



Ecotourism Melanesia

Explore Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific

EM207A 2024 RABAUL MASK FESTIVAL TOUR MON 08 - THU 18 JULY 2024

Core tour 10 nights Port Moresby, Rabaul (festival), Goroka, Madang USD 5825 pp + flights

Optional Sepik River extension 3 nights 18-21 JULY USD 1700 pp + flights

This is an escorted sign-up (open) small group tour for solo travellers and couples to join - includes accommodation with half board, daily excursions and our experienced local tour leader to manage all arrangements. Maximum group size 12 pax. Tour leader: Mrs Jane Toleitau (Ecotourism Melanesia senior guide)

This unique and exciting tour program focuses on tribal culture and features bona fide village experiences and private traditional dancing performances in full costume at various destinations en route. The 10 night core itinerary connects with arriving flights from Asian ports - perfect for visitors from Europe and Asia - and is scheduled to commence with the Mask Festival in Rabaul.

This kind of escorted soft adventure program is purposely designed for independent travellers who may not normally join group tours. Quality independent travel in PNG is expensive and can be problematic due to the need to hire private transport in remote areas (boats, charter flights, four wheel drive cars) and these costs are formidable if not shared. The small group format also affords private cultural performances and visits to out-of-the-way locations that are uneconomical to arrange for independent travellers. In the small group situation the program is not only special but flexible and the tour guide is at liberty to vary the itinerary if unexpected opportunities arise.

Originally called the "National" Mask Festival and traditionally held in Rabaul, government funding has dwindled and the organising committee can no longer afford to fly cultural groups in from other parts of PNG. Accordingly the festival is now morphing from a national festival to a regional festival featuring mainly the mask cultures of the New Guinea Islands region (Rabaul, Kavieng, Bougainville, Manus) and is now being referred to as the "Rabaul Mask Festival". The festival still takes place in Rabaul (or actually in Kokopo, the "new Rabaul" that sprang up an hour's drive from old Rabaul after the 1996 volcanic eruption).

Mask cultures of other areas of PNG will be seen at other stops on this itinerary, including the three major genres of masks: ancestor masks, spirit masks, and fully body masks (tambuans).

Ancestor masks are designed to resemble or represent humans and often have holes in the eyes as a distinguishing feature. Small masks can be worn on the head during dances or ceremonies while other are mounted in homes and men's spirit houses to represent ancestors. These are common in many provinces.

Spirit masks represent non-human beings and are often designed to be mounted on walls and gables to protect the occupants of a home. These are common in the Sepik and Ramu river basins.

Tambuans are also a type of spirit mask but are larger in size and designed to be worn over the head and shoulders, or the whole body, during performances of dances and mime that illustrate goings-on in the spirit world. These are common around Rabaul and the Sepik area. Goroka's mud man helmets are also tambuans.

Other highlights of this tour include:

- Goroka - Asaro Mudmen private performance and visit traditional highlands village
- Full day scenic road transfers from Goroka to Madang
- Madang - private cultural performance with unique totem head-dresses and rainforest bat cave hike
- Optional extension to the mysterious Sepik River and jungle hike on Muschu Is.



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TOUR COST

	Budget accom option	Standard accom option 3.5 star hotel at Port Moresby, Rabaul, Goroka, Madang	Premier accom option	Deluxe accom option
CORE TOUR GROUND PACKAGE 10 nights Port Moresby-Rabaul-Goroka-Madang (price per person twin share)	Not available	USD 5825 pp Single supplement USD 1165	Not available	Not available
SEPIK RIVER EXTENSION 3 nights Wewak (price per person twin share)		USD 1700 pp Single supplement USD 425		
INTERNAL AIR PACKAGE Core tour only POM-RAB-POM-GKA + MAG-POM		USD 1080		
INTERNAL AIR PACKAGE Core tour + Sepik extension POM-RAB-POM-GKA + MAG-WWK-POM		USD 1380		

