



Ecotourism Melanesia

Explore Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific

EM208W 2024 MT HAGEN SHOW WEEKENDER 5 nights WED14AUG - MON19AUG 2024 5 nights Mt Hagen

Escorted sign-up (open) tour for solo travellers and couples - includes accommodation, excursions and some meals. Flights extra.

This five nights escorted tour program is designed for independent solo travellers and couples requiring shared, managed arrangements for attending the Mt Hagen Show (also incorrectly called the Mt Hagen Festival). The tour offers a selection of accommodation options - subject to availability at time of booking - and organised excursions to the Show, the Paiya Sing-sing and other attractions. For the excursions you will share a bus, guide and sideline seating with others in the tour group, but after dinner each night you will have time to yourself and may be staying at different accommodation from others on the tour.

The Mt Hagen Show is Papua New Guinea's largest cultural extravaganza. The Show has its origins in colonial days when government administrators sought to reduce tribal fighting by promoting inter-marriage and channelling inter-tribal rivalry into positive forms of competition. Major sing-sing events like the Mt Hagen Show and Goroka Show became opportunities for tribes to gain status without bloodshed, by competing to put on the best cultural performance. The Mt Hagen Show today is still a competition, with tribal groups vying for sizeable cash prizes and of course the honour and glory that first prize at the "Hagen Show" brings to one's tribe. Local crowds of up to 50,000 people throng the show grounds during the course of the weekend, flocking in from the Highlands as well as Madang and Lae which have road access to Mt Hagen. In contrast, less than 300 overseas visitors attend each year's Mt Hagen Show, so it is definitely a "local" festival and not a tourist show.

The Show attracts cultural groups from all over Papua New Guinea including Bougainville and the Trobriand Islands. Apart from traditional dancing there are also comedy skits and drama portrayals of tribal legends. Outside the arena there are agricultural and trade displays, health awareness programs, sideshow alley and all manner of other activities at the Show which make it the highlight of every year for the Highlands people. Some very remote villagers come to town only once per year, for the Show, so you will see quite a kaleidoscope of faces and costumes in the spectator crowd as well as the performing groups. Tourists are given special seats with the best view, and you will also have permission to enter the performance arena to take close-ups of the dancers.

Apart from the Show itself, there is also another, private sing-sing held on the day before the Show, at Paiya Village about half an hour's drive out of town. This event is a photographer's dream, with an authentic natural backdrop (no visual pollution from big crowds, fences or advertising signs), and opportunities for portrait and group photography before and after each group perform.



TOUR COST

	Budget accom option 2★ motel Includes light breakfasts and tour lunches	Standard accom option 2.5★ motel Includes hot breakfasts and tour lunches	Premier accom option	Deluxe accom option
Tour cost per person twin share (5 nts hotel, 4 days touring)	USD 2600 pp	USD 2850 pp	Not available	Not available
Single supplement (own room, two bus seats)	USD 650	USD 710		
Internal air (optional extra) POM-HGU-POM (flat rate)	USD 600	USD 600		

BOOKING NOTES:

1. Places on the tour are subject to room availability at the time of booking. We do not block-book rooms.
2. Mt Hagen has less than 300 clean hotel and motel rooms and most properties capitalise on this shortage of rooms during the Show weekend by charging peak-season rates. This contributes to the high cost of this package.
3. Star ratings are an approximate guide only and are not based on any published star rating system.
4. Tour prices are subject to change at any time prior to final payment if there is a major loss in the exchange rate.
5. For trip modifications and extensions please enquire.
6. To book a place on this tour please e-mail a copy of your passport photo page and your request to ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com We will then send you an availability confirmation and a quote.
7. 25% deposit is required to book Show Weekender tours and secure your preferred accommodation, plus the amount in full of any flights you require us to purchase on your behalf. 75% balance is due 6 weeks before arrival. Our normal terms and conditions apply (see page 2 of your quote). An early-bird discount may be available if you pay in full at the time of booking - please enquire.

GROUND TOUR PACKAGE INCLUSIONS

- Port Moresby - meet and greet, assist with arrival connection
- Mt Hagen - meet and greet, transfer to accommodation
- Mt Hagen - 5 nights selected accommodation package
- Mt Hagen - arrival familiarisation tour of Mt Hagen town
- Mt Hagen - full day sightseeing tour of Mt Hagen surrounds with lunch
- Mt Hagen - full day excursion to Paiya village private sing-sing with lunch
- Mt Hagen - two days excursions to the Mt Hagen Show with tourist pass and snack foods
- Mt Hagen - departure transfer to airport and check-in assistance
- Port Moresby - meet and assist with departure connection
- Mt Hagen - all fees and gratuities for local guides, helpers, village demonstrators
- Mt Hagen - on-site company tour leader to escort and manage daily arrangements
- 24-hour back-up assistance from our office in Port Moresby

EXCLUSIONS

- Domestic airfares (arrange your own or we can supply at quoted cost)
- Dinners (pay as you go)
- Any lunches not specified as included
- Tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)
- Souvenirs and items of a personal nature
- Bar drinks and bottled water in the hotel
- Travel insurance

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1: WED 14 AUG 2024



ARRIVE MT HAGEN

Arrive Mt Hagen by air from Port Moresby. For available flights see

www.airniugini.com.pg and www.pngair.com

A guide from Ecotourism Melanesia will meet you on arrival in Mt Hagen and transfer you to your accommodation to settle in. Lunch today is not included in the package. You can buy something at Port Moresby airport or at your hotel in Mt Hagen on arrival.

13:00 Pick up from your accommodation for a familiarisation drive around Mt Hagen.

