

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

DISCOVER MILNE BAY
The Bwana Bwana Islands
& beyond

Milne Bay Province is in the embryonic stages of tourism. Free from the artificial and destructive practices of mass tourism, the province is a jewel waiting to be discovered; an unpolished and raw beauty. Travel is about having a passion for people's stories and sharing cultures in a holistic way. It is my hope that as tourism grows in the province it will be in a sustainable manner and of a benefit to the local communities. Ecotourism has high potential in the region to minimise the negative impacts of those travelling to the province and give back to conservation and community initiatives. This holistic approach to travel can thereby aid and support humanitarian principles. When you return home, spread the word and awareness of community situations will arise.

Open your mind and heart; embrace the Bwana Bwana culture and impart a sense of value to local communities and their natural heritage.

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MILNE BAY PROVINCE

Situated at the eastern end of mainland Papua New Guinea, Milne Bay Province is characterised by the central ridge of the Owen Stanley Ranges dramatically meeting some 110,000 square kilometres of ocean. Over 435 islands punctuate the meeting of the Coral and Solomon Seas. Volcanic peaks, coral cays, diverse reefs and the pristine, white beaches contrast starkly the cerulean waters.

Milne Bay Province is renowned for the friendly and hospitable people of the region. It is a safe and generally overlooked destination; a traveller's paradise.

Milne Bay Province is a matrilineal society, which means that women in the region have a unique role as landowners, peacekeepers, conservationists and guardians of traditional customs; the land travels along the female line.

Locals have long had high exposure and contact with the outside world due to the location of the province on the major shipping routes of the China Straits. Missionaries, scientists, pearl traders and Japanese and Allied troops have all passed through the province, most famously in the Battle of Milne Bay. In 1942, the Allied Troops defeated the Japanese in the first major battle of World War II that the Japanese were conquered.

The province is made up of seven main island groups in addition to the mainland; the Trobriands, Woodlark, Laughlan, Louisiade Archipelago, Conflict, Bwana Bwana and D'Encastreau Islands. Home to diving sites ranked by National Geographic as top three in the world and sheltering regions of virgin rainforest, Milne Bay Province is a region of unfathomable diversity.

A presentation from Karlee Taylor.

Bachelor of Ecotourism, Flinders University, Australia. in collaboration and with thanks to the communities of Milne Bay Province. Special thanks to the Anakapu and Kinch families. Photography by Karlee Taylor and Marina Anakapu.





Whilst travelling, prevention is the key to keeping good health. Prepare by visiting your dentist, General Practitioner and/or Travel Doctor before leaving. Remember to leave medications in original, labelled containers and bring a signed, dated letter describing medical conditions and medications required.

Before travelling to Papua New Guinea it is recommended to be vaccinated for Tetanus, Diphtheria, Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid Fever, and Japanese B Encephalitis. Travellers should also be aware that malaria is present in PNG and while mosquito nets and coils are available in Alotau, additional preparations such as Anti-malaria pills or Doxycyclin should be brought with you.

Make certain that your travel insurance covers the kind of activities you expect to be partaking in PNG such as diving, trekking, cave exploration etc. And be aware that public hospitals in the country often expect cash up-front.

Services

Landlines, satellite phones, mobile phones, local radio stations, Radio Milne Bay and Government operated radio networks are all operational in Milne Bay Province and in Alotau Internet Access is available in some locations, including Masuarina Lodge. Messages can also be sent through Public Motor Vehicle (PMV) Operators.

Napatana Lodge was the first ecotourism lodge in Milne Bay Province and is the central hub to find out places to stay and things to do in the province. Travellers in the region meet up and swap stories over a few drinks on pub nights. Gretta Kwasnicka-Todurawai will help to sort out any of your travel wishes if at all possible. Gretta is an experienced traveller and has the contacts throughout the region to make your travel plans happen; she will give you all the advice you need in an honest and rhetoric free manner.

