

Civilized

Adventures

Journey to Papua New Guinea by Denell Falk

Papua New Guinea is for the traveler who wants to explore a destination and experience a culture that few others have. With limited tourist facilities (there are no real “deluxe” accommodations), a climate that ranges from the hot and humid lowlands of the Sepik Valley and the coast to the cool and misty mountains, and a very limited road network (i.e. simple and generally bumpy), this is the most primitive country that I have experienced, as I discovered this October.

For the prepared traveller, Papua New Guinea will deliver an incredible adventure! Our interactions with the local

people were simply amazing. The people are curious, yet shy. They are excited to share their culture and they proudly performed traditional rituals for we who travelled so far to visit them.

We found that most rural Papua New Guineans have never been exposed to the outside world: television and internet do not exist for them. Their only exposure comes from missionaries and the few tourists who travel to these remote areas.

It was a great privilege to meet these people who have not been influenced by the rest of the world. We gained insight into their ancient culture and the role of males and females (the male definitely has the preferential role).

We were entertained at a couple of “Sing Sings” (a

traditional tribal singing and dancing celebration). The men took great pride painting their bodies and primping their headdresses right down to each individual feather. With a tiny mirror, they did a final check of their bright facial makeup. Cassowary bones, possum tails, birds of paradise feathers, human hair wigs died and shaped by stiff red soil, colorful palm leaves and penis gourds were all a part of their ceremonial dress.

The “Wigmen” explained the art of growing hair. For 18 months they sleep with their head upright so that they never “crush” their growing hair. Then their heads are shaved and the hair sold to the local wig master who creates ceremonial wigs for the men. We also visited Spirit Houses where the young men were healing from “crocodile cutting”, a form of

body marking which is only one part of their grueling initiation. It was amazing to hear of the hardships and sacrifices that young men undergo to earn their passage to manhood.

This is just a sampling of our many experiences. Sound interesting? Civilized Adventures is planning a trip to Papua New Guinea in 2012. Call us and we will ensure that you receive trip details once they are finalized. Please remember that we also offer Tailored arrangements if you prefer alternative dates, routes, durations or activities.



Photos: D. Falk

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