



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

ITINERARY FOR TOUR EM29 2009

WALK THE BULLDOG TRACK

9 nights package (1 night Port Moresby, 7 nights expedition, 1 night Bulolo)

See schedule of open treks in 2009 on our website. Private treks also available.

PACKAGE COST: PGK 9,810 per person. 10% discount for private treks (minimum 12 walkers).

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS: Everything at the PNG end, ie:

- one night Port Moresby in 3-star hotel accommodation - or better - with breakfast (twin-share unless you pay a single supplement).
- one night Pine Lodge, Bulolo (2.5 star) with dinner and breakfast (twin-share unless you pay a single supplement of)
- seven nights camping in tents or village huts, including all meals (camp food and local-style food) and boiled or bottled water
- basic group camping equipment including lamps, tropical first aid kit, ropes, tarpaulins and ground sheets, axe and machete, cooking utensils, camp crockery and cutlery
- trek guide and sufficient porters to carry all food, equipment and up to 8 kg of each trekker's personal gear. You should plan to carry a small pack with up to 5 kg of your personal gear. Another 8 kg of your gear will be carried in one of our company backpacks by one of our porters. Weight limits for your day pack and the porters packs will be enforced by the trek guide.
- meet and greet and city familiarisation tour on arrival
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10.
- visit to Bomana War Cemetery and Schwimmer Drome war relics display (as time allows)
- road transfer from Port Moresby to Terapo Bridge (Lakekamu River)
- water transfer from Terapo Bridge to Niukeva by 40hp motorised dinghy/canoe, with life jackets
- scheduled or charter flight from Bulolo back to Port Moresby
- any trekking fees charged by local authorities and landowners along the route
- safety plan including carriage of satellite phone and medical kit, first aid training for guides, coordination of emergency situations and evacuations
- souvenir Bulldog Track polo shirt, walker's certificate, and maps
- applicable local taxes

PACKAGE EXCLUSIONS

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

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bulldog Track supply line

The Bulldog Track was an important supply line and evacuation route for Australian military forces based at Wau in 1942. Even though there was an operational airfield at Wau, there was an acute shortage of transport aircraft in Papua at that time. Ammunition and food supplies were transported from Port Moresby to Kukipi by coastal vessel, then taken up the Lakekamu River by outboard canoes to Bulldog, an abandoned gold mining camp. From Bulldog, supplies were carried by native porters along a narrow foot track through jungle swamps, up rocky river gorges and over the steep mountain ridges to Winima village near Wau. Sick and wounded soldiers were carried back the other way to Bulldog for eventual evacuation to Port Moresby. Conditions on the Bulldog Track were just as difficult as on the more famous Kokoda Track some 200km to the south east. You can read war veteran Peter Ryan's account of the Bulldog Track supply line on The Australian newspaper's website at

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,22653320-31477,00.html?from=public_rss or in scanned format on our website Bulldog Track page.

See also a map of the original 1942 supply route on the same website page.

The Bulldog Road

In 1943 army engineers built a vehicular road along the Bulldog to Wau route, approaching Wau via Edie Creek instead of Winima. The ravages of flooding and landslides frequently made the road impassable and after the war the Bulldog Road, as the vehicular route was called, was conceded to the jungle and no longer maintained. Many sections of the vehicular road have now been obliterated but the original route from Bulldog to Winima is still used by locals.

Trekking along the 1943 vehicular road diversion via Edie Creek is no longer possible because it now passes through a gold mining lease area. The mining company operating there does not permit hikers to pass through for safety reasons due to blasting, excavation works etc. One of the last trekkers to walk the Edie Creek route before it was closed off was New Zealander Richard Stanaway who walked west to east with local guides in 2001. See his trip notes at www.richardstanaway.net You can read more about the vehicular Bulldog Road at

http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Bulldog_track

See a map of the 1943 Bulldog Road on our website.

See also these books, which may be available in some Australian public libraries:

- 1. Reinhold, W J. "The Bulldog-Wau Road" (Brisbane, Queensland University Press, 1946). The author was the engineer in charge of building the road.*
- 2. Freeman, Colin. 1975. "Bulldog-Wau Road Sapper"*
- 3. Freeman, Colin. "Wau to Bulldog: Across the Roof of Papua New Guinea". An illustrated account of an Australian Army Patrol over an old military road built by Australian Army Engineers across New Guinea during WW2. Descriptions of History and Geography are provided. 110 pages paperback ISBN 1-4251-7419-1 available from <http://www.trafford.com/08-0374> US\$33.00, C\$33.00, EUR22.54, £17.04*

The Bulldog Track today

Nowadays it takes about a week to walk the track from Bulldog through to Winima, following the original supply route. Three days out of seven are relatively easy walking along surviving sectors of the 1943 Bulldog Road and the other four days are a more challenging negotiation of narrow foot-tracks through thick jungle and over steep ridges. Rusting road construction equipment and other WW2 relics are encountered as you walk along, especially at the Bulldog end.

The first half of the walk going west-to-east ascends the Eloa River valley for four days as far as Yanina village, largely following the 1943 vehicular road which is largely intact, although derelict, along this stretch. There are many river crossings over crudely fashioned cane suspension bridges and slippery log bridges which are rebuilt by locals every year after the wet season floods (December to March) wash everything away. The 1943 road bridges are long gone. At Yanina the 1943 vehicular road diverges north to Edie Creek while the original foot-track leaves the Eloa River and traverses a number of steep mountain ridges for two days semi-montane walking (peaking at 2600m) to Kudjeru village. The last day of walking descends over grassy hillsides following the Upper Bulolo River valley down to Winima. From Winima there is an all-weather road connection to Wau.