Sadowai Guest House is an ecotourism guesthouse operated by the local village in Sewa Bay, Normanby Island in the D'Encastreaux Group. Mombi Onesimo is an extremely knowledgeable guide and will help you with your bird-watching, snorkelling, trekking and touring needs. For more information on the guesthouse, see the information booklet produced by the local community in collaboration with Flinders University Ecotourism Graduate Nick Whitfield-Moore. Copies can be viewed at Napatana Lodge.

Napatana Lodge

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Fax: +675 641 0738
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Sadowai Guest House

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Contact through Napatana Lodge

Masuarina Lodge

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Ph: +675 641 1212
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Driftwood Resort

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Butia Lodge

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Tawali Resort

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Alotau International Hotel

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Galahi Island Resort (see page 21)
Succourth Beach Resort
Ulumani Treetops Lodge, Alotau
Bibiko Guesthouse, Rabe
Gehi Gehi Bungalows, Ahioma
Halowiya, Nigila (contact Sebastioan Miyoni)
Hideaway Bungalows, Ahioma
All contactable through Napatana Lodge
Kwato Island Guesthouse (see page 19)
contactable through Masuarina Lodge



CULTURE

Milne Bay Province has an extremely diverse culture that is mainly about saving face. People will not directly disagree or contradict others in fear of public disgrace, shame or loss of dignity.

Due to the influence of many missionaries in the province, religion is predominantly Christian. However, there are many different churches and faiths in the region. On Sundays, most shops and public transport will be closed to allow families to go to church. Despite the strong importance of the church in the community, traditional beliefs are still preserved in the villages and also a strong superstition and belief in witchcraft.

In marriage ceremonies, the grass skirt is an extremely powerful and significant totem. In establishing power and rights between the bride, groom and respective extended families and their competition in the traditional display of wealth and power can result in many disputes. The holding up of the grass skirt ceases all fights as a last resort. The 'dropping of the skirt' is culturally important due to the indignity the woman has suffered in exposing herself to maintain peace. This exposure can also be used to prove innocence when accused of witchcraft.

People who die in inexplicable circumstances are believed to be victims of witchcraft and the woman as the matriarch is blamed. In some regions women sent the men to war and did magic that would bring success. The women of each clan are

responsible for the safety of the uncles, brothers and sons in their clan.

Every individual belongs to a clan and each clan has a bird and animal totem. These stories are only shared with the members of the clan and cannot be told to those outside the clan.

Traditionally it was custom to leave a basket of food to cross through other people's land to show respect for the owners before entering. This is not expected of visitors; however, when visiting a place of interest it is acceptable to give a small token of appreciation to compensate the landowners. If there are any demands they may be settled by the village councillor who will act as a mediator.

When in the market place, do not step over the food, this is taboo and seen as a sign of disrespect.

Bagi, made from red shell by hand and threaded onto pandanus string before being polished with coconut oil are very important in the Milne Bay Culture. Mwali, white arm shells are also of significance. In Kula tradition, the elaborate necklaces made from the crafted shells were used to exchange for the best trading partners. Bagi and Mwali moved in opposite directions through the islands; bagi clockwise and mwali anticlockwise. The number of generations they passed through indicates the authenticity and value and each have long histories and names associated with the piece, known to those in the Kula trading ring.



ENVIRONMENT

Dominated by the Owen Stanley Ranges Central Spine, virgin rainforest plunges to mangroves and or sandy white beaches, huge boulder corals the size of cars and fluorescent green and purple sponges smother reef slopes and sit in the freshwater run-off of streams. Papua New Guinea is one of the last three remaining tropical

wilderness areas with over seventy-five percent of the country made up of dense rainforest and the remainder savannah grasslands, wetlands, mangroves and sago palms.

