



Ecotourism Melanesia

Discover Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

EM10B 2018 - WALK THE KOKODA TRACK SOUTH TO NORTH

9 nights package for private groups (minimum 6 walkers)

(1 night Port Moresby, 7 nights trekking, 1 night Popondetta)

Optional 3 nights extension to Gona and Buna.

Special features of this package:

- 9 nights itinerary fits nicely into school-holiday periods
- trek begins with a downhill sector which gets all walkers off to an “I can do this” start
- maximum 6 hours walking each day at moderate pace with plenty of time for slow walkers to catch up
- no walking in the dark
- no sleeping in wonky tents
- fresh village food where available
- side trip to Myola “biscuit bombing” grasslands
- no flying in light aircraft
- 10 kg of portage is included free - no need to pay extra \$500 for a personal porter if you pack light
- optional contrasting extension to Gona and Buna with no porters required, no heavy packs, quaint village guest house accommodation, local food, traditional sing-sing

The south-north crossing of the Kokoda Track is the way most troops in 1942 experienced the Track - starting out from Owers Corner with full packs and a train of fuzzy wuzzy angels carrying more supplies at the rear as they moved towards the front lines to relieve and reinforce other units engaging the Japanese forces.

The south-north walk is more challenging than north to south because the climb gradients are steeper in the south-north direction walking from Owers Corner. Coming the other way from Kokoda, the same slopes are tackled as descents, which is hard on the knees but easier on the lungs. However our moderately-paced trek itinerary enables mere mortals who are not super-fit mountaineers to experience the challenge of the south-north crossing without putting themselves through agony.

Our trek leader sets a moderate walking pace with plenty of rest stops to “smell the roses” and take in the points of interest along the way. The unhurried walking pace appeals to older walkers, family groups and “the rest of us” but still requires a good level of cardiovascular fitness. No matter how slow you walk, climbing very steep hills puts a big strain on your body and you (and your trek leader) must be confident that you will be able to cope. Pre-trek training and medical fitness certificate is required for this walk.

A 3 night extension is available for groups that want to explore the north coast beach-heads around Gona where the first Japanese troops landed and the coastal battlefields around Buna and Sanananda where the ragged remnants of the Imperial forces were cornered by Australian and American troops, rallying in near-suicidal engagements till there were virtually none left. While 600 Australians were killed in the Kokoda Campaign the Japanese losses are estimated at over 5,000 by the end of January 1943.



ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

TOUR COST:

	6 pax*	8 pax**	10 pax ***	12+ pax ****
9 nights core trek package - per person, twin share or willing to share	AUD 4,250	AUD 4,000	AUD 3,750	AUD 3,500
Single supplement for core trek (if available) - per person, own room for 2 nts hotel only	AUD 220	AUD 220	AUD 220	AUD 220
Extra night Port Moresby - per room, same rate for single, double or twin occupancy, room only	AUD 215	AUD 215	AUD 215	AUD 215
3 nights extension Gona/Buna - per person, twin share or willing to share	AUD 1,000	AUD 900	AUD 800	AUD 700
Single supplement for extension (if available) - per person, own room for 1 nt hotel only	AUD 110	AUD 110	AUD 110	AUD 110

*Group organiser travels @ 25% discount (PNG component only)

** Group organiser travels @ 50% discount (PNG component only)

*** Group organiser travels @ 75% discount (PNG component only)

****Group organiser travels free (PNG component only)

Treks that straddle ANZAC Day (25th April) are subject to special quote.

TOUR INCLUSIONS - CORE PACKAGE 9 NIGHTS

- Port Moresby - meet and greet and city familiarisation tour, all transfers
- Port Moresby - welcome dinner
- Port Moresby - one night 2.5 or 3.0 star hotel accommodation - room only, twin-share unless you pay a single supplement for own-room.
- Port Moresby - road transfer to Owers Corner with stop at Bomana War Cemetery
- Kokoda Track - 7 nights trekking with overnights in trekkers huts - includes hut fees for both trekkers and porters
- Kokoda Track - group trekking gear including lamps, ropes, tarpaulins and ground sheets, axe and machete, cooking utensils, camp crockery and cutlery
- Kokoda Track - safety equipment including mobile satellite phone, VHF radios, tropical first aid kit
- Kokoda Track - 7 nights trek meals including billy tea breakfasts (damper/pancakes/porridge), packed dry lunches (crackers, tinned fish or meat, cheese, dried fruit), cooked dinners (tinned stew, pasta dishes and/or fresh village vegetables). Main meals only, bring your own snack food if required.
- Kokoda Track - Papua New Guinean trek leader (first aid qualified) and sufficient porters to carry all food, equipment and up to 10 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 10 kg of your gear to one of our porters. [If you would like your own dedicated personal porter to carry up to 20 kg of your extra personal gear the additional cost is \$500.]
- Kokoda Track - trekking permit (NB landowner site fees and village museum fees are optional extras @ PGK5 per person)
- Kokoda - picnic or barbeque lunch on arrival
- Kokoda - private vehicle transfers to Popondetta
- Popondetta - one night 2.5 star hotel accommodation - room only, twin-share unless you pay a single supplement for own-room
- Popondetta - flight to Port Moresby
- Port Moresby - departure day breakfast and airport assistance
- monitoring of trek by our Port Moresby office using VHF radio and/or satellite phone
- coordination of emergency situations and evacuations
- souvenir Kokoda Track polo shirt, walker's certificate and maps
- applicable local taxes
- contribution to other overhead expenses such as recruitment and preparation of porters, flying porters from Kokoda to Port Moresby, accommodation and health care for porters while in Port Moresby, flying supplies and gear in or out of Efogi, Kokoda or Popondetta, maintenance of equipment, cost of retaining handling agents in Kokoda and Popondetta, staff training, donations to village development projects, maintaining public liability insurance and accreditation with Kokoda Track Authority

