



# Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

## ITINERARY FOR TOUR EM09: **WOITAPE VALLEY TREKKING**

Departs Wednesdays (4 DAYS 3 NIGHTS) and Saturdays (5 DAYS 4 NIGHTS)

The mountainous Goilala District in Central Province can only be reached by air and is dotted with scary ridgetop airstrips. The terrain alternates between thick forest and open grasslands and the villages are linked by mule trails established by early missionaries. This trek features a mostly-downhill hike from Ononge airstrip to Waitape station and the next day an undulating hike from Waitape to Kosipe Mission. These hikes pass through villages, gardens and freshwater streams, with magnificent mountain scenery and chance encounters with local mountain people.

### Day 1

5.00am check in at the domestic terminal for your Twin Otter flight departing 6.00am. Ecotourism Melanesia staff will be at the airport to assist you with check-in and to deliver your picnic lunch for the day. The flight to Ononge takes only twenty minutes. Two guides from Waitape Lodge will be waiting for you at Ononge. Any extra bags can be forwarded on to Waitape and will be delivered to Waitape Lodge.

From Ononge's ridgetop airstrip you will commence your full day hike down the Waitape Valley to Waitape station, arriving late afternoon. On the way you will meet local people on the footpath, stop at small villages, cross bubbling streams and pass through village gardens and pristine mountain forest. Set an easy pace and enjoy the hike. You will arrive at Waitape Lodge tired and hungry as the temperature begins to plummet to a chilly overnight low. You will be greeted by a warm log fire, a shower with hot water, and a hot dinner. After dinner the bar will be open with a limited selection of drinks. Accommodation is in twin-share rooms with common bathrooms. All linen supplied.

### Day 2

After a cooked breakfast, choose between a day hike with guide along missionary pathways from Waitape to Kosipe Mission and return (6 hours total, packed lunch supplied), OR gentle river rafting on inner tubes down the Udava River which runs behind Waitape Lodge, OR an easy walking tour of Waitape station followed by lunch in the Lodge's beautiful orchid garden.

Overnight Waitape Lodge

### Day 3

Today another day hike is offered, this time to the base of Mt Albert-Edward, PNG's second highest mountain and return to Waitape. This is a very scenic hike passing through friendly villages.

### Day 4

Your return flight to Port Moresby departs at approximately 7.00am. (For Saturday tour departures this will be an extra hiking day.)

### Day 5 Wednesday (for Saturday to Wednesday tour)

Your return flight to Port Moresby departs at approximately 7.00am.

#### TOUR NOTES:

1. The Waitape Valley offers a close encounter with some of Papua New Guinea's mountainous natural beauty and traditional villages. Various plant and animal species will be visible, including possible sightings of bird of paradise at dusk and dawn. The hiking follows established walking trails and there is no strenuous climbing or hacking through jungle involved. You will only need to bring your own personal gear. Any excess luggage you have with you in the country can be stored at Ecotourism Melanesia's office in Port Moresby. Your willing guides will assist with carrying your personal gear, but keep it light nevertheless. You should pack your personal gear into a medium size lightweight pack (preferably waterproof with an internal frame). You may find it helpful to pack your personal items in garbage bags or ziplock plastic bags to protect them from the wet, especially your camera and Mars bars.
2. What to bring. Personal gear includes two or three changes of clothes (warm days, cool nights, possibly lots of rain - be prepared), light hiking boots (don't go overboard - it isn't Mt Everest) with 3 pairs of cotton/wool blend hiking socks, a pair of light tracksuit pants or similar to sleep in, hat with wide brim to keep sun and rain off your face, waterproof torch with spare batteries, rain poncho, quickdry towel, your favourite soap in a leakproof container, a roll of your favourite toilet paper, a one-litre water bottle to carry with you, and

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your personal first aid kit. Your personal first aid kit will contain Band-aids, blister dressings, topical cream for bites and grazes, antibiotic cream for cuts and scratches, antimalarial tablets, paracetamol, Deep Heat or other muscle liniment and the all-important insect repellent. Some trekkers say "Rid" is more effective.

3. Food and water issues. All food is supplied for this tour but you may wish to bring a stash of munchies in your day pack for eating along the trail (sweets, peanuts etc) - be prepared to share these with your guides. For the first day you should fill your water container in Port Moresby (or carry bottled water) and thereafter your guides will show you clean water sources to fill your container from, otherwise you can bring extra bottled water with you to last till you arrive at Waitape Lodge which has a rainwater tank. If you are worried about water you may wish to bring your own water purification tablets, which you can purchase from most drugstores, camping stores or army disposals stores.
4. Security. In personal security terms you will be well looked after by your guides. In this remote area the level of crime experienced in the city does not exist. The people are all subsistence farmers who work hard on the land to grow vegetables and who hunt and gather food from the forest. You will be accompanied at all times by local guides who know the area intimately.
5. Safety. Waitape Valley is a remote area. If you are interested in trekking through this area you must accept that you will do so at your own risk. There are no proper medical facilities at Waitape. The hikes featured in this tour are not particularly strenuous, however there is every possibility that you may suffer an injury or other medical problem during your trek. Your guides will support and assist you with traversing difficult parts of the walk, but no matter how experienced a hiker you are there is always a chance you will slip and break a limb. You may get a scratch that quickly gets infected and makes your arm or leg swell up. You may suffer a severe gastric reaction to something you eat or drink. If you fall ill or have an accident while on the trek you will be carried by your guides to the nearest airstrip for evacuation. It is our company policy that all trekkers must have comprehensive travel insurance that includes medevac service (check with the agent that sells you the policy if medical evacuation is included). We recommend that you have a medical checkup with your doctor before leaving home to confirm that you are in fit condition to undertake this trekking. If you suffer an accident or fall so ill that you need to be evacuated, a medical doctor will first have to talk to you over the radio to confirm that you need to be evacuated and then your insurer will organise a chartered aircraft to fly in to pick you up.

6. NB

If you are taking the Saturday departure from Port Moresby and thus have 5 days available, you may wish to take the option of climbing Mt Albert-Edward, PNG's second tallest mountain, which in a non-technical climb but requires 2 nights camping. In this case you would depart Waitape with your guides on Day 2 (skip the hike to Kosipe) and commence the walk to Mt Albert-Edward, overnighting one night in a mountain hut and one night in a village as you descent the other side of the mountain, returning to Waitape on the Tuesday and flying out on the Friday. All camping rations and equipment for this option is supplied by Ecotourism Melanesia and goes with you on the plane. There is no additional cost for this option but you must nominate your intention at time of booking so that preparations can be made. In case of bad weather the mountain climb will not proceed and the fallback plan will be to undertake shorter hikes out of Waitape Lodge. Warm clothing will be needed on the mountain as snow may be encountered and a good level of fitness is required due to the rarified air (however oxygen is not required).

**TOUR COST** USD\$1330 per person rack rate

**TOUR INCLUSIONS**

- check-in assistance at Port Moresby airport
- return airfares Port Moresby - Waitape - Port Moresby
- four or five nights accommodation at Waitape Lodge and/or mountain campsite, includes all lodge meals, picnic lunches and/or camp meals
- two guides to accompany you daily
- any equipment required for overnight camping (sleeping bags, tents, lamps, cooking utensils)
- village access and sightseeing fees

**TOUR EXCLUSIONS**

- international airfare
- bar drinks, tips, souvenirs, personal items
- bottled water and first aid requirements

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