

Welcome to Papua!

Here we provide with some information about Papua and all the important topics which should be taken into account before you book a tour with us and before your arrival to Papua. Please read this document carefully.

Quick facts about Papua

New Guinea Island is divided into two parts; Indonesian Papua on the West side of the island and Papua New Guinea on the East side. The Indonesian part of the island consists of 2 provinces; West Papua and Papua Province. We offer tours in this part of New Guinea and will refer to both provinces as just 'Papua' in this document. New Guinea is the second biggest island in the world that lies directly north of Australia. It belongs to the Pacific Melanesian island group. The indigenous Papuans have a dark skin and frizzy hair. There is a huge cultural diversity within Papua and over 250 different languages are spoken. However, Bahasa Indonesia is the working language and most commonly used in the cities. Very few people speak English.

Religion 88% of Indonesia is Muslim and 10% is Christian. In Papua, 75% of the population is Christian and less than 25% Muslim. Religion in Indonesia is a very important part of daily life. Not having a religion or not believing is out of question.

Wildlife Papuan wildlife is very different from that of the rest of Indonesia. Besides crocodiles and endemic bird species, such as those belonging to the group of the Birds of Paradise, you can find tree kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, cuscuses and possums. Papua has still a lot of primary forest. Rivers and high mountains make natural boundaries between villages and tribes. Infrastructures outside the cities is poorly developed and the wild environment makes traveling in Papua difficult. Unfortunately, reality tells us that illegal logging is an increasing threat to wildlife.

Economy In remote areas of Papua, education and healthcare is often not well organised. This means that many schools have no pupils. Facilities are concentrated in cities and are difficult to reach for many people. The villages and countryside are among the poorest of Indonesia, whereas the living standards in cities have been rising. However, many jobs in cities are taken by immigrants from outside Papua leaving few opportunities for the indigenous Papuans. This is one of the reasons why Travel Papua works directly with Papuans and local communities as much as possible.

Tourism Services in Papua

Tourism is still in its infancy in Papua. Although tourism in Papua already exists for over 20 years, there has been little development in the quality of services provided. Most people who work in the tourism industry have a low education, have never travelled outside their village and therefore lack the understanding of the expectations from western travellers. It means you, as a world traveller need to be patient and understanding to their situation. Following we will tell you more about the quality of service you can expect.

Accommodations When you travel to worlds' most remote place you want to stay in the best accommodation possible. We carefully select them personally, but that does not guarantee that they offer standard services you would expect in Western cities. There are only a few good hotels in the bigger cities and it is common that even the best ones can have its deficiencies. If you travel around Papua you will likely experience staying in homestays. Raja Ampat is well known for its homestays. In general, homestays in Papua are not comparable to homestays in the west and therefore are below western standards. Most of them provide mattresses on the floor and shared locally styled bathrooms. Unfortunately the lack of hygiene and maintenance is common. You should bring your own sheets/ sleeping bag and a sleeping mattress when staying in homestays and local houses. Communication in these locations can be a big challenge because the staff do not speak English.

(Public) Transportation Flights are often delayed and if you fly with smaller aircrafts luggage allowance is only 10 kilo. Public boats and ferries cope with the same delay-problem. More stressful can be that nobody from the service provided will tell you the reason for the delay. You can try to find someone to explain you what the estimated time of departure is, but you will have a hard time finding someone that speaks English. When travelling by car, road blocks due to work construction work or the car in front of you hits a valuable pig can cost hours of delay.

Communication Few people speak English. Resorts and big hotels could may have staff that speak English, but otherwise, the only person that you can count on that speaks (average!) English will be your guide.

Guide Services is a handful of local Papuan guides all around Papua. Most of the guides have a full time job (e.g. they are teachers, work for their local government or others) and guiding is a side-job. This means that not all guides have an education in tourism and therefore their level of guiding is not comparable to other parts of Indonesia let alone internationally.

Practical information

Travel Permit We are obligated to report all travellers that book their trip to immigrations officials. Immigration officials need a copy of your passport and therefore we kindly ask you to send a copy of your passport via email at least 3 days prior to the start of your tour. When you travel to the more remote areas of Papua, e.g. Korowai, Nabire and Wamena, you will need a special travel permit. This can be obtained at the local police authorities upon your arrival via our local staff. You also have to carry:

- Copies of your passport
- At least 4 passport size photos

Arrival and Immigration at the Airport On the plane you will receive an Arrival/Departure Card to fill in. After immigration, please keep the Departure card safe as it will be collected upon your departure.

