



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

F.I.T. PACKAGE ITINERARY EM3a - MIDDLE SEPIK SAFARI, 7 NIGHTS

This package features five days exploring the Middle Sepik villages, one day in Wewak and one day visiting the offshore islands of Kairiru and Muschu. The Middle Sepik villages are rich in animistic cultural beliefs and produce a prolific range of cultural artefacts such as wall masks, figurines, bilum bags, flutes, drums, implements, body decorations and bride-price shell money. Each village has its own unique artistic style.

There is very little reliable public transport in this area of PNG and it is necessary for us to arrange private hire of a minibus, lorry or four-wheel-drive vehicle to transport you to and from the Sepik River, and a dedicated motor canoe for touring along the river. Due to these high overhead costs of travel, this package is uneconomical for solo travellers and couples.

DAY 1:

WEWAK

On arrival at Wewak airport you will be met by the hotel transfer vehicle and driven to the hotel for check-in. If arriving on a morning or early afternoon flight, a guide from the hotel will be made available to show you around Wewak town (walking). The hotel is situated close to the main commercial area, market and foreshore. The market has a wide variety of fresh produce and a selection of artefacts for sale. Overnight Seaview Hotel, Wewak (standard single or twin room, includes breakfast)

DAY 2:

WEWAK / MIDDLE SEPIK (YAMOK)

Morning road trip from Wewak to the Pagwi Mission station on the Middle Sepik. Upstream from Pagwi is referred to as the Upper Sepik and downstream from Pagwi is the Middle and Lower Sepik.

Our vehicle and driver will pick you up at the hotel at 7.00am for the 5 hour drive. The road is rough and bumpy in places, so bring a travel pillow or bath towel to sit on. Initially the vehicle climbs through the Prince Alexander Range featuring high montane forest, and the road is tar-sealed as far as Maprik (2 hours from Wewak). A half hour stop will be made in Maprik where you may use restrooms and purchase refreshments. There are a number of large haus tambarans (men's spirit houses) which may be inspected here. From Maprik to Pagwi (2½ hours) the road is largely unsealed. The road passes through the Sepik plains, gradually descending in altitude down to the river basin. The vegetation along this sector consists of grassy plains interspersed with light tropical rainforest.

A packed lunch is provided by the hotel, which you may eat en route or on arrival at Pagwi while waiting for your canoe to be fuelled. Pagwi is just a scattering of houses and there are no rest facilities so a roadside comfort stop may be appropriate a few kilometres before arrival.

At Pagwi your guide will assist you to transfer to your motorised Sepik canoe and by early afternoon you will commence your downriver journey to Korogo village. From Korogo, hike inland to Yamok (90 minutes walking), a beautiful traditional Sepik village with 7 spectacular Haus Tambarans (men's spirit houses) and its own distinct style of artefacts and bilums.

At Yamok, you will tour the village and learn about the spiritual beliefs of the people. Tonight a traditional "sing-sing" will be held in your honour. Overnight village guest house, Yamok (includes dinner and breakfast).

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*NB There is an airstrip at Yamok and flying in by chartered Cessna light aircraft is a viable alternative to travelling overland via Pagwi. It costs extra but is economical for groups of 3-4 people.

DAY 3:

MIDDLE SEPIK (PALEMBEI, YENTCHEN, KANGANAMAN)

After breakfast this morning, you will hike back to Korogo with your guide and your canoe will take you further down river to the crocodile cult villages of Palembang, Yentchen and Kanganaman. These villages all have haus tambarans crammed full of carved artifacts, specialising in totem type poles. After visiting Palembang and Yentchen and learning about the crocodile scarification rituals which take place once or twice a year, you will spend the afternoon at Kanganaman observing a sago cooking demonstration and perhaps learning to paddle a small dugout canoe in the calm shallows.

In the evening you may have the opportunity to join some villagers going out for night fishing (or crocodile hunting). This activity is for the bold and courageous only. The bold and beautiful can spend the evening sitting around the men's spirit house and hear the chiefs and initiated men recount tribal legends and play their bamboo flutes and garamut drums (no TV for evening entertainment here!).

