



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM50A CLASSIC “SEE PNG” TOURING PROGRAM - PREMIUM PACKAGE (4 STAR)

Soft adventure itinerary for independent travellers and private groups

- 10 nights core tour Port Moresby (1 nt), Wewak/Sepik River (3 nt), Madang (2 nt), Goroka (2 nt), Mt Hagen (2 nt)
- optional extra nights at Sepik River
- optional extra night at Wewak with day trip to Yuo Island, Muschu Island or Kairiru Island
- extra nights available at other stops with extra touring
- abbreviated tour options

This flexible go-anytime private touring itinerary features a number of PNG’s contrasting destinations with varied natural, cultural and historical attractions:

- Port Moresby - vibrant modern city with melting pot of people from all over PNG
- Wewak/Sepik River - riverside stilt villages, animist religion, exotic carvings
- Madang - pretty coastal scenery, seaside villages and rainforest, German colonial history
- Goroka - scenic highlands terrain, biodiverse forests, mountain villages, mud men
- Mt Hagen - colourful sing-sings, coffee plantations and market gardens

This “premium” version of the tour program includes well appointed 4 star accommodation with full breakfast, comfortable air-conditioned car or van for road transfers, daily excursions including best available demonstrations of traditional culture and village lifestyle, and “sing-sing” dance performances wherever available. All touring lunches are included.

The tour program is privately guided by our expert local guides at each destination who will arrange and manage each day’s activities for you but the guide does not fly with you or stay with you at the hotel.

NB This is not a trekking package but some walking and clambering is required to see everything on the itinerary. The tour is not suitable for travellers with limited mobility unless modified and re-quoted accordingly.



EM50A PREMIUM (4 STAR) PACKAGE COSTS: all prices per person***

	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 4	Group of 6+
CORE GROUND PACKAGE 10 NTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Wewak, 1 night Sepik River, 2 nights Madang, 2 nights Goroka, 2 nights Mt Hagen 4 star accom with breakfast, all tours & transfers, lunches	USD 14,660	USD 8660	USD 5800	USD 4950
Single supplement 10 nights single room	----	USD 900	USD 900	USD 900
Airfare supplement 10 nts ** POM-WWK-MAG + HGU-POM	USD 750	USD 750	USD 750	USD 750
Extra night Sepik River with full day private motor canoe touring	USD 1150	USD 650	USD 460	USD 390
Extra night Wewak with Island day trip or overnight on Island	USD 1150	USD 650	USD 460	USD 390
Extra night any town - 4 star accom with breakfast and lunch	USD 250	USD 150	USD 150	USD 150
Extra night any town with extra day of private touring	USD 850	USD 470	USD 250	USD 200
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 3 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Madang	USD 4425	USD 2425	USD 1670	USD 1435
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 3 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Goroka	USD 4425	USD 2425	USD 1670	USD 1435
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 3 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Mt Hagen	USD 4425	USD 2425	USD 1670	USD 1435
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 4 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 3 nights Wewak	USD 5400	USD 3240	USD 2160	USD 1780
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 4 NIGHTS 2 nights Goroka, 2 nights Mt Hagen	USD 5400	USD 3240	USD 2160	USD 1780
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 5 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Madang, 2 nights Goroka	USD 6950	USD 4170	USD 2780	USD 2290
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 5 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Goroka, 2 nights Mt Hagen	USD 6950	USD 4170	USD 2780	USD 2290
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 6 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 3 nights Wewak, 2 nights Madang	USD 8990	USD 5390	USD 3590	USD 2965
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 7 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 2 nights Madang, 2 nights Goroka, 2 nights Mt Hagen	USD 10490	USD 6290	USD 4195	USD 3460
ABBREVIATED ITINERARY 8 NIGHTS 1 night Port Moresby, 3 nights Wewak, 2 nights Madang, 2 nights Goroka	USD 11820	USD 7090	USD 4730	USD 3900

* All lunches are included on transfer and touring days - refer to tour itinerary. If you'd like something different from what is provided, this will be at your own extra expense.

** Flat rate economy fare quote. We are a ground operator not an airline agency, but for your convenience we can purchase tickets in your name from the airlines. Alternatively you may arrange your own airfares but we prefer to supply so that we can maintain authority over your tickets 24/7 and re-book or re-ticket you if there are any flight cancellations or if any urgent changes to your itinerary are required during the tour.