Monetary Issues The official currency in Indonesia is the Indonesian Rupiah (RP. or IDR.). Check the current exchange rate before and upon arrival.

- Credit card payments are (mostly) possible in bigger hotels throughout Papua
- Always prepare to have cash with you in the local currency.
- Not all ATM'S accept foreign debit bank cards. We recommend BNI-Bank or BCA-Bank because they accept most international cards. These are available in the bigger cities like; Wamena, Jayapura, Sorong, Manokwari, Merauke and Sentani.
- It is not possible to exchange your foreign currency in Papua, unless you go to an official bank. However, the exchange rate will be very poor so we recommend to withdraw cash from the ATM machines instead.
- When using some ATM machines, your bank card might come out in the end of the transaction. So do not forget to take your card!
- The maximum amount of money you are able to withdraw is between Rp 1.000.000 and Rp 2.000.000 depending on the machine. However, you can get more money out by making multiple transactions.
- In addition, sometimes people struggle to give you change when you pay with a 50.000 note or bigger. Please try to get smaller notes when paying e.g. in supermarkets/hotels.

++ Important note for Wamena Prepare small money (Rp 5.000 – Rp 20.000) for taking pictures of local people during your travels in Wamena. You pay between Rp. 10.000 – Rp. 20.000 per picture (per 'click'). Before photographing, always discuss with your guide when and how to pay the small fee and try to negotiate beforehand.

Electricity Indonesia and so Papua has a standard voltage of 230 V and the frequency is 50 Hz. You can use your electric appliances in Indonesia, if the standard voltage in your country is in between **220 - 240 V**. In Papua the power plugs and sockets are of type C and F. C is also known as the standard "Euro" plug. Power shut downs are common all over Papua. Most hotels have a generator. Homestays and local houses often only work with generators because they have no access to electricity yet. Take into account that generators can break down or are not working properly.

Jam Karet or the Elastically Time Locals call it; Jam Karet. The elastically time. What is a 10 minutes' drive for the Papuan, is a 30 minutes' drive for Westerners. If you have an appointment and someone is not there, we suggest you to call after 10 minutes waiting.

Health and Medical Issues Medical care in Papua is moderate in the bigger cities, but not available when traveling to remote areas. However here are some tips to reduce the chances of getting sick. Please consult the health service in your country 6 to 8 weeks before departure in order to get yourself well informed on the possible health risks when traveling to Papua. Vaccinations for Hepatitis A, DTP and Typhoid as well as Malaria prophylaxis are strongly recommended. There is no prophylaxis against the Dengue fever so pre-caution is important. We recommend you to bring mosquito repellent with a high concentration of DEET from your home country.

- Cover your legs and arms with long clothing, especially during sunrise and sunset when mosquitos are most active. Always use mosquito repellent. Malaria and Dengue are common in Papua
- Remember to drink enough water. This is essential in the tropics!
- Protect your skin from the sun and use a sufficient sunscreen, with a high SPF. The sun is much stronger as Papua is located near the equator
- Take care of your personal hygiene and wash your hands regularly
- Never drink tap water, always buy bottled drinking water
- Try to avoid ice in your drinks. It is easy to catch diarrhoea in Papua.
- Listen to the instructions of the guide and don't be afraid to ask for help

Communication via Internet or mail If your mobile phone company offers international roaming in Indonesia, you can use your own data. However, high fees will most likely apply. Some hotels in the cities offer a free Wi-Fi connection but the network and data coverage can be weak and it is usual that the data operates slower. Few hotels offer paid Wi-Fi. When travelling to the more remote area internet is limited or not available. In addition, a postcard to Europe or the United States takes at least 2 weeks to arrive. However, it might take a bit of an effort to find post cards in Papua.

Business hours Banks, post- and public offices are usually open from Mon - Fri from 08.00 am – 03.00 pm. Shops are usually open daily until 9PM or 10PM. Some shops close their doors for siesta in the afternoon and on Sunday most shops are closed and will only open in the afternoon. Museums are closed on Sunday.

