



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM217 2012 ARAPESH CULTURE FESTIVAL TOUR SUN23SEP-SAT06OCT

13 nights Port Moresby, Wewak, Wewak Islands, Dagua (festival), Sepik River, Madang, Goroka

Fully escorted sign-up soft adventure tour, group size minimum 6 maximum 8

The Arapesh are a coastal people of East Sepik Province, occupying the narrow coastal plain between the Torricelli Range and the Bismarck Sea, west of Wewak. These coastal areas of the province are quiet backwaters off the "main drag" between Wewak and the Sepik River, and hardly any outsiders are seen out this way.

The aim of the Arapesh Culture Festival is to revive and strengthen the traditional customs of the Arapesh people and counter the westernisation that affects villages situated close to major towns like Wewak.

The Festival is held every year at the Dagua school grounds. It is a local festival not a tourist festival. There is no accommodation at Dagua which is why other tour companies do not promote the festival. 2012 will be our first year to take a small group of tourists to the festival and the organisers are very excited.

Our group will sleep at the school.

This escorted tour includes more village stays than our standard escorted tours. Nine out of thirteen nights will be in villages. Apart from the festival the standout feature of this tour will be a canoe trip down the Sepik River from Pagwi to Angoram. Other highlights include village experiences at the Wewak Islands and Barum village near Madang.

TOUR COST: PGK 15,500 per person (twin-share, includes domestic air and many meals)

Single supplement is +20%

See the bottom of our website home page for conversion rates to AUD, USD and EUR.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS (ALL DEPARTURES)

- Port Moresby - meet and greet, welcome lei and gift
- Port Moresby - ad hoc sightseeing on arrival day if time allows
- Port Moresby - domestic economy class flight to Wewak
- Wewak - 2 nights accommodation at Windjammer Beach Motel (3 star, twin share, room only) with airport transfer
- Wewak - 2 nights accommodation at In-Wewak Boutique Hotel (3.5 star, twin share, room only) with airport transfer
- Wewak - return speed boat transfers to the Wewak Islands
- Wewak Islands - full day beach activities, village tour and overnight 1.5 star accommodation and meals at Muschu Island
- Wewak Islands - full day village tour, cultural program and overnight 1.5 star accommodation and meals at Kairiru Island
- Wewak Islands - half day Victoria Bay hike
- Wewak - return road transfer to Dagua with sightseeing stops
- Dagua - 1.5 days attendance at Arapesh Culture Festival activities including guides
- Dagua - overnight 1.0 star camping accommodation and meals
- Wewak - road transfer to Sepik River (Pagwi)

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- Sepik River - 3 nights motor canoe touring the Middle Sepik and Lower Sepik including accommodation in village guest houses or huts, village entry fees and tours, local style meals supplemented with camp food, local guides and boat crew, basic safety equipment
- Sepik River - road transfer from Angoram to Wewak
- Wewak - domestic economy flight to Madang
- Madang - town tour and road transfer to Barum village
- Madang - village tour and overnight 1.5 star accommodation and meals at Barum village
- Madang - road transfer to Goroka
- Goroka - town tour and road transfer to Akameku village
- Goroka - half day village tour and overnight 1.5 star accommodation and meals at Akameku village
- Goroka - half day Asaro Valley tour including Daulo moss forest walk and Asaro mud men performance
- Goroka - road transfer to airport
- Goroka - domestic economy flight to Port Moresby
- Port Moresby - 1 night accommodation at Ponderosa Family Hotel (3 star, twin share, room only) with airport transfer
- Port Moresby - farewell buffet dinner
- Port Moresby - last day ad hoc sightseeing, souvenir shopping or other activity with packed lunch and airport dropoff
- Full time tour escort to accompany and manage the group, plus local guides and helpers
- Potable drinking water is provided in all rural areas of the tour (either bottled or boiled)
- Daily itinerary monitoring and coordination from our Port Moresby office
- First aid kit and mobile satellite phone with 24 hour helpline

EXCLUSIONS

- Meals at hotels
- Bar drinks and bottled water at hotels
- Souvenirs and personal items
- Visa fees
- Excess baggage charges (free allowance is 16kg checked bags and 5kg carry on)
- Personal items. Bring your own favourite munchies, favourite bath soap, favourite toilet paper, small quick-dry towel, personal medications and first aid kit, personal hygiene requirements, brimmed hat or cap, "amphibious footwear" (sandals or quick-dry canvas shoes), insect repellent, sunscreen, personal flashlight, battery-operated personal fan

ITINERARY

DAY 1: SUNDAY 23 SEP 2012 PORT MORESBY / WEWAK

Arrive Port Moresby and connect through to Wewak.