*** Prices valid till end 2025 but subject to change prior to purchase.

EM50A CORE TOUR 10 NIGHTS - PREMIUM PACKAGE (4 STAR) LIST OF INCLUSIONS

- Port Moresby - airport arrival meet and greet and assist, transfer to hotel
- Port Moresby - half day private city tour by deluxe car or van
- Port Moresby - 1 night 4 star accommodation with full breakfast
- Port Moresby - airport transfer, departure check-in assistance
- Wewak - airport meet and greet, hotel transfer and half day private town tour by deluxe car or van
- Wewak - 2 nights 4 star accommodation with full breakfast
- Wewak - return road transfers to Sepik River by deluxe car or van with bottled water and boxed lunch.
- Sepik River - motor canoe hire and fuel, 2 half days of village tours with cultural demonstrations and sing-sing performance with tumbans, entry to men's spirit houses, flutes and drums playing,
- Sepik River - 1 night 1 star camp-style accommodation at village guest house or homestay with a mix of local style and camp style food and bottled water, camp shower and latrine.
- Wewak - airport transfer, departure check in assistance
- Madang - airport meet and greet, transfer to hotel by deluxe car or van
- Madang - 2 nights 4 star accommodation with full breakfast
- Madang - full day private town and lagoon tour by deluxe car or van and open motor boat, with lunch.
- Madang - full day private seaside village excursion by deluxe car including north coast road scenic drive, traditional flower lei welcome, sing-sing performance and culture demonstrations, special village lunch, dugout canoe paddling excursion in the lagoon, Warwin Creek rainforest bat cave hike
- Madang - full day road transfer to Goroka by deluxe car or van with bottled water and boxed lunch (or possible light aircraft flight, with extra half day sightseeing on arrival in Goroka)
- Goroka - 2 nights 4 star accommodation with full breakfast
- Goroka - full day private town and village tour by deluxe car or van including markets and cultural museum, Asaro mud men village (entry to village and cultural centre, full mud man display and photo session with mud men, full mudman dance performance, Benabena cane swallowing demonstration) plus Kenadi rural village (village entry and walk-around tour with villagers in costume performing culture and lifestyle demonstrations and group sing-sing performance).
- Goroka - full day road transfer to Mt Hagen by deluxe car or van with stops at Daulo Pass (guided moss forest walk), Snake Village (village entry and walk-around, see villagers handling snakes), Kundiawa town (pub lunch included), Mindima skeleton village (village entry and walk-around tour, skeleton dancer performance and photography, *karim leg* courtship ritual demonstration), Kendeng farming community (entry and walk-around tour of farm activities, children's dance performance).
- Mt Hagen - 2 nights 4 star accommodation with full breakfast
- Mt Hagen - full day private town and village tour by deluxe car or van including city and surrounds, walking tour of a Melpa tribe village and gardens with villagers in costume, women's tribal sing-sing dance and men's stomping dance performance), afternoon guided forest nature walk. Includes lunch.
- Mt Hagen - departure airport transfer and airport assistance
- Port Moresby - airport assistance and farewell
- Throughout this tour:
 - (i) services of an experienced local driver/guide with mobile or satellite phone
 - (ii) all transfers by air conditioned best available car or van with bottled water, umbrellas
 - (iii) any tips/gratuities due to local villages, guides, drivers, demonstrators and helpers
 - (iv) basic safety equipment eg seat belts for cars, life vests for motor boats
 - (v) daily reconfirmation of flights and arrangements coordinated by our Port Moresby office
 - (vi) 24 hour emergency backup from our Port Moresby office

ITINERARY EM50A CLASSIC “SEE PNG” PRIVATE TOUR PROGRAM - PREMIUM PACKAGE

DAY 1:



PORT MORESBY (half day city tour)

On arrival at Port Moresby airport, pass through passport control and customs checks. After exiting the Arrivals Hall you will be met by staff from Ecotourism Melanesia holding our sign. (If you do not see anyone waiting for you, please wait at the Vodaphone sales outlet and our staff will meet up with you there). Our local phone contact number is 7204 6950). Our staff will assist you to transfer to your hotel. If arriving on an early flight your room may not be ready and you may have to pass some time having breakfast in the restaurant, snoozing in an armchair in the lobby or resting in a deck chair at the poolside until your room is ready.

12:00 Lunch in the hotel (included)

13:00 Our Port Moresby guide will pick you up and take you for a private afternoon tour of Port Moresby possibly including a familiarisation drive around the city, a visit to the national museum (if open), the parliament house (if open), Bomana War Cemetery, Adventure Park zoo and National Orchid Gardens and an urban over-water stilt village.

Overnight 4 star accom, Port Moresby - includes full breakfast

DAY 2:



PORT MORESBY / WEWAK (half day town tour)

06:00 Breakfast and check out (large bags may be stored with our guide at our office or at your hotel if you will be returning there).

