



# Ecotourism Melanesia

Explore Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific

## EM209B 2024 GOROKA SHOW AND KALAM CULTURE FESTIVAL TOUR 10 nights WED11 - SAT21 SEPTEMBER 2024

2 nights Mt Hagen, 4 nights Goroka (festival), 3 nights Simbai (festival), 1 night Port Moresby - maximum group size 8 pax

Escorted sign-up (open) tour for solo travellers and couples - includes accommodation with half board, all excursions and our experienced local tour leader to manage all arrangements.

This small group soft adventure tour EM209B offers travellers who normally move around independently the convenience of joining a shared, managed small group for attending the frenetic Goroka Show and the Kalam Culture festival at remote Simbai. Group size is limited to 8 for this particular tour because of charter aircraft load limits. If there is enough demand two parallel groups with separate guides will operate.

The **Goroka Show** is partly an agricultural show and partly a highlands sing-sing. Since colonial days the people of the Eastern Highlands have come together once a year to display samples of their best crops and livestock to compete for prizes, and to show off their most colourful and energetic dance traditions. The pride of each tribe is vested in its dancing groups which vie for attention and prominence on the dance ground - often there are several groups performing at once in different parts of the arena. Sparks fly occasionally on the field as jealousy and competition fuel conflict between tribal groups. At the end of the Show, judges award prizes to the best dancing groups. Cash awards have now taken the place of pigs.

The **Kalam Culture Festival** on the other hand is a small local festival attended by only a few privileged outsiders. Once a year the people of the Kalam tribe around Simbai in the highlands come together to initiate their pubescent boys into manhood by piercing their nose septums, giving them their first pig to kill, and first occasion to wear the huge cane-framed head-dresses for which the tribe is famous. The festival gathering is also an opportunity for resolving disputes ("bel isi"), pay bride price and other compensation payments (in the form of cash and pigs), and feast and celebrate together the traditions of the tribe.

The itinerary commences in Mt Hagen with an excursion to the famed Paiya village sing-sing which is held on the Thursday before each Goroka Show). 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.

From Mt Hagen the group transfers by bus to Goroka with some interesting stops en route at the Omo Masalai skeleton tribe village, the Chimbu snake village and the ancient Daulo Pass moss forest. Travelling into Goroka by road also avoids the flight chaos that plagues the start of each Goroka Show weekend, which typically sees many flights overbooked, cancelled and delayed, and ensures you arrive in time for the Show.

The tour ends with a transit night in Port Moresby for an early start on the last day to fly out or take an extension to Rabaul, Alotau or the Sepik River.



ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

## TOUR COST

	Budget accom option	Standard accom option Goroka: 2.5 star motel Mt Hagen/Port Moresby all 3.5 star hotel - <i>includes breakfast &amp; most lunches</i>	Premier accom option	Deluxe accom option
GROUND PACKAGE 10 NIGHTS per person twin share	<b>Not available</b>	<b>USD 6250 pp</b> Single supplement USD 1250**	<b>Not available</b>	<b>Not available</b>
INTERNAL AIR PACKAGE* PortMoresby-MtHagen Goroka-Simbai (charter) Simbai-MtHagen (charter) MtHagen-PortMoresby		USD 1350		

*\*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.*

*\*\* Single supplement applies at Mt Hagen and Goroka only – single share not available at Simbai*

## BOOKING NOTES:

- 1.Places on the tour are subject to availability of rooms at the time of booking. We do not block book hotels.
2. Star ratings are an approximate guide only and are not based on any published star rating system.
- 3.Package prices are subject to change at any time prior to final payment.
- 4.To book a place on this tour please e-mail your request to [ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com](mailto: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 preferred accommodation, plus the amount in full of any flights required. 70% balance of the ground tour package is due 6 weeks before arrival.
- 5.Our normal terms and conditions apply (see page 2 of your invoice).
- 6.EM209B involves some walking (up to 2 hours at a time) and several nights sleeping “rough” in very basic accommodation at Simbai (guest house with clean bedding and good food but rather basic outhouses and no electricity). Some physical agility and mental resilience is required for this tour. Otherwise consider another itinerary like EM209R which has all nights in hotels.
- 7.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 on planning, reconnoitring and organising 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 and various hidden costs like local permits and insurances and retainers for local organisers.

