

Port Moresby



First-time visitors to Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby can find it confronting and even intimidating, but since all visitors enter PNG through its gritty capital almost everyone ends up spending some time here. Port Moresby is the South Pacific's largest city, and while the sprawling capital isn't among the world's great metropolises, it does have redeeming features.

A visit to Parliament Haus, PNG's most impressive building, and the cultural displays at the National Museum are recommended – the mosaic façade of Parliament Haus will excite any photographer in the late afternoon. The National Botanical Gardens are a highlight; when the orchids are blooming, it's perhaps the city's most charming spot. Outside town, Varirata National Park is heaven for bird-watchers and the drive there is rewarding.

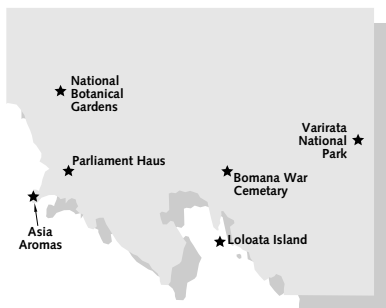
The city's relatively sophisticated infrastructure is a bonus. If you've been wandering through villages for weeks, a meal at one of the good restaurants is perfect after the dozens of sweet potatoes you'll have consumed. Or it'll serve as a welcome treat before heading bush.

Experiencing Port Moresby is about people rather than sights. It's a microcosm of PNG's future and it's fascinating to talk with expats and locals to sense what it's like to live in a city rated one of the earth's most dangerous and least liveable.

Be mindful in Port Moresby (don't flash your jewels), but there's no need to be paranoid. With so little work available, most people sit around smoking, chewing betel nut, reading the newspapers – they'll regale you with good manners and thoughtful conversation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gazing up at the towering, mosaic façade of **Parliament Haus** (p74) done in Sepik *haus tambaran* style; it's PNG's most noted architectural icon
- Seeing the spectacular orchids' explosion of form and colour at the **National Botanical Gardens** (p76)
- Driving out to solemn **Bomana War Cemetery** (p83) and contemplating the dramatic history of WWII that it reveals
- Enjoying the cool air of **Varirata National Park** (p83) and the great bird-watching opportunities
- Catching a boat out to **Loloata Island** (p90) for some excellent snorkelling and diving
- Chowing down on some fine food at **Asia Aromas** (p80) and other excellent restaurants.



■ POPULATION: 250,000

■ AREA : 240 SQ KM

HISTORY

While Port Moresby today has dozens of different tribal groups, only two can truly call it home: the Motu and Koitabu. The native people of the Port Moresby area (and much of the eastern tip of the mainland) are descendants of Polynesian people, unlike the predominantly Melanesian population. The Motu are traditionally a sea-going people and didn't arrive until relatively recently, probably less than 2000 years ago. Motu villages were built on stilts over Moresby Harbour. Hanuabada ("Great Village") was the largest of their communities and still exists today. Stilt houses can also be seen at Koki Village near Town and Tubuseraia down the Magi Hwy.

The first European to visit was Captain John Moresby in 1873, after whom the harbour was named. Moresby explored extensively along the south coast and spent several days trading with villagers at Hanuabada. He was impressed with the people and their lifestyles, posing the rhetorical question in his diary, 'What have these people to gain from civilisation?' One year later, the London Missionary Society arrived and was soon followed by traders and 'blackbirders', who recruited indentured labourers and were little better than slave-dealers.

In 1888 Port Moresby became the capital of the newly declared British New Guinea. Under Sir William MacGregor's remarkable 10-year administration, the government in Port Moresby and a national police force were established. Sir Hubert Murray was appointed chief judicial officer of British New Guinea in 1904, and in 1906 the territory was handed to Australia, itself only five years independent of British-colonial rule. Murray took over administration of Papua, as it was known, until his death in 1940 at 78 from leukaemia at Samarai Island while still on duty.

Port Moresby was overshadowed by Lae, the supply base for the gold rushes in Wau and Bulolo, and Rabaul until WWII. The Japanese quickly occupied all of northern New Guinea and were rapidly advancing south when Port Moresby became the staging post for Allied troops fighting along the Kokoda Track. Port Moresby remained in Australian hands throughout the war.

After the war, Papua and New Guinea were administered as one territory with Port Moresby becoming the capital largely

by default – more attractive alternatives such as Lae and Rabaul had been flattened by Allied bombing.