See a Google GPS image of the Bulldog Track today on our website.

Bulldog vs Kokoda

Walking time for both the Bulldog Track and Kokoda Track is roughly the same at 7 days. However one main difference between the two tracks is that only the Kokoda Track is said to have almost the same degree of walking difficulty in either direction. The Kokoda Track has roughly the same number of climbs and descents whether you walk north to south or south to north. On the other hand the Bulldog Track is definitely easier to trek from east to west (ie from Winima down to Bulldog) because it is a net descent from 2000 metres at Winima down to 80 metres at Bulldog.

WW2 veteran Peter Ryan who walked both the Kokoda Track and the Bulldog Track in 1942 describes the Bulldog Track as being the tougher of the two, though the walking conditions at that time - prior to the construction of the vehicular road bench in 1943 - were undoubtedly more challenging than today. Our senior Kokoda trekking guide Philip Arari who has reconnoitred the Bulldog Track for next year's trekking program reckons the Bulldog Track is easier to walk than Kokoda - even in the uphill direction from Bulldog to Winima - because there are quite long remnants of the levelled 1943 vehicular road to follow, offering a relatively smooth walking surface and more consistent gradients for climbs and descents, unlike the Kokoda Track where one expends considerable energy stumbling over tree roots and scrambling up and down every little undulation in the terrain. Even the spurs between Yanina and Kudjeru typically take less time and effort to mount than ridges encountered daily along the Kokoda Track.

Our guides also opine that the Bulldog Track (in either direction) gives trekkers more time to 'get their legs in' before tackling the most difficult section between Yanina and Kudjeru. Walking out from Bulldog you get several days of steady gradients along the old 1943 road before you have to tackle any really steep spurs. Starting from the Winima end, you get a full day of hiking through gentle rolling hills before you come up against more serious gradients at Kudjeru. Compare this with walking the Kokoda Track where you get thrown in at the deep end right from the first day whether you start at Owers Corner with the steep descent to Goldie River immediately followed by that real huff and puff up the Golden Stairs, or that killer first day climb from Kokoda to Isurava if you start from the north.

Whichever way you walk, the Bulldog Track is just as scenic as the Kokoda Track - moreso, perhaps, because you can see all the way to the coast a lot of the time - and features a more varied and visible range of plants, birds and small mammals like bandicoots. Interactions with local village people are also more candid along this route as there are few visitors traversing the Bulldog Track and the people are not numbed by tourism. Along the Bulldog Track villagers still stop, stare and greet occasional visitors with amazement whereas locals along the Kokoda Track no longer bat an eyelid at groups of up to 100 people hiking past their window.

That said, please take note that walking the Bulldog Track is significantly riskier than trekking Kokoda, due to the more isolated terrain, the scarcity of airstrips for medevac flights, and the lack of communication facilities - see trip notes at the bottom of this itinerary.

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

Our 2009 Bulldog Track expeditions

Ecotourism Melanesia has decided to operate our Bulldog Track trekking expeditions "the hard way", uphill from Bulldog to Winima, because

(i) trekking in this direction more accurately emulates the WW2 supply line, ie this is the direction in which supplies were carried through to Kanga Force in Wau

(ii) there is demand from trekkers who have already "killed" the Kokoda Track for another challenging expedition as a follow-up trip so we don't want it to be too easy

(iii) it is cheaper and more practical for us to mount expeditions from our operations base in Port Moresby rather than from Wau which is just a small town with few facilities.

In 2009 we are offering the Bulldog Track as an open trek once a month from May to November. See our open trek schedule on our website Bulldog Track page. The logistics of operating expeditions in such a rugged and isolated area are far more complex than for the Kokoda Track (which is now like grand central station at some peak periods) and we require larger group sizes to make open treks along the Bulldog Track economical to operate. A minimum of 12 trekkers is required to operate each of the 8 open Bulldog Track treks we have scheduled for 2009. Expeditions for private groups of minimum 12 and maximum 20 trekkers can be arranged on any other date convenient to your group and compatible with our Kokoda and Bulldog trekking schedules.

GENERIC ITINERARY

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY

PORT MORESBY

Arriving flights today are:

Air Niugini PX91/QF379 from Cairns arrives at 8:25am

Airlines PNG CG101 from Cairns arrives at 8:55am

Air Niugini PX2/QF313 from Sydney arrives at 11:25am

Air Niugini PX6/QF351 from Brisbane arrives at 12:30pm

Airlines PNG / Pacific Blue DJ191 from Brisbane arrives at 12:55

Air Niugini PX93/QF381 from Cairns arrives at 1:25pm

On arrival at Port Moresby international airport you will be met by staff from Ecotourism Melanesia and we will transfer you to your hotel for check-in. After allowing you some time to freshen up, our staff will take you on a 1-hour familiarisation tour of the city, pointing out major landmarks and points of interest relevant to Port Moresby's wartime history, and a visit to the Bomana War Cemetery and the Schwimmer Drome war relics display.

After the tour we will drop you back at the hotel for some leisure time.

At 7.00pm we will pick you up from the hotel again and bring you to our company compound in Boroko for an informal barbeque dinner to give you an opportunity to get to know our staff and the other trekkers. (If you are booked on an open trek this might be your first chance to meet the other people you will be walking with).

After dinner there will be a 1-hour slide show and briefing about the Bulldog Track and the trek you is just about to undertake, with time for questions.

By 10.00pm you will be back at your hotel to settle in for the night.

Overnight hotel, Port Moresby (room only, twin share - please pay cash for all drinks and extras and only charge your breakfast to your room account).