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

TOUR INCLUSIONS - GONA/BUNA EXTENSION 3 NIGHTS

- Popondetta - private vehicle transfer to Gona
- Gona - overnight accommodation at village guest house - includes welcome sing-sing, clean bedding, local style food and bottled water
- Gona - full day scenic hiking to Buna via Sanananda - includes land access fees but pay as you go for entering specific sites of interest @ PGK5 - PGK10per person per site
- Buna - overnight accommodation at village guest house - includes clean bedding, local style food and bottled water
- Buna - private vehicle transfer via scenic route to Popondetta
- Popondetta - one night 2.5 star hotel accommodation - room only, twin-share unless you pay a single supplement for own-room
- includes local guides but not porters (carry your own light pack for this short extension)

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- hotel meals and any other food and drink not stated in the itinerary or tour inclusions as “included”
- bottled water, water purification tablets and other water-related items not specified in the itinerary and other written information provided (see trip note below on drinking water)
- items of clothing or footwear
- any other equipment not specified in the itinerary and other written information provided, such as personal water bottle, umbrella, rain poncho
- souvenirs, gifts and tips
- items of a personal nature
- bar drinks and snacks
- telephone calls
- cancellation fees
- evacuation costs

ITINERARY

DAY 1:

PORT MORESBY

Arrive Port Moresby on your flight from Australia.

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 familiarisation tour around Port Moresby city.

After the tour we will drop you back at the hotel for some leisure time, then at 7:00pm we will pick you up from the hotel again and bring you to our company office (or alternative venue) for an informal welcome dinner and briefing session to give you an opportunity to meet your trek guide and porters who have arrived from Kokoda yesterday.

If the weather is fine, dinner will be served outdoors, a local-style barbeque featuring local fish, chicken and vegetables with tropical fruit on the side.

After dinner we will show a short video about Port Moresby and the Kokoda Track during 1942, update you on logistics for your impending trek, and allow time for questions. By 10:00pm you will be back at your hotel to settle in for the night.

Overnight hotel, Port Moresby (room only, twin share - please pay cash or card for your breakfast and all drinks and extras).

Note 1: If you are arriving on a morning flight we can take you for additional sightseeing, souvenir shopping etc to fill up this day, or leave you to relax at your hotel, according to your preference.

Note 2: There are ATMs at the airport terminal where you may withdraw cash with your credit card. During the familiarisation tour the bus will stop on request at a supermarket to purchase any last minute items you require (supermarkets do accept credit cards for

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

payment of goods but no cash out).

DAY 2:

TREKKING FROM OWERS CORNER TO UA'ULE CREEK (6 hours walking, plus stops)

Rise and shine at around 6:00am this morning. Hotel breakfast is pay-as-you-go (ie not included in your tour package). You can either order a room service breakfast or have breakfast in the restaurant. Service may be slow so order early.

At 07:30am check out of your hotel room, pay for any food and drink you have charged to your room.

NOTE

The hotel may not have a secure storage room for baggage so any bags and travel documents you do not wish to take with you on the trek should be given to Ecotourism Melanesia staff for safe storage at our office. Make sure your bags are clearly labelled with your name. Passports and valuables will be locked in our office safe on the basis of "all care taken but no responsibility". Alternatively you can carry your papers with you on the trek in a waterproof wallet, but if your passport becomes water-damaged you may be refused entry back into Australia ☹

At 8:00am approx our transfer vehicle will pick you up at your hotel together with your trek baggage and first transfer you to our company office for "kit-up".

NOTE ON PACKING OF YOUR GEAR

During kit-up you will give up to 10 kg of your personal gear to one of our porters who will carry this in his backpack along with another 10 kg of our company equipment and food supplies. In addition you should plan to carry a day pack with no more than 5 kg of your most personal items (camera, medication, water bottle etc). You may wish to purchase a day pack containing a water bladder so that you won't have to carry a water bottle.

The 10 kg of gear you give to your porter to carry should be packed into a soft drawstring bag like a laundry bag or army-style kit bag that can easily be fed into the top opening of your porter's top-loading hiking pack, on top of the group food and equipment that he is carrying in the bottom half of his pack. This drawstring bag does not need to be lockable because your porter will guard your belongings with his life, and you will carry any valuables with you in your day pack.

Your gear will be weighed at our compound with a spring scale. If you have more than the 10 kg of portorage that we include free in your trek package we will ask you to either carry the extra weight yourself or re-pack there-and-then and remove any non-essential items to bring your portorage down to 10 kg. If you deem everything to be essential and the weight is still over 10 kg and you can't carry the extra yourself we will have to allocate you a dedicated personal porter and charge you an additional \$500 for this service.

By 9:00am you'll board our bus or passenger truck and head out the road towards Owers Corner. Fifteen minutes out of town is the **Bomana War Cemetery** where you will stop and have about 1 hour to wander among the graves and sign the visitors book. There is no rush and you will have time to look for any specific graves although it would be helpful if you have the plot location handy (try the websites of the Australian War Memorial or the Australian Office of War Graves).

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. (In 1942, the territories of Papua and New Guinea were Australian soil so 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 you 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 people of today's generation be able to go off to war as bravely and selflessly?

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

Departing Bomana at 10:30am, your drive will continue out the winding, scenic Sogeri road, impossibly steep in some places, arriving half an hour later at the little township of **Sogeri**. Here you turn off the bitumen road and drive for another rather bumpy hour across the rolling downs of the Sogeri Plateau to **Owers Corner**. These days the Owers Corner hillock has been transformed into a nice picnic park with historical displays and a little police station. Here at Owers Corner you will get a clear view all the way to Ioribaiwa Ridge, the closest point the Japanese came to Port Moresby, which was actually shelled by the Howitzer guns from Owers Corner.

12:00 At Owers Corner you'll eat a cut lunch and then your trek leader will give a briefing on walking protocols and safety procedures before you strike out. The walk begins with a steep 30 minute descent to Goldie River which you will wade across - stop and enjoy a swim if you like - and begin ascending the lower slope of **Imita Ridge**, hiking past the old **Uberi** village site, through forest and over a number of small creeks to a campsite known as **Goodwater** which is about half-way to Ua'Ule Creek. After a rest at Goodwater, climb the "Golden Stairs" (which aren't actually there any more) up to the summit of Imita Ridge (about 2 hours) and descend another hour down the other side of the ridge to the **Ua-Ule Creek** crossing. A swim in the beautiful swimming hole at Ua-Ule Creek will be a great pick-me-up for you after the challenging first day's walk.

