



# SOLOMON AIRLINES



## Solomon Airlines brings new meaning to the words ‘national carrier’

As the country’s national carrier, Solomon Airlines needs little introduction. The company started out some 60 years ago as a small charter business, Megapode Airlines. Over the decades that followed, the government invested significantly in the company and after a rebranding in 1984, ‘Solomon Airlines’ was born.

A symbol of national pride and key enabler of the Solomon Islands’ domestic and global connectivity, the airline makes an important



contribution to the nation’s tourism sector and economic development. Today, the airline has a team of 228 staff – which over 90% are based locally – and provides passenger travel, cargo and charter services across its domestic network spanning 23 local destinations, its international hub in Brisbane, and other Pacific routes including Nadi, Port Moresby, Port Vila and Tarawa.

The company provides a cargo incentive initiative to domestic exporters, which aims to help support local businesses to grow and thrive. “We give them cheaper rates that can help them to send their goods and



“A symbol of national pride and key enabler of the Solomon Islands’...”

*expand their local market,” explained Jenny Lobo, Solomon Airlines’ Market Research Officer. “We have a good number coming onboard this initiative.”*

Solomon Airlines also donates domestic flights to support fundraisers such as the Honiara Rotary Club and collaborates to raise awareness for causes such as World Heart Day and the World Ocean Day clean-up. *“By giving back to the community, we show them how much we care and educate them to give back to the environment, because every day we depend on the environment, we live in the environment, we need the environment,”* described Jenny.



*“By giving back to the community, we show them how much we care...”*



Recently, the company has been updating its domestic and international fleet and in March last year, its new Airbus A320-200 made its maiden journey from Brisbane to Honiara.

*“The most memorable moment for me was when the airline bought the new Airbus,”* recalls Jenny. *“I was fortunate to be part of the team that brought in the new aircraft and sharing in the new experience with our people.”*

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But like most national carriers around the globe, the impact of Covid has been profound and Solomon Airlines has had to revisit its business model to stay afloat. As international borders closed, the company was forced to scale down its international flight schedule and quickly shift gears to focus on domestic tourism.

At the same time, the airline has responded to the increase in demand for charter flights in the absence of regular international flight traffic, transporting Covid vaccines and construction workers from overseas into the country, or flying seasonal



workers out to Australia to commence their employment. This has helped to further support the nation's economy and resilience during the pandemic. *"Before Covid, our main destination was Australia. Now, with the international borders closed, we have to change how we do marketing,"* said Jenny.

The company has used social media to help boost domestic travel and tourism. They have had an active Facebook presence since 2011 and post regularly, showcasing the stunning beauty of the Hapi Isles and promoting holiday packages and deals for their 48,000-plus followers.



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As part of their Covid strategy, Solomon Airlines partnered with the government to establish 'Iumi Tugeda Holidays' to boost the domestic tourism market. It is the largest domestic tourism initiative in Solomon Islands' history, traversing 9 provinces and involving more than 50 local tourism operators. It offers significant accommodation and airfare savings and has contributed to a notable rise in domestic travel over the past year.

*"We post at least four times in a week during the main peak window from 6.00-7.00pm in the evening, as that's the time where we have a high number of people visiting Facebook," explained Jenny.*



*" We post at least four times in a week... "*



But the airline is also taking care to strike a balance between serving the local market, while maintaining international interest in the Solomon Islands as a holiday destination. *"We are careful to not over-bombard with our domestic content and to ensure that we keep our international viewers as well, so that we don't lose them,"* she added.

Sharing her expertise as the airline's Market Research Officer, Jenny has also helped to introduce social media to provincial tourism operators. *"When I visited one of our Iumi Tugeda Holidays*

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*partners during one of our outreaches in the province, I helped him to create his Facebook page for his business and build his content. He didn't know that Facebook was a platform that can help his business to grow. He thought it's just a platform for communicating."*

*"I'm really happy that through what I learnt with Solomon Airlines regarding social media, I can share it with others too. When I see that our customers are satisfied and happy with our services, I am happy," shared Jenny.*





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