07:00 Our driver/guide will transfer you to the domestic terminal in time for bag drop, security screening and boarding.

09:05 Air Niugini flight PX120 departs Port Moresby for Wewak (direct)

10:25 On arrival at Wewak airport, collect bags and meet up with our local guide who will be holding a sign or will approach you. Transfer by hotel shuttle or guide's car to your hotel.

12:00 Lunch at your hotel (included)

13:00 The local guide will take you for an afternoon tour of Wewak town and surrounds possibly including:

- an orientation drive around the town passing through shopping areas, residential areas and urban villages
- a stop at the main market (fresh produce, souvenirs, locally made clothing, handicrafts/artifacts)
- a stop at the Japanese war memorial at Mission Hill ... a major defensive lookout position of Imperial forces in WW2. There are some well preserved gun emplacements and relics of military hardware
- a drive 15 minutes out of town to the Allied cenotaph memorial at Cape Wom, the former allied field headquarters where a Japanese General surrendered his sword to an Australian General to signify an end to the Pacific War on 13 Sep 1945. The Cape Wom area has a lovely long grey sand beach which is suitable for swimming.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel, Wewak - includes full breakfast

DAY 3:

WEWAK TO SEPIK RIVER (overnight excursion by road and motor canoe)



06:00 Breakfast and collect your boxed lunch (included) from reception
07:00 Meet up with your guide in the hotel lobby and board your waiting bus or four-wheel-drive car to the Sepik River. Your drop off point will be either Pagwi, Timbunke, Kanduanam or Pagwi depending on weather, road conditions and the prevailing local situation at the time. All the roads from Wewak to the Sepik River are unsealed most of the way and quite bumpy. On arrival at the road head you will clamber into a waiting motor canoe and head either down-river or up-river to the first village which may be Korogo, Kaminabit, Tambanum, or Moim depending which jumping off point you have arrived at. Spend today and tomorrow visiting a number of villages of the Middle Sepik region. Very few tourists visit this area due to the lack of conventional accommodation. At each village your guide will take you on a walking tour of the village to meeting local people at their huts doing their usual late afternoon chores - chopping firewood to smoke fresh fish and cook sago for dinner before it gets dark (there is no electricity here and most people can't afford kerosene for lamps). You'll visit one or more men's spirit house and see artisans at work carving weaving and sculpting. Culture and lifestyle demonstrations will be enacted for you and a full scale sing-sing performance (traditional dancing) with several different groups.

NB Much of today's canoe travel will be in blazing hot sun (and/or rain !) so wear long sleeves, plenty of sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses and even hold an umbrella to keep the sun off you. Beware also of the sun's reflection off the water which can burn you face and neck.

Overnight village guest house or village home stay - Sepik River

Includes a mix of local style food (fresh fish, vegetables and tropical fruit) and camp style food (eggs, crackers, tinned meat/fish), bottled water, clean camp-style bedding, bucket shower). Very basic accommodation but you'll cope for one night and the in-situ cultural experience is well worth it.



DAY 4:

SEPIK RIVER TO WEWAK (by motor canoe and road)



