



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM9a - CLIMB MT ALBERT EDWARD PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

7 nights ex-Port Moresby (Itinerary may commence any Tuesday or Thursday)

The mountainous Goilala District in Central Province can only be reached by air and is dotted with scary ridgetop airstrips. The terrain alternates between thick forest and open grasslands and the villages are linked by mule trails established by early missionaries. This expeditionary trek features village to village hiking to the base of Mt Albert Edward then an overnight climb up the western slopes, returning by a different route with a final overnight at Waitape Lodge. The trekking route passes through many small hamlets, vegetable gardens and freshwater streams, with magnificent mountain scenery and chance encounters with local mountain people. Be prepared for wet weather at any time of the year, but most rainfall is at night and generally the days are clear and sunny with very cold nights.

You will be accompanied on the trek by one guide and enough porters to carry camping equipment food supplies. You should plan to carry your own personal backpack with your clothes and toiletries (10kg maximum recommended weight) or you can pay an extra K300 for a personal porter to carry your personal pack.

PACKAGE PRICE (per person, includes internal air):

Group of 1 = PGK7,500

Group of 2 = PGK 5,500 per person

Group of 3 = PGK 5,200 per person

Group of 4+ = PGK 4,900 per person

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- check-in assistance at Port Moresby airport
- return airfares Port Moresby - Waitape - Port Moresby
- two nights basic guest house accommodation (one star) at Kosipe and Yongai with basic meals
- one night lodge accommodation (two star) at Waitape Lodge with prepared meals
- 4 nights camping with all camping equipment including tents, inflatable mattresses and Coleman sleeping bags rated to minus 5 degrees with extra blankets
- food supplies for trekking (packed lunches and camp dinners/breakfasts)
- English speaking guide and sufficient porters to carry the equipment and food we supply
- landowner access fees and village gratuities
- first aid kit and satellite phone for emergencies

EXCLUSIONS:

- international airfares
- bar drinks at Waitape Lodge
- water purification tablets (water supplies en route are safe to drink, and it will be possible to boil and cool drinking water at campsites)

ITINERARY:

DAY 1:

HIKE FROM WOITAPE AIRSTRIP TO KOSIPE MISSION

5.30am check in at the old Airlines PNG terminal (Terminal 2) for your Twin Otter flight scheduled for 0630am departure. Ecotourism Melanesia staff will be at the airport to assist you with check-in.

Note that Waitape flights are designated as “freight and fares” rather than “RPT - regular passenger transport” and therefore the advertised departure time may not eventuate if the Airline decides to reorganise the day’s flights to fit in with charter requirements etc. Therefore, be prepared for a delayed departure of up to several hours even though you have checked in early.

The flight to Waitape takes only thirty minutes. On arrival, you will kit up and start walking with your guide along the missionary mule trail to Kosipe, about 6 hours easy walk through forest and open grasslands, with many creek crossings. Bring a pair of sandals or quick-dry canvas tennis shoes sneakers to wear for water crossings and then dry off your feet with a small towel and change back into your hiking boots and hang the wet shoes on the back of your pack to dry (?).

Along the way to Kosipe you will pass through small hamlets and meet local people going to and from their gardens. You will also pass many locals walking the other way to Waitape as this is a commonly used walking track.

If time allows in the afternoon, and if the weather is warm, enjoy a swim in the Ivani River just a few minutes walk from the guest house. Your guide will introduce you to the local people living at Kosipe village and show you the place where a primitive stone axe was found, indicating very old settlement in this area.

Accommodation at Kosipe is at the mission guest house, originally built by French catholic missionaries in the 1950s. For meals today a packed lunch and snacks are provided. Dinner is catered by Kosipe mission guest house, based on local vegetables and some tinned protein. Rug up for a cold night.

Overnight Kosipe Catholic Mission

DAY 2:

HIKE FROM KOSIPE MISSION TO NIUME CAMPSITE

Hot tea and scones for breakfast. Kosipe is normally covered in thick mist every morning until about 9am and it is advisable to wait for the fog to clear before moving off on today’s walking.

Today’s hiking is about 6 hours and the route passes through thick forest and there is a lot of flora and fauna along the way including wild orchids, tree kangaroos, wild pigs, cuscus and various bird species. About halfway along today’s trekking route you will come to the site of a crashed American aircraft from 1942. Mid afternoon, arrive at Niume, an abandoned village site high on the western approach to Mt Albert Edward. Set up camp and enjoy the mountain scenery as the sun goes down. Hot camp food for dinner and rug up for another cold night.

Overnight camping at Niume

DAY 3:

CLIMB MT ALBERT EDWARD, OVERNIGHT MOUNTAIN HUT

Depending on the weather and how well you are walking, you may gain the summit of Mt Albert Edward (13,400 feet or 3990 metres) late today and overnight at the summit or you might overnight short of the summit and go up to the summit early in the morning. There are huts in various locations on the mountainside that can be used for campsites.

The best views from the summit are early in the morning and you will be able to see from coast to coast. The summit is leased from the local landowners by the Civil Aviation Authority and has a number of radio towers and radio huts erected

there but nobody lives there. Temperatures are just below freezing at night and snowfall has been recorded on the summit.

Overnight camping on Mt Albert Edward

DAY 4: **DESCEND FROM MT ALBERT EDWARD, OVERNIGHT FOREST CAMP**
Pop a bottle of bubbly this morning to celebrate conquering PNG's second highest mountain (gawd knows what bubbly will do to your brain at this altitude...). Commence your descent down the eastern slopes of Mt Albert Edward.

Overnight forest camp.

DAY 5: **ARRIVE YONGAI MISSION**
Continue down the eastern approach of Mt Albert Edward, passing through several small villages and arriving at Yongai Catholic Mission.