ORIENTATION

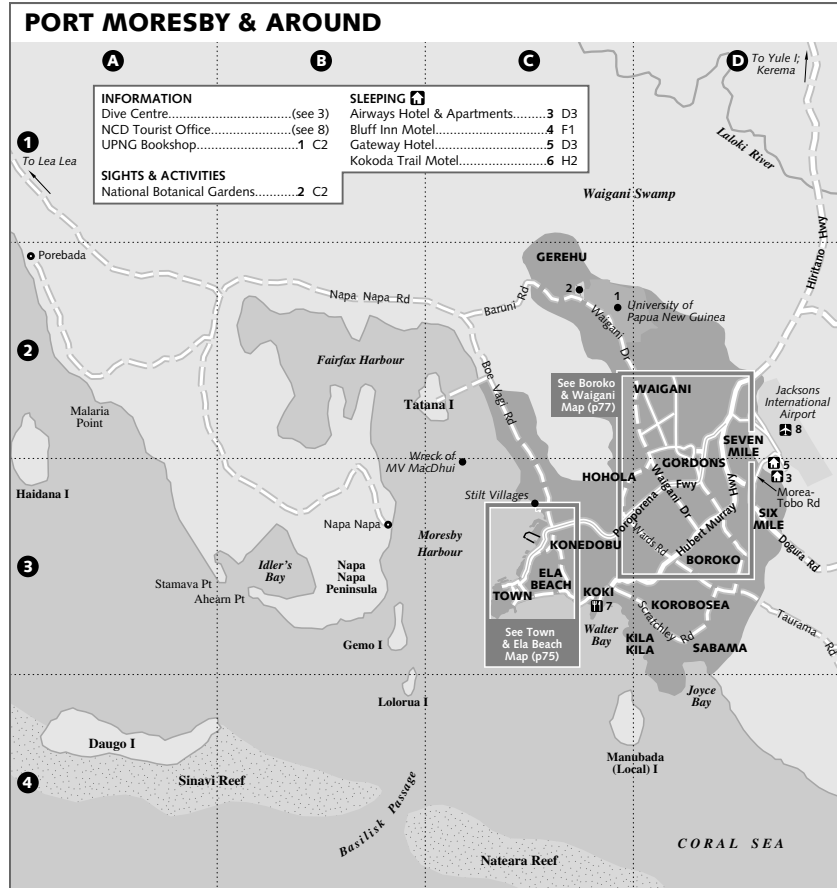
Port Moresby is a collection of districts rather than a single city; it sprawls around the coast and inland hills. It can be a difficult place to get your bearings – it's quite hilly and few roads follow a straight line. A tourist map and a compass are helpful. The modest CBD is called Town, and perches on a spit of land that ends in Paga Hill, at the city's southwest end. Town has most of Port Moresby's few older buildings, the shipping docks and wharves, and is bounded to the south by popular Ela Beach. Town has businesses, shops and some good restaurants, but few hotels.

The Poreporena Fwy runs from the Royal Papua Yacht Club and the Harbour City buildings just north of Town, inland to Hohola, Gordons and the airport, about 11km away. It is also the best route to Waigani, home to Parliament, the National Museum & Art Gallery, and most government offices.

Boroko is the district that has become the de facto centre of Port Moresby, with even more businesses, shops, banks, restaurants and several places to stay. Four Mile is, strictly speaking, the neighbourhood on the western side of Hubert Murray Hwy that lies between Boroko and Hohola, but many people use the names Four Mile and Boroko interchangeably.

The potholed Hubert Murray Hwy, once the only roadlink to the airport with Town, is still the best route between Town and Boroko. These are the two districts with most interest for travellers, though Ela Beach is a nice promenade. Waigani Dr stretches northwest from Boroko past more Hohola hotels and the Waigani government buildings, onto the University of PNG (UPNG) and the Botanical Gardens.

To the south of Town, the main road runs alongside popular Ela Beach until you reach Koki, home to the market and another stilt village. A few kilometres past the airport the road divides, the left branch heading north then west toward Kerema and the right branch climbing east to Sogeri and the Kokoda Track. Boroko's large bus stop is the main PMV hub.



Maps

The best and most up-to-date maps of Port Moresby are found in the front of the PNG telephone directory and the ubiquitous red *Nationwide Papua New Guinea Business & Street Directory*. The free booklet *Welcome to Port Moresby*, published a number of times each year, has a simple centrefold map with most places of interest clearly marked. It's available at hotel reception desks and the like.