**Internal air is priced as a flat rate package and must be purchased from Ecotourism Melanesia in conjunction with your ground package to afford us full control over rebooking / reissuing of flights for the group in the event of itinerary changes or flight disruptions.*

BOOKING NOTES:

- Places on the tour are subject to availability of rooms at the time of booking. We do not block book hotels.
- Star ratings are an approximate guide only and are not based on any published star rating system.
- Package prices are subject to change at any time prior to final payment.
- To book a place on this tour please e-mail your request to ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com. We will then send you an availability confirmation and a quote. We will require a 30% deposit to hold your booking and secure your hotel, plus the amount in full of any flights required. 70% balance of the ground tour package is due 6 weeks before arrival.
- Our normal terms and conditions apply (see page 2 of your invoice).
- This is a soft adventure tour not a luxury tour. The tour involves some walking, coping with hot weather conditions and possible clambering in and out of four wheel drive vehicles and boats etc so some physical agility and mental resilience is required. The tour is unfortunately not wheelchair accessible.
- This is a unique small group tour program originally designed by Ecotourism Melanesia. The tour price includes a tour development levy to recoup our outlays for the planning, reconnoitring and organising of this remote area program, maintaining relationships with local service providers and the people living at each tour stop, a share of the group leader's travel costs, plus various hidden costs like local permits, insurances and retainers for local organisers.

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Port Moresby - meet and greet, assist with arrival transfer
- Port Moresby - city tour with restaurant lunch
- Port Moresby - one night 3.5 star hotel accommodation (Holiday Inn Express or similar)
- Rabaul - four nights 2.0 star motel accommodation Rabaul - arrival tour of Kokopo
- Rabaul - two days escorted excursions to the Mask Festival with boxed or street food lunch
- Rabaul - full day Old Rabaul tour with restaurant lunch
- Goroka - two nights 3.5 star accommodation with breakfast (Bird of Paradise Hotel or similar)
- Goroka - full day Asaro Mudmen and highlands village tour with local style lunch
- Goroka - scenic road transfer to Madang with boxed lunch
- Madang - three nights 3.5 star accommodation (Madang Resort Hotel or similar)
- Madang - half day town tour and half day harbour and lagoon boat tour with sit down lunch (optional snorkelling)
- Madang - full day seaside village and rainforest hike trip with local style lunch
- Madang / Port Moresby - airport assistance and farewell
- all fees and gratuities for local guides, helpers, village demonstrators
- accompanying company tour leader to escort and manage daily arrangements
- 24-hour back-up assistance from our office in Port Moresby

SEPIK RIVER EXTENSION 3 NIGHTS INCLUSIONS

- Wewak - three nights 3.0 star accommodation (In-Wewak Boutique Hotel or similar) - or optional two nights Wewak and one night village guest house at Sepik River
- Wewak - full day Sepik River trip with boxed lunch
- Wewak - full day Wewak Islands trip with local style lunch (or optional second day on Sepik River instead)
- accompanying local guide

EXCLUSIONS

- hotel dinners (pay as you go)
- bar drinks including bottled water at your hotel (pay as you go)
- tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)
- souvenirs and items of a personal nature

DAY 1: MON 08 JULY 2024



ARRIVE PORT MORESBY

Arrive in Port Moresby by air from Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Singapore, Hong Kong or Manila. Staff from Ecotourism Melanesia will meet you on arrival and 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 in the coffee shop, snoozing in an armchair in the lobby or resting in a deck chair at the poolside until your room is ready).

12:00 Meet up with other members of your tour group and at the hotel lobby and pick up for your half day tour of Port Moresby starting with a lunch stop and including:

- a visit to the national museum and parliament house (if open)
- a tour of the botanical gardens (Nature Park)
- a walk-through tour of an urban over-water stilt village
- a stop at the Koki Fish Market

Dinner tonight is in the hotel restaurant (pay as you go).

