

welcome to PNG & Solomon Islands



Exploring the Landscape

Test your mettle on a 10-day trek following the steps of Australian diggers along the Kokoda Track, or summit Highland peaks for a glimpse of both sparkling coasts on a clear day. Prowl through jungle-clad scenery with village guides, en route to thundering waterfalls or in search of magnificently plumed birds of paradise. On the coast, hundreds of islands and atolls cry out for exploration. You can slow-boat your way along pristine stretches of shoreline, over-nighting at peaceful villages along the way.

The Life Aquatic

The Solomon Islands and PNG are both world-famous diving destinations, with excellent conditions most months of the year. The biodiversity beneath is astounding, with a colourful array of hard and soft corals and teeming fish life, along with a jaw-dropping collection of WWII plane- and shipwrecks. Live-aboard boats and first-rate dive resorts provide access to sites far from the hordes. The waves are equally uncrowded for surf lovers, with fantastic reef, point and beach breaks scattered around the region's northern shores. There's also fantastic fishing in these pristine waters, with yellowfin tuna, mackerel, sailfish and the legendary Papuan black bass in abundance.

Coral-ringed beaches, smouldering volcanoes and rainforest-covered mountains set the stage for unforgettable adventures, while traditional villages and tropical islands provide magnificent settings for a remote getaway.

(left) An Ulu Island boy enjoying azure waters in East New Britain (p141)
(below) A Malaita Islander (p224) plays a traditional bamboo panpipe



Cultural Wonders

Home to more than 800 distinct languages and lifestyles, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons provide fascinating opportunities to be immersed in traditional cultures. It's well worth planning your trip around over-the-top annual festivals: see colourfully painted and feathered Highland warriors, fearless snake-wielding fire dancers and brilliantly attired island oarsmen chanting to the backdrop of pounding drums. Festivals aside, there are myriad ways to have a paradigm-altering experience: an impromptu *singsing* on the Trobriand Islands, learning about the legends of an eerie skull cave or sharing fruit with new-found friends on a bumpy PMV ride.

Island Idyll

Travel is rarely easy in Melanesia, but the rewards are bountiful. After a few weeks of hard travel you can find your way to a pristine swath of coastline and unwind for a few days in a beautifully sited ecofriendly resort or bush-material village guesthouse overlooking the sea. Spend your days snorkelling coral reefs, walking sandy beaches, paddling up placid rivers or lounging beneath a palm tree. By night, watch the sunset, feast on fresh seafood and watch the sky slowly fill with stars while daydreaming about the great adventures still ahead.