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Trobriand Island Culture Study Package

Our newly redesigned Trobriand Islands package includes a unique village stay at idyllic Munuwata, where you will be immersed in the fascinating culture of the Trobriand Islanders and experience the subsistence lifestyle of a simple people living off seafood, coconuts and yam gardens. Depart Cairns any Saturday (4 night package) or Tuesday (5 night package) or a day later for Port Moresby residents. The trip cost includes airfares, motel and village accommodation, transfers, most meals, village tours and local guides. The 5 night package includes your choice of an extra night on the island with village activities or an extra night at Kiriwina Lodge with local tours around Kiriwina.

ABOUT LOSUIA

Losuia is the tiny township and airfield on Kiriwina Island, which is the largest island in the Trobriands group. The airfield is a former wartime American air base and has a runway that is 1800 metres long. The township has a population about 5,000 and hosts a high school, a small hospital, some minor local government offices and a dozen small trade stores. Very much a "one-horse town". Some of the population live in surveyed streets while the bulk live in satellite villages. There is only one place to stay in Losuia and that is Kiriwina Lodge, a budget motel. Out near the airport is Butia Lodge (named after a local species of flower) which has bungalows built into WW2 aircraft revetments (camouflage shelters).

ABOUT THE "ISLANDS OF LOVE"

The Trobriand islanders have both Melanesian and Polynesian features and are thought to have arrived by sea from Polynesia at least a thousand years ago. The "Trobres" are known as the "islands of love" because of the islanders' custom of encouraging young males and females to engage in romantic behaviour soon after puberty. This is widely misinterpreted by westerners as promiscuity but it is actually a form of courtship and marriage ritual, its purpose is to help the young men and women quickly decide on a partner and settle down. However there is also said to be a tradition that, during the annual yam harvest celebrations, married or betrothed couples are permitted to flirt with other partners. The romantic customs of the Trobriand Islanders do not extend to outsiders ("dimdims"). Visitors who come to the islands hoping for a bit of nookie are usually disappointed! The Trobriand Islanders are a very proud people and they value the propagation of their genetic lines and they disapprove of casual relationships between islanders and outsiders.

ABOUT MUNUWATA ISLAND

Munuwata is a tropical island paradise about one hour's ride due west of Losuia by banana boat. (A banana boat is large open fibreglass dinghy with outboard motor. Its up-curved shape at the front gives it a bent appearance like a banana). Sometimes the trip takes longer if the sea is choppy and your boat driver may take you the long way around, hugging the lee of Kaileuna Island to avoid the chop. Life jackets are provided but you will probably be more interested in the tarpaulin that will keep you dry from sea spray.

Munuwata Island (also spelled Mounuwata), is inhabited by a small community of about 100 people. Their language and customs are closely related to the people of Kaileuna, the nearest large island. Despite their proximity to Losuia the people of Munuwata live a remarkably traditional subsistence lifestyle, growing yams and other vegetables in small gardens and catching fish and other seafood from the waters that surround their island.

Munuwata is fringed by sandy beaches and reefs. You can walk around the island in about 2 hours. There are about 20 houses grouped into a small village at one end, and the rest of the island is light rainforest and gardens. All the houses on Munuwata are traditional style Trobriand huts and there are no modern buildings. There are not enough children here for the island to have its own school so the kids paddle to the next island (Kuiawa) every day for school. Fortunately there is a submerged sandbar joining the two islands and the water is not deep. Understandably though, Munuwata kids have strong arms from paddling!

In the past, tourists have not visited Munuwata, although the islanders travelled regularly to Losuia to compete in dance competitions at the regular festivals. In 2010 Ecotourism Melanesia came to an exclusive arrangement with the local people to build a couple of guest huts and host visitors that we bring in for village stay experiences. Part of the deal is a commitment by the villagers not to build any modern houses or other prefabricated buildings on the island, using only traditional building materials to make and repair their houses, and to ensure that all sing-sing performances and other cultural demonstrations are true to their ancestral traditions. The village elders are happy with this arrangement because they want to motivate their young people to maintain the island traditions and not allow their dances or customs to be watered down by outside influences like plastic decorations.

ABOUT THE YAM CYCLE

The yam cultivation cycle is the basis of the Trobriands calendar, culminating in the yam harvest in July/August each year when the villages – and clans within villages - compete to produce the largest yams. Harvested yams are stored in “yam houses” in the centre of the village as a way of “showing off” a clan's yam harvest.

ABOUT TROBRIANDS CARVINGS

In all Trobriands villages you will see artisans producing beautiful woodcarvings from rosewood, ebony wood and kerosene wood. Trobriand carvings are without doubt the best in Papua New Guinea so take the opportunity to purchase from the source at basement prices. Apart from carvings you will be able to purchase cultural artefacts such as traditional dress (grass skirts, necklaces etc), lime gourds and spatulas (used for chewing betel nut), cooking utensils and bamboo combs. Trobriand Islanders are traders by tradition so they welcome the opportunity to sell to visitors but don't feel pressured to buy more than you want.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- Return flights from Cairns to Port Moresby
- Port Moresby - transfer from/to hotel
- Port Moresby - 1 night in a Premier room at the Ela Beach Hotel
- Port Moresby - check in assist for Losuia flight
- Port Moresby – tour information package (itinerary, maps, destination information)
- Return flights from Port Moresby to Losuia
- Losuia – airport meet and greet, all transfers
- Losuia – arrival lunch and half day Kiriwina Island tour by vehicle
- Losuia – 2 nights 2-star motel style accommodation at Kiriwina Lodge, including set-menu meals
- Losuia – return banana boat transfers to Munuwata Island
- Munuwata Island – traditional dancing program
- Munuwata Island – village tour, freedom of the island
- Munuwata Island – 1 night village style accommodation in guest hut with imported camp bedding
- Munuwata Island - local style meals, hygienically cooked and served
- Munuwata Island – services of a village organiser to manage arrangements for your visit
- Munuwata Island – village visit fees and gratuities for helpers and demonstrators
- Losuia – departure day short tour of villages or historical sites on Kiriwina
- Losuia – services of a local guide throughout
- Daily reconfirmation of flights and arrangements coordinated by our Port Moresby office

EXCLUSIONS:

- Tips (not essential, but appreciated for exceptional service)
- Souvenirs and items of a personal nature
- Bar drinks
- Personal items.

Bring your own favourite munchies, favourite bath soap, favourite toilet paper, small quick-dry towel, personal medications and first aid kit, personal hygiene requirements, brimmed hat or cap, “amphibious footwear” (sandals or quick-dry canvas shoes), insect repellent, sunscreen, personal torch, battery-operated personal fan.

We strongly recommend that you take out travel insurance, which we can arrange for you for a nominal fee.

Group size	Group of 1	Group of 2	Group of 4	Group of 6+
Price per person 4 nights	AUD 3985	AUD 3015	AUD 2555	AUD 2425
Price per person 5 nights	AUD 4325	AUD 3315	AUD 2805	AUD 2645