## GROUND TOUR PACKAGE INCLUSIONS

- Port Moresby - meet and greet, assist with arrival connection
- Mt Hagen - meet and greet, transfer to accommodation
- Mt Hagen - complimentary afternoon sightseeing tour for early arrivals
- Mt Hagen - two nights 3.5 star accommodation with breakfast (Highlander Hotel or similar)
- Mt Hagen - full day excursion to Paiya village private sing-sing with lunch
- Mt Hagen - private bus transfer to Goroka with sightseeing stops and lunch
- Goroka - four nights motel accommodation and breakfast
- Goroka - two morning excursions to the Goroka Show with tourist pass, boxed lunch and bottled water
- Goroka - two afternoon excursions to Asaro mudmen and local villages
- Goroka - day trip to Mt Gahavisuka Forest park with boxed lunch
- Simbai - three nights local guest house accommodation with all meals and bottled water
- Simbai - daily guided excursions to local villages, Kalam Culture Festival activities with cultural performances
- Port Moresby - one night 3.5 star hotel accommodation with breakfast (Holiday Inn Express or similar)
- Port Moresby - airport transfer, departure 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

## EXCLUSIONS

- dinners (pay as you go) except at Simbai
- bar drinks including bottled water at hotels (pay as you go)
- tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1: WED 11 SEP 2024



### ARRIVE MT HAGEN

Arrive Mt Hagen by air from Port Moresby. For available flights see [www.airniugini.com.pg](http://www.airniugini.com.pg) and [www.pngair.com](http://www.pngair.com)  
Your guide 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.  
13:30 A complimentary sightseeing tour of Mt Hagen town is available for those who have arrived in Mt Hagen on a morning flight.

Overnight Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen includes breakfast

### DAY 2: THU 12 SEP 2024



### MT HAGEN (Paiya sing-sing and Magic Mountain)

08:00 Depart the hotel for a scenic drive out through typical highlands countryside to Paiyakona (Paiya) village where a private sing-sing performance for overseas visitors is held the Thursday before each Goroka Show. Arriving before the sing-sing commences you will be able to 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 Goroka Show on the weekend.

The Paiya sing-sing includes a local style lunch 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 Goroka 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 Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen includes breakfast



**DAY 3: FRI 13 SEP 2024**



**MT HAGEN / GOROKA (private bus trip with village stops)**

08:00 Check out of the hotel and load your bags in our charter bus for 08:30 departure to Goroka. Normally the drive takes 4 hours but today's transfer will take the whole day with sightseeing and lunch stops enroute.

The Highlands Highway runs east from Mt Hagen, passing first through the market gardens, coffee and tea plantations of the Waghi Valley. This valley is often called the "food bowl" of PNG because of the intensive agricultural activities and in fact at the village of Kuk near Mt Hagen archaeologists found evidence that the area has been planted with food crops for thousands of years.

From the Waghi Valley the highway passes through the small towns of Kudjip and Minj then climbs into the alpine Chimbu Province with its precipitous ravines and steep mountainsides amazingly covered in furrowed gardens with people working away in them... "one foot uphill, one foot downhill" as the locals sometimes joke.

The first stop late morning will be at Mindima village in the Chimbu province to see the villagers of the Omo Masalai tribe perform their ghoulish but slightly comical "skeleton dance" and a demonstration of their local courtship ritual.

Back on the highway PNG's highest peak, Mt Wilhelm, comes in to view on the left as the bus winds its way to Kundiawa town, the "capital" of Chimbu, for a lunch stop at the Mt Wilhelm hotel (included).