See www.airniugini.com.pg or 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 welcome 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 sightseeing 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.

15:30 Air Niugini flight PX126 departs for Wewak via Madang (aircraft: Fokker F100 with 98 seats)

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17:40 On arrival in Wewak the group will be met by our tour escort and transfer 15 minutes to your hotel.

Overnight Windjammer Beach Hotel, Wewak - 3 star room, room only. (We select this hotel because it is on the beach which is convenient for boarding the small boats which will transfer our group to the islands).

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. Dinner and breakfast are available at the hotel in Wewak, pay by cash or credit card.

DAY 2: MONDAY 24 SEP 2012 WEWAK / WEWAK ISLANDS (village stay)

After breakfast we check out of the hotel and carry our bags down to the beach in front of the hotel to board our open speed boat for a 30 minute boat ride to beautiful Muschu Island.

TOUR NOTE: 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. There are only a few villages. The island was occupied by Japanese navy gunnery units during the war and some of the big naval guns are still there in the bushes. In September 1945 when the Japanese surrendered, Australian forces kept up to 10,000 Japanese prisoners on the island until they were repatriated to Japan in 1946. There are no ferries servicing the island and the only way to get there is by squatting on the floor of a privately hired open speed boat ("banana boat") which is a little intimidating for conventional tourists, therefore Muschu is not a tourist destination despite its appeal.

The morning hours are the best time to enjoy this lovely tropical paradise before the sun reaches its scorching zenith. Walk along the beach, swim in the warm waters and play games in the sand with the village kids who will view you as a novelty because hardly any tourists come here.

Snorkelling masks are provided for viewing the coral reef. Bottled water and fresh drinking coconuts are provided, then a local style tropical lunch at the nearby Sup village guest house.

Sup (pronounced "soup") is a delightful seaside village, sandy paths between the houses, green coconut palms and ferns everywhere. There is a small village school for primary-age kids and when it's time for high school the kids go to boarding school in Wewak or at St John on Kairiru Island.

In the afternoon our local guide will lead us on a hike through the coconut plantations and light rainforest to see Japanese war relics and other points of interest on the island. Walking will mostly be under shade but the heat and humidity will be high so bring a water bottle and something to fan yourself with.

Overnight Sup village guest house, Muschu Island (includes all bedding and local style meals)

DAY 3: TUESDAY 25 SEP 2012 WEWAK ISLANDS (village stay)

After breakfast we depart Muschu Island and continue by banana boat to

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Kairiru Island. Unlike Muschu, Kairiru Is a volcanic island with mountainous interior and small crater lake. The island takes about 2 hours 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, a walking tour of the village and a tropical feast for lunch.

After lunch we take a one hour hike to the waterfall for a refreshing splash. Dinner tonight will be a traditional-style "mumu" where food is wrapped with coconut cream in banana leaves and slow-cooked under hot stones.

In 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.

Overnight Polen guest house, Shagur village, Kairiru Island (includes all bedding and local style meals)

TOUR NOTE: SHAGUR VILLAGE, KAIRIRU ISLAND

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. 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.

DAY 4: WEDS 26 SEP 2012

WEWAK ISLANDS / WEWAK

This morning after breakfast we commence a scenic hike around the eastern coast of Kairiru Island to the hot springs at Victoria Bay. The hike is quite challenging, following the undulating coastal path along cliff tops and through sections of rainforest. There are blow holes in the cliffs that will spray water beneath us if the waves are right. It's a very pretty hike with much coastal ocean scenery and verdant light rainforest. At one point we will be "up lifted" by our speed boat across a difficult section of the walk.

(If you are not able to undertake this hike you can spend more time at the village and tag along in the pickup boat towards lunchtime).

By early afternoon the hikers will arrive at beautiful Victoria Bay where a picnic lunch is served under the shady trees growing along the beach. Enjoy a rejuvenating swim in the bay where cool sea waters mix with hot spring water that gurgles out of rocks on the beach and drains into the bay.

14:00 Depart Victoria Bay for Wewak, alighting on Windjammer Beach and checking back into the same hotel in time for sundowners at the patio bar.

Overnight Windjammer Beach Hotel, Wewak - 3 star room, room only.

DAY 5: THURS 27 SEP 2012

WEWAK / DAGUA

08:00 Depart Windjammer Beach Hotel by mini bus for Dagua. This will be a 3 hour road trip including a stop at the Cape Wom cenotaph en route.

