

5 nights' Mt Hagen, optional 1 night in Port Moresby, semi-escorted small group tour for independent travellers

TOUR INFORMATION

This five night program is designed for independent travellers requiring managed arrangements for visiting the Mt Hagen Show. It offers a selection of accommodation options – subject to availability at time of booking – and escorted excursions to the Paiya Village sing-sing and the Mt Hagen Show.

The Mt Hagen Show is Papua New Guinea’s largest cultural extravaganza. The Show has its origins in colonial days when colonial administrators sought to reduce tribal fighting by promoting inter-marriage and channelling inter-tribal rivalry into positive forms of competition. Major sing-sing events like the Mt Hagen Show and Goroka Show became opportunities for tribes to gain status without bloodshed, by competing to put on the best cultural performance. The Mt Hagen Show today is still a competition, with tribal groups vying for sizeable cash prizes and of course the honour and glory that first prize at the “Hagen Show” brings to one’s tribe.



The Show attracts cultural groups from all over Papua New Guinea, even from Bougainville and the Trobriand Islands. The local crowd of 50,000 mainly flock in from the Highlands provinces plus Madang and Lae as these are the only places with road access to Mt Hagen. In contrast, less than 300 overseas visitors attended last year’s Show, so it is still definitely a “local” festival and not just for tourists. There are also agricultural and trade displays, health awareness programs, sideshow alley and all manner of other activities at the Show which make it the highlight of every year for the Highlands people. Some very remote villagers come to town only once per year, for the Show, so you will see quite a kaleidoscope of faces just in the spectator crowd, even before you turn your attention to the sing-sing arena. Tourists and locals with cameras are given special seats with the best view, and you will also have permission to enter the performance arena to take close-ups of the dancers.

Apart from the Show itself, there is also another, smaller sing-sing on the day before the Show. This is held at Paiya Village about half an hour’s drive out of town, is more informal without the huge crowds, and provides an authentic village backdrop for photography, with opportunities for watching the performers putting on their make-up and body decorations before the performance.

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 – Wed 12 Aug

AUSTRALIA – PORT MORESBY – MT HAGEN

Depart Australia from either Sydney, Brisbane or Cairns. You will be met at Port Moresby airport by our tour representative who will assist you with your check in to Mt Hagen.

VA39 DEPART BNE 0935 ARRIVE POM 1250 or

QF57 DEPART BNE 0925 ARRIVE POM 1235 or

PX004 DEPART BNE 1040 ARRIVE POM 1350 then

PX186 DEPART POM 1515 ARRIVE HGU 1615.

Upon arrival, your guide will meet you on arrival and transfer you to your accommodation. The town will be very crowded due to the impending Show and walking around the shops and other public areas is not recommended. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel).

Day 2 – Thu 13 Aug

MT HAGEN (Full day Mt Hagen district excursion)

08:30 Depart from the hotel in our privately chartered 30-seat bus for a full day of sightseeing around Mt Hagen district starting with a turn around the main commercial area to point out the location of key banks, grocery stores, hospital etc then head out the Kuminga back road past peri-urban villages, roadside markets, market garden plots and coffee plantations to Mt Ambra which offers scenic views of Mt Hagen (if the access gate is open). From Mt Ambra head around the back of the airport past the Show Grounds to the Highlands Highway and east to Kindeng farming community which is the home of our Mt Hagen guide. Here you'll have candid opportunities to mingle and chat with local people engaged in small scale agricultural activities such as marketing gardening, fish farming and raising livestock. Families from a number of different areas of the highlands have settled at Kindeng which makes it quite a diverse community. From Kindeng you'll drive back into town and turn south on the Kum Road out to Rondon Ridge for a guided nature walk in the forest reserve and magnificent orchid gardens around Rondon Ridge Lodge. Lunch will be served at Rondon Ridge Lodge. The Raggiana bird of paradise is common in this area and there is a good chance of seeing or at least hearing one in the wild (they have a very loud call).

Returning to Mt Hagen your bus will follow the Highlands Highway west into the Melpa tribal region and up a side road to Moika or Ogelbeng village. Here you will be able to take a walking tour of the village and gardens, go inside a family hut, meet local people and children doing their everyday thing and photograph some villagers in full costume and body paint. You'll also see a rare display of tribal treasures which have been passed between families for generations for the settlement of marriages and conflicts – "moka kina" mother of pearl, cowrie shells transported from the coast, animal bones and teeth, brilliant bird feathers (and even sun-dried whole birds!), stone and shell "money". Return to the hotel before the afternoon rain begins. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel) includes breakfast

NB If you have a particular interest in birds you may wish to buy a copy of "Birds of New Guinea", available in Port Moresby from major hotel gift shops.