Of PNG's 700 bird species, Milne Bay has 269, including 14 birds of paradise. For a species list

visit the website at www.visitmilnebay.com

Milne Bay Province has been identified as one of the top three diving sites in the world with species such as the pigmy seahorse, mimic octopus, rare nudibranchs, manta rays, whale sharks, hammerheads, whales, dolphins and

turtles just to name a few.

Milne Bay is a region of exceptional biodiversity; ecosystems are thriving under near pristine conditions and are quite likely the largest expanse of mainly undamaged reefs remaining in the coral triangle.

Climate and Weather

Temperature in Milne Bay typically hovers between 25-30°C with highly variable humidity and changeable winds. Conditions are also highly variable between the Mainland and the islands. October to December generally produce the best conditions to travel in the province. January to March are subject to the North Westerly wind known as Yalasi and the onset of the cyclone season, so conditions are more unpredictable. July to August is normally the wettest season inland with high rainfall and the harvest/ planting season. June to September in the wet season in the bay, however, January to July is the wet season on the North and South coasts of Milne Bay Province Mainland.

Health Services

Milne Bay Province has a hospital of good standard and pharmacy with assistance from AusAid. There are good doctors and the St Barnabas School of Nursing also operates out of the hospital. However, as with all hospitals in the country there is often a shortage of drugs and equipment. Some private hospitals expect cash up-front for treatment.

Food

In Alotau, most foods are available; however, they are quite expensive. The best way to experience the culture of the region is to eat what local people eat. The standard diet is made up of rice, fish, chicken, yams, pit-pit, pineapple, guava and greens. Diet varies depending on the availability of local resources e.g. greater access to fresh seafood.

Alotau is the provincial capital established in 1968 meaning 'safe place', harbour or bay. Before 1966, Samarai Island was the capital but as the town centre expanded it was shifted to Alotau. In the census conducted in 2002 the population of the town was 9,888 with a total of 210, 412 in the province.

Alotau has a marketplace, elementary school, three primary schools and a secondary school. Alotau has a good hospital, government offices, police and fire stations. There is also a wharf, sports oval and war memorial.

Main Languages spoken include Tawala, Suau, Wedau, Dobu, English, Motu, Tok Pisin and many more, less commonly spoken. Tok Pisin can be fun to learn, however, it can sometimes be seen as a condescending way to communicate due to the plantation days. Try and learn local words to show your interest and appreciation. However, nearly everybody speaks English very well.

ALOTAU



The Bwana Bwana or Samarai Island Group is the gateway to the chains of the Calvados, Conflicts and Engineering Islands. In these outer island groups a traditional lifestyle is led and people live in harmony with the greatest biodiverse marine habitat in the world.

Samarai Island is located on the South Eastern peninsula of Mainland Papua New Guinea. Offering views up and down the China Strait, the island also overlooks the Eastern passage to the mainland where the end of the Owen Stanley Ranges can be seen.

Formerly Samarai Island was the administrative headquarters for Milne Bay Province. At one stage the port was larger than Port Moresby with ships coming direct from CookTown, Australia to ship out gold from nearby mines at Sudest, Misima, Woodlark Islands and Gibara. Copra (trade coconut) production was a major economic activity throughout the islands.

