



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

ITINERARY FOR TOUR EM10A 2008

WALK THE KOKODA TRACK - NORTH TO SOUTH

9 nights package (1 night Buna, 7 nights trekking, 1 night Port Moresby)

DAY 1

Arrive Port Moresby, visit Bomana War Cemetery, connect through to Popondetta

You should plan to arrive in Port Moresby on Airlines PNG flight CG201 from Brisbane (departs 0730 arrives 1040), Airlines PNG flight CG101 from Cairns (departs 0645 arrives 0855) or Qantas/Air Niugini flight PX91/QF379 from Cairns (departs 0700 arrives 0825).

On arrival at Port Moresby international airport you will be met by staff from Ecotourism Melanesia and we will take you on a drive around the city and out to the Bomana War Cemetery before returning to the airport at 1130 to check in for your connecting flight to Popondetta which departs at 1255. After checking in and getting your boarding pass, we will provide a packed lunch for you to eat in the departure lounge while waiting for your flight to be called (the short flight to Popondetta is a non-catering service).

One of our staff will travel with you on the flight and escort your group as far as Kokoda. Backpacks containing trekking supplies for your group will travel on the same aircraft with you.

Note 1

There are ATMs at the airport terminal where you may withdraw cash with your Visa card. During the drive around town our driver will stop on request at a supermarket to purchase any last minute items you require (supermarkets do accept credit cards for payment of goods but no cash out). We will also accept from you any baggage you would like us to store for you until you return to Port Moresby. Safe storage of air tickets and passports at our office is also available, these will be kept in the manager's safe on the basis of "all care taken but no responsibility" - alternatively you can carry your documents with you on the trek in a waterproof wallet.

Note 2

If you wish to arrive in Port Moresby the day before (Sunday) or earlier, we will automatically bill you for an extra night's accommodation at the Gateway Hotel at \$130 per room per night for single/twin or \$150 for triple share. The Gateway Hotel is close to the airport, good value for money, and has a variety of food outlets including formal restaurant, bistro, room service and pizza.

Note 3

Bomana War Cemetery is the final resting place of most of those Australian soldiers who gave their lives along the Kokoda Track. They were originally buried in temporary graves along the Track and their remains were later reburied at Bomana. There are almost 3,000 graves at Bomana but less than 1,000 of these troops were killed on the Kokoda Track. The rest were killed in other battles including Buna, Gona and Milne Bay. There are also some graves of British servicemen killed at Singapore and a smattering of graves of servicemen and women from other Commonwealth countries. There are no US or Japanese soldiers buried at Bomana, all US and Japanese remains found have been repatriated. (At the time of the war, Papua was Australian soil which is why it was considered appropriate to inter Australian soldiers here).

The beautifully manicured lawns and monuments at Bomana War Cemetery contrast starkly with the wild unforgiving jungle of the Kokoda Track. During your trek will walk over the very spots where many of these young men fell in 1942. As you wander among the graves one fact that will strike you is the young ages of the fallen as stated on the headstones: 19, 20, 21, 22 - one lady who visited commented that her son who is the same age is still playing Nintendo and borrowing Mum's car - would the young men of today's generation be able to go off to war as bravely and selflessly?

On arrival at Popondetta airport (about 20 minutes drive out of town) you will board a local style passenger truck (bench seats in the back with tarp-covered frame) for a journey via the old wartime airfield complex to the seaside village of Buna. On arrival at Buna you will be treated to a traditional welcome, a cool coconut drink and selection of local-style foods for afternoon tea before touring the battlefield areas and village "museum" with a display of war relics collected from this area. Local historian Mr Maclaren Hiari MBE (founder of the Kokoda-Buna Historical Foundation) will provide a briefing on the Buna campaign and point out battle sites and memorials. Maclaren is a retired academic; his field of research is the role played by local Papuans as carriers, informants and infantrymen during the Kokoda Campaign.

Overnight Buna Village Guest House (twin-share accommodation, includes dinner and breakfast)

Note 4

Buna, Sananda and Gona are the beach-head villages where the Japanese first landed in July 1942 before marching up to Kokoda. They slaughtered many native people and white missionaries and plantation staff living in the Popondetta area. Six months later the Japanese survivors from the Kokoda Track were cornered at Buna and Gona and there were many bloody battles here as the Japanese desperately defended themselves with dwindling supplies while waiting to be rescued by ships that never came. Many more Japanese, Australian and later American servicemen were killed in the battles of Buna and Gona than were killed on the Kokoda Track. This is often overlooked because the battles at Buna and Gona are not as well-known as the battles along the Kokoda Track.

We visit Buna today because Gona is further up the coast and accessed by a different road that goes via Popondetta town - too far for the time available today.

