

Solomon Is. Culture



Tourism Solomons, proudly flying the nation's flag

In 1969, the Solomon Islands Government recognised the need for a separate organisation focused on promoting the country as a tourist destination for visitors. This led to the founding of the Solomon Islands Tourist Authority, a statutory body and National Tourism Organisation for the Solomon Islands, that represents tourism operators across the country.

The national tourist office was then rebranded in 1996, as the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau. In 2018, they again underwent another rebrand and



are now known as Tourism Solomons with the brand slogan, 'Solomon Is.'

Today, Tourism Solomons' key role is to promote Solomon Islands overseas as a desirable tourist destination. In doing so, it also aims to increase tourism development to further contribute to economic growth and diversity, and boost employment opportunities.

"We work closely with our partners to ensure that the Solomon Islands stands out as a destination. Internally, as an organisation, our partners in the

"Promote Solomon Islands overseas as a desirable tourist destination."



industry are our tourism operators,” said Helen Aumae, Tourism Solomons’ Marketing Officer.

Tourism Solomons markets the country and its offerings as a unique travel destination with activities such as fishing, diving, surfing, hiking, trekking, historical tours and its authentic and unique culture. They have 17 in-country staff and a team of 3 based internationally in Australia and the US.

“Tourism is an exciting and fun industry to work in. You get to create new relationships with people you work with, especially the tourism operators and stakeholder partners, because the industry is very inclusive that covers almost all the different sectors such as agriculture, fishing, etc.”



“ Helps put food on the table for local families...”



“It is the ability to tell people and share stories about our beautiful destination in overseas and local markets as well and encourage them to come and visit us. Seeing some of these people who actually travel to the Solomon Islands is indeed rewarding because through their visit, they’re definitely contributing to the economy and helps put food on the table for local families both directly and indirectly,” shared Helen.

Tourism Solomons targets both international and local travel enthusiasts who seek an off-the-grid experience in a part of the world that

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remains unspoilt by more commercial tourism. Their target markets include the US, Asia and Europe, with Helen highlighting that *"our main markets are Australia and New Zealand, given their proximity to the Solomon Islands as a destination but we still focus on the long-haul markets as well."*

"In time, we hope that tourism will replace sunset industries like logging, minerals, gold and fishing that have dominated the local economy for many years," she added.

Apart from their marketing responsibilities, Tourism Solomons is active in the community and engages in clean-up campaigns 4



times in a year, as well as activities for International Oceans Day and World Environment Day. In addition, they are involved in various 'Go Green' initiatives. Helen said that *"when we have visitors coming in and through our surveys, we have seen that rubbish has been one of the negative things that have been mentioned about Honiara, especially. So, as an organisation, we tend to work closely with our communities in supporting and encouraging them to keep our environments clean."*

"Supporting and encouraging them to keep our environments clean."



No different than with most organisations, particularly in the tourism sector, the global emergence of COVID-19 has halted everyday business. But Tourism Solomons quickly determined that it needed to *“shift a bit of our focus off the international market and more towards domestic customers. It is important however, that even in this challenging period, we still want to be seen as a holiday destination when borders re-open.”*

“With the focus on domestic tourism, we are currently supporting our number one partner, Solomon Airlines, with the lumi Tugeda Holidays package. This program is aimed to help our local operators in these



“We are still maintaining our international presence...”



difficult times to bring some much-needed revenue. It also helps operators in preparing them to maintain their offerings and standards for when we can open our borders again.”

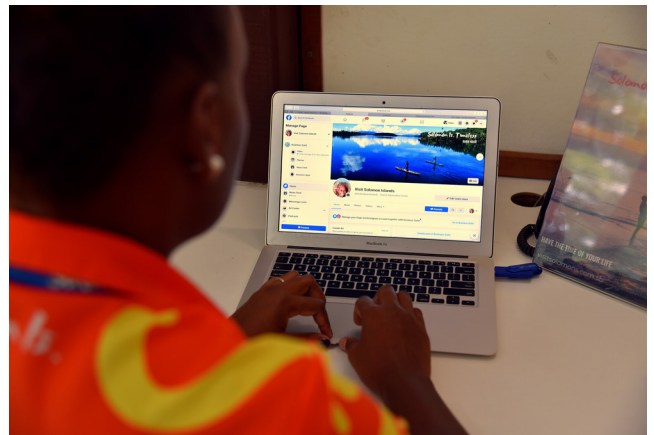
“Aside from the current pandemic, we are still maintaining our international presence as part of our core responsibility as the marketing arm of the government. We have been doing this through PR and online marketing activities. Currently, our strategic focus is on domestic tourism, digital marketing and preparation for the re-opening of borders,” explained Helen.

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Tourism Solomons began using Facebook in 2009 and the platform has accentuated their digital marketing efforts. Through Facebook, they post stunning imagery of Solomon Islands' crystal waters, vibrant coral reefs, warm hospitality and local communities. They also share tourism-related news and highlight holiday packages on offer by local operators.

"We help to promote and market their offerings to our customers both local and international. Through their engagement with Tourism Solomons, they have the opportunity for their products and services to be promoted and marketed through our contacts both on traditional print media and especially online and digital as well."

"We help promote and market their offerings to our customers..."



Helen noted the differences in using social media for personal, compared with professional and marketing purposes. She said that *"setting up a post for your organisation's business profile is very different to when you decide to post on your personal page. I overcame this by learning how other destinations present themselves to their customers digitally."*

"The other challenge is when there is limited material to share. Thankfully, this is not the case now as we have some fresh materials in store to share with our customers. During this pandemic, the team has been involved in collecting new materials, imagery and updated information from our

tourism operators and their activities which are on offer."

"Through our marketing on Facebook, it has helped us to reach a lot more people than we're used to compared to when we were focusing on the traditional style of marketing. This is because as a marketer, we now understand that a lot of people nowadays are actually going online and on Facebook to search for information on a particular destination that they would like to visit."

She continued saying that, "we also use Facebook as a way of reaching out to more travel agents in our target markets. Now, Facebook, Instagram and other digital platforms are a part of our key marketing tools. This is due to the exposure that social media has created for Solomon Islands as a destination."

Tourism has undoubtedly been one of the industries most heavily affected by COVID-19, due to travel restrictions and border closures. But throughout the pandemic, Tourism Solomons has displayed true resilience and determination to move forward. It has adapted to the current situation, while remaining ready to welcome back international visitors to experience the beauty of the Hapi Isles once more. "Solomons is still here [and] even in these unprecedented times, is always here and is waiting," concluded Helen.



"Solomons is still here even in these unprecedented times..."





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