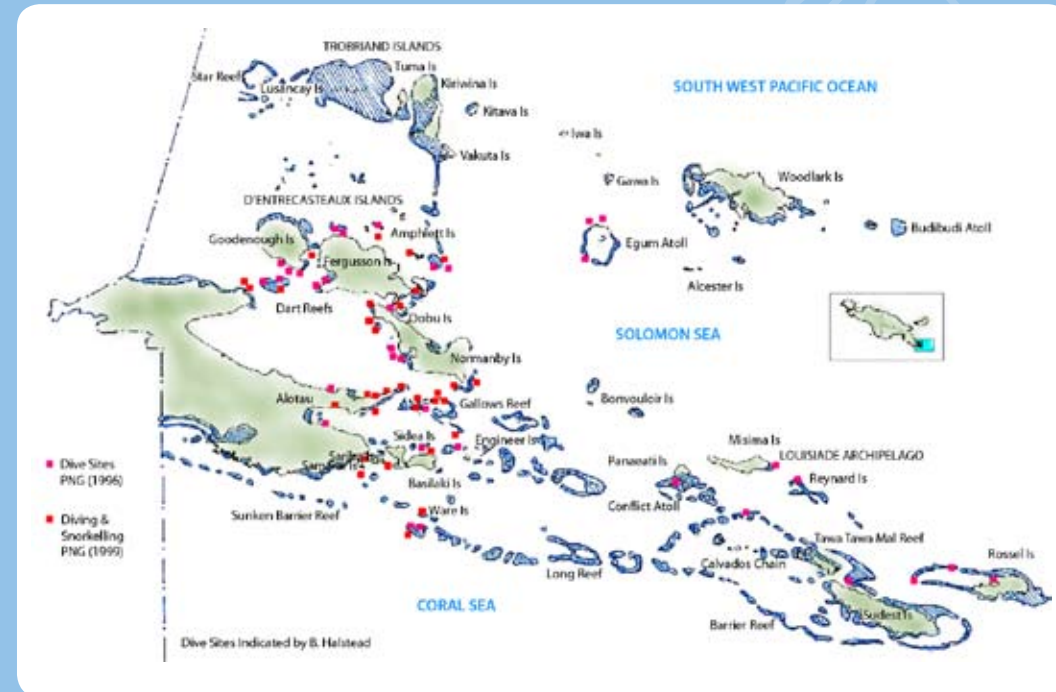
Ruins and relics of these times still remain; grand architectural buildings now very run-down stand as a silent testimony to Samarai when it was the 'Pearl of the Pacific' and the crown jewel of British New Guinea. Now the island is a simple but favourite destination for cruise ships and visitors.

Samarai was one of the most fascinating little ports in the Pacific; a picturesque island of 54 acres, it was known as 'The Pearl of the Pacific'. Today the pearl farming industry on the island is run by Coral Sea Mari Culture. The island was first settled as a London Missionary Society (LMS) Church station in 1878. Because of its central location to shipping and trade routes, many traders were attracted to the island as a base.

Captain John Moresby from the Royal British Navy first named the island "Dinner Island" when he sailed through in 1873 and enjoyed a meal in Samarai. The word 'Samarai' is said to represent peace although the name initially arose with Japanese occupation as Samurai. Later when back under colonial rule the name was changed again to Samarai to give a more British feel.

In the late 1800's towards the turn of the century after the British Government declared the Protectorate of British New Guinea, the town of Samarai grew into a very busy port and administrative headquarters for the region.

One of modern PNG's trading companies, Steamships, had its origins on Samarai in 1919. There was also a major pearl and trochus shell industry around the Trobriand Islands. The company started trading merchandise around the islands from aboard a boat. After the war the company bought a shop on Samarai and later advanced to a chain of stores around PNG.



More detailed maps can be purchased from local hardware stores when visiting the region. Limited maps are available at www.visitmilnebay.com

Air Niugini and Airlines PNG fly daily to Alotau's Gurney airport.

Motorised dinghies used as sea taxis can be found on the shore front of the TST shopping centre in Sanderson's Bay for hire, or you can hitch a ride on a dinghy travelling to Samarai. Local owned dinghies with 40 HP outboards run most days of the week.

Sea taxi K25 one-way

Approximately 1.5 hours travel time

Normally leave Samarai around 8:30 am and return around 7:00pm.