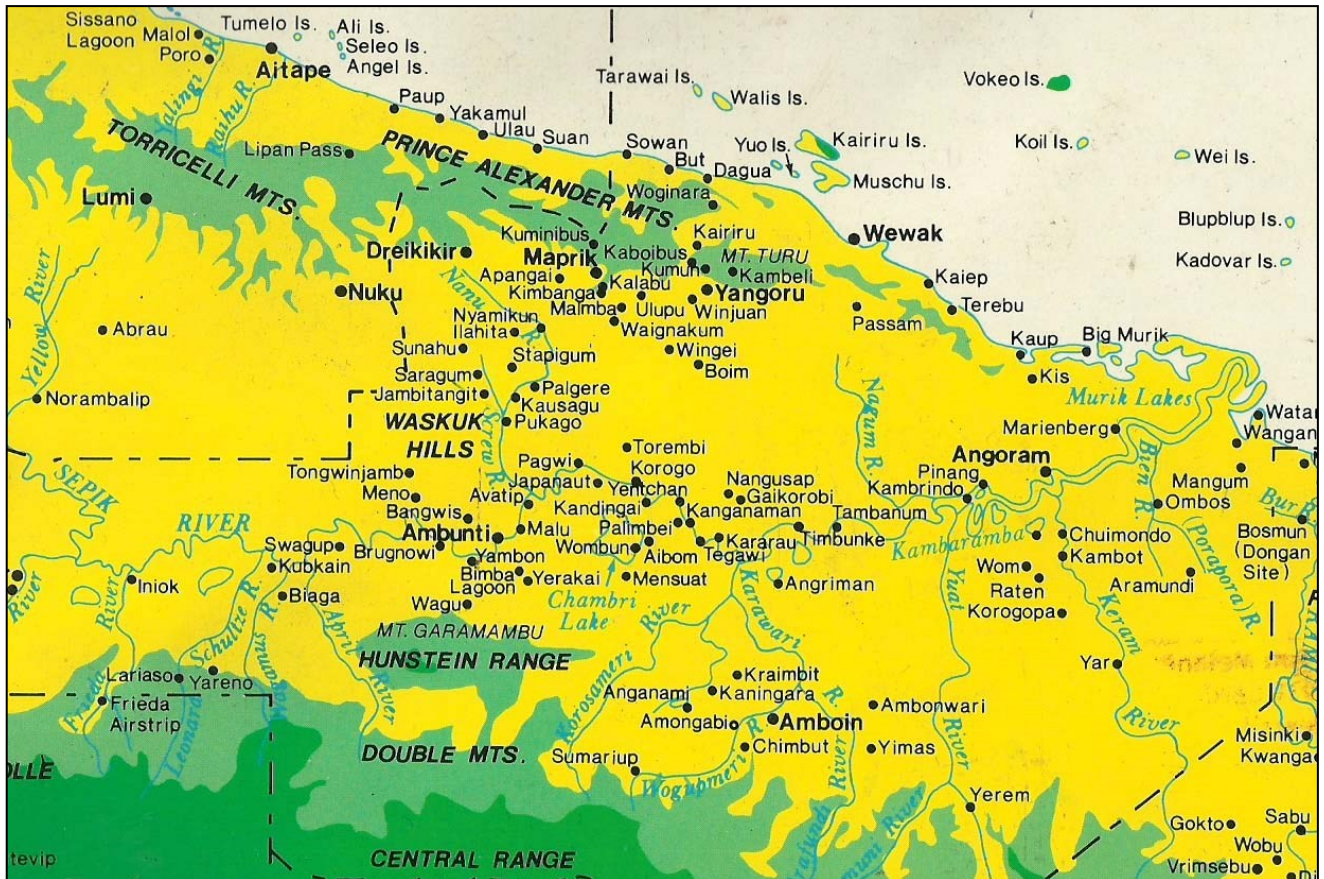
Visit another village this morning then head upstream or downstream to the road head to rendezvous with your vehicle and commence the four hour drive back to Wewak.

19:00 Arrive back at the hotel in time for dinner. (If you're going to be late we'll call ahead and ask the kitchen to keep dinner for you).

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel, Wewak - includes full breakfast



NB The Sepik River leg of the itinerary is deliberately vague because we need to maintain flexibility. The Sepik River is a very changeable environment both physically and socially and we can only offer routes and village that are possible at the time of your visit. Sometimes we even have to switch planned routes at the last minute because of changes in the situation on the ground. For example each access road to the river goes through an annual cycle of deterioration followed by maintenance (or lack thereof) and it's rare for all four access roads to be passable at the same time. Heavy rain may suddenly close a road that was open yesterday. The river itself changes course from year to year, especially the minor channels or "shortcuts" across S bends, and this affects navigability and travel times. The social situation in the Sepik River basin is also quite unpredictable: there are often village disputes, political rallies, funerals and other local events that we have to steer around to avoid possible complications during your trip. So it's difficult to guarantee at the time of booking exactly which route you will take and which particular villages you will visit when it comes time for your visit. What we DO promise is that we will provide the best possible arrangements for you in the prevailing circumstances ☺



OPTIONAL EXTRA NIGHT SEPIK RIVER TOURING (PREMIUM PACKAGE)

DAY 3:



SEPIK RIVER DAY TRIP (core tour Day 3)

16:00 instead of motoring downstream to Kanduanam and returning by road to Wewak, motor 30 minutes upstream to Timbunke Catholic Mission and overnight here with your guide. Twin rooms with shared bathroom (flush toilet), some electricity overnight for lights and charging devices. **Overnight basic accom parish guest house, Timbunke (includes mainly local style food with bottled water).**

DAY 3A:



OPTIONAL EXTRA FULL DAY AND OVERNIGHT SEPIK RIVER (village tours)

08:00 Depart Timbunke 45 minutes upstream to Kaminabit, the first of the “crocodile cult” villages (Iatmul tribe). At Kaminabit you can visit Bowie’s Art Center, a little hut where an excellent range of handicrafts and genuine artifacts from all over the Sepik Basin is available at good prices. From Kaminabit one more hour upstream brings you to Kanganaman village which boasts the largest Spirit House on the Sepik [where you will also hear flute and drum players perform under the spirit house and see a “tumbuan” sing-sing performance \(a tumbuan is a full body mask costume\)](#). Later, scoot across the river, leave the canoe and walk 30 minutes inland from the river to Palimbei village which has two lovely Spirit Houses packed with artifacts - some are made for sale while others are tribal heirlooms not available for sale. (Your lunch today is a packed lunch provided by Timbunke guest house).