Day 3 – Fri 14 Aug

MT HAGEN (Paiya Village Sing-Sing)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the scenic drive through typical highlands countryside to Paiyakona (Paiya) village where a private sing-sing performance for overseas visitors is held the Friday before each Mt Hagen Show. Arriving before the sing-sing commences you can watch the performers adorning themselves with feathers, shells and ochre paints in preparation for dancing. The performers will be happy to show and tell about their traditional dress ("bilas") and pose for photographs without expecting payment. About 10 different dancing groups will perform, mainly from the Highlands,

including the Huli wigmen, the Melpa tribe stompers and the Enga tribe with their wide black wigs. Some of the groups will also perform at the Mt Hagen Show on the weekend. The Paiya sing-sing includes a “mumu” lunch cooked under hot stones at the sing-sing grounds, and a tour of the cultural displays at Paiya village including the men’s spirit house and the ancestors’ skull house which really is an ossuary full of dozens of skulls. Some traditional customs like courtship ritual and mourning rites may also be demonstrated. The advantage of attending this private sing-sing in addition to the Mt Hagen Show itself is the village environment which makes the experience more authentic, the smaller crowd from just the one village area is easy to socialise with, and the photography in the bush setting without buildings, fences and advertising signs in the background is much more rewarding.

If the afternoon rains hold off after the sing-sing your tour bus will drive you further west along the Highlands Highway as far as the border between Western Highlands and Enga Province, then return to Mt Hagen. On the outward drive please note any photo stops you’d like to make on the way back and notify the guide or driver. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel) includes breakfast

Day 4 – Sat 15 Aug

MT HAGEN (Festival)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the 30 minute drive to the show grounds. Our staff will have already been out there earlier in the morning to set up a marquee and chairs for you. Arriving before the start of the show, you’ll be able to walk among the performers and capture some candid photos as they apply their face paint and body decorations.

The program usually begins around 09:00am with half an hour of speeches followed by a grand parade with all participating cultural groups marching around the arena several times. The rest of day will loosely follow a printed schedule of individual group appearances, usually with three or four different groups performing in different areas of the arena at the same time because with 80-100 different cultural groups attending each year there are too many to fit in a weekend program if performing one by one. Tourist pass holders are permitted to enter the arena to take close-up photographs but do try to avoid getting in the way of other tourists’ cameras. We will have extra guides on hand to describe and explain the dances for you and accompany you around the arena (and side shows) if you need help with your camera gear etc.

Bottled water and a supply of fruit and bakery snacks is supplied for lunch today (fresh lunches cannot be delivered because of the crowd and traffic gridlock outside the show ground gates by mid-morning).

Mid-afternoon as the daily downpour looms, your group will pack up and depart the show before the end of the program in order to beat the exit chaos in the carpark and street outside. Drop off at your accommodation. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel) includes breakfast.

Day 5 – Sun 16 Aug

MT HAGEN (Festival)

07:00-07:30 Pick up at your accommodation for the second day of the Show which will feature different cultural groups from yesterday and of course the judgment and prize-giving at the end of the day. However your group will again leave a little early to beat the crowds and avoid getting stuck in gridlocked traffic and doused by afternoon rains. If there is time remaining in the afternoon and the weather stays dry your guide may offer a short excursion. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel)

Day 6 – Mon 17 Aug MT HAGEN – PORT MORESBY – BRISBANE/SYDNEY

**PX181 DEPART 1000 ARRIVE POM 1100 then
QF58 DEPART POM 1325 ARRIVE BNE 1635 or
VA38 DEPART POM 1340 ARRIVE BNE 1645.**

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and we will transfer you to Mt Hagen airport for your flight to Port Moresby. In Port Moresby, our tour operator’s representative will be on hand to help you connect with your onward flight. For those staying the night, we can arrange an afternoon city tour (additional charge).

NB Flights out of Mt Hagen on the Monday after the Show are often problematic. Due to the high demand the airlines do put on extra flights but Mt Hagen airport can’t handle the congestion so there are usually flight delays. Also beware that on peak days like this the airlines do overbook their flights and passengers may be denied boarding despite holding a ticket. We recommend online check-in before going to the airport and we advise against booking a tight international connection out of Port Moresby on this day.