Overnight Yongai Guest House

DAY 6: **HIKE FROM YONGAI MISSION TO SAUWO RIVER CAMPSITE**
Pleasant day hike from Yongai mission to the midway point between Yongai and Waitape which is at Sauwo River.

Overnight riverside camp or village hut, Sauwo River

DAY 7: **HIKE FROM SAUWO RIVER TO WOITAPE, OVERNIGHT WOITAPE LODGE**
Final half-day hiking from Sauwo River to Waitape government station, arriving in time for lunch. Relax at the lodge and enjoy the log fireplace in the lounge. You will probably be the only guests staying as most visitors only come up on weekends. Your guide and porters will have lunch with you and then go home to Kosipe.

Overnight Waitape Lodge (Owen Stanley Lodge), double room with shared bathroom.

DAY 8: **FLY TO PORT MORESBY**
Morning flight from Waitape to Port Moresby. Anticipated departure time anywhere between 7.30am and 11.00am. The Lodge is right next to the airstrip so you can wait in comfort for the aircraft to arrive. Ecotourism Melanesia vehicle will be waiting for you on arrival in Port Moresby to collect the camping equipment and drop you off at your hotel or home.

TRIP NOTES:

1. The Goilala District offers a close encounter with some of Papua New Guinea's mountainous natural beauty and remote villages. Various plant and animal species will be visible, including possible sightings of bird of paradise at dusk and dawn. The hiking follows established walking trails and there is no strenuous climbing of sheer rock faces or hacking through jungle involved. You will only need to bring your own personal gear. Any excess luggage you have with you in the country can be stored at Ecotourism Melanesia's office in Port Moresby. You should pack your personal gear (we suggest no more than 10kg) into a medium size lightweight pack (preferably waterproof with an internal frame). You may find it helpful to pack your personal items in garbage bags or ziplock plastic bags to protect them from the wet, especially your camera and Mars bars. If you do not wish to carry your own pack an extra porter can be engaged to carry it for you. This must be arranged in advance and involves an extra cost of PGK300 = USD\$100.

2. **What to bring.** Personal gear includes two or three changes of clothes (warm days, cold nights, possibly lots of rain - be prepared), light hiking boots (don't go overboard - it isn't Mt Everest) with 3 pairs of thick cotton/wool blend hiking socks, a pair of tracksuit pants or similar to sleep in, hat with wide brim to keep sun and rain off your face, waterproof torch with spare batteries, rain poncho, quickdry towel, soap in a leakproof container, a roll of toilet paper, a one- or two-litre water bottle to carry with you, and your personal first aid kit. Your personal first aid kit will contain Bandaids, blister dressings, topical cream for bites and grazes, antibiotic cream for cuts and scratches, antimalarial tablets, paracetamol, Deep Heat or other muscle linament and the all-important insect repellent. Some trekkers say "Rid" is more effective. Your guide will also carry a group medical kit.

3. **Food and water issues.** All food is supplied for this trip but you may wish to bring a stash of munchies in your day pack for eating along the trail (sweets, peanuts etc) - be prepared to share these with your guides. For the first day you should fill your water container in Port Moresby (or carry bottled water) and thereafter your guides will show you clean water sources to fill your container from. If you are worried about water you may wish to bring your own water purification tablets, which you can purchase from most drugstores, camping stores or army disposals stores.

4. **Security.** In personal security terms you will be well looked after by your guides. In this remote area the level of crime experienced in the city does not exist. The people are all subsistence farmers who work hard on the land to grow vegetables and who hunt and gather food from the forest. You will be accompanied at all times by local guides who know the area intimately.

5. **Safety.** Goilala District is a remote area. If you are interested in trekking through this area you must accept that you will do so at your own risk. There are no proper medical facilities in this area. The hiking featured in this tour is not particularly strenuous, however there is every possibility that you may suffer an injury or other medical problem like altitude sickness during your trek. Your guides will support and assist you with traversing difficult parts of the walk, but no matter how experienced a hiker you are there is always a chance you will slip and break a limb. You may get a scratch that quickly gets infected and makes your arm or leg swell up. You may suffer a severe gastric reaction to something you eat or drink. If you fall ill or have an accident while on the trek you will be carried by your guides to the nearest airstrip or cleared area for helicopter evacuation. It is our company policy that all trekkers must have comprehensive travel insurance that includes medevac cover (check with the agent that sells you the policy if medical evacuation is included), or otherwise sign a waiver to absolve Ecotourism Melanesia from any costs involved with medical evacuation. We recommend that you have a medical checkup with your doctor before leaving home to confirm that you are in fit condition to undertake this trek. If you suffer an accident or fall so ill that you need to be evacuated, a medical doctor will first have to talk to you over the radio to confirm that you need to be evacuated and then your insurer (or your own credit card!) will authorise a chartered aircraft to fly in to pick you up.

6. **Altitude sickness.** At heights above 3000 metres the air is rarified and you will have to breathe deeper and faster to intake sufficient oxygen for your body's needs. Physically exerting yourself walking up steep slopes of course increases your body's oxygen consumption and makes you breathe even harder. Altitude sickness occurs if you do not take in enough oxygen to meet your body's requirements. This can be avoided if you climb the slopes at a steady pace and do not overly exert yourself, and if you remember to take deeper and more frequent breaths than normal. If you feel a headache coming on or if you begin to feel light-headed, nauseous or otherwise unwell, you'll need to stop and rest and give your body time to adjust. If the unwell feelings persist, you will not be able to continue climbing and your guides will lead you around the side of the mountain and down the other side without climbing further. Once you return to lower elevations the symptoms of altitude sickness will subside.