



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM209 2014 MILNE BAY CANOE FESTIVAL TOUR THU06NOV-MON17NOV
11 nights Alotau, Trobriand Islands, Port Moresby, Wewak, Sepik River, Mt Hagen
Fully escorted sign-up soft adventure tour, group size maximum 12

The Milne Bay Canoe and Drum Festival is a celebration of Milne Bay's traditional reliance on native canoes and drums for transportation and communication between the islands. Participants from other provinces also bring their canoes and drums to join in the canoe races, drumming contests, and singing performances.

Participating canoes range from tiny one-man dugouts through outrigger sailing canoes to huge war canoes from Balimo in the Western Province. This festival is the only place outside Balimo where you can behold the spectacle of 30 black-skinned Balimo men paddling a 40 foot war canoe with all their might.

Participating drums range from *kundu* hand-drums with lizard or snake skin stretched across the opening of a hollowed log to form a tympanic membrane, through to giant slit-gong log drums made from hollowed out tree trunks and beaten with mallets to produce low frequency thuds that can be heard many miles away even from island to island.

Alotau is a small town where it is safe to wander among the crowds observing the festival activities without fear of harassment. There will be many stalls at the festival venue selling local food, handicrafts and even older artifacts that villagers bring for sale once a year at the festival.

From Alotau the tour group moves on to the Trobriand Islands, touring the main island Kiriwina and spending a whole day on tiny Munuwata Island, a sand bar lost in time where the 200 villagers spend their days fishing and tending their yam gardens.

From the islands the tour moves on to the mystical Sepik River staying two nights in local style huts among the river people, then a flight to Mt Hagen for cultural and nature tours featuring the Paiya village skull house, the Magic Mountain moss forest and orchid gardens, and a highlands sing-sing.

NB This is a "wet foot" tour that involves climbing in and out of small boats, some walking in sand and mud, and a few nights in basic huts without electricity. Some physical agility and mental resilience is required. Also note this is a unique small group tour program originally designed by Ecotourism Melanesia and not offered by other tour companies. The tour price includes a tour development levy to recover our outlays on designing, reconnoitring, organising and monitoring the tour, and a share of the tour leader's travel costs.

CORE TOUR COST: PGK 16,800 per person (11 nights)

based on twin-share or willing to share, includes internal air and many meals.

Single supplement available: please enquire.

To convert the tour cost to other currencies, please request a quote.

TOUR INCLUSIONS (11 nights):

- Port Moresby - meet, greet and assist
- Port Moresby - domestic flight to Alotau
- Alotau - 3 nights 3 star accommodation (room only - pay as you go for meals)
- Alotau - local guides for the Milne Bay Canoe and Drum Festival (attractions on the program are free entry and walking distance from all hotels)
- Alotau - sightseeing tours of the town and East Cape
- Alotau - domestic flight to Losuia, Trobriand Islands
- Trobriand Islands - 2 nights 2.0 star accommodation at Lokuia Lodge - fan cooled twin-share room with set-menu meals
- Trobriand Islands - half day road tour of Kiriwina Island
- Trobriand Islands - full day boat excursion to Munuwata Island
- Trobriand Islands - domestic flight to Port Moresby
- Port Moresby - brief city tour
- Port Moresby - 1 night 4 star accommodation at Quality Inn Gateway Hotel (room only)
www.coralseahotels.com.pg
- Port Moresby - flight to Wewak
- Wewak - road transfer to Sepik River
- Sepik River - 2 nights 3 days motor canoe expedition including village guest house accommodation, local-style meals and bottled water, village tours
- Sepik River - flight to Wewak (or alternative overland transport if flight not available)
- Wewak - 1 night 3.5 star accommodation at In-Wewak Boutique Hotel (or alternative if unavailable) - room only, pay as you go for a la carte meals and extras www.in-wewak.com
- Wewak - domestic flight to Mt Hagen
- Mt Hagen - 2 nights 2.5 star accommodation at Magic Mountain Nature Lodge - twin share bungalow including set-menu meals, bottled or boiled water
- Mt Hagen - village cultural tour with sing-sing
- Mt Hagen - full day hiking excursion
- Mt Hagen - domestic flight to Port Moresby
- Port Moresby - departure check-in assistance
- Throughout the tour we provide:
 - services of a full time tour leader
 - all fees and gratuities for local villages, guides, demonstrators and helpers
 - all airport/hotel transfers
 - all road travel by late model mini bus or four wheel drive vehicle with bottled water on board (unless otherwise specified)
 - all water travel by open speed boat, skiff or motor canoe with life vests supplied and bottled water on board (unless otherwise specified)
 - various additional gear that may be required for your safety and comfort in remote areas such as mobile satellite phone, tropical first aid kit, mosquito net, life vest, sleeping bag, supplementary food supplies (we may ask you to carry such items with your personal baggage from Port Moresby to your destination and if this incurs any excess baggage penalty we will pay the charges)
 - daily reconfirmation of flights and arrangements coordinated by our Port Moresby office
 - 24 hour assistance from our Port Moresby office (phone 7700 5066, 7204 6950 or 7686 8917)

