



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

ITINERARY FOR TOUR EM10B 2009

WALK THE KOKODA TRACK - SOUTH TO NORTH

7 nights package - "Basic Kokoda"

(1 night Port Moresby, 5 nights trekking, 1 night Kokoda) PGK6400 per person

Fly in, walk the Track, fly out - a shorter, slightly more challenging trekking tour with longer walking hours on some days but still a moderate pace suitable for physically fit mums and dads.

DAY 1: MONDAY

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 12:55pm

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. This will include a visit to the Bomana War Cemetery and the Schwimmer Drome private war relics display if your flight arrives on time. After the tour we will drop you back at the hotel for some leisure time.

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?

At 6.00pm 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, your porters for the trek, 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 Kokoda Campaign and the trek you are just about to undertake, with time for questions.

By 9.00pm 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 is twin share and if you 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 hotel room for the first night we can arrange this for an extra charge of \$200.

DAY 2: TUESDAY

PORT MORESBY TO OWERS CORNER THEN UA-ULE CREEK

Rise and shine at around 6am this morning, take your last hot shower for a week, and dress for trekking. 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 7.00am check out of your hotel room (please fix up any phone calls, drinks or snacks you have charged to you room) and proceed to the hotel car park with all your baggage. Your guide and porters should be waiting for you in the hotel car park by 7.00am but if they are not there right on time, please don't worry - sometimes the vehicles we hire for the trip to Owers Corner turn up a bit late at our office to pick up the porters.

Here in the hotel car park your group will "kit-up". During kit-up you will give up to 8kg of your personal gear to one of our porters who will carry this in his backpack along with another 10kg of our company equipment and food supplies. In addition you should plan to carry a day pack with no more than 5kg of your most personal items (camera, medication, water bottle etc). The gear you give to one of our porters should be packed into a soft bag like an old sleeping-bag cover or heavy duty garbage bag.

NB Your gear will be weighed in the car park with a spring scale. If you have more than the 8kg of portage that we include free in your trek package we will ask you to re-pack there-and-then in the hotel car park and remove any non-essential items to bring your gear down to 8kg. If you deem everything to be essential and the weight is still over 8kg we will have to allocate you a dedicated personal porter and charge you an additional \$500 for this service.

Also here in the hotel car park Ecotourism Melanesia staff will accept from you any baggage or empty bags you would like us to store for you while you are on-trek (eg containing your clean set of clothes to change into on returning from the trek). Safe storage of air tickets and passports at our office is also available, these will be kept in our manager's safe on the basis of "all care taken but no responsibility" - alternatively you can carry your documents with you on the trek in a waterproof wallet. All items will be collected by one of our staff there in the hotel car park and packed directly into our company vehicle and transferred directly to our office for safe storage. (If you are planning to spend an extra night at the hotel on return from Kokoda, you may instead wish to use the hotel's own baggage storage facility and safety deposit box. Storage at the hotel is safe.)

You are also welcome to pack a small overnight bag with a change of clean clothes that our tour coordinator can bring over to Kokoda on the plane while you are trekking, and have ready from you at the hospital guest house at Kokoda when you emerge from the bush so that you can spruce up before connecting onto your overseas flight the next day.

By 7.30 or 8.00am you will board our bus or passenger truck for the 2-hour

drive up to Owers Corner. Bomana War Cemetery is on-the-way to Owers Corner and if time did not allow a visit yesterday we will make a stop there en route.

By 11.00am you should be commencing the descent from the Owers Corner picnic park to Goldie River which is the first leg of the Kokoda Track. At Owers Corner you will get your last clear view of the trail all the way to Ioribaiwa Ridge. Once you descend into the bush you will quickly lose sight of the forest because of all the trees, so to speak. A fresh lunch-pack is provided for today's lunch and thereafter you will be on village food and dry rations.

Overnight Ua-Ule Creek camp site. (There is no village at the Ua-Ule Ck camp site. The trekker's hut is operated by a family who live in the next village and they may bring food in to the camp site for your stay, otherwise it will be camp rations.)

NB If your group is walking fast your guide may opt to keep going to Ofi Creek and overnight there to keep some time up your sleeve in case of delays later in the trek.