En route to Buna you will be shown the spot where the famous photo of Dick Whittington limping along with his fuzzy wuzzy angel Raphael Oimbari was taken.

Many visitors state that overnighting in the village guest houses at Buna or Gona is the highlight of their Kokoda trekking package. These coastal villages receive many fewer visitors than the main Kokoda Track villages and they have much better food resources and better quality guest house accommodation. Interaction with the village people is of a higher quality and a traditional sing-sing is usually performed.

Note 5

For logistical reasons such as flight delay, non-availability of accommodation at Buna or closure of the road to Buna, it may occasionally be necessary to skip the Buna village trip and either overnight in Popondetta town or truck straight up to Kokoda and overnight there. In this event we offer alternative arrangements equivalent (or greater) in value and no part-refund or compensation is offered.

DAY 2

Early morning road trip to Kokoda and trek to Deniki

6.00am rise and breakfast, dress for trekking, pack up your backpack.

7.00am depart Buna by passenger truck for the 4-hour drive up to Kokoda. We stop at Popondetta town to visit the memorial park where there are excellent information plaques about the beach-head battles at Buna, Gona and Sanananda. From Popondetta the road passes through grasslands, light forest and oil palm plantations, with many bridged river crossings. The road is bumpy in places and you may want to sit on your rolled-up rubber sleeping mat to save yourself a few jolts. Toilet stops behind a tree will be possible en route.

On arrival at Kokoda around 11am, you'll visit the Kokoda cenotaph and little museum to view displays and see the site of the original district office that was commandeered by the Japanese and later retaken several times by the Australian forces in 1942. The museum has a very authoritative account of the Campaign and we suggest you photograph the text and photographs on display so that you can read them in detail on your computer screen when you return home.

We have a barbeque or picnic lunch at Kokoda, and here you will be introduced to the guide and porters who will accompany your trek, and your personal gear (up to 7kg) will be given to one of the porters to carry in one of our company backpacks.

Note

The carry-bag you use to bring your 7kg of portage gear as far as Kokoda can be given to our staff member to take back to Port Moresby on the plane and return to you after the trek, otherwise you can just use a cheap or disposable bag to carry this gear from Port Moresby as far as Kokoda and the bag can be disposed of at Kokoda or if it is very light it can be squeezed up and carried through in the porter's backpack. Apart from the 7kg of gear you give to a porter to carry, you must also plan to carry your own day pack with 5kg or less of your most personal items (camera, medication, water bottle etc).

After lunch, your group will kit up and the guide will give a briefing on walking protocols and safety procedures before you strike out from Kokoda, past the hospital and into the plantations at the start of the Kokoda Track proper. Passing through Hoi and Kovelov villages you will begin the climb to Deniki.

After the initial objections from your calf muscles you will fall into a steady climbing footslog, reminding yourself that today's steep hike is the hard part and from tomorrow onwards it gets easier (well, psychologically anyway!). Rest stops can be as frequent as you wish - there is plenty of time to arrive at Deniki before dark even for very slow walkers - and your porters will encourage you, cut a walking stick for you, and even give you a leg-up or a push from behind whenever you seem to

need a bit of help. Carry 2 litres of water with you today as there is nowhere to get water after leaving Hoi village: porters will help carry your extra water.

By 5pm you will arrive at Deniki, a now abandoned village site. This where Australian forces withdrew to when the Japanese first pushed into Kokoda. There is a panoramic view of the Kokoda valley from here. A couple of local families have built trekker's huts ("guest houses") here and you will overnight here.

Overnight Deniki trekker's hut (village food)

DAY 3

Deniki to Alola

After a billy tea breakfast at dawn you will continue climbing from Deniki for another two hours until you reach the present day site of Isurava village. After resting here, continue on for another hour to the Isurava memorial, at the wartime site of Isurava village where the Battle of Isurava took place over four days 26-29 August 1942. By mid-morning the early fog should have cleared and you should enjoy good views of the battlefield and nearby valley. The memorial cenotaph inscribed with the four virtues of mateship, courage, endurance and sacrifice was opened by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 2002 to commemorate 60 years since the Battle of Isurava during which Private Bruce Kingsbury VC heroically charged the advancing Japanese and was killed by a sniper. Near the memorial you will see a plaque at the site where he is believed to have fallen. He is now buried in the Bomana War Cemetery with all other Australian soldiers who fell during the Kokoda campaign.

There are a number of informative plaques at the Isurava battlefield site and you'll spend about an hour here surveying the scene and taking photographs of the memorial (all the stonework was lifted in by chopper). You'll probably encounter other trekking groups here as there is also a guest house and camp ground here.

Another 45 minutes walking from the battlefield will bring you to Alola village, arriving mid day or early afternoon with plenty of time for a side trip to the Maiaka waterfall, swapping yarns with the village people or playing games with the kids.