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- international airfares
- bottled water (except where stated as provided)
- hotel meals and any other meals stated as not included, or described as “pay as you go”
- tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)
- souvenirs and items of a personal nature
- bar drinks
- visa fees and visa assistance
- excess baggage charges (your free allowance on scheduled domestic flights is 16kg + 5 kg and you can check in additional kilos at your own cost)
- personal items. Bring your own quick-dry bath towel, personal medications and first aid items, personal hygiene requirements, brimmed hat or cap, “amphibious footwear” (sandals or quick-dry canvas shoes), insect repellent, sunscreen, personal flashlight, battery-operated personal fan. NB Aerosol cans are not permitted on domestic flights in PNG so bring roll-ons or pump-action sprays.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: THU 06NOV2014

PORT MORESBY / ALOTAU

Early morning arrival from Singapore, Cairns or Brisbane.
Ecotourism Melanesia staff will greet you at the airport and assist you to check in for your connecting flight to Alotau.

10:00 Air Niugini flight PX954 departs Port Moresby for Alotau (aircraft: Dash 8-Q400 with 74 seats).

10:50 On arrival at Alotau’s Gurney Airport the group will transfer to the hotel and check in before lunch (pay as you go).

After lunch we take a familiarisation tour around Alotau township by mini bus, including the markets, the Chinese shops, the war memorials, scenic views and other places of interest.

Overnight 3 star hotel, Alotau eg Masurina Lodge or Napatana Lodge (room only, pay as you go for meals)

DAY 2: FRI 07NOV2014

ALOTAU

This morning attend the Canoe and Drum festival activities such as canoe races, drum beating contests, traditional dancing, displays of handicrafts, agricultural and maricultural produce, demonstrations of weaving, carving, local style cooking. You can either stick with our tour leader or venture out by yourself with a copy of the tour program and town map - it’s a small town and impossible to get lost. There will be crowds of friendly locals who will look after you if you need any help. Alotau is that kind of place. For lunch, buy some local food from the stalls at the festival, or try formal dining at the Alotau International Hotel on the foreshore. There are also a few local style diners in the shopping area where you can sit down to local fare. There will be a full day’s entertainment including local bands, dancing groups, and the annual beer can regatta.

Overnight 3 star hotel, Alotau (room only, pay as you go for meals)

DAY 3: SAT 08NOV2013

ALOTAU

Spend another half day at the Canoe and Drum festival venue which is walking distance from our hotel.

In the afternoon the group will take an excursion to the East Cape (PNG’s

Land's End) with a stop at pretty Biwa Beach and the skull cave.

Overnight 3 star hotel, Alotau (room only, pay as you go for meals)

DAY 4: SUN 09NOV2014

ALOTAU / TROBRIAND ISLANDS (half day tour of Kiriwina Island)

After breakfast, settle your meals and extras at the hotel reception before we transfer to the airport by hotel shuttle.

10:45 Airlines PNG flight CG1644 departs Alotau for Losuia, Trobriand Islands (aircraft: Dash 8-200 with 37 seats)

11:25 On arrival at Losuia airport on Kiriwina, the largest of the Trobriand Islands, we transfer 30 minutes by bumpy local road to Lokuia Lodge, located on the foreshore of Losuia township.

After checking in to our fortunately air-conditioned rooms and having our first Trobriand Islands lunch - hopefully their famous chilli mud crab - we venture out on a half day tour of Kiriwina Island. Although playing host to the township, port and airport, Kiriwina Island is pleasantly traditional, most village houses are made of bush materials, and daily routine of fishing and tending yam gardens persists as it has for centuries.

Overnight Lokuia Lodge (2 star accommodation in fan cooled room with private bathroom, includes set-menu meals).

DAY 5: MON 10NOV 2014

TROBRIAND ISLANDS (day trip to Munuwata Island)

After breakfast (crab omelette is a specialty at Lokuia Lodge!), we board a local "banana boat" for the one hour trip out to Munuwata Island.

