

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Orion helps rebuild the fabric of life in Ghizo

Returning to Ghizo in the Solomon Islands during April 2008, the Captain of *Orion* presented a cheque for \$10,000 for use by the local community to help rebuild some of the social structure lost after the previous year's destructive tsunami which destroyed coastal villages and damaged much of the island's infrastructure. (With an epicentre located just 45 kilometres south of Ghizo the earthquake that produced the tsunami registered 8.1 on the Richter scale.)

A recent message from Ghizo's provincial member, the Honourable Danny Kennedy, confirms the monies received have been put to good use, with the recent completion of two new women's sewing centres fully funded by Orion Expedition Cruises and generous donations by Orion's guests.

In addition to being a means of providing clothing for families, sewing provides an important social arena and income generation facility for the women and local small businesses to make uniforms for school children and sell their wares in the local markets.

The worst of the humanitarian crisis is over and life in Ghizo has returned to pre-tsunami days. The main street in Gizo (the capital of Western Province, on the island of Ghizo – different spelling) once again the setting for colourful market stalls with plentiful fruit, vegetables and fish for purchase. There being little electricity on Ghizo, and scant refrigeration, the markets are a regular event for this mainly subsistence living community.

Since first visiting in April 2008, just one week before the tsunami struck, the expedition ship *Orion* has become a regular visitor to Ghizo. *Orion* and her guests provide welcome injections of cash into the local economy through purchases at the markets (the intricate wooden carvings often inlaid with mother of pearl are outstanding), tours (nothing formal, just a ride in the back of a local ute to see Japanese occupied World War II remnants including a Zero and Kawanishi flying boat) and scuba diving (outstanding coral gardens, turtles, plentiful reef fish and sharks, and the easily accessible underwater wreck of the Japanese supply ship *Toa Maru* whose cargo holds still contain a Japanese tank, motor cycle and sidecar along with numerous sake bottles, gas masks and rifle bullets).

Nearby Kennedy Island is named after the exploits of one Lieutenant J.F. Kennedy, later to become President of the United States, whose patrol boat, the PT 109, was rammed by a Japanese destroyer and sank. After clinging to wreckage until dawn Kennedy, towing an injured seaman, and his sailors swam to a small island now known as Kennedy Island.

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Kennedy later swam to another island and arranged for a message (carved on coconut shell) to be sent to US forces prompting their rescue.

These days the attraction of a cold bottle of South Pacific Lager makes the waterfront-sited PT109 bar a popular assembly point for *Orion* guests.

Orion's guests spend time ashore in Ghizo, later in the day transferring by Zodiac to Kennedy Island where they are entertained by locals and spend the afternoon snorkelling and swimming in the clear waters that surround the island.

Orion will be visiting Ghizo again in March 2010 during the 16 night Melanesian Discovery voyage from Auckland to Rabaul (PNG).

Melanesian Discovery voyage

Departs Auckland 1st March, 2010. 16 nights Auckland, Bay of Islands, Isle of Pines, Tanna, Port Vila, Malakula, Espiritu Santo, Santa Ana, Ngella, Ghizo and Kennedy Island, Rabaul. Charter flight from Rabaul to Cairns available.

Fares begin from \$11,890 per person for an ocean view Category B Stateroom through to Owners' Suites with French Balcony at \$24,905 per person

Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the current Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is the world's latest purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship, featuring an unmatched range of onboard facilities.

With 75 crew and a maximum of just 106 passengers Orion offers the highest staff to guest ratio and guest to public space ratio of any ship based in Australian waters.

Further information on Orion Expedition Cruises can be obtained by visiting the website www.orioncruises.com.au

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: info@orioncruises.com.au



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