Overnight Alola village guest house (village food)

DAY 4

Alola to Templeton's Crossing (#1)

Five hours walk from Alola is Templeton's Crossing. Actually there are two Templeton's Crossings, the southernmost is number 1 and the northernmost is number 2. Today you'll trek via Eora Creek Crossing and Templeton's number 2 and sleep at Templeton's Crossing number 1.

Arriving at Templeton's Crossing No 1 by late afternoon you will settle into the trekker's hut and rug up for the cold night ahead. There is no village here so apart from other trekking groups (if any) you will have the place to yourselves. You will sleep on the floor in the bare trekkers hut unless the owner does not turn up to unlock it in which case the porters will erect canvases to form a large fly tent and the whole group will bunk in underneath. Dinner here will be hot camp food and after dinner entertainment will be tall stories from other trekkers and ukelele serenades from your porters around the camp fire.

Overnight Templeton's Crossing No 1 campsite (camp cooking)

DAY 5

Templeton's Crossing to Kagi

By mid morning today you will have reached the top of Mt Bellamy, the highest point of the Kokoda Track, and then there is a long downhill stretch to Kagi village. If your group is walking well and you have time to spare, your guide will take you on a 2-hour side-trip to the scenic lookout over Myola. Further along is a junction in the track with the right turn going to Kagi and the left turn to Myola (sometimes called Lake Myola because it was originally thought to be a dry lake bed but in fact it is just an area of open grassland with the Eora Creek running through it).

Note

Myola was the area proposed to be used as a food drop zone by the Australian military forces during the Kokoda campaign but most of the food dropped (or "biscuit bombed") never reached the troops because boxes disintegrated on impact or were lost in the undergrowth (or water if the creek was in flood). In the past some of our groups took an extra day and walked right in to Myola but it became the consensus of opinion that apart from the open grassland there is not much to see at Myola that you can't see from the lookout on Mt Bellamy. There is a small village at Myola - just a few houses - and in the past there was a good guest house there but this is now closed due to an ongoing land dispute between two families.

Thirty minutes walking along the trail towards Myola is the much-vaunted site of an American aircraft crash but the truth of the matter is that the plane disintegrated on impact and the wreckage consists of nothing more than hundreds of small unidentifiable bits and pieces spread over a wide area so it is not really worth the extra hour's round trip to see it. To boot, the local landowner usually charges a sightseeing fee if you go there.

Kagi is one of the larger villages along the Kokoda Track and the guest house has a collection of war relics.

Overnight Kagi village guest house (mixture of camp rations and local-style food for dinner).

DAY 6

Kagi to Menari

A full day's trekking today, first two hours of steep descent and climb to get to Efogi, and then continue on to climb Brigade Hill, stopping to read the memorial plaque and survey the battlefield, and descend to Menari village.

Note

The majority of villagers in Kagi, Efogi and Menari are adherents of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and observe their day of rest (Sabbath) from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. Church services will be in progress on Saturday mornings. Cooked food provided in guest houses may be prepared early on Friday afternoon or late on Saturday evening, so be aware of the reason for the variation in meal times. Sometimes no village food will be prepared by the guest house owners and you will have camp rations only.

Overnight Menari village guest house (village food).

DAY 7

Menari to Naoro

After climbing a steep saddle you will descend and pass through a number of river crossings and abandoned village sites before climbing halfway up the Maguli Range to the new site of Naoro village.

Overnight Naoro village guest house (village food).

DAY 8

Naoro to Ua-Ule Creek

A long walk today, arriving mid afternoon at Ua-Ule Creek (pronounced "wah-ooly") where there is a waterhole in the creek great for swimming and relaxing in the shade. There is no village here but there is a guest house operated by a family from a nearby village.

Overnight Ua-Ule Creek guest house (village food).

DAY 9

Ua-Ule Creek to Owers' Corner and overnight hotel

This morning a long and challenging climb up Imita Ridge, down the Golden Stairs to Goldie River where you can have a cool swim, then a final steep climb to Owers' Corner, arriving around noon.

Note 1

Commonly mis-named "Owen's Corner" this hillock now turned into a pleasant picnic park is named after Lt Noel Owers spelled with an "r". Lt Owers surveyed the road from McDonald's Corner to Owers' Corner in 1942.

The Ecotourism Melanesia welcome wagon will meet you at Owers' Corner with a sausage sizzle (or chicken and chips if it's raining) and an esky of cold drinks then we load up the waiting vehicle for the one hour drive down the picturesque Sogeri Gorge to Port Moresby.

Note 2

If time allows and you would like to stop again at the Bomana War Cemetery this will be possible as it's on the way. Visiting the War Cemetery is much more meaningful when you are fresh from walking the Track, however many groups find they are just too tired to make the stop and want to head straight for the hotel. This is why we take you to visit Bomana when you first arrive in Port Moresby so that you won't miss out if you're too zonked to make the stop there after completing your trek.

