



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM14 - KOKODA BATTLEFIELDS PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS 6 nights ex-Port Moresby (Port Moresby, Popondetta, Gona/Sanananda/Buna, Kokoda)

PACKAGE COST:

Group of 2 = PGK 8,743 per person including domestic flights

Group of 4+ = PGK 5,893 per person including domestic flights

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- Day 1 meet and greet on arrival including familiarisation drive around Port Moresby city if time allows
- Information kit including destination maps, background information and Ecotourism Melanesia polo shirt
- Two nights twin-share three star hotel accommodation in Port Moresby (room only)
- Full day Port Moresby war history tour with packed lunch
- Full day Sogeri and Owers Corner tour with packed lunch
- Half day visit to national museum and botanical gardens. Includes packed lunch. (Museum not open weekends.)
- All airport transfers
- Flight from Port Moresby to Popondetta
- Meet and greet on arrival at Popondetta's Girua airport
- 2-hour tour of Girua airfield complex, Oro Bay and Popondetta town
- Two nights standard twin-share room at Comfort Inn, Popondetta (room only)
- Full day tour to Gona, Sanananda and Buna beach-head battlefields including sites fees, village gratuities, local-style lunch, village dance group, road and boat transfers, local guide
- Return road transfers from Popondetta to Kokoda
- Two nights basic twin-share room with common bathroom at local guest house, Kokoda including meals
- 2-hour walkaround tour of Kokoda battle sites including entry to Kokoda museum, plus optional hike to Hoi village
- Flight from Popondetta to Port Moresby or Kokoda to Port Moresby
- Departure connection assistance and farewell at Port Moresby airport

EXCLUSIONS:

- meals not specified in itinerary, or meals specified as not included
- bar drinks, snacks, tips, souvenirs, personal items
- bottled water (available from all shops in Port Moresby, Popondetta and Kokoda)

ITINERARY:

DAY 1:

PORT MORESBY

Arrive Port Moresby with Air Niugini/Qantas or Airlines PNG flight and overnight hotel. Ecotourism Melanesia will meet you on arrival at Jackson's Airport and transfer you to the hotel. If time allows, our driver/guide will take you for a drive around Port Moresby to show you the layout of the city.

Overnight hotel, Port Moresby (3 star, room only)

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DAY 2:**PORT MORESBY**

Full day guided war history tour of Port Moresby area including Paga Hill fort, harbour defences, Macdhui shipwreck, Burns Peak ack-ack site, Jacksons airfield revetments and bomb craters, a visit to the modern history museum (if open) and/or a private war relics collection, plus the Bomana War Cemetery.

Overnight hotel, Port Moresby (3 star, room only)

DAY 3:**OWERS CORNER**

Today we drive you up the majestic Sogeri Gorge and along a bumpy bush road to Owers Corner, the southern end of the Kokoda Track - total driving time is about 2 hours. At Owers Corner there is a picnic park with pictorial display boards illustrating action at Owers Corner in 1942 and a Howitzer field gun identical to the one dragged up to Owers Corner in bits and assembled in 1942. In 2006 we took two of the surviving gunners Ron Phillips and George Gwilliam back to Owers Corners where it all happened, which was an emotional moment for them, knowing they had played their part to protect our freedom. Ron and George described how they pumped 700 rounds into the Japanese position at Ioribaiwa Ridge before the Japs turned tail and "advanced to the rear" back towards Kokoda, their Imperial dreams of invading Port Moresby bitterly shattered. If time and fitness allow, our guide can accompany you on a 1-hour hike down the first section of the Track to Goldie River and back. Includes packed lunch.

On the way back, if time allows we take a drive through the Variarata National Park and stop at the panoramic lookout point where Port Moresby can be seen in the distance.

Overnight hotel, Port Moresby (3 star, room only)

DAY 4:**PORT MORESBY / POPONDETTA**

Morning visit to the national museum and art gallery which has splendid displays of PNG culture, the next-door parliament house which is designed like a Sepik River Haus Tambaran (men's spirit house) and the botanical gardens which have a magnificent range of flowering and non-flowering tropical flora including PNG's famous orchids and gingers. Some animal enclosures with marsupials, birds of paradise and cassowaries allow visitors to see PNG fauna at close range. Includes packed lunch.

