



# Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

## EM201 **MT HAGEN SHOW TOUR** - AUGUST 2010

13 nights Wewak, Kairiru Island, Middle Sepik, Upper Sepik (Crocodile Festival),  
Mt Hagen Show, Simbai, Madang

Fully escorted sign-up soft adventure tour, group size minimum 8 maximum 16.

*The Mt Hagen Show is Papua New Guinea's largest cultural extravaganza. The Show has its origins in colonial days when colonial administrators sought to reduce tribal fighting by promoting inter-marriage and channelling inter-tribal rivalry into positive forms of competition. Major sing-sing events like the Mt Hagen Show and Goroka Show became opportunities for tribes to gain status without bloodshed, by competing to put on the best cultural performance. The Mt Hagen Show today is still a competition, with tribal groups vying for sizeable cash prizes and of course the honour and glory that first prize at the "Hagen Show" brings to one's tribe.*

*The Show attracts cultural groups from all over Papua New Guinea, even from Bougainville and the Trobriand Islands. The local crowd of 50,000 mainly flock in from the Highlands provinces plus Madang and Lae as these are the only places with road access to Mt Hagen. In contrast, less than 300 overseas visitors attended the 2008 Show, so it is still definitely a "local" festival and not something put on for tourists. There are also agricultural and trade displays, health awareness programs, sideshow alley and all manner of other activities at the Show which make it the highlight of the annual calendar for the Highlands people. Some very remote villagers come to town only once per year, for the Show, so you will see quite a kaleidoscope of faces just in the spectator crowd, even before you turn your attention to the sing-sing arena.*

*Tourists and locals with cameras are given special seats with the best view, and you will also have permission to enter the performance arena to take close-ups of the dancers. Apart from the Show itself, our tour group will also attend another, smaller sing-sing on the day before. This is held at Paiya Village about half an hour's drive out of town, is more informal without the huge crowds, and provides an authentic village backdrop for photography, with opportunities for watching the performers putting on their make-up and body decorations before the performance.*

*Before and after the Mt Hagen Show we visit some interesting destinations in Papua New Guinea's northern and highlands regions: volcanic Kairiru Island, the Sepik River, exotic Simbai and PNG's prettiest town, Madang. The Sepik River leg involves climbing in and out of canoes, a bit of walking, and sleeping in village huts, so a little agility is required. This sector now includes the Sepik Crocodile Festival at Ambunti on the Upper Sepik. This provides an opportunity to attend a rural festival crowded by locals rather than tourists. The 2009 festival was culturally spectacular - the best rural festival we have witnessed in ten years of operating.*

*A member of our 2008 tour group (Julie from Australia) has mounted a photo slide show of her trip on the internet which you can view at*

[http://www.kodakgallery.co.uk/l.jsp?c=1iigdztX.2rju8aw2x&x=0&y=b8j9pw&localeid=en\\_GB](http://www.kodakgallery.co.uk/l.jsp?c=1iigdztX.2rju8aw2x&x=0&y=b8j9pw&localeid=en_GB)

*She has taken some fantastic pictures and added some poignant and funny captions. There are just under 200 images in the slide show. Once you arrive at the website, the images take a minute or so to load and then if you click Play the Slideshow it will take 10 minutes to see all the pics. Alternatively you can just hit the next (arrow) button or click on the first picture itself to go to the next picture.*

**TOUR COST: PGK 16,200 per person, twin-share, 13 nights, includes internal air**

Single supplement is PGK 2000 (guaranteed single room for 1 night Wewak, 4 nights Mt Hagen, 1 night Madang plus possible single room, hut or tent if available at Kairiru Island, Sepik River and Simbai).

**Truncated tour options:**

1. Day 1 to Day 11 only (ie skip Simbai and Madang) - PGK 13,100 per person twin share. Single supplement is PGK 1700 (guaranteed single room for 1 night Wewak, 4 nights Mt Hagen plus possible single room, hut or tent if available at Kairiru Island, Sepik River).
2. Day 7 to Day 14 only (ie skip Wewak and Sepik River) - PGK 9,650 per person twin share. Single supplement is PGK 1650 (guaranteed single room for 4 nights Mt Hagen, 1 night Madang plus possible single room at Simbai if available).

*To convert the tour cost to other currencies, use the current exchange rate listed on our website home page or contact us for a quote. The tour price is subject to change. However clients paid-in-full are protected against any price rises.*