Note 1: If you are arriving on a morning flight we can take you for additional sightseeing, souvenir shopping etc to fill up the day, or leave you to relax by the hotel pool, according to your preference.

Note 2: There are ATMs at the airport terminal where you may withdraw cash with your credit card. During the drive around town our driver will stop on request at a supermarket to purchase any last minute items you require (supermarkets do accept credit cards for payment of goods but no cash out).

Note 3: Hotel accommodation in Port Moresby on Day 1 and Day 11 is twin share and if you

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

are booked on an open trek you may have to share a twin room with a stranger of the same sex. Soon you will be sharing village guest houses or tents with these "strangers" so you will be thrown together sooner or later anyway. But if you specifically want your own single room for the two hotel nights we can arrange this for an extra charge of \$200 x 2 nights = \$400.

Note: Bomana War Cemetery is the final resting place of most of those 600 Australian soldiers who gave their lives along the Kokoda Track. They were originally buried in temporary graves along the Track and their remains were later re-interred at Bomana. There are almost 3,000 graves at Bomana. Apart from Kokoda Track casualties many of these troops were killed in other battles including Buna, Gona and Milne Bay. There are also some graves of British servicemen killed at Singapore and a smattering of graves of servicemen and women from other Commonwealth countries. There are no US or Japanese soldiers buried at Bomana, all US and Japanese remains found have been repatriated. (At the time of the war, Papua was Australian soil and that is why it was considered appropriate to bury Australian soldiers here). The beautifully manicured lawns and monuments at Bomana War Cemetery contrast starkly with the wild unforgiving jungle of the Kokoda Track. During your trek will walk over the very spots where many of these young men fell in 1942. As you wander among the graves at Bomana one fact that will strike you is the young ages of the fallen as stated on the headstones: 19, 20, 21, 22 - one lady who visited commented that her son who is the same age is still playing Nintendo and borrowing Mum's car - would the young men of today's generation be able to go off to war as bravely and selflessly?

DAY 2: THURSDAY

PORT MORESBY TO TERAPO BRIDGE AND URULAU VILLAGE

Rise and shine at around 7.00am this morning. Breakfast is included in your tour package and you can either order a room service breakfast or have breakfast in the restaurant [just charge your breakfast to your room and we will pick up the tab - your choice of continental breakfast (cereal or fruit and toast), or full hot breakfast (cereal, toast and eggs/bacon or whatever) plus juice and tea/coffee].

At 8.00am check out of your hotel room and arrange with the reception to store any baggage that you will not be taking with you on the trek.

Note: The hotel has a secure storage room for baggage and they will keep your bags under lock and key until you return to have your last night here next week. Make sure your bags are clearly labelled with your name. Safety deposit boxes are also available at reception for valuables such as passport, tickets and excess cash - alternatively you can carry your papers with you on the trek in a waterproof wallet, but if your passport becomes water-damaged this may cause travel problems for you.

At 8.30am we will pick you up at the hotel together with your trek baggage and commence the 3-hour road journey to Terapo Bridge. If you arrived too late yesterday to visit Bomana War Cemetery we will stop there this morning for a quick visit en route to Terapo Bridge.

We travel by small bus or open-sided passenger truck with bench seats known locally as a PMV. Our trekking supplies accompany us in a support vehicle. The road is sealed for most the journey with just a few rough patches. We pass first through the Central Province which is fairly dry and dusty. The last township of Bereina marks the last Central Province habitation before we cross the unmarked border into Gulf Province, where the parched light scrub typical of Central Province gives way to the green rainforest and swamplands of the Gulf country. There will be a couple of behind-a-tree toilet stops along the way, and a packed lunch to eat either on the road or in the boat, whenever you feel hungry.

We aim to arrive at Terapo Bridge about midday. Actually there are two Terapo bridges: the first one we come to straddles the Lakekamu River and the second bridge only 200 metres up the road crosses the Tauri Tiver. Downstream from the bridges, the two rivers come within 100m of intersecting but never actually meet before they empty into separate estuaries on the Papuan Gulf about 1km downstream from the bridges. The Lakekamu mouth is adjacent to Kukipi village where supplies were transferred from coastal ships to native canoes in 1942 for onward shipment up the Bulldog Track.

There is also a narrow canal joining the two rivers a short distance downstream from the bridges, which makes the two river systems very

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

useful for moving passengers and freight between the villages in this area using both paddle canoes and small motor boats.

At the first Terapo Bridge, tethered in the fast-flowing Lakekamu River, is our small fleet of motorised fibreglass dinghies known locally as "banana boats". Also waiting for us here are some of our porters who will carry backpacks of supplies and gear once we start walking.

We transfer our bodies and supplies into the boats, don life jackets and the 40hp outboards commence our push upstream against the 10-knot current. The river banks pass slowly as we make headway, giving time to enjoy the lush virgin jungle with its exotic bird life and the occasional small crocodile sunning itself on the mudflats of the inside bends.

Three hours upstream from the bridge is the small village of Urulau, where we tie up our boats for the night in a quiet tributary creek. Urulau is a family hamlet of less than 50 people living off mainly fish and sago.

Here we will stay overnight; sleeping in large open-sided stilt huts built specifically for visitors, with plenty of floor space for setting up our tents inside the hut, this being the best way to sleep soundly without being bitten by mosquitoes. For dinner this evening our hosts will prepare a traditional "mumu" which is food wrapped in leaves and cooked under hot stones. Foods will include fish and prawns caught in the river, and local vegetables like sweet potato and stewed bananas.