On arrival in Port Moresby you will be dropped off at the hotel. Stored luggage etc that you left with us before flying to Popondetta will be delivered to your room at the hotel.

In the evening, Ecotourism Melanesia will shout your trekking group and your porters to a round of pizza at the hotel to give you a chance to have a meal together and see each other cleaned up before saying goodbye. During the evening you will share a final tune on the ukulele and a few laughs about who fell in the creek, and your guide will present you with your certificate for completing the walk, and your souvenir polo shirt which you will wear back home like a badge of honour. The logo on your shirt reads "Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea, Mi inapim pinis". In local PNG pidgin this means "been there, done that". If you wish to say a few words, or present a gift to your porter, this would be the appropriate time.

Two rounds of drinks are included with dinner, if you would like extra please pay cash to the bar or charge to your room and fix up the tab when you check out. By 9pm we will call it a night and your guide and porters will say farewell and return to our company compound where they will be accommodated for two nights of rest before walking back to Kokoda with the next trekking group.

Note

Please respect our policy that porters not have more than two beers at Owers Corner and two beers at the hotel. Otherwise things can get a bit rowdy back at our company compound, where other staff and their families are accommodated.

DAY 10

Depart Port Moresby for Australia

Fly out to Cairns or Brisbane.

(Breakfast not included, you will get breakfast on the plane if it is a morning flight).

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- meet and greet on arrival (Ecotourism staff)
- visit to Bomana War Cemetery
- storage of luggage and travel documents at our office if required
- scheduled or charter flight from Port Moresby to Popondetta with packed lunch
- guided tour of Buna village
- 1 night village guest house accommodation at Buna (or alternative accommodation in Popondetta or Kokoda if there is a problem getting to Buna) - includes meals
- road transfer from Buna to Kokoda
- lunch and kit-up at Kokoda
- 7 nights trekking along the Kokoda Track with overnights in village guest houses / trekkers huts if available (or camping under tarpaulins/tents if huts not available)
- basic group camping equipment including lamps, tropical first aid kit, ropes, tarpaulins and ground sheets, axe and machete, cooking utensils, camp crockery and cutlery
- 7 nights trek food including billy tea breakfast, packed dry lunches, cooked dinner (local and/or camp food)
- 1 trek guide and sufficient general porters to carry all food, equipment and up to 7 kg of each trekker's personal gear. You should plan to carry a day pack with up to 5kg of your personal gear and give another 7kg of your gear to one of our porters. [If you would like your own dedicated personal porter to carry up to 16kg of your personal gear the additional cost is A\$400.]
- trekking fees charged by local authorities and landowners along the main route of this itinerary (but pay as you go for optional stops at privately-owned historical sites off the main path)
- picnic or barbeque lunch and esky of cold drinks on arrival at Owers Corner
- road transfer from Owers Corner to Port Moresby with optional stop at Bomana War Cemetery
- one night accommodation in Port Moresby (twin share hotel room) room only
- farewell pizza dinner at hotel with porters including two drinks
- radio monitoring of trek with daily message exchange with our Port Moresby office where possible
- coordination of emergency situations and evacuations
- souvenir Kokoda Track polo shirt and walker's certificate
- laminated Kokoda Track map

- all local taxes

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- food and drink other than the meals stated in the itinerary and other written information provided
- bottled water, water purification tablets and other food-related items not specified in the itinerary and other written information provided (see tour note below on drinking water)
- any equipment not specified in the itinerary and other written information provided, such as personal water containers
- souvenirs, gifts and tips
- items of a personal nature
- bar drinks and snacks
- telephone calls
- cancellation fees
- camp bedding (see tour note below on sleeping gear)
- items of clothing or footwear

TOUR NOTES:

1. **Our itinerary.** Our seven-and-a-half-day trek is suitable for walkers with reasonably good physical fitness who have undertaken some prior training in preparation for this trek. Our itinerary has been tried and tested with many groups of different ages and walking speeds. Our walk is sensibly paced with early morning starts on most days, allowing extra time in the afternoon for slower walkers to complete each daily sector. A group of fast walkers may arrive earlier at each village than estimated in our tour itinerary, but will not be allowed to proceed any further on the same day. On our tour, trekkers must sleep at the specified village or campsite each day. The trek guide, however, may choose to vary the itinerary en route in consideration of local conditions such as weather and the number of other trekking groups in the area.

2. **Equipment** supplied by Ecotourism Melanesia includes cooking and eating utensils, camping lanterns and torches, two-way radio and tropical first aid kit.

