

OCEANIA · CULTURE · DIVING · HIKING · HISTORY · ADVENTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is one of the most culturally diverse places on Earth, with over 800 languages among roughly ten million people. Trek the wartime Kokoda Track, cruise the Sepik River past carved spirit houses, dive Kimbe Bay's reefs and time a trip for the Highland shows, when clans gather in feathers and paint. Independent travel is genuinely challenging, so most visitors go with a guide.



The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all but essential travel to parts of Papua New Guinea.

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.

FCDO advice last updated 17 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Port Moresby	 CURRENCY Papua New Guinean kina (PGK) £1 ≈ PGK 6.00	 LANGUAGE Tok Pisin, English Hiri Motu	 BEST TIME Jun–Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £80–£400 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type I 240V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 24h via Singapore or Brisbane ~£1,200–£2,100 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+10, UTC+11 standard time

Papua New Guinea occupies the eastern half of New Guinea plus some 600 islands, and its terrain — knife-edge ranges, swamp, rainforest and reef — kept its peoples apart long enough to produce astonishing cultural variety. The main regions are the cool Highlands around Mount Hagen and Goroka; the Sepik River basin in the north, famed for carving; the islands of New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville; and the southern coast around Port Moresby, start of the Kokoda Track. No road links Port Moresby with Lae or the Highlands, so trips are planned around domestic flights, with most visitors focusing on one or two regions.

This is one of the world's most expensive places to travel: flights, hotels and guides add up quickly, and simple village guesthouses are the main budget option. Schedules slip, flights change and plans need slack. The rewards are huge — dawn mist over Highland valleys, singsings with hundreds of performers, birds of paradise, Second World War relics and reefs with almost nobody on them. It suits experienced, patient travellers, divers, trekkers and history-minded visitors retracing Kokoda. Many are struck by the warmth of village hospitality and by how strongly clan, land and custom still shape daily life.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ADVENTURE

Kokoda Track

The 96-kilometre trail over the Owen Stanley Range follows the 1942 campaign between Australian and Japanese forces. Most trekkers take eight to ten days with a licensed operator and local porters, usually between April and November.
- 2

CULTURE

Sepik River

PNG's great river winds past villages renowned for carving, crocodile-scarification initiations and soaring haus tambaran spirit houses. Travel by motorised canoe from Ambunti or Pagwi, sleeping in simple village guesthouses along the way.

3

WILDLIFE

Kimbe Bay

Off West New Britain, this bay's reefs, seamounts and walls hold some of the richest coral diversity on Earth, with dolphins, turtles and passing whales. Walindi Plantation Resort is the long-established dive base.

4

HISTORY

Rabaul

Partly buried by ash in 1994, Rabaul sits on a flooded caldera ringed by volcanoes, including the still-steaming Tavurvur. Explore Japanese wartime tunnels and Admiral Yamamoto's bunker, then bathe in the hot springs at the volcano's foot.

5

NATURE

Tufi

On Cape Nelson in Oro Province, steep rainforest-clad inlets known locally as fjords open onto coral reefs and Second World War wrecks. Stay at the dive resort or in village guesthouses and explore by outrigger canoe.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Port Moresby

≈ 760,000 people

The capital is mainly a gateway, but the National Museum and Art Gallery, Parliament House's spirit-house façade and Bomana War Cemetery merit a guided half-day.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Lae

≈ 150,000 people

PNG's industrial port and second city sits at the start of the Highlands Highway; most visitors pass through, though the botanic gardens and Lae War Cemetery are worth a stop.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Mount Hagen

≈ 46,000 people

The Western Highlands' main town is a market and transport hub, worth timing for August's Mount Hagen Show and a base for highland walks and coffee country.

PNG's urban figures are rough: Port Moresby's is the 2024 census count for the National Capital District, while Lae and Mount Hagen rely on older census-based estimates, and sources disagree on which town ranks third.

