

# PAPUA NEW GUINEA

DETAILED ITINERARY

RABAUL MASK FESTIVAL

Jan 03/24



Photo: © Donald Whiteley

Papua New Guinea is like no other place on Earth - culturally rich and geographically remote, with some of the most stunning scenery anywhere.

From the rugged mountains to the coastal islands, this journey is an adventure of a lifetime. We meet and learn about some of the tribal people of this land including the Asaro Mudmen, the Wahgi, the Simbu, the Kaguel, the Melpa and the fascinating Trobriand Islanders. Our adventure includes many village visits so that we can really meet the people and experience their way of life.

We explore 3 nights on Kiriwina Island (part of the Trobriand Islands), where people live a traditional lifestyle. Throughout our journey, we encounter amazing birdlife, lush flora, stunning scenery and some of the most fascinating tribal people on Earth.

Our June departure features the annual Rabaul Mask Festival as many of the tribes from all over PNG display their own tribal dances, along with mask giving mystical and almost hypnotic experience. In the Province of East New Britain, we also visit a local village, learning

## Facts & Highlights

- 21 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Port Moresby • All meals included • Includes 5 internal flights • Visit some of the most remote and fascinating tribal cultures on earth! • Encounter the Asaro Mudmen, the Wahgi, Simbu, Kaguel and Melpa tribes of the Highlands
- See the mystical Baining Fire Dance at night • Explore Rabaul including 2-day Mask Festival • Visit the remote Trobriand Islands • Search for the spectacular Bird's of Paradise • Snorkel with dolphins; this is unlike any other dolphin experience

## Departure Dates & Price

**Jun 26 - Jul 16, 2025 - \$12995 USD**

Price includes \$1500 USD of domestic air cost.

## Activity Level: 2 or 3

**Comfort Level:** 2 days over 8,000 feet. Local roads can be rough and wet. Travelers must be flexible and prepared for day-to-day changes. Some areas are very primitive

**ACCOMMODATIONS** Trobriand Island accommodation is comfortable but basic with private facilities.

**ELDERTREKS**



SMALL GROUP  
**EXOTIC ADVENTURES**  
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

about their culture including preparation of lunch. we enjoy lunch with the village before returning to our lodge in the afternoon. We have an opportunity to snorkel with dolphins in a unique way that is unlike anything you have experienced. We will also visit the original inhabitants of the region to experience the mystical Baining Fire Dance.

Papua New Guinea is one of the most culturally interesting places on Earth, with many of its tribal people following a traditional lifestyle. This adventure has been designed to experience the villages and people of Papua New Guinea. As much of the interior of the country has no roads or impassable ones, we maximize our time by flying from location to location and flight schedules frequently change. While we endeavor to do/see everything listed in the itinerary, it is common for changes to occur to the itinerary for things that are beyond our control. Traveler must be prepared for changes to this program, either before your journey starts or during the trip itself.

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## DAY 1 ARRIVE IN PORT MORESBY

We will meet on arrival at Port Moresby airport and transfer to our hotel. We gather this evening for our orientation meeting and dinner.

Overnight in Port Moresby.

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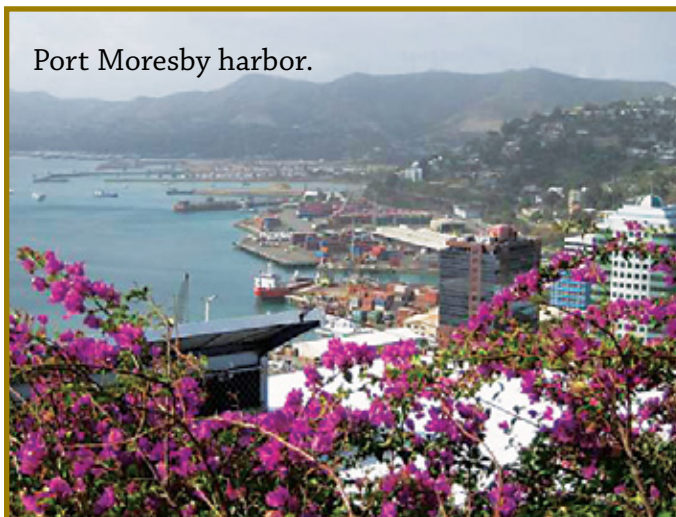
## DAY 2 PORT MORESBY CITY TOUR

Today we embark on a city tour of Port Moresby that includes the National Museum, Botanical Gardens, an outside view of Parliament House and a visit to Hanuabada village, one of the only two remaining stilt villages in the area. The village is populated by the Motuan people, who are the original native people in the Port Moresby area.

