



Return charter flights ex Cairns ARE INCLUDED in the cruise tariff.

This itinerary is provided as example only – prevailing conditions and local arrangements may cause variation.

Helicopter flights can be purchased as a package or individually.

The New Britain Expedition

Cairns/Madang – Kavieng/Cairns

More present day adventure for the present day adventurer!

Day One

Your “welcome aboard” is in the vibrant city of Cairns – but this time embarkation proceedings will be a little different! One of our crew members will escort you aboard North Star’s very own charter aircraft!

Now sit back and enjoy the comfortable flight to Madang.

Colourful Madang has been called the “prettiest town in the South Pacific”. Its peninsula setting is a show-place of parks, waterways, luxuriant shade trees



and sparkling tropical islands. Although small, the town has modern urban facilities, including hotels, department stores, markets and artefacts shops.

The area is world famous for its coral reefs and excellent visibility making diving popular all the year round. There are a variety of places to dive with all sites featuring an abundance of reef and pelagic fish, dramatic drop offs and, both soft and hard corals.

Those who like diving on wrecks will also find the area dotted with sunken ships and aircraft.

Game fishing is also a popular local sport and the coastal currents off Madang carry sailfish, kingfish, tuna, mackerel, barracuda, marlin, yellow fin and wahoo. Fishing is especially good in the waters around Karkar and Bagabag Islands.

After clearing customs, we'll transfer you to the onboard luxury of the **TRUE NORTH** and, the delights of our renowned galley! Enjoy a welcome aboard lunch as we cruise the local area – then join the first of our shore-parties and discover postcard beaches, palm trees, tranquil villages and a flotilla of canoes.

Day Two

The Sepik – as far as adventure is concerned, it doesn't get much better. Just the name conjures up excitement!

The Sepik River is the longest river in Papua New Guinea and, one of the great river systems of the world. It has a large catchment area and supports numerous landforms including swamplands, tropical rainforests and mountains. Biologically, the river system is possibly the largest uncontaminated freshwater wetland system in the Asia-Pacific region.

The river's total length is 1,126 kilometers and it has a drainage basin of over 80,000 square kilometres! There is a 5-10 kilometer wide belt of active meanders along most of the river's course and a floodplain up

to 70 kilometers wide includes extensive backwater swamps.

However, unlike many other large river systems, the Sepik has no delta – it flows straight into the sea.

The entire Sepik basin remains a largely undisturbed environment - there are no major urban settlements or mining and forestry activities in the river catchment.

Local villagers have lived along the river for many millennia and the river has formed the basis for food, transport and culture.

European contact with the river started in just 1885 when German colonists first explored the area. In 1886 and 1887, further expeditions by steam boat were conducted by the Germans and over 600 kilometers of riverine was explored. Between 1912 and 1913 the Germans sent further expeditions to explore the river and surrounding areas. They collected flora and fauna, studied local tribes and produced the first maps. The station town of Angoram was established as a base on the lower Sepik for explorations, but with the beginning of World War I, exploration ceased.

After the war the Australian government took trusteeship of the former German colony, creating the Territory of New Guinea. During this period the Australians established a station on the middle Sepik at Ambunti and conducted further exploration.

In 1935 Sir Walter McNicolls, the new administrator of the Territory of New Guinea travelled up length of the Sepik to "have a look at the river people and the kind of country along the banks".

The Japanese held the area throughout most of the Second World War. By the end of the war the Japanese had been completely surrounded however the battle to defeat the remaining forces was hard fought and drawn out due to the terrain.



The Australians eventually pushed the Japanese back to the village of Timbunke on the middle Sepik in July 1945. Eventually the Japanese were defeated and surrendered at Wewak in September 1945.

The Sepik is revered for its art. The tribes living along the river produce magnificent wood carvings and artful clay pottery. Many tribes use garmut drums in rituals; the drums are formed from long, hollowed-out tree trunks carved into the shape of various totem animals. As part of an elaborate coming of age ceremony, young men are scarified with the image of a crocodile on the river bank.

The **TRUE NORTH** will anchor in the mouth area and then it's away in the expedition boats and the helicopter for a day of remarkable exploration and discovery.

Day Three

Occupied by the Japanese during WWII, Hansa Bay became a major base and barge shuttle point from Wewak to bases further to the south-east. Two airfields were located nearby, Awar and Nubia, and there was also an encampment and harbour facility.

Ahead of advancing forces the bay was attacked from the air to neutralize barge traffic and forces in the area. Then on June 12, 1944 patrols from Australian's 35th Battalion reached Hansa. The Japanese abandoned the base leaving behind one of the largest caches of the New Guinea campaign and, at the end of the war, jeeps and other equipment were unceremoniously dumped into the bay.

The divers onboard will likely be mesmerised by the large number of ship wrecks in the bay (numbering more than 30) and they are reported to be in much better condition than those covered by volcanic ash in Rabaul (although several apparently show signs of massive internal explosions that no doubt occurred when they were sunk). The wrecks are relatively clear of silt due to prevailing currents.