When to go to Papua New Guinea

Best time: **Jun–Sep**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

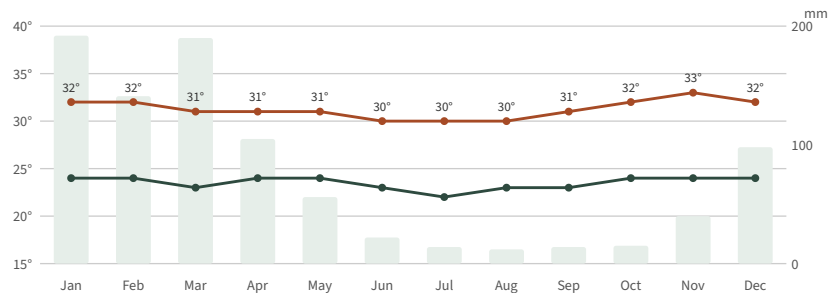
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Port Moresby

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jul	National Mask Festival Kokopo in East New Britain hosts mask dancers from across the islands each July, including Baining fire dancers leaping through flames at night.
Aug	Mount Hagen Show Western Highlands clans parade in elaborate bilas — plumes, paint and shell ornaments — at this August cultural show, one of the country's oldest and largest.
Sep	Goroka Show Held in Goroka around Independence Day (16 September), it gathers dozens of singsing groups in feathers, shells and body paint, including the famous Asaro mudmen.

How much does Papua New Guinea cost?

SHOESTRING £80 per person / day ≈ PGK 480 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £190 per person / day ≈ PGK 1,139 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £400 per person / day ≈ PGK 2,399 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
--	---	---

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Mumu The Highland feast: pork, chicken, sweet potato, greens and banana wrapped in leaves and slow-cooked in an earth oven over hot stones, usually for celebrations.	Sago Starch from the sago palm, staple of the Sepik and lowland swamps, eaten as chewy pancakes, jelly-like porridge or baked with coconut.	Kaukau Sweet potato, the Highlands staple, roasted in the embers of a fire, boiled in coconut milk or cooked in the mumu alongside pork.
---	---	--

Getting around

Air Niugini and PNG Air link Port Moresby with Lae, Mount Hagen, Goroka, Wewak, Hoskins and Tokua (for Rabaul); fares are high and schedules change at short notice. The Highlands Highway runs from Lae to Mount Hagen, but visitors usually travel with arranged drivers rather than PMVs, the public minibuses and trucks. Motorised canoes and small boats serve the Sepik and coastal villages.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  I 240V — bring a UK-to-I adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 111 Fire: 110 Police: 112 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +675	TIME ZONES UTC+10, UTC+11 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Tipping is not customary and can create awkward expectations; agreed payments for guides and porters, plus a small thank-you at the end, are the norm.

ETIQUETTE

Almost all land is under customary ownership, so ask before swimming, fishing or walking across it and expect small custom fees. Dress modestly — women should cover their thighs — and always ask before photographing people.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Jacksons International Airport (POM), Port Moresby

Visas & entry for Papua New Guinea

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit Papua New Guinea. Visas can be obtained in advance online or at a Papua New Guinea (PNG) Embassy or High Commission. Tourist/visitor visas can also be obtained on arrival at Jacksons International Airport in Port Moresby.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Japanese encephalitis

Measles

Polio

Bat Lyssavirus

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Papua New Guinea below 1,800m: atovoquone/proguanil OR doxycycline OR mefloquine recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Papua New Guinea

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 26 Feb 2027	Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare Remembrance Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Thu 17 Jun 2027	King's Birthday
Fri 23 Jul 2027	Papua New Guinea Remembrance Day
Thu 26 Aug 2027	National Repentance Day
Thu 16 Sep 2027	Independence Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Tok Pisin

ENGLISH	TOK PISIN	SAY IT
Hello	Gude	<i>goo-DAY</i>
Thank you	Tenkyu	<i>TENK-yoo</i>
Please	Plis	<i>pleez</i>
Excuse me	Skius	<i>skyooz</i>
How much is this?	Hamas long dispela?	<i>HAH-mus long dis-PEH-lah</i>

Know before you go

Check the FCDO travel advice before booking, arrange airport pick-ups and local guides in advance, and follow your hosts' advice on where to go after dark.

Domestic flights are often delayed, rescheduled or cancelled, so leave buffer days before international connections, and check baggage weight limits on small aircraft.

Carry plenty of small kina notes: ATMs are scarce outside main towns, cards are rarely accepted in villages, and custom fees for access or photography are paid in cash.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.