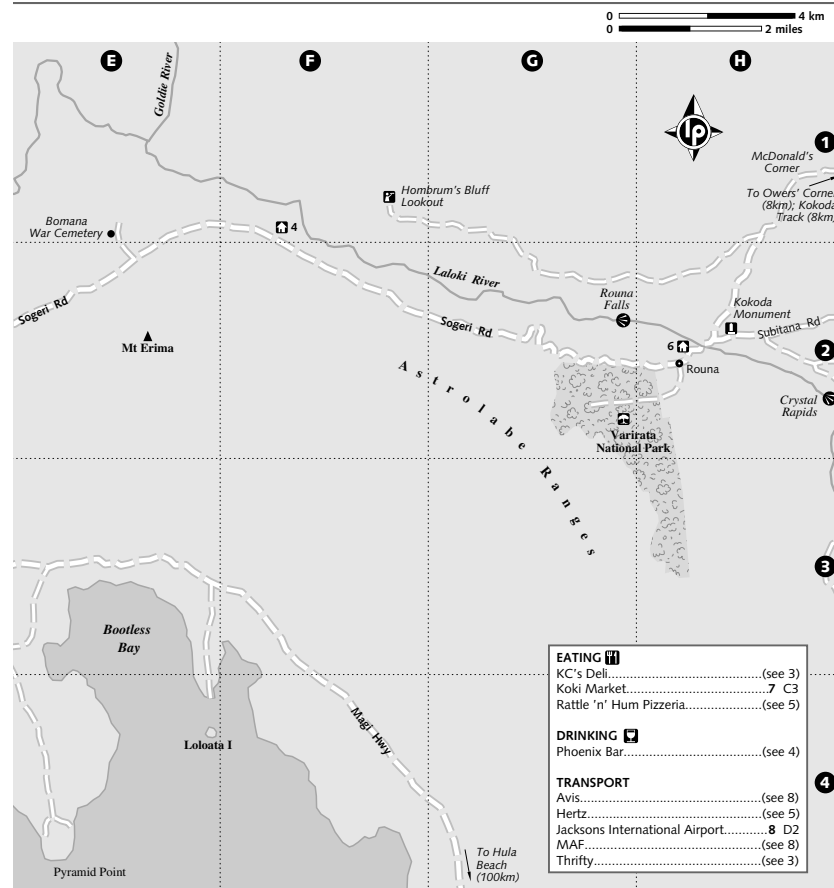
The **National Mapping Bureau** (Map p77; ☎ 327 6223; natmap@datec.com.pg; Melanesian Way, Waigani; ☎ 8.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) produces a huge two-part 1:10,000 street map of Port Moresby (2000), which is also available as a far more manageable book.

INFORMATION Bookshops

Sadly, there is only one decent bookshop in Port Moresby, the **UPNG Bookshop** (Map pp70-1; ☎ 326 7375; UPNG, Waigani Dr, Waigani; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri), and even that stocks mostly coursework materials and academic texts. Top-end hotels have a few overpriced books and there are a couple of duty-free shops at the airport (past Immigration) that have some decent books on PNG. Make sure you bring your own reading material because you can't even buy a trashy airport novel in Port Moresby.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 111)
Fire (☎ 110, 321 3658)



Police (☎ 000)

Women's counselling (☎ 180 1991)

Internet Access

Top-end hotels offer broadband internet access, and some have wi-fi access. Apart from the hotels, Port Moresby has few internet cafés, their connections are only moderately quick and they keep short hours. There are two in Town, one in Gordons and none in Boroko.

Fastlink Broadband Internet Café (Map p75; United Church Bldg, Douglas St, Town; per hr K15; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Next to the historic church; fast connections. Planning to open a branch in Boroko.

Datanets Internet Café (Map 000; www.datanets.com.pg; AON Haus; ☎ 320 0633; MacGregor St, Town; per hr

K22; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Almost opposite Crowne Plaza.

Datec (Map p77; ☎ 303 1333; www.datec.com.pg; Waigani Dr, Gordons; per hr K20; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) The fastest connection.

Libraries

National Library & Archives (Map p77; ☎ 325 6200; Independence Dr, Waigani; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 1-4pm Sun) An Independence gift from Australia, this library houses a huge PNG collection.

Medical Services

Whatever the situation, it's probably worth calling one of the two clinics first.

Paradise Private Clinic (Map p77; ☎ 325 6022; Taurama Rd, Boroko; ☎ 24hr)

Port Moresby General Hospital (Map p77; ☎ 324 8200; Taurama Rd, Korobosea)

Port Moresby Medical Centre (Map p77; ☎ 325 6633; info@pmms.net; cnr Vaivai Ave & Mavaru St, Boroko; ☎ 24hr) Best place in an emergency. Can arrange medical and has a decompression chamber on site.

DENTISTS

Dr Richard Pickworth (Map p75; ☎ 321 1137, after hours 321 1298; Ground fl, Mogorn Motu Bldg, Champion Pde, Town) Good reputation.