If you hitch a ride on a dinghy and plan to move between islands it is a good idea to buy fuel in town before you leave and take it with you. Prices in town vary but are cheaper than on the island. However, fuel is available for sale through local dealers on Samarai. (Approximately K4.50/L at time of print)

HOW TO



HISTORY

Samarai had a white population of 200-300 after the war and another 150-200 others living as missionaries, planters, government officers, traders and miners in outlying islands and rural areas of Milne Bay. The native population on the island were mainly labourers and domestic servants. Their movements were very restricted and most of them lived in labour camps behind the island at 'Dagedagera' meaning backyard, while others, mostly government workers lived on the mainland across from Samarai at Kuiaro.

Life on the island of Samarai then was very grand. There were three large hotels, several large shops, a regular cruise service carrying cargo and passengers directly from Sydney. After the Second World War, a direct air service from Australia using giant Sandringhams which later changed to a Catolina service by TAA and PAT which also serviced Esaála, Nivani, Bwagaoia and several rural areas. With the threat of Japanese invasion in 1942, the Administration in Port Moresby issued orders for all residents to be evacuated and all buildings burnt to the ground. Only a few buildings including the Anglican

Church (still standing) and the Memorial Hall on the island survived this 'scorched earth' policy.

The town was rebuilt after the war and life continued as it was before the war, although not as grand. Hotels were not rebuilt, but a guesthouse was built, a DimDim (white person) club and later a native club after the Indigenous people were allowed to consume liquor in 1962.

A lot more government presence was in the province after the war, especially the rural areas. In 1968 because no further expansion was possible on the island, the Administration moved its headquarters to what it is today; Alotau. When it did, business dwindled and gradually most of the activity moved off the island. Samarai Island is now just a small government district centre for the islands in the Samarai area and the nearby mainland villages.

There is much more to say about Samarai Island, nearby islands and villages. Each place has its charm and history. For more detailed information contact the Samarai district office ph: (675) 642 1042.



ACTIVITIES

Visit the newly established **Samarai Tourism Authority's Arts Exhibition Centre**. Here you can speak to Marina Anakapu who can take you on a tour of the island or arrange for day trips out to the surrounding islands. While there take a look at some of the traditional shields, grass skirts, small drum and stone axe on display. Local arts are also available for sale including carvings, paintings and jewellery.

On the main path up from the wharf a **famous monument** bears testimony to the time of Colonial rule and law in the 18th century. A walk around the island takes about 30 minutes. The path is on the seafront and continues up the hill to the site of the old hospital, now in ruins. A rougher path exists to the very top of the hill where there is a lookout and 360 degree views including out to China Strait.

Visit the **local market** and purchase local food goods including mud crabs, fresh fish and local vegetables. Snorkel under the old Wharf; a world famous muck diving site. For diving bring your own gear and arrange tanks from Alotau through Peter contactable through Napatana Lodge. Fishing off the wharf is the favourite pastime for residents and visitors to Samarai. For the more serious, fishing trips can also be arranged with dinghy operators on the island.

Anige Trading and island canteens operate in addition to Local dealers selling petrol, kerosene and small amounts of diesel.

Fresh water can be obtained from the pipes on the island, pumped across from the mainland.

There is a **hospital** located on Samarai just 5 minutes walk from the guesthouse. There are always nurses present and the hospital is equipped for any minor illnesses or injuries. Any serious injuries or illness will be redirected to Alotau General Hospital via an established transport system.

Many beautiful islands surround Samarai and a trip to Milne Bay Province wouldn't be complete without seeing some of these sights. Use Samarai as a base for a number of must see day-trips or overnight stays in local guesthouses.

DAY ESCAPES

Dekadeka Island, also known as the picnic island, makes a great day because of its ideal location in between the island groups. The white sandy beach gently sloping to the sea makes the island a refreshing stopover point in the day's journey. Dekadeka is uninhabited but has excellent coral for snorkelling (approx. K30 return)

Gonubalabala Island is a small island in between Dekadeka and Doini. About 50metres off the island is the site known to divers as the Manta Ray Cleaning Station. There is a large bomby or rock, where the Manta rays come to have their

parasites removed by small cleaner wrasse. Best times are early morning or late afternoon because the Manta rays will leave with the change of the current. (K50 for boat diving for the day, K10 per diver with guide, K40 return)

Other Islands to visit include:

Ebuma Island (K10 return); Gesila Island (K30 return); Nalaka Beach (K30 return); Gumoio Island (K40 return); Tuyam Island (K60 return) and Mackinley Island. All prices are rough estimates and subject to change depending on the operators and price of fuel.



