



Events

flysolomons.com
Solomon Airlines Limited

Running towards fitness

AT THE SOLOMON AIRLINES PEACE MARATHON

With momentum building in the Solomon Islands as the host country for the XVII Pacific Games, a community oriented running event brings together local athletic stars alongside fun runners.

WORDS FIONA HARPER

Think about renowned running events and Athens, New York and Boston Marathons probably spring to mind. The Solomon Islands? Not so much. Race organisers of the 2022 Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon aim to change that perception. The Solomon Islands are known for their

striking natural beauty both above and below the sea, as well its cultural attractions and intriguing festivals. Now, fitness, health and wellness-focused travellers have a unique running event as an added incentive to visit this much sought after South Pacific holiday destination. This annual running festival is poised as a springboard for international visitors to combine fitness with fun.

Events

The event was first held in 2009 and, after a pandemic hiatus, has returned fitter, faster and stronger. Since its inception the race has attracted local stars such as Chris Votu who holds the national record across the 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 metre distances.

Positioned as a both a competitive race along with social events in a fun environment, the 2022 Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon attracted a field of 500 athletes across distances ranging from 2km, 5km, 10km and 21.1km (half marathon). With a generous prize pool on offer, winners in the Men's and Women's half marathon each took home \$3,000, a gold medal and a domestic air ticket sponsored by Solomon Airlines. Martin Faeni won the men's event in a time of 1.15:47 while Diana Matekali won the women's event in 1.29:42. Matekali won fans around the world when she claimed the Solomon Island's first gold medal in track and field when she won the 10,000 metres race at the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games. Second place getter Sharon Firisua placed in the Top 15 of the marathon at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Men's champion Faeni also competed in the marathon at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, finishing with a very respectable sub-3 hour finish to place him as one of the Commonwealth's top 20 runners.

All events started and finish in downtown Honiara to maximise spectator participation, with the shorter 'fun run' distances attracting participants of all ages from

toddlers to the elderly. A community spirit of camaraderie meant that volunteers man the course handing out drinks, assisting runners and providing a supportive and festival-like atmosphere for all participants.

It's anticipated that the full marathon distance (42.2km) will be added to the program in 2023, which cements event as a significant regional sports event in the South Pacific region.

Coinciding with Solomon Airlines 60th anniversary while also marking the start of the countdown to the XVII Pacific Games, the community running event creates opportunities for local athletes to build their conditioning and preparation for the upcoming games. For international visitors the running event provides an incentive to combine a Solomon Islands holiday with health and fitness.



The event is part of a strategy to reignite tourism after the post-pandemic downturn and is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Culture & Tourism, Tourism Solomons, Travel Solomons and Solomon Airlines. It follows on from the tourism boards' 2021 initiative lumi Tugeda Holiday Specials program which encouraged Solomon Islanders to travel locally by offering massive holiday savings across 11 destinations in 8 Provinces.

Opposite: And we're off! The first wave of runners hit the pavement in the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon. Above: The Honiara community banded together on the day. Below: Running stars of the future.





This annual running festival is poised to be a springboard for international visitors to combine fitness with fun.



Pictured: Is red really the fastest? Runners came in teams dressed in all colours. Opposite: As well as all colours, they came in all kinds of costumes as well.

The Solomon Islands is ideally placed to capitalise on wellness-focused travellers. Health and wellness tourism was a multi-billion industry long before the COVID-19 pandemic, with travellers across the globe planning their holidays around fitness events and wellness activities. World travellers made over 900 million wellness oriented trips in 2019. The Global Wellness Institute predicts that "the wellness market

will return to its robust growth, with the wellness economy reaching nearly \$7 trillion in 2025." Encouraging and supporting health and fitness for both locals and visitors alike is a key element to continuing to build a tourism industry founded upon popular activities like scuba diving, surfing and island cruising. The revival of the annual running festival is just one more enticing incentive to travel to the Solomon Islands. ▴



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ATHLETICS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS?

Travel Solomons is the event manager for the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon, with the next event scheduled to take place in August 2023. Follow the Facebook page for information ([solomonairlinesmarathon](https://www.facebook.com/solomonairlinesmarathon)). Solomon Islands is the host nation for the XVII Pacific Games which start on 19 November 2023 and are expected to attract over 5,000 athletes from Pacific nations – www.oceanoc.org for more information on the Games.





WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO



HERITAGE PARK

H O T E L

H O N I A R A

A part of Constantinou Group of Companies

www.heritageparkhotel.com.sb
(1 677) 24007 ~ info@heritageparkhotel.com.sb