**TOUR INCLUSIONS (13 nights):**

- domestic airfares Port Moresby-Wewak and Madang-Port Moresby
- meet and greet at Port Moresby airport with check-in/luggage assistance for connecting flight to Wewak, and short city tour if time allows
- tour information kit including welcome gift, souvenir polo shirt, maps, destination information
- 1 night standard twin-share hotel room in Wewak (In-Wewak Boutique Hotel or best available alternative) - room only. Single supplement available.
- open speed boat transfers to and from Kairiru Island
- 1 night village guest house accommodation at Kairiru Island (twin-share or multi-share with basic bedding, outdoor bathroom), including local-style meals, village tours and cultural entertainment
- road transfer from Wewak to the Sepik River
- water transfers along the Sepik River by motor canoe (life jackets supplied)
- 2 nights village guest house accommodation at Middle Sepik villages (twin-share or multi-share with basic bedding, outdoor bathroom) including local-style meals supplemented with camp food and bottled water, village tours and cultural entertainment
- 2 nights guest house accommodation at Ambunti (twin-share or multi-share with basic bedding, common indoor bathroom) including local-style meals supplemented with camp food and bottled water
- 1 day attendance at the Sepik Crocodile Festival - includes guides, bottled water, any admission fees
- charter flight from Ambunti to Mt Hagen
- 4 nights twin-share hotel room at Mt Hagen (Highlander Hotel or best available alternative) - room only. Single supplement available.
- 1 full day Paiya village sing-sing tour with lunch
- 2 full days at Mt Hagen Show including transfers, guides, tourist pass, packed lunch and bottled water
- short tours to Waghi Valley and Kuk archaeological site near Mt Hagen if time allows
- charter flight from Mt Hagen to Simbai
- 2 nights village guest house accommodation at Simbai (twin-share or multi-share with basic bedding, outdoor bathroom) including local-style meals supplemented with camp food and bottled water, village tours and cultural entertainment
- charter flight from Simbai to Madang
- optional half day tour of Madang town or water activities at Jais Aben Resort
- 1 night standard twin-share room at Jais Aben Resort, Madang - room only. Single supplement available.
- ad hoc shopping or sightseeing in Port Moresby on departure day
- departure check-in assistance and farewell at Port Moresby Airport
- all fees and gratuities for local villages, guides and helpers
- all airport/hotel transfers throughout the tour
- services of full time tour leader
- 24-hour tour monitoring and emergency assistance from our Port Moresby office
- tropical first aid kit carried with the tour leader

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## TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- international airfares
- bottled water (except where stated as provided)
- any meals not stated as not included, or described as "pay as you go"
- tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)
- souvenirs and items of a personal nature
- bar drinks
- visa fees
- visa assistance

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1: FRI 6 AUG 2010

#### PORT MORESBY / WEWAK

Arrive Port Moresby and connect through to Wewak.

See [www.airniugini.com.pg](http://www.airniugini.com.pg) or [www.apng.com](http://www.apng.com) for details of international flights arriving today from Brisbane, Cairns, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur (flights from Asian cities depart the day before and arrive early morning in Port Moresby).

On arrival in Port Moresby Ecotourism Melanesia staff will greet you with a smile and a surprise gift ☺ and you will be transferred to check in for your connecting flight to Wewak. If time allows between flights, our staff will take you on a short tour of Port Moresby.

*NB Your domestic air tickets are provided by Ecotourism Melanesia as part of the tour package and will be delivered to you on arrival or e-mailed in advance.*

14:40 Air Niugini flight PX148 departs for Wewak (via Madang).

16:50 On arrival in Wewak you will be met by our tour escort and transfer 15 minutes to your hotel.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel (standard room, accommodation only).

*Pay-as-you-go for meals today. Lunch and snacks are available from various outlets in Port Moresby and at the upstairs café in the international airport terminal. Lunch and dinner are available at the hotel in Wewak, pay by cash or credit card.*

### DAY 2: SAT 7 AUG 2010

#### WEWAK / KAIRIRU ISLAND

After breakfast we check out of the hotel and take a walk down the hill from the hotel to the foreshore (luggage follows by car). At the foreshore we board an open speed boat for a 30 minute boat ride to beautiful Muschu Island.

*Muschu is a luscious tropical isle, flat and low and covered in coconut plantations and light rainforest. The island is fringed with beautiful white sandy beaches and colourful coral reefs.*

We will spend about 2 hours at Muschu Island, enough time for some swimming

and snorkelling, beachcombing or a stroll through the plantations. Snorkelling masks are provided. Bottled water and fresh drinking coconuts are provided.

Late morning we depart Muschu and continue further offshore to Kairiru Island. Unlike Muschu, Kairiru is a volcanic island with mountainous interior and small crater lake. The island takes about 1 hour to circumnavigate by speed boat, but today we will travel around only the east side of the island to get to Shagur village on the seaward (north) side of Kairiru Island. From Shagur you cannot see the PNG mainland - only the Bismarck Sea (next stop: Micronesia).

At Shagur village the people will await us with an enthusiastic traditional welcome and a tropical feast for lunch.

*Shagur village is literally a tropical paradise situated in luscious green rainforest. The houses are all traditional style, made of bush materials only. This contrasts with the inland areas of the Sepik River where the topography is fairly flat and dry, despite the presence of the watercourse, and cultural entertainment is not as energetic due to the more regular tourist visits. As Ecotourism Melanesia is currently the only tour company arranging visits to Shagur, the number of visitors coming here is small and each visit is special for both the village people and the visitor. The people here have a well-prepared repertoire of bona fide cultural dances, songs and drama to perform for visitors - one of the best village cultural experiences anywhere in PNG.*

After lunch we take a familiarisation walk around the village and a half hour hike to the waterfall for a refreshing splash.