Overnight trekker's hut, Ua'Ule Creek (camp food)

DAY 3:

TREKKING FROM UA'ULE CREEK TO OLD NAORO

(6 hours walking, plus stops)

Today's walking begins with a one hour climb up the first part of **Ioribaiwa Ridge** to the first inhabited village along the Track, **Ioribaiwa village** which has about 15 houses.

Another half hour climbing brings you to the summit of Ioribaiwa Ridge (rest and enjoy the views - can you see Owers Corner and Port Moresby) and another thirty minutes steep descent to **Ofi Creek** which is a great spot for a morning tea break. There is no village at the Ofi Creek crossing but there are a couple of trekkers huts. Two interesting points about Ofi Creek: firstly it was a popular gold panning location in colonial days, and secondly there is a colony of bees which has apparently been resident there also since early times. The bees mind their own "beeswax" (business) unless they are disturbed.

Have a refreshing swim at Ofi Creek, before tackling the killer three hour climb up **Maguli Range**. Most walkers rate this as the toughest part of the south-north walk - it's a very steep ascent. You need to take this very slowly with lots of stops and lots of drinks of water. Pray for dry weather because if the climb turns muddy and slippery you're in for hell.

At the summit of Maguli Range, stop for lunch and a good rest. It's now a half hour descent to Naoro village (ie New Naoro) where you will have a rest stop. Naoro is quite a large village and you'll be able to watch villagers going about their business and soak up the village atmosphere. From New Naoro it's another half hour descent down to the Old Naoro village site where the now-disused airstrip is located. During wartime the village was located right down here in the river valley but due to recurrent flooding the village was relocated to its current higher site. Availability of water is better here so you will camp here at the Old Naoro village site (Amuduru Creek) tonight.

Overnight trekker's hut, Old Naoro (village food and camp food)

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

DAY 4:**TREKKING FROM OLD NAORO TO EFOGI
(6 hours walking, plus stops)**

Today's walking starts with an easy hike along the Naoro River valley, crossing many creeks and the main Naoro River itself several times before climbing a steep spur that lets down onto **Manari** village on the other side. Have lunch at Manari then walk half an hour down to the Vabuiagi River, cross over and then you begin the long climb up the southern face of **Brigade Hill** which takes about 3 hours with rest stops. The memorial plaque on Brigade Hill is a good spot to stop for a break then takes about ninety minutes to descend the northern face of Brigade Hill - a much shallower gradient - to **Efogi 1** village.

Overnight village guest house, Efogi 1 (village food)

DAY 5:**TREKKING FROM EFOGI TO MYOLA JUNCTION
(6 hours walking time, plus stops)**

Today's walking involves a little back-tracking. From Efogi 1, cross the Efogi River and walk via **Efogi 2 (Launumu)** and **Naduri (Naduli)** to the intersection of this route with the Myola side track. Continue another half an hour along the Myola side track to the lookout at the edge of the **Myola grasslands**.

NOTE

The Myola grasslands were originally thought to be a dry lake bed and the name Lake Myola stuck for a while but is no longer used. It is now recognised that it is just an area of open grassland with the Eora Creek running through it. Photographs from 1942 show the demarcation between the grasslands and the surrounding wooded areas to follow almost exactly the same contour as today. Failure of the forest vegetation to overgrow the grasslands over the past 70 years suggests there is an abrupt change in the soil substrate that cannot support forest growth.

The open, flat grasslands of Myola were used as a supply drop zone by the Allied military forces during the Kokoda campaign but much of the food and ammunition dropped (or "biscuit bombed") never reached the troops because boxes disintegrated on impact or were lost in the undergrowth (or in the water if the creek was in flood). Accordingly there is still a huge amount of live ordnance scattered around the Myola grasslands that PNG and Australian army bomb disposal squads make efforts to remove from time to time. A small airstrip was built on the far side of the grasslands near the small village of Myola during the war but is now disused.

After taking in this fascinating vista, you'll retrace your steps, passing the Naduri turn-off and continue another half an hour to **Myola Junction**. This is the junction of the Myola side track with the main Kokoda Track. There is no village here but a couple of good trekkers huts operated by locals from Naduri.

Overnight trekkers hut, Myola Junction (camp food + village food)

NOTE

Some distance into the bush off the path from the Myola grasslands to the junction is the over-rated site of an American aircraft crash. The truth of the matter 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 taking the side trip into the scrub - and paying the access fee to the landowner - to see it.

DAY 6:**TREKKING FROM MYOLA JUNCTION TO TEMPLETONS CROSSING #2
(6 hours walking, plus stops)**

From Myola Junction the day starts with three hours of climbing **Mt Bellamy** to **Kokoda Gap**, a clearing on the summit with good views. You'll need to have a decent rest stop here. This is the highest point of the Kokoda Track. The rest of the walking is mainly downhill all the way to Kokoda from here.

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

The descent to **Templeton's Crossing #2** takes another three hours. Actually there are two Templeton's Crossings, the southernmost is **Templetons Crossing #1** also known as First Crossing (an hour's walk down from Kokoda Gap) and the northernmost where you will camp tonight is Templetons Crossing #2 which is another two hours downhill.

Rug up for the cold night ahead. There is no village here so apart from any other trekking parties you will have the place to yourselves. Dinner here will be hot camp food and after dinner entertainment will be tall stories from other trekkers and ukulele serenades from your porters around the camp fire.

Overnight trekkers hut, Templeton's Crossing #2 (camp food)

DAY 7:

TREKKING FROM TEMPLETONS CROSSING #2 TO ALOLA (6 hours walking, plus stops)

Two hours climbing and another ninety minutes downhill bring you to the **Eora Creek** crossing which was the scene of a major battle and a temporary cemetery in 1942. Have lunch here then walk a final two and a half hours to **Alola** village. Just before you enter the village there is a side track to the Maiaka waterfall.