15:00 Depart Palembei for the walk back to the canoe and two hours fast run downstream to Kanduanam.

[Note: At each of the villages today you will be able to walk around the village, enter the men’s spirit houses, listen to local guides talk about life along the river and especially the crocodile animist religion. Some men will show you the “crocodile skin bumps” on their backs and some young men who have recently been initiated may show you their fresh scars.](#)



17:00 Rendezvous with your vehicle and commence the two hour drive back to Wewak - it often rains in the late afternoon so if the “daily deluge” begins earlier than expected you are welcome to request an earlier return to Wewak. (The car and driver will be there early).

19:00 Arrive back at your hotel in time for dinner. (If you’re going to be late we’ll call ahead and ask the kitchen to keep dinner for you).

Overnight 4 star accom, Wewak - includes hot breakfast



OPTIONAL EXTRA NIGHT WEWAK WITH DAY TRIP OR OVERNIGHT TO YUO ISLAND, MUSCHU IS OR KAIRIRU IS

DAY 4B:



OPTIONAL EXTRA NIGHT WEWAK WITH DAY TRIP TO YUO ISLAND

07:00 Breakfast

07:30 Meet up at the lobby and walk down to the town beach with our guide to board your motor boat for a 45 min ride to tiny Yuo Island, one of the offshore group of Wewak Islands.

You Island is a tropical paradise surrounded by beach, with two small villages and some colonial mission ruins in the interior. The cooler morning hours are the best time to enjoy this lovely island, so after an initial welcome and coconut drink there will be an organised hike around the island which will take about 2 hours with stops along the way to look at things and meet local people.

After lunch at the little guest house (yes there will be lots of fish!) you'll be set free to enjoy the island on your own for the rest of the day - walk along the beach, paddle a dugout canoe, swim in the warm waters, play games in the sand with the village kids who will welcome your company because not many visitors come here.

Masks are available for snorkelling over the coral reef. Sitting or napping in the shade of an overhanging tree is another way to enjoy the beach.

The guest house on the beach also has chairs to sit on, and your guide can even arrange a nap inside one of the cool rooms of the bush material guest house if you are feeling tired.

16:30 Depart Yuo Island by motor boat for Wewak

17:30 The hotel shuttle will pick you up at the beach.

NB Muschu Island and Kairiru Island also available at same cost.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel, Wewak - includes full breakfast

NB It's also possible to overnight at the village guest house on the island as long as you are not departing on an early flight the next day.



DAY 5:

WEWAK / MADANG (full day town and lagoon tour)



06:00 Breakfast and check out.

06:30 The hotel shuttle will transport you to the airport and the driver will assist you with checking in for your flight to Madang.

07:55 PNG Air flight CG8573 departs Wewak to Madang

08:50 On arrival in Madang, our local Madang guide will meet you and transfer you by private car to your accommodation for check-in then immediately commence today's touring, which will be an exploration of Madang town and lagoon, starting with the Madang Resort carver's hut, orchid gardens and boardwalk then further afield to the town shops (a poke through a typical South Pacific Chinese general store is a must!), the fresh food and handicraft market, the flying fox trees in the town square, the Coastwatcher's Lighthouse, Machine Gun beach, the lovely tidal lily ponds and the Madang culture museum (if open).

Further out of town you'll visit the pretty Balek Grotto, a cold water sulfur spring where you can feed turtles and eels. The site was used for some outdoor scenes in the Pierce Brosnan film *Robinson Crusoe*. You can take a short walk through the surrounding tropical gardens and patch of rainforest where you may come across birds and other fauna.

At a convenient point during the tour, the guide will stop at your hotel or another suitable eatery for you to have your lunch (included).

