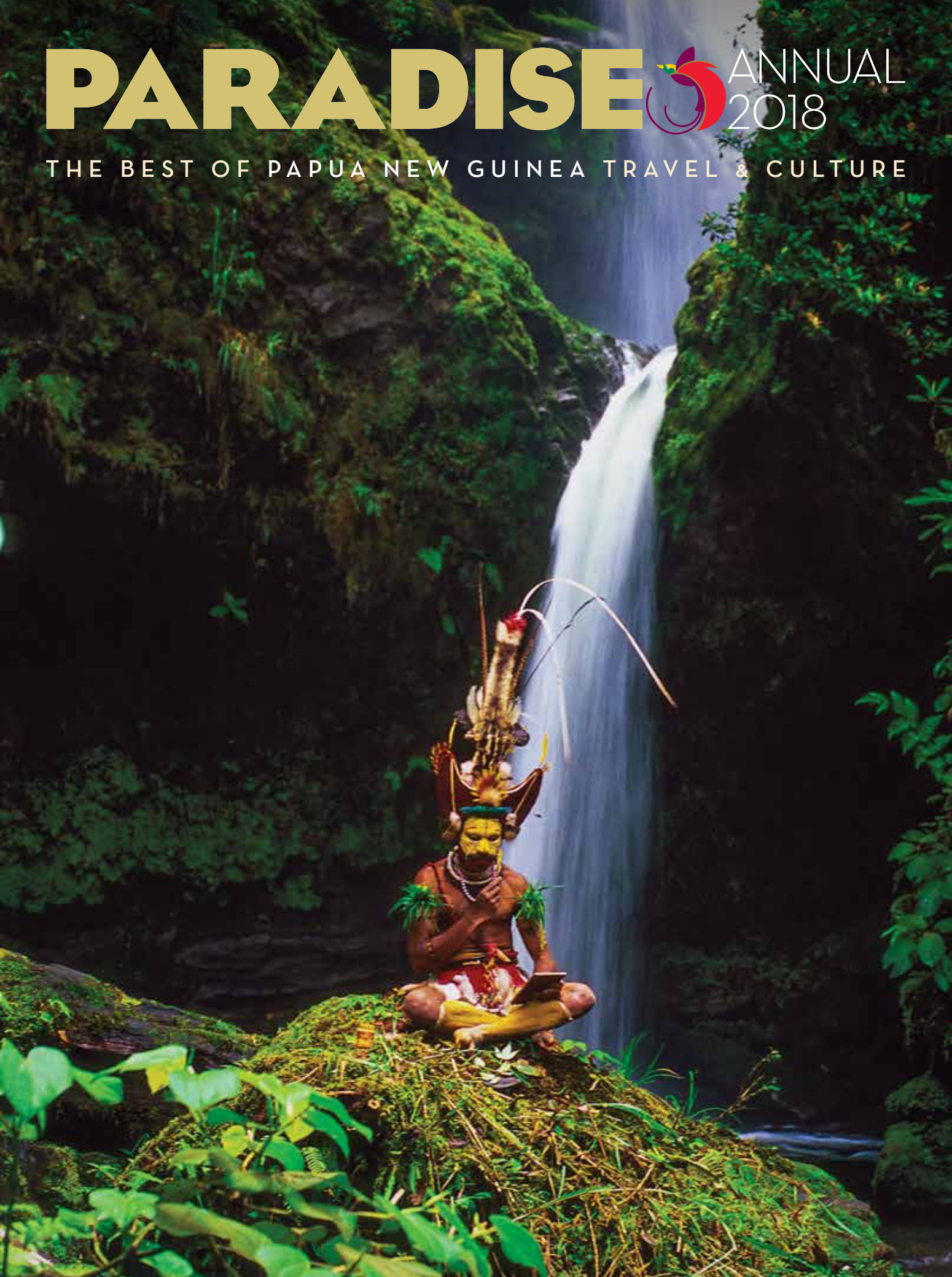


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OPENING SHOT



PICTURE: MILEN STILIYANOV

Where eagles dare. Port Moresby from the air. The Papua New Guinea capital has been transformed with new precincts, hotels and restaurants in preparation for the 2018 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference. As part of the conference, global leaders' will meet in Port Moresby during November.

The *Paradise Annual* is an Air Niugini magazine, produced by Business Advantage International.

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PRIDE IN PNG.



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COVER PHOTO A Huli Wigman at the Inbilg waterfall near Ambua Lodge in Hela Province. Picture: David Kirkland

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first *Paradise Annual*, an Air Niugini publication that showcases the best stories and photos about Papua New Guinea, and also includes a comprehensive guide to all 22 provinces.

The guide details places to stay, what to see, how to get there with Air Niugini, and comments from locals on what they love about their part of PNG.

We've also included a diary of PNG's big events in 2018, including colourful cultural festivals and *sing-sings*. Many of the feature articles have appeared in the regular inflight issues of *Paradise* carried by Air Niugini during the past 12 months, and have been updated where necessary.

The task of selecting stories and photos for the first 'best of' annual was a tough one that took some months, but it was an assignment that was approached with enthusiasm in the *Paradise* office.

PNG is a country full of fascinating stories and, in the

end, we couldn't resist including some of our favourite older stories too.

One of those is an essay by Chips Mackellar, a former PNG patrol officer, who writes about a blind man who falls asleep in a canoe and drifts out to sea. When we published this piece in 2015, it received a proverbial standing ovation in reader response.

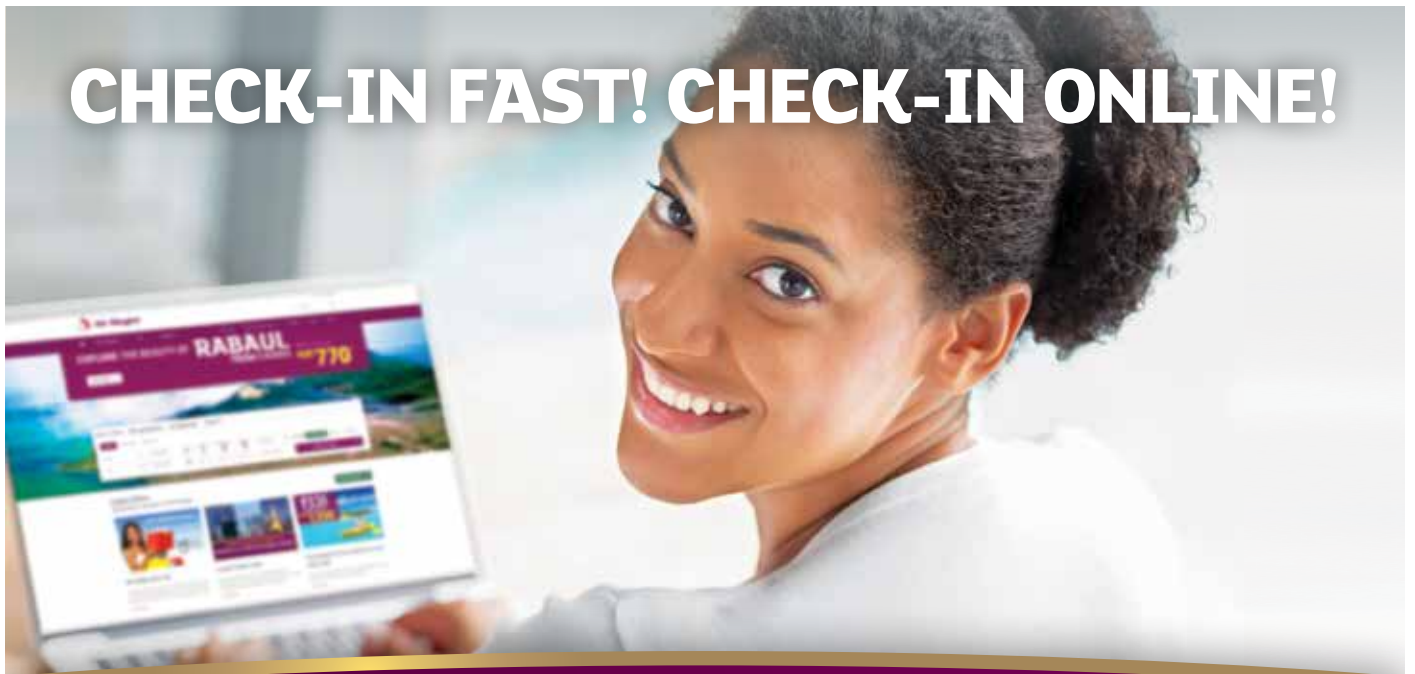
Some of the best photographers to have travelled to PNG are also featured.

Among them is Puerto Rican Wylda Bayron. She initially went to PNG as a tourist, but ended up staying a year and a half after she set herself a goal of shooting the traditional costumes in all 22 provinces.

Thanks also to the other marvellous photographers who have contributed, including Rocky Roe, Jan Hasselberg, Chris McLennan, Milen Stiliyanov and David Kirkland.

ROBERT UPE, *Editor*

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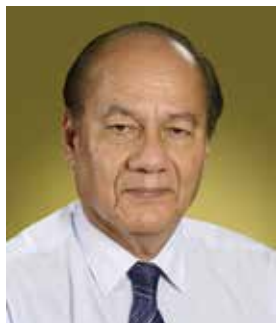


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A MESSAGE FROM AIR NIUGINI'S CHAIRMAN



Air Niugini has been bringing the world to Papua New Guinea since it was founded in 1973, two years before PNG achieved its independence.

As the country has grown and developed, so has our role as the country's major domestic and international airline – and a champion of PNG's tourism sector.

Air Niugini – together with its low-cost subsidiary Link PNG – carries 1.4 million passengers each year, while Air Niugini Tours makes it easy for travellers to enjoy PNG's key tourism centres. Founded in 2016, our Business Travel Centre (BTC) has also rapidly become one of PNG's leading travel agencies.

Air Niugini now flies regularly to and from most of the major centres in the Asia-Pacific region, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Manila, Bali, Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, Nadi, Honiara, Port Vila, Pohnpei and Chuuk.

In 2018, we will start regular passenger and freight services to China – flying initially twice weekly to Shanghai. These flights have the potential to open up new tourism opportunities for PNG and to enhance Port Moresby as a regional hub for passengers travelling from the Pacific Islands and northern Australia into Asia.

Air Niugini also continues to modernise and invest in the future.

We have taken delivery of nine Fokker 70 jet aircraft, connecting Port Moresby with PNG's regional centres and our growing Pacific network.

Our aircraft cabins are being refurbished, including new seats, and we have upgraded our systems to deliver more efficient online bookings, more competitive fare choices and improved customer service. We have expanded and redeveloped our much-lauded executive lounge network, and we will soon be preparing in earnest for the arrival of two new Boeing 737-MAX aircraft in 2020, with two more to follow in 2021.

Our own investment is being matched by the modernisation of airport terminals across the country to ensure Port Moresby and our busiest regional airports have the most modern, passenger-friendly facilities available. Runways are being strengthened and lengthened to take larger jet aircraft and all-weather 24/7 operations.

In November 2018, PNG will host the APEC Leaders' Meeting, when our country will receive many world leaders, including the presidents and prime ministers of the US, China, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

This important event, and its lead-up meetings, will open the world's eyes to our country and all the exciting opportunities for trade, investment and people-to-people links.

As you will agree as you read this exciting new annual – a sister publication to *Paradise*, Air Niugini's inflight magazine – PNG is a beautiful country with unique fauna and flora and many rich and varied cultures. It offers a range of travel experiences that are now recognised by leading travel guides globally as without parallel anywhere in the world.

I hope the *Paradise Annual 2018* inspires you to explore and enjoy more of our extraordinary country in the company of Air Niugini.

Sir Frederick Reiher, KCMG, KBE
Chairman, Air Niugini Limited



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PARADISE ANNUAL Q&A

CHRISTINE
PEIPUL

*The executive manager
of the PNG Tourism
Industry Association
recommends the country
for the adventurous.*

Q: What type of traveller does Papua New Guinea suit?

A: It suits a traveller who wants to experience adventure, nature, culture and the people. Someone who embraces diversity and who wants to sleep in a village hut, make a fire and eat *mumu kaukau*. No two places are alike – you’ve never been to PNG if you’ve only been to the cities and towns.

Q: What are PNG’s biggest tourist attractions?

A: Generally speaking, culture and war history are major drawcards. Specifically, it is the Mount Hagen and Goroka shows and other cultural festivals around the country. The Kokoda Trail rates for its historical significance and adventure. PNG also receives visitors who come solely for an activity, such as diving, surfing or birdwatching.

Q: PNG has an exciting calendar of festivals. Can you tell us about one that people may not know about?

A: One of the lesser-known festivals is the Sepik River Crocodile Festival, in Ambunti, along the Sepik River, on August 5–7. It showcases the importance of the revered reptile among the local people.

Q: What’s something else that travellers may not know about PNG?

A: Port Moresby has a craft market each Saturday of the month, as well as the Moresby Arts Theatre Craft Market every second Saturday, and others at Laguna, Ela Beach and the Holiday Inn. If you are visiting Port Moresby, make sure a Saturday is included during your stay so you can take a piece of PNG home with you.

Q: PNG does not have many five-star resorts with swimming pools and butler service, but it does have a network of very good lodges across the country. Can you describe them for us?

A: Most major towns have comfortable hotel rooms. Port Moresby is the hub for choice and style. But if someone is looking for rural hospitality and basic accommodation, it would be worth trying villagehuts.com. They have a network of guesthouses and lodges in rural PNG, and best of all you get first-hand experience of the local area, culture and people.

Q: Some travellers perceive PNG to be dangerous. What’s the situation really like?

A: The perception of being a dangerous destination is one that this industry battles every day. It’s one that draws adventurous travellers to PNG and, at the same time, deters the cautious. Perhaps, that’s our weakness and our strength as a destination. If you are going to any destination that is perceived to be dangerous, always seek advice from local operators and use a local tour operator or guide, and ensure they are recognised by the local tourism associations and authorities.

Q: Is there untapped potential in PNG’s tourism? What would you like to develop further if you had a treasure chest of money?

A: We need to preserve our culture and cultural heritage because it is the mainstay of PNG’s tourism. PNG’s rich culture and traditions, through song and dance, are what most visitors associate us with. Our diversity fascinates people, but we will slowly lose our way to modernisation and commercialisation if not managed well. With more funds, it would mean that PNG can devise safeguards to preserve and better manage our cultural resources, not only for visitors but for our future generations. One thing that PNG can do is get more of our natural sites and cultural practices, rituals, dances and dress to be UNESCO listed.



Left: P&O will be sending 10 cruises to PNG during 2018.

Picture: David Kirkland

A LAND OF BOUTIQUE ADVENTURES

PNG may not have an abundance of luxury resorts or high tourist numbers, but it's nirvana for travellers taking the road less travelled. Robert Upe reports.

Every year, about 200,000 visitors arrive in Papua New Guinea, many of them for boutique adventures such as trekking, diving and surfing.

The famous Kokoda Trail, a gruelling 96-kilometre endurance test of steamy jungle, steep hills and mud, still largely defines PNG tourism, but there's so much more.

"PNG really is a land of a million different journeys," says Angelique Amon, a co-owner of the Lissenung Island Resort.

"It's unspoilt and uncrowded, the people are friendly, and it's like stepping into another world."

Amon says visitors may not find a luxury hotel such as the Ritz-Carlton in PNG, but they will be more than rewarded with their experiences.

What's better than surfing a perfectly peeling wave all on your own, diving or snorkelling with majestic manta rays, brushing shoulders with the world's largest butterfly, or coming face to face with Huli Wigmen and Asaro Mudmen at *sing-sing* performances?

PNG's visitor numbers are relatively low compared with, say, the massive 800,000 that go to Fiji, but part of the appeal of PNG is that it is the tourist road less travelled.

The Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority (TPA) says it has a target to double holiday figures every five years and has forecast overall visitation of 285,470 people by 2021.

The TPA is hampered by law and order issues that are sometimes reported sensationally around the world. Tourist operators around the country say the reports of lawlessness are greatly exaggerated.

My own experience, travelling away from the bigger cities, is that PNG is as safe – and welcoming – as anywhere else in the world.

In 2016 (the most recent figures available), there were 197,632 arrivals into the country. Business travel accounted for most arrivals (72,355), followed by employment (48,348), holiday arrivals by air (37,621), and holidays arrivals by cruise ship (19,123).

The number of cruise ships coming to PNG has been growing rapidly for some five years. In 2013, P&O dipped its toe into PNG waters and sent two ships, and this year it has 10 PNG cruises on its itinerary.

P&O is by far the biggest cruise operator into the country and expects to carry 14,500 passengers on its 10 cruises.

The cruise ships call at destinations such as Alotau, the Conflict Islands, Madang, Rabaul and Wewak.

"It is a true adventure lover's paradise," says P&O spokesperson Lyndsey Gordon. "It is a mix of beautiful landscapes and cultural events that make PNG stand out as a destination."

The TPA reports that most holiday visitors come from Australia (24,677 in 2016) followed by the US (6520), the UK (3833) and Germany (2420).

A good many of those visitors come for the country's colourful cultural festivals that showcase traditional song, dance and dress.



50 REASONS TO LOVE PNG

PNG has it all, from surfing remote reef breaks, to staying in jungle lodges, watching hundreds of dolphins leap out of the water, dancing at cultural festivals, and eating fresh-caught fish cooked in a fire pit. Start choosing your own adventure with our list of 50 great things to do and places to stay.

Robert Upe reports.

1 KOKODA TRAIL

This gruelling, hilly and muddy 96-kilometre trek is Papua New Guinea's most famous attraction. Trekkers follow in the footsteps of World War 2 Allied soldiers (mostly Australians) who fought the approaching Japanese. More than 30 trekking companies, based in PNG and Australia, offer fully supported tours with transfers, guides and porters.

2 SURFING AT NUSA ISLAND RETREAT

There's a laidback barefoot vibe at this small resort with overwater-thatched cottages on an island just off Kavieng, in the country's far north-east. Daily, there are short boat trips to peeling reef breaks – with no other surfers. In between surf sessions, there's snorkelling over shallow-water war wrecks, and great food, including fresh-caught reef fish. Visit the adjacent village for local culture and artefacts.
nusaaislandretreat.com

3 AIRWAYS HOTEL

This secure oasis of luxury, with excellent service, is very close to Port Moresby's Jacksons International Airport. There are big and luxurious rooms befitting a five-star property, a day spa, and very good eating options – none better than Bacchus restaurant, where the wagyu is tasty and tender, and where old-fashioned crepes suzette are cooked with flair and flare at your table.
airways.com.pg

4 WAR HISTORY

PNG was the site of fierce fighting during World War 2. Divers and snorkellers can explore sunken war wrecks at numerous locations. Madang has great wreck diving, along with Rabaul. If you want to explore above water, there are war cemeteries, memorials, secret tunnels used by Japanese soldiers, rusting artillery, tanks and crashed planes to be seen. The war museum at Kokopo has a wide-ranging collection of World War 2 memorabilia, while in Rabaul you can tour the bunker of Japanese commander Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Opposite the bunker, the New Guinea Club has an intriguing museum.

5 BLACK BASS

PNG's famed black bass is one of the biggest fighting fish going around. Black bass can reach 'monster' proportions, some weighing up to 30 kilograms. They're mainly caught in rivers, or estuarine water, and the chase for them will take you to some of PNG's most remote areas, including Lake Murray in the Western Province.

sportfishingpng.net; baiafishingpng.com; anglingadventures.net.au

6 EATING MUMU STYLE

A *mumu* is a traditional style of preparing food. Typically fish, meat or chicken is wrapped in banana leaves and cooked over coals in a fire pit. It's offered widely. Rapopo Resort in Kokopo, for example, will do it for guests on the beach, or try the excellent hotel version (done in the oven) at Mount Hagen's McRoyal Hotel.

7 NULI SAPI

This resort is a delight for travellers seeking affordable PNG-style accommodation. Located on remote Logeia Island, via Alotau in Milne Bay Province, there are four basic thatched overwater huts made from bush materials. Quiet nights, perhaps with a guitar in the communal kitchen/dining area, boat excursions, snorkelling, fresh seafood, swimming and a Saturday market at nearby Samarai Island are on the agenda. Getting there's an adventure: 90 minutes by motorised dinghy from Alotau.

facebook.com/NuliSapi

8 VOLCANO CLIMBING

It's possible to scramble to the top of Mount Tavurvur, near Rabaul, and to peer into the smoking crater. After crossing the barren moonscape surrounding the mountain, the steep slopes provide a challenge. There's no track, just loose rock, and fissures letting out hot steam. You should make it to the top in about 30–45 minutes from the base. Go with a guide, take plenty of water, and set off early to beat the heat. Most hotels in the region will arrange guides.

9 MOTORCYCLE TOURS NEAR LAE

Niugini Dirt Adventures takes bikers off-road on multi-day trips near Lae. The terrain is for experienced riders only, and involves river crossings that sometimes require bikes being loaded into dugout canoes.

niuginidirt.com



Main picture: A warm welcome awaits visitors to PNG.

Picture: David Kirkland

Above: Nusa Island Retreat.

Picture: Chris Peel

10 TOWN MARKETS

The markets provide a glimpse into a buzzing slice of local life, where fruit, vegetables, livestock and clothing are sold. You may feel like paparazzi at some markets, such as Mount Hagen. The locals love to have their photos taken. Their rationale is that if they can't travel abroad, they can at least have their images transported to other countries.

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Website: crossroadshotellae.com

**11 BIRD OF PARADISE**

PNG's national bird has long been a favourite for bird watchers, explorers and naturalists, among them English broadcaster David Attenborough who has had a lifelong obsession with them because of their spectacular plumage and exotic courtship rituals. Attenborough has filmed them all over PNG, which has 38 of the world's 43 species.

12 MUD MEN

They look fearsome and ghostly, and they're meant to. The masks, mud-smeared bodies and long bamboo finger spikes worn by Asaro Mud Men were originally adorned to scare enemies. The Mud Men, from a village near Goroka, are one of PNG's icons. Outside their Highlands territory, they can be seen at various cultural shows.

**13 ARTEFACTS**

Baskets, *bilums*, *kundu* drums, masks and traditional weapons are for sale across the country. You can buy them at villages direct from the makers, at town markets, or, as a last chance, at Jacksons International Airport from a shop called 'A Little Something from PNG'. The shop also sells PNG's prized chocolate and coffee.

**14 RONDON RIDGE LODGE**

Rolling Stone Mick Jagger stayed here, in the hills overlooking Mount Hagen. It's all very stylish and includes apartment-style accommodation, bird-watching excursions, and tours to see Mount Hagen tribesmen in traditional dress, as well as PNG's famous Mud Men. The lodge is part of the portfolio of properties owned and operated by Trans Niugini Tours.

pngtours.com

15 CRYSTAL RAPIDS

These cascades, at Sogeri, about 30 minutes' drive from Port Moresby, provide welcome respite from the Moresby heat. There are grassed picnic areas on the riverbanks. It's popular with locals.

16 KOKOPO DOLPHINS

Wake early and take an excursion in Blanche Bay, Kokopo, where spinner dolphins are regulars. Spinners are the acrobats of the dolphin family, rising out of the water and spinning on their axis. Sometimes, there are more than 100 to be seen. Local hotels will arrange tours.

17 VILLAGE HUTS STAY

Village Huts is a local tourism operator that has a range of local-style accommodation on offer, including huts, guesthouses and homestays.

villagehuts.com

18 SALAMAUA

This is a gorgeous and little-known isthmus, perfect for snorkelling, diving and fishing. It is about an hour by boat from Lae and was once the capital of Morobe Province and a base for Australians during World War 2.

19 RABAU HOTEL

Against all odds, the Rabaul Hotel survived the 1994 eruption of Mount Tavurvur, which buried the town in volcanic ash. The building was one of the few left standing and, these days, is a thriving hotel, and historic landmark, in Mango Avenue in the rebuilt town. It has about 40 modest rooms, a highly praised Asian-style restaurant (it also serves Western dishes) and an enthusiastic host/owner, Susan McGrade, who is an oracle of local history and things to do in the area.

rabaulhotel.com.pg

20 NATIONAL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

In Port Moresby, the museum is a showcase of culture, artefacts and history.

21 GOROKA SHOW

More than 100 tribes gather at this annual cultural show, one of the best in PNG. The 2018 show is on September 15-17.

Top: A tourist gets into the spirit of things with a Mudman.

Picture: David Kirkland

Middle: Artefacts for sale on a village visit.

Picture: David Kirkland

Bottom: Rondon Ridge Lodge.

Picture: Robert Upe



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22 WALINDI PLANTATION RESORT

In Kimbe Bay on New Britain Island, this is one of PNG's top dive resorts, with rooms and bungalows in tropical garden settings, as well as a live-aboard dive boat, the MV *Febrina*. Village visits, volcano walks and birdwatching are part of the offering.

walindifebrina.com

23 TUFU DIVE RESORT

Another of PNG's star dive resorts, remote Tufu in Oro Province is hot for reef and wreck diving, including the World War 2 US bomber, Black Jack. But there's more than diving and snorkelling: take your pick from kayaking, fishing, cultural tours, birdwatching and immersing yourself in nature and rainforests where you can see orchids and the world's largest butterfly, the Queen Alexandra Bird Wing.

tufudive.com



Dive resorts, including Walindi Plantation Resort, provide a gateway to world-class diving in PNG.

Picture: Franco Banfi

24 SEPIK RIVER

Venture into jungle and to isolated villages along PNG's longest river and its tributaries. There are no roads, so all travel is by water. The *Sepik Spirit* is one boat that offers comfortable tours.

pngtours.com

25 CROCODILE FESTIVAL

Held annually at Ambunti, this festival brings Sepik River communities together to celebrate the cultural significance of the crocodile. There's dancing and singing, as well as villagers with crocodiles. You'll also see men with crocodile scarification, where their skin has been cut so that the scars resemble the back of a crocodile. The 2018 festival is on August 5-7.

26 KENU AND KUNDU FESTIVAL

The annual festival in Alotau is on November 2-4 this year and includes canoe racing, *kundu* drums, dancing groups, art, craft and drama performances.

27 HIRI MOALE FESTIVAL

This Port Moresby festival coincides with PNG's independence anniversary on September 16, and includes the Miss Hiri Queen contest.

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Right: The locals often like to have their photos taken at bustling town markets like this one at Mount Hagen, but ask first.
Picture: David Kirkland



28 HULI WIGMEN

One of PNG's most accessible and spectacular waterfalls is the Makara Falls, in the heart of Huli Wigman country in Hela Province. Off the Highlands Highway, it's a five-minute walk along a bush track to the falls, which are close to Ambua Lodge, part of the stable of properties owned and operated by Trans Niugini Tours. The Huli are a colourful warrior clan, known for their red, yellow and white-painted faces, as well as their elaborate wigs made from human hair. Despite their warrior status, they warmly welcome visitors and enthusiastically perform *sing-sings* and dances. The small town of Tari is the gateway to the Huli.

pngtours.com

29 MOUNT HAGEN CULTURAL SHOW

Held annually in August, the tourist-friendly show is one of the largest tribal gatherings in the country, with more than 100 tribes displaying their cultural traditions through song, dance and costumes. The show is on August 17-19 this year.