Mills Dental Care (Map p75; ☎ 320 0600; 1st fl, Deloitte Tower, Douglas St, Town)

Money

ANZ and Westpac are more efficient than Bank South Pacific, where you'll likely grow old waiting to change your money. If you're changing cash or travellers cheques, ask for the international desk. See p296 for more on money.

TOWN

ANZ (Map p75; ☎ 180 1444; cnr Champion Pde & Musgrave St, Town) ATMs are more reliable than Westpac's ones. Can use Visa and MasterCard.

Bank South Pacific (p75; ☎ 321 2444; cnr Musgrave & Douglas Sts) Agents for Western Union.

Westpac (Map p77; ☎ 322 0888; cnr Musgrave & Douglas Sts) Agent for American Express. In theory, ATMs work for Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Visa/PLUS, Maestro. There's a charge of K20 to change cash.

BOROKO

ANZ (Map p77; ☎ 180 1444; Hubert Murray Hwy) Has ATMs.

Bank South Pacific (Map p77; ☎ 323 2288; cnr Nita St & Angau Dr)

Westpac (Map p77; ☎ 322 0888; Nita St)

Post

Boroko Post Office (Map p77; ☎ 300 3794; Tabari Pl, Boroko; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8-11.30am Sat)

Post Office (Map p75; ☎ 300 3797; cnr Cuthbertson St & Champion Pde, Town; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 11.30am Sat)

Telephone

At least half of the phones at the airport and outside the post offices in Town and Boroko should be working. See p300 about using the excellent Telikad system.

Prepaid mobile start-up kits (including prepaid SIM cards) are available from the government-owned PNG Telekom's B Mobile

network as well as the newcomer Digicel. These two systems don't talk to each other, and when we visited Moresby many people were carrying around two mobiles – one B Mobile and one Digicel. See p300 for more on the great telecommunications debacle.

Tourist Information

Kokoda Track Authority (Map p77; ☎ 325 1887; kokodatrackauthority@global.net.pg, 1st fl, Brian Bell Plaza, Boroko; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Statutory body that administers activities related to the Kokoda Track – it collects and distributes trekking fees, liaises with landowners etc. Good place to come if you're looking for a guide or want to join a trek.

NCD Tourism Office (Map p70-1; Jackson's International Airport; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Small, underfunded National Capital District tourism booth.

PNG Tourism Promotion Authority (TPA; Map p75; ☎ 320 0211; 5th fl, MMI Haus, Champion Pde, Town; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Provides limited information on accommodation; it's mainly about marketing and promotion.

Travel Agencies

Dove Travel (Map p77; ☎ 325 9800; fax 325 1451; Angau Dr, Boroko; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) This Catholic-run agency is pretty well connected with all forms of transport in PNG plus international flights. Can also suggest cheap sleeping options if you're desperate.

Westpac Travel (Map p75; ☎ 322 0663; fax 322 0640; Douglas St, Town)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Port Moresby can be a dangerous place, but it's not the hell on earth that many who've never been here make it out to be. The vast majority of visitors to Port Moresby leave unscathed, and if you use your common sense, you should be fine (see p291 for how to avoid trouble).

There are no guarantees and the situation can change quickly, so ask the locals when you arrive about what is safe, then make your own choice. Walking around Town and Boroko during daylight hours should be absolutely fine, but anywhere else you should walk with a local. Avoid secluded urban areas at any time; *raskols* (bandits) are not strictly nocturnal. The view from Paga Hill in Town is terrific, but don't walk up there on your own. Stay out of the settlements unless you are with one of the residents (that includes Hanuabada). Don't walk around Kila Kila, Sabama or Six Mile at any time. After dark, don't walk

THE JACKSON'S AIRPORT JOB

On 19 November 2007 a Tropicair King Air C90 aircraft chartered by Bank South Pacific took off from Jackson's Airport in Port Moresby bound for Tabubil. Aboard were two Australian pilots, AU\$2million in cash (salaries for Ok Tedi mine workers)...and two sham security guards. The impostor security guards pulled their guns on the unsuspecting pilots and ordered them to make for a disused WWII airstrip on Daugo (Fisherman's) Island near the mouth of the Port Moresby harbour.

Three more bandits were waiting to meet the hijackers and they bundled the two pilots into a boat headed for the mainland. The two muddy but unharmed pilots were later found by police handcuffed to a tree in a swamp. After an exchange of gunfire four of the five bandits were arrested, one was shot dead and the three boxes of money and several firearms were retrieved.

anywhere. The most important thing is not to make yourself a target or put yourself in situations where you are vulnerable. It's just common sense.

