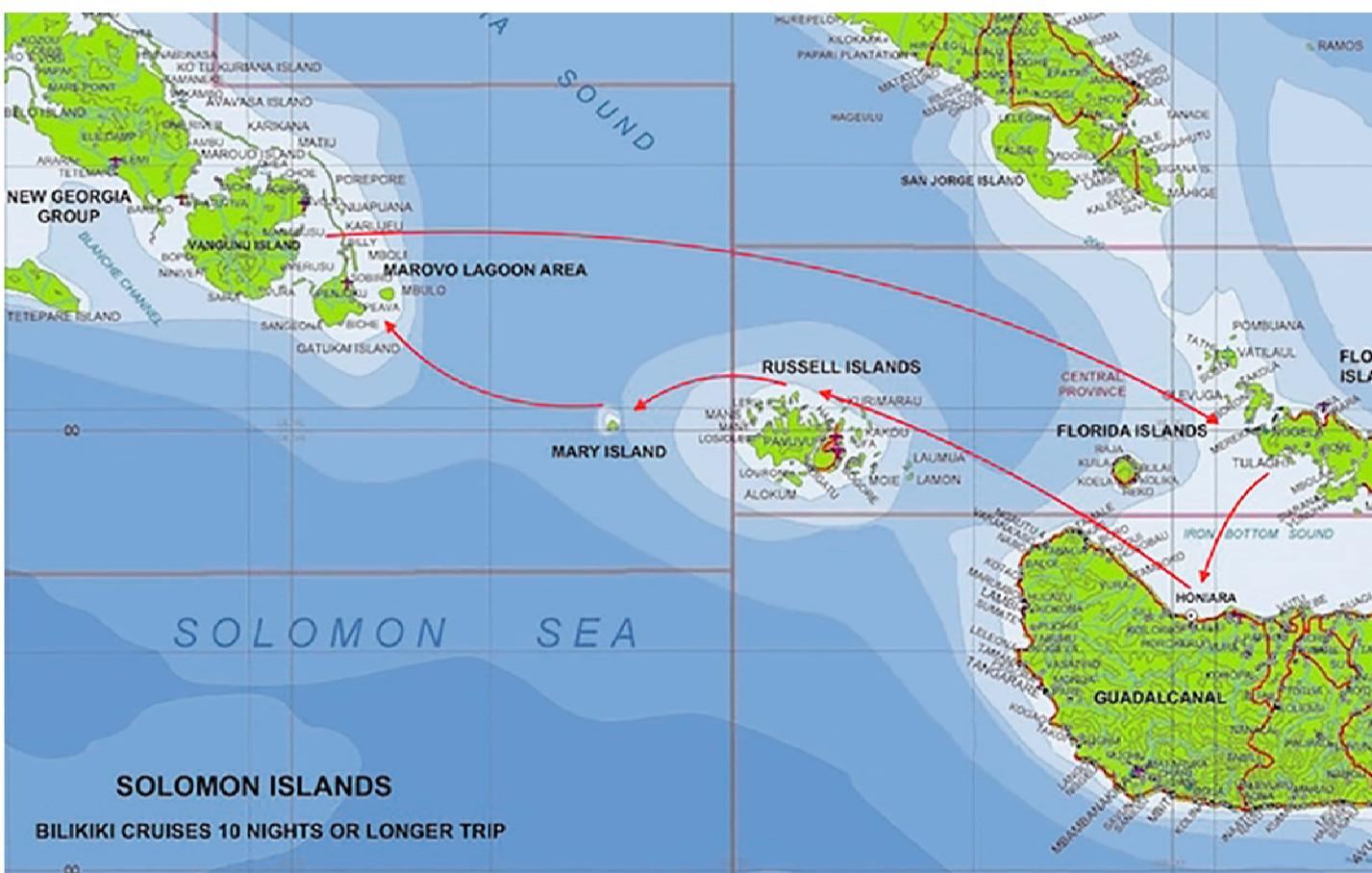


WORLD-CLASS DIVING: Solomon Islands

Solomons' waters give you outstanding variation in world-class diving: healthy hard coral reefs, sheer walls with enormous fans, caverns and caves, current-swept passages, muck sites with their bizarre critters, bommies teeming with brilliant tropical fish, pelagics, plus WWII and modern wrecks. All this in toasty warm waters with great viz and minimal dive tourism—so you'll have the dive sites to yourselves.

Spending 10 days at sea means there's enough time for you to explore all three of main island groups: Florida Islands, Russell Islands, and Marovo Lagoon in the New Georgia Group. With nearly 30 years of dive experience in the region's waters, the *Bilikiki* crew have discovered countless gems to show you. The following map shows a typical 10-day itinerary:



Russell Islands

Leru Cut

A spectacular split in Leru island forms a breathtakingly beautiful reef formation. You can swim 200' into the cut and surface right inside the jungle canopy which, when dived at the right time of day, has amazing beams of light and fantastic photo opportunities of the vine-covered cliffs and jungle. Then descend and exit onto a sheer wall of fans and soft coral. On the way back out, stop to look for electric clams, ghostpipefish and pygmy seahorses.