Beginning mid-afternoon and continuing into the evening, we will be treated to a cultural entertainment extravaganza with all manner of traditional singing, dancing and drama skits portraying the island legends - be prepared to split your sides over some great slapstick comedy even if you can't understand a word of what's going on! Dinner tonight will be a traditional-style "mumu" where food is wrapped with coconut cream in banana leaves and slow-cooked in under hot stones.

Overnight Polen guest house, Shagur village, Kairiru Island (basic twin or multi-share accommodation - all bedding and netting supplied - includes meals).

### DAY 3: SUN 8 AUG 2010

#### KAIRIRU ISLAND / WEWAK / SEPIK RIVER (YAMOK)

A lot of travelling today, so we start with an early breakfast at 6.00am then depart Shagur at 7:00am by open speed boat for Wewak. This time we will skirt the eastern coast of Kairiru Island and make a brief stop at the hot springs at Victoria Bay.

By 9:00am our boats will come ashore on the beach in front of the Windjammer Beach Hotel which is a convenient place to rendezvous with our waiting vehicles. The hotel bar will be open by this time so you can have quick beer and a bowl of fries while we load up if you wish. By 10:00am we'll board our 25-seater bus (with trailing luggage vehicle), and commence our 4-hour drive from Wewak to the Sepik River.

The road from Wewak to Pagwi on the Sepik River is bitumen sealed most of the way and quite a pleasant journey. First we climb steep winding curves from the steamy coastal strip to the cool forests of the undulating Prince

Alexander Range. Two hours into the trip we will stop at a roadside market for a lunch of tropical fruits, cooked vegetables and delicious green coconuts to drink (pay as you go).

Back on the road, we soon see fleeting views through the trees of the Sepik plains, with the river itself a fuzzy brown ribbon on the horizon. Descending onto the savannah grasslands of the Sepik basin, we pass through a number of villages before arriving at Pagwi mission station on the Middle Sepik by early afternoon.

At Pagwi we transfer to our waiting motor canoes and head down-river approximately one hour to the Korogo Fishing Lake, an ox-bow lake formed by a cut-off river bend. Here we leave our canoes and walk for an hour through light rainforest to Yamok village. In the past, Yamok was a riverside village but changes in the course of the Sepik River over the past century have now left Yamok well inland. The hike to Yamok is easy walking, mainly flat ground, and mud will be the only inconvenience if the ground is wet but this is the dry season. Porters will hump your bags and our other supplies so you won't have to carry anything. Visiting Yamok is well worth it as this village is probably the most beautiful on the Sepik and has seven Haus Tambarans (mens spirit houses) which is more than any other Sepik village. Very few tourists visit this village so we are assured of a warm welcome.

On arrival at Yamok, we will be welcomed by a traditional "sing-sing" and then tour the village. Special permission will be given for the women in our tour party to enter the Haus Tambarans, which are strictly off-limits to local women.

Overnight village guest house, Yamok (includes meals).

*A supply of dry groceries - flour, sugar, biscuits, coffee/tea etc - will be supplied by the tour company to supplement food provided in the villages, plus an adequate supply of bottled drinking water. Accommodation will be twin-share or dormitory style in village guest houses built in native style. Sleeping bags, inflatable mattresses and mosquito nets are supplied. We strongly suggest you bring your own battery-operated personal fan to cool yourself when sleeping under mosquito nets.*

#### DAY 4: MON 9 AUG 2010

##### SEPIK RIVER (YAMOK / KANGANAMAN)

This morning we spend a little more time looking around Yamok then we hike back to the Korogo Fishing Lake and board our motor canoes, and continue motoring downstream to Kanganaman village (about half an hour's ride) where fresh fruit, dried fish and cooked sago will be awaiting us for lunch.

After leaving our bags at the village guest house we take a tour around Kanganaman, especially the Haus Tambaran which has sacred artefacts. In the afternoon we will scoot across the river in our canoes to Kanganaman's sister village, Palembangi.

Kanganaman and Palembangi are the heart of the Middle Sepik "crocodile cult".

*Crocodiles play a major part in the cultural heritage of the Middle Sepik people. Crocodiles are animal totems symbolising strength and power. In the Middle Sepik crocodile cult villages of Yentchen, Palembangi and Kanganaman, the attributes of the crocodile are so envied that the men even try to make themselves look like crocodiles. The initiation of boys into adulthood involves a painful scarification ritual during which dozens of small cuts are made all*

*over the back from shoulders to hips, and pockets of skin are lifted away from the flesh. Upon healing, this leaves raised scars that resemble the bumpy back of the crocodile. Such initiations are carried out in secret only once or twice a year and outsiders are not normally allowed to witness the cutting ceremony.*

Back at Kanganaman, in the late afternoon we will observe sago being extracted from the pith of sago palms, and learn 20 ways to cook sago. In the evening we will sit around the men's spirit house and hear the elders recount tribal legends and play their bamboo flutes and garamut drums.

Overnight village guest house, Kanganaman (includes meals).