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY

UA-ULE CREEK TO MENARI

After a billy tea breakfast at dawn, a long walk today but not the hardest. Ascend Ioribaiwa Ridge (the closest point to Port Moresby reached by the Japanese), then the higher Maguli Ridge, descend to Naoro, criss-cross the Naoro River - pronounced "now-ro" - several times before arriving at Menari.

Overnight Joe Alai's guest house, Kagi (good village food is always provided for dinner here).

DAY 4: THURSDAY

MENARI TO KAGI

Start the day with a walk down to the creek and then a very long steep climb up Brigade Hill. Inspect the memorial plaque and the battlefield vista then descend to Efogi. From Efogi there is a steep descent and ascent to Kagi.

Overnight village guest house, Kagi (village food provided for dinner).

DAY 5: FRIDAY

KAGI TO TEMPLETONS CROSSING

From Kagi, a steady ascent to the turnoff to Myola, arriving at the junction about mid morning, turn left at the junction then a further climb to Mt Bellamy and descend to Templetons Crossing Number One. If your group is walking well and you have time to spare, your guide can take you on a 2-hour side-trip on Mt Bellamy to a scenic lookout over Myola, or continue walking down to Templetons Crossing #2 and camp there.

Myola is sometimes called Lake Myola because it was originally thought to be a dry lake bed but in fact it is just an area of open grassland with the Eora Creek running through it. Myola was the area proposed to be used as a food drop zone by the Australian military forces during the Kokoda campaign but most of the food dropped during so-called "biscuit bombing" never reached the troops after boxes disintegrated on impact or were lost in the undergrowth (or water, if the creek was in flood). In the past some of Ecotourism Melanesia's trekking groups took an extra day and walked right in to Myola but it became the consensus of opinion that apart from the open grassland there is not much to see at Myola that you can't see from the lookout on Mt Bellamy. There is a small village at Myola - just a few houses - and in the past there was a good guest house there but this is now closed due to an ongoing land dispute between two families.

Thirty minutes walking along the trail from the junction towards Myola is the much-vaunted site of an American aircraft crash. The truth about this wreck is that the plane disintegrated on impact and the wreckage consists of nothing more than hundreds of small unidentifiable bits and pieces spread over a wide area so it is not really worth the extra hour's round trip

to see it. To boot, the local landowner usually charges a sightseeing fee if you go there.

There are various different explanations as to why there are two Templeton's Crossings, the southernmost is number 1 and the northernmost is number 2.

Arriving at Templeton's Crossing No 1 by late afternoon you will settle into the trekker's hut and rug up for the cold night ahead. There is no village here so apart from other trekking groups (if any) you will have the place to yourselves. You will sleep on the floor in the bare trekkers hut unless the owner does not turn up to unlock it (or another group arrived earlier and got in first, even if we booked it!) in which case your porters will erect canvases to form a large fly tent and the whole group will bunk in underneath. Dinner here will be hot camp food and after dinner entertainment will be tall stories and ukelele ditties around the camp fire.

Overnight Templeton's Crossing No 1 (camp food)

DAY 6: SATURDAY

TEMPLETONS CROSSING TO ALOLA

Six hours walk from Templeton's Crossing is Alola. Just before the village is a turnoff to the Maiaka Waterfall, quite a big waterfall which is worth a visit if you are not too tired.

Overnight village guest house, Alola (village food/camp food)

DAY 7: SUNDAY

ALOLA TO KOKODA

About 6 hours walking altogether today. From Alola it is an hour to the Isurava battlefield where you stop for a look around, and another three hours from there to Deniki and two hours further on down the hill is Kokoda. Once you see the Kokoda hospital on your right you have crossed the "finish line".

The Isurava battlefield and memorial is the wartime site of Isurava village where the Battle of Isurava took place on 28-29 August 1942. By mid-morning the early fog should have cleared and you should enjoy good views of the battlefield and nearby valley. The memorial cenotaph inscribed with the four virtues of mateship, courage, endurance and sacrifice was opened by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in August 2002 to commemorate 60 years since the Battle of Isurava during which Private Bruce Kingsbury VC heroically charged the advancing Japanese and was killed by a sniper. Near the memorial you will see a plaque at the site where he is believed to have fallen. He is now buried in the Bomana War Cemetery with all other Australian soldiers who fell during the Kokoda campaign.