SIGHTS

Most of Port Moresby's few sights are in Town and the government district of Waigani, but unless you have access to a boat you'll run out of interesting things to see within a couple of days.

Port Moresby City

There is little of historical interest remaining in Port Moresby's CBD, where office towers and neglect have steadily claimed much of the area. The oldest building still standing is the **Ela United Church** (Map p75; ☎ 321 7426; Douglas St), opened by the London Missionary Society in 1890. **St Mary's Catholic Cathedral** (Map p75; Musgrave St, Town) is not so old but it does have an impressive entrance portal in the style of a Sepik *haus tambaran* (spirit house). The **Old Parliament Building** (Map p75; MacGregor St, Town) was never an architectural wonder, but its opening as the House of Assembly in 1964 was a significant milestone on PNG's road to independence. Sadly, the shell it has become symbolises the country's steady decline in recent years; it's occupied by squatters and *buai*-sellers. Despite its majestic hilltop position overlooking Town and the port, there's nothing that indicates its former significance.

The harbour headland, **Paga Point** (Map p75), is adjacent to Town. It's worth walking to the top of Paga Hill for the fine views over the town, the harbour and the encircling reefs, but don't go alone. On the southern side of Town is the long, sandy stretch of **Ela Beach** (Map p75). The beachfront promenade is a popular walk during the day, though the

sands are not full of sunbathers these days. Even locals perceive this area as potentially unsafe. If you do swim here, you'll attract a lot of attention, but the biggest threat may be the shallow water, thick seaweed and black, spiny and painful sea urchins – you might prefer to take to the waters at your hotel swimming pool.

Hanuabada

Past the docks to the north lies Hanuabada (Map p75), the original Motu village. Although it is still built over the sea on stilts, the original wood and thatched houses were destroyed by fire during WWII. They were rebuilt in all-Australian building materials, corrugated iron and fibrocement, but it's an interesting place and the people have retained many traditional Motu customs.

You cannot simply wander around the villages if you are not a guest or if you don't have a local guide, but your hotel should be able to suggest someone.

Koki

The picturesque stilt village of Koki, at the eastern end of Ela Beach, is worth visiting if you can find a local to take you. The best way to do that is by visiting the neighbouring **Koki Market** (off Map p75), one of the oldest and, after a vast improvement in security, safest markets in the city. Fresh produce and fish straight off the boat are sold here, but even if you're not shopping for produce, it's a colourful place to watch grassroots-style PNG commerce. Don't flash around your jewels or expensive cameras if you're alone, but if you go with a local (someone from your hotel, perhaps) then carrying a camera shouldn't be a problem. Always ask before taking someone's picture; you'll find them much more

VOICES: TONY TORE, THE BLACK SCOTSMAN

Tony Tore is 57 and Port Moresby's only bagpipe-playing busker. He's a Gulf country man from Malalaua, but he calls himself the Black Scotsman. Two or three times a week he plays in Boroko Square or in Town.

Where did you learn to play the bagpipes? In the army. On 20 June 1968, I enlisted with the Australian Defence Force's Northern Command (back when New Guinea was an Australian colony). I went to Australia in 1971 and 1985 with the PNGDF (Papua New Guinea Defence Force) Pipe Band.

Did you see active service in the army? In 1980 I was part of the Kumul Force of the PNGDF that went to Vanuatu when Jimmy Stevens led a secessionist movement against Walter Lini's government. The Kumuls helped put down the rebellion in two weeks without firing a shot. I did two tours of duty to Bougainville (during the decade-long civil war), but I felt bad about fighting against our PNG brothers. We had to enforce the blockade of the Bougainville Island and rebel soldiers were starving in the mountains. Many just walked out of the bush and surrendered just to get some food. Conditions on Bougainville were very bad. Things got really crazy in Bougainville. In 2001 the PNGDF downsized. Some of us are still fighting for our re-trenchment payment.

So these days you play in the streets for people's loose change? People are poor, they don't have much money to give. But they like my music. It's good – when people listen to my pipes they're not fighting or robbing each other. Moresby used to be a beautiful place when the Australians were here (colonial times), but since PNG's independence we have gone backwards. The politicians are corrupt – they only look after themselves. Today Moresby is not safe, it's not clean. There's *buai* (betel nut) everywhere.

Do you see many tourists in Port Moresby? Some but not many. Sometimes a busload of Japanese tourists will walk through the square here at Boroko and take photos of the *bilum* sellers. Then they get on the bus again and are gone. Boroko is the main area for tourists; they can buy *bilums* (string bags) and carvings here.

I've often seen soapbox preachers here in Boroko Square. Are you the only busker here? There are often preachers here in Boroko and they usually preach in Tok Pisin. Sometimes we get evangelists from America who preach in the square. They're great performers, they're well dressed and get big crowds.