30 DRIFTWOOD

The setting for Driftwood is idyllic – it's in rainforest on absolute waterfront, near Alotau, the gateway town to beautiful Milne Bay. There are just 11 cute white bungalows, and a jetty with restaurant and bar. It's hard to think of a more perfect spot to have outdoor dinner and drinks on a warm night.

driftwoodresortpng.com

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Left: Doini Island has accommodation right on the beach.
Picture: Robert Upe

31 DOINI ISLAND PLANTATION RESORT

After checking out of Driftwood (No. 30), hop aboard a motorised open boat at Alotau for a two-and-a-half hour journey to the island, where you're greeted with beachfront bungalows and a castaway vibe. Visit skull caves, kayak, swim, bushwalk and fish. Like most PNG lodges, this isn't so much a 'sit-by-the-pool with a cocktail' destination (there's actually no pool), as a place for the soft adventurer.

doiniisland.com

32 SNORKELLING WITH RAYS

Snorkel with manta rays at Gona Bara Bara Island at Milne Bay. The rays are attracted to the island, where a section of fringing reef has been dubbed as a 'manta ray cleaning station'. The graceful creatures are cleaned of parasites here by cleaner fish. Tour operators run half-day trips to the small island, or you could stay for several weeks and live alongside the tiny local community as a volunteer for Manta Watch Camp. If you're staying at Doini Island (No. 31), they'll take you across to the mantas for a few hours.

mantawatchcamp.org

33 MOUNT WILHELM

PNG's highest mountain provides a formidable hiking challenge. It takes three or four days to reach the 4509-metre summit along a well-defined track. The rewards include glacial lakes and valleys, high-elevation rainforests and moss-coated forests, not to mention the views from the top. Several companies provide guided tours. escapetrekkingadventures.com.au; pngtrekkingadventures.com

34 TUPIRA SURF CLUB

In Ulingan Bay, 180 kilometres north of Madang, the club provides accommodation for about a dozen surfers who can access five quality breaks. Surfer numbers are capped at 20, ensuring uncrowded waves. The club hosted the recent World Longboard Championships. facebook.com/Tupira-Surf-Club-158686431496



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<http://www.kpmg.com.pg>



35 STANLEY HOTEL

Port Moresby's largest and newest hotel has stylish rooms, multiple dining choices and connection to the Vision City Mega Mall where there are more food options, cinemas and a nightclub.
thestanleypng.com

36 MADANG RESORT

Located at the entrance to Madang Harbour, the property has almost a kilometre of water frontage, a dive shop with training facilities, swimming pools and a marina for the 30-metre *Kalibobo Spirit*, which does Sepik River and island charters. The resort's main restaurant has open dining along the waterfront.
madangresort.com

37 CONNECTIVITY

You'll feel totally isolated in many parts of PNG, especially staying at remote lodges, or exploring the Sepik River region. But that doesn't mean you need to be out of touch. Mobile phone reception and internet connectivity is available across most parts of the country. Pick up a local sim card at Jacksons International Airport.

38 BOUGAINVILLE

Largely undiscovered by tourists, Bougainville is only now getting some serious tourist activities up and running. Trek to waterfalls, stay in villages and travel out to sandy atolls.
rotokas.ecotourism@gmail.com

39 PORT MORESBY NATURE PARK

More than 150 animals – birds of paradise, tree kangaroos, hornbills and cassowaries among them – live at this park. You'll also find native gardens with 11,000 orchids, ginger, and picnic areas.
facebook.com/portmoresbynaturepark

40 KOKOPO BEACH BUNGALOW RESORT

You can see it all from here: volcanoes, islands and a stunning bay where spinner dolphins frolic (see No. 16). There's good food in a traditional semi-open *haus-win* setting with local timber poles and a sago roof, and comfortable accommodation, but in the resort's range of tours, it also offers home stays, for a night or two, at Maira village on Mioko Island. It takes about two hours by boat to get to the island where you'll be greeted by a posse of friendly and excited children.
kbb.com.pg

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MADANG RESORT

41 RAPOPO PLANTATION RESORT

Tropical gardens, a beautiful swimming pool and views across Simpson Harbour put this resort right up there with the best places to stay if you're visiting Kokopo and/or Rabaul. There's a dive school and a good range of land tours.

rapopo.com

42 SWIMMING

Be sure to take a dip in the warm turquoise waters of PNG, with idyllic palm-fringed beaches. You'll often be joined by the locals.

43 COFFEE AT DUFFY'S

PNG is known for its great coffee, and one of the country's hippest cafes and specialty coffee roasters is Duffy's, which has outlets in town, Waigani and at the airport at Port Moresby. Try local blends such as 'Kissed by a Highlander' and 'Fuzzy Wuzzy'.

44 LISSENUMG ISLAND RESORT

The resort is 20 minutes by boat from Kavieng, in New Ireland Province. You can walk around the island in about 15 minutes and there are eight ocean-front rooms. Diving, surfing, fishing, snorkelling and village visits are offered.

lissenungisland.com

45 TAWALI RESORT

Set high in the jungle on a bluff overlooking the sea, Tawali may have one of the best verandahs in PNG for sunset drinks. Guest bungalows also enjoy the sea vistas. This is first and foremost a divers' paradise, but there are land tours (to waterfalls and skull caves) to keep non-divers interested. Part of the allure is the remote location in Milne Bay, reached by a long and bumpy road trip and then boat transfer.

tawali.com

46 BAINING FIRE DANCE

See this spectacular dance at the Rabaul Mask Festival, every July. Masked young men perform it around a big bonfire as an initiation into adulthood.

47 PORT MORESBY DINING

If you haven't eaten in Port Moresby in recent times, you may be in for a surprise. The nation's capital is rapidly coming on in development terms, with hotels and restaurants springing up for the 2018 APEC summit. The legacy will be a great crop of new places to eat, some of which are already trading. More than 20 have opened in the past year, among them Asian, Italian, Indian and Japanese places.

48 PANASESA RESORT

The handful of beachfront bungalows at this Conflicts Islands resort can be booked exclusively for one group. There's also a clubhouse and sunset beach cocktail bar, plus chef, dive and resort staff. Swimming off white-sand beaches, snorkelling and big-game fishing are among the activities. Or just loll in a hammock with a book.

conflictislands.com

49 TROBRIAND ISLANDS

This remote Papua New Guinean archipelago, in the Solomon Sea, is a favourite stopping point for cruise ships where locals (many in traditional dress and with face paint) sell carvings and beads, and play beach cricket with visitors. The scenery is clichéd – in the best possible way – with blue water and palm-lined beaches.

50 LIVE-ABOARD SURFING

The *PNG Explorer*, a 23-metre steel ship for 10 guests, cruises out of Kavieng on a variety of surf adventures from October to May. Most charters on board the mid-level luxury vessel are for 10 nights. The company has recently purchased a second vessel, the ultra-luxury *Ultimate 1*. If you're not surfing, there are also diving and fishing trips, and plans to expand into general tourism and visit cultural events in the Trobriand Islands.

pngsurfing.com



Picture a small private island, with a white sandy beach, tall palm trees, beautiful flowers, traditional and comfy bungalows, magnificent sunsets, and fine food.

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UNDERWATER TREASURES

Deborah Dickson-Smith pinpoints some of the best dive sites in PNG, where you can see everything from war wrecks to manta rays and colourful corals.

The Coral Triangle is the epicentre of the Earth's marine biodiversity. Tens of thousands of species of fish, corals and other weird and wonderful creatures can be found in its warm and clear waters.

Sitting close to the centre of the Coral Triangle, it's no wonder that Papua New Guinea has some of the best coral reefs in the world. This incredible marine biodiversity makes diving and snorkelling one of the most obvious recreations in the region.

Fortunately, too, PNG's small and well-dispersed population ensures that there's minimal human impact, so wherever you're diving, chances are you'll be on your own. Even the dive resorts are nicely spread out, with only one or two in each province.

This, in itself, leads to a form of stewardship, where resorts come to an arrangement with local communities, and reefs become protected, in exchange for employment and supply of provisions.

So, with such a range of opportunities, where do you start your underwater adventures? We've picked out some of the best, and easily dived sites, for each part of the country. So, even if you're a beginner, here's where to take the plunge.



CORAL GARDENS MILNE BAY PROVINCE

We selected Coral Gardens, out of all the amazing dive sites at Tawali, for its panoramic array of colourful hard corals – and its easy access. Even snorkellers can enjoy this gently sloping dive site where corals of every shape, size and colour compete for attention and the reef fish are simply overwhelming in their abundance and diversity.

Nearby Deacon's Reef has similar coral cover, but a narrower shelf, which falls away sharply to the depths, attracting whale sharks, hammerheads and manta rays.

Visibility: +30m

Depth: 3-10m

Ability level: All levels, including snorkellers.

Stay: Tawali Leisure and Dive Resort is the only dive resort in Milne Bay. It is modern, spacious and comfortable, with two dive boats and access to dozens of pristine sites. See tawali.com.

CYCLONE WALL ORO PROVINCE

This is wall diving at its best: from seven metres, vertical walls plummet beyond 40 metres, then slope away out of sight. There is plenty to see at all levels: at 20 metres there are stretches covered in anemones, punctuated by large gorgonians and huge barrel sponges; at 10 metres hard and soft corals take over, playing host to reef sharks, triggerfish, scorpionfish and anthias; at seven metres hawkbill and green turtles often 'hang' around, and large brain coral reach up to just under the surface where the crowds of reef fish make for a serene safety stop.

Visibility: +30m

Depth: +20m

Ability level: Open Water (Deep Diver certification is recommended).

Stay: Cyclone Reef has three distinct sites, and all can be dived from Tufi Dive Resort, on whose house reef you'll find a host of mandarin fish. See tufidive.com.

Left: Coral Gardens at Tawali.

Picture: Diveplanit

Right: A colourful anemone at the Cyclone Wall.

Picture: Heather Sutton



“AT AN INCOMING TIDE, THIS NARROW PASSAGE IS LIKE FISH SOUP. EAGLE RAYS, BIG DOGTUOTH TUNA, BARRACUDA, GREY REEF SHARKS AND LOADS OF OTHER FISH CAN BE SEEN.”



Above: Albatross Passage, the signature dive site in Kavieng.
Picture: Nuria Rizo

ALBATROSS PASSAGE NEW IRELAND PROVINCE

The signature dive site in Kavieng is Albatross Passage, which is the first passage between mainland New Ireland and the island of New Hanover.

At an incoming tide, this narrow passage is like fish soup. Eagle rays, big dogtooth tuna, barracuda, plenty of grey reef sharks and loads of other fish can be seen here on almost every dive. The wall itself is overgrown with big fan corals, black corals and sponges, and this is the home for small creatures like nudibranchs, leaf scorpionfish and pygmy seahorse.

Albatross is best dived at an incoming tide, which ensures that the visibility is at its best (usually around 30 metres). This current also brings in lots of pelagic fish.

On the way from Lissenung Island to Albatross are two more great dive sites: the wreck of an American B25 bomber from World War 2 – the Stubborn Hellion – as well as Albatross Muck.

Visibility: 30m

Depth: 20-25m

Ability level: Minimum Open Water. Advanced recommended.

Stay: The easiest access to Albatross Passage is by staying at Lissenung Island, a small private island with four private bungalows, just 20 minutes by boat. See lissenungisland.com.

FATHERS REEFS WEST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

A long, extinct volcanic caldera, Fathers Reefs are a series of reefs along the northern coast of New Britain. The underwater topography is of dramatic reefscape, arches and swim-throughs. Being offshore, these reefs also attract pelagic activity such as sharks, rays, turtles and schools of barracuda.

Visibility: 20-30m+

Depth: 5-30m

Ability level: Advanced and above.

Stay: If you're looking to dive around West New Britain in comfort and style, the *MV Febrina* is the way to go. This spacious, purpose-built live-board accommodates just 12 divers, and departs the Walindi Resort for eight-day itineraries regularly throughout the year. See walindifebrina.com.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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JOSIE'S REEF WEST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

Kimbe Bay is home to brilliant coral formations that delight underwater photographers.

Dramatic seamounts, coral walls and lush coral gardens are a feature of diving here, along with myriad fish and invertebrate life.

Josie's Reef is a recently discovered site, covered in a dense forest of sponges, sea-whips and corals, and a giant sea fan larger than a bus.

Visibility: 20-30m+

Depth: 10-30m

Ability level: Open Water and above.

Stay: Nestled on the east coast of Kimbe Bay, the Walindi Plantation Resort is the perfect base from which to explore the bay's reefs and islands. Walindi runs daily dive excursions, complete with surface interval lunches served on a deserted island. See walindifebrina.com.

Above: Pete the bi-plane in 30 metres of water at Rabaul.
Picture: Rabaul Kokopo Dive

Left: A lunch stop at Restorf Island during a dive with Walindi Resort.
Picture: Tobias Friedrich/Walindi Resort

PETE'S BI-PLANE NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

Pete is named after the Allied code name for that type of Japanese reconnaissance bi-plane, and lies near the shore in 30 metres of water. Like the rest of the plane, the three-pronged front propeller is still intact and is one of Rabaul's most iconic underwater sights.

Only the rear gun is missing (stolen in recent years) and the main pontoon is twisted a little to the side – otherwise, the plane looks as it might have parked itself there only recently. The crystal-clear water makes for a great photo opportunity.

Visibility: 20-30m+

Depth: 30m

Ability level: Advanced and above.

Stay: The easiest way to dive the plane wreck is with Rabaul-Kokopo Dive, which operates out of Rapopo Plantation Resort. See rapopo.com.

PLANET ROCK MADANG PROVINCE

Three kilometres offshore from Madang town is the volcanic seamount known as Planet Rock – a seamount with its head at just five metres and its foot hundreds of metres below.

Strong ocean currents surge through Astrolabe Bay, sweeping around the mount, bringing with them large schools of predatory, pelagic fish. As soon as you hit the water on Planet Rock you are aware of an agitation and excitement among the smaller schooling fish that inhabit the surface of the mount.

Planet Rock is home to many triggerfish, including colourful clown triggers, territorial titans, and moray eels peering out of the rocky crags.

Virtually all of the larger sharks that inhabit PNG waters have been seen and photographed in the currents around Planet Rock.

Due to the strong currents and its location offshore, Planet Rock is not always accessible, but when it is, you won't find a better spot to get the adrenaline pumping.

Visibility: 20-30m+

Depth: 30m

Ability level: Advanced and above.

Stay: You can dive Planet Rock with Niugini Diving Adventures at the Madang Resort. The resort is one of the oldest and most historic hotels in PNG, set in landscaped tropical gardens. See madangresort.com.



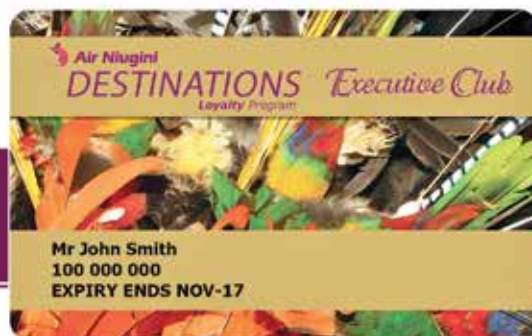
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Above: Paddling adventure awaits at Tufi Dive Resort.

Picture: Supplied by PNG Trekking Adventures

Below: Exploring a sand island near Pokpok Island.

Picture: Adam Constanza

BAREFOOT IN THE SAND

Pokpok Island's Uruna Bay Retreat, a short boat ride from Keita in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, delivers on white-sand beaches, turquoise sea and top-notch snorkelling metres from shore.

There are many islands dotted around Pokpok that can be explored by boat or sea kayak.

Just 30 minutes away by boat, the outer reef offers an abundance of fish and intricate coral.

Uruna Bay Retreat has a main house with three bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and an undercover deck perfect for dining. There are also three basic but well-kept bungalows, and limited generator power.

Contact pokpokbougainville@hotmail.com.

PADDLE THE COASTLINE

PNG Trekking Adventures has a three-day expedition paddling a bamboo outrigger from village to village along remote PNG coastline.

It starts and finishes at the Tufi Dive Resort in Oro Province, and includes two overnight stays in villages, snorkelling, visits to waterfalls and secluded white-sand beaches, as well as swimming in jungle water holes.

The dug-out outriggers have large bamboo platforms on which guests sit. There's plenty of time to soak in the scenery and take photos, because local guides and crew do the paddling.

See pngtrekkingadventures.com.

ISLAND HOMESTAY

There are only 20 residents on Gona Bara Bara Island – a three-hectare dot off PNG's south-eastern tip that has no electricity, running water or even internet access.

But you can stay in two eco-bungalows, eat fresh crayfish and swim with giant manta rays.

The island's homestay is reached by a 90-minute dinghy ride from Alotau, in Milne Bay.

The traditionally built timber and thatched-roof accommodation is in lush gardens with sea views. The bungalows include writing desks, hammocks, beds with mosquito nets, bucket showers and pit toilets.

If you're not swimming with the mantas, or snorkelling or diving over the island's reef, there are excursions to nearby islands, including the weekly market at Samarai Island.

See gonubalabala.com.

REEL THRILLS

Sport Fishing PNG (SFPNG) is a fishing charter operator based in Port Moresby. The PNG-owned company takes anglers to some of the country's remotest places, from desolate reefs to wild rivers.

Giant trevally, dogtooth tuna, the legendary Papuan black bass and barramundi are some of the fish on the radar.

The charters range from day trips, right through to 14-day, live-aboard expeditions.

The saltwater tours are mainly live-aboard, while the company's river tours have live-aboard or lodge-based accommodation.

See sportfishingpng.net.

— ROBERT UPE & ADAM CONSTANZA



A PIECE OF PNG

THE KUNDU DRUM

What is it?

A traditional drum that is known for its rhythmic sounds.

Where are they used?

Kundu drums are an essential part of traditional ceremonies and dances in many parts of Papua New Guinea. On the national coat of arms, a *kundu* provides a perch for the kumul, the bird of paradise.

Are there different types?

Although there are regional design variations, *kundu* drums of all sizes follow a similar construction – a log is hollowed out and a reptile skin is stretched over one end as a tympanum. Drums are tuned with knobs of wax or soft tree sap before being hit with the hand.

How are they made?

Sections of the tree are cut off and the exterior hourglass shape, usually incorporating a handle in the middle, is carved before the solid centre of the timber instrument is gradually burned out using hot coals. The final stage is putting on the drum's skin. A goanna or lizard skin is softened in water and stretched over the top of the *kundu* and held in place with a ring of twisted cane, today sometimes replaced by the possibly more efficient piece of old bicycle inner tube. In some Papuan provinces, such as Gulf and Central, the bases of the *kundus* have a distinctive fishtail shape.

How big are they?

Kundus vary in size – there are tiny ones played with just a finger or two,

children's drums and also larger ones. The most common are about a metre long – a comfortable weight and size to manage – especially if the drummer is performing for hours.

How are they decorated?

Some drums are plain and rather utilitarian, with perhaps just a smear of oil or pig grease to brighten them up, whilst others are more elaborately carved, reflecting the style of particular ethnic groups. Some are elaborately carved, some are inset with mother of pearl, or have seeds attached to add a rattling sound to performances.



Are they used all over PNG?

Kundus are not part of the traditional musical tool kit of people in Manus, New Britain, New Ireland or Bougainville. However, in the rest of the country, certain tree species are recognised as being suitable for the manufacture of the drums.

Where's the best place to see and hear them?

The annual Kenu & *Kundu* Festival in Alotau, the provincial capital of Milne Bay, in November. The event attracts dance groups from all over the province as well as other parts of the country.

Where can you buy them?

Kundus are not often found in hotel souvenir shops, but we did find 30–40-centimetre miniatures at the Airways Hotel souvenir shop for PGK220. The 'Something Made in PNG' shop at Jacksons International Airport has them from about PGK120. Local shows and festivals are the best places to find them. As an essential musical accompaniment to ceremonies, such as bride price payments, house, or church openings, and other events there are also opportunities to buy an instrument direct from a village player. *Kundus* from PNG were collected by early colonial explorers and administrators and can be found in museums in England, Australia and Germany. Like any antique, their value increases with age; older ones would have been carved with stone tools, and develop a patina that only comes from years of handling.

Are old ones available?

Old *kundus* are unlikely to still be held in a village, but why not buy a contemporary one? You never know when you might have to beat out a rhythm.

And did you know?

PNG's overseas diplomatic posts are referred to as *kundus* because of their role in gathering and sharing information. The word is in each post's email address.

– JOHN BROOKSBANK

“AS THE SUN SETS AGAINST
A COASTLINE OF COCONUT
TREES I RIDE PERFECT HEAD-HIGH
WAVES UNTIL MY ARMS CAN
BARELY GET ME BACK TO THE
TENDER; THEN I CLIMB
THE LADDER AND GRAB
A COLD BEER.”





SURFING'S LAST FRONTIER

*Craig Tansley rides perfect waves in
PNG, with no-one else on them.*

The last time I was in Indonesia, I was on a surf charter boat in the Mentawis, searching hard for my perfect wave. As boatloads of surfers from every corner of the globe arrived at each line-up, I found that most of them didn't even attempt to show they understood any of the etiquette of surfing.

Wave-crazed surfers paddled inside me with an aggression that unnerved me, and even when I found my own wave, another surfer was just as likely to cut into it, sometimes sending me to the shallow reef below to avoid a collision.

It made me question the state of surfing in the modern world. It made me wonder what the early pioneers of surfing might make of this sorry state of events.

So, it's as much a sense of relief as anything else, that overcomes me as I paddle into my very first Papua New Guinea surfing line-up.

There are no other surfers here.

The skipper of the surf charter boat I'm on says that in 12 years of coming here, he's never seen another surfer in the line-

Left: The *PNG Explorer* at anchor while a sole surfer rides the waves.
Picture: Chris Peel, PNG Surfaris



up. And his boat, *PNG Explorer*, is believed to be the only surf charter vessel in the country (incredible when you consider there are over 50 in the Mentawis).

I've flown to Kavieng in PNG's far north-eastern reaches, via Port Moresby. From here, I've motored westward overnight, along the New Ireland coastline to New Hanover. At dawn, I wake and find myself – with fresh-brewed coffee in hand – in a pristine bay surrounded by tiny islets and coconut trees.

Local villagers paddle past in flimsy wooden canoes, while tiny children play in the dazzling blue waters beside the boat.

Surf guide Chris Peel tells me I have three choices of waves in this bay. All of them, he says, are on a par with the waves I'll find a little further west in Indonesia.

PNG is surfing's very last frontier. It's as if the modern world hasn't touched this part of the country.

Territorial locals rule the waves in so many other countries, but here the only locals I share waves with are tiny children on old surfboards left behind by surfers on previous visits of the *PNG Explorer*.

The kids take great delight in sharing their waves with us, often high-fiving us when we make it to the end of our rides.

PNG Explorer owner and skipper Andrew Rigby stumbled upon these waves by chance. Hailing from Victoria, in Australia, he was here catching crayfish for live trade when he realised the potential of the waves on offer all around him, many of which had never been surfed. He leased his father's crayfish boat and started surf charters out of Kavieng.

"I used to take time off from catching lobsters to go find waves, and just about everywhere I looked I'd find perfect empty waves," he says.

"I knew there'd be plenty of hard work ahead but I wanted to make a business around surfing those waves and sharing them with other surfers. I still love doing it every day."

Each dawn on the *PNG Explorer*, we gather on the back deck of the refitted crayfish trawler and discuss wave options over lattes (there are plenty of luxuries on board, including freshly caught crayfish).

On my first morning, I'm one of only two surfers who want to surf a gentle-breaking, perfect right-hand reef break. I'm taken by tender, and then dropped a few metres from the waves, where I paddle over perfectly transparent waters to the point of the bay. Endless waves peel off one after another. The only company I have is a canoe that paddles past 100 metres further out to sea, the fisherman in it looking at me with great curiosity.

Top to bottom: Getting in a barrel; locals cheering on; a cutback in the sun.

Opposite: Perfect form.

Pictures: Chris Peel, PNG Surfaris



When I'm done riding, I paddle back to the tender anchored nearby and make it to the boat in time for a two-course breakfast. In the middle of the day I fish from the tender – a canopy blocking the severe noon sunshine – and watch marlin jump nearby while spinner dolphins ride the bow waves of the boat.

But it's the late afternoon surfs I really look forward to most.

It's when the water's dead-still as the afternoon trade wind dies off. As the sun sets against a coastline of coconut trees I ride perfect, head-high waves until my arms can barely get me back to the tender; then I climb the ladder and grab a cold beer from the Esky and watch my fellow surfers ride their last waves as the first stars come out for the night.

Then we motor back to the *PNG Explorer* in time for fresh sashimi on the back deck as the moon rises.

When the swell drops, we steam north to an island called Emirau. There's no airport on the island, and with the exception of an Australian lobster exporter who worked here in the 1980s – and the occasional visiting doctor – the island won't see any foreigners outside those on our vessel.

We pull in to a protected passage between tiny islands, anchoring in clear, blue waters. A small community lives on the

beach where we've anchored. Five children paddle out to greet us; the youngest balances in the front of the canoe, watched over by his older siblings. Some days we hand them fish we have caught in exchange for coconuts they pick from the trees that line the shore.

When we return to my favourite bay on the north coast of New Hanover to surf a fast-rising swell, the local villagers put on a *sing-sing*. All the local villages come together to perform local songs and dances.

On our voyage back to Kavieng, we snorkel above Japanese World War 2 plane wrecks, and we steam close to the coast, watching the mountains roll on in a hinterland that's as wild and forbidding as any on this earth. There are no other boats around, nor are there any hotels. If this was anywhere else on this planet, surfers would have discovered this surf paradise en masse and made their mark – opening surf camps and licensing surf-charter businesses.

But PNG still manages to keep its secrets, despite its proximity to Australia and the rest of South-East Asia.

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JUNGLE JAUNT

*Robert Upe ventures into the remote heart of PNG,
a trip that involves dugout canoes, rivers and
jungle that goes forever.*

The jungle choir is in full voice. Papuan hornbills, kingfishers, lorikeets, parrots and butcherbirds are singing an operetta from the treetops. They're accompanied by the screeching of low-lying cicadas and the deep bass-like rumbles of distant thunder.

We're floating down the muddy Karawari River, going softly with a current that pushes through the endless East Sepik jungle in Papua New Guinea's interior.

It is eight hours downstream to the nearest road, and then another eight hours by that road to the nearest small settlement, Wewak. I later work out on Google that the closest McDonald's hamburger restaurant is roughly 1500 kilometres away, in Cairns, Australia.

Our guide, a local villager who has adopted the Anglo name of Paul, has turned off the 350-horsepower jet engine of our steel boat so we can silently float and listen to the end-of-day cacophony.

Under a hot brow-wiping sun, we have visited tribes along the river today, being greeted by curious villagers and excited children wherever the jet engine has taken us.

It's not as though we are the first travellers here. However, our group of six is a novelty, especially the tall West Hollywood blonde who is a student of anthropology and psychology, and her lanky elderly companion with Woody Allen humour. We're

told that the next visitors aren't due for three more weeks.

The villagers have performed cultural dances, welcomed us into their huts, and allowed us to enter spirit houses where human skulls are neatly arranged on shelves.

They have told us spirit stories. "Crocodiles never die, they turn into spirits. That's why you never find the body of a crocodile."

The villagers have also shared their sago pancakes, and splashed with us in the river where the mud in the shallows squishes between our toes.