A visit to Kwato Island is a must. The old stone church is one of the oldest surviving buildings and is surrounded by outstanding views of the China Straits.

Kwato Island is a very important island to the history of the province due to a revolutionary missionary Charles Able and his wife Beatrice. Charles and Beatrice Abel created an institution where Papuans received a Christian education and balanced training in all aspects of human development. The skills and attitudes taught became famously known as the 'Kwato way'. Skills taught included sawmilling, carpentry, house and boat building, operation of boats and engines, seamanship, blacksmithing and plumbing for the Men. Women were taught fine needlework and tailoring, cooking, baking, home management, nursing, child and infant welfare. The first trained women became 'tanuagas' and trained the younger girls. Milne Bay is the only Province where all villages make their own cargo boats.

The Abel family name still continues through Liz Abel, a resident on Kwato. Liz has a wealth of information to share as do the friendly residents of the local village.

For more information contact Liz Abel or obtain a copy of the publication 'New Horizons, the Kwato Story' published in 1991 on the centenary and then reprinted in 2005.

A dinghy can be arranged through Marina at the Samarai Tourism Authority to take you across for the cost of fuel there and back. The trip takes approximately 10 minutes. (K20 return)

Two bungalows sit by the sea, consisting of two-bedrooms (one double and two single beds), an open plan living and cooking area and adjacent outhouse with toilet and Balinese bathing area.

K70 per night meals not included

K10 extra for small gas stove

Most other cooking utensils provided



Galahi Island is a stunningly beautiful island just off Sariba Island. There is a traditional style guesthouse built from sagopalm that sits on the hilltop overlooking the sea. The guesthouse is built alongside the village and guests are able to participate, if willing, in village activities such as fishing, hunting, gardening and traditional methods of cooking. Galahi has a number of tour guides, including Michael, who will happily answer any of your questions about the native flora and fauna. The area surrounding Galahi is a naturalists dream, characterized by a complex system of coral reefs, mangroves, forests and sea grass beds.

The Leman Family at Galahi operate Galahi Village Guest Stay as the first Ecotourism guesthouse in the Bwana Bwana Island group and are very conscious about maintaining their natural resources and heritage.

Galahi Village Guest Stay has already had experience in catering for local school trips, international university students and a variety of local and international travellers and tourists.

To get to Galahi, you can arrange transport through work boats, hire a sea taxi or arrange to meet with the Kinch family boat at the wharf.

Prices start from 80K per night per person with additional fuel costs and dinghy hire for motoring between islands. (Estimates subjective to rising fuel and food costs; to be negotiated with the Kinch family) Galahi Island is really a highlight of Milne Bay Province and is an experience not to be missed.

Galahi Village Guest Stay can be contacted through Napatana Lodge, via email; jkinch@datec.net.pg or via mail:

PO Box 829, Alotau, Milne Bay Province

GALAH

Tours include:

The Galahi Canoe tour; Paddle around the island in the early morning or late evening while the seas are calm and glassy and snorkel out of the canoe on some of the most bio-diverse reefs in the world.

Sidudu Skull Cave; Visit the skull cave at Sidudu village on Sariba Island and experience the powerful cannibalistic history of the area.