You get big crowds too! Your Scottish bagpipe music seems very exotic here in Port Moresby. Yes, but people like my music. One time a drunk man came to watch me play. He had run away from his wife. He went to the ATM, bought me a Coke and gave me K5. He said, '*MUSIC blo yu tanim tingting blo mi* (your music changed my mind).' And he set off to apologise to his wife.

amenable if you buy something. PMVs stop outside the market.

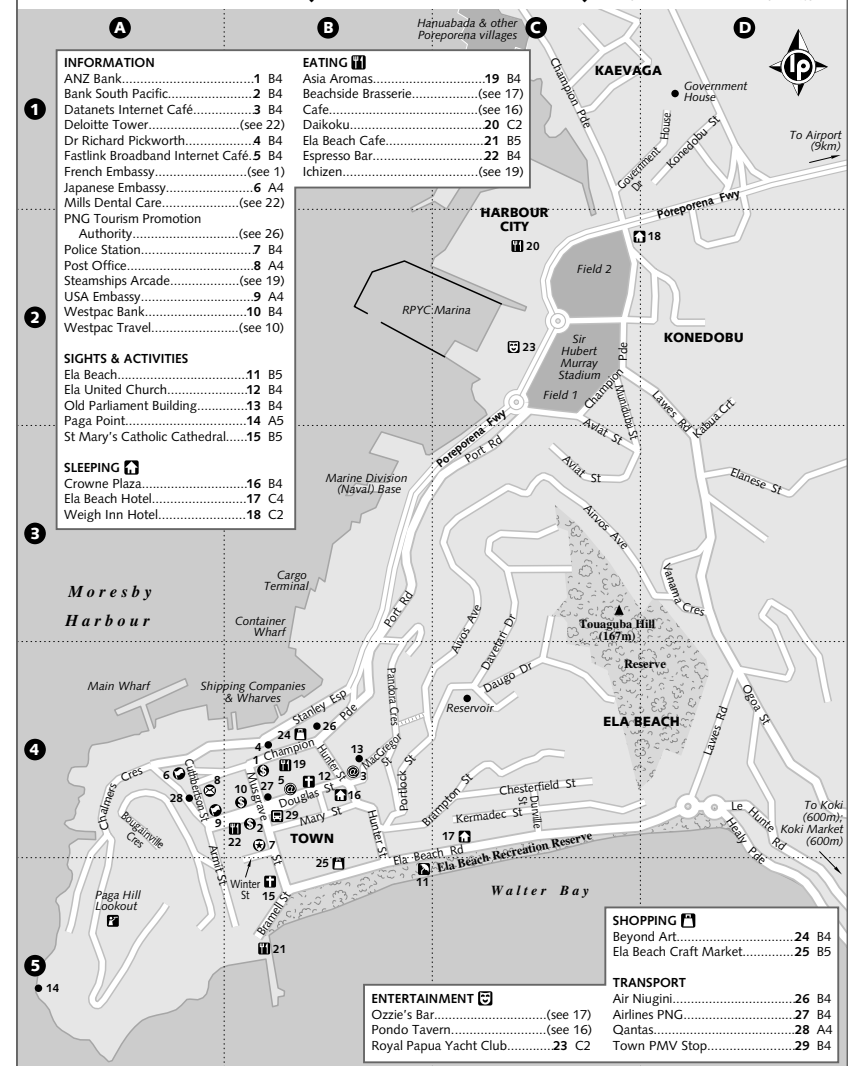
Parliament Haus

The impressive **Parliament Haus** (Map p77; ☎ 327 7377; Independence Dr, Waigani; 🕒 8am–noon & 1–3pm Mon–Fri, or when parliament is sitting) was officially opened in 1984 with Prince Charles on hand. The main building is in the style of a Maprik, or Sepik-style, *haus tambaran*, while the attached, circular cafeteria building follows

Highland design principles. The façade is quite stunning, with a mosaic featuring unmistakably PNG motifs. Photographers with wide-angle lenses will be rewarded with great shots in the late afternoon light.

The cavernous lobby is entered through doors whose handles are stylised *kundu* drums (an hourglass-shaped drum with lizard skin). Inside, huge Sepik masks share space with several display cases full of fantastic butterflies, including the native

TOWN & ELA BEACH (PORT MORESBY CITY)



Queen Alexandra's Birdwing (the world's largest with a 30cm wingspan) beetles and some very large stick insects. The display cases are easy to miss; they're under the stairs. Photography inside Parliament Haus is forbidden.