Fortunately Lokuia Lodge is right on the water's edge and we won't have to go far to step into our boat. At Munuwata we will have a full-on cultural experience with a small community of Trobriand Islanders living on a tiny island that most of us would call paradise.

On arrival at the island we will be treated to a traditional welcome procession on the beach, and dancers will escort us up to the village. Don't worry, this is not just a tourist show as the islanders would normally offer such a colourful welcome to any native visitors from the other islands as well.

At the village square, the community will then treat us to the "best of" their cultural repertoire including the tapoika dance (a hilarious sexually suggestive routine mimicking the pounding of sago with a pestle), the "string dance" and a number of children's dances. Yes the children will miss school today to be present for our arrival ... don't worry they will learn more from us and our visit than they would pick up in a day at school. During the traditional dancing you are welcome to get up close with your camera and take as many photographs as you like. After the performance the kids will run and play on the beach while we enjoy a selection of island foods for lunch, including fruit, fish, shellfish, sago, yam and greens.

In the afternoon the Munuwata people will show us around their village, their gardens and their daily routine. We'll see how they build and repair houses with bush materials from the light rainforest on the island. On Munuwata, typical of most Trobriand Islands, families do not live in larger family homes but each couple or individual has his or own separate little sleeping hut. A child sleeps with his parents until puberty and then builds his or her own sleeping hut. Each extended family's sleeping huts are built

in a circle or semi circle around a central “haus win” or breeze house where the family members sit and socialise, kind of like a living room. The smoke house where food is cooked is usually attached to the haus win, because food preparation is a hugely social activity here. (On Kiriwina Island, where the villages have more space to play with, clusters of sleeping huts are built in concentric circles around a central yam house.

The Munuwata people will show us how they grow and cook their own food, and how they catch fish with lines and nets. A visit to Munuwata would not be complete without getting into (and falling out of) one of their native canoes so don't miss the opportunity to go out for a paddle.

Late afternoon, we transfer by boat back to Lokuia Lodge.

Overnight Lokuia Lodge (2 star accommodation in fan cooled room with private bathroom, includes set-menu meals)

DAY 6: TUE 11NOV 2014

TROBRIAND ISLANDS (Wawela beach trip) / PORT MORESBY

08:00 After breakfast if time allows we will take an excursion down the bottom “tail” of Kiriwina to Wawela, a picture-perfect palm tree beach where we can take a pleasant beach walk and a dip in the Solomon Sea. Local who live near the beach will bring us young coconuts to drink the juice.

10:00 Depart Wawela beach for Losuia airport. A boxed lunch is provided to eat before or during the flight (all domestic flights in PNG are non-catering).

11:50 Airlines PNG flight CG 1645 departs Losuia for Port Moresby (via Alotau) (aircraft: Dash 8-200 with 36 seats)

14:00 On arrival at Port Moresby airport we transfer to our hotel.

15:30 Commence a two hour city tour.

Overnight Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby (4 star twin share, room only - pay as you go for meals and extras)

DAY 7: WED 12NOV2014

PORT MORESBY / WEWAK / SEPIK RIVER (Korogo)

10:00 Air Niugini flight PX944 departs Port Moresby for Wewak (aircraft: Dash 8-Q400 with 76 seats)

11:30 On arrival we stop at one of the hotels to have lunch (pay as you go) then depart by private four wheel drive vehicle to Pagwi, our jumping-off point on the Sepik River.

The road from Wewak to Pagwi is tar sealed most of the way and quite a pleasant journey. First we climb steep winding curves from the steamy coastal strip to the cool forests of the undulating Prince Alexander Range. Two hours into the trip we stop at a roadside market to buy tropical fruits, cooked vegetables and delicious green coconuts to drink (pay as you go). Back on the road, we soon see fleeting views through the trees of the Sepik plains, with the river itself a fuzzy brown ribbon on the horizon. Descending onto the savannah grasslands of the Sepik Basin, we pass through a number of villages before arriving at Pagwi “station” on the Middle Sepik by early afternoon.

At Pagwi we board our waiting motor canoe and head down-river approximately half an hour to Korogo, one of the Middle Sepik crocodile cult villages. After we settle into the village guest house we take a familiarisation walk around the village, stopping at the Haus Tambaran

(men's spirit house) where the curator will show us the tambu artifacts and explain the traditions of the crocodile cult.

Overnight village guest house, Korogo (1 star village hut, includes meals and drinking water).

A supply of dry groceries - flour, sugar, biscuits, coffee/tea etc - will be supplied by the tour company to supplement food provided in the villages, plus an adequate supply of drinking water. Accommodation will be twin-share or dormitory style in the village guest hut. Tropical sleeping bags and mosquito nets are supplied. We strongly suggest you bring a battery-operated personal fan to cool yourself when sleeping under your mosquito net.