Obligingly, they have allowed us to try a dugout canoe. The dugouts are so narrow that they hardly fit Western-sized hips. I get wedged in so tight that I pray I won't roll over, but I dare not stand up to paddle, as is the custom for men.

Dugouts are vital to each family for transport and fishing. They take up to a month to make, with axes used to chop and shape the red cedar.

So, when one is handed over, it is a supreme show of faith.

Thankfully, the spirits grant safe passage. I don't capsize and, with a companion paddler, I'm able to complete a wobbly criss-cross of the wide river, to the collective amusement of the villagers.

The seven-metre *puk puks* (crocodiles) that inhabit this territory are further upstream, I'm advised. Paul says 'piranha' are in these waters too, but they are not the flesh-eating little terrors of South America.

Right: One of the fearsome Mudmen encountered near Mount Hagen.
Picture: Chris McLennan





Top: Huli Wigmen near Tari.
Picture: Robert Upe

Above: A Papuan hornbill.
Picture: Chris McLennan

Opposite: A flotilla of fisherwomen on the Karawari River.
Picture: Robert Upe

“We only call them ‘piranha’ because they have sharp teeth,” he laughs. “They won’t bite people.”

Paul eventually indicates to the boat driver that our peaceful float listening to the choir must end. We need to go home, which tonight is Karawari Lodge.

As the thrust of the jet engine increases, the choir is lost in the treetops.

Our boat is square, with 18 plastic seats and a canopy over the top. It’s a bit like a party vessel that New Year’s revellers may hire on Sydney or Auckland harbours, but comfortable and manoeuvrable for this jungle travel.

Its flat bottom allows us to skim across shallow sections of water when we detour into vine-cloaked tributaries that are choked with reeds and flanked by jungle vegetation I’d never heard of, such as octomeles and macarangas. Wild pigs, monitor lizards, bandicoots, cassowaries, pythons and four species of PNG’s iconic bird of paradise hide within.

“The forest here is untouched,” says Paul as he sweeps his hand across the landscape. “There is no logging or mining.”

Karawari Lodge is perched at the top of a ridge, overlooking the river and the jungle that stretches to a mountainous horizon. By the time we are on the verandah with cold beer and popcorn, a furious electrical storm has crackled into life.

Bolts of lightning clap down for hours and tropical-strength rain smacks into the thatched roofing.

We six (we’re the only ones staying) are joined by a hornbill that shelters with us. This must be the smartest bird in the jungle.

Soon, she musters the courage to jump on the shoulder of one beer drinker.

Joanna (that’s the courageous hornbill named by the lodge, not the beer drinker) is a gentle soul. Her long down-curved beak can probably crush human bones, but when she clamps on to arms or hands to investigate the curious human form, it is with the tenderness of a choir singer.

The next morning, there’s more river exploration. We shove off with our party boat into the current from the riverbank below the lodge, where the *Sepik Spirit* is tied up.

This riverboat is reminiscent of something from the 1950’s adventure film *The African Queen*. The *Spirit* is still being spruced up for the coming season, but we hear she’ll soon be shipshape and offering three-night trips for up to 20 passengers at a time.

Our destination today is Yimas Lakes, where saltwater crocodiles will outnumber us and gaze at our picnic lunch.

On the way, we stop at Yimas village. This is the home of Paul, and he proudly brings us ashore where women with painted faces and grass skirts perform the ‘fish dance’ to the beat of a *kundu* drum.

The dance is reserved for celebrations, Christmas and to welcome visitors.



Baskets, masks, bows, arrows, spears, *bilums*, jewellery and carvings that have been handmade over days, or weeks, of toil are laid out on the ground for us to buy at bargain prices.

This is the case in every village we visit. Strictly speaking, there is no bargaining but you can ask for a 'second price'.

There are more than 800 languages in PNG, so negotiation is often easiest with translation by the guide.

The children of Yimas bid us an excited farewell. They hang on to the side of the party boat for as long as they dare, before jumping back to shore with thumping barefoot landings on the dirt.

More children have gathered up river, where they wait for us to pass so they can play in the bow waves that will roll to shore. To the screech of the kids, the driver accelerates the jet engine to create bigger waves and more fun.

The sun is overhead and the humidity is sapping and sweat inducing, despite a breeze created by the party boat's momentum.

White-bellied sea eagles and kites ride the thermals overhead. They are hunting, perhaps for the bandicoot among the octomeles.

As we round a bend, we come across a group of about 20 women fishing in dugout canoes. They are in traditional dress, with white and ochre body and face paint. This is how it would have looked if you rounded this bend 100 years ago.

Some of the women have babies with them and some have small fires on board so they can smoke the fish before they spoil in the heat.

The fisherwomen come alongside. Tobacco is traded and we buy a large catfish for PGK5 (\$US1.58), as well as a piku for PGK10. The piku is the 'piranha' that Paul spoke of.

As we picnic at Yimas Lakes later, our boat driver wades in to gut and clean the fish. There's no frenzy of crocodile action, but the salties are watchful.

That night, the lodge chefs prepare the fish simply so we can appreciate the true taste. It's neither good, nor terrible, but satisfying in its freshness and the way it was obtained.

Karawari Lodge is one of several wilderness lodges operated by Trans Niugini Tours, a highly capable tour company that has been in business for 35 years. (The company also runs the *Sepik Spirit*).

Travelling between the lodges involves boats, bumpy roads and light planes that thud on to grass landing strips. Pack light, because the luggage limit is 10 kilograms.

On this nine-day tour, we also stay at Rondon Ridge near Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands, and Ambua Lodge in Hela Province, which can fairly be described as David Attenborough territory.

The British naturalist stayed at Ambua Lodge while filming his 1996 classic documentary about the bird of paradise, *Attenborough in Paradise*.

Attenborough's birding guide, Joseph, also leads us on an excursion, but the birds prove to be elusive.

From Ambua, we visit villages (by road, rather than river) and meet the colourful Huli Wigmen who perform a *sing-sing* (traditional song and dance).

They paint their faces a distinctive yellow and red, and wear wigs with feathered headdresses.

At Rondon Ridge, we meet villagers from several tribes, including the notorious Mud Men.

Simply, the story of the Mud Men is that a small tribe was dispossessed of its land by a large tribe. To win back their land, they made masks and covered themselves in mud and hid in the cemetery. As a misty dawn broke they rose up from the graves and scared the bejesus out of the intruders, who fled, never to return.

MORE INFORMATION pngtours.com

LODGES WE STAYED AT

AMBUA

WHERE: Hela Province

HOW WE GOT THERE: Air Niugini flight from Port Moresby to Tari, then a 50-minute drive along the Highlands Highway.

HOW BIG: 26 round huts made of bush materials and 18 newer hotel-style rooms.

WHAT IT'S LIKE: The huts and rooms are basic; they include small bathrooms, and have comforts such as electric blankets for the cool mountain mornings and evenings, and armchairs. All accommodation has good views into the Tari Basin. There are sofas and sitting areas in the main lodge, a small bar where beers cost PGK12, a central wood burner, and a dining area. There's also an adjacent souvenir shop selling artefacts. Good home-style cooking.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE: Huli Wigmen, bird of paradise, waterfalls, and village ceremonies.

ELEVATION: 2100 metres

CLIMATE: Warm, but cool nights and mornings.



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KARAWARI

WHERE: East Sepik Province

HOW WE GOT THERE: Light plane from Tari (45 minutes).

HOW BIG: 20 rooms (10 with river views, 10 with jungle views).

WHAT IT'S LIKE: Basic, but full of character. Despite some shortcomings (limited power, trickling showers) our group rated this as the favourite lodge on the trip. Rooms include beds with mosquito nets, bathrooms and ceiling fans (but generators are turned off between 10pm and 6am). The main lodge area is full of artefacts that are for sale, and the verandah has great views of the river below, of jungle that goes forever and mountains. Again, the home-style meals are good.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE: There are visits to several villages along the river, where various ceremonies are performed.

ELEVATION: 90 metres (tropical lowland)

CLIMATE: Hot and humid.

RONDON RIDGE

WHERE: Western Highlands Province

HOW WE GOT THERE: Light plane from Karawari to Mount Hagen (45 minutes), then one hour by road from Mount Hagen. (Air Niugini also flies to Mount Hagen from Port Moresby.)

HOW BIG: 29 rooms

WHAT IT'S LIKE: This place rocks when it comes to jungle comforts. It's like a luxury city hotel, except it's in the wilds. Rolling Stone Mick Jagger stayed in 2014. The spacious tri-level new suites (opened last year) have flat-screen TVs, sofas, lounge chairs, well-equipped kitchens, electric blankets, bedside touch lamps and rain showers with endless hot water. Older basic rooms are smaller, but they are cosy and well equipped. There's also the super-spacious two-bedroom double-storey Wingti Villa (opened last year) that's fit for prime ministers and royalty. I bet Jagger would stay in this villa if he ever comes back. All accommodation has great views looking over Mount Hagen township in the valley below. The main lodge has a bar, dining area, sofas and lounge chairs, souvenir shop and outside seating next to landscaped gardens and pond.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE: Mud Men, bird of paradise, spirit dances, a medicine man, PNG's third-largest town (Mount Hagen).

ELEVATION: 2150 metres

CLIMATE: Warm but may need a cardigan at night.



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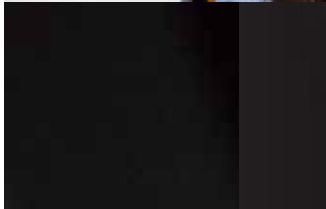
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KOKODA REMEMBERED

Seventy five years after the Kokoda Campaign, Dr Peter Williams re-tells the story of one of the most famous conflicts of World War 2.



Flying out of Port Moresby to the north or east, you'll cross the Owen Stanley Range, a spine of green, jungled mountains and ridges splitting the south-eastern tail of Papua New Guinea in two. Several tracks wind between 3000-metre peaks from the southern coast to a plain, which runs to the north coast at Buna. One of these tracks is named after a village that it passes through – Kokoda.

For the average middle-aged person, such as myself, it's a 10-day walk from Port Moresby to Kokoda. 'Walk' is probably not the right word, as you'll need your hands to climb up a steep ridge, then make an ever so careful descent down the other side to a roaring, rocky stream, crossing it on a log. Repeat four times with a rate of progress of one kilometre per hour and that's an average day on the trail.

In 1942, during World War 2, a Japanese army advanced along the Kokoda Trail, intending to capture Port Moresby. They were opposed, held, then driven back by Australians and Papuans.

Look down and spare a thought for over 2000 men who died in those battles in the Owen Stanleys. Many of their bodies have never been found. Down there somewhere still is Masanoru Honda, a carpenter from the Japanese island of Shikoku, and Des Smith, a bus driver from Deniliquin in Australia.

Why Port Moresby?

Armies need a base from which to launch and sustain military operations. The base should have a harbour, docks, airfields, storage sheds for supplies and a reliable source of fresh water.

Much of this did not exist when the Australians first arrived in Port Moresby early in 1941, but within a year the town was transformed into the only site in mainland PNG capable of supporting a large army. It was vital for the Australians to hold Port Moresby if they were to advance northwards through the islands. Similarly, even if the Japanese did not intend to invade the east coast of Australia, holding Port Moresby allowed

Above left: Fuzzy wuzzy angels carry a wounded Australian soldier across Brown River.

Above centre: A Papuan shades a wounded Australian soldier from the Kokoda sun.

Above right: Australian soldiers with captured Japanese weapons.

Opposite: Private George Whittington, an Aussie soldier in the Kokoda Campaign, is helped by fuzzy wuzzy angel Raphael Oimbari near Buna in 1942.

Pictures: Australian War Memorial





them to threaten to do so one day. Without Port Moresby the Japanese threat to invade Australia was a hollow one.

Why did the Japanese approach Port Moresby along the Kokoda Trail?

At the battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, a Japanese attempt to capture Port Moresby by sea failed. By July, a repeat of the seaward option was rejected as hundreds of Australian and American aircraft now operating from bases in Far North Queensland could bomb Japanese ships rounding the eastern tip of New Guinea heading for Port Moresby. Instead, the Japanese decided to land on the north coast at Buna and attack Port Moresby from there, by land along the Kokoda Trail.

Who fought in the Kokoda Campaign?

Australians, Papuans and Americans fought on the Allied side. The vast majority were Australian infantry, some poorly trained militia, and some from experienced units that had returned from fighting the Italians and Germans in Africa.

The Papuans carried the supplies without which the Australians could not fight and survive in the mountains, and a small number fought as infantry; the Americans flew the majority of the aircraft. American infantry arrived towards the end of the campaign.

Most of the South Seas Force came from the Japanese island of Shikoku. One of them, Sadashige Imanishi, told me: "I thought, being from the village of Motoyama in the highlands of Shikoku, that I knew all about mountains, but I had never seen anything as rugged or forbidding as the Owen Stanley Range."

Aiding the Japanese were Papuan scouts as well as labourers and supply carriers from Taiwan and Korea, both then under Japanese rule.

The Japanese advance

On July, 22, 1942 a Japanese battalion of the 144th Infantry Regiment, 500 men, landed at Buna, 130 kilometres north-east of Port Moresby. The first opponents the Japanese encountered were Australians Tom Grahamslaw and John Chalk, of the Papuan Infantry Battalion (PIB).

The Japanese came to the front door of Sangara Mission, where the two officers were having breakfast. Grahamslaw and Chalk fled out the back door, so this cannot truly be considered the first military action of the Kokoda campaign.

That happened the following day at Awala, where 38 men of the PIB fired on the Japanese. Private Daera Ganiga said: "Each man fired eight or nine times, then major Watson told us to run for our lives. We did."

If they stood and fought for long, the small Australian and Papuan force would be surrounded and annihilated, so a policy of delay was adopted – shoot and scoot. At, Wairopi, Gorari and Oivi, this was repeated, but at Oivi it nearly didn't work. They would have been surrounded but for corporal Sanopa of the Royal Papuan Constabulary.



Top: General Tomiario Horii (front left) with his men.

Above: Papuan carriers receive their orders from Australian officers.

Pictures: Australian War Memorial

Map: Business Advantage International

“EXTRACTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN WOUNDED AND SICK WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM. THE CARE SHOWN TO THESE MEN BY THE PAPUANS WHO CARRIED THEM ON STRETCHERS OVER THE MOUNTAINS SAW THE PAPUANS DUBBED THE ‘FUZZY WUZZY ANGELS’.”

Sanopa found an unguarded track and led the force to safety.

The first serious attempt to halt the Japanese was made at Kokoda. It failed and the Australian commander, colonel William Owen, was killed.

Then, a battalion-sized Australian force arrived from Port Moresby. They briefly recaptured Kokoda on August 8, but were unable to maintain their hold on the village.

At Deniki, on the northern slopes of the Owen Stanley Range, the Australians were defeated again and driven back.

By the end of August, the main bodies of both armies were approaching one another. A veteran Australian brigade, brought from Queensland, formed the core of a 2300-strong force with which brigadier Arnold Potts was ordered to halt the Japanese drive on Port Moresby.

His opponent, general Tomitaro Horii, had been frustrated by Allied air attacks on his shipping, which delayed the arrival of his main force. Now, however, the two forces were assembled on both sides of a steep gorge leading into the Owen Stanleys, nine kilometres south of Kokoda, near a village called Isurava.

The battle began on August 27 and continued for four days. The Japanese artillery, eight light guns, decided the outcome. Potts, with no artillery, was unable to deal with the Japanese bombardment; he fell back to Eora Creek on August 31.

By now, the extraction of the Australian wounded and sick along the trail was a serious problem. The care shown to these men by the Papuans who carried them on stretchers over the mountains saw the Papuans dubbed the ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’.

Falling back slowly, the Australians fought rear-guard actions at Eora and Templeton’s Crossing. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Allied forces, continued to reinforce the Kokoda front and ordered Potts to try once again to halt the Japanese advance.

On September 8 at Efogi (Brigade Hill), Potts was defeated. The Japanese pinned his force by a frontal attack while sending a battalion of infantry to cut the trail in the Australian rear. Once again, the Japanese artillery played a key role. The Australians were driven from their position in one day with heavy loss.

The final battle of the Japanese advance took place at Ioribaiwa. Potts was replaced after Efogi by brigadier Ken Eather, who planned something more than a defensive stand. He had his own 2000 fresh veterans of 25th Brigade, together with 1000 survivors of the retreat from Kokoda. As the Japanese approached, Eather intended to counter-attack.

But from September 14 to 16 the Australians, as yet unable to match the Japanese in jungle fighting, saw their plan

unravel. Eather ordered a retreat. The Australians fell back to Imita Ridge, only 40 kilometres from Port Moresby. Eather’s superior, general Arthur Allen, told Eather: “There won’t be any withdrawal from the Imita position, Ken. You’ll die there if necessary.”

But, instead of attacking, the Japanese dug in on Ioribaiwa Ridge.

Why did the Japanese halt?

On August 9, 1942, the day after the Australians had briefly retaken Kokoda, US Marines captured a Japanese airfield on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, 900 kilometres from the eastern tip of PNG at Milne Bay. This came as a great surprise to the Japanese, disrupting their plan to capture Port Moresby.

The first Japanese attempts to recapture their Guadalcanal

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airfield failed. Then a Japanese landing at Milne Bay, in early September, was repulsed by Australian infantry and the Royal Australian Air Force. It was the first time during World War 2 that a Japanese amphibious landing had been comprehensively defeated.

The Japanese realised that they hadn't the resources to continue the advance on Port Moresby as well as to recover Guadalcanal. The South Seas Force on the Kokoda Trail was ordered to stop and dig in at Ioribaiwa Ridge, while fresh troops from Rabaul attempted to retake Guadalcanal.

The Australian counter-attack

On September 27, the Australian counter-offensive began when 4600 men assaulted Ioribaiwa Ridge – to find that the Japanese had retreated the previous night. The Japanese had pulled back 30 kilometres along the Kokoda Trail to a stronger position.

From October 13, the Australians battered their way through continuous bunkers and trenches from Templeton's Crossing to Eora Creek. Australian losses were heavy and

“EACH MAN FIRED EIGHT
OR NINE TIMES, THEN
MAJOR WATSON TOLD US
TO RUN FOR OUR LIVES.
WE DID.”

progress slow, but after two weeks the Japanese, conceding defeat, retreated from the Owen Stanley Range and fell back to Oivi, 10 kilometres east of Kokoda village on the trail across the plains leading to Buna.

In early November, the Australians, having learned many lessons from their reverses, outmanoeuvred and soundly defeated the South Seas Force at Oivi.

To General MacArthur the way to Buna seemed open. A rapid advance might capture the Japanese base and end the enemy invasion of Papua at a stroke.

The battle of Buna-Gona

MacArthur planned a two-pronged move: the Australian 7th Division, victors at Oivi, advanced east from Kokoda along the Kokoda-Sanananda Trail. At the same time the United States 32nd Division, now deemed sufficiently well trained for battle, struck north-west from Milne Bay along the coast towards Buna. However, the opportunity MacArthur saw to capture Buna quickly did not exist.

Since July, the Japanese had constructed an elaborate fortress of coconut tree log and concrete bunkers and

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trenches, which stretched for eight kilometres along the coast from Gona to Buna. Recent reinforcements from Rabaul also brought the garrison's strength up to 11,000, half the number of the Allies who opposed them.

From November 19, repeated Allied infantry assaults, without artillery support, found the Buna nut impossible to crack. Neither the veteran but tired Australians who had fought their way along the Kokoda Trail, nor the fresh but inexperienced Americans, could make any headway.

Realising a prolonged effort was required, the Allies brought up artillery and tanks by air and sea. Additional bomber squadrons were deployed to Port Moresby.

When the Australians captured Gona on December 9, the Japanese supply line – now reduced to small ships landing supplies at night along the coast north of Gona – was cut. The Japanese began to run out of food and medical supplies.

At the end of December 1942, Australian infantry and tanks reinforced the US 32nd Division, breaking the deadlock in the south at Buna village, which fell on January 2, 1943. The Japanese could see the writing on the wall and ordered a breakout from the Buna perimeter. Abandoning their weapons and equipment, 3000 of them escaped through the jungle. By the end of January 1943, all organised Japanese resistance in Papua had ceased.

After the battle

From July 1942 to January 1943, 17,000 lives were lost in the fighting along the Kokoda Trail, at Milne Bay, and at Buna. Almost 13,000 were Japanese; the rest were Australians, Americans and Papuans.

The six-month Japanese invasion of Papua was over. Australia no longer needed to fear an invasion and the Allies could now turn their attention to recovering the rest of New Guinea.

Now, few who remember the campaign remain. For Des Moran of Yeppoon: "It was the greatest disaster and tragedy of my life."

Yukiko Tsukamoto, wife of a Japanese survivor, told me: "My husband is still frightened by the sound of thunder. It makes him remember the enemy and the artillery. He still wakes me up at night."

Peter Williams is a military historian in Canberra, Australia. He has visited the battlefields in PNG, interviewed Australian, Papuan and Japanese veterans and researched in all three countries. He has written books, websites and articles on World War 2 in PNG. His books include *The Kokoda Campaign 1942: Myth and Reality*, and *Kokoda for Dummies*.

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SO YOU WANT TO TACKLE THE KOKODA TRAIL?

*Here's everything you need to know
about one of the world's toughest treks,
as told to Robert Upe by Pam Christie,
who has walked the Kokoda Trail 60+
times and is the principal of PNG
Trekking Adventures.*



Above: Pam Christie, the owner/operator of PNG Trekking Adventures.
Picture: Supplied

Opposite top: Trekkers on a flat and dry section of the trail.
But don't be fooled, most of it is tough going.

Opposite bottom: A narrow makeshift bridge for
one of the river crossings.
Pictures: Greg Newington

Q: How long is the Kokoda Trail and how many days does it take to trek?

It's 96 kilometres, but if we take in World War 2 history sites it is about 104 kilometres. We think an eight-day itinerary is the best.

Q: What are the hardships encountered along the way?

The Kokoda Trail is one of the hardest treks in the world. The physical challenge, the heat, the high humidity, the rain and the mud are major factors.

Q: Why do you think so many people find it rewarding?

For the majority of our clients it is about following in the footsteps of the soldiers who fought in the Kokoda Campaign. It can be a very emotional journey for these trekkers. There is also the physical challenge. Combining both of these factors, it is an extremely rewarding experience when they get to the finish. The beauty of the Kokoda Trail should never be underestimated, either. Our clients from Europe walk it purely for the flora and fauna, and the culture. Trekkers never leave PNG without having the utmost respect for our staff who work and walk with them. We could not do any of the adventures in PNG without them. The cultural aspect is an integral part of all our treks in PNG.

Q: Do trekkers stay in tents or huts?

A combination of both. There are small guesthouses in the villages and some campsites. We find trekkers like to sleep in the tents, although if it is wet it is nice to be in a guesthouse.

Q: Do they carry heavy backpacks?

Trekkers have the choice. We do not encourage this option unless they are a very experienced hiker and used to carrying 20+ kilograms in extreme conditions. We always book trekkers a personal porter to carry their large packs, unless advised otherwise. Not only is this a great experience for them to walk with and get to know our staff, but they are also employing a young man and supporting the economy.

Q: How much walking is involved in a typical day?

It can be anywhere between six to eight hours per day. We start early in the mornings so that trekkers can get three to four hours of walking under their belt before it gets hot. This also means that they get into the campsite at a reasonable hour. They then have time to relax, get set up, go for a swim and rest weary muscles.

Q: What's meal-time like?

The food is great, lots of variety, and where we can, we purchase fresh fruit and vegetables. In the villages, we can purchase fresh bread, scones, doughnuts, and banana bread. They are all baked in the ovens that PNG Trekking Adventures and BNG Trading Co have given the villages so they have a sustainable income selling product to trekkers.



Q: What training do trekkers need to do as a minimum to be prepared for Kokoda?

You can never over-train for Kokoda. Ideally, six months out from the trek people should start exercising. We send our clients a suggested training program. Climbing up and down stairs is also excellent training for Kokoda.

Q: How many in a group?

About eight to 12 trekkers, plus support staff. We want our trekkers to have an intimate experience and not be just a number. We want them to finish the trek having had an experience of a lifetime. We will take more trekkers if it is a corporate/school group or larger family group.

Q: When is the Kokoda trekking season?

From May through to the end of October, which is our dry season. It would be very irresponsible and dangerous for trekkers to go out during the wet. Also the track needs time out to rejuvenate.

Q: What's your favourite part of the trek?

Up around the top of Mount Bellamy and walking through the moss forest. That area is sensationally beautiful.

Q: How much?

About PGK9300 per trekker. For corporates/schools, prices can vary.

PNG Trekking Adventures has been in business in Papua New Guinea since 2002. Pam Christie is the owner/operator.





PLEASURES OF THE MUMU

*Jacqueline Fock tucks into a mouth-watering feast,
cooked in a pit with hot rocks.*

The famous French chef Marcel Boulestin once said: “Cookery is not chemistry. It is an art. It requires instinct and taste rather than exact measurements.”

This is the perfect annotation for the traditional form of cooking of Papua New Guinea, the *mumu*.

On a trip to Rabaul, I was fortunate to participate in the making of a *mumu*, which is an amalgamation of a few key ingredients endemic to the local area, wrapped in green leaves and cooked in the ground with heated stones. It's like an ‘earth oven’.

The *mumu* continues to be the main form of food preparation in some remote parts of PNG, but generally it is now used more as a ceremonial method of cooking to celebrate group gatherings.

In the quest to learn more, I meet *mumu* expert Salomie.

We set up an outdoor kitchen on the beach at Rapopo Plantation Resort at Kokopo, which overlooks Simpson Harbour and distant volcanoes.

But the first step is a trip to the market, where we see super-sized fruit and vegetables with intense colours. I'm told everything at the market is natural and organic, and the wholesome nature of the crops is due to the volcanic soil of the region.

We need to buy root vegetables, so we walk towards the section where all the *kaukau* (sweet potatoes) and bananas are selling. I can safely say that the residents of Kokopo and Rabaul are spoilt for choice. I see vibrant orange and purple *kaukau*, both of which are going into the *mumu*, along with my favourite tuber, the wholesome taro.

We buy bananas, which I like to call ‘magic’ bananas because they turn purple when they are cooked. I have never come across the purple banana in any other part of PNG. I'm not sure why it turns purple, but I am almost convinced that it's due to the lack of oxygen and the slow-cooking process of the *mumu*.

Pitpit, a vegetable resembling grass, is also collected. I have no other vegetable to which it can be compared, but it is crumbly and spongy and neutral in flavour.

The leaves of the highly nutritious aibika plant are also put in our basket to provide the green element in the *mumu*, and we also buy fresh ginger root and coconuts.

Left: Locally gathered food is laid on leaves, wrapped and cooked *mumu* style.
Picture: David Kirkland



Now all we need is the protein, but it will be delivered to us later. *Mumus* can include chicken and pork, but ours is going to have freshly caught crayfish and fish from the local fishermen who deliver to Rapopo Plantation Resort almost daily.

We return to the beach and dig a shallow pit, just deep enough to layer large river rocks, some local driftwood from the beach and the parcels of food.

While the rocks are being heated, we peel the vegetables and take our time to enjoy the view and the company. As the rocks heat, the driftwood starts to smoke and Salomie takes some large banana tree leaves and waves them over the heat.

The leaves will be used to wrap the food, but waving them over the smoke and heat first toughens them up and ensures the parcels do not break.