It's possible to visit the chamber and witness parliament when it's sitting. A taxi from

Boroko costs about K15 or K20 from Town. Alternatively, take a PMV along Waigani Dr, get out at the white, empty Pineapple Building, and walk about 2km northeast.

National Museum

All the exhibits at the **museum** (Map p77; Independence Dr, Waigani; admission K12; 🕒 8.30am–3.30pm

Mon-Fri, 1-3.30pm Sun), just beyond Parliament Haus, sit under a fine film of dust. But you can happily spend an hour or so looking at the displays that cover the geography, fauna, culture, ethnography and history of PNG. There are superb examples of masks, shields and totems, a magnificent Milne Bay outrigger canoe decorated in cowrie shells, and a display showing how *bilums* are made. Photography is not allowed, but you can take pictures of the few birds, lizards and snakes living in the courtyard.

National Botanic Gardens

At the northern end of Waigani Dr, just beyond the University of Papua New Guinea, the **National Botanic Gardens** (Map pp70-1; ☎ 326 0248; www.ncbg.org.pg; Waigani Dr, Waigani; adult/child/student/family K8/3/5/10; ☀ 9am-4pm) are an island of calm and beauty in the midst of an otherwise lacklustre city. Don't miss them! There is more than 2km of boardwalk threading under and through the jungle canopy, well-maintained lawns and gardens displaying both local and exotic plant species, and probably the best collection of native and hybrid orchids in PNG. There are also some excellent wildlife displays, such as tree kangaroos, hornbills, cassowaries, a giant python, and a large aviary that houses parrots and birds of paradise (the only chance most visitors get to see them).

Islands, Beaches & Reefs

The wreck of the Burns Philp cargo ship **MV MacDhui** (Map pp70-1) can be seen just breaking the surface in Moresby Harbour, off Hanuabada. It was sunk by Japanese aircraft in the early days of WWII. Its mast now stands in front of the Royal Papua Yacht Club (Map p75).

Many expats have boats and the yacht club is busy on weekends. If you play your charm cards right, you might get asked out for the day. **Manubada (Local) Island** (Map pp70-1) is popular for weekend beach trips, but carry your own water and sun protection because there is no shade. The **Bootless Bay** area (Map pp70-1; southeast of Port Moresby) and the other islands around the harbour are also popular; see p90.

There are many interesting places within easy reach if you have access to a boat. **Basilisk Passage** (Map pp70-1) is the deep, narrow entrance to the Port Moresby harbour

named by Captain Moresby after his ship, HMS *Basilisk*. The SS *Pruth* was wrecked on nearby **Nateara Reef** (Map pp70-1) in 1924, and there's the beautiful **Sinasi Reef** (Map pp70-1) outside the passage and the adjoining **Daugo Island** (Map pp70-1), also known as Fisherman's Island, which has lovely stretches of white-sand beaches.

ACTIVITIES

The diving around Port Moresby is excellent. Bootless Bay has world-class diving over reefs and WWII wreckage. Loloata Island (p90) is a popular holiday spot for divers. The only dive operator in Moresby itself is the **Dive Centre** (Map pp70-1; ☎ 323 1355; www.divecentre.com.pg; poolside at Airways Hotel & Apartments, Seven Mile). It offers full PADI courses (K1175), equipment, air, and a wide range of diving and snorkelling tours. A two-dive outing including all gear costs K275. Very professional.

A round at the well-managed **Port Moresby Golf Club** (Map p77; ☎ 325 5367; Waigani) costs K110, plus K20 to hire clubs.

TOURS

For organised tours that walk the Kokoda Track see p93. The companies listed here also offer Kokoda trekking, but they do Moresby-based day tours also.