There are a number of informative plaques at the Isurava battlefield site and you'll spend about an hour here surveying the scene and taking photographs of the memorial (all the stonework was lifted in by chopper). You'll probably encounter other trekking groups here as there is also a guest house and camp ground here.

Deniki is a now abandoned village site. This is where Australian forces withdrew to when the Japanese first pushed into Kokoda. There is a panoramic view of the Kokoda valley from here, you'll see it with the sun behind you in the late afternoon. A local family has built a trekker's hut ("guest house") here recently and this is where you will overnight.

On arrival at the Kokoda hospital guest hospital there will be hot showers and barbeque dinner with cold drinks awaiting you. One of our company staff from Port Moresby will also be there, with your overnight bags containing your clean change of clothes.

Once everybody has had time to relax a little and get cleaned up, you will spend a final couple of hours with your porters over some dinner, a few drinks, plenty of laughs about who fell in the creek, and a final tune on the ukelele. We will aim to have a multimedia projector set up if you would like to show some of your digital photos taken on the trek. Hopefully the hospital generator will keep churning out electricity overnight!

During the evening your guide will present you with your certificate for completing the walk, and your souvenir polo shirt which you will wear

back home like a badge of honour. The logo on your shirt reads "Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea, Mi inapim pinis". In local PNG pidgin this equates to "been there, done that". If you wish to say a few words, or present a gift to your favourite porter, this would be the appropriate time.

At 9pm we will call it a night and you will have an opportunity to say farewell to your porters before they head off to their family blocks for overnight.

Please note that we only cater a small amount of alcohol for trekkers at the closing function. We ask that you respect our policy that porters not drink alcohol before, during or after treks. In the past we had a few occasions where some porters became difficult to manage after having too much to drink and we would like to avoid any recurrence of this.

Overnight Kokoda hospital guest house (includes meals).

DAY 8: MONDAY

FLY OUT TO AUSTRALIA OR TAKE EXTENSION PACKAGE TO

- LOLOATA ISLAND
- TUFU
- RABAUL / KAVIENG
- GOROKA / MADANG
- TROBRIAND ISLANDS / ALOTAU
- WAU / SALAMAUA
- WEWAK / SEPIK RIVER
- TARI / MT HAGEN

This morning after breakfast at the hospital guest house we take time to look around Kokoda before we walk down to the airstrip to wait for our charter flight back to Port Moresby (departs 9am approx).

Our guide and porters will escort you around the Kokoda "station" area which is located on a plateau about 20 metres above the surrounding land. We walk to the district office - still on its original location - and inspect the cenotaph where there are various memorials, and the little museum. The museum has a very authoritative account of the Campaign and we suggest you photograph the text and photographs on display so that you can read them in detail on your computer screen when you return home. From the station we walk down to the creek and the market, along part of the airfield runway and back up to the hospital but a different path. (From the airfield if the weather is clear you will be able to see Deniki.)

Our charter flight is booked to depart Kokoda at 9am but due to operational requirements of the charter airline we may have to accept a slightly earlier or later time. Mindful of your international connections, we will push for our charter to run to time.

On arrival at the charter terminal in Port Moresby you will either transfer over to the main terminal to check in for your connecting flight or transfer to your hotel if you have made arrangements for extra nights in PNG.

If you require any additional transport for some souvenir shopping, sightseeing or errands, Ecotourism Melanesia will be happy to assist you, just let us know beforehand.

Outgoing flights today are:

- Air Niugini PX90/QF384 to Cairns departs 9:25am (check in at 8:00am)
- Air Niugini PX3/QF350 to Brisbane, departs 10:00 (check in at 8:30am)
- Air Niugini PX1/QF312 to Sydney, departs 1.30pm (check in at 12:00 noon)
- Airlines PNG / Pacific Blue DJ190 to Brisbane departs 1.45pm (check in at 12.00 noon)
- Airlines PNG CG100 to Cairns departs 5:00pm (check in at 3.30pm)
- Air Niugini PX98/QF382 to Cairns, departs 6:25pm (check in at 5.00pm)