Overnight 3.5 star hotel, Port Moresby (Holiday Inn Express or similar), includes breakfast

DAY 2: TUE 09 JULY 2024



PORT MORESBY / RABAU

Transfer with your group to the airport for your flight to Rabaul (flight details to be advised). A boxed lunch is provided to eat at the airport or on the flight.

On arrival at Rabaul's Tokua airport, transfer to your accommodation and settle in. From where you are staying you may be able to see the ash cloud that spews from time to time out of the active "baby" volcano, Tavorvur, in the distance at Old Rabaul. In the afternoon take a tour of Kokopo district including the Kokopo Museum and the Bitapaka War Cemetery.

Dinner tonight is in the hotel restaurant (pay as you go).

Overnight 2.5 star accommodation, Rabaul/Kokopo (to be advised), includes breakfast



DAY 3: WED 10 JULY 2024



RABAU (festival day)

04:30 Rise early and have coffee and biscuits in your room.
05:00-05:30 Our tour bus will pick you up at your accommodation and transport you to Kokopo Beach to witness the “Kinavai” - the arrival of the “spirits” that will preside over the festival. At 06:00 as the sun rises, witness the canoes carrying the *dukduk* and *tumbuan* “spirits” arrive on the shore. The figures dance on the beach and disappear. They will reappear at the festival later in the morning.
06:30 Return to your hotel for breakfast.
08:30 Transfer to the festival venue at Kokopo and settle into your seat for the first day of the Festival: a combination of static culture displays and dance performances. There will also be many stalls and displays with local foods and handicrafts available for sale. Your guide will buy your lunch from one of the stalls today. Our staff will interpret the performances for you and will be available to accompany you around the festival grounds and explain local culture and foods to you. As the festival program winds down for the day, return to your hotel to freshen up and perhaps take a walk through the local shops or along the beach.
For dinner tonight (pay as you go) you will have the choice of eating in the hotel or being bussed to an outside restaurant.
Overnight 2.5 star accommodation, Rabaul/Kokopo (to be advised), includes breakfast



DAY 4: THU 11 JULY 2024



RABAU (festival day)

08:00 Pick-up for transfer to the second day of the National Mask Festival, as per yesterday.
Mid afternoon, depart from the festival and return to your hotel for freshen up and early dinner in the hotel restaurant.
19:00 Transfer one hour drive to Gaulim “village”(township) to witness the Baining Fire Dance. This dance originated at Gaulim and the people are fiercely protective of it not being performed at other venues and not being performed in daylight.
22:00 Arrive back at hotel.

Overnight 2.5 star accommodation, Rabaul/Kokopo (to be advised), includes breakfast

DAY 5: FRI 12 JULY 2024



RABAU (touring day)

08:00 Pick-up for full day tour of old Rabaul following a circular route going out on the coastal lowland road and back in the afternoon via the inland hills route with the afternoon sun behind you for best photos of Simpson Harbour and the smoking volcano. Your guide will attempt to include all the following stops as time and conditions allow: Japanese barge tunnels and gun emplacements, Chinese cemetery, Vulcan volcanic cone, old Rabaul market and shops, Japanese Peace Memorial, old Rabaul airport (close-up viewing point of Tavurvur volcano), Matupit village and hot springs, Admiral Yamamoto’s bunker, Rabaul Hotel lunch stop (included), Rabaul Historical Society Museum, Rabaul Seismic Observatory (harbour views only, no entry), Submarine Base, scenic North Coast Road then inland via Kerevat town, Toma village (harbour view photo stop) and Uluganan villages back to Kokopo.

Overnight 2.5 star accommodation, Rabaul/Kokopo (to be advised), includes breakfast

DAY 6: SAT 13 JULY 2024



RABAUL / PORT MORESBY / GOROKA (travel day)

08:00 Breakfast and check out of the hotel for airport transfer and flight to Goroka via Port Moresby (flight details to be advised)
A boxed lunch is provided to eat on the flight.