#### DAY 5: TUE 10 AUG 2010

##### SEPIK RIVER (KANGANAMAN / AMBUNTI)

This morning we depart Kanganaman for a rather long journey by motor canoe. Kanganaman to Pagwi will take 2 hours and we will make a comfort stop here and visit a small crocodile farm. Pagwi to Ambunti will take a further 3 hours. A hot lunch will be ready for our arrival at Ambunti, the sleepy "capital" of the Upper Sepik.

*Ambunti is a pindrop-quiet little township with a number of small government offices, a few tiny shops and churches, an airfield and one or two minor cottage industries. The population is less than 1000. There are no streets, just grassy lanes between houses and other buildings that are used by a few tractors with open trailers for hauling loads around the station - the rest of the time people just walk because nowhere is far from anywhere at Ambunti. The township normally seems asleep during the hot days, but comes alive in the late afternoon when various football games sprout on the airstrip runway and other open spaces and draw small social crowds. There is a little "hotel" called Ambunti Lodge which caters for tourists, plus a few other guest houses run by the church missions.*

After lunch, spend the afternoon exploring Ambunti station and visit the venue for the crocodile festival so that you will not be disorientated in the crowds tomorrow. Our guides are available to walk with you but it is quite safe to move around the station on your own. You might meet the occasional harmless drunk warming up to the festival atmosphere but just smile and say good afternoon and keep walking, as you would anywhere.

Overnight mission guest house at Ambunti (includes catered meals).

*NB In 2009 we stayed at Ambunti Lodge for the festival but had various problems there so we decided to give this place a miss for 2010.*

#### DAY 6: WED 11 AUG 2010

##### SEPIK RIVER (AMBUNTI)

Today we attend the Sepik Crocodile Festival. Activities will get under way about 08:00am and continue until mid-afternoon. The festival venue is the lawns around the district office at the far end of the airstrip, about 20 minutes walk from our guest house. The venue will be ringed by stalls selling very good Sepik artifacts and handicrafts at bargain prices so buy up big. Tourists and officials will be given seating on the front steps of the district office and the performance area will be on the grass in front of the steps so you will have ringside seats. You will also be able to take your camera

into the performance area to get those close-up shots. There will be big crowds of friendly Sepik people - mingling with the masses will be half the fun for you today. You won't have to worry about drunks or pests as the local police will be around and they don't tolerate trouble-makers at these community events. There will also be a food market outside the main venue where you can buy all manner of fresh fruit, cooked foods and coconut drinks so there will be no lunch provided at the guest house today - just buy what you want from the market. If you are busy with photography, send one of our guides to gopher. The festival venue will be hot and sunny so wear a hat and plenty of sun-screen, and drink plenty of water. A carton of bottled water from our supplies will be carried up to the venue and available for you to help yourself from.

*Crocodiles play a major part in the lives of the Sepik people. Apart from their centrality to spiritual beliefs, crocodiles are important for the local diet and the village microeconomy. Everywhere in the Sepik River basin, the crocodile is an occasional source of protein for the village diet, and crocodile skins are sold for cash to outside buyers. The collecting of crocodile eggs in the wild and hatching them in crocodile "farms" is an ongoing threat to the wild population. WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) is educating locals about sustainable harvesting of wildlife resources and encouraging them to turn to alternative sources of income such as ecotourism.*

*The two species of crocodile prevalent in the Sepik basin are the common saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) and the New Guinea freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus novaeguineas*).*

*These days the wild populations of both species are retreating to the more remote tributaries of the Sepik that are furthest from their major predator: humans. It is unusual to see crocodiles along the main human-occupied areas of the Sepik River proper these days, as the constant passage of motorised dinghies and other small boats has driven the crocodile population up into backwaters. Very large crocodiles are rare these days and no "monster man-eaters" have been caught in the past 10 years.*

*The Sepik Crocodile Festival is an initiative of WWF and aims to promote controlled harvesting of the wild crocodile population. The festival takes place at Ambunti on the Upper Sepik where WWF's conservation activities are focused, and is scheduled in August, the middle of the dry season, when the festival is least likely to be disrupted by rain. The Crocodile Festival celebrates the centrality of the crocodile in lives of the Sepik people and also provides a venue for WWF to conduct conservation awareness with locals who flood in to Ambunti from all over the Sepik basin for the festival. Village groups will perform crocodile-themed traditional dances and dramas. Sepik handicrafts will be for sale, especially crocodile carvings and crocodile tooth necklaces. The pride and joy of your souvenir collection will be a crocodile-head canoe prow if you can buy one. Sepik canoes normally have an animal totem carved into the prow and when the canoe becomes old or develops un-patchable leaks the prow is sometimes cut off with a chainsaw or axe and sold as a souvenir (about 40 centimetres long by 20 centimetres wide, and weighing about 3kg). Of course, it's not really a tourist souvenir but a genuine cultural artifact. Fumigation and special packing will be required if you want to take a canoe prow home with you.*

*At the 2009 festival the cultural performances were superb. Dance groups came from as far afield as the Blackwater Lakes and the far Upper Sepik. The quality of the traditional costumes was exquisite and some groups danced with live crocodiles. Amazingly, each village's traditional dress and dance routines were very different from each other - it's amazing that so many*

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*diverse cultures have all evolved along the same river! Some of our tour group members later commented that the Sepik Crocodile Festival far outshone the Mt Hagen Show for authenticity and photography. In fact this was the only opportunity during the tour to witness bona fide Sepik River culture as there was nothing similar from the Sepik region seen at the Mt Hagen Show later.*

Overnight mission guest house, Ambunti (includes catered meals and bottled water).