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

DAY 8:

TREKKING FROM ALOLA TO DENIKI (6 hours walking, plus stops)

From Alola it is a ninety minute walk to the site of the **Isurava battlefield memorial** which is where Isurava village was located during the war. After the horror of the Battle of Isurava at the end of August 1942 when their houses were largely destroyed and their soil drenched with the blood of the fallen, the Isurava people rebuilt their village on a new site higher up on the ridge.

Morning fog often envelops the memorial site, so you may not be able to see right down the Eora Creek valley but you should be able to see everything in the immediate area.

NOTE

The Isurava memorial cenotaph inscribed with the four virtues of mateship, courage, endurance and sacrifice was opened by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 2002 to commemorate 60 years since the Battle of Isurava which took place over four days 26-29 August 1942. During this battle 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 most other Australian soldiers who fell during the Kokoda campaign. There are no graves at the Isurava battlefield, or anywhere else along the Track. The area has been carefully searched by recovery teams and all human remains have been reinterred at Bomana. There are a number of informative plaques at the Isurava battlefield site and you'll have plenty of time to survey the scene and take photographs of the memorial (all the stonework was lifted in by chopper).

Mid-morning, continue walking another hour to **new Isurava village**, take another rest stop here then begin the last descent of the trek to **Deniki**, a now abandoned village site. This is the location which Australian forces withdrew to when the Japanese first pushed into Kokoda. There is a panoramic view of the Kokoda valley from here. A couple of local families have built trekkers huts here and you will overnight in one of these. You'll have plenty of time to enjoy the view and set up your bed before dark.

Overnight trekkers hut, Deniki (dinner will be cooked food carried from Kokoda)

DAY 9:

TREKKING FROM DENIKI TO KOKODA / ROAD TRIP TO POPONDETTA (2 hours walking)

The aim today is to arrive at Kokoda mid-morning, have a look around Kokoda and a farewell lunch with your porters, then drive down to Popondetta for overnight.

From Deniki the track descends through the famous choko fields and village gardens belonging to Hoi people, then there is a final steep drop down to flat land and you arrive at **Hoi** village. From here on the track is basically flat all the way to **Kovelo** village and then finally **Kokoda** government station. On arrival at Kokoda the first thing you will see is the hospital on your right and you can regard the hospital front gate as the “finish line”. Turn into the hospital grounds where you will find Delma our local agent waiting for you with cold drinks at the hospital guest house. Proper showers and flush toilets are available here.

After everybody has had time to get cleaned up and relax a little, Delma will serve a barbeque lunch and there will be a short farewell ceremony when your trek leader will present you with your certificate for completing the walk, and your commemorative polo shirt that 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. A farewell song from the porters on the ukulele will leave you a little teary-eyed.

But wait - there's more! Still a little more walking to go: a tour of the Kokoda “station” area. Kokoda is actually located on a plateau about 20 metres above the surrounding land. From the hospital it is a ten minute walk to the district office which is still at its original location. Inspect the cenotaph where there are various memorials, and look through the little museum which explains the advances and retreats which caused Kokoda station to be over-run by the Japanese and later retaken several times by the Australian forces in 1942. 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 cenotaph area it is a 10 minute walk down to the Kokoda market, a good place to hang out with the local for a bit while you buy some local mangoes, sugar cane or pineapple. From the market if the weather is clear you will be able to see Deniki.

At 1:00pm board your passenger truck for the 3 hour drive down to Popondetta. Porters will say their final good-byes to you as you board the truck.

The drive down to Popondetta take you through oil palm plantations, virgin jungle and across a number of rivers including the Kumusi River where General Hori and his white horse drowned.

On arrival in Popondetta make a short stop at the **Popondetta Memorial Park** where there are excellent information plaques about the beach-head battles at Buna, Gona and Sanananda. Unfortunately there won't be time to stop here in the morning on the way to the airport.

Overnight Comfort Inn, Popondetta (room only, twin share - please pay cash or card for your meals, drinks and extras).

TOUR NOTES:

1. Please note that we do not permit porters to accompany trekkers to Popondetta and drink beer at the Comfort Inn. Our porters are paid on arrival at Kokoda and we like them to take their pay straight home to their families and not be tempted to drink it up in Popondetta. We ask that you respect our policy.

2. Comfort Inn Popondetta (formerly known as Lamington Lodge Hotel), is only a 2.5 star establishment similar to a budget motel in Australia but has a reasonable restaurant offering a typical bistro menu such fish and chips, steak and salad, roast of the day, pizza and pasta. If there are enough guests staying in the hotel they usually put on a 3-course buffet option as well. Expect to pay about PGK80 = A\$35 per person for dinner and a couple of drinks.

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

DAY 10:

POPONDETTA / FLY OUT TO AUSTRALIA

Sorry but unless you are taking the Gona and Buna extension you will need to be up at 05:30 this morning to catch the morning flight to Port Moresby and connect with your international flight to Australia. There will not be time to have breakfast in the hotel restaurant because it doesn't open till 06:00 so if you can just have a cuppa tea and packet of Scotch Finger biscuits in your room for now, we will provide a late breakfast for you on arrival in Port Moresby.

06:00 Check out of the hotel and please ensure that any food, beverage and extras charges on your room account are settled. Board the passenger truck again for the 40 minute drive to Popondetta airport located at Girua, a former American wartime airfield complex.

07:00 Check in at Popondetta airport for the flight.

07:50 Airlines PNG flight CG1671 departs Popondetta for Port Moresby (aircraft: Dash 8-200 with 37 seats)

08:25 On arrival in Port Moresby you will be transferred to our company office for a late breakfast and to sort out your baggage. Hot showers are available at our office.

10:00 Transfer back to the airport to check in for your afternoon flight to Brisbane, Sydney or Cairns. Various souvenirs including books about Kokoda are available in the Duty Free shop and lunch is available in the Airport Café after you have checked in.

Most afternoons there are Air Niugini or Virgin Australia flights to Brisbane, and Air Niugini or Qantaslink flights to Cairns.