OPTIONAL

Day 7 – Tue 18 Aug

PORT MORESBY – CAIRNS

PX090 DEPART POM 0930 ARRIVE CNS 1055 or
PX003 DEPART POM 0615 ARRIVE BNE 0925

Additional night required in Port Moresby due to no connections on the Monday, at selected hotel. We can add breakfast as an optional extra at any of the hotels.



PRICES – PER PERSON IN AUD

	2* Guest house/backpacker lodge. Includes light breakfasts and boxed lunches	2.5* Budget Hotel Standard Room. Includes hot breakfasts and boxed lunches	3.0* Tourist Hotel Standard Room. Includes breakfasts and boxed lunches	3.5* Highlander Hotel Standard Room. Includes all meals
Mt Hagen Show Package accommodation, tours and airfares				
Ex Port Moresby, domestic flights included, price from*	\$3460	\$3675	\$4075	\$5100
Ex Mt Hagen, no flights included	\$2850	\$3060	\$3470	\$4490
Single Supplement (excluding Port Moresby)	\$680	\$1020	\$1360	\$2380

Optional night in Port Moresby	3* Deluxe Queen Room (Double only)	3.5* Premier Twin Room	4* Superior Room	5* Standard Room
1 night – room only, per person, twin share	\$110	\$128	\$140	\$150
Single Supplement	\$110	\$128	\$140	\$150

For our North American guests we can quote you in USD, which will be converted to AUD

Please let us know if you’d like us to quote flights from Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific or Asia to connect to our package.

Additional accommodation can be arranged in Port Moresby if required for flight connections.

We can add other packages to extend your stay in Papua New Guinea



TOUR NOTES

**‘From’ price applies to domestic airfares. We quote best case scenario at the time of printing this document and will re-quote on the day of request.*

*** Port Moresby accommodation not include in Cairns package and will be added upon hotel option requested.*

The Paiya sing-sing is a private performance of cultural groups held at the Paiya Kona (Paiya) village sing-sing ground the Friday before every Mt Hagen Show. The purpose of the Paiya sing-sing is to give visitors the opportunity to enjoy traditional dancing in a village setting away from the chain-mesh fences and thronging crowds of the Mt Hagen Show, get photographs with village backdrops and mix with the performers before and after the program. Arriving early before the sing-sing commences you will be able to watch the performers adorning themselves with feathers, shells and ochre paints in preparation for dancing. The performers will be happy to show and tell about their traditional dress (“bilas”) and pose for photographs without expecting payment. About 10 different dancing groups will perform, mainly from the Highlands. Some of them are groups that will perform at the Mt Hagen Show tomorrow.

The Paiya sing-sing includes a “mumu” lunch cooked under hot stones at the sing-sing grounds, and a tour of the cultural displays at Paiya village including the men’s spirit house and the ancestors’ skull house which really is an ossuary full of dozens of skulls. The chief and his three wives will be on hand for photos and some traditional customs like courtship behaviour and mourning rituals will be demonstrated.

In previous years our tour groups have always commented that they enjoyed the Paiya sing-sing even more than the Mt Hagen Show itself, because the village setting made the experience (and the photography) more natural and the smaller crowd from just the one village area was easy to socialise with.

The Mt Hagen Show is Papua New Guinea’s largest cultural extravaganza. The Show has its origins in colonial days when colonial administrators sought to reduce tribal fighting by promoting inter-marriage and channelling inter-tribal rivalry into positive forms of competition. Major sing-sing events like the Mt Hagen Show and Goroka Show became opportunities for tribes to gain status without bloodshed, by competing to put on the best cultural performance. The Mt Hagen Show today is still a competition, with tribal groups vying for sizeable cash prizes and of course the honour and glory that first prize at the “Hagen Show” brings to one’s tribe.

The Show attracts cultural groups from all over Papua New Guinea, even from Bougainville and the Trobriand Islands. The local crowd of up to 100,000 mainly flock in from the Highlands provinces plus Madang and Lae as these are the only places with road access to Mt Hagen. In contrast, less than 500 overseas visitors attend the Show, so it is still definitely a “local” festival and not something put on for tourists. Some very remote villagers come to town only once per year, for the Show, so you will see quite a kaleidoscope of faces in the spectator crowd, even before you turn your attention to the sing-sing arena.

Tourists sit in a private viewing area and have permission to enter the performance arena to take close-ups of the dancers. Typically the crowds in the Show grounds number 50,000 in the morning swelling to 100,000 in the afternoon when the public ticket gates were opened for free entry. The crowds are so dense that it is very hard to walk around the stalls and displays, even with guides to shepherd you, very easy to get separated from others and get lost, and very easy to get pick-pocketed. Realistically we have to abandon any ideas of our tour group perusing the stalls around the show ground after the sing-sing program in the arena. We need to just focus on getting in to the tourist enclosure, watching the sing-sing program and getting out again (we will drive in and out by bus but even this involves inching through the throng).