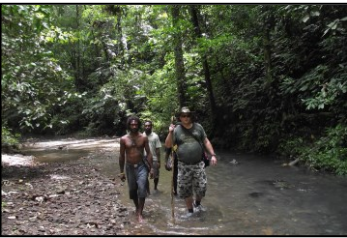
Later in the afternoon your guide will take you on a banana boat (small motorised skiff or fibreglass dinghy) for a sightseeing and snorkelling excursion in the Madang lagoon.

First explore the Madang inner harbour and port with its many sheltered waterways and tiny tidal lagoons and then the giant outer Madang Lagoon which has many small islands, some inhabited by village communities while others are home to birds and crabs only.

Stop at Pik Island to swim, or snorkel over the colourful reef (mask/snorkel supplied).

Overnight Madang Resort Hotel, Madang includes full breakfast

DAY 6:



MADANG (seaside village and rainforest excursion)

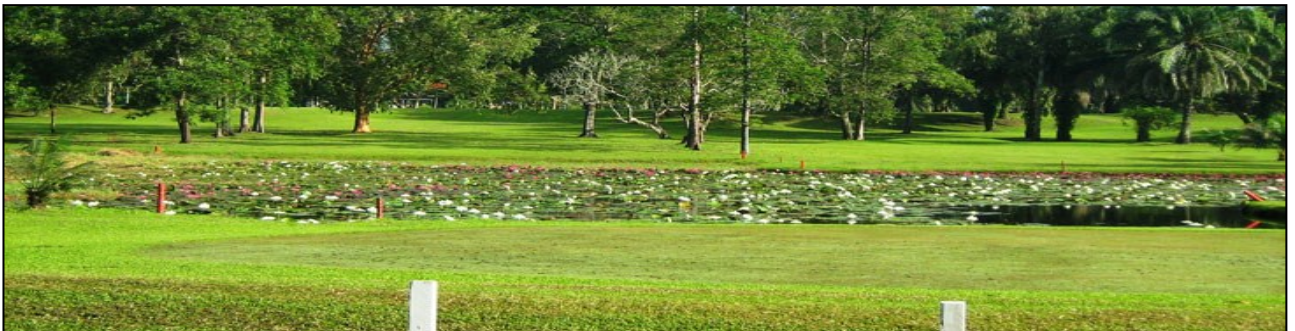
08:00am Commence today's guided touring with a drive out of town past the airport and turn off at the side road up Nobnob ridge to the Nobnob lookout which offers panoramic views of the Madang coastline - Madang town and lagoon to the south east and Karkar Island to the north.

Back on the main road, drive further out the North Coast road and turn off to the historical Alexishafen Catholic mission which during WW2 was occupied in turn by both the Japanese and the Allies, with all original mission buildings destroyed and later rebuilt. There are many war relics to be seen here, and the old mission cemetery.

Continue another 20 minutes drive out the north coast road to Rempi Lagoon, a picturesque coastal lagoon protected by a line of tiny islands running parallel to the beach. More of the *Robinson Crusoe* movie was shot here at Rempi Lagoon and in the adjacent rainforest on shore. On arrival at Rempi village the locals will welcome you with a sing-sing dance performance then paddle you out to the little islands in a native dugout canoe and you can explore the tiny islands - walk around one in just a few minutes - then paddle back to shore again. Don't hesitate to ask for your turn with the paddle, it's great fun paddling even if you go around in circles ☺ The local dugout canoes have stabilising outrigger arms which prevent them from tipping over. And wherever you see a flash of brilliant colours in the water you can jump out with a mask and flippers for a spot of reef snorkelling.

Back at Rempi village a local style seafood lunch is prepared for you (included), some fish is barbecued under hot stones or coals and some local vegetables cooked with coconut and seafood in traditional clay pots. After lunch, say farewell to the lagoon and head inland 10 minutes drive to the Warwin Creek rainforest. Here a 2 hour hike through the pristine rainforest is available if you enjoy reasonable physical fitness. There is a steep descent to the creek at the start and a steep climb out of the gully at end, with most of the hike following the verdant creek itself - the walking track crosses the creek many times so you will be up to your ankles or knees in water a lot of the time and your shoes will get thoroughly soaked (fortunately there are no leeches or other nasties as the creek is quite fast-flowing). The hike includes a foray into a limestone cave with stalactites and a small stream running through it. The cave is inhabited by thousands of tiny bats which feed off gnats and other insects in the cave. You may also spot the occasional small python lying in wait for a hapless bat. Your guide will provide flashlights for exploring the cave. Further downstream from the cave is a lovely swimming hole with a series of pretty cascades where you can jump in for a fun swim before completing the hike by climbing back up to the road. (If you are not a good hiker, a shorter forest walk on flat ground is available, skipping the creek and the bat cave.) Late afternoon, drive back to your accommodation in time to catch the tropical sunset before dinner.