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TOUR NOTE: CAPE WOM CENOTAPH

Cape Wom was the site of a small Japanese military airstrip built in 1943 and later commandeered by Australian forces in 1945 after the Japanese retreated from Wewak to the inland jungles. After the Japanese imperial surrender on 2nd September 1945 in Tokyo Bay, the commander of the Japanese 18th Army in New Guinea Lt. General Adachi was captured, weak from starvation, near Yangoru (half way to the Sepik River) and flown to Wewak by Australian forces to participate in an official surrender ceremony at Cape Wom airstrip on September 13, 1945. Adachi signed the surrender document on behalf of Japanese imperial forces in New Guinea and presented his sword to the Australian commander Major General Robertson in the presence of 3,000 Australian troops.

In 1969 a memorial park and cenotaph was built by the Australian government at the exact spot where Adachi surrendered his sword. The park is not well maintained and is often "decorated" by broken beer bottles but there is an Avenue of Honour (memorial trees with commemorative plaques) and a number of artillery guns and other relics on display. The park sits on part of the now-overgrown airstrip runway.

Some of the tunnels built around the airstrip by the Japanese are still intact and local guides are able to show their locations. There is also a nice little swimming beach here. Tourists visit the cenotaph occasionally and there is an Anzac Day memorial service here every 25th April, but Japanese visitors never come here as the surrender invokes sentiments of shame so they prefer to visit another memorial on Mission Hill near Wewak which pays homage to their war dead.

More information: http://www.pacificwrecks.com/provinces/png_wewak.html

See a photograph of the sword handover at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_surrender_\(AWM_019296\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_surrender_(AWM_019296).jpg)

The road to Dagua is sealed about half of the way and the rest of the ride is a fairly corrugated gravel road.

On arrival at Dagua we will pick up a local guide who will show us around the village and tell us about the World War 2 history of Dagua then after lunch we will settle into the culture festival program. Needless to say, not much will happen till we arrive as we will be the guests of honour. The program will take place at the school grounds.

TOUR NOTE: DAGUA WW2 AIRSTRIP

Dagua village was the site of Japanese military airstrip built in 1943 and later bombed into unserviceability by Allied bombing raids. There were a number of damaged Japanese aircraft still on the strip when Australian forces occupied the area in March 1945. In the area surrounding the airstrip there were also several wrecks of Allied aircraft that were shot down during bombing raids but by now all of these wrecks have been well picked over and/or vandalised and there is virtually nothing left. The Dagua Catholic primary school was built in the middle of the runway after the war and still stands there today.

Overnight Dagua primary school (bedding and meals supplied)

DAY 6: FRI 28 SEP 2012

DAGUA / WEWAK

Full day culture festival at Dagua.

15:00 Depart Dagua for 2.5 hour drive direct to Wewak.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel - 3.5 star standard room, room only

DAY 7: SAT 29 SEP 2012

WEWAK / SEPIK RIVER

08:00 We board our mini bus and commence our 4-hour drive from Wewak to Pagwi, our jumping off point on the Sepik River.

The road from Wewak to Pagwi 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 where you can buy tropical fruits, cooked vegetables and delicious green coconuts to snack on (pay as you go).

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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 midday.

At Pagwi we transfer to our waiting motor canoes (4 passengers plus crew to each canoe) and head down-river approximately two hours to Kanganaman village where fresh fruit, dried fish and cooked sago will be awaiting us for late lunch.

The main attraction at Kanganaman is the huge spirit house, the largest on the Sepik. A local guide will introduce us to the spirit house and its purpose, and allow us to take a look inside where artifacts hang from the walls and ceiling. 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" log drums.

Overnight village guest house, Kanganaman (includes meals).

DAY 8: SUN 30 SEP 2012

SEPIK RIVER

This morning our local guide will show us more of the Middle Sepik tradition of "crocodile cult".

TOUR NOTE:

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, Palembang 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.

After lunch we will head off further downstream to another Middle Sepik village, Kaminabit, where we will be welcomed with a colourful Sepik singing. Here at Kaminabit there is an excellent village carver's hut with a wide range of Sepik carvings and woven crafts at very good prices.

In the late afternoon we will observe a demonstration of sago being extracted from the pith of sago palms, and learn different ways to cook sago and even the sago grubs which are very similar to the "witchetty" grubs consumed by Australian aborigines.

Overnight village guest house, Kaminabit (includes meals).

DAY 9: MON 01 OCTOBER

SEPIK RIVER

07:00 Depart Kaminabit by motor canoe and head downstream 2 hours to Tambanum, the largest village on the Sepik. Tambanum is known locally as the "carving factory" of the Sepik due to the prolific output of its local artisans. Walking through the village you can see all manner of artifacts displayed under people's homes including large woven baskets and gable masks, fish traps, carved figurines and spirit masks, sago beating sticks and even necklaces of crocodile teeth. Tambanum also has a number of small spirit houses (one for each clan) each of which features a large carved orator's stool where the clan leader will seat during men's spirit ceremonies. Clan women are not permitted to enter but foreign women are usually allowed.