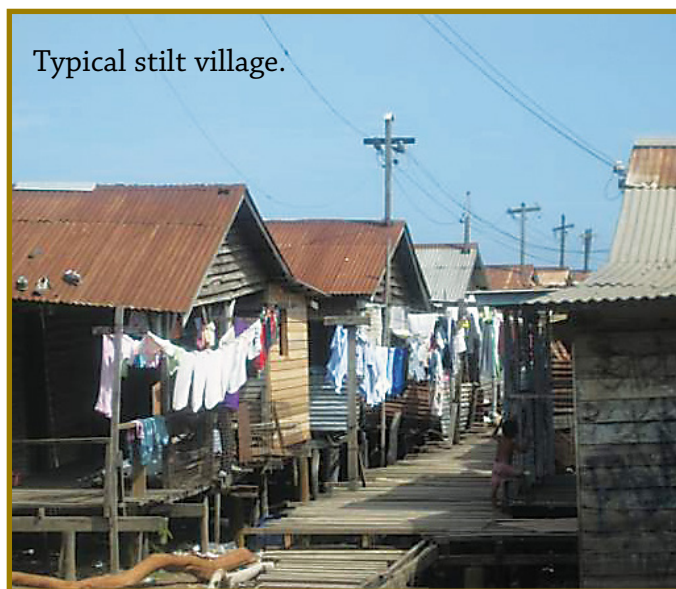
Overnight in Port Moresby.



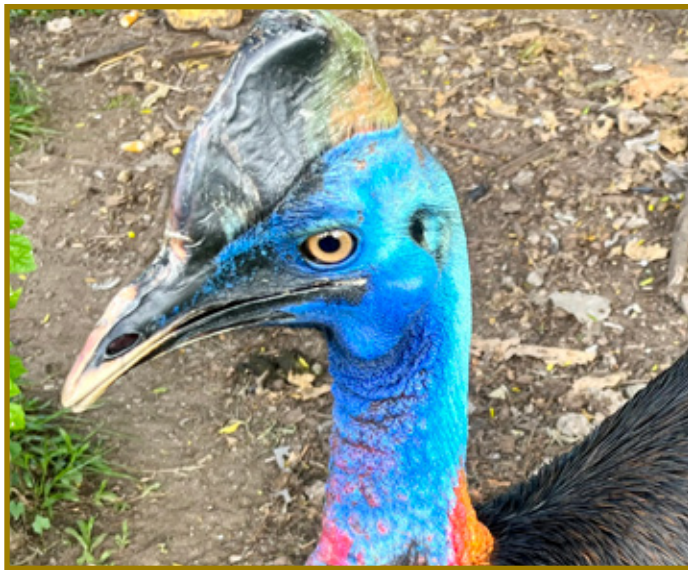
Port Moresby harbor.



Typical stilt village.









### **DAY 3 FLY TO MT. HAGEN; TO KAMUL; IN SEARCH OF BIRDS OF PARADISE**

This morning we depart for the airport for our domestic flight to Mt. Hagen. Upon arrival, we set out for Kamul lodge in the shadow of Mt. Hagen, to an area well known for its bird watching. In addition to the birds of paradise (75% of the birds of paradise species can be seen here), you may also spot the crested berrypecker, white winged robin, tit berrypecker, brown sicklebill and bibbon tailed astrapia. We will take a walk through the forest, bird spotting and looking for the beautiful mountain orchids that can be found here. We take a scenic drive to Wapenamanda in Enga province, the highest and most rugged province in Papua New Guinea.

Overnight in Kamul.

### **DAY 4 DRIVE TO MT. HAGAN; SPECTACULAR WARE DANCE**

After an early breakfast we depart for a tour in the Tambul District, one of the highest areas in the Highlands. We visit Alkena village, which is the origin of the most spectacular and colorful dance in the province called the Ware Dance. We spend the rest of the day at the village witnessing other performances such as the Welcome Dance and other traditional activities.

We also visit a local market. Should the local school be open we will spend some time visiting with the local school children.

Overnight in Mt Hagen.

### **DAY 5 MINDIMA VILLAGE - COURTSHIP CEREMONY**

After breakfast, we set out for Molka Lodge, where we stop for lunch. We then continue to the village of Mindima where we witness the colourful Courtship ceremony. At each village, we have the opportunity

to purchase tribal jewellery, head dresses and other traditional carvings or artifacts made by the villagers.

After the performance, we return to Mt. Hagen for dinner and overnight.

