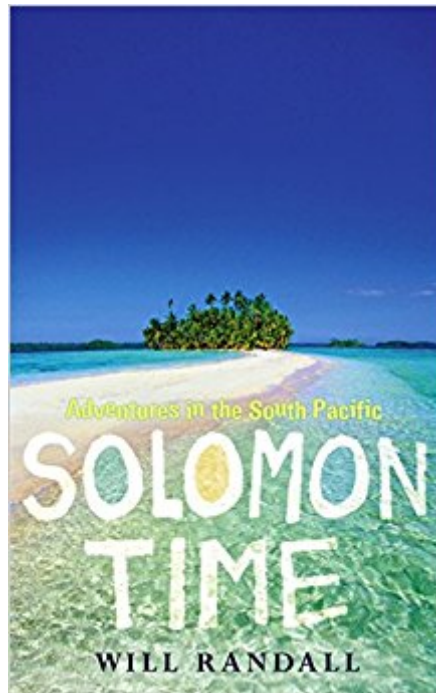




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Solomon Time: Adventures In The South Pacific



Synopsis

Echoing the experiences of Robert Louis Stevenson - who spent several years in the South Pacific - here is the story of a contemporary writer who lived in and came to love the Solomon Islands. Most unexpectedly, Will Randall, once a happy schoolteacher, found himself dispatched to a small village on a not very large island, far out in the vastness of the South Pacific. His mission (although he had hardly chosen to accept it): - to fulfil the dying wishes of the 'Commander' and help the local people set up a money-making community project. The Solomon Islands, islands lost in time - Solomon Time; these little gems of land scattered across the ocean, must be the last sanctuary on our shrivelled planet not yet overshadowed by the Golden Arches or encapsulated in a Coca-Cola bubble. Everyone has dreamed at some time of living on a desert island. Here is the unvarnished truth. Sharks, turtles, a band of unruly chickens, a cast of extraordinary characters, and a bird called the Spangled Drongo, accompany Will Randall through some of the most fascinating and certainly funniest scenes to be found in travel writing since Gerald Durrell.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Abacus (June 6, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0349115028

ISBN-13: 978-0349115023

Product Dimensions: 7.9 x 0.8 x 5.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.5 ounces

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,877,239 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #84 in [Books > Travel > Australia & South Pacific > South Pacific](#) #1843 in [Books > Travel > Australia & South Pacific > General](#) #10215 in [Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Travel](#)

Customer Reviews

Immensely likeable. OBSERVER offers plenty of pleasures. SUNDAY TIMES

Will Randall is a schoolteacher and writer who is currently working in India on his second book.

Absolutely charming book: a great read - very funny, interesting, even a bit of adventure. Tells of the

author's time spent in the Solomon Islands - mainly living on Rendova island (where John F. Kennedy's PT-109 was based during WWII) and trying to help the village develop some sort of better income. I've been to Solomon Islands, but only Guadalcanal, and last (mid 1990's) some few years prior to the period Will Randall writes of (late 1990's). I can say that his characterization of the people and culture is accurate and affectionate. I enjoyed the Pijin (one of the "Pidgin English" languages spoken in Melanesia) used in the book (you can usually figure out what it means by reading phonetically - but the author translates most anything complex into English). "Solomon Time" is a reference to the lack of the tyranny of the clock which is fairly common in the tropical parts of the developing world: there are no cold seasons, the days float along and life is what happens. The descent of the Solomon Islands into a failed state was well on its way when I was there, by the time of this book you can see the collapse of the country at the edges of the story. I was sorry to hear of the old Henderson Field being turned in to a more modern "Honiara International Airport" by the Japanese in 1996. The old airport was my favorite in the world - you felt like you were back in the 1940's: comprised of Quonset Huts and slowly rotating ceiling fans you had your passport stamped in an atmosphere of tobacco smoke and rotting vegetation. The only negatives are the often erratic nature of the narrative (he occasionally jumps forward and back in time and this is sometimes difficult to follow), and his almost subconscious dislike of people from the United States (every one he meets is described as some form of moral cripple). It is definitely an English book - references and expressions that North Americans may find hard to follow (or would plain read over without comprehension - example: aside from me, Who reads Tintin in the US or English-speaking Canada? The author uses a quote from Captain Haddock at one point as a jest, but which is lost on a person who doesn't know Captain Haddock's unique form of cursing) but I would find this part of the book's charm, although I don't know if others would.

Having lived in Solomon Islands for many years, I found Will Randall's book very entertaining and believable. He recounts his experiences in an isolated village in a lovely, naive style which is consistent with my reality. Similar to Alexander McCall Smith's stories of Africa which have a clever way of painting the characters with a patina of integrity and decency, you will find yourself feeling very affectionate towards many of Randall's subjects and affronted by those who introduce contrasting tones of mischief. The stories flow smoothly from his pen and, at the end of each chapter, I found I had a smile and a desire to start the next one. One of those books I was sorry to finish and which led me to buy several others by the same author.

I have a relative who has an island in the Solomons. Not wanting to go over there without any sort of study under my belt, I began searching for books that would tell me about this unusual place. Not only did this book give me great first account information, but it is well written. Will is a fantastic story teller and really capture the island life. Even if you never plan on traveling to the Solomon Islands, this is still a terrific little gem of a book. A+++

Funny and poignant, does a good job of capturing the feel of life in the Solomon Islands once one is away from Honiara.

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