Overnight Urulau Village, Lakekamu River.

DAY 3: FRIDAY

URULAU TO NIUKEVA AND AVI AVI RIVER

After a camp breakfast we board our boats again and get back on the river. An hour upstream the Lakekamu River divides into two tributaries, the Kunimaipa River and the Tiveri River. We take the left fork up the Tiveri River, and another hour upstream we come to the old abandoned Bulldog mining camp, located at the confluence of the Tiveri and Avi Avi (Eloa) Rivers.

We will stop here for a look around and see where the old gold mine operated prior to WW2. There are equipment relics, and the now overgrown airstrip. Although the mining camp itself is abandoned there is still a hamlet of local people living here.

We will not start walking from Bulldog because the first section of the original track following the west branch of the Avi Avi River from Bulldog through the lowland swamps to the foot hills was obliterated by flooding many years ago and these days the walking track now starts from Niukeva village about 30 minutes by motor boat up the Tiveri River from Bulldog. So after another jaunt upstream we come to the village of Niukeva which is also the navigable limit of the Tiveri River. Here we will leave our boats and continue on foot. Some additional porters will be waiting for us at Niukeva. We will leave in the boats any equipment that we will not be carrying with us and the boats will return to Terapo.

From Niukeva we hike along an overgrown jungle path, east towards the Avi Avi River.

We skirt the higher ground to the north that ascends to the Owen Stanley Range. We follow mainly flat land but the walking is challenging due to marshy terrain which may be quite boggy after rain. There will be mosquitoes, leeches and possibly snakes along this stretch but don't worry we won't be charging you extra for this excitement.

After two hours walking and several creek crossings we arrive at the west branch of the Avi Avi River at a point where the 1943 Bulldog Road originally followed the Avi Avi River south to Bulldog itself. This lowland section of the road has been wiped out and is now swamp.

At the junction of the Niukeva jungle path and the remnants of the old Bulldog Track, we set up camp for the night.

Overnight Avi Avi riverside camp.

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

DAY 4: SATURDAY

AVI AVI RIVER TO TEKADU AIRSTRIP

First task today is to cross the fast-flowing Avi Avi River. From time to time the locals build log bridges or vine suspension bridges over this river and every wet season they are washed away. How we cross today will depend if there is any bridge in place. If not, and the water level is less than chest deep, we will attempt to wade through with guide ropes. If the water is too deep or the current too strong, we either build a raft or beat a path through the jungle along the riverbank to a better location for crossing.

After crossing, another hour of walking brings us to the confluence of the west and east branches of the Avi Avi River. Upstream from here it is called the Eloa River. Here also the track forks and a separate track heads south east to the small gold mining township of Kakoro.

The Bulldog Track then follows the southern (eastern) bank of the river, up the river gorge towards Tekadu. The ground rises steeply on either side of the river, but our ascent is gradual from just 80 metres above sea level at the Avi Avi River camp site (despite being so far inland) to about 200 metres at Tekadu airstrip. The distance looks short on the map but there are multiple creek and river crossings that will slow us down.

Tonight we overnight at Yenawe village, a small hamlet next to the Tekadu airstrip. Again we pitch our tents in open visitor huts.

Overnight village hut, Yenawe village, Tekadu airstrip (camp food)

DAY 5: SUNDAY

TEKADU AIRSTRIP TO ANANDEA VILLAGE

About 6 hours walking today, largely following the 1943 Bulldog road along its path up the Eloa River gorge, slipped in places but largely intact. The road makes a steady climb, evened out by the original 1943 road bench.

Overnight village hut, Anandea village (camp food)

DAY 6: MONDAY

ANANDEA VILLAGE TO YANINA VILLAGE

Another steady climb today, similar terrain to yesterday following the bench cutting of the 1943 road, wide and clear most of the way. There are several crossings of the Eloa River by cane or log bridges - the 1943 vehicular bridges are long washed away by floods of yesteryear, though you may spot remnants. Don't forget to stop and look behind you from time to time as there are beautiful views of the surrounding ridges. Walking time approximately 6 hours.

At Yanina we undertake a change of porters. Fresh porters from villages along the northern half of the Bulldog Track are waiting for us here at Yanina. Porters from Niukeva will walk back home tomorrow.

Overnight village hut, Yanina village (camp food)

DAY 7: TUESDAY

YANINA VILLAGE TO BUBBLING BROOK CAMP SITE

We say goodbye to our Niukeva porters and continue walking with fresh porters. From Yanina the 1943 road diverges to the north and the rest of the way along the original supply route to Winima is foot-track only. The going is much harder now. The track climbs out of the Eloa River gorge and traverses several spurs with steep climbs

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

and descents. (This is why the 1943 engineers chose a longer but less undulating route via Edie Creek). While locals walking at a fast pace can make it from Yanina through to Kudjeru in 10 hours, we mere mortals will take an overnight in the middle and break it into two walking days. We camp tonight at a pleasant spot where a small underground spring bubbles to the surface. Our guides have dubbed it Bubbling Brook.

Overnight Bubbling Brook camp site (camp food)

DAY 8: WEDNESDAY

BUBBLING BROOK CAMP SITE TO KUDJERU VILLAGE

Another day of serious hiking with some steep spurs to mount, eventually reaching the source of the Waruwi River which comes up from underground. We follow the river down to Kudjeru village. About 6 hours hiking today, with ample rest stops.