Once the leaves are ready, they are placed into large bowls and the vegetables are put on top. At this point, the *mumu* is visually coming together.

While waiting for the seafood to arrive, we feast on sea

urchins. They are collected by spear in chest-high water, where they can be easily seen.

They are cracked open live for their roe, more-ish and rich in flavour.

Soon after, the crayfish and reef fish arrive. They are prepared and placed as the top layer in the food parcels.

Salomie starts the labour-intensive task of coconut milk extraction. Fresh coconut milk comes from finely scraping the flesh of coconuts and soaking it in warm water and then squeezing the grated flesh to infuse the water with the flavour and oil.

Salomie takes handfuls of the soaked coconut and squeezes them through a gauze cloth to leave only the rich creamy nectar. This is done over and over until enough liquid is covering the raw ingredients. Finally, a sprinkle of salt.

The many layers of banana leaves are folded and wrapped neatly and the parcel is placed over the hot rocks. To create a heated furnace, the large bundle is covered with more hot rocks, wood and leaves.



We need to let it cook for three hours. While waiting, I reflect on the mumu process.

The practice is an art form in which the ingredients always vary, depending on availability. In our case, utilising and supporting local fishermen makes sense.

Dinner is a special experience, shared with some locals and resort guests, in an open-air pagoda over the water during sunset.

A colourful merging of textures and flavours is served up. The mumu has a slightly, natural smoked flavour, and the coconut milk has done its work in caramelising and fusing the vegetables. The fish and crayfish are perfectly cooked and the vegetables are soft.

Finally, those bananas. Yes, they are purple and so sweet.

In the end, the experience fuels my passion for wholesome, organic food and cooking preparation.

I'm pleased that the mumu has not been lost over the years. It brings people together from start to finish, and becomes the centre of celebration, rather than just a meal.

"THE MUMU HAS A SLIGHTLY NATURAL, SMOKED FLAVOUR, AND THE COCONUT MILK HAS DONE ITS WORK IN CARAMELISING AND FUSING THE VEGETABLES."

Far left: Coconut milk is infused with other ingredients for the mumu.

Left: Fresh seafood delivered by canoe.

Pictures: Jacqueline Fock

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A WHEELCHAIR ODYSSEY THROUGH PNG

BBC journalist Frank Gardner was shot and crippled by terrorists in the Middle East, but he has fulfilled a lifelong ambition to visit PNG and see the bird of paradise. Richard Andrews reports.

Frank Gardner was on assignment in Saudi Arabia when he was shot six times by Al-Qaeda terrorists and left for dead. Gardner's cameraman was killed in the 2004 ambush, which left the BBC correspondent paralysed from the waist down.

After 14 operations and almost a year in hospital, Gardner returned to work. He's since been embedded four times with the military in Afghanistan and travelled to Colombia, Borneo and the Arctic.

Just as significantly, his injuries didn't stop him pursuing a childhood dream to see a bird of paradise in the wild.

"I ski and scuba dive," says Gardner, 55. "But the one country I've always wanted to go to, one of the most distant, remote, exotic and

difficult places, has always been Papua New Guinea."

Gardner's fascination with the country began at the age of eight when he was given a deck of playing cards with colourful images of birds of paradise on the back.

"I asked my mum whether these birds actually existed. When she told me where they lived, I said: 'Can I go there?' My dad promised to take me to PNG one day, but unfortunately he died before it could happen.

It was my great regret I didn't go when I still had the use of my legs and I thought my dream had also died."

Right: Frank Gardner on a wood and ratten chair on poles that allowed him to be carried in PNG.

Picture: BBC







“THE ONE COUNTRY I’VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO, ONE OF THE MOST DISTANT, REMOTE, EXOTIC AND DIFFICULT PLACES, HAS ALWAYS BEEN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.”



However, a chance encounter with British writer–adventurer Benedict Allen resurrected the idea. In his 20s, Allen had lived with the Niewra people on the Sepik River for six months and undergone the crocodile man initiation ceremony.

“I’m your man,” he said, when Gardner spoke of his unfulfilled dream.

The expedition started unceremoniously in Wewak, when Gardner and his team had to evacuate their guesthouse after a new TV set imploded and covered the place in smoke.

The team then headed south, stayed in Yanchimangwa village, and spent time exploring the Chambri Lakes region in East Sepik Province.

For Allen, the trip was also a nostalgic return to Kandingai, in the Middle Sepik, a village renowned for its intricately carved spirit masks.

And just to make the trip even more challenging, the team continued on to the remote Hanseemann Mountains in Madang Province.

“I found the people in PNG very friendly, helpful and charming, whether it was the flight crew on Air Niugini flights or villages along the way.

“I’m particularly grateful to Felix, my local companion, a master carpenter, who looked after my safety and comfort. He made the difference between a tough time and a hard time.”

As most of the terrain was too rugged for wheelchair access, Felix designed a wood and rattan chair with poles, which was shouldered by four people. Gardner was then carried in relays by hired locals as he passed through the territory of different clans.

“This was quite dangerous as we were going along very narrow hill trails with sheer drops,” he says. “If any of those guys had missed their footing I would have tumbled down and probably broken my neck. They took huge care,

Above left: A bird of paradise.

Picture: David Kirkland

Left: Frank Gardner meets up with a villager.

Picture: Supplied by Frank Gardner

never missed their footing once and never complained.”

Narrow mountain trails and sheer drops were not the greatest dangers Gardner faced. Something that seemed much more innocuous disrupted the dream.

Halfway through the expedition, he discovered two pressure sores. Looking at the picture, medics considered the lesions life-threatening and urged Gardner to seek immediate treatment.

“I really fought against the advice at first and said I was clinically fine,” he says. “To prove it, I did 10 pull-ups on a beam in our hut, but finally accepted that leaving was the right decision.”

Gardner was evacuated by helicopter to Port Moresby and then flown to Brisbane, where he spent five days in St Andrews War Memorial hospital.

Gardner returned home, very disappointed, to recover in London. But the dream was now too strong and

he returned to PNG four months later with Allen. This time they flew from Port Moresby to Tari and Gardner was carried through forests in the Southern Highlands.

Finally, he got to see a bird of paradise.

“The first time was frustrating. I could hear the birds calling to each other, but couldn’t see them because I was stuck in a wheelchair. But eventually I caught glimpse of this amazing cascade of golden feathers and chocolate brown plumage.

“The first-ever glimpse of a bird of paradise in the wild is a moment you never forget. It’s a glimpse of paradise itself.”

Gardner also rhapsodises about camping in the Highlands and waking to hear “the magical, mystical call from somewhere in the dawn mist”.

“There was nothing but birds, fish and sky. It felt like heaven.”

Another highlight was a river trip, with the expedition greeted by villagers in two large canoes.

“They came out beating their drums in unison and displaying elaborate headdresses and necklaces made with feathers from the very birds of paradise I was hoping to see.”

Gardner’s odyssey was screened by the BBC as a two-part documentary called *Birds of Paradise: The Ultimate Quest*.

For Gardner, seeing the birds of his childhood dream, offered “a form of closure” to his injuries.

“In a country that’s largely inaccessible to the disabled, the good nature and resourcefulness of its people meant that, with a bit of determination, somebody who can’t walk can still visit one of the remotest places on the planet and see one of the most beautiful creatures in nature.

“In travel terms it’s the holy grail.”



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BEHIND THE MASK

Kathleen Prior sees sacred rituals, elaborate costumes and fire dancers at the annual Mask Festival in Kokopo.

Excited chatter ripples through the darkness at Kokopo beach in East New Britain where a growing cluster of people is waiting. As milky early morning light starts to seep over the horizon, the crowd falls silent in anticipation. Faintly in the distance, chanting and drumming can be heard.

Kinavai is a sacred ritual of the Tolai people in East New Britain. Shrouded in secrecy for hundreds of years, the tradition is today performed to open the Mask Festival held in the province annually. Locals and tourists are invited to watch and join in the celebrations.

It is one of the rare occasions that people outside of the Tolai tribe are able to see the *tumbuans*. Both feared and revered, the *tumbuans* are the masked figures of incarnated spirits. Respected elders of the community undergo a secret process as they prepare for adorning the elaborate costumes of the *tumbuans*. Once this is complete, it is believed that they become the embodiment of the spirit.

In days gone by, the *tumbuans* would pass judgments



Far left: Costumed men leap through the flames.

Left: A procession of boys and older teenagers who will be initiated into manhood.

Below: Dancers at the Mask Festival.

Pictures: Kathleen Prior

in Tolai communities. They could enforce and punish. At Kinavai, their presence is necessary to initiate boys of the clan to manhood.

On this morning, women have gathered to bid their sons goodbye and good luck. “They are coming,” whispers one of the mothers, Rachael, as the chanting grows louder and a cluster of boats on the horizon starts to drift towards the beach.

A procession of barefoot boys begins to walk along the shoreline. Each wearing a red lungi, they are nervous. Older boys and teenagers follow, then they all stop and turn to face the crowd.

Their mothers go to meet them and the ceremony begins. The women, all standing on one side, use a stone to break open a coconut, splashing the water at their sons’ feet. Next they crack some sugar cane, before flinging a handful of lime powder. The white powder, alongside red ochre, is also smeared on the boys’ chests and smudged on their brow and cheek bones. It is believed to protect them from the evil spirits.

Now, the boats are nearing the beach.

Aboard are the female *tumbuans* and the male *dukduks*.

The masks for both are conical. The females’ are black with geometric faces and eyes of concentric circles, painted in white and red. A tuft of white feathers flutter at the top. The male masks are faceless, but are taller and more

elaborately carved than those of their female counterparts. Both *tumbuans* and *dukduks* have a billowing bodysuit of green leaves that rustle as they move and jiggle. The Kinavai represents the Tolai people crossing the sea and arriving at the Gazelle Peninsula hundreds of years ago. Once the boats are close enough, the *tumbuans* and *dukduks* wade to the shore and playfully dance at the water’s edge. The Tolai people on the beach retreat, as to touch the *tumbuans* is forbidden.

Meanwhile, the tourists and other spectators lurch closer and there is a frenzy of photography. As the rhythm of the drum picks up, people begin to stomp their feet and rejoice. The morning sun is now golden, and everyone revels in its joyous warmth.

Later in the day, the mask festival is formally commenced at the Kokopo sports field with speeches and applause.

In front of the captivated audience, the final elements of the Tolai traditions are displayed. The *tumbuans* are summoned by chiefs hollering and banging the *kundu* drum. They are whipped with strings of *tabu*, or shell money, then fall to their knees.

Another highlight of the four-day event takes place in the evening. After nightfall, guests are driven up to the village of Gaulim in the Baining Mountains. There, a fire burns and crackles. Almost immediately after we arrive, the drums begin to beat.



Left: One of the elaborate masks on show.

Below: Dancing to the rhythm of the *kundu*.

Right: *Tumbuans* landing at the beach at Kokopo.

Pictures: Kathleen Prior



Costumed men circle the fire, then, one by one, they jump over the flames. Suddenly, they spring upwards and jump onto the fire, flames licking their legs as they kick the burning timber, sending scattering embers towards the crowd. The crowd gasps in unison, in fear and wonder.

In the pitch black and peacefulness of the mountains, the flames are the only light, their flickering red and orange mesmerising. Coupled with the evocative chanting and drum rhythm, they leave us enchanted.

The next day, back at the sports field, festivities are set to get under way at noon. But we're on PNG time, and scattered but heavy downpours keep dampening dancers' enthusiasm to perform.

Finally, the *kundu* begins a dramatic slow and steady build-up, announcing the imminent arrival of the first performers.

There is a schedule of events, but it serves more as an indication of possible performances than a strict timetable. As dancers in costume appear, it's a fun game to guess which village they represent. When men appear with masks adorning feathered birds' heads, we know these must be the Sinivit villagers showcasing their *akakuruk* or chicken dance. In unison, they stamp and bow, capturing the illusion of the chickens on their headdress pecking at the ground.

For the *amurup* or emu dance, a man from the Marmar village appears painted head to toe in black. He is joined by two men in surprisingly realistic black-feathered costumes

representing the emus. This dance is a comical one, with the man struggling to control the two giant birds as they scamper around him.

The fire eaters are another highlight. These men need no fanciful costumes to attract the audience's attention. Bare chested with a simple feather headband, the lead performer takes logs from the fire. One end smoulders in red, and smoke

AS THE RHYTHM OF THE
DRUM PICKS UP, PEOPLE
BEGIN TO STOMP THEIR FEET
AND REJOICE.

streams around his face. Then he takes a bite. Spectators flinch, but he does not even wince as he chews on the burning embers. A round of applause accompanies our sigh of relief.

After the performances, there are plenty of opportunities to have photos taken with the costumed dancers. Or to sit and



enjoy a chat with one of the tribespeople, who are happy to share stories of their culture.

It is here, that I speak with villagers from the Baining Mountains, resulting in me riding in the back of a pick-up truck up to their village just a few days later. The men have offered to show me their workshop where the masks are made. It's an opportunity I cannot refuse.

On arrival, I am taken up a steep muddy incline to the so-called 'secret place'. They tell me I am the first woman and first journalist to be allowed inside.

It is a rather humble building, more of a shack, made from natural materials. Inside, an assortment of masks hang from the walls.

Many of the masks have animalistic qualities, such as ears and a beak, having been inspired by the creatures of the forest.

Gideon, a young man from the village, explains how the masks are made. "When a man sleeps at night, he dreams of the head of spirits. When he wakes, he will sketch on the ground with a broomstick or small knife. Then he will use that drawing to make the mask."

He points to one with a long protruding jaw and teeth, like the snout of a crocodile. "The maker had slept by the river when he dreamt of this one!"

The masks are made from tapa cloth, a fabric created by pulping the bark of a tree, which is stretched over the frame. This is then painted in red and black. The black ink comes

from the sap of a tree, and for the red, leaves of the areca tree are mixed with slaked lime.

The fire dances are performed about three times a year, sometimes to pass boys into manhood and sometimes for funerals, as well as other special ceremonies. To prepare for the dance, the men performing must not partake in any wrongdoing throughout the day.

"If a man does something morally wrong," Gideon tells me, "when he performs he will be burned by the fire."

The wearing of some bigger and more important masks requires another level of initiation. For this prestigious role, men must undertake a long period of fasting. The man is buried in the soil with just his head showing and is not allowed food, only water. Some men, reportedly, stay like this for up to a month. When they are lifted out by their fellow villagers, they are weak but must perform the dance before they are offered any nourishment.

This rite of passage is only undertaken by the strongest elders in the village and those who are most respected.

As we talk, the chief of the village pops by to say hello, beaming with pride for his treasured tradition.

He tells me: "This dance is important to us as it has been passed on by our ancestors. It keeps the bad spirits away."

Then he says something that reminds me of the entranced tourists who so much enjoyed the vibrant cultural displays of this year's mask festival. "It entices the good ones to come close to enjoy the music and the night." Just as we all did.

MYSTERY OF THE AIR

AMELIA EARHART AND PNG: AN INSEPARABLE STORY

The last anyone saw of the American aviatrix was when she flew her plane from Lae eastwards into the Pacific. Many theories exist about her last movements, putting her final resting place variously in Kiribati, Saipan and PNG. History geek Roderick Eime examines the theories.

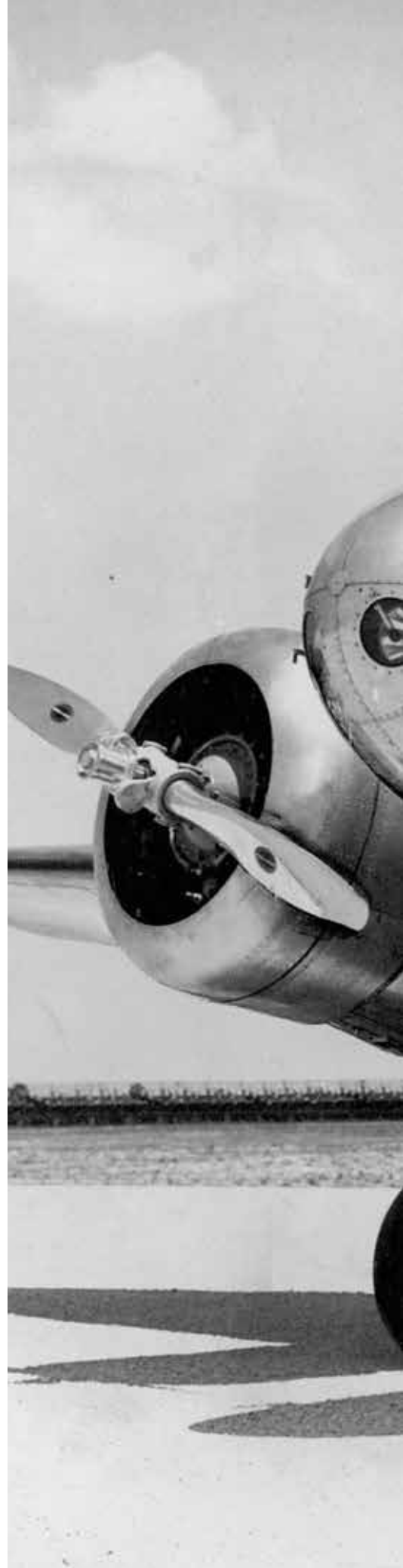
Sitting in a lonely field next to the site of the old Lae airport is a forlorn slab of concrete that once bore a plaque dedicated to the brave aviatrix, Amelia Earhart, who was last seen flying from the grass and gravel strip to her intended destination in the Pacific in July 1937.

The popular narrative is that she was never seen again. But was she?

Lae has long since been served by the more favourably located airport at Nadzab. With the busy gold mining industry, old Lae airport was once among the busiest anywhere and that's how Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, found it when they arrived on June 29 after completing 35,000 kilometres of their round-the-world flight.

The intrepid pair checked into Lae's 'plush' and only hotel, the Cecil, and were greeted by the owner, Flora 'Ma' Stewart. Once the only art-deco building in Papua

Right: Amelia Earhart with her Lockheed Electra in Miami in the US.
About a month later she disappeared after leaving PNG.





New Guinea, it somehow survived Japanese occupation, but was demolished in the 1970s. It would be enthralling to be a fly on the wall at the dinner table as Earhart and Guinea Airways general manager, Eric Chater, discussed the flight thus far and the dangerous and complicated 11,000-kilometre trans-Pacific legs that lay ahead.

While Earhart dined privately in the comfort of the Chater household, Noonan took the opportunity, in the absence of an invitation to join Earhart, to go drinking with some of the local flyers, Bertie Heath and Jim Collopy. Noonan waxed on about his time with Pan American flying their Clippers around the Pacific and how he had no specific apprehension about the next leg as he felt particularly qualified to find the speck that was Howland Island. The two noisily put the drunk Noonan to bed about midnight, waking Earhart in the next room.

While the pair enjoyed a break at Lae, Chater's mechanics were busy servicing Earhart's Lockheed Electra, attending to several issues Earhart had noted on the eight-hour flight from Darwin. Chief mechanic, Ted Finn, oversaw the operation and Earhart spent some time in the hangar watching them work on the engines, radio and gyro.

Earhart was keen to get going as soon as possible, but first had to attend to many messages that were relayed via the AWA wireless station, as there were no phones in Lae. Harry Balfour was the sole operator of the rudimentary station.

She had to rely on expensive, hand-transcribed dispatches, which contained crucial weather observations and route advice from both the US Navy base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and the US Coast Guard vessel, *Itasca*, which was stationed off Howland Island to provide radio guidance.

Heavily laden with 1100 US gallons of fuel, the Electra took off from old Lae airstrip amid great fanfare, with many locals turning out to see the pair off. A black-and-white film taken by young Guinea Airways employee Alan Board, and the still photos taken that day, are the last known images of her, Noonan and the Electra.

The film and images were recently analysed by Jeff Glickman, an expert forensic examiner, and it has been determined that an antenna attached to the underside (belly) of the aircraft was likely ripped from the Electra as it taxied to take off. The specific function of this device has been subject to some debate, and how it could have affected the flight ahead has been debated by experts in many books and internet forums.

As the aircraft disappeared to the east, the weather reports Earhart had been waiting for arrived from Hawaii and attempts were made to transmit this information to her. The success, or otherwise, has never been fully established and crackly, garbled transmissions continued for the next few hours. The last verified position report was near the Nukumanu Islands, 1300 kilometres from Lae.

From this point on, matters get confused. There have been many theories about the 'disappearance', but it helps to understand the political mood in the region at the time, especially relations between the US and Japan.



In 1937, the Japanese had control of most of Micronesia through to the Marshall Islands, having been ceded them by the League of Nations as a protectorate after the defeat of Germany in World War 1. Beginning in the 1920s, the Japanese were expanding the settlements all through this huge territory by encouraging civilian migration from Japan.

Things were going fine for a while, but in the early 1930s Japan began to quietly build its military presence in these territories in contravention of its agreement with the League of Nations. Chuuk in Micronesia, for example, was expanded to a huge military base to rival Pearl Harbor, as well as suspicious installations in the Marshall Islands, uncomfortably close to the main US base in Hawaii.

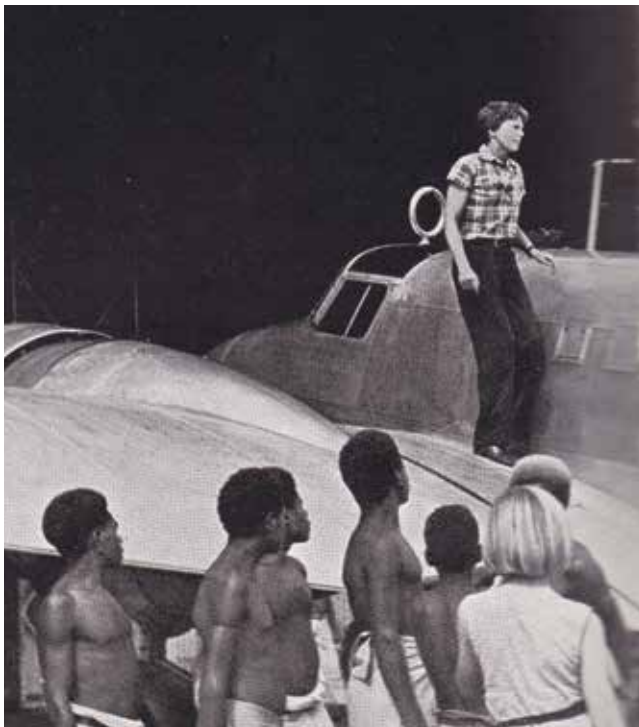
The US government had taken particular interest in the ambitious empire, especially after Japan's military intervention in China and clear signs it was building its armed forces elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific. What if an otherwise innocent civilian flight could be diverted to reconnoitre these secret islands and determine if Japan was demonstrating hostile intentions to its neighbours, the US included?

It was well known that Earhart was short of funds after the first (east to west) attempt at the round-the-world flight ended in an expensive accident in Hawaii. But she miraculously acquired enough money to relaunch her attempt just two months later, when the flight took off from Oakland, California, in the opposite direction.

For the final and most difficult section across the Pacific,



Top: Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan.



Above: One of the last photos of Amelia Earhart as she prepares to leave Lae.

the aircraft was equipped with advanced RDF equipment and, as mentioned earlier, had the support of the US Coast Guard and a specially built airstrip on remote Howland Island. Proponents of this theory have suggested that was quite an unusual and conspicuous investment for a pair of 'stunt flyers'.

Oral history in the Marshall Islands strongly supports the theory that the Electra either crash-landed or was force-landed at Mili Atoll, near the regional capital of Jaluit. A set of storyboard postage stamps were even issued to recall this event.

The theory goes that the pair, accused of espionage, became prisoners of Japan and were sent to jail on Saipan where they were incarcerated for several years until they either died or were executed.

"It was widely known throughout the islands by both Japanese and Marshallese that a Japanese fishing boat first found them and their airplane near Mili," recalls one of the Marshall Island's most prominent modern pioneers, Robert Reimers. "They then transferred them to a bigger boat (believed to be the *Koshu Maru*). They were brought to Jabor, where (local medic) Bilimon (Amaron) treated them. They were then taken to Kwajalein and from there to Truk and then Saipan. There was no mystery ... everybody knew it!"

Another theory gaining much traction at the moment, despite scant evidence, is that when the plane became lost or disorientated near Howland Island, they crashed near Nikumaroro (then known as Gardner Island) in Kiribati. It is here that it is believed they survived for a time as castaways until dying.

But in recent years a far more intriguing theory has emerged: that the wreck of the Electra is hidden in the jungle near Kimbe.

Timothy Joe Aiap, from Urin village high in the Whiteman's Range in the Kandrian district of West New Britain, claims to have found wreckage that conforms to the description of the Earhart aircraft. Other commentators have cast doubt on that, claiming instead that he has found a lost US bomber or fighter aircraft, possibly a B-24 (Liberator) or P-38 Lightning.

One of those experts interested in the West New Britain theory is retired Australian aviation engineer David Billings, who is working from a World War 2 map unearthed from lost archives in 1993, which detail findings by Australian soldiers on patrol in East New Britain in April 1945.

The most perplexing clue in this mystery is that the soldiers recovered a manufacturer's tag from the wreckage that matches 'precisely' the serial numbers from Earhart's Lockheed 10E Electra. While the tag itself was handed in to authorities at the time, the notes still exist handwritten on the original patrol map. This theory suggests that Earhart invoked a contingency plan to turn back in the event of an emergency.

All of this reminds us that the enduring mystery of Earhart and Noonan's disappearance continues to grip the imagination and spawn a wealth of conspiracy theories that go beyond a simple record-breaking stunt to espionage, official secrecy and a meticulously orchestrated cover-up.



PASSION PLAY

*Brian Johnston looks at the
history of rugby league, a national
obsession in PNG.*

Above: Kumul Wellington Albert salutes the crowd during the 2017 Rugby League World Cup.

Right: PNG captain David Mead kicks off during the competition.
Pictures: Dave Buller

Rugby league isn't just the most popular sport in Papua New Guinea, but something of a mania. The sport is part of the school curriculum, and the country's official national sport. Over 1000 teams are estimated to be grouped into clubs and 40 leagues across PNG.

As for rugby league's fans, they're widely regarded as among the most dedicated and enthusiastic in the world. Some of the country's biggest television audiences gather to watch the national men's team, the Kumuls, or Australian state-of-origin matches. Stadiums are regularly sold out when the Kumuls take to the field, such as we saw in the Rugby League World Cup matches played in Port Moresby late last year.

Such fervour might seem surprising given the relatively youthful nature of rugby league in PNG. It was likely first introduced in the 1930s by Australian miners and settlers and reinforced in the 1940s by Australian troops stationed and fighting in PNG. The PNG Rugby Football League was founded in 1949. Still, until the late 1960s it was played mostly by expats, although it attracted growing spectator interest.

Things started to change in the early 1970s. A national rugby league team took part in the inaugural Rugby League Pacific Cup in 1975, which was hosted by PNG.

It finished a reputable second, defeated in the final (38-13) by New Zealand Maori.





It was a long wait after that for the ultimate triumph, but in 2009 (with PNG again the host nation), the Kumuls took out the tournament with a resounding 42–14 victory over the Cook Islands.