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- meet and greet and city familiarisation tour on arrival (Ecotourism staff)
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8.
- visit to Bomana War Cemetery and Schwimmer Drome war relics display if time available
- one night Port Moresby in 3-star hotel accommodation - or better - with breakfast (hotel accommodation is twin-share unless you pay a single supplement of \$200).
- road transfer from Port Moresby to Owers Corner
- 5 nights trekking along the Kokoda Track with overnights in village guest houses / trekkers huts if available (or camping under tarpaulins/tents if huts not available)
- basic group camping equipment including lamps, tropical first aid kit, ropes, tarpaulins and ground sheets, axe and machete, cooking utensils, camp crockery and cutlery
- 5 nights trek food including billy tea breakfast, packed dry lunches, cooked dinner (village food and/or camp food)
- 1 trek guide and sufficient general porters to carry all food, equipment and up to 8 kg of each trekker's personal gear. You should plan to carry a day pack with up to 5 kg of your personal gear and give another 8 kg of your gear to one of our porters. [If you would like your own dedicated personal porter to carry up to 16 kg of your personal gear the additional cost is A\$500. However we really think you should be able to get by with just 8 kg of gear.]
- trekking fees charged by local authorities and landowners along the main route of this itinerary (but pay as you go for optional stops at privately-owned historical sites off the main path)
- farewell presentation dinner with porters at Kokoda
- one night guest house accommodation at Kokoda - includes meals and bottled water
- brief battlefields tour at Kokoda
- scheduled or charter flight from Kokoda to Port Moresby
- monitoring of trek by our Port Moresby office using VHF radio and/or satellite phone where possible
- coordination of emergency situations and evacuations
- souvenir Kokoda Track polo shirt, walker's certificate, and maps
- applicable local taxes

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- food and drink other than the meals stated in the itinerary and other written information provided
- bottled water, water purification tablets and other food-related items not specified in the itinerary and other written information provided (see tour note below on drinking water)
- 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 tour note below on sleeping gear)
- items of clothing or footwear

TOUR NOTES:

1. **Our itinerary.** Our South-North trek is suitable for walkers with good physical fitness who have undertaken some prior training in preparation for this trek. Our itinerary has been tried and tested with many groups of different ages and walking speeds. Our walk is sensibly paced with early morning starts on most days, allowing extra time in the afternoon for slower walkers to complete each daily sector. A group of fast walkers may arrive earlier at each village than estimated in our tour itinerary, but will not be allowed to proceed any further on the same day. On our tour, trekkers must sleep at the specified village or campsite each day. The trek guide, however, may elect to vary the itinerary en route in consideration of local conditions such as weather and the availability of guest house accommodation due to the number of other trekking groups in the area.
2. **Equipment** supplied by Ecotourism Melanesia includes cooking and eating utensils, camping lanterns and torches, tents if required, two-way radio, satellite phone and tropical first aid kit.
3. **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). Pack stuff that you will want access to while walking (camera, toiletries, munchies, water bottle) in your day pack and your 8 kg of other gear (clothing, sleeping gear etc) into a separate duffel bag or overnight bag for transporting it as far as Kokoda. At Kokoda your 8 kg of portage will be transferred into one of our porters' backpacks and your carry bag will be brought back to Port Moresby by air with our escort staff, or donated to somebody at Kokoda if it is just a cheapie or a disposable.

4. 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
- one 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)
- water bottle (1.5 or 2 litre) to carry in your day pack - many trekkers recommend a "bladder" which enables you to take frequent sips as you walk along, while others say bladders are overkill and everybody survived just fine with empty cordial bottles in the past...)
- your personal first aid kit (see below).

TIP: Don't bring a big hat, most trekkers recommend a terry-towelling hat with small floppy brim that will soak up sweat, or a bandanna to tie round your head. Most of the trek involves walking under the shade of trees and a wide brimmed hat is not necessary and will just get in the way.

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.

5. **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. Some of the village guest houses provide foam rubber mattresses to doss down on but this can't be guaranteed. (We always book village guest houses in advance but sometimes our group arrives to find another group that didn't book has gotten there earlier and the proprietor has given them the beds which leaves us outside in tents. Grrr.). To sleep IN, bring a lightweight sleeping bag rated for 5 degrees. Your sleeping bag will also protect you from creepy crawlies (in the village guest houses there may be the odd cockroach or beetle). If you are not sleeping on a guest house mattress you will be putting your sleeping mat down on the bare wooden floor of the hut. If we are unlucky in the guest house department your porters will set up one or two-man tents for you to sleep in, or if it is hot dry weather with no mosquitoes we usually just rig a couple of tarpaulins as a big open-sided fly tent and everybody dosses down on a big ground sheet underneath.