Overnight village hut, Kudjeru village (camp food)

DAY 9: THURSDAY

KUDJERU VILLAGE TO WINIMA VILLAGE TO BULOLO

Today's walking is long but relatively easy, about 8 hours of undulating open grasslands passing through several small family hamlets. We arrive mid-afternoon at Winima village where road transport is waiting for us (30-seater bus, or a lorry with bench seats in the back). We say farewell to our second cohort of porters here and all our backpacks are loaded on to a support vehicle which will follow the bus. From Winima it is a one hour drive to Wau town, but there is no decent accommodation available in Wau so we drive on another twenty minutes to Bulolo. This smaller township is closer to the Harmony Gold Mine and boasts both a nice little hotel and a sealed airstrip.

Overnight Pine Lodge, Bulolo (twin share, includes buffet dinner and full breakfast)

DAY 10: FRIDAY

BULOLO TO PORT MORESBY THEN

FLY OUT TO AUSTRALIA OR TAKE EXTENSION PACKAGE TO

- Loloata Island
- Tufi
- Kikori
- Rabaul / Kavieng
- Goroka / Madang
- Trobriand Islands / Alotau
- Wau / Salamaua
- Wewak / Sepik River
- Tari / Mt Hagen

After breakfast we transfer to Bulolo airstrip to board our charter flight to Port Moresby, either direct or via Lae.

Connecting outgoing flights today are:

Air Niugini PX1/QF312 to Sydney, departs 13:30 (check in at 12:00)

Airlines PNG / Pacific Blue DJ190 to Brisbane departs 13:45 (check in at 12:00)

Airlines PNG CG100 to Cairns departs 17:00 (check in at 15:30)

Air Niugini PX98/QF382 to Cairns, departs 18:25 (check in at 17:00)

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

TRIP NOTES:

1. **Risks.** Walking the Bulldog Track is significantly riskier than walking the Kokoda Track. For a start, there is water travel involved, plus higher risk of snake bite and malaria. The area is isolated and communications are poor - there are no village radios and no other trekking groups to seek help from. You will rely heavily on your guide's satellite phone in the event that you need to call for help. And unlike the Kokoda Track which has many good airstrips, the Bulldog Track has only one serviceable airstrip at Tekadu and sometimes even this strip is closed if the villagers don't cut the grass. This means medical evacuation from most locations along the Bulldog Track is only possible by helicopter, but even choppers will find very few clearings suitable for landing in these mountains. If you injure yourself while walking this route you may have to be carried by your porters on a makeshift stretcher for several hours before reaching a clearing where a helicopter can land. We have identified a number of possible medivac sites while planning this trek but they are all several hours walking apart. Travel insurance that will cover you for medical evacuation by chopper is essential for this trek and you must acknowledge and accept the risk that medivac may not be immediately available if you are injured some distance from a suitable landing site. Be aware also that here in PNG there is a shortage of helicopters available for medivac charters and if your injury is classified as non-life threatening or if you are injured in the late afternoon - however dire the circumstances - you will probably have to spend a night in pain or discomfort until next morning before a medivac chopper fly in to the closest landing site.

2. **Walking pace.** Our Bulldog Track expedition is suitable for walkers with good physical fitness who are experienced hikers and/or have undertaken adequate physical training in preparation for this trek. The trek is sensibly programmed with early morning starts on most days, allowing for arrival at each day's destination between midday and mid afternoon depending on the group's walking pace. Due to the isolation of the terrain, separation of the trekking group with faster walkers at the front and slower walkers straggling behind will not be permitted. It is not a race and fitter walkers must be prepared to slow their pace to enable the weakest walker in the group to keep up. Accelerating the trek itinerary for fast-moving groups will not be permitted for both safety and logistical reasons. In the event of communication failure it is important that our office in Port Moresby knows where the group will be camping each night. Coordination of two teams of porters also requires a set schedule. And completing the trek a day early, for example, will only cause logistical problems at Bulolo because the only hotel Pine Lodge runs at a high occupancy rate and probably will not have rooms available if the group arrives on the wrong day. Therefore the expedition group must camp each night at the village specified on the itinerary, unless there is some compelling reason for the guide to vary the itinerary in consideration of local conditions such as weather.

3. **Equipment** supplied by Ecotourism Melanesia includes cooking and eating utensils, camping lanterns and torches, tents, camp toilet and shower, satellite phone and first aid kit.

4. **Porterage.** Your trek package includes 8kg of porterage. This means you can give up to 8kg of your personal gear to one of our porters to carry. Some other trekking companies distinguish between food porters who carry only group supplies and personal porters who carry only trekkers' personal gear. However the problem with such a system is that during the trek the food porters' packs get lighter as food is used up, while the personal porters' packs don't lighten at all (in fact they may get heavier if the clothes etc they are carrying get wet). Ecotourism Melanesia operates a more equitable portering system whereby each porter carries a combination of trekkers' personal gear and group supplies. In addition to the 8kg of gear that you give to one of our porters at the start of the trek, you should plan to carry up to 5kg in your own daypack. Thus you should pack a total maximum 13kg of personal gear for the trek. (You can store additional clothing etc in a suitcase or bag at the hotel in Port Moresby while you are on the trek). Bring only the bare essentials on the trek, many trekkers make the mistake of packing too many changes of clothes and too many things that you "might" need but probably won't (like the latest Tom Clancy mega-novel or an extra pair of hiking boots). In your day pack, pack stuff that you will want access to while walking (camera, toiletries, munchies, water bottle) and pack your 8 kg of other gear (clothing, sleeping gear etc) into a separate army duffel bag or drawstring canvas bag that can be packed into one of our porters' backpacks in Port Moresby before departing on the expedition.