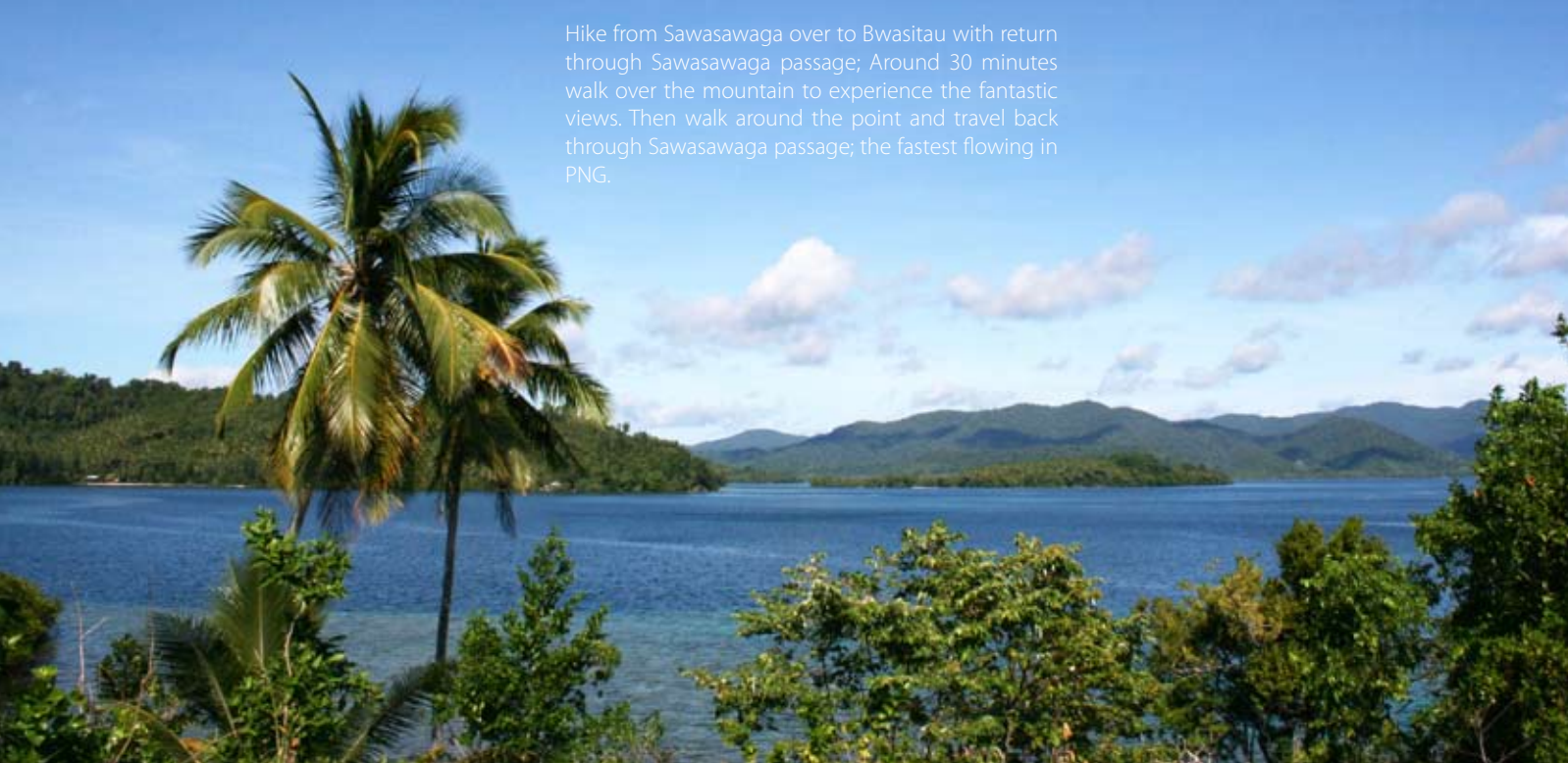
Hike from Sawasawaga over to Bwasitau with return through Sawasawaga passage; Around 30 minutes walk over the mountain to experience the fantastic views. Then walk around the point and travel back through Sawasawaga passage; the fastest flowing in PNG.

