

Central, Oro & Milne Bay Provinces



The eastern provinces of Central, Oro and Milne Bay have it all – dazzling reefs, an arsenal of WWII historic sites, jungle-clad mountains and, most endearingly, good-spirited and genuinely hospitable people. Those who love the outdoors will find plenty of it here and ample opportunity to scramble over, fall down on, dive into, and swim through it.

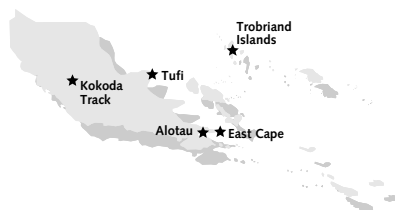
Papua New Guinea's foremost attraction, the Kokoda Track, seesaws for 96 unrelenting kilometres between the Central and Oro Provinces. But the Kokoda is far more than a mere track. Japanese and Australians fought one of WWII's bloodiest running battles along these paths and, for many Aussies, it embodies their never-say-die identity. Today, many walk in solidarity for their forefathers who fought and died in this most inhospitable but beautiful battlefield.

Further east, at Tufi and north of Alotau, some of the world's most biologically diverse reefs will have you gasping on your snorkel's mouthpiece. When you tire of marvelling at the kaleidoscopic colours of the reefs and diving the numerous WWII planes and boat wrecks, try your hand at muck diving (diving amid the critters that lurk at the sea bed and the detritus of history) under the pylons of the Samarai Island Wharf.

Turning north, across the Solomon Sea, you'll find the legendary Trobriand Islands, home to the exotic Milamala Festival of 'free' love, cricket and – above all – yams. Alotau, the capital of Milne Bay Province, is one of the safest and most attractive towns in the country and home to the Milne Bay Kundu & Canoe Festival, during which island warriors paddle ocean-going canoes in races guaranteed to have your heart racing.

HIGHLIGHTS

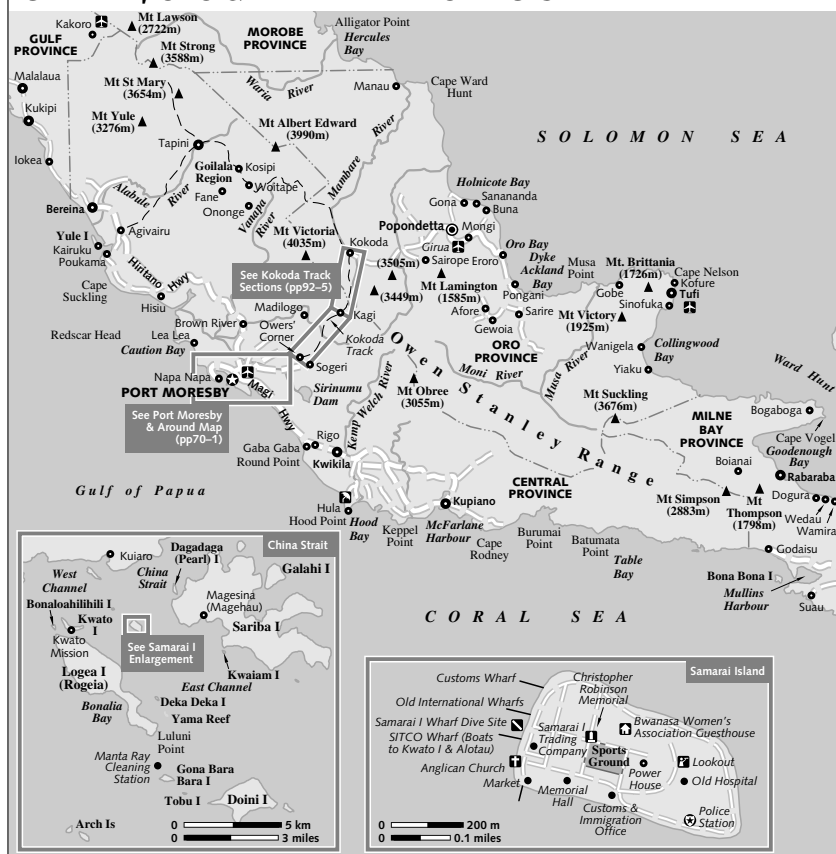
- Retracing WWII battles over the rugged Owen Stanley Range on the infamous **Kokoda Track** (p91)
- Swimming through clouds of techni-coloured reef fish and catching a canoe to the untouched island communities off **East Cape** (p113)
- Playing cricket on **Trobriand Islands** (p120) and immersing yourself in the islands' unique culture.
- Staying in a seaside village among the amazing volcanic *rias* (fjords) of **Tufi** (p107)
- Cheering alongside locals for your favourite canoe in the **Milne Bay Kundu & Canoe Festival** (p111) in Alotau



■ POPULATION: 527,000

■ AREA: 67,940 SQ KM

**CENTRAL, ORO
& MILNE BAY PROVINCES**



Apart from men of God, the region attracted a less savoury crew of opportunists