From Tambanum we will continue on down the main Sepik River passing the

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large stilt village of Kanduanam until we reach the confluence of the Yuat River. We turn right up the Yuat River for about 45 minutes till we arrive at Kundima village. Tourists never come up here and there is no village guest house but we have made arrangements to camp in a village hut. This bend in the river where Kundima is located features a large sand bar where locals gather every evening to socialise, play sand games and scratch matches of soccer and volleyball so we shall surely join in.

Overnight Kundima village, Yuat River ("camping" in a village hut ie we set up our own mosquito nets and mattresses on the floor of a bare hut and locals will bring us food)

DAY 10: TUE 02 OCTOBER

SEPIK RIVER / WEWAK

After spending some time with the Kundima locals this morning checking out their food gardens, visiting the village clinic and school and patronising the little trade store for anything we need, we will retrace our route down the picturesque Yuat River to the main Sepik. Travelling downstream with the current we will make good time and we will be able to make a stop at Moim village before arriving at Angoram township early afternoon.

After a visit to the Angoram market for some fresh fruit to eat on the way to Wewak we will board our waiting transport and hit the road. Driving time to Wewak is about 2 hours.

Overnight In-Wewak Boutique Hotel - 3.5 star standard room, room only

DAY 11: WED 03 OCTOBER

WEWAK / MADANG

04:00 The hotel restaurant does not open for breakfast until 07:00 but you can request a plate of fruit or bread with toaster the night before, to have with tea or coffee in your room.

04:30 Hotel shuttle bus departs for Wewak airport. Passenger check-in usually opens at 05:00. The aircraft has overnighted at Wewak and the pilots have probably stayed at the same hotel as yourself, and will probably travel to the airport on the same shuttle, so don't worry about being late for the flight.

06:10 Air Niugini flight PX125 departs Wewak for Port Moresby via Madang (aircraft: Fokker F100 with 98 seats)

07:00 On arrival in Madang we transfer first to the Madang Resort Hotel to have breakfast (pay as you go), then our local guide will lead us on a couple of hours sightseeing around Madang including some WW2 relics, the madang cultural museum, the iconic lighthouse at Kalibobo point, the German colonial cemetery at Alexishafen and the wildlife sanctuary and sulphur caves at Balek village (where some scenes from the Pierce Brosnan movie Robinson Crusoe were filmed).

Heading out of town we turn off the main highway that leads to Lae and Goroka and we follow a bumpy access road up the Gogol River valley (locally known as "The Trans Gogol") to the village of Barum where we will spend the night.

On arrival at the village the local people will welcome us with a traditional sing-sing and drama performance and take us on a familiarisation tour of the village. There will also be an opportunity to take a nature walk in the forest with villagers as guides, swim in the river and shower under a waterfall before we settle into the village guest house for the night.

A local-style dinner is prepared with foods dry roasted under hot river stones either wrapped in banana leaves or stuffed into giant bamboo stalks.

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Overnight Barum village, Madang (basic village guest house, includes local style meals)

DAY 12: THU 04 OCTOBER

MADANG / GOROKA

Our tour vehicle has overnighted with us at Barum which allows for an early start this morning on the long drive up to Goroka.

05:00 Breakfast and farewells

06:00 Depart Barum by road for Goroka. The drive will take around 6 hours as it is uphill much of the way. This includes comfort stops and photo stops.

Somewhere near the half way mark where the road climbs out of the Markham Valley up the Kassam Pass you will notice the sudden drop in temperature as you pass through the inversion layer separating the steamy coastal humidity from the cooler highlands climate. Your stress level will suddenly drop and you will begin to relax in the more tourist-friendly temperature range of the highlands.

12:00 On arrival in Goroka we will stop at the Bird of Paradise Hotel to use the toilets and have lunch (pay as you go). Toilets and lunch are also very conducive to relaxation ☺ .

After lunch our local guide will take us on a tour of Goroka including the cultural museum and the handicrafts market before we head up the Asaro Valley, a one hour drive to Akameku village, our home for tonight.

On arrival we'll be treated to a highlands-style welcome sing-sing and a village tour with home demonstrations of some highlands-style village activities such as cooking, bilum weaving, fire making and the use of the bow and arrow for hunting (and maiming one's tribal enemies). From the guest house we will take a one hour forest walk to the waterfall and a bird of paradise nesting spot. Late afternoon is the best time to see the raucous Raggiana bird of paradise in the wild, because this is the time of day it is most active, jumping from tree to tree and making very loud calls, seemingly oblivious to humans observing the show from below.