Overnight 3.5 star Bird of Paradise Hotel, Goroka (includes breakfast)

DAY 7: SUN 14 JULY 2024



GOROKA (full day town and villages tour)

08:00 Meet up with your guide at reception and commence some sightseeing around Goroka town including:

- Mt Kiss lookout (see most of Goroka town and the adjacent Asaro Valley)
- fresh produce market (vegetables, pigs, chickens)
- handicrafts market (woven bilum bags are the best buy)

Then 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. An added bonus will be a cane-swallowing ritual performed by men from the Bena tribe. Lunch (if you can stomach it) will be served at your guide's home at Asaro - meat and vegetables roasted in bamboo

From Asaro, drive 30 minutes further to a local 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 locals in traditional dress and 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.

17:30 Return to hotel

Overnight 3.5 star Bird of Paradise Hotel, Goroka (includes breakfast)



DAY 8: MON 15 JULY 2024



GOROKA / MADANG (scenic road transfer)

07:00 Breakfast in the hotel and check out

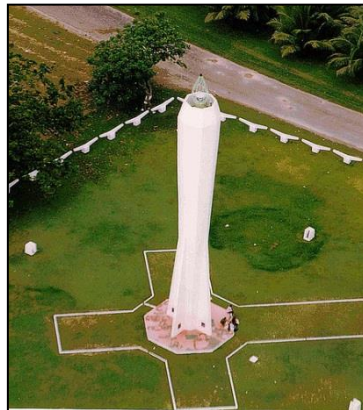
08:00 Check out and meet up at reception to make an early start on the bus ride to Madang. A packed lunch and plenty of bottled water is arranged by the guide. The trip takes 8 hours, initially a downhill gradient through scenic villages and countryside along the remainder of the mountainous Highland Highway, passing through the rural towns of Henganofi and Kainantu (toilet stops) and crossing the majestic Yonki hydroelectric dam before descending through the steep winding Kassam Pass into the wide flat Ramu River Valley. Twisting down the hairpin bends of the Kassam Pass - which is occasionally blocked by landslides so no yodelling please ☺ - you may notice the change in temperature and humidity as you pass through the thermal inversion layer from the dry, cool air of the highlands to the moist, warm air of the coastal tropics.

Making a left turn onto the Ramu Highway, the drive transitions into a smoother and faster run for the remaining 3 hours down to Madang, passing by many kilometres of sugar cane farms and other agricultural ventures. The final leg into Madang town becomes more crowded with many roadside hamlets, markets and smallholder blocks, with occasional glimpses of the Bismarck Sea visible to the right.

On arrival in Madang town, check in at your hotel and if there is any spare time you can explore the hotel gardens and take a walk around the foreshore area near the hotel.

Overnight 3.5 star Madang Resort Hotel, Madang (includes breakfast)

DAY 9: TUE 16 JULY 2024



MADANG (town and lagoon tour)

07:00 Breakfast at the hotel

08:00 Commence today's exploring of Madang town and surrounds.

First up see a fine array of Madang handicrafts at the Madang Resort carver's hut and orchid gardens then stop at the town centre for a browse through the fresh produce market. A poke around in a typical Chinese store is also a must! Also in the town centre you will see Madang's resident flying fox colony, a love-them-or-hate-them crowd of noisy bickering creatures that inhabits a copse of trees in the town square.

Down on the foreshore, stop at the Coastwatcher's Lighthouse, Machine Gun beach, and the lovely tidal lily ponds of the Madang inlet and the Gold Club lily ponds. The Coastwatchers Memorial Lighthouse flashes the Madang harbour signal out to sea at night and is an iconic feature of Madang - somewhat resembling a life-size space rocket - located next to "Machine Gun Beach", a sheltered swimming beach featuring a number of wartime artillery relics

Further out of town, stop at the Madang culture museum (toilets available) and the pretty Balek Grotto (see left) which is a cold water sulfur spring where you can feed turtles and eels - the site was used for some 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.