Walk from Sawasawaga to Sebaluna or Koitupitupi

Kwato Church

Samarai Island Walk

Trip to the Pearl Farm



Visit the village of DukwaDukwa and meet rightful landowner Yobibina who is 64 years old. His sons or local village boys will take you on a breath-taking climb up the mountain to Moiaro Rock, the site of a skull cave. The skulls in the cave are known to the village people as the trophies of a ruthless cannibal who would travel to nearby islands, kill people, bring them back to Logea to eat them and then put their skull under the overhang of Moiaro Rock.

Logea Island is the site of the Samarai Cemetery. There are graves some 100 years old. People that

died on Samarai were taken to nearby Logea Island to be buried. The graves are overgrown in the bush. The community is looking for funding to restore the cemetery and clean around the graves. They hope that relatives may come and visit.

Walk over the hill to the other side of Logea Island for a rewarding beach picnic or surf at Banarea Beach. This long, white sandy beach often has good waves and a number of dolphins.

(Approximately K20 return) Arrange through Napatana Lodge or Samarai Tourism Authority.

LOGEA



SIMAGAH

Travel along the river by dinghy or paddle a canoe from the mouth to the origin of the Simagahi River, then trek through to Kuiuaro. The trek takes around 2 hours. Trails are being established to create a trek all the way back to Alotau. The river is an excellent site for bird-watching; visitmilnebay.com for a bird list to use as a guide to most of the sighted species in the area. If interested in bird-watching be sure to enlist the help of Neddy, a local man from LeiLei, now living on Samarai. Ian Poole is another person to contact as he is instigating the trekking in this area. This trek can be arranged through Napatana Lodge or Samarai Tourism Authority but requires a relatively high level of fitness. Prices are to be negotiated upon booking. Return dinghy transit from Kuiuaro starts at 30K.



LEILEI

The trip to Lei Lei begins by a meandering journey through thick mangroves into a small cove. Wading through the water and then a short trek later and a small village materialises out of the rainforest. There are a number of treks available of varying degrees of difficulty. Best times to travel to the village are early in the morning or just before dusk as the staggeringly diverse bird life comes to the water areas to feed. Hiking up the creek with Neddy as your experienced local guide, describe to him the birds you are looking for and he will find them for you. LeiLei also has a known lek tree (where birds of paradise display courting rituals) with fine viewing of a number of known pairs of birds of paradise. Trips to LeiLei can be arranged through Samarai Tourism Authority and negotiated with boat operators and Neddy. Prices dependant on fuel costs.



KANAKOPE

Kanakope is a beautiful village with many attractions including a skull cave, 3 waterfalls with treks of varying difficulty, war relics and good bird-watching. Levi Gorio, a local man, will act as your guide. During World War II Kanakope was an American Naval Base. Remaining traces of these times can be seen in old trenches, gun sites, vehicle repair sites and two concrete bunkers thought to be ammunition storage houses.

Canoe and Kundu Festival

First Weekend of November, celebrating the link between the people and the ocean; Traditional canoe races, war canoe races, traditional culture, food, dance and arts.

Hagita Cultural Show

Hagita High School, Alotau

Milaa Mala Festival

Trobriand Yam Festival- July

Ugwabwena Cultural Show

Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands- Early July

Cameron Cultural Show

Alotau- Mid August (21st-22nd in 2008)

Milne Bay Day (Dawn Service)

Alice Wedega Park, Alotau- August 26th

EVENTS & FESTIVALS





DISCOVER MILNE BAY
The Bwana Bwana Islands

A PRESENTATION FROM KARLEE TAYLOR,
BACHELOR OF ECOTOURISM, FLINDERS UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA.
IN COLLABORATION AND WITH THANKS TO THE COMMUNITIES OF MILNE BAY PROVINCE.
SPECIAL THANKS TO THE ANAKAPU AND KINCH FAMILIES.