5. **Packing list**

- three changes of clothes (warm days, cold nights - remember that you may get soaking wet if it rains, and forget about pyjamas - you will sleep in whatever dry clothes you have)
- light hiking boots with 3 pairs of cotton/wool blend hiking socks
- small waterproof torch with spare batteries
- rain poncho (not rain coat, it won't fit your day pack underneath - you can buy a hiking poncho from any outdoors shop like Aussie Disposals - don't skimp on a PVC one, buy a good quality nylon one)
- lightweight quick-dry bath towel - just a small hand towel is enough to dry yourself with
- half a bar of soap in a leak-proof container
- a roll of toilet paper (wrap it in a large freezer bag or shopping bag to keep it dry)

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

- water bottle (1.5 or 2 litre) to carry in your day pack. Packs with a built-in water bladder are popular these days but may be difficult to refill on this trek as there are no taps en route and you will most often collect drinking water from springs and streams. An empty cordial bottle will do just as well as an expensive drink container or day pack bladder.

- your personal first aid kit (see below).

- a cap or floppy-brim hat (eg terry-towelling) that will soak up sweat, or a bandanna to tie round your head. Most of the trek involves walking in the shade of trees and river gorges. An ostentatious wide brimmed hat or akubra is not necessary and will just get in the way (and frighten the natives, and probably your fellow trekkers). Only the motor boat ride up the Lakekamu River and the grassland hiking on the last day involve unshielded exposure to the sun, so a smaller hat will do, and a bit of sun protection cream.

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

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

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

6. **Sleeping gear.** To sleep ON you must bring your own roll-up or fold-up rubber sleeping mat or compact (very) lightweight roll-up or blow-up mattress. To sleep IN, bring a lightweight sleeping bag rated for 5 degrees. We supply each trekker with a one-man tent to sleep in (two-man tents for couples) and there is a zipper with insect netting at the entrance of the tent to keep creepy-crawlies out. In some locations if it is too hot to sleep in small tents and there are no mosquitoes or other creepy crawlies around we sometimes just rig a couple of tarpaulins as a big open-sided fly tent and everybody dosses down on a big ground sheet underneath.

7. **Trekwear.** We recommend wearing long pants on Day 1 to 3 to protect you from the sun while travelling on the river and from leeches and jungle scratches on the hike from Niukeva to Avi Avi River. From Day 4 onwards we suggest shorts because there are numerous points where you will wade knee-deep, thigh-deep or even waist-deep through running creeks. When wearing shorts with hiking boots, some trekkers say ankle-covers (gators) and/or shin-covers will be helpful for keeping water, mud and grass seeds off your boots while others snicker and say gators are over-kill. Also, if you think you'll need a walking stick let one of the porters cut one from the jungle for you instead of buying some expensive contraption from a camping store.

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

8. **Bathing.** During the trek you will bathe in creeks and rivers or under a camp shower, usually in front of fellow trekkers, our porters, and sometimes village people. Bathing or showering nude in the open will not be appropriate so we suggest male trekkers bathe in shorts or underwear and ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing. After bathing, get changed and hang your shorts or undies near the camp fire to dry out.

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

- something to treat bites and scratches and inflamed skin (eg Soov cream which contains anaesthetic)
- some antibiotic powder (not antiseptic - Dettol cream etc is useless for preventing infection in the tropical jungle, you have to hit skin wounds with antibiotics straight away).
- one strip (12 tabs) of paracetamol or aspirin for general pain relief
- small nail clippers for clipping off bits of skin from blisters etc (but don't pack the nail clippers in your hand luggage or the airport security will go bananas)
- something to prevent and treat chafing between the legs, eg petroleum jelly or lanoline/sorbolene cream
- a small tube of sun protection cream
- blister dressings (shoes rubbing skin off feet is probably the number one problem with long treks like this - forget about Band Aids and Leukoplast because they won't stick, bring a small roll of Elastoplast fabric sticking plaster or Snowflake zinc oxide plaster, the type that makes you scream when you pull it off, that's the only stuff that will keep a wad of gauze bandage firmly covering the spots where your skin has rubbed off and blisters are developing (this strong sticking plaster is also good for closing deep cuts that would normally need stitches). Also a couple of gauze bandages that you can cut lengths of, to fold into wads to cover your blisters or pack wounds. (If you wear light hiking boots that fit you well and have already been worn-in for a couple of weeks, with thick woollen socks, you probably won't get blisters.)

Spend some time on making your personal first aid kit as lightweight as possible - too many trekkers make

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

the mistake of bringing a big tube of everything which is just dead weight. Your trek guide carries a tropical first aid kit with adequate supplies for the group, so if you forget something or run out of something you have that as a backup. Also every other trekker will be carrying a little first aid kit and most of them won't use it much so there will be plenty of supplies available within the group.

Your personal kit should also be tuned to your individual needs (eg if you are asthmatic, make sure you bring a Ventolin puffer, and so on). To reduce size and weight of your first aid kit, squeeze out two thirds of each tube and keep this in other containers at home, and pack the tubes with remaining ointment to take with you. Pack your little first aid kit into a toiletries bag together with your soap, shaving razors etc.

10. Guide and porters. Your trekking party will include an English-speaking guide (trek leader) who has traversed the track many times before and knows the area well. In addition we provide sufficient porters to carry the equipment and supplies we provide plus 8kg of your personal gear. Porters will not only carry gear but will also support you over difficult parts of the Track and carry you to the nearest chopper clearing if you slip and break your leg, heaven forbid. Porters enjoy helping visitors cross the Track and they appreciate the opportunity for employment that you are giving them so doesn't feel self-conscious about somebody else doing the work.