3. **Porterage.** Your trek package includes 7kg of porterage. This means you can give up to 7kg of your personal gear to one of our porters to carry. Some other trekking companies distinguish between food porters who carry only group supplies and personal porters who carry only trekkers' personal gear. However the problem with such a system is that during the trek the food porters' packs get lighter as food is used up, while the personal porters' packs don't lighten at all (in fact they may get heavier if the clothes etc they are carrying get wet). Ecotourism Melanesia operates a more equitable portering system whereby each porter carries a combination of trekkers' personal gear and group supplies. In addition to the 7kg of gear that you give to one of our porters at the start of the trek, you should plan to carry up to 5kg in your own daypack. Thus you should pack a total maximum 12kg of personal gear for the trek. (You can store additional clothing etc in a suitcase or bag at our office while you are on the trek). Bring only the bare essentials on the trek, many trekkers make the mistake of packing too many changes of clothes and too many things that you "might" need but probably won't (like the latest Tom Clancy mega-novel). Pack your private, personal gear into your day pack (camera, toiletries, munchies, water bottle) and the other 7kg of gear (clothing, shoes, lightweight sleeping bag, sleeping mat) into a separate duffel bag or overnight bag for transporting it as far as Kokoda. At Kokoda your 7kg of porterage gear will be transferred into one of our porters' backpacks and your carry bag will be brought back to Port Moresby by air with our escort staff.

4. Packing list

- three changes of clothes (warm days, cold nights - remember that you may get soaking wet if it rains, and forget about pyjamas - you will sleep in whatever dry clothes you have)
- light hiking boots with 3 pairs of cotton/wool blend hiking socks
- small waterproof torch with spare batteries
- rain poncho (not rain coat, it won't fit your day pack underneath - you can buy a hiking poncho from any outdoors shop like Aussie Disposals - don't skimp on a PVC one, buy a good quality nylon one)
- lightweight quick-dry bath towel
- one bar of soap in a leak-proof container
- a roll of toilet paper (wrap it in a large freezer bag or shopping bag to keep it dry)
- water bottle (1.5 or 2 litre) to carry in your day pack - empty cordial bottles are fine but many trekkers recommend a "bladder" which enables you to take frequent sips as you walk along)
- your personal first aid kit (see below).

TIP: Don't bring a big hat, most trekkers recommend a terry-towelling hat with small floppy brim that will soak up sweat, or a bandanna to tie round your head. Most of the trek involves walking under the shade of trees and a wide brimmed hat is not necessary and will just get in the way.

TIP: Apart from your small bath towel bring a sweat towel for wiping your face and arms to refresh yourself as you trek.

TIP: Bring spare batteries for your digital camera because batteries seem to go flat more rapidly in the humid climate and there will be nowhere to buy them along the way.

TIP: Ladies (and gentlemen) with long hair: we recommend you have your hair braided before commencing the trek.

5. **Sleeping gear.** To sleep ON you must bring your own roll-up or fold-up rubber sleeping mat or compact (very) lightweight roll-up or blow-up mattress. Some of the village guest houses provide foam rubber mattresses to doss down on but this can't be guaranteed. (We always book village guest houses in advance but sometimes our group arrives to find another group that didn't book has gotten there earlier and the proprietor has given them the beds. Grrr.). To sleep IN, bring a lightweight sleeping bag rated for 5 degrees. Your sleeping bag will also protect you from creepy crawlies (in the village guest houses there may be the odd cockroach or beetle). If you are not sleeping on a guest house mattress you will be putting your sleeping mat down on the bare wooden floor of the hut. If we are unlucky in the guest house department your porters will rig a couple of tarpaulins as a big fly tent instead of trying to squeeze you into tiny two-man tents, and you will put your sleeping mat down on the ground sheet.

6. **Trekwear.** Most experienced Kokoda trekkers recommend wearing shorts because there are numerous points where you will wade knee-deep, thigh-deep or even chest-deep through running creeks. The Track is now sufficiently wide and cleared in most parts that you will be unlikely to be pushing through long grass or undergrowth and therefore unlikely to get grass cuts, bramble scratches or leeches on your legs (thank God, I hear you say). When wearing shorts with hiking boots, ankle-covers (gators) and/or shin-covers will be helpful for keeping water, mud and grass seeds off your boots.

Part of the trek involves wading through creeks. If your main hiking boots get wet doing this you are in for some very uncomfortable walking. Bring a cheap pair of canvas tennis shoes that you can wear for the creek crossings or walking in the wet, then tie them on to the back of your pack to drip dry as you walk along, and leave them by the camp fire at night to really dry out. Don't try to cross the creeks in bare feet, the bottom may have sharp stones and gravel, and the occasional broken bottle or rusty tin can.

7. **Bathing.** During the trek you will bathe in creeks and rivers or under public taps in villages, usually in front of other people. Bathing without clothes may offend others so we suggest male trekkers bathe in shorts and ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing.