CORE TOUR ENDS

DAY 10:

POPONDETTA / 3 NIGHTS EXTENSION TO GONA AND BUNA

08:00 Breakfast at the hotel (pay as you go) and check out of your room. Store your gear at reception while you take some time to explore the Popondetta town shops and market. Popondetta is a safe little town with the occasional drunkard but no major security concerns. Our guides will accompany you. The Papindo Supermarket and Pharmacy has a good range of stock if you are looking for your favourite soft drink or candy. The Chinese shops are also worth a poke around - you will probably see some interesting things that you have never seen in any shop in Australia before. You will see a lot of village people standing around the shops and under the big rain trees waiting for public transport, waiting for relatives doing their shopping, or just hanging out in the "big smoke" watching the world go by. Feel free to say hello to people and engage in conversation with maybe an ice-breaker like this:

"Hi my name's Phil, I've just finished walking the Kokoda Track - is that anywhere near your village?"

11:00 Back at the hotel, board the passenger truck for a drive up to the Popondetta Memorial Park (you will have skipped this yesterday since your group is doing the extension and there is more time and better light to visit the memorial park this morning). Joining your group today for the Gona and Buna extension is our local historian Maclaren Hiari MBE, a retired history academic whose research has specialised in the role played by local Papuans in the fighting during the Papuan Campaign of 1942-43. Maclaren has also researched the extra-judicial killing of Papuans by both Japanese and Australian commanders in cases where the locals were believed to have been cooperating with the other side.

12:00 Lunch at the hotel (pay as you go)

13:00 Store at the hotel any bags you don't need for the next two nights and load everything else onto the passenger truck and depart for Gona Beach, about an hour's ride along a bumpy road.

At Gona Beach, kit up for walking and the group will explore the Gona

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

Mission area and see the site of the old mission cross. Maclaren will brief you about the first Japanese landings at Gona Beach and nearby Basabua, and some of the early atrocities committed.

15:00 From Gona Beach hike about an hour along the black sand beach to Basabua village which was over-run during the Japanese landings although there are no longer any elders here who were old enough in 1942 to remember during the invasion.

On arrival at Basabua village guest house a troupe of traditional sing-sing dancers will greet the group and perform local dances in full costume with tapa cloth clothes and bird of paradise feather head-dresses. (You won't see a sing-sing on the main Kokoda Track because the villages there are too small to mount a sing-sing and also rather un-motivated because so many trekking groups pass through whereas only about 5% of Kokoda trekkers make it to Gona and Buna so your visit is definitely an occasion to be celebrated here).

Overnight village guest house, Basabua near Gona (local style dinner and breakfast, clean bedding provided).

Note: unlike the mild days and cool nights on the Kokoda Track, the weather at Gona and Buna will be tropical hot and steamy. Mosquitoes will be prevalent after sundown.

DAY 11:

GONA / SANANANDA / BUNA

Thanks to those annoying village roosters you will rise early this morning and be having breakfast by 6:00am. By 7:00am you will be moving around the village probably mingling with the village kids in their well worn uniforms as they dawdle their way to the village school wide-eyed at the white visitors.

Today you will hike your way from Basabua to Sananda (lunch stop) and onwards to Buna, walking through the beach-head battlefield areas where six thousand exhausted, wounded and sick Japanese troops were cornered by Allied forces in December 1942 while waiting in vain for Imperial Navy ships to evacuate them. By 22 January 1943 when the Allied forces overran the last of the Japanese positions only six Japanese were captured. The remainder of the garrison had escaped northward into the jungle or were wiped out. Buna beach was so littered with rotting corpses from both sides it was called Maggot Beach.

Most human remains found have now been repatriated by the Japanese, Australian or American military but every year when the rivers flood and tonnes of earth are moved around there are fresh discoveries of skeletons and rusting relics. Locals say the souls of yet-undiscovered soldiers walk the beaches at night in their hundreds.

Most of the hiking today will be along coastal footpaths, some walking along the beach and some trudging through marshy areas. There are still many defensive bunkers to be seen, foxholes, bomb craters, piles of rusting metal drums that identify the location of supply dumps and the occasional rusted tank, amphibious vehicle or artillery piece.

In each village there are a few locals who collect the war relics and display them in little huts in their backyards which they call "museums" and charge a small fee for entry. Most of the collections contain the same kinds of relics but there is the occasional rare or outrageous item in each museum. Our company policy is to encourage the locals to handle wartime artifacts with care and reverence - especially soldiers' dog tags and other personal items - so we try to patronise each museum we pass by and ask you to pay a token entry fee of PGK5 to the owner of each collection. Lunch stop will be at Sanananda village guest house where local food will be provided and fresh coconut juice.

On arrival at Buna late afternoon you will visit the war memorials - most are on the beach-front - where Maclaren will brief you on the main action

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

around Buna.

Overnight village guest house, Buna (local style dinner and breakfast, clean bedding provided).

DAY 12:

BUNA / POPONDETTA

Another rude awakening by village roosters will herald this day and after a typical village breakfast of fresh fruit and freshly baked buns with billy tea your group will kit up and start walking along the coastal track from Buna towards the Girua airfield complex. The last 5 km of the feeder road to Buna passes through marshy terrain and after heavy rains this last stretch can be impassable to vehicles so it's likely the group may have to walk up to 2 hours before meeting the waiting passenger truck at the nearest point of firm ground. On the way to Girua there is a stop at Siremi village the home of the most famous "fuzzy wuzzy angel" Raphael Oimbari who was immortalised by the iconic photograph by war correspondent George Silk of Oimbari walking with Private George "Dick" Whittington along the very track you are now traversing, on Christmas Day 1942 on their way to a field hospital. Whittington later died of typhus as did many other soldiers. Driving through the overgrown Girua airfield complex you will see wartime airstrips, aircraft relics and old fuel dumps, old barracks, the gravesite of the two nuns murdered by the Japanese... this whole area is like an outdoor war museum. The airfield complex was actually established by the American forces after the routing of the Japanese garrison as a major base for Allied air operations throughout 1943. From Girua you will drive east to Oro Bay which was the sheltered shore where ships and landing barges landed supplies for the Allied forces. 15:00 Arrive back at Comfort Inn in time for a late lunch and check in to your welcomingly air-conditioned rooms again.

Overnight Comfort Inn, Popondetta (room only, twin share - please pay cash or card for your meals, drinks and extras).