12:30 Lunch at the hotel (included)

1:30 Board a motor boat owned by the hotel for a sightseeing and snorkelling excursion in the Madang lagoon.

The tour will take in the Madang inner harbour and port with its sheltered waterways and tidal lagoons and also the giant outer Madang Lagoon which has many small islands, some inhabited by village communities while others are home to birds and crabs only.

Stops will include Alexishafen (German mission station occupied by the Japanese in WW2 then destroyed and rebuilt by the Allies) and Pik Island, a lovely place to swim and snorkel over the colourful reef (mask/snorkel supplied).

Overnight 3.5 star Madang Resort Hotel, Madang (includes breakfast)



DAY 10: WED 17 JULY 2024



MADANG (seaside village and rainforest bat cave excursion)

07:00 Breakfast

08:00am Commence today's tour 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 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 Wargidan village the locals will welcome you then paddle you out to the little islands in a native dugout canoe and you can do some exploring then paddle back to shore again. Don't hesitate to ask for your turn with the paddle, it's great fun 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 snorkel for a spot of reef snorkelling.

Back at Wargidan village a local style seafood lunch is prepared for you with some fish barbequed 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 20 minutes drive to the Warwin Creek rainforest. Here a 2 hour hike through the pristine rainforest awaits you 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 but fortunately there are no leeches or other nasties in the creek as it 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 insects. You may even spot a 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 the hotel in time to catch the tropical sunset before dinner.

Overnight 3.5 star Madang Resort Hotel, Madang (includes breakfast)



DAY 11: THU 18 JULY 2024



MADANG / PORT MORESBY / FLY OUT or extend to Sepik River

05:00 Early breakfast, check out and transfer to Madang airport for your flight to Port Moresby: **PX111 departs 0650 arrives 0750**

OR if you are taking the Sepik extension you can sleep a bit longer and transfer to the airport at 08:30 for your flight to Wewak: **PX128 departs 1125 arrives 1215**

On arrival in Port Moresby you will be met by staff from Ecotourism Melanesia and assisted to connect with your onward flight or other arrangements.

End of core tour package.

SEPIK RIVER EXTENSION 3 NIGHTS (minimum 4 bookings to operate)

DAY 11: THU 18 JULY 2024



MADANG / WEWAK

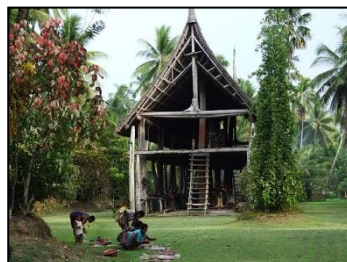
PX128 departs Madang 1125 arrives Wewak 1215

On arrival in Wewak you will be met by the hotel shuttle and our local guide for transfer to the hotel in time for lunch. *Lunch today is not included, please pay for your own lunch at the hotel.*

14:00 After lunch our local guide will take you for a drive around Wewak town area then 14km west of Wewak town to Cape Wom (Wom Beach) which is the site of the Wom Memorial Park, the location of the official Japanese WW2 surrender in New Guinea. At Wom are also the overgrown remains of the Wom WW2 airstrip, some caved in Japanese tunnels, and some preserved field guns.

Overnight Wewak includes breakfast

DAY 12: FRI 19 JULY 2024



WEWAK (Sepik River day trip)

05:00 Early breakfast in room

06:00 Pick up and road transfer 4 hours to Timunke OR Pagwi on the Middle Sepik (depending on road conditions).

10:00 On arrival at the river, board a motorised canoe and travel 30 minutes upstream to upstream to Kaminabit or downstream to Korogo.