Overnight Mt Hagen (selected accommodation) includes breakfast

DAY 2: THU 15 AUG 2024



MT HAGEN (full day Mt Hagen excursion)

Commence today's touring with a drive out the Kuminga back road past peri-urban villages, roadside markets, market garden plots and coffee plantations to Mt Ambra which offers scenic views of Mt Hagen then around the back of the airport past the Show Grounds to the Highlands Highway and east to Kindeng farming community.

Here you'll have candid opportunities to mingle and chat with local people engaged in small scale agricultural activities such as marketing gardening, fish farming and raising livestock. Families from a number of different areas of the highlands have settled at Kindeng which makes it quite a diverse community.

From Kindeng you'll drive back into town and turn south on the Kum Road out to Rondon Ridge for a guided walk through the magnificent orchid gardens and adjacent forest reserve. The Raggiana bird of paradise is common in this area and there is a good chance of seeing or at least hearing one in the wild (they have a very loud call).



After a lunch stop (TBA) visit Moika or Ogelbeng village and take a walking tour of the village and gardens, go inside a family hut, meet local people and children doing their everyday thing and photograph some villagers in full costume and body paint. You'll also see a display of tribal "treasures" which have been passed between families for generations for the settlement of marriages and conflicts, including "moka kina" mother of pearl, cowrie shells transported from the coast, animal bones and teeth, brilliant bird feathers (and even sun-dried whole birds!), stone and shell "money".

Return to your accommodation before the afternoon rain begins.

Overnight Mt Hagen (selected accommodation) includes breakfast



NB If you have a particular interest in birds you may wish to buy a copy of "Birds of New Guinea", available in Port Moresby from major hotel gift shops.

DAY 3: FRI 16 AUG 2024



MT HAGEN (Paiya village sing-sing)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the scenic drive through typical highlands countryside to Paiyakona (Paiya) village where a private sing-sing performance for overseas visitors is held the Friday before each Mt Hagen Show. Arriving before the sing-sing commences you can watch the performers adorning themselves with feathers, shells and ochre paints in preparation for dancing. The performers will be happy to show and tell about their traditional dress (“bilas”) and pose for photographs without expecting payment. About 10 different dancing groups will perform, mainly from the Highlands, including the Huli wigmen, the Melpa tribe stompers and the Enga tribe with their wide black wigs. Some of the groups will also perform at the Mt Hagen Show on the weekend. The Paiya sing-sing includes a “mumu” lunch cooked under hot stones at the sing-sing grounds, and a tour of the cultural displays at Paiya village including the men’s spirit house and the ancestors’ skull house which really is an ossuary full of dozens of skulls. Some traditional customs like courtship ritual and mourning rites may also be demonstrated.

The advantage of attending this private sing-sing in addition to the Mt Hagen Show itself is the village environment which makes the experience more authentic, the smaller crowd from just the one village area is easy to socialise with, and the photography in the bush setting without buildings, fences and advertising signs in the background is much more rewarding.

If the afternoon rains hold off after the sing-sing your tour bus will drive you further west along the Highlands Highway as far as the border between Western Highlands and Enga Province, then return to Mt Hagen. On the outward drive please note any photo stops you’d like to make on the way back and notify the guide or driver.

Overnight Mt Hagen (selected accommodation) includes breakfast

DAY 4: SAT 17 AUG 2024



MT HAGEN (Mt Hagen Show)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the 30 minute drive to the show grounds. Our staff will have already been out there earlier in the morning to set up a marquee and chairs for you. Arriving before the start of the show, you’ll be able to walk among the performers and capture some candid photos as they apply their face paint and body decorations.

The program usually begins around 09:00am with half an hour of speeches followed by a grand parade with all participating cultural groups marching around the arena several times. The rest of day will loosely follow a printed schedule of individual group appearances, usually with three or four different groups performing in different areas of the arena at the same time because with 80-100 different cultural groups attending each year there are too many to fit in a weekend program if performing one by one. Tourist pass holders are permitted to enter the arena to take close-up photographs but do try to avoid getting in the way of other tourists’ cameras. We will have extra guides on hand to describe and explain the dances for you and accompany you around the arena (and side shows) if you need help with your camera gear etc.

Bottled water and a supply of fruit and bakery snacks is supplied for lunch today (fresh lunches cannot be delivered because of the crowd and traffic gridlock outside the show ground gates by mid-morning).

Mid-afternoon as the daily downpour looms, your group will pack up and depart the show before the end of the program in order to beat the exit chaos in the carpark and street outside. Drop off at your accommodation.

Overnight Mt Hagen (selected accommodation) includes breakfast

DAY 5: SUN 18 AUG 2024



MT HAGEN (Mt Hagen Show)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the second day of the Show which will feature different cultural groups from yesterday and of course the judgment and prize-giving at the end of the day. However your group will again leave a little early to beat the crowds and avoid getting stuck in gridlocked traffic and doused by afternoon rains. If there is time remaining in the afternoon and the weather stays dry your guide may offer a short excursion.

Overnight Mt Hagen (selected accommodation) includes breakfast

DAY 5: MON 19 AUG 2024



DEPART MT HAGEN

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and either your guide or your hotel shuttle (by arrangement) will transfer you to Mt Hagen airport for your flight. In Port Moresby, Ecotourism Melanesia staff will be on hand to help you connect with your onward flight.

NB Flights out of Mt Hagen on the Monday after the Show are often problematic. Due to the high demand the airlines do put on extra flights but Mt Hagen airport can't handle the congestion so there are usually flight delays. Also beware that on peak days like this the airlines do overbook their flights and passengers may be denied boarding despite holding a ticket. We recommend online check-in before going to the airport and we advise against booking a tight international connection out of Port Moresby on this day.

END OF TOUR PROGRAM (extensions to other destinations are available)