One hour further on brings you to the "snake village" where the local people have a strange affinity for snakes and like to keep them as pets, although the poisonous ones stay in cages ☺ . You'll see the locals showing off their pythons and tree snakes and have a turn at handling them if you wish. If you are not a "snake person" you can huddle in the bus ☺

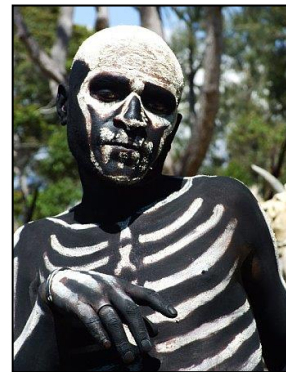
From the snake village, continue another hour to the peak of the Daulo Pass, a high altitude biodiversity hotspot where the road winds through swirling mists past giant tree ferns and trickling waterfalls. Local children sell flowers on the side of the road here. If it's not raining by this time you will be able to take a guided walk through the ancient moss forest which is populated by flowering and non-flowering trees and 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. Birds of paradise also frequent the area.

From the Daulo Pass the road descends through the fertile Asaro Valley and finally into Goroka town.

16:00 (approx) On arrival in Goroka you will be checked in at your accommodation and have some time to rest and settle in before dinner.

18:30 Bus transfer to dinner (Bird of Paradise Hotel, Pacific Gardens Hotel, Goroka Steak House or Mandarin Chinese Restaurant, pay as you go)

Overnight 2.5 star motel accommodation, Goroka includes breakfast



**DAY 4: SAT 14 SEP 2024**



**GOROKA (Goroka Show + village excursion)**

07:30 Pick up from your accommodation for transfer to the show grounds in time to photograph some of the performing groups getting dressed then settle into your seat ready for the start of the sing-sing program around 09:00.

The tourist seating has good views of the performance area and your tourist pass (provided as part of your tour package) gives you blanket permission to enter the performance area if you wish to take close-up photographs. Special toilets for tourists are situated nearby.

A number of our guides will accompany our group today to interpret the performances for you. Bottled water is supplied.

A boxed lunch is served at the show ground (eg pizza or Chinese).

14:00 Depart from the Show grounds and head straight to a local village about 45 minutes drive out of town. This is a typical semi-rural highlands village with round huts made of bush materials, smoky cooking fires and pigs and chickens wandering around. At the village some traditional-style food is available for tasting and you'll see local people engaged in a variety of typical daily activities. Many of the locals grow organic coffee on smallholder blocks for their income.

17:30 Drop off at your accommodation.

18:30 Bus transfer to dinner (Pacific Gardens Hotel, Goroka Steak House or Mandarin Chinese Restaurant, pay as you go)

*NB The Bird of Paradise Hotel is closed for a private function (the Show Ball) on the Saturday evening of the Show weekend.*

Overnight 2.5 star motel accommodation, Goroka includes breakfast

**DAY 5: SUN 15 SEP 2024**



**GOROKA (Goroka Show + Asaro Mudmen)**

07:00 Breakfast

07:30-08:00 Pick up from your accommodation for the second day at the Goroka Show as per yesterday.

14:00 Depart from the Show grounds and drive 30 minutes out the Highlands Highway through the Asaro Valley to Asaro village to see a performance of the Asaro mudmen in their home environment. Yes it's staged just for you and it's a little corny but it's brilliant entertainment and fantastic photography in the forest setting without the festival crowds and fences in the background.

17:30 Drop off at your accommodation.

18:30 Bus transfer to dinner (Bird of Paradise Hotel, Pacific Gardens Hotel, Goroka Steak House or Mandarin Chinese Restaurant, pay as you go)

Overnight 2.5 star motel accommodation, Goroka includes breakfast



**DAY 6: MON 16 SEP 2024**



**GOROKA (Mt Gahavisuka Forest Park trip)**

08:00 Breakfast

09:00 Depart from the hotel for an outing 45 minutes drive to the north east of Goroka town to Mt Gahavisuka Forest Park, a beautiful 80 hectare area of protected forest with walking trails, some curated botanical gardens and a scenic lookout at the summit.

The area offers something for everybody. If you are a fit hiker you can take the 2 hour steep walk to the summit which has expansive views of Goroka and the Asaro Valley, and one hour to descend.

If you are a less serious walker you can enjoy some of the undulating paths around the base of the mountain, passing by pretty streams and waterfalls and a huge variety of flowering and non flowering plants.