After a village stop at Kaminabit or Korogo, continue upstream or downstream to today's destination - Kanganamun village which boasts the largest Spirit House on the Sepik. The Spirit House is packed with artifacts - some are made for sale while others are tribal heirlooms not available for sale. At the Spirit house you'll hear local guides talk about life along the river and especially the crocodile animist religion. Some men may show you the "crocodile skin bumps" on their backs and some young men who have recently been initiated may show you their fresh scars. Here at Kanganamun Spirit House you will also hear flute and drum players perform and a local style lunch will be served.

After lunch, take a walkaround tour of the village then motor back down or up river to the road head and transfer to your waiting vehicle for the drive back to Wewak, arriving at the hotel in time for late dinner.

Overnight Wewak includes breakfast

TRIP NOTE:

If enough members of the group are interested, it is possible to overnight at Kanganamun village and spend another day at the Sepik River instead of returning to Wewak and taking the next day trip to Wewak Islands. This would be at the same cost but will have to be a whole-group decision and decided in advance of arrival in PNG so that arrangements can be made.

Note that accommodation at Kanganamun village guest house is VERY basic, similar to camping ie sleep in sleeping bags, sponge bath with a bucket of water, outhouse pit toilet.

DAY 13: SAT 20 JULY 2024



WEWAK (day trip to the Wewak Islands)

07:00 Breakfast

07:30 Meet up at the lobby and walk down to the town beach with our guide to board a “banana” boat (large dinghy) for a 45 min ride to Sup (“soop”) Beach on the eastern side of Muschu Island. Here you’ll be welcomed with a coconut drink (the whole island is covered in plantations) and take a walking tour of Sup village. Then you will be given a choice of activities: either enjoy some beach time and relax in the shade under overhanging trees or in a waterside bungalow, or take a three hour round trip steamy jungle hike to see “the “Guns of Muschu” (see note below).

After a fish lunch the boat tour then continues across to the south side of Kairuru Island to see the catholic mission at St John and the hot springs at Victoria Bay.

17:00 return to Wewak

Overnight Wewak includes breakfast

TRIP NOTE:

Muschu is a lush tropical island around 15 km by 5 km, around five kilometres offshore from Wewak at its closest point. Low and flat, the island is covered in coconut plantations and marshy jungle, and fringed with beautiful white sandy beaches and colourful coral reefs. There are only a few villages. The island was occupied during WW2 by Japanese navy units who planted extensive vegetables on the western side of the island to grow fresh food to supply to their ships, submarines and the thousands of men in their garrison at Wewak. In September 1945 when the Imperial forces surrendered, the Australian army kept up to 10,000 Japanese prisoners of war on the island until they were repatriated to Japan in 1946.

On the eastern coastline of Muschu, facing the direction from which any allied sea invasion would supposedly have come, there are the remains of beach defences and on high ground inland from Sup Point a pair of large 140mm (5.5 inch) naval guns - never even test fired during the war for fear of revealing their hidden position to allied coast watchers - are still there pointing out to sea as they are too heavy to be removed. For more information about Muschu Island’s role in WW2 see www.gunsofmuschu.com

St John Catholic Mission on the south side of Kairuru Island was occupied by the Japanese navy during the war with over 3,000 personnel based there supporting submarines and seaplanes. Although there are few visible relics remaining, the coastline around St John is riddled with caves and tunnels dug by the Japanese to shelter from continuous allied bombing. Even in recent years, hidden caves with fuel drums and human remains have been uncovered.