Overnight village guest house, Kanganaman (includes dinner and breakfast)

DAY 4:

MIDDLE SEPIK (CHAMBRI LAKES)

This morning your motorised canoe will transport you through narrow inland waterways that connect the main Sepik River to the Chambri Lakes. The Lakes may be semi-dry in the middle of the dry season (July/August) or filled to capacity and even flooded during the wet season (December to February).

You will see a lot of bird life today, and a lot of locals fishing with nets. One of the lakeside villages, Aibom, is renowned for its clay pottery. You can see potters at work and purchase fired pottery. Next stop, Kirimbit village has an airstrip and a mission radio, which is reassuring in case you fall ill during the first part of the trip and decide to fly out early.

The villages along the shores of the Chambri Lakes have a distinct culture and artistic style - you will be able to purchase some of the unique local art. Few tourists visit the Chambri Lakes as it is off the main river so you will "have the place to yourself".

Overnight Kirimbit village guest house (includes dinner and breakfast).

DAY 5:

MIDDLE SEPIK (MINDIMBIT)

Morning canoe meander from Kirimbit to Mindimbit village which is back on the main Sepik River. Mindimbit again has its own distinct artistic style featuring moon-faced figurines. Spend the afternoon and overnight at Mindimbit.

Overnight village guest house, Mindimbit (includes dinner and breakfast).

DAY 6:

MIDDLE SEPIK / WEWAK

From Mindimbit you will stop at Angriman village en route to Timbunke, a small riverside township where you will be met at 12 noon by our vehicle for the 4-hour road transfer back to Wewak. (Alternatively a 20-minute Cessna charter flight from Timbunke to Wewak can be arranged at extra cost).

Overnight Seaview Hotel, Wewak (standard single or twin room, includes breakfast)

DAY 7:

WEWAK ISLANDS

After breakfast, an open speed boat will transfer you from the Wewak foreshore (located just a few minutes walk down the hill from your hotel) to the offshore islands of Kairiru and Muschu. Kairiru is a mountainous, forest-covered island with

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waterfalls and hot springs – the Japanese had an operations base here during World War 2. Muschu is a low-set island surrounded by pretty beaches with great snorkelling reefs. You will spend the morning on Kairiru including a village tour, rainforest walk, cultural entertainment and tropical island lunch. In the afternoon, transfer over to Muschu and spend some hours beachwalking, swimming and snorkelling (BYO mask and snorkel or some gear is available for hire). Late afternoon, transfer by speed boat back to Wewak. Overnight Seaview Hotel, Wewak (standard single or twin room, includes breakfast)

(Overnight on Kairiru or Muschu Island instead of Seaview Hotel is available, but not if you are booked on the early morning flight out of Wewak).

DAY 8: Fly out of Wewak.

PACKAGE COST (RACK RATES)

Currency	Per person, group of 1	Per person, group of 2	Per person, group of 3	Per person, group of 4
AUD	6,198	3,384	2,634	2,118
USD	4,879	2,664	2,074	1,667
EUR	3,692	2,016	1,569	1,262
GBP	2,505	1,368	1,065	856
PGK	13,187	7,200	5,604	4,507

INCLUSIONS

- meet and greet at Port Moresby and Wewak airports
- welcome kit including maps, destination information, phone calling card and Ecotourism Melanesia polo shirt
- guide for walking tour of Wewak on arrival day if time allows
- three nights standard twin-share room with breakfast only at Seaview Hotel, Wewak (2½ star)
- overland transport from Wewak to Pagwi by private vehicle and en-route stop at Maprik (includes driver and fuel)
- packed lunch from Seaview Hotel on Day 2
- Sepik River guide (5 days)
- private-hire motor canoe transport from Pagwi to Timbunke, via designated villages including driver and fuel (includes return-to-base fee)
- village tour at each village en route, village gratuities
- at least one cultural performance (sing-sing) en route, either at Yamok or another village
- village guest house accommodation at each village, including local-style dinner and breakfast
- sago-making demonstration at one of the villages en route
- other village-based activities (eg fishing, joining in men’s or women’s activities) as opportunities arise
- overland transport from Timbunke to Wewak by private vehicle (includes driver and fuel)
- full day Wewak Islands trip including return water transfers, village tour and rainforest walk, cultural performance, traditional-style lunch, beach activities
- transfer to Wewak airport on departure