Overnight Madang Resort Hotel, Madang includes full breakfast



DAY 7:



MADANG / GOROKA (full day scenic road transfer)

07:00 Breakfast and check out

08:00 Board your private car for the 8 hour drive to Goroka, with stops. The first half of the journey follows the flat coastal highway with Astrolabe Bay on the left and many roadside villages with market stalls to your right. The road passes through some delicious patches of tropical jungle but these soon give way to the open ground of the Transgogol, a wide river plain enveloping the Gogol and Nuru Rivers and their mess of tributaries which dump mud everywhere during the wet season. Fortunately however the mud is nutritional volcanic soil from upstream and much of the Transgogol floodplain has been planted with hardy oil palms that cope well with floods. The highway loosely follows the Nuru River south west for fifty kilometres through hilly terrain as far as Usino where the river peters out and the highway takes a wide bend through 90 degrees to follow the Ramu River valley south east towards Lae. The Ramu Valley is an agricultural wonderland with farms galore. Sugar cane fields, cattle grazing country. Shortly after the Ramu Sugar Factory the highway crosses the Ramu River for the first time and enters the Morobe Province for about 10 kilometres until the highway forks with one prong heading straight down to Lae and the right turn taking you up through the precipitous Kassam Pass to the Yonki Dam. As your car climbs up into the PNG Highlands you may notice the change in atmosphere as you pass through the temperature inversion layer from the steamy coastal tropics to the cool dry air of the highlands. Lunch today will be a boxed lunch provided by your hotel (included) and you are welcome to stop the car at any point to buy any goodies you see at roadside markets.

Your driver will make a lunch stop at the Yonki Dam where you can eat your packed lunch (if you have not already devoured it in the bus!). Apart from the lunch stop your guide will schedule a few other comfort stops during the journey but don't expect anything flash (or flushing). ☺

16:00 On arrival in Goroka settle into your accommodation then your guide will lead you on a leg-stretching walk around the nearby streets to check out any lingering markets and visit a shop for any needful things.

Overnight Bird of Paradise Hotel, Goroka - includes full breakfast



DAY 8:



GOROKA (full day town and villages tour)

07:00 Breakfast at your accommodation

08:00 Meet up with your guide at reception and commence a morning of sightseeing around Goroka town by car including:

- Mt Kiss lookout (see most of Goroka town and the adjacent Asaro Valley)
- JK McCarthy Museum of Highlands Culture (if open)
- fresh produce market (vegetables, pigs, chickens)
- handicrafts market (woven bilum bags are the best buy)
- Goroka coffee factory

Depending on time available and the weather today, lunch (included) will either be a packed take-out meal to eat on the run (eg fried noodles or sandwiches) or a quick stop at your hotel for a sit-down lunch.

Later drive 30 minutes out of town to the Asaro Valley, home of the famed Asaro mud men. Here you will be treated to a private mud men performance - a little corny but a lot of fun and great photography. The Asaro people have long had a tradition of crafting fierce looking clay helmets worn during tribal fights in the old days to frighten the enemy. The helmets are also worn for traditional dancing and drama performances demonstrating how their ancestors confronted enemy tribes wearing their scary mud helmets, their bodies smeared with grey mud, looking like evil ghosts. After the dance (or "prance") you'll be shown how the clay helmets are made, and you'll have an opportunity to try one on yourself. As an added bonus you may also witness a cane-swallowing ritual.

From Asaro, drive 30 minutes to Kennedy village where the people live an even more traditional lifestyle in round huts made of bush materials. The village is a typical rural highlands community with smoky cooking fires and pigs wandering around. At the village you'll be welcomed by a traditional "sing-sing" group with a wide age-range of villagers involved from elderly people down to small kids. Walk by a number of homes to see locals engaged in different daily chores and activities including cooking, house building, making and using bows and arrows, weaving "bilum" string bags, fashioning "kundu" hand drums from hollow logs and a special demonstration of funerary rites. On the land around the village you'll see people engaged in vegetable gardening (the highlands climate is perfect) and tending their coffee crops. Organic coffee grown on smallholder blocks is the major local cash crop.

Overnight Bird of Paradise Hotel, Goroka - includes full breakfast



An initiate during the ritual of nose bleeding.
Pictures courtesy of NFI-USA.

Initiates in traditional attire are taken back to the village after the ritual of cane swallowing.

A participant at the cane swallowing ritual.

DAY 9:



GOROKA / MT HAGEN (full day road transfer with stops)

07:30 Breakfast and check out.