DAY 14: SUN 21 JULY 2024



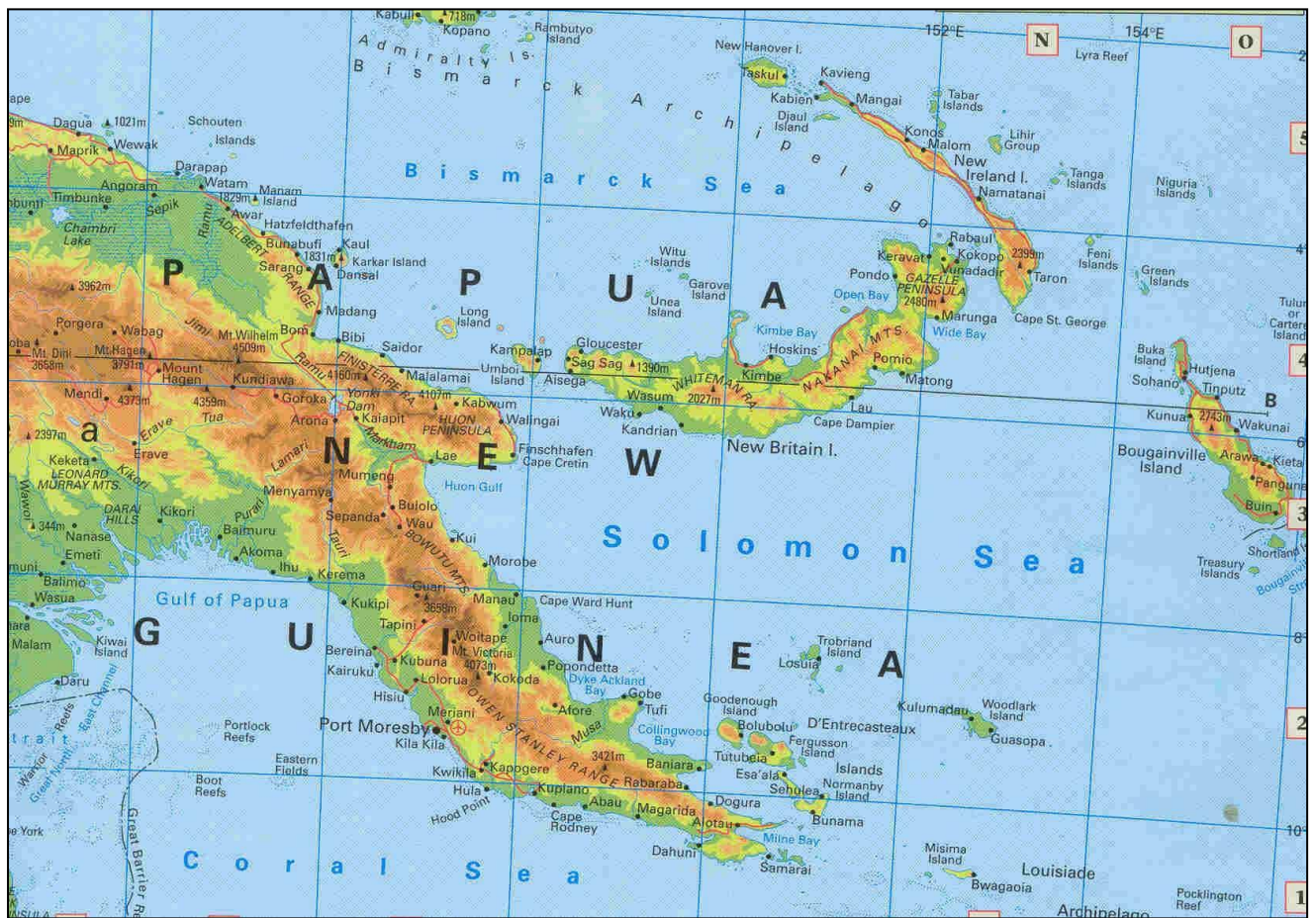
WEWAK / PORT MORESBY

05:00 Early breakfast and check out of In-Wewak Boutique Hotel

06:00 Transfer on the hotel shuttle to Wewak airport for your flight to Port Moresby

07:40 flight PX141 departs Wewak for Port Moresby arriving 09:00

On arrival in Port Moresby you will be met by staff from Ecotourism Melanesia and assisted to connect with your onward flight or other arrangements.



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