DAY 8: THU 13NOV2014

SEPIK RIVER (Korogo to Kaminabit)

From Korogo we will travel one hour downstream to the heart of the crocodile cult, the twin villages of Palembangi and Kanganaman which are located on opposite sides of the river.

TOUR NOTE: The Middle Sepik crocodile cult

Crocodiles (known locally as "pook-pooks") play a major part in the cultural heritage of the Middle Sepik people. Crocodiles are animal totems symbolising strength and power. In the Middle Sepik crocodile cult villages from Korogo down to Kaminabit the attributes of the crocodile are so envied that the men even try to make themselves look like crocodiles. The initiation of boys into adulthood involves a painful and bloody scarification ritual during which dozens of small cuts are made all over the back from shoulders to hips, and pockets of skin are lifted away from the flesh. Upon healing, this leaves raised scars that resemble the bumpy hide of the crocodile. Such initiations are carried out in secret only once or twice a year and outsiders are not normally allowed to witness the cutting ritual although increasingly villagers are accepting large cash inducements from film crews and wealthy tourists for permission to observe and photograph their young men undergoing the skin cutting.

Once initiated, the men of the crocodile cult may sit in the Haus Tambaran (men's spirit house) and participate in pagan cult practises such as communing with the ancestors.

Middle Sepik men who are not initiated (for whatever reason eg due to Christian religious beliefs, due to living in the city and not having the opportunity, or due to being frightened of the pain), are not permitted to enter the Haus Tambaran. However in most villages the initiated men do allow outside visitors, including foreign women, to enter.

While Palembangi boasts two of the most ornate spirit houses on the Sepik, Kanganaman certainly has the biggest as it is set on very high posts to defend it from flooding.

Both Palembangi and Kanganaman are located about 20 minutes walk inland from the river bank so you will carry only your camera and day-pack with you while your larger luggage remains in the canoe with the canoe crew. A fruit lunch is provided at Palembangi.

Apart from inspecting the spirit houses with their collections of artifacts, the locals will put on a traditional dance performance in the village setting which will provide a much better background for photography than at the crocodile festival. There will also be an opportunity to photograph the "crocodile skin" of initiated men.

Later in the day we continue another hour downstream to the large riverside village of Kaminabit which is actually split into two "suburbs" - Kaminabit 1 and Kaminabit 2. Here we take a longer walk through the village meeting the locals and seeing what they are up to: smoking fish over hot coals, washing sago in the river, repairing houses that are constantly damaged by wind and water, and of course the daily fishing routine.

Overnight village guest house, Kaminabit (includes local style food and bottled water).

DAY 9: FRI 14NOV2014

SEPIK RIVER

07:00 After breakfast we will depart Kaminabit and continue by motor canoe further downstream a 90 minute journey to Tambanum.

TOUR NOTE: Tambanum village

Tambanum is the largest village on the Sepik River (population about 2000) which actually spills over onto both banks of the river. The locals get from one side of the village to the other by standing in flat-bottomed canoes and poling themselves across. The River is suitably shallow here at low tide.

There are several clans inhabiting Tambanum village and each clan has its own Haus Tambaran (men's spirit house). The Haus Tambarans at Tambanum are only small but each one contains a variety of old and interesting artifacts including an orator's stool which is a large wooden statue with a seat where the meeting leader sits while speaking about important issues. Some clans at Tambanum do not allow women to enter their Haus Tambaran, even tourists. Other clans allow female visitors to enter. Your guide will pay any fees involved.

Tambanum is well dubbed "the carving factory of the Sepik" because Tambanum people are prolific artisans. As you walk through the village you will see almost every house displaying handicrafts for sale including masks, figurines, fish traps, mats, jewellery, animal totems, canoe prows, bows and arrows, clubs, grass skirts, tapa cloth, cooking utensils, sago beaters and sago bowls... most of which are genuine cultural artifacts that they would normally make for their own use and purposes but nowadays they also make extra ones for sale to visitors. There are also some items made specifically as souvenirs - your guide will help you tell the difference. Many houses at Tambanum are decorated with large woven gable masks sitting just under their roofs - these are usually clan totems and not available for sale (too large to carry out anyway).

As you walk through village (about 30 minutes walk from one side to the other) the village people will come out of their houses to say hello and answer any questions you may have about the decorations and wares displayed on and under their homes. Your guide will arrange a visit to one or two of the house tambarans.