### **DAYS 6 TO GOROKA; ASARO MUDMEN**

This morning we depart for a full day tour to Goroka, via the huge Waghi Valley. Enroute we stop at Avi for a brief visit to their orchid gardens. After lunch we continue to visit Asaro village to meet the famous Asaro Mudmen who traditionally covered themselves in mud before raiding nearby villages. The legend of the Mudmen says that the tribe was attacked and forced to flee their village. To hide, they jumped into the Asaro River. When they emerged at twilight from the river, covered in mud, the attacking tribe saw them and thought they were spirits and fled the area. While in the village we may be able to watch an eerie performance of the Mudmen, which is a production of mime. We also may see a local artist making an actual mudmask.

After lunch we continue to Goroka, stopping for a view of the breathtaking scenery at Daulo Pass.

Overnight in Goroka.

### **DAY 7 GOROKA SITES**

Goroka is the capital of Eastern Highlands province and we will spend the day exploring some of the interesting sites, including the JK McCarthy Museum and the Raun Raun Theater. We will walk to the lookout at Mt. Kiss for some amazing views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Overnight in Goroka.

### **DAY 8 GOROKA TO MADANG**

Madang province has many of the country's highest peaks and a broad ethnic diversity. Madang has been labeled "the prettiest town in the South Pacific" due to its palm-rimmed beaches, offshore islands, and lovely









Asaro mudmen



parcs, all set against a rugged mountain backdrop. We have a full day of driving today, with several interesting stops along the way including an arts and crafts center and Yonki Hydro Dam. We will enjoy lunch enroute at a sugar plantation

Overnight in Madang.

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## **DAY 9 MADANG - BALEK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY; SPIRIT HOUSE**

This morning we visit the Madang local market, Kalibobo light house, and Madang Museum and Arts Gallery. This afternoon we visit the Balek Wildlife Sanctuary, home of an interesting sulphur creek pouring out of a limestone formation. The creek is filled with turtles, eels and fish. The creek is said to cure illnesses by the local people. The park also has a variety of tropical trees and plants, hot springs and sulphur caves. Following our visit to the sanctuary, we visit the local Haus Tamburan (Spirit House) for a traditional dance ceremony.

Overnight in Madang.

## **DAY 10 FLY TO PORT MORESBY**

Today we fly back to Port Moresby and check into our hotel 5 star hotel, where we can relax and store any purchases and souvenirs in their 'checked luggage' storage.

Overnight in Port Moresby.

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## **DAY 11 FLY TO KIRIWINA ISLAND, TROBRIAND ISLANDS**

After an early breakfast, we fly to the island of Kiriwina, in the Trobriand Islands. The Trobriand Islanders have a fascinating and rich culture and a unique feature of these islands is the importance of yams. The crop is an indicator of how well the producer is at gardening and there is a yearly festival held to show off the best of the yams grown that season.

Overnight in Kiriwina.





## DAY 12 KIRIWINA ISLAND, TROBRIAND ISLANDS

The label of a “free love society” has been placed on the islands, but the sexual practices of these people have been misunderstood. The society does encourage free choice and “casual encounters” as the norm for teenagers, however, people are encouraged to settle down to married life. The belief in this society is that all children are in spirit form until they enter a woman through her head and then are born. In addition to spending time with the villagers, we also explore the island, including its beautiful beaches, WWII relics and nearby caves. Our time on Kiriwina Island is flexible so that we can explore according to the group’s interests and local events.

Overnight in Kiriwina.

## DAY 13 KAIBOLA VILLAGE, TROBRIAND ISLANDS

This morning we leave the lodge and drive to Kaibola village where we will enjoy a swim, walk on the beach or snorkel. We will have time to relax at our hotel in Kiriwina in the afternoon.

Overnight in Kiriwina.

## DAY 14 FLY TO PORT MORESBY

Today we fly back to Port Moresby and check into our hotel 5 star hotel, where we can relax and once again store any purchases and souvenirs in their ‘checked luggage’ storage.

**Please Note:** Papua New Guinea is perhaps the great tribal experience on earth. However, it is also a place where expecting the ‘unexpected’ is simple a practical attitude to have while traveling to PNG. It is not a destination you



Baby in bilum bag



want arranged by just any travel company. ElderTreks has almost 30 year of experience traveling to West Papua and PNG. ElderTreks has included a buffer day in between each segment of our itinerary on purpose as flights can often be delayed or cancelled. It also gives our group time to reorganize and store any luggage not necessary for the next segment of our adventure. With this extra day, the impact of anything unexpected can be minimized. PNG is unlike any other destination on earth, both in it's challenges and it's rewards!