6. **Trekwear.** Most experienced Kokoda trekkers recommend wearing shorts because there are numerous points where you will wade knee-deep, thigh-deep or even waist-deep through running creeks. The Track is now sufficiently wide and cleared in most parts that you will be unlikely to be pushing through long grass or undergrowth and therefore unlikely to get grass cuts, bramble scratches or leeches on your legs (thank God, I hear you say). 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.

Part of the trek involves wading through creeks. If your main hiking boots get wet doing this you are in for some very uncomfortable walking. Bring a pair of sandals or cheap 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.

7. **Bathing.** During the trek you will bathe in creeks and rivers or under public taps in villages, usually in front of other people. Bathing without clothes may offend others so we suggest male trekkers bathe in shorts and ladies should bring a sarong or quick-dry shorts and top to wear for bathing.

8. **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* (most of the trek is under shade but the last day from Imita Ridge to Owers Corner is more exposed)
- *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 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 your personal kit should be more 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. Remember 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.

9. **Guide and porters.** Your trekking party will include an English-speaking guide who has traversed the track many times before and knows the area intimately. In addition we provide sufficient porters sufficient 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 out if you slip and break your leg. Porters enjoy helping visitors cross the Track and they appreciate the opportunity for employment that you are giving them so don't feel self-conscious about somebody else doing the work.

If you do not wish to carry a day pack at all and you would like a porter to carry all of your personal gear (up to 16kg) you must book an extra personal porter in advance. An extra personal porter costs AUD\$500 including wages and the cost of accommodating the porter in Port Moresby for a few days and flying him/her back to Kokoda. This money is paid to Ecotourism Melanesia in advance, in addition to the normal trek package cost.

It is very difficult to organise an extra porter after the trek has started so please think carefully about whether you can carry your own day pack with up to 5kg of gear or whether you need to book an extra porter to carry everything for you.

10. **Food.** Some trekking companies fly in all their food and equipment from Australia and contribute very little to the micro-economy of the local villages. As an ecotourism company we want to maximise the benefits of tourism to the people living in the local area, so wherever possible we pay the village guest house operators to supply fresh fruit and vegetables for our trekkers. They in turn buy fruit and vegies from other village people. Our policy of supplying fresh food for dinner wherever available not only encourages local enterprise but gives you a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fresh tropical fruit like pawpaw, pineapple, watermelon, bananas, star-fruit, tamarillo, passionfruit, and seasonal vegetables including sweet potato, yam, pumpkin, taro, beans, corn and tomatoes.

Some enterprising village people are now planting large food gardens to sell fruit and vegies to the village guest house operators or direct to trekkers from track-side stalls. Some villages are better at this than others, and the availability of fresh food also varies with seasonality and the number of trekking groups on the Track at the same time. If another large trekking group passes through a village just before your group, you may arrive to find that the village has been cleaned out and there are no fresh vegies available because the villagers didn't have time to go back to their gardens and harvest more food yet, or because the next crop is not ready for harvest yet, so it's a bit hit-and-miss sometimes. Your porters carry spare camp food supplies in case of such eventuality.

Along the Kokoda Track, vegies are mainly plain-boiled in water or dry-roasted on hot stones or in the fire as they don't have coconuts at this high altitude for stewing food in coconut milk, as the coastal villages do. We usually supplement the village food with some savoury rice, pasta or tinned food carried in by our porters.

(Of course, all our hard rubbish is carried out again too and disposed of at proper rubbish dumps at the end of the trek).

Not much meat is available in the villages along the Kokoda Track because (i) most of the villagers are Seventh-Day Adventists and do not eat pork for religious reasons, and (ii) raising chickens on a scale big enough to feed trekking groups is difficult as there is no chicken feed available. (There are no beef cattle raised in Kokoda Track villages and no sheep farming anywhere in PNG).

Lunch each day will be packed dry rations (eg dry biscuits with a small tin of baked beans or tuna, cheese stick or muesli bar, dried fruit). Breakfast will be billy tea with hot porridge or damper.

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 Popondetta. 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.