#### DAY 7: THU 12 AUG 2010

##### SEPIK RIVER / MT HAGEN

This morning we will pack up and walk up to the airstrip to wait for our charter aircraft to arrive. The weather at Ambunti is usually cloudy early in the morning so our charter flight will be booked for mid-morning which gives time for the weather to clear up. Our charter aircraft will be either a 9-seater or 18-seater depending on our group size.

From Ambunti to Mt Hagen is a one hour flight. We will be met at Mt Hagen airport by the hotel shuttle bus and transfer to the Highlander Hotel in time for lunch (pay as you go).

After lunch there will be some leisure time and then at 3:00pm we will take a two-hour tour of the Waghi Valley which is the agricultural powerhouse of the highlands. We'll see tea and coffee plantations, market gardens and a tropical orchid display.

Overnight Highlander Hotel, Mt Hagen (twin share, premier room, room only). Pay as you go for meals - very good quality food is served at this hotel, and prices are very reasonable.

#### DAY 8: FRI 13 AUG 2010

##### MT HAGEN

After breakfast, we will take a scenic drive out through typical highlands countryside to Paiya Village where a sing-sing is held the day before every Mt Hagen Show. Arriving early 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. This is an experience that is in many ways more fascinating than the sing-sing itself because it gives you an opportunity to meet the dancers before they perform. They will be happy to explain their traditional dress ("bilas") to you and pose for photographs. About 10 different dancing groups will perform, from various parts of Papua New Guinea. Some of them are groups that will perform at the Mt Hagen Show tomorrow.

The Paiya Village sing-sing includes lunch cooked at the village and a tour of the cultural displays in the village including the men's spirit house and the ancestors' skull house. The chief and his three wives will be introduced to you and some traditional customs like courtship behaviour and marriage rituals will be demonstrated.

Overnight Highlander Hotel (accommodation only)

*In previous years our tour groups commented that they enjoyed the Paiya Village sing-sing even more than the Mt Hagen Show itself, because the village setting made the experience (and the photography) more natural and*

*the smaller crowd from just the one village area was easy to socialise with.*

**DAY 9: SAT 14 AUG 2010**

**MT HAGEN SHOW**

At 8.00am we depart the hotel for the show grounds for an early arrival to take a look at the stalls and displays and settle into the grandstand before the performances commence around 10am. The show will finish around 3pm.

The tourist grandstand 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 near the grandstand. A number of our guides will accompany our group in the grandstand today to interpret the performances for you. A packed lunch and bottled water is supplied as part of your tour package today but guides can also run errands for you to buy drinks and snacks in the show grounds. Late afternoon, we return to the hotel.

Overnight Highlander Hotel (accommodation only)

**DAY 10: SUN 15 AUG 2010**

**MT HAGEN SHOW**

Second day at the Mt Hagen Show, same program as yesterday.

Today's program will wind down a little earlier than yesterday so before transferring you back to your accommodation we will make a side trip to one of Mt Hagen's unique attractions, the archaeological dig site at Kuk, about 12 km outside the city. This dig site has been nominated for World Heritage listing due to its significant role in providing preserved archaeobotanical evidence that natives of New Guinea developed very early (mid-Holocene period) agriculture skills independently of other world civilisations. ([http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb3284/is\\_302\\_78/ai\\_n29147306/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3284/is_302_78/ai_n29147306/))

Overnight Highlander Hotel (accommodation only)

**DAY 11: MON 16 AUG 2010**

**MT HAGEN / SIMBAI**

07:00 Check out of the hotel and transfer to Mt Hagen airport.

08:00 Depart on charter flight for Simbai.

08:45 On arrival at Simbai airstrip we are met by our local guide with a few extra guys to help carry bags. From the airstrip it is a 30 minute walk to the Kalam Guest House.

*Simbai is an isolated government station in the highlands. It is located approximately halfway between Mt Hagen and Madang. Administratively the area falls within the Madang Province but culturally the people of the Simbai area are more similar to the highlands tribes than the coastal peoples of Madang. The area surrounding Simbai station - the Simbai River valley to the east and the Kaironk River valley to the west - is populated by the Kalam tribe. Archaeological digs in this area have yielded samples of lapita indicating that occupation of this area by the Kalam people goes back thousands of years. The dialect spoken in this area is one of PNG's most unusual languages, characterised by glottal stops. The traditional culture is also unique among Papua New Guinea's thousand-odd tribes. Native houses have a trademark irregular hexagon shape, men's initiation ceremonies*