DAY 13:

POPONDETTA / FLY OUT TO AUSTRALIA

Sorry but unless you are taking the Buna and Gona extension you will need to be up at 05:30 this morning to catch the morning flight to Port Moresby and connect with your international flight to Australia. There will not be time to have breakfast in the hotel restaurant because it doesn't open till 06:00 so if you can just have a cuppa tea and packet of Scotch Finger biscuits in your room for now, we will provide a late breakfast for you on arrival in Port Moresby.

06:00 Check out of the hotel and please ensure that any food, beverage and extras charges on your room account are settled. Board the passenger truck again for the 40 minute drive to Popondetta airport located at Girua, a former American wartime airfield complex.

07:00 Check in at Popondetta airport for the flight.

07:50 Airlines PNG flight CG1671 departs Popondetta for Port Moresby (aircraft: Dash 8-200 with 37 seats)

08:25 On arrival in Port Moresby you will be transferred to our company office for a late breakfast and to sort out your baggage. Hot showers are available at our office.

10:00 Transfer back to the airport to check in for your afternoon flight to Brisbane, Sydney or Cairns. Various souvenirs including books about Kokoda are available in the Duty Free shop and lunch is available in the Airport Café after you have checked in.

Most afternoons there are Air Niugini or Virgin Australia flights to Brisbane, and Air Niugini or Qantaslink flights to Cairns.

EXTENSION TOUR ENDS

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

TRIP 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. This walk is sensibly paced with early morning starts, allowing extra time in the afternoon for slower walkers to complete each daily sector. Faster 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 this tour, trekkers must sleep at the specified village or campsite each day. Only the trek leader/guide 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, general trekking gear like machetes and ropes, two-way radio, satellite phone and comprehensive first aid kit.

3. **Porterage.** Your trek package includes 10 kg of personal porterage. This means you can give up to 10 kg 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 10 kg of gear that you give to one of our porters at the start of the trek, you should plan to carry up to 5 kg in your own day pack. *Thus you should bring a total maximum 15 kg 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). In your day pack, pack stuff that you will want access to while walking along (camera, toiletries, munchies, water bottle) and pack your 10 kg of other gear (clothing, sleeping bag etc) into a drawstring duffel bag. At kit-up your drawstring bag will be transferred into one of our porters' backpacks. NB There will be a weigh-in at kit-up and the 10 kg porterage limit will be strictly enforced. Anything over 10 kg you will have to carry yourself.

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 15 kg) you must book an extra personal porter in advance. An extra personal porter costs A\$500 including the porter's wages, the cost of accommodating him in Port Moresby for a few days and a plane ticket back to Kokoda. If you require a dedicated personal porter this extra cost will be added to your invoice and must be paid in advance. 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 5 kg of gear or whether you need to book an extra porter to carry everything for you. If you opt for a personal porter you can either bring your gear in your own 70-90 litre backpack for our porter to carry (top-loading packs are better for this type of trekking) or you can still bring your gear in a duffel bag that we can pack into one of our company backpacks.

4. **Suggested packing list**

- three shirts or tops (cotton is best)
- one long-sleeved light sweater or windcheater (for wearing around the campsite at night and for sleeping in)
- two pairs of bottoms (jeans, army trousers, drill shorts)
- four changes of underwear
- light hiking boots (must be worn-in and NOT brand new)
- 2 pairs of thick woollen hiking socks (or cotton/wool blend but NOT nylon/acrylic/polyester)
- 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 camping gear shop - don't skimp on a PVC one, buy a good quality nylon one)
- lightweight half-size bath towel (quick-dry type - even just a small hand towel is enough to dry yourself)
- half a bar of soap in a leak-proof container
- one roll of toilet paper (wrap it in a freezer bag or shopping bag to keep it dry)
- personal water bottle (1.5 or 2 litre) to carry in your day pack. Many trekkers recommend a "bladder" built into your daypack which enables you to take frequent sips as you walk along, while others say bladders are overkill and the bladder water is always at body temperature and unrefreshing. No need to spend a lot - many trekkers just walk with an old 2 litre cordial bottle tied on to the back of their day pack and say this is just as good as any expensive insulated bottle.
- a small personal first aid kit (see below)
- lightweight slippers or tennis shoes (for moving around campsites while your boots are drying by the fire, or

for crossing streams without soaking your hiking boots)
- sleeping bag and mat (see below)

TIP: Don't bring big heavy reference books about the Kokoda campaign that you won't have time to read while trekking anyway.

TIP: The weather will be generally warm in the day time and cold at night.

TIP: Don't bring pyjamas - just sleep in whatever dry clothes you have. At each village or campsite you can wash dirty clothes and dry them overnight by the campfire while you sleep in your clean change.

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 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, braided or tied before commencing the trek. Long untied hair will quickly get dirty and sweaty and can become a major distraction and annoyance for you while walking. Alternatively, tie a bandanna around your head while walking.

5. **Sleeping gear.** To sleep ON we provide camp pads (roll-up or fold-up rubber sleeping mats). Blow-up mattresses cannot be carried on the trip as they are too heavy. If you cannot sleep on a foam rubber camp pad for a week then this trip is not for you. To sleep IN we provide clean sleeping bags (machine washed and disinfected with Tea Tree Oil after each trek) but if you wish to bring your own sleeping bag you are welcome to do so, as long as it is a lightweight sleeping bag rated for 5 degrees. Sleeping bags and camp pads do not count as part of your 10 kg portage allowance.

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 water. 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 Overkill Don't Be A Wuss.

If your main hiking boots get very wet from wading through creeks you are in for some very uncomfortable walking with waterlogged feet. Bring a pair of sandals or cheap pair of slippers, boat shoes or tennis shoes that you can wear for the creek crossings or walking in the wet. Don't try to cross the creeks in bare feet as 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 - even your best mates - 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 there are clear patches, and the Buna/Gona battlefields area is very open)
- *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 some extra-large Elastoplast fabric strips or a 1 metre length of Elastoplast fabric sticking 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. 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 during your training, 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. To reduce the size and weight of your

first aid kit, squeeze out three quarters of each tube of cream and keep this in other containers at home, and pack only the squeezed tubes with remaining cream. Pack your little first aid kit into a toiletries bag together with your soap, shaving razor 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 if you run out. Your trek leader also carries a full tropical first aid kit that you can tap into. Also bring any medications that you might need for any specific medical conditions you suffer (eg if you are asthmatic, make sure you bring a Ventolin puffer). Last chance to buy medications will be in Port Moresby on Day 2.