During the course of the morning your guide will help you check in early at the domestic terminal for your flight to Popondetta, and return to the airport at around noon for boarding. The flight departs at approximately 12.55pm

On arrival at Popondetta's Girua airport you will be met by our local guide and take the scenic route into Popondetta town, stopping at Oro Bay where allied and Japanese ships unloaded supplies in 1942-43, the graves of missionaries executed by Japanese soldiers, and the Girua airfield complex with its overgrown runways, aircraft relics and numerous revetments. In Popondetta town, visit the Memorial Park which has excellent pictorial displays illustrating the beach head battle campaigns.

Overnight Comfort Inn, Popondetta (standard room, accommodation only)

DAY 5:**POPONDETTA (BEACH HEAD BATTLE SITES)**

Today a full day tour to Gona, Sanananda and Buna. Your guide today is Mr Maclaren Hiari MBE, a retired academic and founder of the Kokoda-Buna Historical

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Foundation. Maclaren is an expert on the role played by the native Papuans in the 1942 conflict. Maclaren will meet you at the hotel at 8:00am with a 4WD vehicle or local style passenger truck for the one hour drive out to Gona village, the site of the first Japanese landings and the slaughter of Anglican missionaries in mid 1942. Months later, the marshes inland of Gona, Sanananda and Buna became a miry battlefield where Japanese forces retreating from Kokoda fought their last stand against Australian and American troops. Spending about one hour at Gona you will visit the village war museum and be shown battle sites and rusting landing barges and other war relics lying in the tall grass. A short trip by motorised dinghy will bring you to Sanananda village where more relics and battle sites can be seen and the village guest house will put on a local-style lunch with cultural entertainment from a village dance group. After lunch continue by boat to Buna village for another hour viewing battle sites, monuments and collections of relics. The vehicle that dropped you off at Gona will come the long way around by road to wait for you at Buna. Late afternoon, return to Popondetta.

There was serious flooding in the Oro Province in November 2007 which buried some of the battle sites and relics in mud. It may take some time for these to become exposed again. Locals have begun digging some sites out.

Overnight Comfort Inn, Popondetta (standard room, accommodation only)

DAY 6:

POPONDETTA / KOKODA

After breakfast your guide will meet you once again and you will be transferred by road to Kokoda. From Popondetta the road north towards Kokoda passes through oil palm plantations, light forest and grasslands, with many river crossings. Most bridges were washed out by the floods caused by a cyclone in November 2007 and these are only gradually getting re-built so there are some rivers that have to be forded – great fun of course unless the engine dies mid-stream ! The road is sealed about half way to Kokoda but is bumpy the rest of the way (especially crossing the rivers!) and you may want to sit on your rolled-up rubber sleeping mat or sleeping bag to save yourself a few jolts. The drive to Kokoda takes about 3 hours but we will make a stop about half-way to visit the village of Awala and there will be a toilet stop here. All other toilet stops will be on-demand only and will be go-behind-a-tree jobs.

Awala is the site of the first resistance against the Japanese when a platoon of Papuan infantry led by a white Australian commander engaged the Japanese in an exchange of gunfire with no casualties. On arrival at Awala we'll be given some refreshments and sit down to watch a re-enactment of the Awala engagement performed by the local primary school kids dressed up as Japs and Papuans. This is all great fun and is followed by a short hike led by a thousand village kids to the actual site of the engagement in nearby bushland.

At Kokoda, you will have lunch and a rest at the guest house before walking a short distance to the tiny Kokoda museum and cenotaph, which are located on the plateau overlooking the battle sites. From here your guide will describe that campaign as it unfolded.

After this you may choose between resting at the guest house or taking a 3 hour hike up and back to Hoi, the first village along the Kokoda Track, arriving back at the guest house in time for dinner.

Overnight local guest house, Kokoda (basic single or twin room, shared bathroom, includes all meals)

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DAY 7:

KOKODA / PORT MORESBY

Morning road transfer to Popondetta airport (3.5 hour trip) to board Air Niugini flight to Port Moresby departing 1.50pm arriving 2.25pm. (This flight connects with some flights to Australia).

NB If Day 7 is a Wednesday there is also the option of a direct flight from Kokoda to Port Moresby (12.15pm/12.45pm) which also connects with some afternoon flights to Australia. However the Kokoda to Port Moresby flight is often delayed so do not plan any tight connections.

Ecotourism Melanesia will meet you at Port Moresby airport on arrival from Popondetta and assist you to make your flight connection. If time allows, a trip to the PNG Art showroom for last minute souvenirs is possible - an excellent range of carvings etc is available.

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