



# Port Moresby

POP 300,000 / AREA 240 SQ KM

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Rapala (p50)
- » Jepello (p50)
- » Daikoku (p50)
- » Asia Aromas (p50)
- » Beachside Brasserie (p50)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Airways Hotel & Apartments (p49)
- » Ela Beach Hotel (p49)
- » Jessie Wyatt House (p46)
- » Shady Rest (p49)
- » Lamana (p49)

## Why Go?

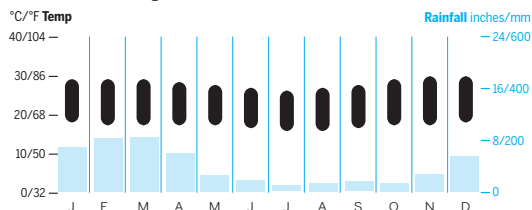
First-time visitors to Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby can find it confronting and even intimidating, but since all visitors enter PNG through its gritty capital almost everyone ends up spending some time here. Port Moresby is the South Pacific's largest city, and while the sprawling city isn't among the world's great metropolises, it does have redeeming features.

A visit to Parliament Haus, PNG's most impressive building, and the cultural displays at the National Museum are recommended – the mosaic facade of Parliament Haus will excite any photographer in the late afternoon. The National Botanical Gardens are a highlight; when the orchids are blooming, it's perhaps the city's most charming spot.

The city's relative sophistication is a treat before heading bush; or, if you've been wandering through villages for weeks, a meal at one of Port Moresby's good restaurants makes a welcome change from rice, taro and sweet potato.

## When to Go

### Port Moresby



**Year-round Hot**  
year-round;  
average highs  
between 28°C  
and 32°C.

**Dec–May Wet**  
season with hot-  
ter, rainier days.

**Jun–Nov Dry**  
season, with  
slightly lower  
temperatures.

## History

While Port Moresby today has dozens of tribal groups, only two can truly call it home: the Motu and Koitabu. The native people of the Port Moresby area (and much of the eastern tip of the mainland) are descendants of Polynesian people, unlike the predominantly Melanesian population. The Motu are traditionally a seagoing people and didn't arrive until relatively recently, probably less than 2000 years ago. Motu villages were built on stilts over Moresby Harbour. Hanuabada ('Great Village') was the largest of their communities and still exists today. Stilt houses can also be seen at Koki Village near Town and Tubuseraia down the Magi Hwy.

The first European to visit was Captain John Moresby in 1873, after whom the harbour was named. Moresby explored extensively along the south coast and spent several days trading with villagers at Hanuabada. One year later, the London Missionary Society arrived and was soon followed by traders and 'blackbirders', who recruited indentured labourers and were little better than slave-dealers.

In 1888 Port Moresby became the capital of the newly declared British New Guinea, and in 1906 the territory was handed to Australia, itself only five years independent of British rule. Sir Hubert Murray took over administration of Papua, as it was known, until his death in 1940, aged 78, at Samarai Island while still on duty.

Port Moresby was overshadowed by Lae, the supply base for the gold rushes in Wau and Bulolo, and Rabaul until WWII. The Japanese quickly occupied all of northern New Guinea and were rapidly advancing south when Port Moresby became the staging post for Allied troops fighting along the Kokoda Track. Port Moresby remained in Australian hands throughout the war.

After the war, Papua and New Guinea were administered as one territory with Port Moresby becoming the capital largely by default – more attractive alternatives such as Lae and Rabaul had been flattened by Allied bombing.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Port Moresby can be a dangerous place, but it's not the hell on earth that many who've never been here make it out to be. The vast majority of visitors to Port Moresby leave unscathed and, if you use your common sense, you should be fine.

Despite this, there are no guarantees and the situation in Port Moresby can change quickly, so always ask the locals when you arrive about what is safe, then make your own choice. Walking around Town and Boroko during daylight hours should be fine, but anywhere else you should walk with a local. Avoid secluded urban areas at any time; *raskols* (bandits) are not strictly nocturnal. The view from Paga Hill in Town is terrific, but don't walk up there on your own. Stay out of the settlements unless you are with one of the residents (that includes Hanuabada). Don't walk around Kila Kila, Sabama or Six Mile at any time. After dark, don't walk anywhere. The most important thing is not to make yourself a target or put yourself in situations where you are vulnerable. It is just common sense.

## Sights

A collection of districts rather than a single city, Port Moresby sprawls around the coast and inland hills. Most of Port Moresby's few sights are in the modest CBD, called Town, and the government district of Waigani.

### Hanuabada

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p42) Past the docks to the north lies Hanuabada, the original Motu village. Although it is still built over the sea on stilts, the original wood and thatched houses were destroyed by fire during WWII. They were rebuilt in all-Australian building materials, corrugated iron and fibrocement, but it's an interesting place and the people have retained many traditional Motu customs.

You cannot simply wander around the villages if you are not a guest or if you don't have a local guide – ask your hotel to suggest someone.

### Koki

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(off Map p44) The picturesque stilt village of Koki, at the eastern end of Ela Beach, is worth visiting if you can find a local to take you. The best way to do that is by visiting the neighbouring **Koki Market**, one of the oldest and, after a vast improvement in security, safest markets in the city. Fresh produce and fish straight off the boat are sold here and even if you're not shopping for produce it's a colourful place to watch grassroots-style PNG commerce. It's best not to go alone, and preferable to go with a local. PMVs (public motor vehicles) stop outside the market.