



# Ecotourism Melanesia

Promoting sustainable community-based tourism in the South West Pacific

## DETAILED ITINERARY FOR: MT LAMINGTON SLOPES TREK - 8 DAYS 7 NIGHTS (TOUR CODE EM08)

The southern slopes of Mt Lamington are inhabited by the Omie people, isolated from the outside world until an airstrip was built in recent times. There are no shops, government stations or medical facilities in this district. In 2002 the first westerner in 30 years trekked through the territory. The Omie tribe now welcomes small numbers of visitors for guided treks to experience their untouched forest and vibrant culture with its colourful traditional dress and energetic dancing, all rarely seen by outsiders. The world's largest butterfly, the Queen Alexandra birdwing can be seen in its natural habitat here. This tour is a challenging hike which follows a circuitous route commencing at Godibehi village near the Asafa airstrip and overnight stays at three other villages before arriving back at Godibehi from a different direction. All overnights are in village huts and village-style food is supplied (mainly fruit and vegetables). You will be accompanied on your trek by at least one English-speaking guide (probably two or three). Hiking in Omie territory without local guides is not permitted.

### Day 1

Departing early morning from the Airlines PNG freight terminal you will travel on a Twin Otter "freight and fares" flight from Port Moresby to Asafa airstrip in the Oro Province. On arrival at the airstrip you will be met by village guides who will accompany you on the 30 minute walk to Godibehi village where a traditional welcome will await you - have your camera ready! At Godibehi you will meet Omie tribal elders and spend the day exploring the village and environs. Overnight village homestay at Godibehi ([basic village homestay](#)).

### Day 2

As the sun rises and as the clouds begin to lift from the valleys below, you will commence a three hour walk to Jaipa village. This small village is perched on a spur of Mount Lamington with views across valleys to distant ranges. The accommodation is located in the middle of the village. At night there will most probably be a full scale traditional Omie sing sing. Overnight village homestay at Jaipa.

### Day 3

A four hour walk to Budo village. Overnight village homestay at Budo.

### Day 4

A six hour walk following mountain streams to beautiful Savodobehi village - the Omie people's centre of culture. On your arrival at Savodobehi there will be a traditional Omie welcome and then, in the evening, traditional food dinner and stories about the Omie culture. At Savodobehi you will overnight in a village guest house a couple of hundred metres away from the village itself, set amidst mountain rainforest ([basic village guest house](#)).

### Day 5

"Rest" day at Savodobehi. Just before dawn, walk into the hills to witness a display of birds of paradise or search for rock wallabies, tree kangaroos, cuscus and cassowaries. During the day, watch as master tapa makers create magnificent designs on their tapa cloth. At night, traditional dancing and singing.

### Day 6

A four hour hike ending up back at Godibehi. Overnight village homestay at Godibehi.

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## Day 7

"Rest" day at Godibehi with bird watching, river swimming, farewell feast and dancing. Walk to the gardens and along the streams in search of birds of paradise or other wildlife including the world's largest butterfly, the giant Queen Alexandra Birdwing which is common in this area. At night there will be a farewell feast followed by a full scale Omie sing sing. Overnight village homestay at Godibehi.

## Day 8

Short walk to Asafa airstrip to wait for your return flight to Port Moresby that will sweep you away from the Omie people and leave you wondering if it was all a dream - until you develop your photos!!!

### TOUR NOTES:

1. **About the Omie territory.** This trek offers a close encounter with some of Papua New Guinea's mountainous natural beauty and cultural heritage. While trekking through the mountains in Omie territory you will not only hear the call of many different birds of paradise but you will be able to watch their ritualistic displays at dawn and at dusk. There are many different kinds of rock wallabies and tree kangaroos that live in the hills surrounding Mt Lamington. As you walk along the trails across the streams and through the village gardens, you will be mesmerised by the beauty of the brilliantly coloured butterflies, including the famous Queen Alexandra Birdwing. The Omie people have fiercely defended their right to maintain their traditional customs - although they are no longer cannibals! Possibly the most memorable times for visitors are when they watch as the Omie people, bare-chested and dressed in tapa cloth and magnificent feather head-dresses, dance to the rhythmic beat of their kundu drums. Great teams of dancers challenge each other as they dance on through the night. Visitors are welcome to participate and learn the dance routines. On clear nights, the skies are filled with a million stars and often you will see giant trees illuminated by the twinkling lights of thousands and thousands of fireflies.
2. **What to bring.** You will sleep in village homes and guest houses so there will be no need to bring any camping equipment. The hiking follows established walking trails and there is no strenuous climbing or hacking through jungle involved. You will only need to bring your own personal gear. Any additional luggage can be stored at Ecotourism Melanesia's office in Port Moresby. Your willing guides will assist with carrying your personal gear, but keep it light nevertheless. You should pack your personal gear into a medium size lightweight pack (preferably waterproof with an internal frame). You may find it helpful to pack your personal items in garbage bags or ziplock plastic bags to protect them from the wet, especially your camera and Mars bars.
3. **Personal gear** includes three or four changes of clothes (warm days, cool nights, possibly lots of rain - be prepared), light hiking boots (don't go overboard - it isn't Mt Everest) with 6 pairs of cotton/wool blend hiking socks, a pair of light tracksuit pants or similar to sleep in, hat with wide brim to keep sun and rain off your face, waterproof torch with spare batteries, rain poncho, quickdry towel, your favourite soap in a leakproof container, two rolls of your favourite toilet paper, a one-litre water bottle to carry with you, and your personal first aid kit. Your personal first aid kit will contain Band-aids, blister dressings, topical cream for bites and grazes, antibiotic cream for cuts and scratches, antimalarial tablets, paracetamol, Deep Heat or other muscle liniment and the all-important insect repellent. Some trekkers say "Rid" is more effective.
4. For **sleeping** we suggest you bring a tropical sleeping bag, a bed liner of the type used at youth hostels, or an empty doona cover that you can sleep inside. Night temperatures go down to 10 degrees Celcius occasionally. Your sleeping bag or sheet is also to protect you from mosquitoes and other insects while sleeping.
5. **Bathing.** During the trek you will bathe in creeks and rivers, usually in front of other people. Bathing without clothes may offend village people. Male trekkers may bathe in shorts. Ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing.
6. **Accommodation.** One feature of this trek is that all food and accommodation along the way is supplied by villagers. This gives you a wonderful opportunity to sample the traditional lifestyle of the Omie people while giving them an opportunity to earn a little cash income from your presence. (Ecotourism Melanesia pays each village for your food and accommodation so there is no need for you to make additional payments in the villages. However you are welcome to stash a few small gifts in your pack to give to people you connect with along the way.)
7. **Food.** All meals are prepared and served by the villagers. All vegetables are fresh from the gardens, fish are fresh from mountain streams and game meat is fresh from the forest. The staple for most meals is sweet potato, often boiled, baked or simmered in coconut milk. Sweet potato is accompanied by other

