

SOLOMON ISLANDS: PARADISE WITH A DARK TWIST



The official figures monitoring the considerable increase in tourists visiting the Solomon Islands are very promising. Yet there are many challenges which need serious consideration.

Over the past five years, **Solomon Islands** managed to attract an impressive number of tourists. In fact, the country has recorded an admirable **38% increase in incoming visitors** in the last quarter of 2008 compared to only 18% in the previous three. The government rejoices over the growing popularity of their home.

The Solomon Islands is an **ideal holiday destination** - it is warm all year round and there is a convenient flight connection between Australia's Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and the Honiara, the capital. Holiday makers find this destination rather exotic and enjoy the vast **diving opportunities** and unspoilt marine riches of the thousand islands which the country consists of. Local ancestral culture and traditions also present a diverting attraction to many visitors. Gaining and maintaining tourist attention is crucial for Solomon Island. Unfortunately, the country faces many challenges, which numerous critics often point out. The major issue appears to be local petty crime. Thieves are everywhere and vandalism is also a very apparent problem. In addition to a not very well organized and efficient police force, the image of Solomon Islands is likely to be jeopardized. The infrastructure needs improving as well. On the other hand, one of the weakest aspects - **the lack of sufficient hotel facilities** - seems to have been solved; the **Heritage Park Hotel** in the Honiara, the capital, is opening soon.

The global crisis is likely to have an impact on the tourist flow as well. Nevertheless, the local authorities remain enthusiastic about the future of tourist industry in their homeland. More initiative not only from the government but also the nation will be needed in order to overcome the stigma of criminality and lack of participation on the locals' part. In order to attract tourists and create a positive image which will drive tourists closer, more will and order are required. Hopefully, the upcoming years will see this revelation being brought into practice.

Date: 2009-03-02

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/solomon-islands-paradise-with-a-dark-twist-news1436>