08:00 Meet up with your guide at reception and commence a full day road transfer to Mt Hagen with stops at Daulo Pass, “snake village”, Kundiawa town and Mindima “skeleton tribe village”. From the hotel it is a one hour drive up the scenic Highlands Highway to Daulo Pass, a high altitude biodiversity hotspot where the highway curls through swirling mists past giant tree ferns and trickling waterfalls. Near the peak of the pass, you will leave your vehicle at the road side and a village guide will lead you on a 30 minute walk through the moss forest, still enveloped in morning fog and dripping with condensation. The forest is populated by flowering trees and tree ferns which form a substrate for the growth of a wide variety of saprophytic native orchids, green mosses and colourful fungi, lichens, liverworts and leafy epiphytes. From Daulo the highway continues climbing in a westerly direction, across the border into Chimbu (Simbu), an alpine province where the people are jokingly said to have one leg longer than the other to enable them to work in their gardens on the steep hillsides. One of the first Chimbu villages encountered is the “snake village” where locals have a penchant for keeping snakes in cages as pets and, yes, taking them out of their cages to play with them. Some of the snakes are venomous so it seems like a rather risky pastime to us. You’ll have an opportunity to watch the people handling their snakes and talk to them about their unusual pets, or, if serpents are not your thing, you can cower in the tour vehicle ☺

Around noon, stop at the “pub” (hotel) in Kundiawa town for lunch (included) - there is a basic short-order menu available including toasted sandwiches, fish and chips, roast chicken with salad, curry chicken etc. One hour’s drive further west brings you to Mindima village. The people here are of the Omo Masalai tribe and, like the Asaro mud men, have a tradition of painting their bodies with clay to frighten their enemies. But the Mindima version of clay body painting is all about skeleton art. Both men and women paint macabre skeleton designs on their bodies and even have a number of dances to go with the image.

The Mindima skeleton dancers are very popular at the Mt Hagen and Goroka Shows (festivals) each year and often walk away with the top prizes in the sing-sing competitions. Today you’ll experience an exuberant performance of skeleton dancers who will also be happy to pose for some great photography, and also see a demonstration of the tribal courtship tradition called “karim leg”.

Back on the highway you’ll soon cross the border into Jiwaka, a rather nondescript province that is bisected by the Wahgi River valley. Here in Jiwaka you’ll make a final stop at Kendeng farming community and have candid opportunities to mingle and chat with local people engaged in everyday activities including tending their gardens and fish ponds (freshwater trout). Families from a number of different areas of the highlands have settled at Kendeng which makes it a diverse community. The children will sing or dance to welcome you.

From Kendeng the highway crosses into Western Highlands province and on to Mt Hagen city less than an hour away. Your guide from Goroka will help you settle in at your accommodation in Mt Hagen and then either hand you over to the care of our Mt Hagen local guide or, sometimes, continue as your guide in Mt Hagen.

Overnight Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen - includes full breakfast

DAY 10:



MT HAGEN (full day town and villages excursion)

08:00 Pick up at your accommodation and commence your Mt Hagen day tour with a city sights circuit with stops and views at the shops, city market and a drive around the Kuminga back road to see rural agri-farms, coffee and tea plantations, peri-urban villages, roadside markets and the airport. Stop for an early lunch (included) at your hotel or other outlet recommended by your guide eg Kofi Cave or The Sweetspot or Mt Hagen Club where the local expat community hangs out.

Back on the road, drive out of town to visit Moika or Ogelbeng, a typical village of the Melpa people who are the native tribe of the Mt Hagen area. Take a walking tour of the village huts and gardens, meet local people doing their everyday thing, see a women's dance group and a traditional Melpa tribe men's *wapa* "stomping dance" sing-sing performance in full costume and body paint.

From the village take a drive out to a protected forest area for a guided nature walk to look for see birds and other wildlife in the natural habitat. Late afternoon is a good time to spot male Raggiana birds of paradise jumping from branch to branch displaying to females; other species of bird-of-paradise are shyer and much smaller in body size so hard to spot unless you wait in a "bird hide". Possums and cuscus may be spotted plus the usual plethora of macro-insects and small reptiles like skinks.

18:00 Depart forest area for the return drive to Mt Hagen

Overnight Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen - includes full breakfast



DAY 11:

MT HAGEN / FLY OUT

The first flight out of Mt Hagen today is PX181 departing 10:00 arriving 11:00 in Port Moresby where our staff will meet you on arrival to assist and farewell you on your international flight connection or further trip extension to Alotau, Rabaul, Tufi or Port Moresby.