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vegetables such as yam, pumpkin, taro, beans, corn, tomatoes, various types of edible leaves, cabbage and some varieties of banana which require cooking. You may also be served freshwater fish, local chicken or wild pig. Many of the meals are prepared by first wrapping the raw vegetables and protein in banana leaves and then slowly cooking the food parcels between layers of red hot river stones. On other occasions, the raw vegetables and protein may be housed in freshly hollowed-out lengths of bamboo that are sealed with aromatic fern leaves before being slowly cooked beneath hot stones. In the mornings before departing for the next stage of your trek you will be served baked yam or sweet potato. BYO salt as it won't be available in the villages. There is no shortage of food in the Omie territory. The gardens are overflowing with fruit and vegetables. At every meal you will be offered far more food than you can eat, so you needn't feel hungry at any point in your trip. Your guides will carry stashes of village food to be eaten along the way between villages. However if you feel you might find fresh fruit and vegetables monotonous you are welcome to bring a box of lightweight food supplies with you that one of the guides will carry for you on the trail. You will not be expected to share your imported food with the guides as they will be happier eating their traditional foods. Basic lightweight supplies may include tea, sugar, instant noodles, instant pasta, dry biscuits, freeze dried vegetables, Weetbix, powdered milk, oatmeal etc. You may also wish to bring a stash of munchies in your day pack for eating along the trail (sweets, peanuts, trail mix etc) - be prepared to share these snacks with your guides. There are no shops in the villages therefore you must bring any extra food with you from Port Moresby.

8. **Water.** Mountain streams in the Omie territory are crystal clear and your guide will show you good places to collect drinking water from. If you prefer to stick to boiled water, a kettle of water can be boiled for you every night in the villages and poured into your water bottle next morning to carry with you for the day. Alternatively you may wish to bring your own water purification tablets, which you can purchase from most chemists, camping or army disposals stores. You are unlikely to suffer any serious gastro complaint from water you drink in the Omie territory. However you may get a bit of mild diarrhoea as your body reacts to drinking water with different biochemical composition to your supply back home. You may be able to avoid this by adding water purification tablets to all water before drinking - this adds a mild chemical taste to the water which some people find objectionable and prefer to go with runny poo instead. On the other hand, many trekkers experience no diarrhoea at all while drinking from various water sources in this pristine area. Cross your fingers. You will also have the opportunity to drink as much fresh coconut juice as you want during this trek - ask for it at any time and it will be provided. Coconut juice is sterile and delicious, and will not give you diarrhoea.
9. **Personal security.** You will be very safe in the Omie territory. The area is private traditional land that outsiders will not trespass on. In this remote rural area there is no crime. The people are all subsistence farmers who work hard on the land to grow vegetables and who hunt and gather food from the forest. You will be accompanied at all times by village guides who know the area intimately. At night as you sleep, you and your belongings will be guarded by the village people. They are very keen to see ecotourism succeed in their area and they won't take any chances with your security.
10. **Safety.** The Mt Lamington Slopes Trek is no picnic and there is every possibility that you may suffer from exhaustion, an injury or other medical problem during your trek. Your guides will support and assist you with traversing rivers and other difficult parts of the walk, but no matter how experienced a hiker you are there is always a chance you will slip and break a limb. 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 or drink. You must understand that *there are no medical facilities in the Omie territory and there is no radio contact with the outside world.* If you fall very ill or have an accident while on the trek you will have to be carried on a makeshift stretcher to the Asafa airstrip for evacuation. It is our company policy that all trekkers must have comprehensive travel insurance that includes medivac service (check with the agent that sells you the policy if medical evacuation is included). We recommend that you have a medical checkup with your doctor before leaving home to confirm that you are in fit condition to undertake this strenuous walk. You must be in good physical health and not at significant risk of requiring medical attention for a known condition while trekking. You undertake this trek at your own risk.
11. **Malaria.** Although there are no mosquitos and therefore no malaria in these mountains, trekkers may wish to travel with their own mosquito nets just in case, and to keep other insects at bay.

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