EXCLUSIONS

- airfares
- bar drinks, tips, souvenirs, personal items
- bottled water and first aid requirements
- dinners at Seaview Hotel
- lunches at Middle Sepik villages

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NOTES

- 1. Flexibility.** The tour itinerary is designed to be flexible to accommodate your interests. At each village your guides will be happy to follow your lead and provide the activities you prefer. If your interest is in art, the guides will show you through the Haus Tambarans (men's spirit houses) with their unique collections of Sepik spirit art, and give you time to inspect the artifacts for sale at each village. (NB Some villages do not allow females inside their Haus Tambarans). If your interest is in flora and fauna the guides will take you on a nature walk at each village to view local flora including wild orchids and wild vanilla, plus a huge variety of rainforest and river birds including possibly the shy cassowary and birds of paradise. If your interest is in walking your guides will take you on hikes inland from the river to visit settlements that receive hardly any outsiders and here you will see a more candid view of traditional Sepik village life.
- 2. Warnings.** The Sepik River is a remote area 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Accommodation** at village guest houses is spartan but you'll survive. Bedding may be a clean woven mat on the floor or a rubber mattress covered with a bedsheet. Aim to bring your own small rubber pillow or inflatable one. Mosquito nets will always be supplied. Toilets are long-drops, (sit-down or squat). BYO toilet paper. Also, bringing a battery-operated personal fan to help you sleep in the still air under the mosquito net is a MUST.
- 5. Meals** in villages will be based on:
 - breakfast: tea with fresh scones and fresh fruit, sago cakes
 - dinner: boiled foods or baked vegetables and fish wrapped in leaves and cooked under hot stonesVillage people in the Sepik do not normally prepare lunch. Rather, they graze on fresh fruit, smoked fish and breakfast leftovers during the day. You should bring a supply of small change for purchasing fruit and fish from village markets during the day - otherwise bring your own supply of daytime snacks.

The food that will be offered to you at the village guest houses will be freshly harvested and cooked vegetables, freshwater or saltwater fish, possibly some chicken or pork or crocodile tail - take it or leave it ! There is no electricity in the villages and leftover food is given to the village animals at the end of the day and not kept for the next day so you are unlikely to experience food poisoning. If you feel the village diet may be too bland for you, you are welcome to bring additional favourite food items with you - village people will not be offended. Dehydrated packet pasta, tinned meats, baked beans etc that you bring with you can be prepared for you by your hosts and served with your meal. A variety of food items is available from supermarkets in Wewak and Port Moresby. Your guide will carry a stock of basic foodstuffs for the trip including tea, coffee, powdered milk, sugar, flour, cooking oil.
- 6. Drinking water.** You will not be given murky river water to drink. Village water supplies are piped from clean springs or rainwater tanks and are generally safe to drink. However any change in water composition can upset your gut (even drinking the water supply from two different towns in your home country). Therefore to prevent the inconvenience of diarrhoea during your trip you may wish to take your own stock of bottled water with you from Wewak. Bottled water from Wewak supermarkets is cheap and there will be plenty of room in the vehicle and the canoe for as much water as you wish to take. Alternatively you can ask your village hosts to boil and cool water for you to drink, or ask for green coconut juice to drink as this is always sterile (and yummy). There is also a new product on the market called "Steripen" which is a battery operated UV water steriliser similar in size and shape to a penlight. Stirring it through a glass of water for a few seconds sterilises the water with ultraviolet light. Steripen (or similar product) is available from most camping stores.
- 7. Climate.** 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.
- 8. 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

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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.

9. **Bathing.** During this tour you will bathe in creeks and rivers, usually in front of other people. Bathing without clothes may offend villagers. Male visitors may bathe in shorts. Ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing. Village guesthouses and homestays may also provide drums of water behind a privacy screen where you can bathe by scooping water over yourself.

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