8. **Your personal first aid kit should include**

- something to treat bites and scratches (eg Stingose)
- some kind of external anaesthetic (pain killer) ointment (eg something containing lignocaine or xylocaine) for relief from inflamed skin
- some antibiotic cream or powder (not antiseptic - Dettol cream etc is useless for preventing infection in the tropical jungle, you have to hit skin wounds with antibiotics straight away). Ask your GP to prescribe for you a tiny tube of tetracycline antibiotic eye ointment as we always find this is effective against skin infections on all parts of the body in PNG.
- one strip (12 tabs) of paracetamol or aspirin for general pain relief
- small nail clippers for clipping off bits of skin from blisters etc (but don't pack the nail clippers in your hand luggage or the airport security will go bananas)
- something to prevent and treat chafing between the legs, eg petroleum jelly or lanoline/sorbolene cream
- a small amount of sun protection cream (most of the trek is under shade but the last day from Imita Ridge to Owers Corner is more exposed)
- blister dressings (shoes rubbing skin off feet is probably the number one problem with long treks like this - forget about Band Aids and Leuokoplast because they won't stick, bring a small roll of Elastoplast fabric sticking plaster or Snowflake zinc oxide plaster, the type that makes you scream when you pull it off, that's the only stuff that will keep a wad of gauze bandage firmly covering the spots where your skin has rubbed off and blisters are developing (this strong sticking plaster is also good for closing deep cuts that would normally need stitches). Also a couple of gauze bandages that you can cut lengths of, to fold into wads to cover your blisters or pack wounds. (If you wear light hiking boots that fit you well and have already been worn-in for a couple of weeks, with thick woollen socks, you probably won't get blisters.)

Spend some time on making your personal first aid kit as lightweight as possible - too many trekkers make the mistake of bringing a big tube of everything which is just dead weight. Your trek guide carries a tropical first aid kit with adequate supplies for the group, so your personal kit should be more tuned to your individual needs. To reduce size and weight of your first aid kit, squeeze out small amounts of cream/ointment from every tube into little resealable plastic bags 2cm x 3cm, label them and take these in your kit (or alternatively, squeeze out two thirds of each tube and keep this in other containers at home, and pack the tubes with remaining ointment in your kit. Pack your little first aid kit into a toiletries bag together with your soap, shaving razors etc. Remember every other trekker will be carrying a little first aid kit and most of them won't use it much so there will be plenty of supplies available within the group.

9. **Guide and porters.** Your trekking party will include an English-speaking guide who has traversed the track many times before and knows the area intimately. In addition we provide sufficient porters sufficient to carry the equipment and supplies we provide plus 7kg of your personal gear. Porters will not only carry gear but will also support you over difficult parts of the Track and carry you out if you slip and break your leg. Porters enjoy helping visitors cross the Track and they appreciate the opportunity for employment that you are giving them so don't feel self-conscious about somebody else doing the work.

If you do not wish to carry a day pack at all and you would like a porter to carry all of your personal gear (up to 16kg) you must book an extra personal porter in advance. An extra personal porter costs AUD\$400 including wages and the cost of accommodating the porter in Port Moresby for a few days and flying him/her back to Kokoda. This money is paid to Ecotourism Melanesia in advance, in addition to the normal trek package cost.

It is very difficult to organise an extra porter after the trek has started so please think carefully about whether you can carry your own day pack with 5kg of gear or whether you need to book an extra porter to carry everything for you.

TIP: Bring a couple of small gifts to give to your favourite porter or porters during the trek - there is usually one that you will take a shine to - or the one that pulls you out of the creek. Things that they can use on future treks make good gifts, eg small maglite torches that take 2 x AA batteries, hiking socks, T-shirts, cheap sports watches. At the end of the trek you are also welcome to give the porters anything you don't want or need to take home with you, even smelly and dirty items of clothing, towels, socks, shoes, first aid items the porters come from poor families and they gratefully accept anything in any condition. (Giving gifts is not compulsory and is not expected by the porters but visitors usually ask us "what makes a good gift?" so this information is provided accordingly).

10. **Food.** Some trekking operators fly in all their food and equipment from Australia and contribute very little to the micro-economy of the local villages. As an ecotourism company we want to maximise the benefits of tourism to the people living in the local area. Much of the food you will eat along the way is supplied and cooked in traditional style by village people en route. This not only encourages local enterprise but gives you a wonderful opportunity to try out local foods. Evening meals in the villages you overnight in will consist of boiled or baked vegetables (eg potato, yam, sweet potato, pumpkin, taro, beans, corn, tomatoes), supplemented with rice, pasta and some tinned food carried by the porters. Lunch each day will be packed dry rations (eg dry biscuits with a small tin of baked beans or tuna, cheese stick or muesli bar, some beef jerky and dried fruit). Breakfast will be billy tea with hot porridge or damper.