In 1974, PNG became a member of what is now known as the Rugby League International Federation, which placed it on the international sporting stage. Although its first Test match saw a 40–12 defeat by England, its first Test win came shortly afterwards when the Kumuls beat French team Les Chanticleers (a thumping 37–6) in Port Moresby.

In subsequent years, PNG further impressed with valiant – if ultimately losing – performances against France and New Zealand.

The growing confidence of the PNG national team saw it attend its first Rugby League World Cup in 1985–88, at a time when the tournament was formatted over a three-year period.

Above: Sell-out crowds attended World Cup games in Port Moresby in 2017.





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“PNG’S RUGBY LEAGUE FANS ARE WIDELY REGARDED AS THE MOST DEDICATED AND ENTHUSIASTIC IN THE WORLD.”

The Kumuls again caught the world’s attention by beating New Zealand in a thrillingly close early-round match in Port Moresby.

Things didn’t go so well in subsequent World Cups, though PNG’s 28–28 draw against Tonga in England in 1995 saw it advance further than ever before in the competition.

The 2000 World Cup, however, would go down in the sporting history books when PNG opened the tournament with a sensational 23–20 victory over host nation France in Paris, and followed it up with wins over South Africa and Tonga. Two million Papua New Guineans – about a third of the entire population – tuned in to the televised quarter-final against Wales. Although the Kumuls were defeated 22–8, it was their best achievement in a World Cup. Tens of thousands of fans swamped Port Moresby airport to cheer the team’s return.

While rollercoaster losses and wins were unfolding internationally, the country was developing rugby league nationally, too. In 1990, the SP Inter-City Cup was established as the first national competition, modelled on the format of the Australian National Rugby League. After changes in sponsorship names over the year, it is now called the Digicel Cup, after a mobile-network supplier. Properly speaking, it has been the Papua New Guinea National Rugby League Competition (or PNGNRL) since 2005.

While this is the premier domestic competition, there are numerous others, including the Port Moresby League and the Nokondi Cup, created in 2007 to bring together local teams in Eastern Highlands Province.

In December 2008, the PNG Women’s Rugby League was founded, reaching its culminating achievement in 2017 by placing a national team, the Orchids, at the World Cup.

Many PNG players also compete – and have become big stars – in the Australian National Rugby League, particularly in Queensland, where 20,000 Papua New Guineans live, and to which others are prepared to fly for matches.

The Port Moresby Vipers and more recently the PNG Hunters have been prominent in the Super Cup tournament, the top level of rugby league club competition in Queensland, contested by 14 teams.

The Hunters joined the competition in 2014 and won the premiership last year. All their matches in Queensland are shown live on national television in PNG.

Rugby league hit a turbulent time in 2010, with clashes over junior development, control of the national team and governing body, and controversy about the numbers of Australian-based players being picked for the national team. Lately, though, things have been on the upswing again.

A team of very experienced players in the national squad in 2016 saw the Kumuls defeat Fiji 22–10 in a Pacific Rugby League Test final in Sydney, after a near-miraculous comeback in the second half of the match that drove the nation to a frenzy. It was the team’s first international away win since 2000.

And then, of course, the Kumuls showed they are on the rise again at the Rugby League World Cup late last year. The team had record-breaking home victories in front of capacity crowds in Port Moresby.

The Kumuls defeated Wales 50–6, Ireland 14–6 and the US 64–0 before going down to England in the quarter-final 36–6.

The buzz around Port Moresby’s hosting of the world cup matches, and the Kumuls’ dazzling performances, have put PNG well and truly back on the rugby league map.

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THE INCREDIBLE VOYAGE OF THE BLIND MAN IN A CANOE

*Chips Mackellar recalls a story of survival
on the Solomon Sea.*

I was the assistant district commissioner of the Trobriand Islands when one day in the 1960s a blind man on Alcester Island lay down on a beached canoe in the warmth of the afternoon sun and dozed off to sleep.

No one on the island took any notice, as they were used to seeing him sleep in the canoes. But later, when his family went to fetch him for dinner, the canoe was gone.

By then it was dark. The tide had come in and the canoe had floated out to sea with the blind man on board, still asleep.

The alarm was raised and people ran along the beach, calling frantically, but there was no response.

In desperation, the villagers paddled around the island in their canoes in the dark, but they did not find the blind man.

The search went on until dawn, when it was obvious that the sea was empty in all directions. Reluctantly, the search was abandoned.

Alcester Island is a speck in the ocean, miles from anywhere. There was no radio on the island and no powerboat to launch a bigger search.

Fortunately, a passing coastal vessel called in at the island a few days after the blind man went missing. It had a radio on board and the alarm was raised, beginning an air-sea rescue operation.





'ADRIFT AND ALONE IN AN EMPTY SEA MIGHT HAVE BEEN BAD ENOUGH FOR ORDINARY

Scheduled flights in the area were diverted and vessels plying the Solomon Sea were asked to keep watch.

But the blind man and the canoe were not found, so after two weeks of disappointment the search was called off and he was officially declared lost at sea.

About a month later, villagers at Kiriwina Island brought a blind man to me at the Sub-District office at Losuia. He was seeking assistance to return to Alcester Island.

I could hardly believe it. Not only was he alive, he was very well. A doctor looked over him and confirmed the blind man had not suffered any ill effects from his ordeal. And what an ordeal it must have been.

Yet, when I told him about the air-sea search, the blind man couldn't understand what all the fuss had been about.

He explained that when he woke up in the canoe, he knew it was dark because he could no longer feel the warmth of the sun on his skin. He also knew the canoe was floating in the sea because he could smell the water and feel the canoe rocking when he moved, a situation confirmed when he put his hand in the water.

He called for help to get back to the island, but received no reply. He assumed that people on the island would also be calling out for him but he could not hear them, so he knew the island was out of earshot.

He felt around the canoe and found a paddle. He could have paddled back to the island if he had known where it was. One problem was that the sea was big and the island was small and, even if it had been close by, he could not see it. So he did not know in which direction to paddle.

He also knew that if he paddled in the wrong direction, he might never make landfall alive.



Adrift and alone in an empty sea might have been bad enough for ordinary people, but for a blind man alone in a canoe, it was infinitely worse.

"So what did you do?" I asked him.

"Since I did not know where Alcester Island was, there was no point in attempting to return there," he replied.

"I knew that Woodlark Island was directly north of Alcester, and it was a larger island and therefore more easy to find, so I

decided to head for there, until I could beach the canoe either on Woodlark Island, or here in the Trobriands."

"These islands are miles apart," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "but even if I could see, there was no way I could compensate for drift and current, so by heading north the chances were that if I missed Woodlark, I might still land in the Trobriands." I was astonished at his sound reasoning.

"Have you been here before?" I asked.

"No," he said. "I had been to Woodlark before with other people in another canoe. But I have never been here."

I was amazed.

"So how did you know where the Trobriands were?" I asked.

"From stories people told," he said, "you know, the Kula Ring."



The Kula ceremonial exchange consists of passing traditional artefacts clockwise, and other artefacts anti-clockwise, between people living in a ring of 18 island groups scattered across the Solomon Sea.

The Kula provides strong mutual obligations of hospitality, protection and assistance to partners within the exchange system of the Ring.

Even if villagers have never met before, the bond between them has already been established by the exchange of artefacts. They may not have passed on the artefact directly, but through others in the Ring, so they have a bond even if they have not met.

So, unable to find Alcester Island, and confident that he might find safe haven somewhere else in the Solomon Sea, the blind man paddled his canoe in the direction of Woodlark Island.

"But how could you navigate your canoe if you could not see where you were going?" I asked.

"I could not see, but I could feel the sun's heat," he said. And he went on to explain that if he kept the sun on his right side in the morning, and on his left side in the afternoon, he would roughly be heading north. So by paddling his canoe in this way he headed for Woodlark Island.

"You could not see the stars, so how did you navigate at night?"

The wind was blowing from the south-east, he told me, so

PEOPLE, BUT FOR A BLIND MAN ALONE IN A CANOE, IT WAS INFINITELY WORSE.'

he knew he was travelling northward because of the sun's heat during the day, and when heading this way he could feel the wind on his back.

So, he said, when the sun had set he paddled with the wind on his back until morning, then, with the sun rising on his right side again and the wind still at his back, he knew he was more or less, on course during the night.

And so, long after the official air-sea rescue had ended, the blind man's own search for a safe haven continued.

"But you were paddling your canoe for weeks," I said. "What did you eat and drink?"

He said he felt around inside the canoe and found a bailer shell. Sometimes it rained, he said, and the rainwater would collect inside the hull of the canoe. Instead of bailing it out, he left the rainwater to slosh around and he used the bailer shell to scoop it up and drink it.

"And food?" I asked. There were flying fish, he said. They skipped across the sea and over his canoe, but some did not make it across and fell into the hull.

He said he could hear them jumping around and after a while they died. He said that by feeling around in the rainwater in the hull, he could find them and eat them raw. There weren't many, he told me, just a few every day, but enough to keep him going.

"And landfall?" I asked. "Tell me about that." After a few weeks of paddling in the direction of what he thought was north, he told me he could hear the surf breaking on a shore somewhere.

He did not know where, but he could hear sea birds flying



overhead and he could smell land: palm trees, smoke from cooking fires, the smell of a village. So when he knew he was close to shore because of the back swell from the beach, he began to call out the name of his Kula artefact.

He called and called and called, he said, and soon he could hear voices from the village and some shouting. Then, amongst the shouts he could hear the name of his Kula artefact being repeated by one of the village men who identified himself as the local Kula partner of that artefact. The blind man then knew that his search for a safe haven was over.

People swam out through the surf and guided his canoe to the beach, and that is how he made landfall.

"I missed Woodlark Island," he said, "but I found the Trobriands instead."

His Kula partner, whom he had never met before arriving in the Trobriands, fed him and cared for him in the village until he was fit enough to continue his journey, and then the village people brought him to my office in Losuia.

I put the blind man on the scheduled charter to Alotau the



following day, and I heard that from there he went by shuttle vessel to Samarai, and from there by government trawler back to Alcester Island.

From Alcester Island to the Trobriands, the blind man had paddled and drifted approximately 320 kilometres. In an open canoe travelling solo, it would have been a remarkable feat of survival for anyone, for the blind man travelling alone it was almost a miracle.

Yet when I discussed the blind man's miraculous survival with the Paramount Chief of the Trobriand Islands, he was unimpressed. "We have been sailing across the Kula Ring for a thousand years," he said. "Canoes get lost, blown off course, break up in rough seas, or get swept on to coral reefs and atolls.

"It doesn't happen very often, but when it does happen we know what to do. Your search with ships and planes could not find this blind man," the Chief continued. "But he knew what to do, and it was his own search for a safe landing which saved him."

"But he was blind," I insisted.

"Yes," the Chief said, "but he still knew what to do, and that is the way it is in these islands."

I was astonished that the Chief was so unimpressed by the blind man's ordeal.

"It was nothing special," the Chief continued, "it was just another event of life in the Kula Ring".

It might have been, but I will always remember the amazing feat of endurance, determination and skill of that blind man.

Chips Mackellar was a patrol officer in pre-Independence Papua New Guinea who rose to the rank of assistant district commissioner before becoming a magistrate in Port Moresby. Patrol officers, or *kiaps* (pidgin for captain), were representatives of the Australian Government with wide-ranging authority. Mackellar has a 2013 memoir, *Sivara*, about his time in PNG. It is available on Amazon.com.

THE YEAR AHEAD IN PNG



Above: Visitors get up close to performers at the Goroka Show.

Picture: David Kirkland

April 25, Anzac Day, Port Moresby

The Dawn Service is open to the public at the Port Moresby (Bomana) War Cemetery to commemorate those who have served in all military services. Organised by the Port Moresby RSL. Tel. +675 7210 7275

April 26-29, PNG Golf Open, Port Moresby

The region's best golfers will battle it out on the fairways and greens at the Royal Port Moresby Golf Club. royalpomgolf.com

May 18, Tumbuna Show, Mount Hagen

This is a gathering of more than 100 tribesmen and women at Kum Mountain, about 13 kilometres from Mount Hagen. It includes dancing, cultural performances and a *mumu* feast. pngtours.com

June 9-11, Madang Festival, Madang

This colourful event is on the Queen's Birthday weekend every year. The Bilum Festival on Karkar Island is held the week before, this year on June 2-3.

July 11-14, Mask Festival Kokopo in East New Britain

This is the staging point for the annual celebration of PNG's dramatic masks, some with thousands of years of history behind them. The festival uncovers the stories, dances and rituals behind the many masks, which are sacred, educational or celebratory.

August 5-7, Sepik River Crocodile & Arts Festival

Feared and revered, the crocodiles of the Sepik River inspire the songs, dances, initiation tattoos and art featured in this festival in Ambunti, East Sepik Province.

August 10-12, Enga Cultural Show

Wabag Groups from the five districts in Enga Province come together for a showcase of song, dance and culture. engaculturalshow.org.pg

August 17-19, Mount Hagen Show

One of PNG's most famous cultural displays was first organised to unify the tribes of PNG. Held in the Western Highlands Province, it offers songs, dances and traditions found across the country.

September 14-15, Frangipani Festival, Rabaul

The festival celebrates the rebirth of Rabaul after the 1994 volcanic eruptions. All events are free and include a march past by schools, Baining fire dances, frangipani float parade through the streets of Rabaul, traditional performances, and a *tumbuan* and *dukduk* ceremony on the foreshore.

September 15-17, Goroka Show

The biggest gathering of PNG's tribes has taken place every September in the Eastern Highlands since 1957, with over 100 tribes embracing their cultural diversity at the *sing-sing*, including the fearsome Asaro Mudmen.

September 16, Hiri Moale Festival, Port Moresby

Port Moresby has a double celebration with both PNG's Independence Day and the Hiri Moale Festival, which was originally a gathering aimed at commemorating trade between the Motuan and Gulf people, and the crowning of the Hiri queen.



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September 21-23, Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival, Southern Highlands

At Daga village, next to Lake Kutubu, local communities stage a *sing-sing* and display art and craft to celebrate the *kundu* drum and Digaso oil, which the Kutubu use for body decoration.

September, Garamut & Mamba Festival, East Sepik

Dance, sing and plant yams in this festival of renewal that is usually held in the first week of September. The stars of the weekend-long show in Wewak are the *garamut* (drum) and *mamba* (bamboo flute), appearing at the *sing-sing*.

October 19-20, National Orchid Show, Parliament House, Waigani

Organised by the Papua New Guinea Orchid Society, expect to see more than 4000 species of orchids.

October 27-28, Morobe Show

The annual show in Lae is hosted by the Morobe Provincial Agricultural Society. Aside from the cultural aspect, expect to branch out – motorbike stunts and beauty competitions have made appearances in previous shows.

morobeshow.org.pg

October, PNG Human Rights Film Festival, Port Moresby

The three-day festival explores social issues such as arranged marriage, human rights and climate change, followed by an interactive panel discussion with the audience.

facebook.com/PNGHRFF

November 12-18, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

The 2018 APEC gathering sees 21 world leaders from the Pacific Rim countries meet in Port Moresby.

apec.org

November 2-4, Kenu and Kundu Festival, Milne Bay, Alotau, in Milne Bay Province

All about canoes (*kenu*) and drums (*kundu*), and the rituals that surround war canoes, built and decorated in time-honoured style.

Traditional dancing groups, drama, craft displays, string band competitions and a convoy of canoes are all part of the festival.

papunewguinea.travel

More details about many of the events can be found at papunewguinea.travel.

– BELINDA JACKSON,
ROBERT UPE



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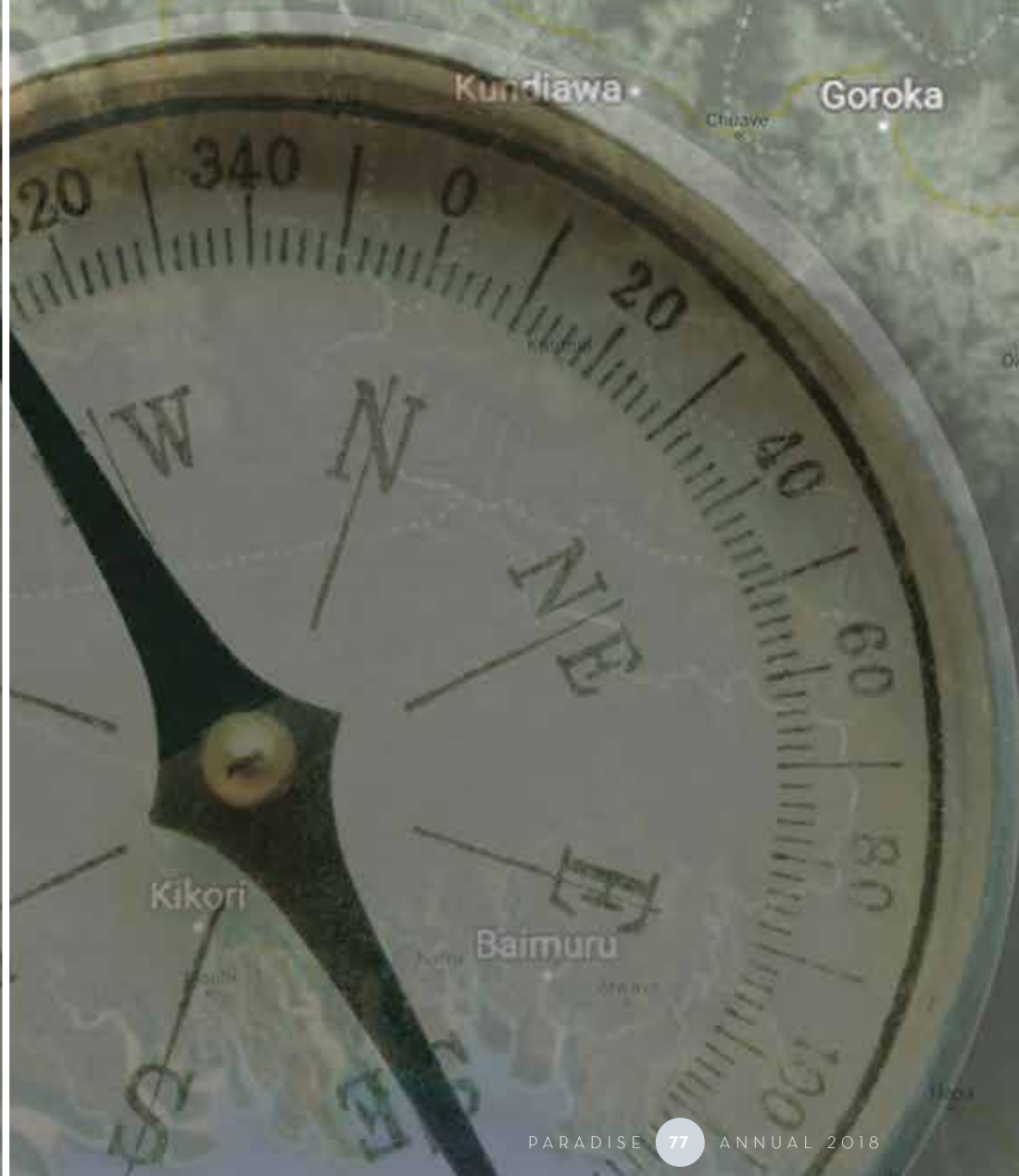
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CAPITAL BUKA

243,280 PEOPLE

9318 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY?

960 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Buka daily. The flight time is 1 hour 40 minutes.



With mist-shrouded mountains, belching volcanoes, palm-fringed beaches and tropical islands, Bougainville offers a study in contrasts. The region is slowly recovering from conflict and looking towards a more hopeful future. Two main islands make up most of Bougainville: the larger main island for which the region is named, as well as Buka, separated by the 'passage', one of the fastest-running currents in the world. The region encompasses smaller atoll chains with rich fishing waters. Bougainville has its own time zone: it is one hour ahead of elsewhere in PNG.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- World War 2 buffs will have ample choice where relics of war are concerned. A must visit near Buin is the downed plane of Japanese commander Yamamoto. Arrange with Bougainville Tours (boughtours.com).
- Arawa housed the families of the mostly Australian miners at the Panguna copper mine. It was purpose-built in the 1960s to resemble any small town in Australia. Check out this timepiece of a town and see bits of old Australiana. Bougainville Tours will get you around.
- Lace up your boots with rotokasecotourism.com and hike the Numa Numa Trail across the spine of Bougainville Island, taking in thick jungle and Mount Balbi.
- Cool off with some snorkelling and swimming in some of the sun-kissed islands just off Buka. Hotels can arrange transport.

WHERE TO STAY

- Buka: Overlooking the passage are Reasons (+675 72259041), Destiny (+675 7069 2458) and Kuri (kuriresortbuka.com); a few streets back is the Toyena (toyenalodge@gmail.com).
- Arawa: The Traveller's Inn (+675 973 9449) offers good rooms and service. The Poonang Nava (pdasiona@gmail.com) has cosy rooms. Down the coast, get away to Puk Puk Island, a dreamy self-catering resort (urunbayretreat@gmail.com). In Buin, try the homely Buin Inn (buininn06@gmail.com).

SOMETHING SUPRISING

Bougainville was home to the first State-of-Origin Rugby League matches in PNG. Soldiers from Queensland and NSW played two games in Torokina in 1945. Some things never change: Queensland won both games.

LOCALS SAY

"Bougainville's annual Chocolate Festival, each September, is putting the region on the map. Bougainville's cocoa is world-renowned."

Sebastian Andreas, photographer

— GORDON PEAKE



Top: The Bougainville landscape throws up everything from volcanoes to palm-fringed beaches.

Picture: Sebastian Andreas

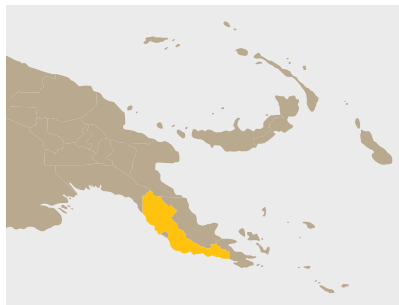
Above: A traditional bamboo band.



Right: A young dancer wearing Buka-style traditional dress, usually pink or purple, and typical face adornment for the region.
Picture: Wylda Bayron



CENTRAL



CAPITAL PORT MORESBY

237,016 PEOPLE

29,998 SQUARE KILOMETRES



Most people arriving into Papua New Guinea will find themselves in Port Moresby, which is in the National Capital District (NCD) within Central Province. Port Moresby has its attractions (see our NCD guide on page 96), but the city is also a springboard to other parts of this province, that includes mountains, river deltas and islands. The starting point for the famous Kokoda Trail is at Owers' Corner, about 60 kilometres from Port Moresby. It's possible to do a day trip to Owers' Corner, via the lush Sogeri Plateau, and to visit the Bomana war cemetery at the same time. The cemetery is the resting place of 3824 Anzacs. It's in lush gardens and accessible from 8am to 4pm daily. (Ask at your hotel for a recommended tour operator, or a car with driver for the day.)

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Tackle the 96-kilometre Kokoda Trail over the rugged Owen Stanley Range into Oro Province. The trek takes 5-10 days (depending where you start and finish) and requires a high degree of fitness. See kokodatrackauthority.org for a list of 36 licensed tour operators.
- The Port Moresby Bushwalkers' Club (facebook.com/Port-Moresby-Bushwalkers-222754271159008) conducts short walks to sites outside Port Moresby every second Sunday, for just PGK20 a person.
- There's good diving at the reef behind Fisherman's Island, near Port Moresby. The Dive Centre (+675 7202 1200) will get you there.
- The Gelebara Kite Club (facebook.com/Gelebara) offers camping and day trips on a secluded beach. It's a perfect location, even if you're not into kite boarding.
- Go on a day trip, or stay overnight, at Lion, Manubada, Lolorua, Gemo, Fisherman's, or Idiha islands. All are close to Port Moresby, but you'll need local knowledge, so a good starting point may be your hotel concierge.

WHERE TO STAY

If you travel to the Sogeri Mountains, check out the Koitaki Country Club (facebook.com/koitakicountryclubkogeri). Along the coast, March Girls (facebook.com/March-Girls-Resort) at Gaire village is noteworthy. Konebada Resort at Boera village (facebook.com/Konebada.resort) and Koke Hanua Lodge (facebook.com/kokehanualodge) also provide authentic PNG accommodation. About 20 kilometres from Port Moresby, the Loloata Island Resort (facebook.com/Loloata) is worth keeping an eye on. It's undergoing a major renovation and will reopen bigger and better than ever. It's ideal for divers.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Trekkers on the Kokoda Trail can burn 4500 calories a day, just slightly less than the average 6000 calories that cyclists burn daily in the Tour de France.

— GRACE MARIBU



Above: A wobbly river crossing along the Kokoda Trail.

Picture: Greg Newington

Right: The remnants of war along the Kokoda Trail.

Picture: Greg Newington

Far right: A girl wearing raggiana bird of paradise feathers on her head and arms. Dog teeth and banana seeds make up her necklace.

The two round pieces are unique adornments of the region and are made with a white shell (lower) and turtle shell (upper).

Picture: Wylda Bayron



LOCALS SAY

“There is lots to do in Central Province – fishing, diving, picnicking; secret trails that lead to cave paintings, swimming holes and little waterfalls; or sit with a cold drink in your hand and watch the sun set before your eyes.”

Tidman Ikosi, Porebada villager

CHIMBU



CAPITAL KUNDIAWA
376,473 PEOPLE
6112 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 432 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen up to four times daily. The flight time is 1 hour. (There are no longer flights to Chimbu's Kundiawa Airport.)



The terrain of this province consists of mountains, isolated ravines and rock formations covered in rainforest vegetation and dotted with wildflowers. It all converges around the highest peak in the land, Mount Wilhelm. At 4509 metres above sea level, this big boy comes complete with hauntingly beautiful lakes, mysterious caves, snowfalls, and majestic views for kilometres when not shrouded in chilling highland mists. Chimbu shares its borders with Gulf, Eastern Highlands, Southern Highlands, Jiwaka and Madang provinces. The bustling commercial and administrative centre of Kundiawa perches on a mountainside beside the Chimbu River.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

- Take on the challenge of the trek up Mount. Wilhelm. It passes through traditional villages, lakes, dense forest and treacherous rocky slopes before reaching the summit. Physical fitness and cold weather gear required. Two operators to take you there are PNG Trekking Adventures (pngtrekkingadventures.com) and Buna Treks and Tours (bunatrekkers@gmail.com).
- Bird watch at Betty's Lodge (villagehuts.com), at the foot of Mount Wilhelm.
- Spot Chimbu locals in their traditional regalia featuring extravagant headdresses made from exotic highland bird feathers. This is a common sight.
- Visit limestone caves near Kundiawa, former burial sites. Guides recommended and can be arranged in Kundiawa.

WHERE TO STAY

Near the town centre, Kundiawa Hotel has 16 rooms with ceiling fans. The Greenland Motel is another well-priced option. It's about a two-hour drive from Goroka or Mount Hagen to Kundiawa. Village Huts (villagehuts.com) can arrange transport and accommodation. Kundiawa Sunrise Transit Lodge (sunrisetransitlodge@gmail.com) is another town option to consider. Betty's Lodge, at the foot of Mount Wilhelm, has 37 beds and is known for its hospitality, trout farm and array of orchids (villagehuts.com).

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Chimbu, pronounced *simbu*, is an expression of delighted surprise in the Kuman language. Australian explorers into the highland interior called the place Chimbu after hearing LOCALS SAY 'simbu' repeatedly when they first met.