11. Food. Unlike on the Kokoda Track where we purchase much of the trek food from local villagers, most of the catering on this expedition is camp food. The villages along the Bulldog Track are only tiny hamlets and do not have sufficient food gardens to feed visiting groups of 20-30 people (remember you will have porters with you as well). The lack of radio communication in these villages also means we are unable to give advance notice to villagers to have food ready. So while we will gratefully purchase any fresh food offered to us en route, we will not rely on this. The exception is our first night at Urulau village, where a good spread of fish and vegetables is always provided for us.

Camp breakfasts will be billy tea, muesli or oatmeal with damper, fried scones or pancakes. Lunch will be noodles, crackers with tinned tuna or baked beans, energy bar, cheese stick and dried fruit. Dinner will be rice, pasta or powdered potato with tinned or rehydrated stew. As much as possible we get both trekkers and porters involved in preparing breakfast and dinner, as this provides good opportunities for social interaction. (Hiking in single file along a narrow track makes 'getting to know you' a little difficult).

Of course, all our hard rubbish is carried out again and disposed of at proper municipal rubbish dumps at Wau or Bulolo at the end of the trek.

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

12. Drinking water along the Bulldog Track is mainly collected from pure mountain springs as we walk along. Spring water along this route is as pure as it gets and does not require boiling or chemical sterilisation. However clean drinking water is not available at Urulau, Bulldog or Niukeva and therefore we bring along sufficient commercially bottled water to last for the first three days. On the last day of walking, clean spring water from Kudjeru will last you through to Winima. If you do happen to experience runny poo on the trek, it won't be from faecal contamination in the water you are drinking but more likely just an adjustment issue as your gut gets used to water with a different mineral and bacterial composition compared to what you drink back home. An anti-diarrhoea pill and a bit of extra toilet paper will usually fix you up.

During the trek you must remember to drink as much as you can to avoid dehydration. Dehydration can creep up on you and knock you out with no warning ... one minute you're walking along, next minute you're flat on the ground. Take frequent sips of water while walking.

If perchance you get stuck at a village or camping site where there is no clean water available due to recent rains, the porters will boil water or use chlorine tablets to sterilise water for drinking.

If you are really worried about water, there is a new product available in camping stores called Steripen which is a penlight-sized U/V water steriliser that runs on AA batteries. You just stir it through a cup of water to sterilise it from any harmful bacteria. Of course, both Steripen and sterilisation tablets don't remove solid contaminants.

13. Safety and insurance. Before travelling to Papua New Guinea we like you to supply a letter from your doctor to state that you are fit for 7 days strenuous walking, and this might be a good opportunity to also have a medical check-up to confirm that all is well. However despite being fit and in good health, you must recognise that there is every possibility that you may suffer an injury or illness during your trek. Your guide will keep an eye on your condition during the trek and your porters will support and assist you with traversing difficult parts of the walk, but no matter how experienced a hiker you are there is always a chance you will

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

slip on a mossy rock and break a leg or arm. You may get a scratch that quickly gets infected and makes your arm or leg swell up. You may suffer a severe gastric reaction to something you eat.

If you fall ill or have an accident while on the Bulldog Track we have a contingency plan in place. Our guide carries a mobile satellite phone for contacting our Port Moresby office, from where we can arrange for a medical evacuation. If you require medical assistance along the Bulldog Track we are going to call in a helicopter to airlift you to Port Moresby without hesitation. For legal reasons our guide cannot allow you to keep on walking if at any point he believes you are not in a fit condition to do so. The cost of airlifting you out to Port Moresby will be about AUD\$4000 depending on where you have to be retrieved from, and it is one of the terms and conditions of our trekking contract that you acknowledge that medical assistance, including medical evacuation, is provided "at the cost of the trekker and/or the trekker's insurer". Most standard travel insurance policies include medical evacuation cover (check to make sure at the point of sale). You can buy a travel insurance policy over the counter from any travel agent or airline office in Australia for about \$200, or from various insurers' websites (eg www.covermore.com.au). Once you have purchased your travel insurance policy please e-mail us the details including name of insurer, your policy number, and the emergency phone number given on the policy document (ie the number to call if you need urgent help from the insurer - make sure it is a direct line number and not a 13 number or 1800 number because we cannot ring these Australian freecall numbers from here in PNG).

14. **Training program.** Which brings us to the next point, preparing yourself for the walk. You may find this expedition to be an extremely difficult and distressing experience if you are not physically prepared. If you are not an experienced bushwalker and/or a person with a high level of fitness, we recommend that you commence a training program at least 8 weeks before the trek, consisting of daily walks at medium pace up and down moderately steep hills for at least 1 hour per day. If you have no hilly streets in your area, the next option is to climb up and down flights of stairs for the same period of time. When walking the Bulldog Track you will have plenty of opportunities to stop and rest whenever you are tired so you should stop and rest frequently while training too. On weekends if you have more time available, increase your training to 2-3 hours per day - an organised bushwalk in your area is a great substitute for walking up and down streets or stairs. Carry a water bottle with you while training, and practice taking frequent sips of water to prevent dehydration, which may not be such a danger in your home area but here in the humid tropics your newly-formed habit of drinking while walking will be a wise investment. After 2 weeks of training carrying nothing, you should start carrying a light day pack while doing your training, gradually increasing the weight up to about 5 kg which is what you will be expected to carry on the Bulldog Track. After doing your training if you are still not 100% confident you can carry a 5 kg day pack 6 hours a day for 7 days on the Bulldog Track then you should reconsider whether you are capable of doing this walk. Do not take the risk of exhausting yourself and having to be flown out by medivac chopper.

15. **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. From Day 1 to Day 3 on this expedition you will be in a malarial area. The Lakekamu River is a particularly high-risk location as the malaria parasites carried by Anopheles mosquitoes in this area appear to be particularly virile with an accelerated incubation period after you are infected by the mosquito bite. Once you get to Tekadu the risk of malaria drops dramatically as the Anopheles mosquitoes do not breed at altitudes above 300 metres.

The best way to avoid contracting malaria is to avoid being bitten by the type of mosquito that carries the malaria parasite, ie the female Anopheles mosquito. These mosquitoes are particularly active a few hours after dusk and a few hours before dawn. They are rarely seen during daytime. In your insect-proof tent during the pre-dawn hours you will be safe. The risky time is during the evening. Reduce the risk by wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirt in the evenings, and spray or roll insect repellent on exposed areas like face, neck and hands. Stay close to the camp fire because the smoke repels mosquitoes.

The second line of defence is prophylaxis, ie taking preventive medication before, during and after you visit a malarial area. There are a number of prophylactic 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 researchers discovered that doxycycline is also a very effective anti-malaria medication. The advantage of taking daily doxycycline to prevent malaria, if you can be sure to remember to take it every day, is that your blood remains saturated with a broad-spectrum antibiotic and this also prevents cuts and scratches from becoming infected, and may stave off chest coughs and other internal infections.

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

The incubation period for the malaria parasite is usually a minimum of seven days so even if you get bitten by a malaria mosquito on your first day here you may not experience malaria symptoms until you are back at

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

home. Thus, if you fall ill after returning home please don't try to "sleep it off", you must go to the doctor and inform him/her that you have been in PNG. Malaria symptoms include body aches and pains, diarrhoea, headache, high temperatures, fever and chills - feeling cold while your body is actually hot. In other words, malaria symptoms are very similar to flu symptoms and easily mistaken, so be aware.

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

16. Visas. You can apply for a tourist visa on arrival at Port Moresby airport. The cost is PGK100 (about \$50), and must be paid in local currency. Getting your tourist visa issued will be quick and easy if you have a copy of this tour itinerary handy to show the immigration officer. Please note your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it in order to be issued a PNG visa. If you are not a citizen of Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, or the USA please contact us for special advice on visas.

We do not recommend that you send your passport to a PNG diplomatic mission in Australia to get your visa because occasionally passports go missing in the mail.

17. Money. You should change about AUD\$200 to PNG Kina at a bank or currency exchange booth in Australia before departure to pay for your tourist visa on arrival and to pay for any bar drinks etc on your first and last nights. If you are just coming in to walk the Bulldog Track and straight out again you probably won't need more than this.

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

You can also exchange AUD cash over the counter at the airport banks located outside the international terminal.

If you happen to arrive without any PNG Kina in your pocket to pay for your tourist visa, you can exchange some AUD cash to PNG currency at the bureau-de-change in the Customs area to pay for your visa. The immigration officer will allow you to pass through the barrier, go to the bureau-de-change to exchange your money and come back to the immigration counter to pay for your visa.

18. Gifts and tips. Giving gifts and tips to porters, village people etc is not expected but visitors usually ask us "what makes a good gift?" so this information is provided accordingly. For porters, most trekkers find that there are usually one or two porters that they take a shine to during the trek - the one who carries your stuff or the one who pulls you out of the creek etc - and they would like to leave them with a gift or a tip or both. For gifts, something they can use back in their village or things that they can use on future treks make good gifts, eg small waterproof torches that take 2 x AA batteries, hiking socks, T-shirts, cheap sports watches. At the end of the trek you are also welcome to give the porters anything you don't want or need to take home with you (eg your torch or even your used, smelly and dirty items of clothing, towels, socks, shoes, first aid items the porters come from poor families and they gratefully accept anything in any condition).

We pay our porters above-average local wages but if you would really like to give a tip then we suggest no more than PGK50 (about A\$25) otherwise it could cause dissention in the group. There will be two cohorts of porters on your expedition, the first cohort will turn back at Yanina and you will part with the second cohort at Winima. There won't be any speeches or gift-giving formalities at either point so if you are planning to give a tip to a porter you should have a banknote folded up and palmed in your hand ready to pass on discreetly as you give the porter a parting handshake.

19. Village donations. If you would like to contribute something to the villages you pass through then we suggest you bring useful things to give to the village schools - this is a way of ensuring your contribution benefits all families in the village. There are little village schools for Year 1 to Year 6 at Tekadu, Kudjeru and Winima only. Don't bring toys, balloons etc. Bring wall maps (The World, Pacific Ocean, Australia, Europe, Africa etc), wall posters (eg animals, plants, machines, famous people, illustrated alphabet or numerals), small reference books (eg pocket dictionary, thesaurus, slimline atlas, fact books) or children's paperback novels with basic reading level (eg Enid Blyton etc). Writing and drawing materials like crayons, pencils, pens, maths sets are also helpful. Don't bring paper or exercise books as they already have adequate supplies of these. Just bring a couple of items at most (to give to ONE school only - you can't help everybody) otherwise our trek weight will increase dramatically. Donated items should be given to the school head

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg

teacher in the village of your choice, not to individual children - this way all of the kids will have access to the materials.

Ecotourism Melanesia is currently formulating a scheme to provide sustained assistance to the village clinics along the Bulldog route so if you would like to make any cash donations or organise some fundraising back at home we will be happy to funnel your donations into medical supplies that we will personally purchase in Port Moresby and deliver to the village during our treks.

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

E-mail ecomel@online.net.pg • Website www.em.com.pg