11:00 Your guide will arrange some fruit for lunch then the group will depart Tambanum and motor back upstream half an hour to Timbuk mission which has the only airstrip on the Middle Sepik.

13:00 Our MAF charter aircraft touches down from Wewak and we board for the return sector. Depending on our group numbers and baggage weight the aircraft may have to make two trips. It's only 20 minutes flying time each way so it won't take long to come back for the second load of passengers if two flights are required. (In the event that weather conditions or operational problems preclude uplift by air, alternative overland transport will be arranged. There is a road from Timbuk to Wewak but the journey takes four hours and is quite a rough surface so a road transfer will be kept as a backup measure only).

The rest of the day is at leisure at the hotel - swim in the pool, relax on the plantation verandah overlooking the Bismarck Sea, take a walk around the Wewak Hill area past homes and schools.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel, Wewak (3.5 star twin room, room only, pay-as-you-go for meals by cash or card)

DAY 10: SAT 15NOV2014

WEWAK / MT HAGEN

After a leisurely breakfast we transfer back to Wewak airport and check in for our flight to Mt Hagen

11:00 Airlines PNG flight CG1623 departs Wewak for Mt Hagen and Port Moresby (aircraft: Dash 8-200 with 37 seats)

11:45 on arrival in Mt Hagen we are met by our local guide and transfer 45 minutes via Mt Hagen town and out the other side into the picturesque Nebilyer Valley and up the lower slopes of Mount Hagen (the mountain) to Magic Mountain Nature Lodge.

13:00 Lunch at Magic Mountain Nature Lodge.

After lunch we will enjoy a guided walk through the orchid gardens around the lodge which feature endemic varieties of flowering trees and tree ferns, saprophytic native orchids and colourful mosses, funghi, lichens, liverworts and leafy epiphytes. Real "Lord of the Rings" stuff - a cryptogamic botanist's dream.

Mid afternoon we will visit nearby Paiya (Paiyakona) village, a "dispersed" type village where all the families live some distance apart separated by their gardening lands. Here we will meet the chief and his three wives and see displays of Western Highlands village culture including a men's ceremonial house, an ancestors skull house and demonstrations of traditional wig-making and the courtship ritual "tanim het" (turnim head). The highlight of the village tour will be a sing-sing performance late in the afternoon featuring both a men's dance and a women's dance (in the highlands, men and women never dance together in one group).

Overnight Magic Mountain Nature Lodge (2.5 star twin share bungalows, includes set-menu meals)

DAY 11: SUN 16NOV2014

MT HAGEN (hiking)

Today a choice of hikes is offered and the group may split according to choice:

Hike 1: Full day climb to the summit of Mount Hagen (3800m), an 8 hour return hike from Magic Mountain Nature Lodge which is located on the lower slopes of Mount Hagen. Most of the walking is through light bushland and open grasslands. Views of the Nebilyer Valley, Mt Hagen town and much of the southern and western highlands can be enjoyed from the summit. This is a non-technical climb - basically just a steep hike up and steep hike down again. Picnic lunch provided.

Hike 2: A 2 hour walk through the moss and orchid forest around Magic Mountain (which is a lesser peak at the base of Mount Hagen) with opportunities to see native birds

Hike 3: A 2 hour a scenic walk from Magic Mountain along the sealed road heading towards Enga Province, stopping at roadside hamlets to chat with locals engaged in tending their gardens and animals. For several kilometres past Magic Mountain the terrain and villages are very picturesque and make for excellent photography. Walk as near or as far as you like and the lodge vehicle will pick you up and drive you back to the lodge.

Hike 4: A 2 hour downhill hike down the Paiyakona valley through montane forest to the high waterfall at the bottom of the valley where you can take a frosty dip and then return to the lodge by car.

Hikes 2, 3 and 4 are pleasant and unhurried. You may choose to take one walk in the morning and another in the afternoon. For all walks you will be accompanied by a guide from the lodge. If you have limited fitness we recommend Hikes 2 and 3 because these can be cut short if you get tired whereas for Hike 4 once you start walking you are committed until you

reach the waterfall pickup point.

Overnight Magic Mountain Nature Lodge (2.5 star twin share bungalows, includes set-menu meals)

DAY 12: MON 17NOV2014

MT HAGEN / PORT MORESBY

07:00 Depart Magic Mountain

08:00 Check in at Mt Hagen airport

09:30 Air Niugini flight PX181 departs Mt Hagen for Port Moresby (aircraft: Fokker F100 jet with 98 seats)

10:30 On arrival in Port Moresby, check in for your afternoon flight to Singapore, Brisbane or Cairns.

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