LOCALS SAY

'Mount Digne is eye-catching and has a lake near the peak. Locals believe there is an enormous monster living under the lake that wards off intruders.'

Lucy Jeremiah, youth leader

— SIVA KIMA



Top: Striking 'skeleton men' dressed to showcase a local folk tale in the province. The body is painted black from burnt tyres and the white is lime created from burnt sea shells.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: Mount Wilhelm throws up some pleasant surprises, such as picturesque lakes. On occasion, PNG's highest mountain also has snow.

Picture: David Kirkland

EASTERN HIGHLANDS



CAPITAL GOROKA
579,825 PEOPLE
11,157 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 360 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Goroka twice daily. The flight time is 1 hour 10 minutes.



The Asaro Valley of the Eastern Highlands is home to the famed Mudmen. Clad in ivory-white paint, elongated bamboo fingers and fearsome masks, the Mudmen captivate onlookers with eerie performances impersonating ghosts emerging from jungle mists. As legend goes, this was once a war tactic used to inflict terror and demolish confidence in unsuspecting enemies before attack. Nowadays, the province prides itself on being peaceful and welcomes many visitors. Having huge provincial boundaries, the landform varies from stretches of lush valleys and emerald rolling hills to precipitous mountain ranges and robust rivers.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Experience one of the biggest cultural festivals in PNG at the annual Goroka Show each September where diverse groups (the Asaro Mudmen among them) perform song and dance. Book with Trans Niugini Tours (pngtours.com).
- Pick up traditional souvenirs at the *bilum* and craft market along Elizabeth Street in Goroka.
- See historic artefacts at the JK McCarthy Museum in Morchauser Street in Goroka. McCarthy was a legendary patrol officer.
- Stop by the Cultural Centre in Kainantu and see traditional pottery on display.

WHERE TO STAY

Set in tranquil gardens, the Pacific Gardens Hotel (pacifichotel.com.pg) in Goroka has standard self-contained rooms. It offers restaurant, bar, free wireless internet and airport transfers. Close to the airport, Bird of Paradise Hotel (coralseahotels.com.pg) has upmarket accommodation, a pool and a deck bistro. Also consider the Lutheran Mission Guest House in the heart of town (McNicoll Street) and the Kainantu Hotel (kainhotel@kklbld.com).

SOMETHING SURPRISING

With an average temperature of 19°C and 69 per cent humidity, Goroka has a perpetual spring climate with plenty of sunny days and cool nights.

LOCALS SAY

‘The Eastern Highlands Province has big mountains and forest areas and the fresh air is good to breathe. Also the weather is nice and cool and the people are peaceful.’

– Jacob Loriko, community leader

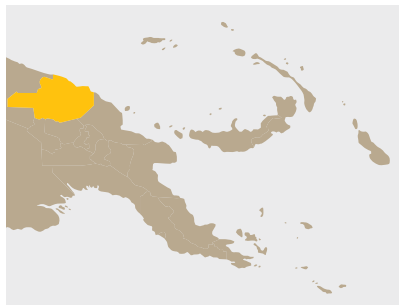
– SIVA KIMA



Top: One of the legendary Mudmen, with fearsome face mask, body covered in mud.
 Picture: Wylda Bayron

Above: A sea of people and produce at market day in Goroka.
 Picture: Siva Kima

EAST SEPIK



CAPITAL WEWAK

433,481 PEOPLE

43,426 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 760 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Wewak twice daily. The flights are via Madang and also direct. The direct flight is

1 hour 20 minutes and via Madang it is 1 hour 40 minutes.



East Sepik Province is a wonder of mountains, islands, beautiful beaches and great river systems. Coupled with this scenery is the province's rich history and traditional cultures rooted in deep folklore. Among the province's customs is crocodile scarification, a painful initiation ceremony in which young men have their skin cut so the scars heal and look like crocodile scales. The province is dominated by the Sepik River, which flows 1126 kilometres from source to the sea.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Attend the annual Crocodile Festival at Ambunti, a three-day cultural celebration usually held during the first week of August. You can see crocodile scarification and initiation tattoos on young men, traditional dance performances and live crocodile encounters.
- Visit the World War 2 memorial at Cape Wom, 14 kilometres outside Wewak, the site of the Japanese surrender in 1945.
- See a spirit house (*haus tambaran*) in the Maprik area. If you visit in July/August, join in the harvest feasting and rituals.
- Take a motorised canoe trip on the Lower Sepik River for birdwatching.
- Ambunti, on the Middle Sepik River, is the region's cultural centre. From Ambunti, travel by motorised canoe, staying in village guesthouses.
- A great way to see the Sepik is by a luxury cruise on *The Sepik Spirit*, operated by Trans Niugini Tours (pngtours.com).
- Sepik Adventure Tours can provide tour advice (+675 7259 6349; facebook.com/Sepik-Village-Journeys-sepik-Adventure-Tours).

WHERE TO STAY

In Wewak, try the Paradise New Wewak Hotel (+675 456 2155) on the headlands. Talio Lodge (taliolodge.com) will interest surfers, a five-minute walk from Boram Airport. Wewak Guest House (+675 856 1497) and remote Karawari Lodge (pngtours.com) are also available.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Crocodile scarification was a dying art form; however, it has had a recent revival with Sepik men seeking to establish their place in local communities instead of the wider world.

LOCALS SAY

"It is true PNG is one of the last places to be discovered and here on the Sepik, we have much to show you."

Mateos Alois, tour operator, Wewak

— GRACE MARIBU



Top: A young man with crocodile scarification, inflicted during a painful initiation ceremony.

Picture: David Kirkland

Above: Middle Sepik children preparing for a sing-sing. Pig's tusks and clay are used as traditional decoration.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

EAST NEW BRITAIN



CAPITAL KOKOPO
328,369 PEOPLE
15,816 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 750 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Rabaul twice daily. The flight time is 1 hour 25 minutes.



East New Britain is a tourism hot spot, known for active volcanoes, the Baining fire dancers, war history, idyllic islands and the annual Mask Festival each July. In 1994, a volcanic eruption devastated Rabaul, burying it in volcanic ash. It has since rebuilt; however, after the disaster the province's capital was shifted to Kokopo, about 30 kilometres down the road.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Visit the hot springs at the foot of smoking Mount Tavurvur, or climb to the top. It's a short but gut-busting scramble on loose shale. Most hotels will arrange tours.
- Try *paiaman* peanuts, roasted or fermented in cocoa driers and sold at the markets.
- Set the alarm for an early morning boat trip to see hundreds of spinner dolphins. Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort (kbb.com.pg) and Rapopo Plantation Resort (rapopo.com) run tours.
- Take in some war history with visits to the Kokopo War Museum, the bunker of Japanese admiral Isoroku Yamamoto and the Bitu Paka war cemetery.
- Take a day trip by boat to the Duke of York Islands (most hotels will arrange), or stay overnight (villagehuts.com).

WHERE TO STAY

In Kokopo, the Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort (kbb.com.pg) and Rapopo Plantation Resort (rapopo.com) are by the sea and have volcano views. The Gazelle International Hotel (gazelleinternationalhotel.com) is opposite the golf course. The Kokopo Village Resort (kokoporesort.com.pg) is in the middle of town. In Rabaul, the Rabaul Hotel (rabaulhotel.com.pg) survived the 1994 eruption and has become a town landmark. Budget travellers may enjoy the guest houses at Takubar, including the New Britain Travellers' Inn (+675 982 9963).

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Rabaul fell to the Japanese in 1942 and became the main base of Japanese military and naval activity in the South Pacific during World War 2.

LOCALS SAY

"Don't miss the Mask Festival. There are hundreds of dancers and the town comes alive for four days. The festival includes the spectacular fire dancers. Also be sure to try *aigir*, a local dish cooked in coconut cream using burning-hot stones."

Alfons Schulz, Rabaul resident

— ANNETTE SETE



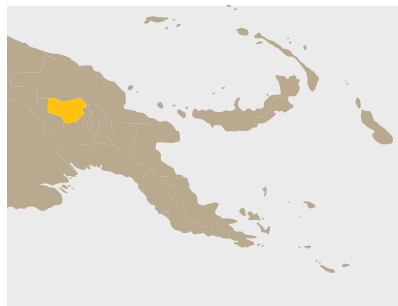
Top: Baining fire dancers in their element. The masks are made of a cane frame and beaten tree bark.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: A lunar landscape surrounds Mount Tavurvur.

Picture: Robert Upe

ENGA



CAPITAL WABAG

432,045 PEOPLE

11,704 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 609 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Wapenamanda Airport daily. The flight time is 1 hour 30 minutes.



Explorer and patrol officer James Taylor saw Enga in 1938 and described it as a 'garden land'. He wrote: "We were in the heart of the valley, one of the most beautiful in New Guinea, if not in the world." Taylor's description, 80 years on, still holds true. Enga, which was carved off from the neighbouring Western Highlands Province around the time of independence in 1975, is in the northernmost part of the highlands. There are mountains over 2000 metres, wild rivers, lush valleys, waterfalls, striking birdlife and glorious orchids.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Watch birds of paradise feed from the balcony at Kumul Lodge. The eco-lodge is world famous among birdwatchers, and also conducts orchid tours.
- Take a peek at the Engan way of life at the Take Anda cultural centre in Wabag. Photographs, paintings and artefacts – including bird of paradise headdresses and fighting shields – can be seen.
- The rich culture of the province comes alive during the annual Enga Cultural Show in August (engaculturalshow.org.pg).
- Go to Kaiap, a village near Wabag, where the rare orchid, *Dendrobium engae*, was discovered. Tours can be arranged with Ribito Hotel to see the same views as James Taylor.
- Breathe in the cool air at Sirunki, the highest habitable village in the province at 1220 metres, with views of Lake Sirunki in the valley below.

WHERE TO STAY

Ribito Hotel (ribitohotel.com), Wabag Lodge (wabaglodge855@gmail.com) and Daewon Hotel (dwltdhagen@gmail.com) offer good value in Wabag. They are close to government offices, shops, the cultural centre and buses. Kumul Lodge (kumul-lodge.com) and Yaskom Resort Hotel (+675 7066 4580) are out of town, along the Highlands Highway. Yaskom is 45 minutes from Wabag and is the place to stay if visiting Sirunki.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Enga is the only place the rare orchid species, *Dendrobium engae*, is found. The plant is depicted on the provincial flag.

LOCALS SAY

"We have had tribal problems. But people are changing. Today my people are warriors of peace. Come stay with us and don't miss the Enga Cultural Show."

Yasowa Kome, proprietor of Yaskom Resort Hotel

– DANIEL KUMBON



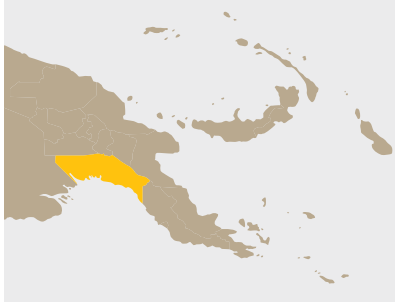
Top: Enga, like Hela Province, has a tradition of wig making. This round wig is made out of the owner's hair and is topped with sickle bird feathers. More than any other item, it has become a symbol of Engan culture.

Picture: Wylida Bayron

Above: A pair of sickle birds near Kumul Lodge.

Picture: Daniel Kumbon

GULF



CAPITAL KEREMA

237,017 PEOPLE

34,472 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 229 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI does not fly into the province. The closest Air Niugini-serviced airport is Jacksons International in Port Moresby.



Gulf Province is located on Papua New Guinea's southern coast. It has a concave coastline of large deltas that lead into the Lakekamu Basin, rich with birds and wildlife. The province offers mountains and wide expanses of seasonally flooded grass plains stretching out from the Turama, Kikori, Purari and Vailala rivers. There's a rich history here, which includes cannibalism and European occupation. Weaponry and other artefacts are used in ceremonies. Gulf artefacts can also be seen at the Papua New Guinea National Museum (museumpng.gov.pg) in Port Moresby. The Gulf people were major traders with Central Province during the Motuan voyages, with clay pots traded for bags of sago. The Hiri Moale Festival in Port Moresby celebrates the trade each year in September. Seen from the air, the tributaries, swamps and rivers of the province are mesmerising and, once you are drawn to the land, you will find it rich with flora and fauna. World-class fishing along the coast of Gulf attracts international visitors.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- If you want to catch the famed Papuan black bass, book through sportfishingpng.net.
- The provincial school arts and crafts festival is held every November.

WHERE TO STAY

The main accommodation in Kerema is GMI Hotel (+675 648 1397). Mission stations offer lodging (papuanewguinea.travel.com). Few tourists visit the Gulf and tourism facilities are scarce.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Gope boards are made in the Gulf Province. The wooden boards are carved with stories of success, including tribal warfare conquests.

LOCALS SAY

"Gulf is known for its tributaries that stretch for miles, and the rich deltas and flood plains that are habitat to so many species and wildlife."

Mai Ori, Miaru village leader

— JOYCELIN LEAHY



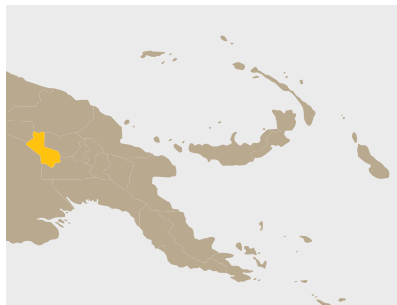
Top: A Gulf dancer with a shark mask made from beaten bark.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: An aerial view of a village on the Gulf Province coast.

Picture: Rocky Roe

HELA



CAPITAL TARI
249,449 PEOPLE
10,498 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 617 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Tari four times a week. The flight time is 1 hour 30 minutes.



This province, formed in 2012 when it split from the Southern Highlands, is home to Huli Wigmen, who have become one of the most internationally recognised symbols of Papua New Guinea. The Huli are distinctive for their face paint and elaborate wigs made from human hair. “When you meet a Huli, brace yourself,” says photographer, author and travel guide Jan Hasselberg. “Once you greet him, or her, that somber face will break into a huge warm smile and you will instantly make a friend.” When you arrive in Tari, be sure to check out the town’s market before taking off to other parts of the province. Garden produce, poultry, livestock and *bilums* are for sale in a sea of people, alongside spirited games of darts among locals who are happy if you join in. Be sure to pack some warm clothing for your visit to Hela Province – it can be cool in the mountains.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Trek into the Tari Gap or raft the Tangari River.
- Bushwalk with a guide into the mountains to see birds, including the famed birds of paradise.
- Visit Huli villages and the Huli wig school, where you can hear about Huli etiquette.
- Watch a *sing-sing* performance by Huli and other tribal groups.
- Spend time in a village to see how locals live and cultivate their land.

To undertake these activities, see pngtours.com and papuanewguinea.travel

WHERE TO STAY

Naturalist David Attenborough has stayed at Ambua Lodge, so you know the lodge’s bird-watching tours must be good. The lodge is operated by Trans Niugini Tours (pngtours.com), which also has a range of cultural excursions. Ambua is about an hour from Tari, along the Highlands Highway. Hela Bushman Lodge (+675 7077 4825, facebook.com/bushmanlodge) is a five-minute drive from Tari and also arranges tours.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

The natural yellow clay used by Huli warriors to paint their faces is called *ambua* and is found at Mount Ambua in the Tari Gap. However, these days many Huli increasingly use commercial face paint.

LOCALS SAY

“We are unique and our culture remains intact.”

Hengene Payani, Tari resident

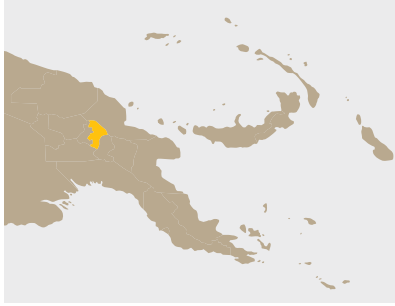
— JOYCELIN LEAHY



Top: A colourful Huli Wigman with distinctive face paint.
 Picture: Wylda Bayron

Above: A rare variety of the bird of paradise – a Princess Stephanie – in Tari Basin.
 Picture: Jan Hasselberg

JIWAKA



CAPITAL BANZ

343,987 PEOPLE

4798 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 483 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen up to four times daily. The flight time is 1 hour.



This is coffee country, and also home to the fastest woman in the Pacific. Guarded by mountain ranges, the Waghi Valley cuts a swathe through Jiwaka Province. The fertile valley is fed by the indomitable Waghi River that glints pale brown in the sunlight. Jiwaka shares its borders with the Western Highlands, Chimbu and Madang provinces. It has three districts – Jimi, North Waghi and Anglimp-South Waghi – and two growing towns, Minj and Banz. The three districts split from the Western Highlands and formed Jiwaka by an act of parliament in 2009. The new province was run by an interim administration until 2012 when the first governor was appointed. To reach Jiwaka, fly to Mount Hagen, the capital of the Western Highlands, and then travel overland. It's about an hour to Banz, depending on road conditions, and another 30 minutes to Minj.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- See Banz come alive during the Jiwaka Show (pngtours.com), a colourful event that exposes the unique and enchanting cultural identity of local tribes.
- Visit coffee plantations and see what goes into making a perfect cup of coffee. Plantation owners should be notified of visits beforehand.
- Purchase some packaged coffee in local shops to taste the exquisite flavours. Coffee from Jiwaka and the highlands region is highly regarded.
- Find inexpensive organic garden produce at the local markets, daily.

WHERE TO STAY

Jiwaka Mission Resort (jiwakamissionresort.com) provides clean and comfortable rooms at affordable prices in the Banz area. Hire cars, tours and airport transfers can be arranged with the resort. Molka Lodge (villagehuts.com) provides accommodation near Minj and has a *mumu* (earth oven), allowing visitors to eat traditionally. Molka will also make arrangements for guests to see traditional song and dance performances. Budget travellers may like JVT guest house (villagehuts.com).

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Toea Wisil, the sprint queen of the Pacific, was born in Banz and has represented PNG in Olympic, Commonwealth and Pacific Games, as well as world athletics championships.

LOCALS SAY

“Jiwaka society treasures family, community and culture. Among the many attractions the province can offer the outside world is Sigr coffee. It’s a must-taste.”

Anna Peter, student

— SIVA KIMA



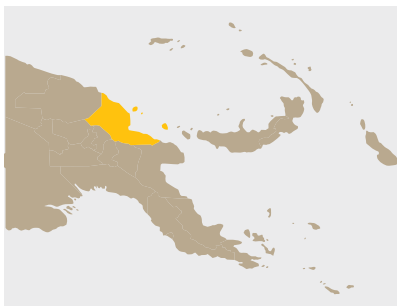
Top: Brightly coloured feathers adorn the headdress of a Jiwaka woman.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

Above: The Jiwaka Mountains of Jimi district.

Picture: Siva Kima

MADANG



CAPITAL MADANG

493,906 PEOPLE

28,886 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY?

494 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Madang twice daily. The flight time is 1 hour.



It's only when you get to Madang that you've truly arrived in paradise. Imagine taking that first sip of an ice-cold beer while gazing out at a picture-perfect view of the sea and swaying palm trees. You've either just spent the day getting acquainted with the area's rich culture, or you've been exploring the province's many shades of blue, from its turquoise-lined coastline to its aqua-fringed islands.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Dive the many reefs scattered around Madang Harbour to see big-ticket items like schools of giant trevally, tuna and manta rays, or hire a kayak from Madang Resort (madangresort.com) and paddle around the harbour, visiting neighbouring islands to stop for a swim and snorkel.
- Drive up the coast to see what coastal life is like in this sleepy province. If you keep heading north you'll come to Tupira Surf Club (sapng.com/surf-camps-boats/tupira-surf-club), which is home to excellent wave breaks from November to April.
- If you haven't had enough of Madang's postcard-perfect beaches, then lunch and a swim at Jais Aben Resort (jaisabenresort.com) is a must. It's a 20-minute drive from town and sits along one of Madang's northern harbours, with excellent snorkelling and white-sand beaches.
- Visit Bil Bil village to see traditional clay pots being made.
- Go to Balek Wildlife Sanctuary where there's a small village and a sulphuric creek in a paradise-like setting with crystal-clear water where turtles, fish and eels congregate.
- Make a photo stop at the Coastwatchers Memorial Lighthouse, a town landmark built in 1952 to honour the PNG and Australian men who assisted the Allies during World War 2.
- Time your visit with the Madang Festival, on each year during the June Queen's Birthday long weekend. This year it's from June 9-11.

WHERE TO STAY

Madang Lodge (madanglodge.com) is a comfortable seaside hotel with rooms and oceanfront apartments for every budget. The Madang Resort (madangresort.com) is a fully serviced resort with waterfront bungalows, two restaurants, a dive shop, swimming pools and conference facilities. Also try the Coastwatchers Hotel on the waterfront (coralseahotels.com.pg).

SOMETHING SUPRISING

Madang Province is home to over 25 per cent of the country's languages. Visit in June to get a taste of the many cultures at the annual Madang Festival.

LOCALS SAY

"Get on the water (sailing, diving, fishing or snorkelling)."

Sir Peter Barter, Madang Resort owner

— MARISA HOWDEN



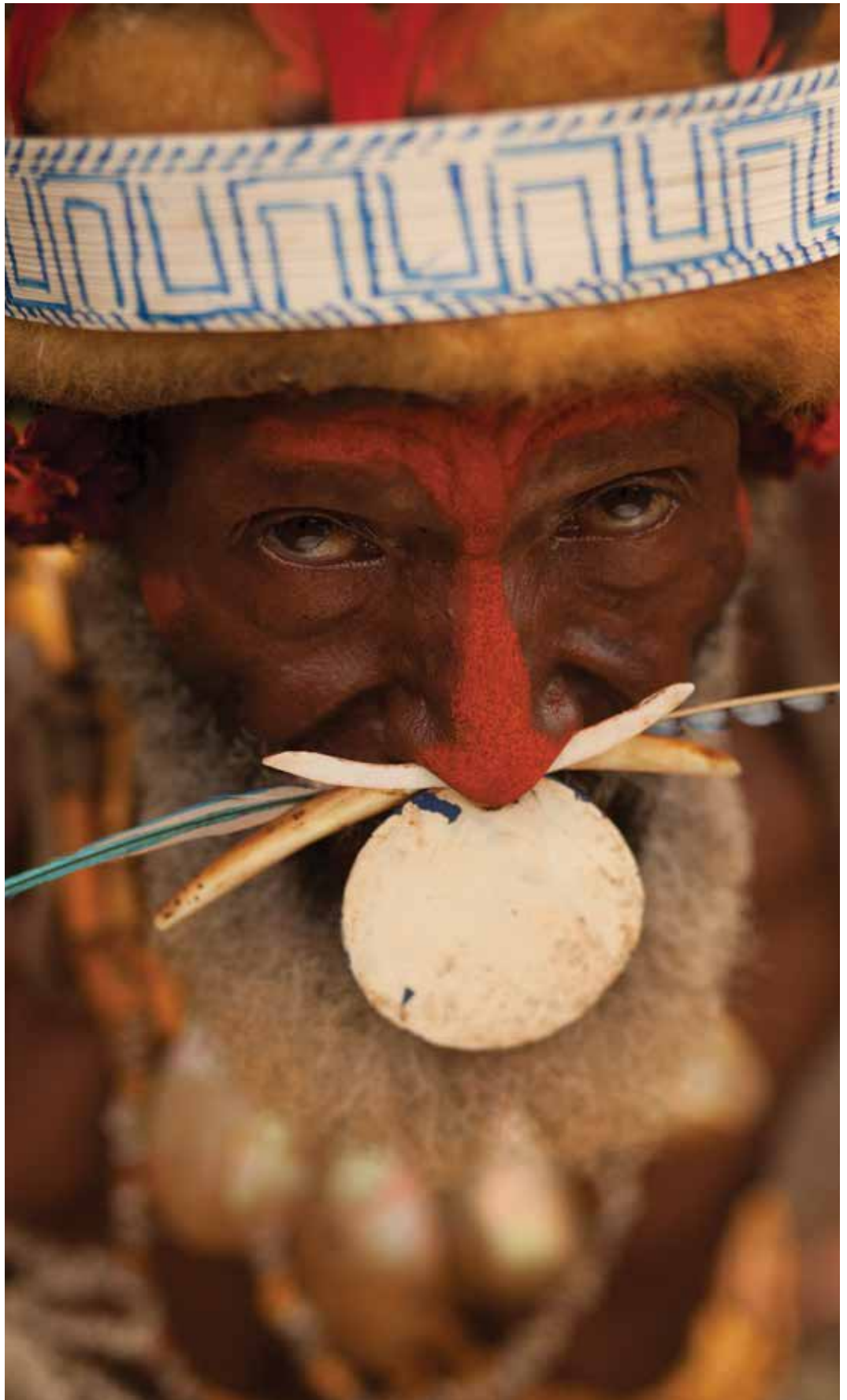
Top: Sing-sings are part of the Madang Festival each June. Picture: Supplied by Madang Resort

Above: The paradise-like setting of the Balek Wildlife Sanctuary was used in the 1997 Pierce Brosnan movie *Robinson Crusoe*. Picture: David Kirkland



Right: A Madang elder with a mix of modern and traditional body and face decoration. Tree kangaroo fur adorns the headdress.

Picture: Wylde Bayron



MILNE BAY



CAPITAL ALOTAU

276,000 PEOPLE

270,000 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY?

374 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Alotau's Gurney Airport daily. The flight time is 50 minutes.



Comprising of more than 435 islands scattered across hundreds of kilometres, Milne Bay Province (also known as the Massim region) is a place of spectacular natural beauty. The islands, broken up into four main groups (the Trobriand, D'Entrecasteaux and Woodlark islands, and the Louisiade archipelago), are where to head for some of the world's best snorkelling and diving, secluded white-sand beaches, bubbling hot springs, traditional villages, and lush hiking trails.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Kayak or stand-up paddleboard along the jungle-lined Dawadawa River, with PNG Trekking Adventures (pngtrekkingadventures.com).
- Time a visit with the three-day Kenu and Kundu Festival in Alotau in early November each year, where war canoes filled with warriors in traditional dress race to the beat of island drums. Crooked Compass (crooked-compass.com) runs tours organised around this event.
- See war relics while learning about the Battle of Milne Bay between Japanese and Australian forces. Kokoda Historical (kokodahistorical.com.au) runs tours.
- Experience some of the world's best scuba diving and snorkelling. Dive packages can be organised through Tawali Resort (tawali.com).
- Hike around the famous hot springs and bubbling mud pools of Fergusson Island, the largest of the D'Entrecasteaux islands. Cruise companies have this in their tours, including Silversea (silversea.com).

WHERE TO STAY

Tawali Resort (tawali.com) on the north coast is a remote rainforest hideaway with breathtaking views and easy access to fantastic snorkelling and diving. If it's beachfront bungalows you're after, staying at Doini Island Plantation Resort (doiniisland.com) means you'll have less than 20 metres to walk from your front door to the warm ocean. In Alotau, Driftwood (driftwoodresortpng.com) has 11 elegant bungalows on the water's edge and a restaurant on its private jetty. Island accommodation in traditionally built overwater bungalows is available at Nuli Sapi (nulisapi.com) on remote Logeia Island.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

The Tawali Skull Caves are filled with human skulls. They date back to the time when missionaries first arrived in PNG and prohibited headhunting and cannibalism, causing villagers to hide their skull collections.