Cultural differences Leave positive thoughts behind and handle situations in Papua with a respectful approach. Practice the local manners:

- Always ask before taking a picture
- Say no with a smile
- Communications often goes indirectly and humbleness is the key word to many things
- 'yes' is a common word to use here, even if they mean no. So always make sure if they mean yes, yes or yes.
- Take off your shoes whenever you enter someone's room or house
- Do not sniff on your food, the people will compare this with dogs or pigs
- Always show respect to elders and official authorities
- Use only your right hand to take or give something, to wave or to eat with. Using your left hand is a no-go
- When we closely walk pass a group of sitting people, always bend a bit forward to show our respect and excuse ourselves that we get ahead of them

Considering donations If you would like to bring donations or presents to the villagers, it is the best to give the items to the guide and who will pass them on to the parents/head of the village. It is better when people get something from their own people, instead of a 'rich tourist'. Unfortunately, a 'rich tourist' is the way many Papuans see our travellers and we kindly ask you to not promote that image.

Dress code Proper dressing is appreciated. It is respectful to have shirts covering your shoulders and trousers as well as skirts that are not too short. Locals wear clothing at the beaches as well. Look at how a local dresses to see what is appropriate. Cotton clothes are more comfortable to wear in a hot weather. A jacket or a sweater can be useful when travelling in higher altitudes e.g. to Arfak or the Baliem Valley. When you stay in a place for more than one night, you may check if your laundry can be done by using a local laundry service.

Bargaining It is possible to bargain in the local markets, but the habit is not as common as in other parts of Indonesia. It is difficult to indicate how much you should to bargain from the product. You should decide on a price that is reasonable for you and the seller. Most important is to keep smiling while bargaining.

Food and Restaurants Rice, noodles, beef, chicken and fish are local dishes here in Papua. Vegetarians may enjoy soya dishes like tofu and tempe. When you stay in homestays, local houses or go on a trekking the meals are simple. Our travellers have recommended to bring the following when you spend the nights in remote places: <https://drytech.no/en/>

Services in local restaurants is generally really slow compared to western standards. If you want to skip the waiting, we recommend you to order your meals beforehand and state the time you would like to have the dinner ready. However, this tactic does not guarantee your food will be there at the specific time, but at least you have saved some time.

Tipping In a country where many people have an income of less than 100 euros per month, tipping for good service is very much appreciated. People working in the hospitality business are also getting more and more used to this custom. For example,

- You can tip a hotel porter carrying your bag Rp.10.000-20.000 / bag. If you arrange a porter for example in the airports or harbours, you have to agree on the price beforehand (Usually Rp30,000- Rp. 50,000 per bag).
- At a restaurant or a hotel 5-10% of the bill, unless there is already a Service Charge included to your bill
- Also a guide and a driver will be happy with a little extra. A reasonable amount for a driver is Rp. 75.000 – 100.000 / day and for a guide around Rp. 100.000 / day.

Note that these are just general guidelines for the amounts.

Time differences Papua is 9 hours ahead of GMT/UTC (Greenwich Mean Time/ Universal Time Coordinated). Bali is 8 hours ahead of GMT/ UTC. Sumatra, Java and Kalimantan are 7 hours ahead of GMT/ UTC.

Taxis There are no meter-taxis in Papua. In the bigger towns in Papua the public transportation is called 'taxi'. These are hop on / hop off minibuses that drive a certain route. You can identify each directions and routes from a different colour of the mini-bus or a number written on the minibus. For one trip, the price is approx. Rp. 5,000. At the reception of your hotel you can ask which colour or number you need to take to your desired destination. In addition, there is also the motorbike taxi, "ojek", but since many locals use motorbikes, it is not always clear who is an official "ojek" driver. Therefore, always discuss with your guide or hotel reception in case you want to use the "ojek". If taking public transportation is too adventurous for you, your hotel can often arrange a drop off or pick up to your desired destination.

What to bring In the bigger cities, like Jayapura or Sorong, you can find personal items such as toothpaste or shampoo, in the supermarkets in town. However, there are certain necessities we recommend you to bring from your home country:

- Torch
- Power bank
- Extra batteries
- Towel
- Mosquito Net
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunblock (30 to 50 SPF)
- Rain clothing and long sleeves and trousers for the pre-caution of mosquitos
- Personal medication and malaria prophylaxis
- Snorkelling equipment + water shoes
- Sleeping pad & Sleeping bag or an extra blanket (during trekking or when staying in local houses)
- Windproof jacket (higher altitude destination)
- Good trekking shoes
- During trekking tours water will be boiled from springs nearby. We recommend to bring water purifiers from your home country if you wish to. These are not available in Papua.