Toilets are available in the tourist area but there has been no decent food and drink available from year to year so simple lunch catering is provided by your tour guide.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS

- PNG domestic Airfares (as specified)
- Port Moresby - scheduled domestic flight to Mt Hagen (as specified)
- Port Moresby – airport meet and greet with check-in assistance for connecting flight to Mt Hagen
- Mt Hagen - meet and greet, transfer to accommodation
- Mt Hagen – 5 nights selected accommodation package
- Mt Hagen – complimentary afternoon Mt Hagen market tour for early arrivals (prior to 1 pm)
- Mt Hagen – full day Mt Hagen and Waghi Valley sightseeing tour with lunch
- Mt Hagen – full day excursion to the Paiya village sing-sing and Magic Mountain orchid gardens, includes entry fee, bottled water and local style lunch
- Mt Hagen - two day excursions to the Mt Hagen Show, includes tourist entry fee, bottled water, pizza lunch
- Mt Hagen - on-site company tour guide to escort and manage daily tours and arrangements
- Mt Hagen – departure transfer and check-in assistance
- Port Moresby – departure connection assistance and complimentary city sightseeing between flights
- all fees and gratuities for local guides, helpers, village demonstrators

- 24-hour phone number for tour leader assistance

EXCLUSIONS

- Australia – PNG International and domestic Airfares (as specified). We can arrange for you.
- Flights unless included in the package
- Travel insurance (mandatory). We can arrange this for Australian residents.
- Port Moresby accommodation cost is separate to the show package.
- any meals not stated as not included in the selected accommodation package and excursions
- alcohol and any other drink not stated in the package.
- tips (not expected, and only appropriate for exceptional service)
- souvenirs and items of a personal nature
- visas and visa assistance
- airline excess baggage charges (the free allowance on Air Niugini is 30 kg + 5 kg for international guests and 16 + 5 for domestic on their own)
- personal items such as hat, sunscreen, personal first aid kit or medication.

GENERAL TRIP NOTES

1. Prices are quoted in Australian Dollar and are correct at the time of printing this document (08 Feb 20). They are subject to currency fluctuations and may need to be re-quoted if large variances occur with the USD and PGK rates. PNG Holidays **WILL NOT** be liable for changes in price due to the above and the rate **is not guaranteed until paid in full**.
2. Hotels in Mt Hagen charge peak-season rates for the Show weekend and there is an acute shortage of rooms. This contributes to the high cost of this package.
3. Package rate for 4.0 star hotels includes all meals because it is a condition of booking rooms at those hotels for the peak Show weekend that dinners and breakfasts must be pre-purchased in-house.
4. Hotel accommodation. Hotel rooms in the towns transited on this tour are generally of three star standard. Hotel and resort rooms all have private bathrooms, TV and air-conditioning (except in the highlands), unless otherwise specified. While we endeavour to book you into the hotels stated in the tour itinerary, in cases where specified hotels are fully booked by the time we receive your tour deposit we may have to book you into alternative accommodation. In this situation we strive to book you into the next-best available accommodation and we apologise in advance for any disappointment. No compensation or partial refunds or discounts can be paid or allowed on the basis of the perceived quality of hotel rooms provided for you while on this tour because the wholesale rates offered to us by the higher quality tourist hotels are similar to the non-commissionable rates we have to pay lesser quality motels when the tourist hotels are full.
5. When booking a Mt Hagen Show Weekender package with us we require a 50% deposit at the time of booking so that we can immediately secure your preferred accommodation. Our normal cancellation penalties apply (see our terms and conditions).
6. Star ratings are an approximate guide only and are not based on any published star rating system.

7. Single supplement. All accommodation included in the tour package quoted is twin-share. On payment of a single supplement levy and subject to availability, we will arrange single occupancy for you at the hotels on this tour. The single supplement charge is a flat rate and covers the cost of the extra rooms and our service fee for the additional arrangements. If you are travelling alone and you do not pay the single supplement, or if single supplement is not available, we will room you with another member of the tour group of the same gender. Smoking won't be allowed in any of the hotel or guest house rooms on this tour.

8. Extras. Bar drinks, between-meal snacks, any meals not included in the package, and other extras at hotels can be paid for in cash or with credit card direct to the hotel or restaurant.