9. **Guide and porters.** Your trekking party will include an English-speaking guide (trek leader) who has traversed the track many times before and knows the area intimately. In addition we provide sufficient porters to carry the equipment and supplies we provide plus 10 kg of your personal gear. Porters will not only carry gear but will also support you over difficult parts of the Track and carry you to the nearest airstrip 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 carrying your stuff.

10. **Food.** 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 some of these fruit and vegies from other village people so there is a flow-on benefit. 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 locals 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 our efforts to base the trek menu on local food can be a bit hit-and-miss sometimes. However we have good relationships with the particular village guest houses we patronise so we can nearly always rely on a good feed of fresh local food at these stops. Our porters always carry enough camp food to supplement or replace village food. Camp food dinners usually consist of tinned stew with rice, spaghetti with tinned Bolognese sauce, fried tinned ham with reconstituted dried peas and potato, Continental savoury rice or pasta, or whatever else we can source from Port Moresby's sometimes unreliable supermarkets. At the village guest houses along the Kokoda Track, vegetables are mainly plain-boiled in water or dry-roasted under hot stones or in the fire. The villages at this high altitude don't have coconuts for cooking in coconut cream as the coastal villages do. Not much meat is available in the villages along the Kokoda Track because (a) most of the villagers are Seventh-Day Adventists and do not eat pork for religious reasons, and (b) raising chickens on a scale big enough to feed trekking groups is difficult as there is no grain for chicken feed available (c) there are no beef cattle raised in the Kokoda Track area and no sheep farming anywhere in PNG.

Breakfast and lunch supplies are all carried by our porters. Breakfast each morning will be billy tea with hot porridge, toasted muesli, damper or pancakes: please don't expect Coco Pops and croissants. Lunch each day will consist of dry biscuits with tinned tuna or other meat, cheese stick, dried fruit: please don't expect hamburgers or BLT's. Of course, all empty tins and other hard rubbish is washed and packed into garbage bags and carried out by the porters for disposal at proper rubbish dumps.

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. Snack foods will count as part of your 10 kg portage allowance unless you carry them in your day pack.

11. **Drinking water** along the Kokoda Track is collected from clean sources at camping sites and from rainwater tanks or piped supplies in the villages. None of our trekkers has ever reported any problems with water-related diarrhoea on the walk (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 regularly 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. Don't follow your porters' drinking habits. Their bodies seem to need less water intake as they have grown up in this climate carrying sacks of sweet potatoes and firewood from their mountain gardens to their villages; their bodies are more resilient when walking in these tough conditions with heavy loads.

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 since we first began running treks in 2004 we have never needed to do this. As a backup measure you can bring a few water purification tablets, but if you are really worried about water, there is a product available in camping stores called Steripen. This 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. Purification tablets make water taste awful. At Gona and Buna the water sources are not as pure as along the Kokoda Track so bottled water will be included as part of the extension package and carried by guides.

12. Fitness, safety, insurance and medical evacuation. For legal reasons we require that you have a medical check-up including a cardiovascular fitness test before arriving in PNG (do this AFTER you are well into your training routine, not before) and supply a letter from your doctor to state that you are fit for 9 days challenging walking. You won't be allowed to commence the walk unless we have this document in our hot little hands first. However despite being certified fit and in good health, you must recognise that there is still a possibility that you may suffer an injury or illness during your trek. Your guide will keep an eye on your condition as you walk and your porters will support and assist you with traversing difficult parts of the track, but no matter how fit you are or how experienced a hiker you are there is always a chance you might slip on a mossy rock and break a bone. 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. You may be overtaken by dehydration and collapse.

If you fall ill or have an accident while on the Kokoda Track we have a contingency plan in place. Our trek leader carries both a VHF radio and a mobile satellite phone for contacting our Port Moresby office, from where we can discuss your condition with a doctor and obtain advice on how to manage your situation. We will also contact your travel insurer and obtain their advice on what level of assistance they will provide under the terms of your travel insurance policy.

If your condition is not life threatening but sufficient to prevent you from continuing the walk (eg you have sprained an ankle or have an infected toe that you can't walk on) you will probably be assisted or stretchered by your porters to the nearest airstrip and - in consultation with your insurance company - we will arrange earliest pickup by any scheduled or charter flight that is due to fly your way within the next few days. Usually your insurance company will meet any cost involved, which is usually just a seat on somebody else's plane. Insurance companies often will not authorise dedicated medivac charter of a plane or helicopter just for a sprained ankle, so you can expect to endure some degree of discomfort and frustration for a day or three while waiting for non-urgent evacuation by scheduled flight or somebody else's charter flight.

If your condition is potentially life-threatening and requires immediate evacuation, your insurance company will arrange earliest pickup by a dedicated (ie just for you) fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter, depending on where you are and what charter aircraft are available. If your condition requires in-flight treatment a flight nurse and/or doctor will be on board the aircraft to begin immediate treatment when you are picked up. If your condition does not require in-flight medical treatment there will only be a pilot and one of our company staff on board, and we will transport you to a private clinic here in Port Moresby when you arrive, for treatment.

If you wish to voluntarily withdraw from the trek at any time because you feel you are not coping with the walking and fear you may cave in if you keep going (and then become a problem for everybody else) you should advise your guide that you wish to discontinue walking. Your guide will then discuss the situation with you and first determine whether a bit of emotional first aid (encouragement) might fix you up or whether another option is for you to stay back at one of the villages with your porter and have one or two rest days before continuing the walk with just your porter. However if you and your trek leader both agree that flying out is the best option, he will arrange through our office for the first available passing flight to divert to the airstrip where you are waiting and pick you up. It's important to note that flying out voluntarily must be at your own cost. Your travel insurer will not cover it. Flying out may be as cheap as \$100 for a seat on a scheduled flight to Menari or Efogi, \$2000 to divert another aircraft flying past, or \$4,000 to charter your own helicopter to fly in to wherever you are, airstrip or no airstrip.