If you are a birder you can settle quietly onto a rock or log in among the vegetation and study the tree birds flitting about in the branches above (several species of bird of paradise inhabit the park) and shy ground birds including the giant cassowary poking around in the leaf litter underneath. Bring an umbrella because there is bound to be a shower or two during the day - that's why everything is so green. Guides are available to accompany you so you don't get lost.

13:00 a picnic lunch is served at the park, followed by a candid (unplanned) visit to a small village located in the park area.

16:00 Return to hotel

Overnight 2.5 star motel accommodation, Goroka includes breakfast

**DAY 7: TUE 17 SEP 2024**



**GOROKA / SIMBAI (explore Simbai)**

07:00 Check out of you hotel and transfer to Goroka airport.

08:00 Your charter flight departs for Simbai, a 45-minute flight north west of Goroka, if the weather is clear at both ends.

Otherwise, sit and wait.

On arrival at Simbai airstrip you will be met by local guides with plenty of helpful hands to carry your bags for the 30 minute walk to the Kalam Guest House (or similar), a basic but comfortable facility built in local style.

Waiting at the guest house will be a cultural group with a "welcome sing-sing".

Lunch at the Kalam Guest House will likely consist of a tray of salad vegetables and tinned meat or fish with locally baked bread buns - make your own sandwiches. Dinner will be a hot meal.

This afternoon will be an opportunity to hike around the satellite hamlets near Simbai and meet some of the locals in their homes.

Overnight 1 star Kalam Guest House (twin share cabin- includes all meals)

**DAY 8: WED 18 SEP 2024**



**SIMBAI (Kalam Culture Festival day 1)**

Today is the first day of the Kalam Culture Festival when the village people go about preparatory tasks such as collecting firewood and leaves for wrapping food in the earth oven, harvesting food from their gardens (sweet potato, yam, bananas), preparing the food for cooking, and sorting out their traditional dress. Chores include cutting fresh flowers, collecting fresh bird feathers for decoration, and repairing broken head-dresses.

The traditional head-dresses or “crowns” worn by the young men at initiation are very elaborate and require a lot of care.

Some initiation activities like pig killing and nose piercing will commence today, in preparation for the feasting and dancing tomorrow.

Your group leader and some local guides will accompany you to witness the activities which may be in different locations around the Simbai area.

Overnight 1 star Kalam Guest House (twin share cabin- includes all meals)

**DAY 9: THU 19 SEP 2024**



**SIMBAI (Kalam Culture Festival day 2)**

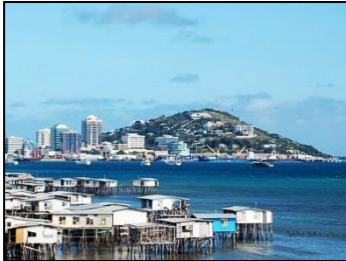
Today you will attend more activities of the Kalam Culture Festival. During the course of the day you may float back and forth between the guest house and the festival venue. Simbai is perfectly safe for you to wander around by yourself. Lunch today will probably be at the guest house - your guide will advise.

In the evening you will join the locals for the festival feast. This will include a range of local vegetables roasted in banana leaves under hot stones in a shallow pit in the ground (this is called a "mumu"). You will also be offered roast wild pork or other game meat hunted from the forest (eg wallaby, possum, cuscus, cassowary). Your hosts will not be offended if you sample only those foods that appeal to you. There will also be plenty of fresh fruit.

The two day festival may conclude with dancing around a night bonfire.

Overnight 1 star Kalam Guest House (twin share cabin- includes all meals)

**DAY 10: FRI 20 SEP 2024**



**SIMBAI / MT HAGEN / PORT MORESBY**

08:00 Pack up and walk to the Simbai airstrip and wait for the arrival of your charter aircraft for uplift to Mt Hagen - flight time will be approximately 30 minutes. Boxed or take-out lunch at My Hagen airport.

Connect on late afternoon flight to Port Moresby and transfer to hotel.

Overnight 3.5 star Holiday Inn Express or similar (includes breakfast)

**DAY 11: SAT 21 SEP 2024**

**PORT MORESBY / FLY OUT OR EXTEND TO SEPIK RIVER, RABAU OR ALOTAU**

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight.