



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM61 - SIMBAI EASY TREK PACKAGE FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

3 nights ex-Madang (1 nt Simbai, 1 nt Kamboin, 1 nt Kanains)
with optional extension to Ramu River or Sepik River

Simbai to Kanains is a predominantly downhill walk along an overgrown four-wheel-drive track that follows the contours of ridges, with no overly steep gradients. The track is usually impassable to vehicular traffic due to landslides, and is mainly used as a footpath. This is the main walking route joining the Simbai sub-district with Aiome mission station and the Ramu River, and as you walk along you will not only enjoy chance encounters with villagers in hamlets en route, you'll also meet local walkers coming the other way, tackling the climb to Simbai. Along this route the villages are still traditional, and people still stop and stare at outsiders. Your chances of meeting another tourist out here are about nil. The flora and fauna along the track is of great variety - wild orchids grow everywhere and birds of paradise and furry mammals are common but eagerly hunted by locals so close your eyes if you are squeamish.

On arrival at Simbai you may wish to opt for an extra night to explore the local caves or do some day hiking in the Kaironk River valley (more remote / more traditional people but more difficult walking). At the end of the standard easy trek (Kanains) you can keep walking and take the Ramu River and Bogia extension or fly out to Timbunke for the Sepik River extension.

For information on Simbai and the Kalam tribe go to our web site www.em.com.pg, click on "TOURIST INFO BY PROVINCE" then follow the links to "Madang" and "Simbai - home of the Kalam tribe".

PACKAGE COST: (per person)

	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 3	Group of 4
Standard 3-night package	PGK 4,029	PGK 3,471	PGK 3,171	PGK 3,064
Extra nights Simbai area trekking/caving*	PGK 300	PGK 300	PGK 300	PGK 300
Extend to Ramu River and Bogia 4 nts	PGK 6000	PGK 4000	PGK 3000	PGK 2500
Extend to Sepik River 2 nts **	PGK 9000	PGK 5000	PGK 4000	PGK 3500
Extra nights Sepik River touring	PGK 950	PGK 600	PGK 500	PGK 400
Extend from Sepik to Kairiru Island 2 nts ***	PGK 3500	PGK 2500	PGK 2000	PGK 1750

*Extra nights Simbai trekking includes village guest house accommodation, meals, local guide and porters for day hiking, village gratuities

**Sepik River extension 2 nights includes charter flight Aiome to Timbunke, village accom, food, guide, daily river touring by motorised canoe with driver and fuel, village gratuities

***Kairiru Island extension 2 nights includes return water transfers to Kairiru Island, all village activities and entertainment, village gratuities, one night village guest house (with meals), one night Wewak hotel (room only).

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PACKAGE INCLUSIONS - STANDARD PACKAGE (SIMBAI TO KANAINS) - 4 NIGHTS:

- Sector airfares Madang-Simbai and Kanains-Madang
- Three nights village guest house / village hut accommodation with local-style meals supplemented with some packaged food
- One day day-hiking around Simbai
- Two days trekking along the route from Simbai to Kanains - mostly downhill walking of moderate difficulty - with local guide and porters to carry your personal backpack and food supplies
- Kalam tribal sing-sing at Simbai
- Ecotourism Melanesia welcome kit with destination information, maps and souvenir polo shirt
- Ecotourism Melanesia tour monitoring and contingency support

INCLUSIONS - OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO RAMU RIVER AND BOGIA - 4 NIGHTS:

- Three nights village accommodation with local-style food and camp rations (Asai River, Atemble, Ramu River)
- Two days motorised canoe or dinghy hire from Atemble to Base Camp including guide, driver and fuel
- Bottled or boiled water for the river trip
- Road transfer from Base Camp to Bogia (private vehicle)
- One night 2 star guest house accommodation at Anua Negu Lodge, Bogia with dinner and breakfast
- Full day road transfer from Bogia to Madang, with stops (private vehicle). Lunch not included.

INCLUSIONS FOR OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO SEPIK RIVER - 2 NIGHTS:

- Light aircraft charter flight Simbai-Timbunke
- Two nights Middle Sepik river touring, overnights in village huts, includes guide, motorised canoe, fuel, food, bottled water, village gratuities
- Road transfer from Pagwi (Middle Sepik) to Wewak

INCLUSIONS FOR OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO KAIRIRU ISLAND - 2 NIGHTS:

- Return water transfers to Kairiru Island
- Village tour, village sing-sing, other activities as described
- One night village guest house with meals
- One night share twin hotel accom in Wewak town, room only + airport transfer

EXCLUSIONS:

- Excess baggage charges on light aircraft sectors
- Tips

ITINERARY FOR STANDARD 3-NIGHT SIMBAI EASY TREK PACKAGE

DAY 1:

MADANG TO SIMBAI

0700 Check in at Madang airport for your light aircraft flight to Simbai (your ticket will be available for collection at the check-in counter).
NB Simbai flights do not operate on a fixed schedule - departure and arrival times are flexible to meet the needs of passengers and cargo customers at various remote airstrips around the Madang province, and therefore you may need to be patient if the aircraft has to do a run to another airstrip and back before doing the Simbai run. Unless the weather is really bad, the Simbai flight always operates Mon-Sat but you may have to wait.

On arrival at Simbai airstrip you will be met by our local guide with a few extra guys to help carry bags. From the airstrip it is a 30 minute hike to the Kalam Guest House NEAR Nugent village where you will spend your first night.

Today you will explore the tiny Simbai government outpost, visit the little Kalam Culture Centre which has displays of traditional tribal artifacts, and walk around a couple of the satellite villages within an hour's walk of Simbai. This

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will be an opportunity to learn some basics of the Kalam tribal culture, and a few words of the language, before venturing further afield.

Overnight Kalam Guest House, Simbai.

A traditional Kalam tribal sing-sing will be held in your honour this evening.

DAY 2:

SIMBAI TO KAMBOIN

After breakfast, commence hiking with your guide and porters along the rough vehicular track (some call it a "road") that links Simbai with Aiome mission station.

The track follows the contours of the hills, undulating with a net downhill gradient but no very steep inclines or descents because the route was originally surveyed as an access road for vehicles. (Regular landslides during the wet season cause the track to be impassable to vehicles most of the time.)

As you walk you will have opportunities to enjoy visiting with the people and observing the native flora and fauna en route. Wild orchids, birds of paradise and furry mammals are common in this area - your guide will help you spot them and hopefully will resist the primal urge to trap and kill them, which is what they have been taught to do since they were old enough to walk.

Today's hike will take about 5 hours including side-trips into the forest and occasional stops to visit villagers in hamlets en route. If you need more time than this to walk at a slower pace, or make frequent stops, or take a side trip into the forest for bird-watching, your guide will follow your lead. It's your trek. The itinerary is designed so that even the slowest tortoise will still arrive at Kamboin before dusk.

Apart from impromptu stops at hamlets along the way there will be a scheduled lunch stop, at Kambaneng village about 3 hours from Simbai.

Early to mid afternoon, arrive at Kamboin Forest Hut, a lovely native-style lodging that fits snugly in the surrounding environment. People from a village down in the valley operate the hut and they will cater dinner for you. (*Lunch and breakfast supplies are flown in with you from Madang and carried by your porters*).

DAY 3:

KAMBOIN TO KANAINS

This morning shortly after you commence walking from Kamboin you can turn off the trail and follow a creek upstream about 20 minutes to a waterfall marked on the map as "Falls" (optional, if you are walking well).

Another 3 to 4 hours walking from Kamboin and passing through a number of hamlets brings you to Kanains village. If you are interested in birds, the guest house owner can take you out for a bird-watching foray before dusk. There are some good bird of paradise nesting sites around Kanains and late afternoons is a good viewing time. No promises, but good possibilities to see male birds in display mode. BYO binoculars.

Overnight Kanains village guest house.

DAY 4:

KANAINS TO MADANG

After breakfast, a short walk to the airstrip and wait for today's light aircraft flight to Madang.

End of standard Simbai Easy Trek package or select extension to Ramu River or

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Sepik River.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO RAMU RIVER AND BOGIA - 4 NIGHTS

DAY 4:

KANAINS TO ASAI RIVER

After breakfast, continue trekking with your guide and porters downhill towards Aiome. After 5 hours you will arrive at the Asai River and overnight here. Today's walking is a consistent descent to the Asai River flood plain. As you descend you will notice the increase in temperature and humidity as you pass through the highlands/coastal inversion layer. Down on the plain it is flat ground which makes for easier walking but now you have the heat and humidity to contend with, which is quite energy-sapping, especially if it is a hot dry day.

Overnight Asai River village hut.

DAY 5:

ASAI RIVER TO ATEMBLE

Another two to three hours easy walking from Asai River is the Aiome mission station. Aiome is the "big smoke" compared to Simbai. There is a high school, catholic mission, small government office and a few little trade stores. Stop here for lunch and treat yourself to a cold Coke from the shop - well, it will be cold if the station generator is working.

From Aiome it is another 3 hours walking to the Ramu River. Atemble village on the south bank is the landing place for canoes and outboard dinghies.

NOTE about possible vehicle transport to Ramu River. There is a vehicular track between Aiome and Atemble that is used to ferry passengers and cargo to and from the river, but vehicles are not always available and most of the time people walk and carry.

If perchance there is a serviceable vehicle at Aiome and you are flagging and would prefer to hire this vehicle to drive you to Atemble instead of walking, you are welcome to do so but this will be at your own additional expense (K200 approx).

This itinerary does not assume the availability of serviceable vehicles at Aiome because sometimes there are none. There is no road link from Aiome to the outside world and there are only a few vehicles at Aiome that just do local runs around the area (and up to Simbai if the track is clear). One vehicle is owned by the mission, one by the high school and there are one or two private trucks available for hire when they are running. Whenever the local vehicles break down they are often out of service for a long time awaiting parts - and a mechanic - to come from Madang.

At Atemble you will (hopefully) find waiting for you our outboard-powered canoe, ready to take you downstream tomorrow morning.

Overnight village accommodation, Atemble.

DAY 6:

ATEMBLE TO RAMU RIVER VILLAGE

This morning your guide from Simbai will farewell you at Atemble and hand you over to our Ramu River guide who will have also a canoe driver and helper on board to assist.

From Atemble you will spend a good part of today motoring down the river and

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depending on how far you get you will overnight at a riverbank village that your guide will select.

There is plenty of time to stop at small hamlets on the banks of the river to visit with the locals. Along the Ramu River the population is very sparse and the locals are happy to receive visitors. Most locals live in small family hamlets rather than large villages, because of limited carrying capacity of gardens planted on the riverbanks. Annual floods wash away the gardens and food crops have to be replanted at the beginning of each dry season, which makes it difficult to sustain large village populations.

Overnight Ramu River village - some local food will be provided - must be time for some FISH by now!

DAY 7:

RAMU RIVER TO BOGIA

Continue motoring downstream for most of the day, arriving at "Base Camp" mid afternoon. Base Camp is the point on the Ramu River closest to Bogia and the North Coast Road to Madang. This is the jumping off point, and arrival point, for river traffic connecting with road vehicles going to Madang. There is no village here but a small resident population of fuel sellers, and a trade store. People camp here under tarpaulins while waiting for their road or river transport.

At Base Camp (again, hopefully) a vehicle will be waiting to drive you to Bogia, a small town on the coast, about 90 minutes from the river, over a fairly bumpy feeder road.

On arrival at Bogia, check in at Anua Negu Lodge, a modern guest house that will seem to you like The Ritz after so many nights in villages.

Overnight Anua Negu Lodge, Bogia (single or twin share rooms with shared bathroom) - includes dinner and breakfast.

DAY 8:

BOGIA TO MADANG

Today your hosts at Anua Negu Lodge will drive you to Madang. This will be a 6 hour road trip. The North Coast Road is tar-sealed much of the way and is quite a pleasant ride. It is a very scenic drive, with beautiful coastal panoramas. You will ask the driver to stop many times while you take photographs. The peaks volcanic Manam Island and much-larger Karkar Island will be in view for much of the trip. There are numerous pretty beaches and rivers where your driver will be happy to stop for you to take a swim or a beach walk. There will be many roadside market stalls where you will be able to buy fruit, cooked foods and delicious green drinking coconuts, so you should plan to buy your own lunch today.

Late afternoon you will arrive in Madang town and be dropped off at your accommodation (not included in package).

[End of Ramu River extension](#)

OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO SEPIK RIVER - 2 NIGHTS

DAY 4:

KANAINS / MIDDLE SEPIK

After breakfast, walk to the airstrip and wait for today's light aircraft flight to

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arrive from Madang. Today the flight will be diverted to fly you on a charter basis to Timbunke airstrip on the Middle Sepik. You should arrive at Timbunke by midday. Our Sepik guide will be waiting for you at Timbunke airstrip. A short walk from the airstrip is the mighty Sepik River and your waiting motor canoe.

If our local guide and the canoe are not there when you arrive, perch yourself on the shady lawn near the catholic church and wait there. Our guide will not be far away and may have been delayed by weather conditions or other factors. Timbunke mission station is a safe place to wait.

From Timbunke you will board the motorised canoe and travel 1 hour downstream to Tambanum, the largest village on the Sepik River. Tambanum is known locally as the "carving factory" of the Sepik due to the prolific output of its village artisans. Tour the village, inspect the men's spirit houses (males only - please display reverence) and view artefacts available for sale.

For lunch today the guide will purchase fruit and dried fish from the local people for you. Fresh green coconuts can be purchased for drinking. The local tour guide will bring with him a supply of bottled water for you.

Overnight village hut, Tambanum Village (village food and camp rations for dinner and breakfast). NB there is no village guesthouse at Tambanum and the guide will arrange a private homestay.

DAY 5:

MIDDLE SEPIK

From Tambanum, motor upstream past Mindimbit and Angriman villages. If time permits you can stop and walk around the villages and see their Haus Tambarans (men's spirit houses). These villages each have their own distinct artistic style - Mindimbit figurines are moon-faced figurines while Angriman masks and figurines have elongated faces.

Continuing upstream, by lunchtime you will arrive at the crocodile cult villages of Yentchen, Palembangi and Kanganaman. These three villages are situated close to each other on opposite sides of the river. Spend time in these villages this afternoon, your guide will introduce you to the village people and they will be proud to tell you about their traditions.

Here, the crocodile is respected and revered for its strength, stealth and hunting ability - the people identify with the crocodile and seek to be like it - boys undergo an initiation ceremony in their early teens when the skin on their back is cut in many places with a razor - without anaesthetic - and ashes or other organic material is inserted under the skin causing bumpy scars that resemble the dorsal surface of the crocodile. The skin cutting ritual occurs on average only once every two years these days due to increasing numbers of young men leaving the village to go to boarding school or look for work in Wewak and other towns - their exposure to modern culture weakens their resolve to undergo the agony of the skin cutting ritual.

Overnight Kanganaman village guesthouse (includes dinner and breakfast). Lunch today will be fruit and dried fish purchased from locals - your guide will organise this.

DAY 6:

MIDDLE SEPIK / WEWAK

From Kanganaman, motor upstream to the Pagwi Mission Station and board our waiting vehicle for the road transfer to Wewak town (3 hours). En route you can buy fresh fruit and cooked foods from roadside markets for your lunch (own expense).

The earliest you could arrive in Wewak would be 1300hrs. The trip may take longer in the case of bad weather, or problems with the motor canoe or road vehicle (flat tyre etc) but by leaving Kanganaman early around 0600 you can make allowance for contingencies.

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On arrival in Wewak, proceed straight to the airport and check in for your flight from Wewak to Port Moresby or Madang (not included in package) or overnight hotel if continuing on to Kairiru Island next day. Afternoon flights depart between 1500-1700 on different days.

End of 2 nights Sepik River extension

OPTIONAL EXTENSION FROM SEPIK RIVER TO KAIRIRU ISLAND - 2 NIGHTS

DAY 7:

WEWAK / KAIRIRU ISLAND

On arrival in Wewak, meet up with your guide from Kairiru Island who will be waiting for you at the Windjammer Beach Hotel. You may wish to have a late lunch here before going to the island (own expense).

Your guide will transfer you by motor boat (45 min) to Shagur Village on the seaward (north) side of Kairiru Island. Here, the village people will await you with an enthusiastic traditional welcome. Take a familiarisation walk around the village before dark.

This evening, the village people will entertain you by firelight with their cultural dancing, singing and some drama skits of traditional "fairy tales".

Dinner tonight will be an island-style feast with all traditional foods.

Overnight village guest house, Kairiru Island (basic accommodation, includes meals)

DAY 8:

KAIRIRU ISLAND / WEWAK

Today there is a choice of activities on this tropical paradise island.

1. full day mountain hike with village guides to the crater lake at the top of the island. This is a challenging hike, a 6-hour round trip for fast walkers. Slow walkers (and photographers!) have to make it an overnight trip and camp overnight in a lean-to at the lakeside. The crater lake is a biodiversity hotspot with a wide variety of birds, a microcosm of tropical plants, and clean water for swimming. There is no human habitation here and it is a truly pristine spot.

2. full day coastal hike first to the waterfall east of Shagur and then around to the west of Shagur to explore tidal caves, ending up at Victoria Bay where there is a nice beach and a small bubbling hot spring emanating from a rocky outcrop on the sand. The hot spring empties into the sea which makes for a great mineral spa.

3. shorter walks to the waterfall and return, around the village, along the coast to the next village, up the hill to the Japanese lookout cave.

4. canoeing. If the sea is calm, learn how to paddle a native canoe and even go out with a few of the village boys to try your luck at fishing with traditional spear or hook-and-line

5. village-based activities. Learn how to weave mats, cook local foods, build houses with leaves and sticks, cultivate tropical vegetables in the gardens, carve paddles, weapons and tools from wood.

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At 5.00pm, depart Shagur Village by motor boat for the return trip to Wewak. If you would like to stop off at Victoria Bay to take a dip in the mineral spa, stop at the St John mission to see the Japanese base relics and WW2 cemetery, or stop at Muschu Island for some snorkelling, aim to leave Shagur earlier, to have enough time for stops.

On arrival at Wewak waterfront around 1800 hrs (6.00pm), your hotel transfer bus will pick you up and transfer you to the hotel.

Overnight hotel, (either In Wewak Boutique Hotel or Windjammer Beach Hotel, according to your preference and depending on availability) - room only.

DAY 9:

DEPART WEWAK

Fly out of Wewak to Madang or Port Moresby (flight not included in package).

TRIP NOTES:

1. **Availability.** The standard package itinerary (2 nights) may commence and conclude any day of the week except Sunday because flights to and from Simbai do not operate on Sundays. Charter flights from Simbai to Timbunke are also not available on Sundays.
2. The **weather** at Simbai will be warm by day (20-25 Celcius) and cool at night (10-15 Celcius). Please bring a sweater and warm underwear, and a rain poncho. The Sepik area is always hot and humid. Only rainfall provides some variation in the weather. The rainy season is December to March but the "dry" season also has regular rainfall, so you are probably going to get wet at some point during this trip one way or another. We suggest you pack several changes of all-cotton quick-drying clothes, and a battery operated personal fan for relief from steamy humid weather, especially under your mosquito net at night.
3. **Accommodation** at village guest houses at Simbai and the Ramu or Sepik rivers is basic but comfortable. The guest houses are built in local style with bush materials. Each twin room has two single beds with rubber mattress. You will sleep in your sleeping bag and some extra blankets will be provided by the guest house. A pillow and mosquito net is also provided. There are no malaria mosquitoes at Simbai due to the high altitude (Anopheles species do not breed above 300m) but there are other species of mosquito and other bugs. The Ramu and Sepik areas are malarial areas.
4. **Food** at village guest houses and home stays will be local style based on local produce and may be dry-roasted wrapped in leaves under hot stones in the fireplace. A supply of basic packaged foods will accompany you on the plane from Madang. Our local agent in Madang will deliver this box of food supplies to you at your hotel the night before. The object of the extra food supplies is to supplement food provided in the villages, which you may find bland. Food supplies will include some flour, biscuits, cooking oil (the locals will make bread, scones or pancakes for your breakfast), tea, sugar, pasta, rice and some tinned food.
5. **Water.** A carton of bottled water will also be supplied for you to take on the plane to Simbai. If this runs out you can ask your guide to organise boiled and cooled water to refill the bottles, or you can refill directly from pure mountain springs with negligible risk of illness. Bring your own water purification tablets if you insist, but remember this is a pristine, lightly populated area where water supplies are not polluted. The Ramu and Sepik river areas are another matter and bottled water will be supplied all the way through in those areas.
6. **Toilet** facilities in the rural areas will be an out back pit latrine specially made for guests... sit-down variety. Bathing will be in an outdoor bathroom (bucket of water and scoop - water will be heated for you at Kalam Guest House only).
7. **Baggage** on the light aircraft flight to Simbai is very limited due to the small aircraft size. Limit your personal baggage to 10kg only. Leave extra baggage in Madang - your hotel or lodge will store it for you.

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8. **Warnings.** Both Simbai and the Sepik River are remote areas where there are no hospitals and the availability of medical care is very limited. Medical evacuations may be difficult to arrange. The Sepik River area is renowned for mosquitoes: be prepared with repellent and anti-malaria medication. Some activities on this tour require water travel in native canoes that do not carry safety equipment. Individuals who cannot swim are advised against taking this tour. This tour involves light hiking requiring an average level of fitness.
9. **Tour variation.** Due to prevailing weather conditions there is a 50% chance that some aspects of this tour will have to be modified at short notice. Airfields in this area are mainly grass strips which cannot be used after heavy rains and this will prevent flying in or out by air if you have booked this. Rains may also cause localised flooding in some riverside villages rendering them unsuitable for visitors. Accordingly this tour may be modified at short notice by (i) rearranging the specified destinations, (ii) substituting different villages not specified in the above itinerary. Such variations to the advertised itinerary will be at the discretion of the local tour operator in accordance with safety considerations and operational limitations.
10. **Personal gear.** For this trip we suggest you pack personal items in ziplock plastic bags to protect them from rain and canoe wake splash. Personal gear should include three or four changes of clothes, light hiking boots, plastic sandals for wearing in the canoe (shoes may get wet). Four pairs of cotton/wool blend hiking socks, a pair of light tracksuit pants or sarong to sleep in, hat with wide brim to keep sun and rain off your face, waterproof torch with spare batteries, rain poncho, quick-dry towel, your favourite soap in a leak-proof container, two rolls of your favourite toilet paper, a two-litre water container to carry with you, and your personal first aid kit. Your personal first aid kit will contain Band-aids, wound dressings, antibiotic cream (not antiseptic) for applying to cuts and scratches, antimalarial tablets, anti-diarrhoea tablets, paracetamol, Deep Heat or other muscle linament and the all-important insect repellent (some visitors say "Rid" is more effective). For sleeping, a woven mat or rubber mattress and mosquito net are provided at each destination in this tour but you should bring your own tropical sleeping bag, empty quilt cover or a bed liner of the type used at youth hostels.
11. **If you take the Sepik River extension, the trip to Kairiru Island is highly recommended by our former clients.** Kairiru Island is literally a tropical paradise and the people here have a well-prepared repertoire of cultural dances, songs and drama to perform for visitors - one of the best village cultural experiences anywhere in PNG. The village is situated amidst lush green rainforest and the houses are all traditional style, made of bush materials only. This contrasts with the inland areas of the Sepik River where the topography is fairly flat and dry, despite the presence of the watercourse, and cultural entertainment is not as energetic due to the more regular tourist visits. As Ecotourism Melanesia is currently the only tour company arranging visits to Kairiru, the number of visitors going there is relatively small and each visit is special and personal for both the village people and the visitor.