Overnight Akameku village guest house, Goroka (includes local style meals)

DAY 13: FRI 05 OCTOBER

GOROKA / PORT MORESBY

From our base at Akameku village, this morning we take in some of the sights of the Asaro Valley including the Dauilo Pass moss forest, the Asaro mud men and the Mt Gahavisuka national park. A 45 minute huff and puff from the car park up the foot path to the summit of Mt Gahavisuka is rewarded by panoramic views of the Asaro Valley and Goroka town.

After lunch back at Akameku, we spend a final couple of hours in the company of our hosts before heading to Goroka airport.

17:17 Air Niugini flight PX963 departs Goroka for Poprt Moresby (aircraft: Dash 8 - Q315 with 50 seats)

18:25 On arrival in Port Moresby we transfer to our accommodation at the Ponderosa Family Hotel for check in, then onwards to the Gateway Hotel for a final buffet dinner together (included).

Overnight Ponderosa Family Hotel, Port Moresby - 3 star room, room only

DAY 14: SAT 06 OCTOBER

PORT MORESBY / FLY OUT

Today is departure day and the tour group members will fly out on various

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flights to Australia and Asia. Breakfast today is pay as you go but we will provide a complimentary packed lunch at the airport for anybody waiting for an afternoon flight. Catering at the airport is not very appealing. If time allows before your flight we will be happy to take you for some additional sightseeing or souvenir shopping around Port Moresby. Some suggestions:

- the national museum (mainly cultural displays and takes about 1 hour to look through) if you missed it on Day 1
- the PNG Art artifact warehouse 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.
- 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. Mainly in English but some German and French texts. Expect to pay USD70-200 per out-of-print volume.
- the Port Moresby botanical gardens (adjacent to the university) which also has a small zoo with native PNG animals and a walk-through aviary with several species of bird of paradise
- 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

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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 is 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. 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 20% 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 8 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 6 at the booking deadline of two months before the tour, the tour may at our discretion be cancelled and deposits refunded OR alternative customised (ie unescorted) arrangements to an equivalent value may be offered.
- 6. Extras.** Bar drinks, between-meal snacks, any meals not included in the package, and other extras at hotels can be paid for in cash or with credit card direct to the hotel or restaurant.
- 7. Safety and security.** Some activities on this tour may 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 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 vast majority of the country, especially the rural areas, is 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, Wewak, Madang, Tufi and Port Moresby are perpetually warm-to-hot with high humidity. Nights are cooler but still humid. In the Highlands areas like Goroka, 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 are not obtainable in all stores here.

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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 mattresses which will have clean sheets (or sleeping bag) and pillows, set up under mosquito nets. Sometimes beds are made on a woven mat on the floor, sometimes 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 usually 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 an overhead pipe or drum of water that you can use to scoop water over yourself. In some villages a nearby stream is used for bathing. When bathing in public places 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 varied menu is available, lunches and dinners are sometimes not included in your tour, in order to give you some freedom of choice. Such 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 is usually collected in rainwater tanks or carried in containers from clean water sources. However to prevent discomfort from drinking from a different water supply every day as you progress through your tour, we recommend you drink bottled or boiled water, or use water purification tablets. In order to reduce littering the villages with plastic bottles we usually ask village guest houses to supply drinking water that has been boiled and cooled, that we can use to refill our water bottles. In the villages you can also ask for fresh coconut juice 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 and automatic teller machine in the Customs area where you can change money to pay for your visa. 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. 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 embassy or high commission (London, Brussels, Washington DC, Canberra, Singapore, Manila) or through the Australian diplomatic mission in other countries.

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 Mastercard and Visa Card but there is an ATM withdrawal limit of PGK2000 (about USD\$900) per day. Larger amounts can be withdrawn over the counter in bank branches located in major towns. The currency exchange booths at Australian and Asian airports 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 before arrival in PNG because the exchange rate for purchasing PNG kina is better here.

15. **Costs.** To give you an indication of the costs of hotel meals, at hotels in Port Moresby fish and chips costs USD\$10, a medium pizza is USD\$15, T-Bone Steak is USD\$20 and a local beer is USD\$4.

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 gentamycin ointment), and prickly heat powder.

There are hospitals and doctors available in all major towns in PNG which can provide routine medical care, but when visitors require urgent 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-

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existing health condition that may flare up and require medical attention. While we are on-tour our office in Port Moresby is on 24-hour alert to provide assistance 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 Larium) 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.