White Beach

Both a historical dive and fantastic macro site, this mangrove-lined steep rubble slope was the dumping ground for American military equipment after WWII: trucks, sunken pontoons, earth-moving equipment, a jeep, bombs, ammunition and vintage bottles. Mantis shrimp, archerfish, mandarinfish and jawfish call this place home.

Mirror Pond

At the edge of a hard coral garden, enter a cave that opens to daylight in a stunning pond reflecting the jungle overhead. Outside on the reef is a sheer wall where snappers and trevallies hunt and pygmy seahorses hide in gorgeous gorgonian fans. The shallows host a stunning coral garden where crocodilefish, cuttlefish and anemonefish live. If you're lucky, you may see the resident crocodile.

Karumolun Point

The Chief of Karumolun Island has banned all fishing and collecting on this dive site for the past 5 years, creating a local marine protected area. This point is covered in soft corals and hosts a big school of jacks, barracudas and lots of sharks. Often eagle rays are seen here. The macro side of this dive site is fantastic as well with electric disco clams (Red File Shell Clams), cuttlefish, crocodilefish, ghostpipefish and nudibranchs galore, to name a few things usually seen here.

Mary Island

Divers often refer to Mary Island as the “best” dive of a trip. It is an isolated, uninhabited island with *stakka fis* (stacks of fish) swarming the pristine hard coral slope that drops away into the inky abyss. Here we find a stunning amount of hard corals and fish life. The schools of fish are amazing here, along with grey reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks and blacktip reef sharks patrolling the area. Jacks and barracuda are in abundance. The rumbling sounds of distant underwater volcanic eruptions make this an unforgettable dive site. We usually stay here for the whole day.

Marovo Lagoon

This island group is characterized by awesome drift dives along stunning sheer walls covered in the largest seafans ever seen. This area is only visited on longer trips (like ours). There are many villages with carvings for sale in this area.

Kicha

Not only is this dive site a truly stunning example of hard corals and seafans, it is teeming with fish life. Friendly spadefish follow divers around. Schools of jacks and barracuda circle around the point, while giant bumphead parrotfish chomp on coral. All this amazing color and beauty are accentuated by an underwater soundtrack provided by the underwater volcano, Kavachi, which is only 15 miles away.

Mbulo Caves

This dive site is a series of interconnecting caves and swimthroughs with beautiful sunbeams and a magical atmosphere. There is also staggering hard coral and tropical fish on the reef outside.

Wickham Island

There are a lot of amazing dive sites around this Island. It has something for everyone with soft coral points, the largest seafans ever seen, sharks and rays. Plus, there are great places to look for small stuff like pygmy seahorses, cuttlefish, crocodilefish, snake eels and many different species of anemonefish.

Japanese Maru #2

A Japanese cargo vessel sunk by American bombers in WWII, this is a stunning, photogenic wreck covered in black corals. A deck gun hangs over the side of the ship, and trevallies and groupers now hunt the decks.

Florida Islands

Twin Tunnels

A lush, large seamount in the middle of the channel between Guadalcanal and the Florida Islands, the top of this seamount has two tunnels, dropping vertically straight down from the top of the mount at 45’ and exiting in a cave at about 110’. There is plenty of pelagic fish action at the point where the current hits! Swimming out of the cave to the sheer wall of the seamount, you can see schools of fusiliers with grey reef sharks cruising by. This seamount is home to cuttlefish, octopus, pygmy seahorses plus schools of snapper hiding from hunting trevallies, grey reef sharks, blacktip reef sharks, mackerel, tuna and hundreds of tropical fish.

Devils’ Highway (Manta Feeding Station)

The best place in the Solomons to dive with manta rays! A channel between two islands funnels water, forming strong currents and an adrenaline-filled dive! Drift along the shallow reeftop, then duck under the reef wall and watch as up to a dozen mantas swim close by in formation to feed. They are often joined by sweetlips, jacks and bumphead parrotfish.

Maravagi Bay

A macro divers delight! A calm, protected bay offers all sorts of great macro subjects such as nudibranchs, demon stinger scorpionfish, cockatoo waspfish, various pipefish, cuttlefish, various anemonefish, juvenile spadefish, shrimps, crabs, plus a bunch of giant clams and a small wreck packed with spadefish and bream.

Japanese Mavis Seaplane

A large impressive plane, this Japanese seaplane sunk during WWII and now sits upright on the bottom at 100’ and is still intact.

The Ann

The *Ann* is a modern wreck close to shore whose hull is covered with enormous elephant ear sponges. Up in the shallows near a village, you can get shots of local children posing for you underwater.

Velvia Reef

This small seamount in the middle of a channel is a critter hunter’s nirvana. Crocodilefish, tons of nudibranchs (especially *Nembrotha kubaryana*), and lionfish are prolific here.