TIP: Most trekkers say that the food we provide is more than sufficient, but you are welcome to bring a stash of your favourite munchies to pop into your mouth while walking along. Avoid chocolate because it will melt in the tropical heat as you pass through Port Moresby and Popondetta. Trail mix, muesli bars, candy are great but be sure not to drop wrappers along the trail. Declare all food on arrival at the airport and as long as it's all packaged, processed food there should be no problems with the quarantine officers.

11. **Drinking water** along the Kokoda Track is collected from clean sources at camping sites and from rainwater tanks in the villages. If you get stuck at a camping site where there is no clean water available due to recent rains, the porters will boil water on the campfire and leave it to cool and settle. As a backup measure you can bring a few water purification tablets, but none of the groups we have taken on the Track have ever needed them (who likes drinking water that tastes like a swimming pool anyway?) None of our trekkers has ever reported any problems with drinking water, nobody has ever had diarrhoea on the Track (or at least nobody has owned up to it !). There is a new product available in camping stores called Steripen which is a penlight-sized U/V water steriliser that runs on AA batteries, you just stir it through a cup of water to sterilise it from any harmful bacteria. This might be a better alternative to water purification tablets if you are concerned about drinking water.

During the trek please remember to refill your water bottle or bladder at every opportunity and drink as much as you can to avoid dehydration. Dehydration can creep up on you and knock you out with no warning ... one minute you're walking along, next minute you're flat on the ground. Take frequent sips of water while walking.

12. **Safety and insurance.** We like you to supply a letter from your doctor to state that you are fit to walk for 7 days strenuous walking, and this might be a good opportunity to also have a medical check-up to confirm that all is well. However despite being fit and in good health, you must recognise that there is every possibility that you may suffer an injury or illness during your trek. Your guide will keep an eye on your condition during the trek and your porters 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 on a mossy rock and break a leg or arm. 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.

If you fall ill or have an accident while on the Kokoda Track we have a contingency plan in place. Our guide carries both a VHF radio and a mobile satellite phone for contacting our Port Moresby office, from where we

can arrange for a medical evacuation. If you require medical assistance along the Kokoda Track we are going to call in a fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter to airlift you to Port Moresby without hesitation, because for legal reasons our guide cannot allow you to keep on walking if at any point he believes you are not in a fit condition to do so. The cost of airlifting you out to Port Moresby will be about AUD\$2000 depending on where you have to be retrieved from, and it is one of the terms and conditions of the trekking terms and conditions agreement that you sign before undertaking your trek that medical assistance, including medical evacuation, is provided "at the cost of the trekker and/or the trekker's insurer". Most standard travel insurance policies include medical evacuation cover (check to make sure at the point of sale). You can buy a travel insurance policy over the counter from any travel agent or airline office in Australia for about \$200, or from various insurers' websites (eg www.covermore.com.au). Once you have purchased your travel insurance policy please e-mail us the details including name of insurer, your policy number, and the emergency phone number given on the policy document (ie the number to call if you need urgent help from the insurer - make sure it is a direct line number and not a 13 number or 1800 number because we cannot ring these Australian freecall numbers from here in PNG).

Sorry to sound gloomy, but a small percentage of Kokoda trekkers do require some form of medical assistance or medivac, especially those who are un-fit or ill-prepared for the walk but even the fit, gung-ho types. How embarrassed was the Navy search and rescue helicopter pilot who broke an ankle bone at Ua-Ule Creek last year and had to be airlifted out by somebody else's chopper ! Can happen to anyone...

13. Training program. Which brings us to the next point, preparing yourself for the walk. Ten years ago the Kokoda Track mainly attracted experienced bushwalkers looking for a new challenge. More recently the Kokoda Track has become a focal point of Australia's developing cultural identity and is attracting more and more walkers interested in the role of Kokoda in Australia's wartime history. "Doing Kokoda" is even seen as a rite of passage for some Australians now, similar to visiting Gallipoli in Turkey. This means we now have many walkers coming through Kokoda who are not experienced bushwalkers and may be of marginal fitness. Some of these walkers find the Kokoda Track to be an extremely difficult and distressing experience if they do not prepare themselves adequately. If you are not an experienced bushwalker and/or a person with a high level of fitness, we recommend that you commence a training program at least 8 weeks before the trek, consisting of daily walks at medium pace up and down moderately steep hills for at least 1 hour per day. If you have no hilly streets in your area, the next option is to climb up and down flights of stairs for the same period of time. When walking the Kokoda Track you will have plenty of opportunities to stop and rest whenever you are tired so you should stop and rest frequently while training too. On weekends if you have more time available, increase your training to 2-3 hours per day - an organised bushwalk in your area is a great substitute for walking up and down streets or stairs. Carry a water bottle with you while training, and practice taking frequent sips of water to prevent dehydration, which may not be such a danger in your home area but here in the humid tropics your newly-formed habit of drinking while walking will be a wise investment. After 2 weeks of training carrying nothing, you should start carrying a pack weighing about 5kg while doing your training. After doing your training if you are still not 100% confident you can carry a 5kg day 5 hours a day for 7 days on the Kokoda Track itself then you should book a dedicated personal porter... do not take the risk of exhausting yourself and having to be flown out by medivac chopper.