11. **Drinking water** along the Kokoda Track is collected from clean sources at camping sites and from rainwater tanks in the villages. None of our trekkers has ever reported any problems with drinking water; nobody has ever had diarrhoea on the Track (or at least nobody has owned up to it!). During the trek you must remember to refill your water bottle or bladder at every opportunity and 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 on the campfire and leave it to cool and settle, but so far in running treks since 2004 we have never needed to do this.

As a backup measure you can bring a few water purification tablets.

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. This might be a better alternative to water purification tablets if you are concerned about drinking water.

12. **Safety and insurance.** 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 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 Kokoda Track we have a contingency plan in place. Our guide carries both a VHF radio and 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 Kokoda Track we are going to call in a fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter to airlift you to Port Moresby without hesitation, because 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\$2000 depending on where you have to be retrieved from, and it is one of the terms and conditions that you must sign our trekking contract and disclaimer acknowledging 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).

Sorry to sound gloomy, but a small percentage of Kokoda trekkers do require some form of medical assistance or medivac, especially those who are un-fit or ill-prepared for the walk but even the fit, gung-ho types. How embarrassed was the Navy search and rescue helicopter pilot who broke an ankle bone at Ua-Ule Creek and had to be ignominiously airlifted out by another rescue chopper ! Can happen to anyone...

13. **Training program.** Which brings us to the next point, preparing yourself for the walk. Ten years ago the Kokoda Track mainly attracted experienced bushwalkers looking for a new challenge. More recently the Kokoda Track has become a focal point of Australia's developing cultural identity and is attracting more and

more walkers interested in the role of Kokoda in Australia's wartime history. "Doing Kokoda" is even seen as a rite of passage for some Australians now, similar to visiting Gallipoli in Turkey. This means we now have many walkers coming through Kokoda who are not experienced bushwalkers and may be of marginal fitness. Some of these walkers find the Kokoda Track to be an extremely difficult and distressing experience if they do not prepare themselves adequately. 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 Kokoda 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 if that is what you are planning to carry on the Kokoda trek. After doing your training if you are still not 100% confident you can carry a 5 kg day pack 5 hours a day for 7 days on the Kokoda Track itself then you should book a dedicated personal porter... do not take the risk of exhausting yourself and having to be flown out by medivac chopper.

14. 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. Your chances of being bitten by a malaria mosquito somewhere along the Kokoda Track is not high because mosquitoes do not breed at altitudes above 300m but Port Moresby, Popondetta and Kokoda station are malaria-prone areas. If you are taking effective anti-malaria medication your chances of actually contracting malaria even in a malarial area are quite low (but not zero). There are a number of recommended anti-malaria medications that can be taken weekly (eg Larium) or daily (eg Doxycycline). Doxycycline is actually an antibiotic and it was only in recent years that people discovered, 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.

Even if you are infected with malaria you are unlikely to fall ill during your trek as 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 are unlikely to experience malaria symptoms until you are back at 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.

15. Visas. You can apply for a tourist visa on arrival at Port Moresby airport. The cost is PGK100 (about \$45), 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.

16. 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 day in Port Moresby. If you are just coming in to do the Kokoda trek and straight out again you won't need more than this anyway. Just carry about PGK50 (AUD\$20) in coins and small notes with you on the Kokoda Track to buy fruit and the occasional warm can of Coke from village markets. Get this change from the airport bank or a supermarket on your day of arrival.

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 is an ATM at the airport that accepts 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.

17. 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 PGK100 (about A\$40) otherwise it could cause dissention in the group. Sometimes trekkers pool their tips and give them to the guide and he distributes the money evenly to all porters.

18. 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. Don't bring toys, balloons etc for the kids - they have had enough of that. Suitable donations to village schools include: 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 teacher in the village of your choice, not to individual children - this way all of the kids will have access to the materials. Village schools along the Kokoda Track (Naoro, Menari, Efogi, Kagi, Alola) only cater for Year 1 to Year 6 whereas primary schools at Kokoda, Awala, Gona and Buna go up to Year 8. The only high schools are at Popondetta but you will not be visiting any of these. Ecotourism Melanesia is currently formulating a scheme to provide sustained assistance to the school and clinic at Menari village 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 school supplies and medical supplies for Menari that we will personally purchase in Port Moresby and deliver to the village. (Other trekking companies are targeting assistance towards other villages such as Kagi and Efogi).