LOCALS SAY

"Milne Bay has over 56 languages and hundreds of islands and atolls. The population is scattered among the islands and some villages still do not have contact with 'our world'. We're in the Coral Triangle and the marine diversity and beauty of the province are second to none."

Jay Mataio, Milne Bay tour guide

— NINA KARNIKOWSKI



Above: Trobriand Island men arrive at the Kenu and Kundu Festival with their elaborately decorated canoes and traditional dress.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

Right: A smiling Trobriand Island girl.

Picture: David Kirkland

Far right: The jungle-fringed coastline near Tawali Resort.

Picture: Robert Upe



MANUS



CAPITAL LORENGAU
60,485 PEOPLE
2000 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 821 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Manus daily. The flight time is 1 hour 20 minutes.



It may be the smallest and the least populated province in Papua New Guinea, but Manus has some of the loudest drumbeats in the country. Manus is famous for its riveting cultural dance. The thundering rhythm of the *garamut* (a long slit drum) draws people to the dance, where men, women and children jump, shake and shout “Hey, hey! Hey, hey!” You can join them in August–September each year at the Manus Cultural Show. Also referred to as the Admiralty Islands, Manus comprises 18-plus islands covering about 2000 square kilometres of land and 220,000 square kilometres of sea. Manus Island is the largest of the islands.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Surf at Rambutso Island and stay at Bundro Village Bungalows (davidputulan@gmail.com).
- Surf at Manus Island and stay at Chopon Surf Lodge (choponsurflodge.com), which has access to nine major surf breaks. There are never more than six surfers booked into the lodge.
- Hike up Mount Dremsel, (arrange through local hotels). It is the province’s highest point and includes limestone caves with large chambers, and war relics.
- Spot an endangered greenback turtle at M’Buke Island (inquire at Seeadler Bay Hotel), a three-hour boat ride from Lorengau.
- Take the plunge at Ahus and Onetta islands (contact Mark at Manus Tourism, mmunguas75@gmail.com), reputed to have some of the best snorkelling and diving sites in the province.

WHERE TO STAY

The Seeadler Bay Hotel (seeadlerbayhotel.com) is within walking distance of Lorengau and the 28-room Lorengau Habourside Hotel (lorengauharboursidehotel.com.pg) is positioned in the heart of Lorengau township. Village stays can be arranged by both hotels.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Manus has been in the news because of its processing centre for refugees, but beyond this controversy the province is known for its stunning beauty, where you can surf, kayak, fish, trek, see war relics and bird watch.

LOCALS SAY

“We may be so far out in the sea, but the welcoming drums make you feel at home straight away.”

Kolohie Kaluwin, Rumbutso villager

— JOYCELIN LEAHY



Top: A Manus girl wears a necklace made of green snails indigenous only to the province. She also wears a traditional Manus *bilum* around her neck. This *bilum*, unlike most, is elongated and woven from pandanus leaves.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: A bird’s-eye view of Lorengau on Manus Island.

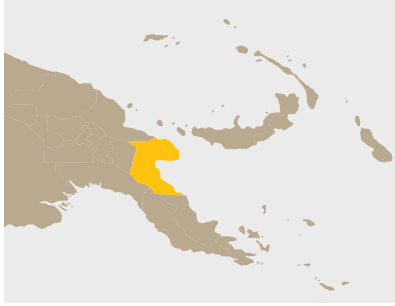
Picture: Rocky Roe

Below: A newly carved *garamut* at Rambutso Island, with two sticks for making a lot of noise.

Picture: Kolohie Kaluwin



MOROBE



CAPITAL LAE
674,810 PEOPLE
33,705 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 307 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Lae up to four times daily. The flight time is 45 minutes.



Morobe is Papua New Guinea's most populous province and the gateway to the interior of the country. It boasts a wide variety of vegetation, flora and fauna, landscape, topography, cultures, history and archaeological background. The province includes the bio-diverse Huon Peninsula, the Markham Valley and Delta, and coastal areas extending into the Bismarck Sea. Morobe experienced a gold rush in the 1920s. World War 2 was fought intensely on its land and waters. Lae is the country's second-biggest urban centre and industrial hub.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Every October, Morobe comes alive with the annual Morobe Provincial Agricultural Show (morobeshow.org.pg), held in Lae since 1959. The exhibition showcases everything from agricultural produce to commercial products and cultural activities.
- The Rainforest Habitat is another Lae must-see. Situated on 3000 square metres of rainforest with a lake, raised walkways, and beautiful flowers, the habitat (unitech.ac.pg) houses the largest variety of birds of paradise kept anywhere in the world.
- The outer towns of Wau and Bulolo offer bird and butterfly watching.
- Salamaua is a tiny isthmus about an hour from Lae by boat. Go for the incredible snorkelling and swimming.

WHERE TO STAY

Lae International Hotel (laeinterhotel.com), Hotel Morobe (hotelmorobe.com), Lae City Hotel (laecityhotel.com) and Huon Gulf Motel (coralseahotels.com.pg) are all in the heart of Lae. If venturing into the southern highlands of Morobe, the Pine Lodge Hotel (pinelodgebulolo.com) in Bulolo provides good accommodation and meals amid lush tropical forest.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Lae is the last place where round-the-world aviator Amelia Earhart was seen alive. She took off on July 2, 1937, and was never seen again.

LOCALS SAY

"Ours is a province that has everything - from the mountains to the seas, from birdwatching to diving to seeing the remains of World War 2 at Salamaua to the 'smoked bodies' of Aseki. Our potential for eco-tourism is great and one day when Morobe is all sorted, the world will come to see us."

Desley Ray, government employee, Lae

— GRACE MARIBU



Top: One hour from Lae, the tiny Salamaua isthmus offers great snorkelling, swimming, diving and fishing.

Picture: Milen Stiliyanov

Above: Morobe dancers and a *tumbuan* body mask, which covers the head, shoulders and torso of the wearer.

The masks are woven from cane, grass, leaves and sago and represent the spirit world.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

NATIONAL CAPITAL DISTRICT



CAPITAL Port Moresby
369,139 PEOPLE
240 SQUARE KILOMETRES



The National Capital District (NCD) is Port Moresby. It is both a city and a district. NCD is the gateway to Papua New Guinea – the nation’s capital, centre of politics, trade and commerce. Port Moresby is a growing and bustling metropolitan area. Hotel and restaurant developments have taken off in the past few years, propelled by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leader’s summit, which will take place in November 2018.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- The National Museum and Art Gallery (museumpng.gov.pg) in Waigani has more than 30,000 anthropological collections. Next to the museum is National Parliament (parliament.gov.pg), best known for its steep roof depicting a Sepik spirit house.
- The Port Moresby Nature Park (facebook.com/PortMoresbyNaturePark) showcases the nation’s flora and fauna, including the bird of paradise.
- Get an overview of Port Moresby with a day tour with a tour operator such as Pepeta PNG (pepetapng.com), including craft markets.
- The annual Hiri Moale Festival in September commemorates the great Hiri trade voyages and includes the crowning of the Hiri queen.

WHERE TO STAYWHERE TO STAY

The Airways Hotel (airways.com.pg) and Gateway Hotel (coralseahotels.com.pg) are near the airport; the Stanley Hotel (thestanleypng.com) is one of the newest in Waigani. Budget travellers may like the Shady Rest Hotel (www.shadyrest.com.pg) at Three Mile, or Raintree Lodge (raintreelodgepng.com) at Boroko.

SOMETHING SUPRISING

US Army general Douglas MacArthur lived in Port Moresby during World War 2 while coordinating the Allied troops in the Pacific campaign.

LOCALS SAY

“The nation’s capital now boasts many good restaurants, a lively nightlife and excellent venues for meetings, conferences and sports. Our urban safety is much better than, say, 10 years ago. To experience our traditional cultures, come in September and October during the independence anniversary celebrations and the Hiri Moale Festival.”

Muriel Gerari, tourism officer

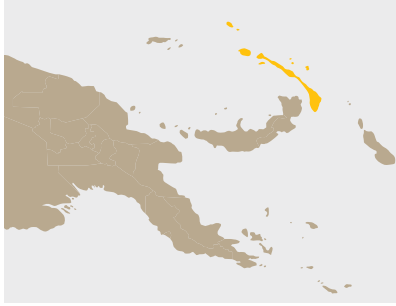
– GRACE MARIBU



Top: Papua New Guinea’s National Parliament building, styled with a steep roof depicting a Sepik spirit house.
 Picture: David Kirkland

Above: Contestants vying to become the Hiri queen at the annual Hiri Moale Festival are judged on several criteria, including grace of movement and traditional tattoo designs.
 Picture: Wylda Bayron

NEW IRELAND



CAPITAL KAVIENG
118,350 PEOPLE
7404 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 859 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Kavieng daily. The flights are via Rabaul and also direct. The direct flight

is 1 hour 35 minutes and via Rabaul it is 2 hours.



One of the northernmost islands of Papua New Guinea, New Ireland is long, narrow and mountainous, with vast stretches of beautiful white sandy beaches. No wonder it is called *bilas peles* in tok pisin, meaning dressed up or decorated village. The province is made up of many islands (the largest is New Ireland) and is part of the Bismarck Archipelago.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- There's surfing, fishing, diving, snorkelling, island hopping and canoeing. All can be arranged with accommodation providers.
- Cycling the Boluminski Highway from Kavieng to Namatanai has become popular with tourists. (Arrange with the New Ireland Tourism Authority, phone +675 984 2441.)
- Feed the giant eels at Laraibina.
- Make arrangements to spend a Friday night in Kavieng for the delicious seafood buffet at the Kavieng Hotel.
- Take a short boat ride from Kavieng to Nusa Island where day visitors are welcome at Nusa Island Retreat (nusastrandretreat.com). There's also a small village on the island where you can buy handicrafts.

WHERE TO STAY

Kavieng Niu Lodge (kaviengniulodge.com) has air-conditioned accommodation in town. Nusa Island Retreat (nusastrandretreat.com) and Lissenung Island Resort (lissenungisland.com) are perfect if you're surfing, diving, snorkelling or fishing. The live-aboard surfing, diving and fishing boat *PNG Explorer* (pngsurfaris.com) is based at Kavieng. Rubio Plantation Retreat (newirelandsurf.com), 220 kilometres from Kavieng, is another top option for surfers. Villages along the Boluminski Highway will accommodate backpackers and cyclists. Namatanai Lodge (namatanailodge.com) caters for guests travelling further down the west coast.

SOMETHING SUPRISING

The tradition of shark calling occurs in New Ireland, particularly at the villages of Kontu and Tabar. The shark callers attract sharks (some say by magic) to their small canoes and then catch them by hand.

LOCALS SAY

"New Ireland is ideal for a romantic getaway. The Tsoi Islands must be high on your list for a visit."

Roline Likas, journalist

— ANNETTE SETE



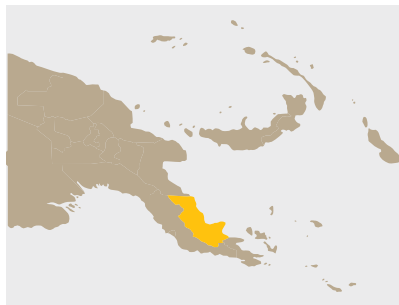
Top: This traditional dress is unique to remote islands of New Ireland. The men mix lime with natural mud colours to create the face design.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: A boat from Nusa Island Retreat over a sunken vessel. Snorkellers have easy access to the wreck in the shallow water.

Picture: Supplied by Nusa Island Retreat

ORO



CAPITAL POPONDETTA
176,206 PEOPLE
34,650 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 139 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Popondetta twice daily. The flight time is 35 minutes.



Oro Province, in the east of Papua New Guinea, is the birthplace of the world's largest butterfly, the Queen Alexandra's birdwing. Not only does the province incubate this giant butterfly, with a wingspan up to 30 centimetres, but it also has a rich and fascinating art and culture heritage and is known for its *tapa* cloth, made from the mulberry tree bark. The Kokoda Trail runs through Oro Province (as well as Central Province), and there is world-class diving. The Oro people are warm and resilient, having withstood the bloody Kokoda campaign during World War 2, cyclones, and the 1951 eruption on Mount Lamington in which 3000 people died. It's possible to trek to the top of the 1680-metre volcano for spectacular views.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Visit Tufi Resort (tufidive.com) for diving, snorkelling, kayaking, fishing and cultural experiences.
- See 1942 war relics along the coast in Buna and Gona. It is recommended that visitors take a guide. Ask for one at Oro Guest House (+675 7316 0402), or contact PNG Trekking Adventures (pngtrekkingadventures.com).
- See the Musa River hot springs and dive or snorkel at Cape Nelson (arrange with Tufi Resort).
- See the birdwing butterfly at Ondahari Village, about 40 minutes from Popondetta. Make bookings for the village guesthouse at the Oro Guesthouse in Popondetta.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Oro women cook on open fires in handmade clay pots.

WHERE TO STAY

The Tufi Resort (tufidive.com) is the province's top accommodation and has breathtaking views over fjords, the sea and mountains covered in rainforest. World-class diving is among the many activities on offer. Traditional village accommodation is available through Tufi Village Stays (tufivillagestays.com). The Oro Guest House (+675-6297127) provides clean, comfortable and affordable accommodation in Popondetta.

LOCALS SAY

"In Oro, there is so much to see and do that you won't want to leave. From its mountains to the coastline - you will also find people who are proud and willing to share their rich culture in a hospitable manner."

Emily Kendi, eco activist, youth and women's leader

— JOYCELIN LEAHY



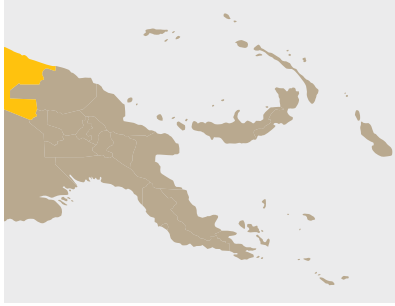
Top: The *tapa* cloth worn around the waist is a specialty of the province. Also typical of the province is the headdress made with a great variety of feathers, including cockatoo.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

Above: A male Queen Alexandra's birdwing butterfly on pink hibiscus. The birdwing is the largest butterfly in the world and lives in a small area near Popondetta.

Picture: Jan Hasselberg

SANDAUN (WEST SEPIK)



CAPITAL VANIMO

248,411 PEOPLE

35,920 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 993 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Vanimo five times a week. The flights are via Madang and Wewak. The flight

time is 2 hours via Wewak and 2 hours 55 minutes via Madang.



Sandaun Province (formerly West Sepik) is the outer province of Papua New Guinea, bordering Indonesia at West Papua. Provincial capital, Vanimo, is only 30 kilometres from the Indonesian border, which is closed to tourists. Sandaun has seen little development and tourism except for people moving between the two countries. The province hosts the headwaters of the Sepik River where it is covered in thick, forested mountains. On the coast, west of Vanimo, are good beaches for swimming and surfing.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Head eight kilometres west of Vanimo to the village of Lido for some surfing.
- Aitape, an old German missionary station, can be reached by boat from Vanimo (ask locals for boats). There's some surfing here and you can trek and visit waterfalls. Accommodation is available.
- Tenkile Conservation Base (tenkile.com) at Lumi has a collection of endangered tree kangaroo species as well as marsupials and cassowary.
- Aitape Islands, especially Ali Island (islandproject.com.au), have a long-standing reputation for hospitality and hosting cruise ships. Tourists can swim in the warm crystal-clear waters, or enjoy a traditional dance and cultural presentations.

WHERE TO STAY

In Vanimo, try the Vanimo Surf Lodge (vanimosurflodge.com) for its friendly service and air-conditioned rooms. The lodge can also provide details on the things to see and do. The town has a small taxi service and a hire car facility. CBC Guest House (+675 456 3032) is another option.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Green River has untapped potential for white-water rafting and kayaking from the village of Kambriap to Yibru.

LOCALS SAY

"Sandaun is PNG's last frontier. When you think you have seen it all, we will still surprise you! Come."

Judith Sirias, Vanimo resident

— GRACE MARIBU

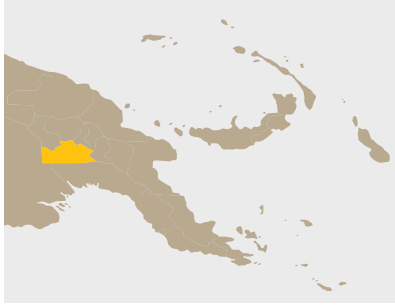


Top: The koteka (penis sheath) is made from a gourd, which is a fruit plant with a hard shell. It is used in the province for festivals, ceremonies and pageantry.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: Getting into a barrel at Lido Right, near Vanimo.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS



CAPITAL MENDI
515,511 PEOPLE
15,089 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 1088 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Mendi twice weekly. The flight time is 1 hour 30 minutes.



The Southern Highlands is a province where you can get off the tourism grid into unseen and often unheard of places. Geographic highlights include 4368-metre Mount Giluwe, the second-highest mountain in Papua New Guinea, and Lake Kutubu, the second-largest lake. Lake Kutubu is in the Kikori Basin, a UNESCO Heritage site that is home to unique biodiversity and landscapes. Here you can mingle and meet Foi (Foimena) people and see their distinct culture in which men and women live separately.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- The Southern Highlands Province has several waterfalls, including the 100-metre Wasi Falls.
- Book early for the Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival from September 21-23 at Daga village beside Lake Kutubu. The festival acknowledges the importance of the *kundu* drum and the Digaso oil – both significant in Southern Highlands culture. Details from sjffrey@www.pacific.org.

WHERE TO STAY

Relax at Tubo Eco Lodge, with a perfect view of Lake Kutubu and enjoy superb birdwatching. Norman Ba'abi is the owner (nibaabi@gmail.com). Alternatively stay in Kiburu Lodge (+675 549 1350) a wilderness retreat in the rainforest, only 10 minutes from Mendi.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

At Lake Kutubu, corpses are left on cliff ledges by the side of the river – part of the process of preserving the dead and living spiritually as one with the natural environment.

LOCALS SAY

“Modern technology is coming in and new things are taking place, so I don’t want to lose my culture, I really want to maintain my culture.”

Ara Kowo, village leader Lake Kutubu area

– JOYCELIN LEAHY



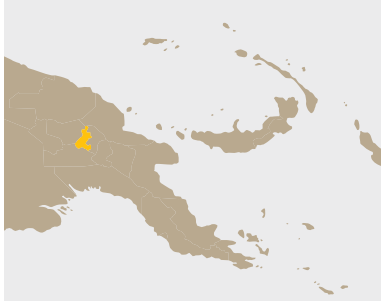
Top: Warriors in the Southern Highlands wear several different colours of mud on their faces and bodies.

Picture: Wylda Bayron

Above: The roaring Mubi River, downstream from Beaver Falls. The province has several spectacular waterfalls.

Picture: Rocky Roe

WESTERN HIGHLANDS



CAPITAL MOUNT HAGEN

46,256 PEOPLE

4299 SQUARE KILOMETRES

HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 514 KILOMETRES

AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen up to four times daily. The flight time is 1 hour.



Mount Hagen is the third-largest city in Papua New Guinea, but it feels rural, especially as you come in to land over grass huts and terraced gardens where *kaukau* and other fruit and vegetables grow in the fertile Wahgi Valley. At Mount Hagen's market, sink your teeth into some of the harvest, including cassowary fruit or *haas bin* (bean root). The area is also rich in culture, which is showcased at the spectacular Mount Hagen Show each August. The show draws many tribes from the region who come to perform *sing-sings* in one of the largest cultural displays in PNG. The province is also home to Kuk Swamp, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the Wahgi Valley.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Rondon Ridge Lodge (pngtours.com) has abundant birdlife and orchids on its expansive grounds, and offers tours to see the Melpa people and the famed PNG Mud Men.
- The Kum Caves, about seven kilometres from the city centre, are not yet on the main tourist trail. The caves are home to birds and possums. To visit, phone Peter Raim of the Kopi tribe (+675 7165 6731).
- For a visit to Niugini Highlands Orchids phone award-winning grower and collector William Pint Kupal (+675 7104 1030).
- Enjoy some of PNG's best coffee in park-like surroundings at Kofi Cave, which serves highly regarded Banz Kofi. It's on Airport Road, close to the airport and adjacent to some small craft markets.
- Play a round of golf at Mount Hagen Golf Club (mthagengolfclub.com).

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Rolling Stone Mick Jagger once stayed at Rondon Ridge Lodge.

WHERE TO STAY

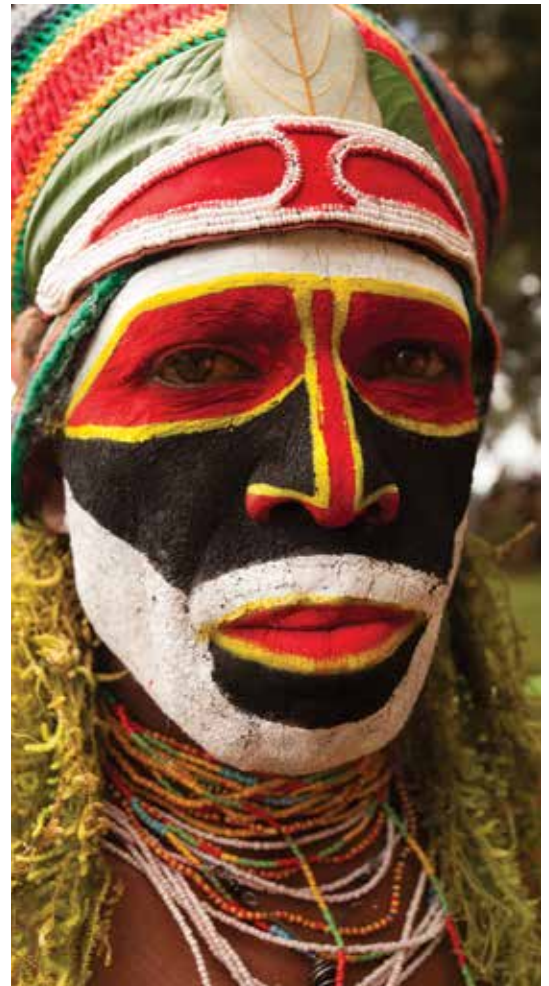
Rondon Ridge Lodge (pngtours.com), 40 minutes' drive from Mount Hagen, is part of the Trans Niugini Tours chain. The lodge is perched high in the hills overlooking Mount Hagen. Two of the best-regarded hotels in town are the Highlander (coralseahotels.com.pg) and the McRoyal (mccroyalhotelpng.com), which is very close to the airport. For basic, no-frills accommodation try Martha's Retreat (facebook.com/marthasretreatpng).

LOCALS SAY

"Sit in a circle around the *mumu* and eat with your hands to experience the warmth of Western Highlanders."

Bernadine Danomira, community leader

— JOYCELIN LEAHY



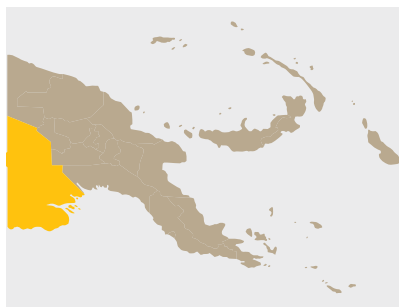
Top: A man with the distinct face paint of the Western Highlands. The face decoration is made of lime and usually includes powdered charcoal to add texture.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: Pineapple and other fresh produce at Mount Hagen market.

Picture: Robert Upe

WESTERN



CAPITAL DARU
201,351 PEOPLE
98,189 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 434 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Daru twice weekly. The flight time is 1 hour 10 minutes.



Make sure you are camera-ready when you enter Western Province, on the border of West Papua. The wildlife is worth a million pictures. More than half of Papua New Guinea's birdlife lives in the province – including sea eagles and massive flocks of pelicans and pygmy geese – but many visitors travel here for the opportunity to catch PNG's mighty black bass and barramundi. The largest river in PNG, the Fly, runs through the province, which is a patchwork of winding rivers, lakes and wetlands with crocodiles. The giant OK Tedi mine is the dominant economic feature of the Western Province.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Fish the Fly River, Lake Murray and other areas based at Bensbach Wildlife Lodge or Lake Murray Lodge, operated by Trans Niugini Tours (pngtours.com).
- Kiunga-based Quinten Tours (+675 7198 9397) runs fishing, birding and cultural safaris into remote and wild areas of the province, including the Strickland River and the Star Mountains, which include the Hindenburg Wall, a series of limestone escarpments up to 1000 metres high and 50 kilometres long.
- Kiunga Nature Tours (+675 548 1451) conducts birdwatching excursions and trips to villages near the border of West Papua.
- The Gogodala Canoe Festival is held every April to May and involves canoe racing among locals.
- Journey to Wawoi Falls in the Wawoi District of the Middle Fly. It is one of PNG's largest and most spectacular waterfalls.

WHERE TO STAY

The Bensbach and Lake Murray lodges operated by Trans Niugini Tours (pngtours.com) offer the pick of accommodation in the province. Ikame Village Lodge (skepuknai@gmail.com) is a good option for birdwatching.

SOMETHING SURPRISING

Lake Murray is the largest lake in Papua New Guinea and hosts five species of the bird of paradise, including the famous raggiana bird of paradise.

LOCALS SAY

Western Province offers visitors exquisite rare birds. We have one of the largest bird populations in the world. A must-see."

Tour operator and bird expert Samuel Kepuknai

– JOYCELIN LEAHY



Top: A dancer proudly shows his painted mask. The masks made in Gogodala villages depict various venerated local animals, in this case a bird.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: Lake Murray spreads across Western Province and offers prime birdwatching and fishing.

Picture: Rocky Roe

WEST NEW BRITAIN



CAPITAL KIMBE
264,264 PEOPLE
20,387 SQUARE KILOMETRES
HOW FAR FROM PORT MORESBY? 525 KILOMETRES
AIR NIUGINI flies from Port Moresby to Hoskins twice daily. The flight time is 1 hour 5 minutes.



This province occupies the western half of New Britain Island. It is populated by people from all over Papua New Guinea, many of them coming here to plant oil palm and work the many plantations and mills. Thus, the province is dubbed the 'oil palm country'. Unlike neighbouring East New Britain Province, the west is largely unknown by tourists, even though it boasts great diving, snorkelling and trekking. It is also home to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Muruk Cave system in the Nakanai Range. The upgraded Hoskins Airport is about 45 minutes' drive from the main town of Kimbe.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

- Kimbe Bay is famous for its coral, rewarding snorkelling and diving experiences, and volcanic caves.
- The Cathedral is a must-do night dive (walindifebrina.com). It is a horseshoe-shaped reef with a large cave at one end and a white sandy bottom.
- There's excellent fishing (baiafishingpng.com) at Kimbe Bay.
- There's great trekking in the Cape Gloucester area where the active Mount Langila volcano rumbles in the distance, or explore Lake Dakataua, which was formed after a giant volcanic eruption in 1884.

WHERE TO STAY

Walindi Plantation Resort (walindifebrina.com) is the perfect getaway for divers, offering land-based diving, as well as excursions on board the MV *FeBrina*. Liamore Reef Resort (liamoreefresort.com) and Kimbe Bay Hotel (+675 983 5001) also provide accommodation within the main town of Kimbe.

