very INACCURATE in other places. And the newer versions are not necessarily better than the older versions. The 2010 version, for example, significantly increased accuracy and detail in some places, but decreased detail in other places (Fiji and Philippines). I have been told that the CM93 v2005 chart has the best DETAIL but may not be the most accurate.

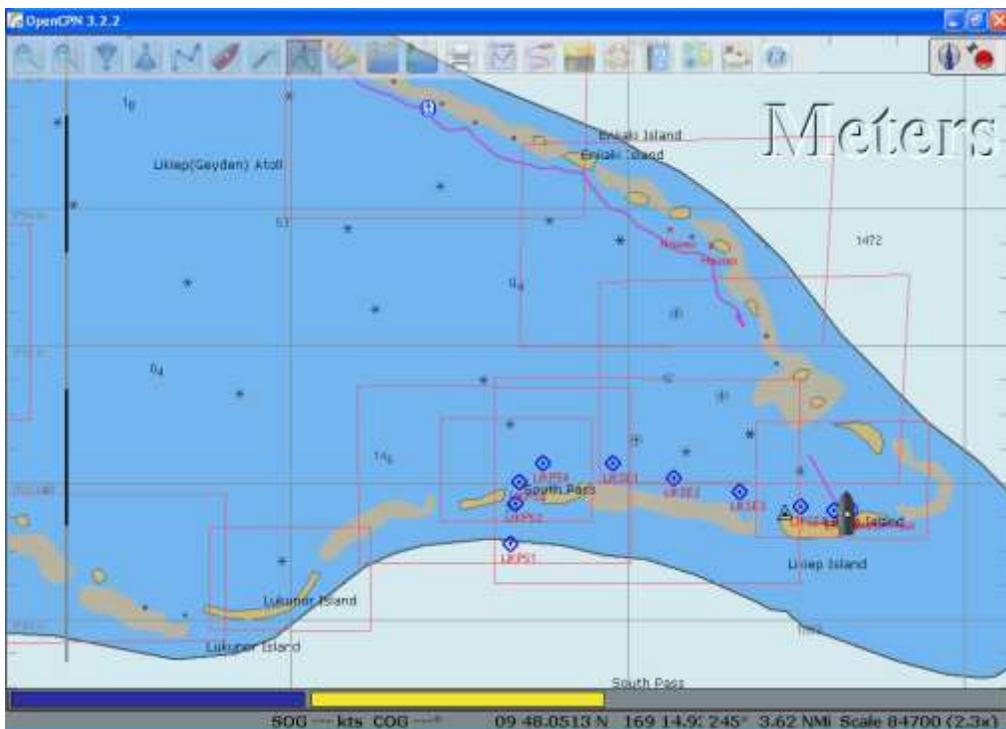
The prudent mariner will check chart accuracy in each location, using Google Earth as a guide.

**Warning:** There are a LOT of different CM93 chart sets floating around. Offsets for a 2010 version of charts (what mine are) may not be appropriate for a 2011 (or 2005) version of charts.

Also, if your set of charts have been made from combined directories (ie copying an "update" into an existing CM93 directory, some charts may be there that are not in someone else's "2010" list. Example: Below is a screen shot from the most detailed chart I have for Likiep Atoll on one computer.



And here is about the same view with the "same" chart set on another computer:



Note considerably more detail. This chart, 2940504, dated 2010-03-01, does not exist apparently in the "latest" 2010 chart set. (it also won't be displayed by Maxsea, even if it is present in the CM93 folder).

### 13.2 How to Apply Offsets in OpenCPN

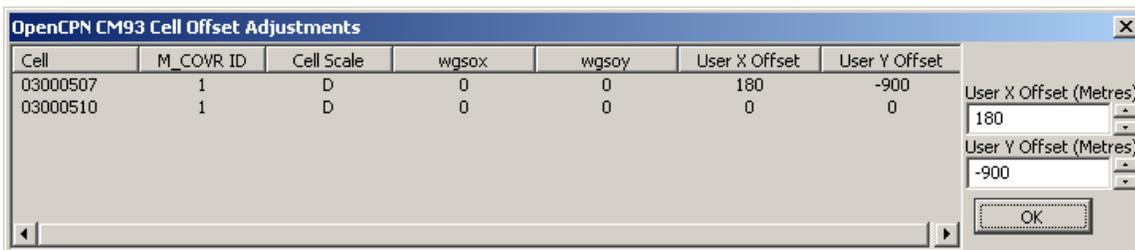
Unlike Maxsea, when you apply offsets to "correct" CM93 charts in OpenCPN, it shifts the chart, not the GPS position. (this is the right way to do it).

Here's a quick rundown on calculating the offset and applying it:

1. Drop a mark in OpenCPN on a prominent feature on a GoogleEarth chart for an atoll. (end of an island, or center of a pass, for example)
2. Turn off Chart Quilting (F9 key, or use the Settings Dialog). There are two easy ways to tell whether Chart Quilting is on or off.
  - a. If the colored ovals at the bottom of the screen have square corners instead of oval corners, quilting is off.
  - b. If you right-click on the CM93 chart (anywhere), the pop-up window will have an additional menu item "CM93 Offset Dialog"

Pressing F9 again will turn quilting back on.

3. Right-click on the CM93 chart and select "CM93 Offset Dialog". This pops up the OpenCPN CM93 Cell Offset Adjustments window:



Normally, if you are zoomed in, you will only see one line (the most detailed chart). Regardless, click on the line to highlight that line. Then enter the offsets in the box to the right. X offsets move the chart left and right. Y offsets move the chart up and down. As soon as you TAB out of the entry field, the offset will be applied. (Clicking OK also applies the offset, but also closes the window).

Keep fiddling with the offsets until the mark you dropped on the prominent feature on the GoogleEarth view, lines up correctly on the CM93 view.

4. Now check the offset in several other places on the chart. Often you will get it perfect in one spot, and it will be off in another spot. This is the nature of imperfect charts. Fiddle until you are happy with it... either the pass you intended to go in is dead-on, or you have an average view.

Notes:

See the OpenCPN help file for more info (there's not a lot in v3.2.2, but may be in the future).

In OpenCPN, these offsets are, I think, saved in the CM93 folder in the OpenCPN folder in the Program Data folder (see the Help/About tab for where the log file is... that's where you'll also find a CM93 folder.) (ie where the layers folder is).

They appear to be saved in a file that is named the same as your CM93 chart folder name.

Backing up this folder, AND keeping the same naming convention on another computer MIGHT



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