



## **P&O Cruises Makes History in Solomon Islands**

September 30, 2016

P&O Cruises' Pacific Eden today became the largest cruise ship to visit the remote paradise of Gizo in the Solomon Islands as part of a history-making voyage.

Today's visit to Gizo, which is the capital of the Western Province, Solomon Islands, is P&O's inaugural call to the port and the first of two maiden visits for Pacific Eden in the Solomon Islands this week.

When Pacific Eden berths at Honiara tomorrow (Saturday), she also becomes the first cruise ship – and the largest vessel – to call at the new Honiara City wharf.

P&O Cruises President Sture Myrmell thanked the City of Gizo community for today's special welcome for Pacific Eden's 1500 guests. Prior to P&O's call, only smaller expedition style ships have visited the city.

"Pacific Eden has the honour of being the largest cruise ship and the first P&O vessel to visit the City of Gizo - a major event for the community," Mr Myrmell said.

"From the moment our guests got off the ship, they were made to feel welcome. Our ship's tenders were greeted and escorted to shore by a traditional war "tomoko" canoe, paddled by 26 locals.

"The main road was closed to create a pedestrian walk and lined with traditional arts and crafts stalls staffed by locals, including wood carvers from all over the Western Province who came to the city to sell handcrafted souvenirs.

"The Solomon Islands craftsmanship is world-class and its wood carvers are renowned for beautiful work that features Mother of Pearl shell inlay," he said.

"There were also locals selling fresh coconuts and entertainers showcasing the area's cultural dancing and music.

"I would like to thank the people of the City of Gizo for putting on a wonderful welcome for our guests, providing an experience of the Pacific that they will never forget," Mr Myrmell said.

Pacific Eden, which is on a 10-day voyage to ports in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands from Cairns, will visit Honiara tomorrow, becoming the first cruise ship and also the largest vessel to call at the new wharf in Honiara Port.

P&O will host a special lunch onboard Pacific Eden for members of the Solomon Islands Government, the community and Australia's High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands, Andrew Byrne.

"The Government and people of Western Province have made an enormous effort to ensure that this visit is successful. I'm confident we will look back on this visit in years to come as the dawn of a new era for tourism in Solomon Islands," Mr Byrne said.

Pacific Eden will return to Gizo and Honiara at the end of October. She will make a further three visits to Solomon Islands in 2017.

In total, there will be seven ships under the Carnival Australia umbrella that have called in Honiara this year. In addition to P&O Cruises' two visits, Princess Cruises has made four calls while Seabourn has also made one visit.

A study released in July this year showed cruise shipping contributed about \$640,000 to the Solomon Islands each year in direct and indirect economic impact.

The study, which was commissioned by the Australian Government, World Bank Group member IFC and Carnival Australia, identified the potential to develop cruise tourism so there were shared benefits for the community.

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