

4 nights Mt Hagen, semi-escorted small group tour for independent travellers

TOUR INFORMATION

This four 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 – Thu 17 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.
PX186 DEPART POM 1500 ARRIVE HGU 1600.
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 – Fri 18 Aug** MT HAGEN (Paiya village and Magic Mountain)
08:00 We will take a scenic drive out through typical highlands countryside to Paiya Kona (Paiya) village where a sing-sing is held the Friday before every Mt Hagen Show. After the sing-sing our tour bus will scramble up the steep driveway to Magic Mountain Nature Lodge nearby, for a walk through the moss forest and orchid gardens featuring endemic varieties of flowering trees and tree ferns which form a substrate for the growth of saprophytic native orchids and colourful mosses, fungi, lichens, liverworts and leafy epiphytes - a cryptogrammic botanist's dream. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel).
- Day 3 – Sat 19 Aug** MT HAGEN (Show and Moika Village)
08:00 We depart from the hotel for the 30 minute drive to the show grounds. Our staff have already been out to the show grounds earlier in the morning to set up our marquee and chairs.
09:00 The sing-sing program is due to begin in the main arena.
Bottled water and a small pizza per person is provided for lunch.
14:00 We depart from the show ground and after a comfort stop at one of the hotels we take an excursion half an hour's drive out of town to Moika, a typical Mt Hagen cluster village, for a village walk-around tour and an opportunity to look inside a traditional highlands roundhouse, see the food gardens they live off and some of their tribal artefacts. Despite being close to town Moika village consists almost entirely of traditional huts. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel)
- Day 4 – Sun 20 Aug** MT HAGEN (Show and Mt Kalina)
08:00. We depart from the hotel for the second day of the Mt Hagen Show. Bottled water and a small pizza per person is provided for lunch.
14:00 We depart from the show ground and after a comfort stop at one of the hotels we take an excursion half an hour's drive out of town to Mt Kalina for a forest walk. A local guide will take us on a one hour nature walk through the montane forest pointing out the local flora and fauna. In the high altitude forest there is a waterfall, a wide variety of flowering and non-flowering plants including wild orchids, green tree snakes and possible sighting of the Raggiana bird of paradise which is the biggest and loudest thus easiest to find. Overnight Mt Hagen (selected hotel).

Day 5 – Mon 21 Aug MT HAGEN – PORT MORESBY – AUSTRALIA
 PX181 DEPART 1000 ARRIVE POM 1100.
 PX098 DEPART POM 1700 ARRIVE CNS 1825 **OR**
 PX005 DEPART POM 1330 ARRIVE BNE 1640.

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.

PRICES - PER PERSON IN AUD

Mt Hagen Show Package accommodation, tours and airfares	2* Guest house/backpacker lodge. Includes lunches only	2.5* Budget Motel Standard Room. includes lunches only	3* Tourist Hotel Standard Room. Includes all meals	4* Highlander Hotel Deluxe Room. Includes all meals
Ex Cairns, all airfares included	\$3560	\$4015	\$4600	\$5120
Ex Brisbane, all airfares included	\$3710	\$4165	\$4750	\$5270
Ex Port Moresby, domestic flights included, price from*	\$3190	\$3650	\$4250	\$4750
Ex Mt Hagen, no flights included	\$2730	\$3185	\$3770	\$4290
Single Supplement	\$520	\$910	\$1560	\$1950

TOUR NOTES

**‘From’ price applies to PNG domestic airfares, sold without international. We quote best case scenario at the time of printing this document and will re-quote on the day of request. Domestic flights sold with International from Australia are set rates, other than the taxes. However, specials may be available from time to time, offering cheaper rates than quoted. Please advise us if you would like us to check for the more restrictive fares.*

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.

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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

-) Australia – PNG International and domestic Airfares (as specified)
- Port Moresby - scheduled domestic flight to Mt Hagen (as specified)
- Port Moresby – (time permitting) complimentary short sight-seeing tour
- Port Moresby and Mt Hagen – airport meet and greet, transfer to hotel
- Port Moresby – airport meet and greet with check-in assistance for connecting flight to Mt Hagen
- Port Moresby - complimentary city sightseeing between flights
- Mt Hagen - meet and greet, transfer to accommodation
- Mt Hagen – 4 nights selected accommodation package
- Mt Hagen – complimentary Banz coffee plantation tour for early arrivals
- 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 half day excursions to the Mt Hagen Show, includes entry fee, bottled water, pizza lunch
- Mt Hagen – afternoon excursion to Moikap village (or similar)
- Mt Hagen – afternoon excursion to Mt Kalina forest (or similar)
- 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

- Travel insurance (mandatory). We can arrange this for you.
- any meals not stated as not included in the selected accommodation package and excursions
- 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)
- personal items such as hat and sunscreen.

GENERAL TRIP NOTES

1. Prices are quoted in Australian Dollar and are correct at the time of printing this document (20 Oct 16). 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 3 star at Hotel Kimininga or Highlander Hotel 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 page 2 of your invoice).
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 50% 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 23kg 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 PGK8 per kilogram Port Moresby to Mt Hagen and PGK10 per kilogram Port Moresby to Wewak. 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.

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.

13. 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.

14. Visas. Tourist visas are available on arrival at Port Moresby airport for citizens of designated countries including New Zealand, the USA, Canada and Northern and Western European countries; Australian citizens MUST have a current visitors' visa in their passport PRIOR to departure from Australia, otherwise they will be refused boarding and no refunds will be given. 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\$1040) 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.