*feature nose-piercing and pig-killing, and on special occasions the initiated men wear huge exotic head-dresses – the largest in Papua New Guinea – decorated with animal skins and furs, and the exoskeletons of hundreds of luminescent green beetles. Just a few minutes walk from the government station brings you into satellite villages where the local people still live in grass huts, still wear traditional dress and still hunt game and harvest fruit and vegetables from the forest for their diet.*

After settling in at the guest house we begin our first foray into Kalam territory. Our guide will lead us on a walking tour of satellite villages surrounding the Simbai station, where we will meet local people living in small family hamlets of less than 20 people. Due to their hunter-gatherer lifestyle the Kalam people have always lived in small, sustainable family groups although today they also plant garden crops and raise domestic animals, especially pigs. During the day we will also visit the tiny Kalam Culture Museum which has displays of traditional tribal artifacts, and the orchid gardens which feature high-altitude orchid species. Tonight, the culture will come alive with a traditional Kalam tribal sing-sing featuring the huge exotic head-dresses.

Overnight Kalam Guest House, Simbai (includes meals)

#### DAY 12: TUE 17 AUG 2010

##### SIMBAI

Today there is a choice of activities depending on your interests and your hiking ability. If you are fit to hike for about two hours out and two hours back you can join our guide on a scenic hike through some more remote village hamlets in the Kaironk River valley, stopping to meet and talk to locals you meet on the way. There will be spontaneous opportunities to observe or join in with locals doing their gardening, hunting, building houses and other day-to-day activities.

If you are not much of a hiker there is plenty to see around Simbai and its nearby satellite hamlets. Take a foray into the nearby forest with a guide who will point out wild orchids, medicinal plants and perhaps a shy tree kangaroo or cuscus. Sit with village women as they prepare traditional foods, and let the men show you their “bride price” heirlooms, and demonstrate how they make their trademark head-dresses.

These two days at Simbai will surely be the cultural highlight of the trip. No other tourists. Very little Western influence. Just like a living museum display of the Stone Age.

Overnight Kalam Guest House, Simbai (includes meals)

#### DAY 13: WED 18 AUG 2010

##### SIMBAI / MADANG

This morning we will fly by charter aircraft from Simbai to Madang. On arrival in Madang we will check in at the Jais Aben Beach Resort about 20 minute drive from the airport (hopefully in time for lunch).

From Madang airport we will take the scenic route via Madang town and foreshore through to Jais Aben, a mid-range beach resort located twenty minutes drive out of town. After lunch at the resort you have a choice of activities in the afternoon: water activities at Jais Aben or a sightseeing tour. From Jais Aben it is a short paddle by canoe to mangrove labyrinths and offshore islands. There is a pretty little beach for paddling and swimming and a motor boat available for a snorkelling trip to the lagoon reef. There is also a

swimming pool with sun chairs for relaxing.

Alternatively the afternoon tour will include the Madang produce market, handicrafts markets, war memorials and lighthouse, Alexishafen colonial cemetery and the NobNob lookout.

Overnight Jais Aben Resort, Madang (standard twin share bungalow, room only) [www.jaisaben.com](http://www.jaisaben.com)

#### DAY 14: THU 19 AUG 2010

#### MADANG / PORT MORESBY

Today you have a choice of departing flights from Madang. You can depart on the early flight at 07:20 which connects with PX90/QF384 to Cairns at 09:30 (same aircraft operates the Madang service followed by the Cairns service so you won't miss the connection) or the 11:30 flight which connects with afternoon flights to Brisbane, Cairns and Singapore.

If you have time in Port Moresby between flights Ecotourism Melanesia vehicles and drivers are available for your last-minute touring, souvenir shopping or errands before we farewell you at the airport. Places you might like to visit:

- the national museum (mainly cultural displays and takes about 1 hour to look through)
- the PNG Art artifact showroom (okay it's a tin shed) which has the largest range of artifacts, arts and crafts from all over the country. They will fumigate, pack and ship your goods overseas so you can avoid carrying stuff with you on the plane if you wish. Especially important if you are travelling to Australia where non-fumigated artifacts may be confiscated and destroyed by Quarantine officers.
- the rare books section of the University bookshop which has several cabinets of out-of-print goodies scoured from the internet including Papua New Guinea biology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, geology, sociology and modern history. Expect to pay K200-K300 per out-of-print volume.
- the Bomana War Cemetery which is mainly of interest to Australians. Almost 3400 graves of mainly Australian servicemen killed in action in World War 2, including 600 on the infamous Kokoda Track.