Sometimes we also come up against situations where our trek leader can see that somebody is on his/her last legs and not coping with the trek despite his/her own insistence that he/she is OK and wants to keep walking. In these circumstances the trek leader has the right of veto and may insist that, before you become a medivac case, you either (a) withdraw from the trek and make arrangements to fly out at your own cost or (b) stay back at a village with one of the porters and take a rest day to regain some strength before continuing the walk. If this happens to you, you will complete the trek one or two days after the rest of the group and probably have to reschedule your international flight, but any flight rebooking penalties will probably cost less than evacuating yourself from the Track by air.

Normally when a trekker requires medical or voluntary evacuation, the trek leader will leave the head porter or another responsible porter to stay with you at the village airstrip until your aircraft arrives, then fly out

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

with you to Port Moresby. The rest of the trekking group must keep walking so that they can arrive in time to catch their international flight. The trek leader will leave his satellite phone or VHF radio with you so that you keep in direct contact with our Port Moresby office until your transport arrives.

Bear in mind that charter aircraft based in Port Moresby (both fixed-wing and helicopters) which are engaged by aeromedical retrieval companies for evacuation flights (medivacs) are often on hire to mining companies during the day and may be some hours away from Port Moresby when a medivac call comes through. By the time an aircraft is recalled to Port Moresby from a distant mining site to pick up a medical crew and refuel, it may be too late in the day to fly to a remote Kokoda Track airstrip which has no runway lights. Dusk arrives early along the Kokoda Track because of mountain shadows, and aircraft are not allowed to land at a remote airstrip unless they are assured of being able to take off again by last light. (Well, they can land but if they are still on the ground at last light they have to wait overnight till dawn before they can take off again). Accordingly even if you are seriously ill or injured you may not necessarily be airlifted out immediately. In particular, if you request medical evacuation after noon on any day there is a 50% chance that you may have to wait until next morning before an aircraft can get in to pick you up. This is a risk you must accept when deciding to walk the Kokoda Track. It is one of our 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".

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, even the fit gung-ho types. How embarrassed was the Navy search and rescue helicopter pilot walking with one of our groups a few years back - he 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 dubious fitness. (Statistics tell us that one in two Australian adults is now overweight). 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 9 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 prophylaxis (preventive 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 *Anopheles* 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 prophylaxis your chances of actually contracting malaria even in a malarial area are quite low (but not zero). There are a number of recommended medications that can be taken weekly (eg Lariam) or daily (eg Doxycycline) that kill malaria parasites as soon as they enter your bloodstream from a mosquito bite. Doxycycline is actually an antibiotic and it was only in recent years that it was discovered that doxycycline is also an effective anti-malaria medication. The

ECOTOURISM MELANESIA LTD

www.em.com.pg ecotourism.melanesia@gmail.com

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 state that you have been in PNG and may have malaria. 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 free tourist visa on arrival at Port Moresby airport. Getting your tourist visa issued is quick and easy if you have an Australian passport and 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 much more than this anyway, especially if you have a credit card to pay for hotel extras. Just carry about PGK100 (AUD\$40) 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 do not always have PNG Kina currency in stock, but even if they do, 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 are ATMs 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.

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, or at a pinch may allow you to go out into the main terminal area to use an ATM and come back and pay for your visa. They know you won't abscond without your passport!

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 \$40) otherwise it could cause dissention among the other porters who might feel that they also worked hard on the trip. Sometimes trekkers pool their tips and give them to the guide and he distributes the money evenly to all porters. Please don't give alcohol or cigarettes to our porters - company policy.

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, Manari, 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 and Kokoda 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 Manari 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 Manari that we will personally purchase in Port Moresby and deliver to the village. A systematic way of helping the communities along the Kokoda Track is to donate to the Kokoda Track Foundation www.kokodatrackfoundation.org or if you would like to help rural people all over PNG benefit from responsible tourism you could donate to the Community-Based Tourism Foundation www.cbtf.org.pg.

19. Hotels in Port Moresby. These days there is a serious shortage of affordable accommodation in Port Moresby. Many hotels have a full house during the week and operate at 80-90% capacity on weekends. There are huge mining projects operating in Papua New Guinea and the hundreds of mine workers passing through Port Moresby each week on their way to and from the mine sites is placing a heavy demand on hotel accommodation and driving prices up to ridiculous levels. Apart from prices there is also a chronic problem of *overbooking* at some hotels and in the past some of our trekking groups have been inconvenienced on a number of occasions, arriving to find that reserved and pre-paid rooms had been given away to other guests who arrived earlier in the day. We accommodate our trekking groups at the Ponderosa Family Hotel or the Shady Rest Hotel which are quiet, lesser-known hotels that are comfortable, reasonably priced and have not yet inconvenienced us with overbooking.

The Ponderosa Family Hotel is located in the quiet Henao Drive residential area at Five Mile.

The new wing rooms - called "deluxe" rooms - are less than 3 years old, very spacious and well-appointed. Each unit has two double beds as well as nice sitting furniture, a spotless ensuite bathroom with stylish fittings, and a little balcony with chairs overlooking the gardens.

The Ponderosa has a restaurant and bar but no nightclub and is therefore quiet at night. There are no shops nearby so self-catering is only possible if you stop at a supermarket on your way there. The hotel has a spacious carpark which we find convenient for manoeuvring our tour vehicles, and they have a shuttle bus for airport transfers. However two downsides with the Ponderosa are no swimming pool and no internet access. We can get you to an internet café or let you check your email at our company office if needed.

The Shady Rest Hotel is located at Boroko not far from our office and offers good quality "budget hotel" accommodation and a good restaurant with a selection of Western bistro style and Indian style meals. There are shops over the road but we suggest you don't go there as it's a risky area with pickpockets and drunks. There is a night club at The Shady Rest Hotel which we hope won't keep you awake at night. A refundable key deposit is required at check-in.