14. Malaria. Before arriving in PNG you must see your doctor or traveller's medical centre for anti-malaria medication, which you will take during your time in PNG. No anti-malaria medication is 100% effective against malaria but taking something is better than not taking anything. Your chances of being bitten by a malaria mosquito somewhere along the Kokoda Track is not high because mosquitoes do not breed at altitudes above 300m but Port Moresby, Popondetta and Kokoda station are malarial areas. If you are taking effective anti-malaria medication your chances of actually contracting malaria even in a malarial area are quite low (but not zero). There are a number of recommended anti-malaria medications that can be taken weekly (eg Larium) or daily (eg Doxycycline). Doxycycline is actually an antibiotic and it was only in recent years that people discovered, that doxycycline is also a very effective anti-malaria medication. The advantage of taking daily doxycycline to prevent malaria, if you can be sure to remember to take it every day, is that your blood remains saturated with a broad-spectrum antibiotic and this also prevents cuts and scratches from becoming infected, and may stave off chest coughs and other internal infections.

If your doctor suggests you take chloroquine as anti-malaria medication please query this because nowadays many strains of malaria in PNG are resistant to chloroquine and it is not recommended as an anti-malaria medication for tourists.

Even if you are infected with malaria you are unlikely to fall ill during your trek as the incubation period for the malaria parasite is a minimum of seven days so even if you get bitten by a malaria mosquito on your first day here you are unlikely to experience malaria symptoms until you are back at home. Thus, if you fall ill after returning home please don't try to "sleep it off", you must go to the doctor and inform him/her that you have been in PNG. Malaria symptoms include body aches and pains, diarrhoea, headache, high temperatures, fever and chills - feeling cold while your body is actually hot. In other words, malaria symptoms are very similar to flu symptoms and easily mistaken, so be aware.

Presumptive treatment for malaria (artemether tablets) will be carried in the guide's first aid kit on your trek. If you experience any of the symptoms mentioned above, even if you think it is not malaria, please inform your guide and commence a course of presumptive treatment for malaria. The only way to correctly diagnose malaria is with a blood test and since this will not be available while out in the bush you will have to err on the side of caution and presume that your symptoms are caused by malaria and take the treatment. If it turns out the symptoms are not really caused by malaria, but by flu or something else, the presumptive treatment won't hurt you.

15. Visas. You can apply for a tourist visa on arrival at Port Moresby airport. The cost is PGK100 (about \$45), and must be paid in local currency. Getting your tourist visa issued will be quick and easy if you have a copy of this tour itinerary handy to show the immigration officer. Please note your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it in order to be issued a PNG visa. Please check your passport expiry date to make sure it is at least 6 months away from the time you plan to enter PNG. If you are not a citizen of Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, or the USA please contact us for special advice on visas. We do not recommend that you send your passport to a PNG diplomatic mission in Australia to get your visa because they are very slow and occasionally passports go missing in the mail.

16. Money. You should change about AUD\$200 to PNG Kina at a bank or currency exchange booth in Australia before departure to pay for your tourist visa on arrival and to pay for any bar drinks etc on your first day in Port Moresby. If you are just coming in to do the Kokoda trek and straight out again you won't need more than this anyway. Just carry about PGK50 (AUD\$20) in coins and small notes with you on the Kokoda Track to buy fruit and the occasional warm can of Coke from village markets. Get this change from the airport bank or a supermarket on your day of arrival.

The Travelex currency exchange booths at major Australian airports including Brisbane and Cairns always have PNG Kina currency in stock (banks and currency exchange booths in the city centres may not), but don't change large sums of money there because the exchange rate for changing AUD\$ to kina is better here in PNG than in Australia. If you will need more than \$200 to spend here, wait till you arrive in Port Moresby and use your credit card to get a cash advance in PNG kina from an automatic teller machine. There is an ATM at the airport that accepts Visa/Mastercard, and other ATMs around the city.

You can also exchange AUD cash over the counter at the airport branch of the Bank of South Pacific on arrival. If you happen to arrive without any PNG Kina in your pocket to pay for your tourist visa, you can exchange some AUD cash to PNG currency at the airport bank in the Customs area to pay for your visa.