**TOUR ENDS**

## TRIP NOTES:

1. **Conditions.** The general terms and conditions applicable to this tour are those specified on your invoice and on the Booking page of our website.
2. **Change of itinerary.** Destinations are subject to change in response to local conditions. Where travel to a specified destination is contraindicated by local conditions, travel to an alternative destination of similar value with similar activities will be provided where possible, but claims for partial refunds based on quality of substitute activities will not be accepted.
3. **Hotel accommodation** in the towns transited on this tour are generally of three star standard. Hotel and resort rooms all have private bathrooms, TV and air-conditioning (except in the highlands), unless otherwise specified. Hotel accommodation in Papua New Guinea towns is very limited. While we endeavour to book you into the hotels stated in the tour itinerary, in cases where specified hotels are fully booked by the time we receive your tour deposit we may have to book you into alternative accommodation. In this situation we strive to book you into the next-best available accommodation and we apologise in advance for any disappointment. Book early ! No compensation or partial refunds or discounts can be paid or allowed on the basis of the quality of hotel rooms provided for you while on this tour because the wholesale rates offered to us by the tourist hotels specified are similar to the non-commissionable rates we have to pay lesser quality guest houses when the tourist hotels are full.
4. **Single supplement.** All accommodation included in the tour package quoted is twin-share. On payment of a single supplement we will arrange single occupancy for you in those hotels with sufficient capacity. The single supplement charge is a flat rate and covers the cost of the extra room and our service fee for the additional arrangements. If you are travelling alone and you do not pay the single supplement you will be roomed on willing-to-share basis with another member of your group of the same gender.
5. **Group size.** The maximum group size for this tour is 16 people plus 1 tour escort (Ecotourism Melanesia staff) due to charter aircraft capacity limits. Where the number of bookings for the tour exceeds this maximum, two parallel tour groups may be operated. Where the number of confirmed bookings for this tour is less than 8 at the booking deadline of two months before the tour, the tour may be cancelled and deposits refunded or alternative unescorted arrangements to an equivalent value may be provided.
6. **Extras.** Meals, snacks, bar drinks and other extras at hotels can be paid for in cash or with credit card direct to the hotel.
7. **Safety and security.** Some activities on this tour require water travel in local boats and native canoes that may not be carrying a full set of safety equipment. We do provide life jackets but if you require a special fitting you should bring your own. Individuals who cannot swim are advised against taking tours like this involving open water travel in small craft. Light hiking activities on this tour require an average level of fitness. Papua New Guinea is sometimes pictured as a dangerous destination, but although street crime is a concern in some urban areas and tribal fights are prevalent in some parts of the Highlands, the country is generally safe and welcoming. It is very uncommon for a tourist to be a victim of crime in PNG because tourists do not usually visit areas where crime or tribal violence are prevalent. Nevertheless, Ecotourism Melanesia takes the safety and security of our visitors seriously and all tours we offer involve destinations that we rate as safe.
8. **Climate and clothing.** Coastal and lowland areas of Papua New Guinea, including the Sepik River and Wewak, are perpetually warm-to-hot with high humidity. Nights are cooler but still humid. In the Highlands areas like Mt Hagen and Simbai the days are generally warm and sunny with moderately cold nights and mornings. We suggest visitors pack clothes made predominantly of cotton which will allow an evaporative cooling effect in hot humid areas. A battery operated personal fan is useful when travelling in rural areas without electricity. Pack a sweater or warm jacket for wearing in the Highlands in the evenings. Recommended sleeping attire is light track pants and sweat shirt or similar. Papua New Guinea is a conservative country and brief or revealing clothing worn by foreigners is frowned upon.
9. **Packing suggestions.** We suggest that your packing list include: a small flashlight with spare batteries, rain poncho, a small bath towel, your favourite soap in a leakproof container, two rolls of your favourite toilet paper, a one-litre water bottle, a small first aid kit. We recommend valuable personal items (camera, travel documents etc) be packed in ziplock plastic bags to protect them from the wet (rain, sea spray). Suitable footwear for this tour includes boat shoes/tennis shoes/sneakers, and a pair of sandals/thongs/flipflops. Bring spare batteries for your digital camera because batteries seem to go flat more rapidly in the humid climate and are not obtainable in all stores here.
10. **Accommodation in rural areas.** Village guest houses offer very basic accommodation in village-style huts accommodating two to four people per room. Bedding consists of rubber or inflatable mattresses which will

have clean sheets (or sleeping bag) and pillows, set up under mosquito net "tents" inside the hut, sometimes set on a woven mat on the floor, sometimes set on a raised bed frame. Lighting is provided by kerosene pressure lamps and flashlights. There is usually an outdoor bathroom and toilet - the toilet will be a sit-down pedestal over a pit latrine and the outdoor shower will consist of a screened-off area of grass or pebbles with a drum of water that you can use to scoop water over yourself. In some villages there is a nearby stream that you can bathe in. When bathing in public places such as a stream it is appropriate to bathe in your clothes and change into dry gear once back inside your room. Male visitors may bathe in shorts. Ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing.

11. **Meals.** At village guest houses and rural lodges local-style food is served consisting of a variety of fresh fruit and fresh vegetables cooked in coconut milk, plain boiled or baked in banana leaves under hot stones (known locally as mumu). For breakfast they provide tea with fresh scones or pancakes, and fruit. At village guest houses and small hotels where there is limited menu choice, or where set-menu meals are provided, these are included in the tour package. At larger hotels where a menu is available, meals are not included in your tour package. Hotel meals may be paid for in cash or by major credit card. Your tour itinerary clearly states which meals are included in your tour package price, and which meals which are pay-as-you-go (PAYG).