SOMETHING SUPRISING

West New Britain is the most volcanically active region in PNG with 18 of the 21 volcanoes on New Britain Island belonging to the 1000-kilometre long Bismarck Volcanic Arc. It is located within the active tectonic region and has favourable environment for geothermal activity, a hot prospect for the development of geothermal energy resources for PNG.

LOCALS SAY

"You should check out Lake Lalili and try the *talapias* (fish) sold on the road sides. That's a whole different experience."

Dorcas Tindri, radio journalist

— ANNETTE SETE



Top: A rarely seen headdress from remote islands in West New Britain Province. The shield and grass skirt are made with modern materials, but age-old designs.

Picture: Wylde Bayron

Above: A diver is dwarfed by a school of barracuda. The province is known for its spectacular underwater sights.

Picture: Darek Sepiolo / Walindi Resort

DIRECTORY

PNG travel tips, hotels, lodges, places to eat & tour operators

TRIP NOTES

CLIMATE

With the exception of the Highlands, Papua New Guinea has a warm tropical climate. The wet season in Port Moresby is from December to April.

COMMUNICATIONS

INTERNET: Web access in Port Moresby has improved immensely in recent years. In other urban centres, you may still be relying on dial-up. For those staying longer, wireless internet, via a USB modem, is available. Complimentary Wi-Fi is becoming more common at hotels, and is also available at Jacksons International Airport.

PHONE: International mobile phone roaming is possible in PNG but it can be costly. A cheaper option is to buy a local SIM card and pre-paid credit (including data packs for smartphones).

ELECTRICITY

The current in PNG is 240V AC, 50Hz, using Australian-style plugs.

GETTING AROUND

TAXIS: Recommended firms are City Loop (1800 000), Comfort (325 3046), and Scarlet (7220 7000).

CAR HIRE: Deal with one of the international names and ask them to provide a driver (PGK450+ per day). With the poor state of roads, especially in Lae, 4WDs/SUVs are recommended.

AIRPORT TRANSFERS: For arrival/departure in Port Moresby, any of the hotels listed in this guide will provide a complimentary transfer.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS: Travelling within PNG often means taking an internal flight (for instance, you cannot drive between Port Moresby and Lae). Air Niugini offers passengers the chance to book (and for some flights, also to check in) online, but make sure you print out a copy of your receipt to show at the check-in counter. Aircraft and helicopter charter services are available for travel to remote locations.

HEALTH

Serious medical conditions typically require treatment outside the country. Travellers should ensure they have adequate health cover (the cost of medical evacuation alone can reach \$US30,000). Visitors should also note that malaria is prevalent in PNG and there have been cases of measles and tuberculosis in some parts of the country.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

For St John Ambulance phone 111 or 7111 1234. St John provides 24-hour ambulance service in Port Moresby and air medical evacuation throughout PNG.

MONEY

PNG's currency is the kina (PGK). ANZ and Bank of South Pacific (BSP) have branches at Port Moresby's international airport. ATMs are located around Port Moresby, Lae and other urban centres.

SAFETY

While the situation is not as bad as portrayed by some international media, you should always take precautions, especially at night.

TIME ZONE

PNG has a single time zone, 10 hours ahead of UTC/GMT.

EATING OUT

PORT MORESBY

AIRWAYS HOTEL: Port Moresby's ritziest hotel has several places to eat. If you're after fine dining, Bacchus is the place to go. For something more casual, go poolside to Deli KC. The Vue Restaurant, which has a buffet each morning and evening, as well as an a la carte menu, has stunning views.

See airways.com.pg.

ASIA AROMAS: Offering Chinese and Thai by the water at Harbourside, this eatery has consistently good reviews on social media. Outdoor seating available. A good spot for sunset drinks. Tel. +675 321 4780.

AVIAT CLUB: The club is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Home-style meals include stir-fries, toasted sandwiches and salt-and-pepper prawns. This is a great spot to sit at lunchtime under the shady mango trees, or in the air-conditioned bar. See facebook.com/pages/Aviat-Club/141553252563094.

BEL CIBO: A casual and affordable family style restaurant serving Italian-American at Vision City. See belcibopng.com.

CAFE ON THE EDGE: There are good hamburgers here and breakfast options such as eggs benedict, avocado and crispy bacon. Located under the residential buildings at Harbour City, behind the ANZ and BSP banks. See facebook.com/edgebythesea.

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL: There are multiple eating options at Crowne. The in-house restaurant includes a buffet for breakfast (eggs cooked to order), as well as lunch and dinner. It's one of the few restaurants in Port Moresby with gluten-free choices. The hotel also has fine dining at the Rapala restaurant. See ihg.com.

DAIKOKU: The extensive Japanese menu has teppanyaki, donburi bowls and a large range of sushi. Tucked away above the SVS shopping centre in Harbour City, chefs will whip up your meal at your table. See daikokupng.com.

DUFFY CAFE: This has rapidly become popular among the expat community, with excellent coffee and homemade cafe-style food. See duffypng.com.

PORT MORESBY



DYNASTY AT VISION CITY:

This may be the biggest restaurant in Port Moresby. Its size, its chandeliers and its gold decor make it a favourite for balls, dinners and parties. The menu is huge, too, with pages of Asian dishes.

See facebook.com/pages/Dynasty-Restaurant-Vision-City/148278471918956.

ELA BEACH HOTEL:

The Beachside Brasserie aims to be one of Port Moresby's best value-for-money restaurants, offering seafood and other dishes from the Pacific Rim, curry, pastas, and a classic grill menu. It's located next to the pool, set in Italian gardens.

See coralseahotels.com.pg.

FUSION:

This is one of the city's busiest restaurants. It's a fusion of flavours from China, Thailand and Vietnam. Takeaway available. There's also a sister restaurant, Fusion 2, in the far corner of the ANZ Bank Compound in Waigani.

See facebook.com/pages/Fusion-Bistro/199229050205354.

GATEWAY HOTEL:

The hotel's dining options include Jackson's Gaming-Restaurant-Bar, which has a rooftop bar with views of the airport, as well as claims to the best lamb rack in town. Sizzler's Family Restaurant offers value dining, while Enzo's Express does quick lunches, coffee and pizza. The hotel's Departure Bar, next to the hotel lobby, is a comfortable and air-conditioned space to while away some transit hours in between flights.

See coralseahotels.com.pg.

DIRECTORY

GRAND PAPUA HOTEL: The elegant Grand Brasserie has an a la carte menu of modern European cuisine, as well as buffet options. The Grand Cafe, on Douglas Street, has barista-made Goroko coffee, fruit juices, freshly made salads and sandwiches. The Grand Bar – with stylish marble, high ceilings, timber floors and window shutters – has a light menu and is a popular place to wind down after work.
See grandpapuahotel.com.pg.

HOSI RAMEN: As the name suggests, this Japanese restaurant at Vision City specialises in ramen (noodles served in broth with meat and vegetables).
See facebook.com/pages/Hosi-Ramen/565779996932557.

KOREAN GARDEN: An affordable menu at Vision City that includes a do-it-yourself barbecue, as well as traditional favourites such as kimchi and gimbap.
See facebook.com/pages/Korean-Garden/595454767289525.

LAMANA HOTEL: You're spoiled for choice here with Spices (Indian), the Italian Restaurant, Rio's at the Temple (Brazilian), Cafe Palazzo, Lanes Ten Pin Bowling, and PNG's biggest nightclub, The Gold Club.
See amanahotel.com.pg.

MAGI SEAFOOD RESTAURANT: A local secret on Spring Garden Road (same side as SP Brewery) with excellent Asian food, but specifically the best mud crab in town that needs to be ordered 24 hours in advance.
Tel. +675 323 3918.

MOJO SOCIAL: This casual Mediterranean-inspired bar and restaurant is on the ground floor of PWC Haus at Harbour City. Tapas-style dishes, risotto and pizza are among the offerings.
See mojosocialpng.com.

NAKED FISH: A seafood and steak restaurant at Harbourside. Great spot for sunsets and the water views.
Tel. +675 320 2293.

ROYAL PAPUA YACHT CLUB: Relaxed, spacious and open to non-members. Comfort food, draught beer and an open-plan bar area showing sport on large screens.
See rpyc.com.pg.

SEOUL HOUSE: This restaurant specialises in Korean and Thai food, cooked on the hot plate right in front of you. Seoul House is tucked away in a garden oasis compound in Five Mile.
Tel. +675 325 2231.

SOGNO: This is a traditional Italian restaurant with pastas, risottos and pizzas served out of a stone oven at Harbourside.
See sogno.restaurant.

STANLEY HOTEL AND SUITES: This new hotel in Waigani has several restaurant choices, including the fine-dining Silver Leaf on the 17th floor, and the chic tapas-style Monsoon Lounge, which is great for after-work drinks on the leather-lounge seating. The casual Green Haus restaurant has all-day dining, including buffet dinners with live cooking stations.
See thestanleypng.com.

TANDOOR ON THE HARBOUR: Come here for a curry with great bay views.
See facebook.com/tandoorontheharbour.

TASTY BITES: This Indian restaurant is tucked away in the town centre in Hunter Street near Crowne Plaza. Bookings recommended.
Tel. +675 321 2222.

VISION CITY: PNG's first major shopping mall houses an increasing array of eateries. The cavernous Dynasty (Chinese) and the Ten (Japanese) are stand-outs.
See visioncity.com.pg.

LAE

BUNGA RAYA: This local favourite, serving Malaysian-style Chinese, is located next door to the Lae Golf Club. Be sure to try the stuffed lettuce cups, laksa and claypot tofu.
Tel. +675 472 7177.

CHIGI'S CAFE: This delightful place inside the temporary Brian Bell store near the Lae main markets serves good coffee, milkshakes, sandwiches, cakes and salads.
Tel. +675 7217 1966.

GOLDEN AVIAT: A good option for Chinese, located on Huon Road in Eriku. Open for lunch and dinner, and yum cha on Sundays.
Tel. +675 472 0486.

HUON CLUB: This private members' club offers air-conditioned facilities, comfortable lounge chairs, an expansive deck overlooking the Lae Golf Club, a fully stocked bar and Foxtel to preview all the racing and sporting events.
Tel. +675 7347 1058.

LAE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL: Home to three restaurants – Luluai's Italian Pizza, Vanda and Kokomo – which serve an array of international cuisine, including Indian and seafood buffets. The Sportsman's Bar (aka Jack's Bar) is a good place for a nightcap.

*See laeinterhotel.com.
Tel. +675 472 7000.*

LAE GOLF CLUB: The club is excellent for a few sundowners as you overlook the stunning green.
Tel. +675 472 1363.

LAE YACHT CLUB: The perfect place for late-afternoon beers, or just as nice for a relaxing lunch. Serves pub-style food.
See laeyachtclub.com.pg. Tel. +675 472 4091.

MOUNTAIN VIEW RESTAURANT: Located at the Crossroads Hotel at Nine Mile. Be sure to try the Japanese fusion menu – it's the only place in town where you can get good sushi.
*See hornibrook.com.pg/crossroads/.
Tel. +675 475 1124.*

HOTELS

PORT MORESBY

AIRWAYS HOTEL: Airways is within a large, secure compound next to Jacksons International Airport. An inspiring setting, luxurious rooms, excellent service and very good food options.
*See airways.com.pg.
Tel. +675 324 5200.*

CROWNE PLAZA: Upmarket rooms and suites in the heart of the CBD. Decent gym, business centre, undercover parking, thriving cafe and Mediterranean restaurant.
*See ihg.com.
Tel. +675 309 3329.*

ELA BEACH HOTEL AND APARTMENTS: On the fringe of the CBD, this constantly expanding hotel/apartment complex is part of the Coral Sea Hotels group.
*See coralseahotels.com.pg.
Tel. +675 321 2100.*



GATEWAY HOTEL:

Conveniently located just minutes from Jacksons International Airport, the hotel has a range of dining options, conference facilities, modern gym and two swimming pools. Free airport shuttles are available for guests.

See coralseahotels.com.pg.
Tel. +675 327 8100.

GRAND PAPUA: This premium hotel opened in late 2011 and features 156 suite rooms (short and long stay), an executive floor, gym and conference facilities. The separate restaurant and bar areas are popular for business meetings. Centrally located.

See grandpapuahotel.com.pg.
Tel. +675 304 0000.

HOLIDAY INN: Located in Waigani, the large grounds include a walking track in a tropical garden setting, outdoor restaurant and bar area, business centre and gym. Includes three-star Holiday Inn Express hotel. See ihg.com.

Tel. +675 303 2000.

LAGUNA HOTEL: The 60-room property is a five-minute drive from the heart of Port Moresby and features a lagoon-style pool, free airport transfers, free Wi-Fi and free buffet breakfast. See lagunahotelpng.com.

Tel. +675 323 9333

DIRECTORY

LAMANA HOTEL: In Waigani, the hotel has 24-hour free airport transfers, free in-room Wi-Fi, a conference centre, restaurants, and the famous Gold Club.
See lamanahotel.com.pg.
Tel. +675 323 2333.

STANLEY HOTEL AND SUITES: One of Port Moresby's newest hotels, this is a luxurious 429-room property in Waigani, close to government offices and embassies. It has 95 long-stay apartments, gym, pool, cafe, restaurants and an executive lounge. Connected to Vision City Mega Mall.
See thestanleypng.com.
Tel. + 675 302 8888.

LAE

CROSSROADS HOTEL: A 45-room facility at Nine Mile. The hotel has a Japanese-themed teppanyaki restaurant with Asian/Western fusion menus, full bar service, a well-equipped gym, Wi-Fi and complimentary transfers to both Lae City and Nadzab Airport.
See hornibrook.com.pg/crossroads.
Tel. +675 475 1124.

HOTEL MOROBE: A centrally located 38-room boutique property built in 2014.
See hotelmorobe.com.
Tel. +675 4790 100.

LAE CITY HOTEL: Located in the main Top Town area, it has 24-hour concierge and an excellent cafe and restaurant with Western and Asian cuisine.
See laecityhotel.com.
Tel. +675 472 0138.

LAE TRAVELLERS INN: An affordable option, offering clean and comfortable rooms.
Tel. +675 479 0411.

LAE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL: The city's premier hotel has recently renovated rooms, full bar service, conference and banquet halls, a gym and pool.
See laeinterhotel.com.
Tel. +675 472 2000.

RESORTS & LODGES AROUND PNG

AMBUA LODGE: One of six lodges belonging to Trans Niugini Tours, located near Tari in Hela Province. Known for birdwatching and cultural tours among the Huli.
See pngtours.com.

BAIA SPORTFISHING LODGE: Estuary and blue-water fishing specialist.
See baiafishingpng.com.

BENSACH WILDLIFE LODGE: Also part of the Trans Niugini Tours group, this remote lodge in Western Province is the group's premier wildlife location in PNG and famous for its barramundi fishing.
See pngtours.com.

DRIFTWOOD RESORT: A waterfront Alotau property with 11 bungalows and a restaurant that spills on to a private jetty.
See driftwoodresortpng.com.

DOINI ISLAND PLANTATION RESORT: Beachfront bungalows and resort facilities on an otherwise deserted island, via Alotau.
See doiniisland.com.

JAIS ABEN RESORT: On a former coconut plantation at Madang, the property has beachfront bungalows and a good range of activities, from snorkelling to jungle treks.
See jaisabenresort.com.

KARAWARI LODGE: Part of the Trans Niugini Tours group, located in remote jungle alongside the Karawari River in East Sepik Province.
See pngtours.com.

KOKOPO BEACH BUNGALOW RESORT: Volcano and sea views in an authentic PNG setting, including semi-open restaurant with sago roof. Big range of tours/activities.
See kbb.com.pg.

LAKE MURRAY LODGE: Part of the Trans Niugini Tours group of lodges, in Western Province. A favourite among anglers.
See pngtours.com.

LIAMO REEF RESORT: Has beachfront views of Kimbe Bay, resort facilities including pool and tennis, and activities such as snorkelling and kayaking.
See liamoreefresort.com.

LISSENING ISLAND RESORT: Twenty minutes by boat from Kavieng, with surfing, diving and four bungalows built from traditional materials.
See lissenungisland.com.

LOLOATA ISLAND RESORT: Undergoing renovations and expected to reopen at the start of 2019. The resort is a popular weekend getaway spot near Port Moresby. Perfect for divers and snorkellers.
Tel. +675 7276 8687.

MADANG LODGE: A boutique property on Astrolabe Bay with 54 rooms and a waterfront restaurant.
See madanglodge.com.

MADANG RESORT: A town landmark, with 120 rooms and 80 more in the adjacent Kalibobo Village. Multiple restaurants and pools, tennis court, and home to Niugini Diving Adventures.
See madangresort.com.

MALOLO PLANTATION RESORT: Snorkelling, diving and cultural tours are available from this Madang property, part of the Trans Niugini Tours group.
See pngtours.com.

NULI SAPI: On Logeia Island, via Alotau, there are four basic overwater bungalows made from bush materials.
See nulisapi.com.

NUSA ISLAND RETREAT: A short boat ride from Kavieng, the retreat includes overwater bungalows and is booked out by surfers. Diving, fishing and other activities are also on offer.
See nusastrandretreat.com.

PANASESA RESORT: The resort, with beachfront bungalows, can be booked for exclusive use.
See conflictislands.com.

RAPOPO PLANTATION RESORT: Diving, fishing and local tours are available from this Kokopo property.
See rapopo.com.

RONDON RIDGE: Mick Jagger stayed in this lodge, near Mount Hagen. Part of the Trans Niugini Tours group.
See pngtours.com.

TAWALI LEISURE AND DIVE RESORT: Accessible only by boat, via Alotau. Diving's the main game, but lots more is on offer, from village tours to waterfalls.
See tawali.com.

TUFI DIVE RESORT: Known for its diving, this boutique resort in Oro Province has views over sea, fjords and rainforest. Diving aside, a great range of culturally immersive activities are available.
See tufidive.com.

VANIMO SURF LODGE: Traditional beachfront huts and access to north-coast surf breaks near Vanimo.
See vanimosurflodge.com.

WALINDI PLANTATION RESORT: A dive resort on the shores of Kimbe Bay; also home to the live-aboard dive vessel MV *FeBrina*.
See walindifebrina.com.

TWO-MINUTE GUIDE TO TOK PISIN WORDS/PHRASES

Papua New Guinea has more than 800 languages, but the three official languages are Tok Pisin, English and Motu. Here, we outline some Tok Pisin, which is the largest *lingua franca* of PNG.

- *Where do I find a taxi?*
Bai mi painim taxi long we?
- *One coffee with milk, please.*
Wanpela kap kopi wantaim milk plis.

- *Where is the toilet?*
Toilet istap we?
- *How much is this?*
Dispela em hamas?
- *Thank you very much.*
Tenkiu tru.
- *You understand English?*
Yu save long tok Inglis?
- *Where is my bag?*
Bag bilong mi istap we?

- *Where can I change my money?*
Wanem hap bai mi ken senisim moni bilong mi?
- *Why? Bilong wanem?*
- *Where are you from?*
Yu bilong wanem hap?
- *I don't know. Mi no save.*
- *Restaurant*
Ples bilong kaikai

- *Goodbye* **Gutbai**
- *Hello* **Halo**
- *Water* **Wara**
- *Baggage* **Kago**
- *Airport* **Ples balus**
- *Place* **Ples**
- *Fish* **Pis**

NUMBERS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wan	Tu	Tri	Foa	Faiv	Sikis	Seven	Et	Nain	Ten

TOUR BOOKINGS & OPERATORS

AIR NIUGINI: The airline offers a range of PNG holidays, including packages to cultural shows and getaways to the coast and highlands. It also has a Business Travel Centre (Tel. +675 321 2888) with an office in Port Moresby. See airniugini.com.pg.

ALPHABLU LIMITED: Offers snorkelling, sport fishing and sightseeing by speed boat within Milne Bay. The site has a good list of local operators. See alphablueltd.com.

BUNA TREKS & TOURS: A Kokoda trekking specialist that also arranges Mount Wilhelm treks, day tours around Port Moresby and more. See facebook.com/bunatrekkers.

COUNTRY TOURS: Offers a wide range of tours across PNG, from birdwatching to diving and cultural shows. See www.countrytours.com.pg.

DESTINATION SOUTH PACIFIC: Specialises in trips to Highlands and Mount Wilhelm. Based in Port Moresby. Contact kulangtobias8@gmail.com.

KABAIRA DIVE TOURS: Kokopo dive specialist. See kabairadive.com.pg.

KOKODA TRACK AUTHORITY: The KTA manages and promotes the trail and has a listing of 36 accredited operators, plus other useful information for trekkers. See kokodatrackauthority.org.

MELANESIAN TOURIST SERVICES: Based in Madang. Variety of trips and activities. See mtspng.com.

PEPETA PNG: Offers packages to festivals, destinations around the country, and Port Moresby day tours, including craft markets. See pepetapng.com.

PNG HIGHLANDS ADVENTURES: Trekking, rafting, birdwatching and cultural tours. Based in Goroka. See png-highlands-adventure.blogspot.com.

PNG HOLIDAYS: Has a comprehensive listing of tours and accommodation all around the country. See pngholidays.com.au.

PNG SURFARIS: A surf charter operator, based in Kavieng, that runs live-aboard surf and dive trips on the *PNG Explorer* and *Ultimate 1*. See pngsurfaris.com.

PNG TREKKING ADVENTURES: Has a big listing of treks, cultural tours and kayaking packages. See pngtrekkingadventures.com.

RABAU-KOKOPO DIVE: Operates from the Rapopo Plantation Resort in Kokopo. See rabaul-kokopodive.com.

SEPIK ADVENTURE TOURS: A range of trips available, including exploring the famous Sepik River by canoe. Locally owned and operated. Tel. +675 7259 6349.

SEPIK RIVER TOURS: Explore the Sepik River region with locals. See sepikrivertours.com.

SPORTFISHING PNG: River, reef and coastal fishing trips. See sportfishingpng.net.

SURFING ASSOCIATION OF PNG: Provides a guide to PNG surfing, places to stay and a list of operators that run surf trips. See sapng.com.

TRANS NIUGINI TOURS: Owns and operates a series of wilderness lodges and tailors trips to those lodges. Also operates the *Sepik Spirit* riverboat. See pngtours.com.

VILLAGE HUTS: An adventure and backpacker specialist with a network of small locally owned huts, guesthouses and activity providers. See villagehuts.com.

VILINK TOURS & EXPEDITIONS PNG: ViLink is short for 'village link'. This Alotau-based operator offers culture, wildlife and village experiences. Tel. +675 7339 4580.

*In addition to these operators, many hotels, resorts and lodges arrange, or conduct, PNG activities.

Paradise Annual 2018 does not vouch for any of the listed businesses. Travellers should make their own inquiries on the suitability and quality of each business.



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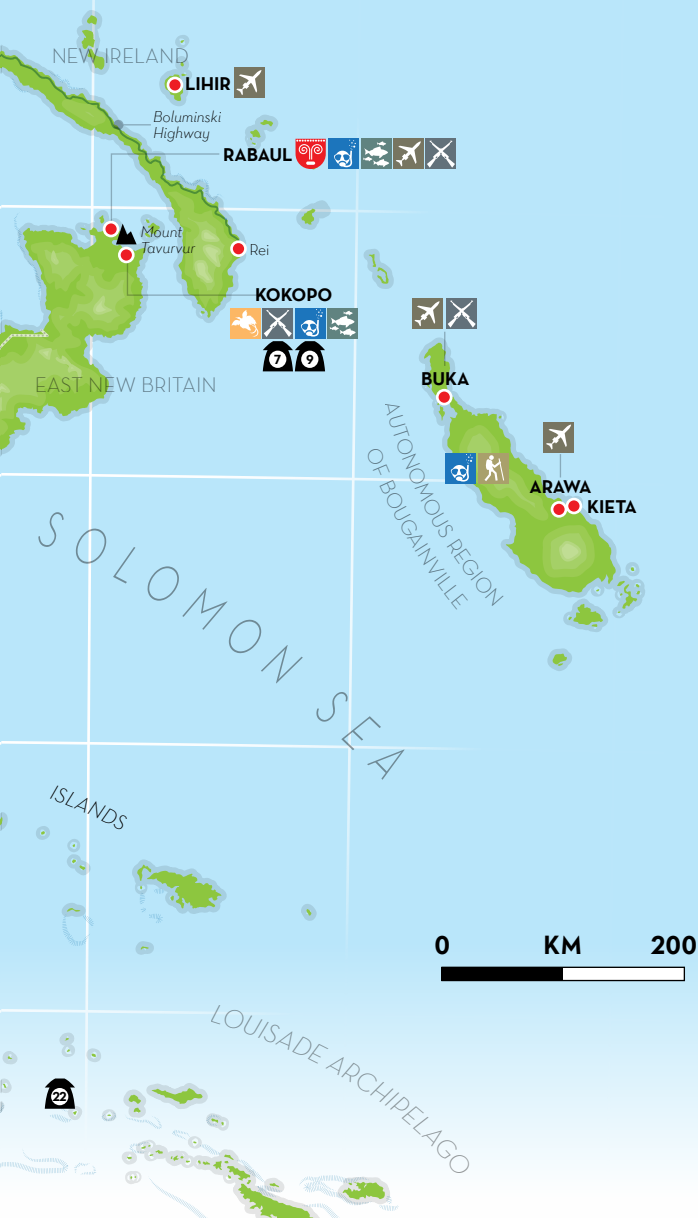




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The Paradise Travel & Culture map of

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



RESORTS & LODGES

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Nusa Island Retreat | 8 Liamore Reef Resort | 16 Malolo Plantation Resort |
| 2 Lissenung Island Resort | 9 Kokopo Beach Bungalow Resort | 17 Bensbach Wildlife Lodge |
| 3 Tufi Dive Resort | 10 Doini Island Plantation Resort | 18 Karawari Lodge |
| 4 Tawali Leisure and Dive Resort | 11 Loloata Island Resort | 19 Vanimo Surf Lodge |
| 5 Walindi Plantation resort | 12 Nuli Sapi | 20 Driftwood Resort |
| 6 Madang Resort | 13 Lake Murray Lodge | 21 Jais Aben Resort |
| 7 Rapopo Plantation Resort | 14 Ambua Lodge | 22 Panasesa Resort |
| | 15 Rondon Ridge | |



KEY FESTIVALS

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Port Moresby
Hiri Moale Festival | Rabaul
Frangipani Festival | Mount Hagen
Mount Hagen Show |
| Lae
Morobe Show | Goroka
Goroka Show | Wabag
Enga Cultural Show |
| Alotau
Kenu & Kundu Festival | Wewak
Crocodile Festival | Enga
Enga Show |



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 Jackson's Bar & Restaurant
 Sizzler's Family Restaurant
 Wild Orchid Restaurant
 327 8100

MT HAGEN
Highlander Hotel & Apartments
 Palmuri Restaurant - 542 1355

GOROKA
Highlander Hotel & Apartments
 Bistro - 531 3100

LAE
Huon Gulf Hotel & Apartments
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PHOTO FINISH



PICTURE: DAVID KIRKLAND

Laughter is the best medicine. A young girl from the Hela Province watches as her relative poses for the camera behind the scenes at a cultural festival.

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Gateway Hotel
Ela Beach Hotel

LAE

Huon Gulf Hotel
KIUNGA

Cassowary Hotel

MT HAGEN

Highlander Hotel
GOROKA

Bird of Paradise Hotel

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