The 60 metre long Shishi Maru lies just 500 metres off the beach. A large freighter, the Shishi Maru weighed over 5000 tons and has fire engines, trucks, and thousands of saki bottles in its hold. Anti-aircraft guns still point skyward and brass shell casings lay on her deck. The marine life growing on the wreck is outstanding and depths ranging from 5 to 25 metres provide comfortable access for both snorkellers and divers.

On land, hikers can rediscover the remains of a Japanese "Betty" bomber – still in an overgrown revetment by the old airstrip.

After lunch we will visit Liang Island. The island used to be home to the King Leopold III Biological Research Station – we believe the station was recently abandoned but an inspection of the area should still prove interesting.

Again, Laing will offer excellent snorkelling and diving around the fringing reefs, especially on the eastern side where the reef drops into deep water. The Encounter Reefs off Laing also provide spectacular dives on a series of sea mounts. The Encounters are reportedly home to "super-sized pelagics".

Just across the bay there is a highly active volcano on Manum Island – a reminder that we are within the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' where 75% of the world's active and dormant volcanoes can be found. The ship's helicopter will be the perfect vehicle to explore Manum and the surrounding area.

Day Four

Bagabag Island is a white-sand island offering excellent fishing, snorkelling, and diving.

There are two very beautiful bays called Christmas and New Year's! We will select one as an anchorage and exploration base.

In the morning the expedition boats will survey the outer-reef which is reported to be teeming with fish,



turtles and dolphins. Previous visitors to the area have raved about endless walls of sea fans, pristine corals and large pelagic species.

The inshore coral will entertain the snorkellers and there will also be relaxed opportunities for swimming and beachcombing on a Bagabag beach.

The ship's helicopter will also be away again - to explore the sounding area and nearby KarKar Island.

Karkar is a larger oval-shaped volcanic island about 25 km in length and 19 km in width. In the centre of the island there is an active volcano with two nested calderas. The latest eruptions on this island occurred in the 1970s.

The island has a relatively large population of approximately 50,000. The two main exports from the island are cacao and coconuts, which can grow in the same soil due to height differences. The large plantations are generally family owned.

After lunch we'll go ashore to meet the Bagabag islanders – there are just 4 villages here and apparently the locals are keen to introduce visitors to their unique culture and way of life.

The island is rich in betel-nut, local pigs and other food. Life on the island can be quite interesting as there are very few people and they all know each other very well.

Then, we will not be able to resist the charms of Christmas and New Year – all ashore for sunset drinks on the beach.

Day Five

Today we visit Saidor on the coast of PNG's main island.

The US Army landed here in January 1994 and constructed an airfield which served as the allied forces most forward airfield for striking Japanese positions to the west.

The strip was often used for emergency landings and many planes crash-landed here after the infamous "Black Sunday" mission of April 16, 1944. On that fateful day planes sent to bomb & strafe Hollandia encountered a severe line of thunderstorms and by the end of the day, 37 aircraft were destroyed, missing or crashed due to navigational error and weather.

Of more modern day interest is the presence of a Bernie Leahy – a descendant of the Leahy brothers who first explored the New Guinea highlands in 1930.

Bernie operates a copra and coco plantation at Saidor and resides in a very impressive three storey home built high up on a ledge that overlooks the Vitiav Straights. Apparently Bernie is a great guy and enjoys people dropping-in. After meeting Bernie we hope to join a tour of the plantation workings and to see some of the many remnants from the war.

Day Six

Long Island is a very unique place, well known for being an important turtle rookery.

Two strato-volcanoes are located on the island: Mount Reamur and Cerisy Peak. The summit of the volcanic complex has collapsed following major eruptions that occurred about 16,000, 4000, and 300 years ago. These events produced a large caldera measuring 10 x 12.5 kilometres in size and which is now filled with a crater-lake known as Lake Wisdom. The last eruption was one of the largest in Papua New Guinea's recent history and this cataclysmic event prompted legends of a "Time of Darkness".

A more recent (and smaller) eruption occurred in 1993.

Time to don the hiking boots as we strike out for Lake Wisdom.

Or perhaps a more leisurely scenic flight in the ship's helicopter is more your 'cup of tea'.



We might also be able to catch-up with Franz Mauder – Franz has lived on the island for many years and apparently he is a very interesting man with some great stories to tell.

Day Seven

The Vitu Islands are a volcanic group with an area of 96 km² located in the Bismarck Archipelago.

Formerly called the French Islands, the group is also sometimes known as the Witu Islands.

The islands are volcanic ocean peaks and although they are reef-ringed, they are not atolls and therefore highly fertile. The group is the chief copra centre of Papua New Guinea, although the main crop harvested is now cocoa (due to the depressed prices available for copra).

Garove [or Big Witu] and Unea [Bali] are the largest islands.