12. **Water.** Town water supplies in Papua New Guinea are treated and officially rated as safe to drink. In the villages, drinking water may not be suitable for consumption by outsiders so you will be provided with bottled water to drink. Village guest houses will also offer you coconut water from young coconuts which is always sterile and safe to drink.

13. **Visas.** Tourist visas are available on arrival at Port Moresby airport for citizens of designated countries including Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada and western European countries. The cost is PGK100 which must be paid in local currency. There is a bureau-de-change in the Customs area and immigration officers will allow you to walk over and exchange your money prior to paying for your visa if you do not have any local currency.

Getting your tourist visa issued will be quick and easy if you have a copy of your 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 to make sure the expiry date is at least 6 months away from the time you plan to enter PNG. Passport-holders of central and eastern European countries, Middle Eastern countries, African and Caribbean countries must normally apply for a visa at least 6 weeks in advance, from a PNG diplomatic mission (ie London, Brussels, Washington DC, Canberra, Singapore, Manila). However we can usually arrange for such visas to also be issued on arrival to avoid the risk of sending your passport away. For assisting with visa matters we do charge an additional fee.

14. **Money.** The best way to obtain PNG currency is by withdrawing a credit card cash advance on arrival. Automatic teller machines operated by major banks in PNG will accept major credit cards although there is an ATM withdrawal limit of PGK2000 (about USD\$800) per day. Larger amounts can be withdrawn over the counter in bank branches located in major towns. There are now ATMs located at Port Moresby airport that you can access on arrival. The Travelex currency exchange booths at major Australian airports including Brisbane and Cairns usually 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 obtaining kina will be better here in PNG than in Australia.

15. **Costs.** To give you an indication of the costs of hotel meals, fish and chips costs USD\$10, a medium pizza is USD\$15, T-Bone Steak is USD\$20 and a local beer is USD\$3.

16. **Health.** The major health risk in PNG is malaria. Preventive medication must be taken while visiting PNG (see information below). Minor health risks for which tourists are advised to update their vaccinations include typhoid, cholera and hepatitis B. Your personal first aid kit should include fabric sticking plasters (eg Elastoplast, not plastic strips), paracetamol, treatment for insect bites (eg Stingose or Calamine lotion/cream), antibiotic cream or powder (not antiseptic - Dettol etc is useless for preventing infection in the tropics, you have to hit skin wounds with antibiotics straight away - ask your doctor to prescribe it for you, eg tetracycline ointment), and prickly heat powder.

There are private medical clinics in all major towns in PNG which can provide urgent medical care, but when visitors require serious medical attention we would normally contact their travel insurer to arrange a medical evacuation to Australia - this can be accomplished in a matter of hours as there are several medivac companies operating in PNG that are on 24 hour standby with fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. However availability of medical care in some rural areas visited as part of your tour is limited and medical evacuations may be difficult to arrange in some locations. You must be aware of this risk especially if you have a pre-existing health condition that may flare up and require medical attention. While you are on-tour your tour

leader will be carrying a mobile satellite phone that can call our office in Port Moresby from anywhere in PNG. Our office is manned 24/7 to provide assistance if required but we cannot guarantee to be able to obtain 24-hour attention from other service providers.

17. **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. If you are taking effective anti-malaria medication your chances of actually contracting malaria are quite low (but not zero). There are a number of recommended anti-malaria medications that can be taken weekly (eg Lariam) or daily (eg Doxycycline). Doxycycline is actually an antibiotic and it was only in recent years that people discovered, quite by accident, that doxycycline is also an 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 that might otherwise spoil your vacation. If your doctor suggests you take chloroquine as anti-malaria medication please query this because nowadays much malaria in PNG is resistant to chloroquine and it is not recommended as an anti-malaria medication for visitors.

Even if you are infected with malaria you are unlikely to fall ill during your visit here 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 you must seek immediate medical treatment and inform the doctor that you have been in PNG.

Early malaria symptoms include body aches and pains, diarrhoea, headache, high temperatures and general "sick" feeling. Symptoms are almost identical to flu. As the illness advances without treatment you will experience fever and chills (feeling cold while your body is actually hot). The only way to correctly diagnose malaria is with a blood test. If laboratory facilities are not available, health workers in PNG generally treat patients presumptively. In your country, your doctor or hospital will probably insist on waiting for a blood test result before treating you and you might suffer for up to 24 hours before beginning treatment. Pharmacies in small towns in your home country may not stock medications for malaria and other such "exotic" illnesses. Therefore we recommend you either treat yourself with a presumptive course of malaria when you leave PNG, or take a box of the pills home with you and take them presumptively if you fall ill.

The medication recommended by the World Health Organisation for presumptive treatment of malaria in Papua New Guinea is a combination of artemether and Fansidar tablets. This treatment is available over-the-counter from pharmacies (five days artemether with Fansidar on the third day). Artemether has no known side effects or interactions with other medications so there is no harm done in taking the presumptive treatment if your symptoms are not caused by malaria. If you are female and you may be pregnant, some anti-malarials will not be suitable for you.

The Sepik River area is renowned for mosquitoes. Although it will be the dry season and mosquitoes will not be in plague proportions, be prepared with insect repellent and anti-malaria medication.