9. Safety and security. Papua New Guinea is sometimes portrayed as a dangerous destination, but although street crime is a concern in some urban areas and tribal fights are prevalent in some parts of the Highlands, the vast majority of the country, especially the rural areas, is safe and welcoming. It is very uncommon for a tourist to be a victim of crime in PNG because tourists do not usually visit areas where crime or tribal violence are prevalent. Nevertheless, PNG Holidays takes the safety and security of our visitors seriously and all tours we offer involve destinations that we rate as safe.

10. Climate and clothing. In the Highlands areas like Goroka, the days are generally warm and sunny with moderately cold nights and mornings. We suggest visitors pack clothes made predominantly of cotton which will allow an evaporative cooling effect in hot humid areas. Pack a sweater or warm jacket for wearing in the Highlands in the evenings. Recommended sleeping attire is light track pants and sweat shirt or similar. Papua New Guinea is a conservative country and brief or revealing clothing worn by foreigners is frowned upon.

11. Packing suggestions. We suggest that your packing list include: rain poncho, a small bath towel, your favourite soap in a leak-proof container, a one-litre water bottle, a small first aid kit. We recommend valuable personal items (camera, travel documents etc) be packed in zip lock plastic bags to protect them from the wet (rain, bow spray). Suitable footwear for this tour includes tennis shoes/sneakers, and a pair of sandals/thongs/flip flops. Bring plenty of spare batteries for your digital camera because batteries seem to go flat more rapidly in the humid climate and are not obtainable in all stores here.

12. Baggage – scheduled flights. The free baggage allowance on scheduled domestic flights is 30kg and the carry-on limit is 5kg, when included on an international ticket purchased through PNG Holidays. Domestic checked-in allowance is 16kg. Naturally you can check more baggage if you are prepared to pay the excess baggage rate which is approximately PGK10 per kilogram Port Moresby to Mt Hagen. Due to narrow-body turbo-prop aircraft operating some scheduled flights, large carry-on items may be taken off you and stored in the hold even if the weight is under the carry-on limit. Liquids are permitted in both checked baggage and carry-on for domestic flights but pressurised aerosol spray cans are not permitted on any domestic flights in PNG either in checked luggage OR carry-on. Bring pump-action sprays or roll-ons. When flying out on your international flight, pack all gels, lotions and other liquids in your checked baggage as carry-on luggage will be hand searched and liquids including water bottles will be removed. If you have liquids that you need during the flight, declare them, to airline staff at check-in.

13. If you are on a gluten free diet or require other special food just let us know in advance and we will do our best to accommodate you, but you should take snacks, special milk. Gluten free cereals etc. as not all items will be available (remember, this is a third world country).

14. Water. Town water supplies in Papua New Guinea are treated and officially rated as safe to drink. In the villages, drinking water is usually collected in rainwater tanks or carried in containers from clean water sources. However to

prevent discomfort from drinking from a different water supply every day as you progress through your tour, we recommend you drink bottled or boiled water, or use water purification tablets.

15. Visas. Tourist visas are NOT available on arrival at Port Moresby airport at the moment due to the outburst of Coronavirus. You can pre-purchase your visa at this link: <https://evisa.ica.gov.pg/evisa/account/apply>. Please note your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it in order to be issued a PNG visa. Passport-holders of central and eastern European countries, Middle Eastern countries, African and Caribbean countries must normally apply for a visa at least 6 weeks in advance, from a PNG embassy or high commission (London, Brussels, Washington DC, Canberra, Singapore, Manila) or through the Australian diplomatic mission in other countries.

15. Money. The best way to obtain PNG currency is by withdrawing a credit card cash advance on arrival. Automatic teller machines operated by major banks in PNG will accept MasterCard and Visa Card but there is an ATM withdrawal limit of PGK2000 (about AU\$820) per day. Larger amounts can be withdrawn over the counter in bank branches located in major towns. The currency exchange booths at Australian and Asian airports usually have PNG Kina currency in stock (banks and currency exchange booths in the city centres may not), but don't change large sums of money before arrival in PNG because the exchange rate for purchasing PNG kina is better here.

16. Package modifications. We can arrange this tour as an 'add-on' to other tours or accommodation packages and can offer much better rates on domestic airfares if bundled together with international flights.

17. Places on the tour are subject to availability of rooms at the time of booking. We do not block book hotels. Goroka has less than 200 tourist-quality hotel and motel rooms and most properties capitalise on this shortage of rooms during the Show weekend by charging peak-season rates. This contributes to the high cost of this package.