

Welcome to PNG & Solomon Islands

True adventure awaits in this enigmatic corner of Melanesia. Smouldering volcanoes, forest-cloaked mountains and coral-ringed islands set the stage for one of the world's most flamboyant cultures.

A Land Apart

Are you up for an adventure? Here in PNG you can trek through steaming jungles and ford rushing rivers with expert guides. Your goal may be a remote village, a magnificently plumed bird of paradise or a kangaroo that has elected the life arboreal. Why not test your mettle on a multiday trek following the steps of Australian diggers along the Kokoda Track, or summit a 4000m-plus Highland peak for a panoramic, coast-to-coast vista.

Aquatic Adventures

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 ship wrecks. 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.

Cultural Wonderland

Home to more than 800 distinct languages, PNG and the Solomons provide incomparable opportunities to be immersed in a variety of fascinating traditional cultures. It's well worth planning your trip around one or two of the major 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 paradigm-altering experiences to be had: an impromptu *singsing* (celebratory dance or festival) on the Trobriand Islands, learning about the legends of an eerie skull cave or sharing fruit with newfound friends on a bumpy PMV ride.

Island Idyll

Travel is rarely easy in Melanesia, but rewards are bountiful. After a few weeks of hard travel, find your way to a palm-fringed, sun-drenched coast and unwind. Opt for a luxury ecofriendly resort with activities or a rustic village guesthouse footsteps from the sea. Spend your days snorkelling coral reefs, combing sandy beaches, paddling 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.



Why I Love PNG & Solomon Islands

By Lindsay Brown, Writer

Papua New Guinea is blessed with an astounding mix of traditional cultures and natural splendour, making it a personal favourite. From the Highlands to the islands there's a myriad of cultural riches, best witnessed during spectacular festivals where body decoration simply defies the imagination. Bunking down in a sleepy beachside village is the perfect antidote to modern city-living ailments, and something I highly recommend to independent travellers. Adventurers will find coral gardens the equal of anywhere else, while jungle trails provide the opportunity to see weird and wonderful wildlife: tree kangaroos, cuscuses and scene-stealing birds of paradise.

For more about our writers, see p260