### **DAY 15 FLY TO RABAU; BAINING FIRE DANCE**

Today we fly to Rabaul on East New Britain province in the northeast of PNG. Upon arrival we check into our charming and comfortable resort with beautiful views of the ocean and nearby volcanos. Late afternoon, we set out to visit the original inhabitants of East New Britain to enjoy the mystical and breathe-taking Baining Fire Dance.

The Baining Fire Dance is a very sacred dance and unique to the East New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea. Initiated men dance bare-footed prove their bravery walking on fire without their feet being burnt while wearing Masks

that represents spirits of their ancestors. The drums and song for this performance are absolutely hypnotic!

Overnight in Rabaul (actually in lesser known Kokopo, after the 1994 Rabaul volcano eruption).

### **DAY 16 RABAU; SNORKEL WITH DOLPHINS; VILLAGE VISIT & TRIBAL COOKING LESSON**

Today we have an early start as we set out by boat to a place where dolphins congregate every morning. Snorkel gear and wetsuits are provided before we set out by boat. We we will slowly be towed by our boat to see the dolphins up close providing a dolphin experience unlike anything you have experienced before.

We return to our resort for breakfast before setting out for our village visit to learn about their culture and way of life. We can help in the preparation of lunch before enjoying lunch with the village. In the afternoon, we return to our resort.

Overnight in Rabaul.









## DAY 17 RABAU MASK FESTIVAL

The Festival begins at dawn with the haunting arrival of the Kinavai. The 'Kinavai' represents the arrival of the feared 'tubuans' amidst the chanting and beating of kundo drums by elders and initiated young men on the canoes, marking the beginning of the Festival. This is the only time 'tubuans' can appear. The tubuan is a masked figure with a conical headdress and spherical leafy dress, which is believed to embody the soul of the deceased.

Dance groups perform throughout the day and you will witness an amazing assortment of colours, songs and instruments throughout the entire day. Each clan has a unique beat and each culture has distinct dances on show.

## DAY 18 RABAU MASK FESTIVAL

Traditional masks will be on full display during the festival during the dance performances, brought over from New Ireland Province and other parts of Papua New Guinea. Many of these masks are regarded as sacred. The schedule of performances happens throughout the day in a spectacle of music, song, dance, tradition and beliefs, all shrouded behind the mystic beautiful of their masks!

Overnight in Rabaul

## DAY 19 RETURN FLIGHT TO PORT MORESBY

We say good-bye to Rabaul and East New Britain for our flight back to Port Moresby. Upon arrival, we will transfer to the dock for Loloata island where we catch our ferry to this neighbouring island.

Loloata is a small island not far from Port Moresby and a perfect place to enjoy, relax and reflect on the amazing experiences and memories from your PNG adventure.

Dinner and overnight on Loloata Island

## DAY 20 LOLOATA ISLAND

Today we have a relaxing day to do nothing but enjoy looking out to the ocean, go swimming, snorkelling or even take a hike on the island with great views. Keep an eye out for the impressive looking Victoria crowned pigeon and the adorable wallabies, the smaller cousin of the kangaroo.

Tonight we have our Farewell Dinner.

Overnight on Loloata Island.

## DAY 21 DEPART PORT MORESBY

We say a fond farewell to this fascinating and beautiful country as we transfer by boat and bus to the airport for your departure flight.



Tambuli dancers.







## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

### 2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

### 3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

### 4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums, national parks and reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments can be wandering through a local market of a small town.

### 5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We travel by domestic flights, micro-bus, 4 wheel drives, wooden canoe, motorized longboats and by foot.

### 6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

Accommodation in Port Moresby, Mt. Hagen, Goroka, Madang, Wewak and in the Trobriand Islands are in hotels that range from 2 star to 4 star and each room has private toilet and bathroom facilities. On the Sepik River we will be spending 2 nights in basic dormitory accommodation (bush longhouses) with limited bathing and toilet facilities. Each person will have a foam mattress with sheets and a pillow with pillowcase as well as a mosquito net. Single supplement rooming requests cannot be accommodated on the Sepik River nor in the Trobriand Islands.

Please note that for our journey on the Sepik River, large suitcases cannot be accommodated; please bring a small overnight bag for these two nights.

### 7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Papua New Guinea is south of the equator, so when it's summer in the Northern Hemisphere, it's winter there. From April to November, the days are generally in the 80-90°F (26-32°C) with nights in the 70°F (21°C). It's always warm and humid, with a chance of rain. The farther inland and higher in elevation you go, the cooler it will be, especially at night.

### 8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

### 9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

*\*Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

### 10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

### 11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings.

### 12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

### 13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the adventure, please call our office for more details. A Trip Specialist will be happy to answer your questions. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.



