The islands are situated north west of the Talasea Peninsula on the north coast of New Britain with Unea lying some 40 nautical miles south east of the main group and the remaining islands - Mundua situated 7 miles NW of Garove, and Narage some fifteen miles NW of Mundua. The final extension of the chain being the Attilian Reef which is further NW of Narage and all but totally submerged making it dangerous to shipping.

Narage Island is a post-eruption volcanic remnant measuring just 210,000 m² - prior to the eruption in 1892-3 it measured more than 600,000 m²!

The tsunami from this explosion wiped-out all but two persons in Munda's lowest-lying village (they were absent on Garove) and was causative to a major population reduction over a wide area on the north coast of New Britain.

Narage is now shrouded in forest but not far from the shoreline there is a pool of boiling water,

providing evidence of more recent volcanic history.

In German colonial times, apart from the Kokopo area, the Vitu's were the stamping ground and major enterprise of the American-Samoan, Queen Emma, whose manager, a Dane named Peter Hansen, became quite famous for his retinue of concubines, some 26 in number!

When the Germans were expelled post World War I the island group was acquired by the trading group Burns Philp. Langu Plantation was ceded by Burns Philp to the Coote family after World War II as compensation following the execution of their family head (and Burns Philp store manager) by the Japanese after he refused to give the invaders keys to Burns Philp's facilities in Rabaul.

The Perhafen mission was established inside the caldera which forms the bulk of Garove, a wise choice considering the island's exposure to sea state - the island comprising at places only the precipitous higher ground of the caldera rim.

The helicopter will provide a bird's eye view of the entire island group whilst the ship's expedition boats will deliver guests ashore for historical and cultural tours.

And the surrounding reef will again lure the fishers, snorkellers and divers.

Vitu's remote coral reefs remain largely unexplored. Few divers have visited this area and many reefs remain un-dived. The visibility is usually superb and pelagic fishes are abundant. Grey reef sharks, silvertip sharks, dog-tooth tuna, rainbow runners and barracuda are seen on most dives. The fish assemblages on these reefs are distinctly oceanic in composition and a number of species that are rare closer inshore are very abundant here.

Day Eight

A cruise highlight today as we glide into renowned Kimbe Bay.



Kimbe is part of a global centre of marine diversity called the Coral Triangle. Supporting 60 percent of the Indo-Pacific's coral species and home to some 860 fish species, the area's rich waters are among the world's most precious. It is believed that this is where coral originated making it the oldest known coral reef on earth. Because of a massive die-off of coral worldwide due to pollution and global warming, Kimbe Bay has become increasingly important. The bay includes a series of marine protected areas designed to incorporate both human needs and the principles of coral reef resilience. The protected areas were established by the Nature Conservancy – a charitable group that works to preserve plants, animals, and natural communities by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. (Founded in 1951, The Nature Conservancy works in more than 30 countries. The Conservancy has over one million members and has protected more than 473,000 square kilometers internationally. The organization's assets totaled \$5.64 billion in 2009.)

Predictably enough – much of the day will be devoted to exploring these stunning marine environs.

Day Nine

Another cruise highlight – today we visit the Baia Sport Fishing Lodge in Open Bay.

This could be a once in a lifetime opportunity to fish jungle-lined rivers for black and spot tail bass, mangrove jack and other estuarine species.

The “one that got away” will likely dominate proceedings in the ship's bar tonight (bass fishing is normally conducted on a catch and release basis).

Day Ten

Be on deck early this morning as we cruise into the picturesque Mascott Channel.

The helicopter will be available for early scenic

flights over New Hanover and the other islands of the Bismarck Archipelago.

New Hanover is a large volcanic island measuring some 1,190 km². The island has a population of approximately 18,000. Today's flights will feature idyllic islands set against the aqua backdrop of the St Georges Channel, white sandy beaches lined with palm trees and coral fringed lagoons.

And the Mascott Channel will offer one last opportunity to participate in the now familiar PNG line-up of great fishing action, relaxed snorkelling and world-class diving.

Enjoy a lunchtime cruise to Tsoi Lik. Then join the crew for our very last village visit – the village of Mansava is a **TRUE NORTH** favourite and always an inviting cultural mix of singing, dancing and overwhelming hospitality.

Then it's back onboard for a farewell dinner to remember!

Day Eleven

This morning we are alongside in Kavieng.

Transportation will arrive to take you on your morning excursion.

Choose to visit Nusa Island Retreat where you can enjoy kayaking, swimming or just strolling around the island. There will also be the opportunity for one last perusal in the artefact shop. Enjoy an early seafood lunch before being transferred by boat to the Malagan Lodge & onto Kavieng Airport.

Alternatively, head to Lisseung Island for a snorkel and swim or just relax with your book in the sun. Here you will also enjoy a seafood lunch before being transferred to the airport.

All too soon it's time for your short flight back to Cairns and we are already looking forward to welcoming you back onboard – the next time you *Go Wild in Style!*