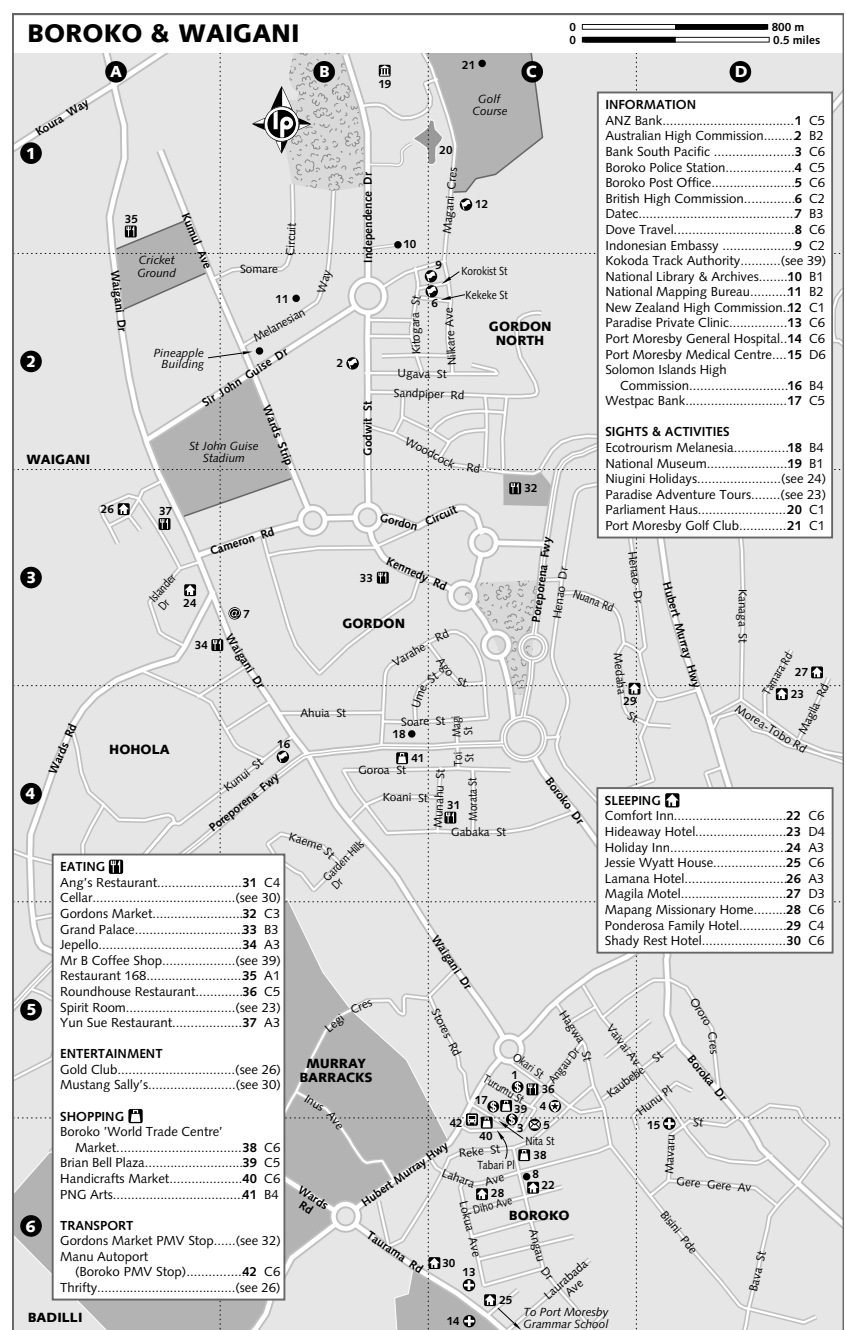
Ecotourism Melanesia (Map p77; ☎ 323 4518; www.em.com.pg; IEPNG House, Gordons) This is the best of the locally owned tour operators (but by no means the cheapest). They'll customise tours to suit your needs.

Niugini Holidays (Map p77; ☎ 323 6486; www.ng.hols.com; Holiday Inn, Islander Dr, Hohola) Several pricey but professional day trips, including three-hour tours of Port Moresby Town (per person K135), full-day Town and Varirata National Park tours (K255) and full-day Taste of Kokoda Track tours (K745). The price per person falls as the group size increases.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In early August the capital hosts the **International Orchid Spectacular** in the grounds of Parliament Haus (p74).

Port Moresby's big event is the three-day **Hiri Moale Festival**, celebrated around September 16 to coincide with Independence Day celebrations. Motu people race giant canoes and celebrate the shift in tradewinds that traditionally brought traders home from the Gulf region where they exchanged earth-fired pots for food. There's a Miss Hiri Queen contest. The festival is held at Ela Beach.



SLEEPING

Places to stay are scattered all over Port Moresby and are collectively the country's most expensive. There are places at Seven Mile near the airport, in Six Mile, Boroko, Hohola (sometimes called Waigani) and Town, with a few others scattered in between. Boroko is really the centre of activity in Port Moresby and the most convenient location as almost all PMV routes stop at its big bus stop on the Hubert Murray Hwy, one of only two routes into Town. All midrange and top-end places have a free airport shuttle. Prices listed here are inclusive of VAT.

For more on accommodation, see p282.

Budget

Magila Motel (Map p77; ☎ 325 0536; www.magila.com.pg; Magila St, Six Mile; 'backpacker' s/d K50/75, d K130-150; 🏠) This clean place has rooms with private bathroom and satellite TV. The attached Magila Gorilla Club can be rowdy (and rough!) until late, so ask for a room at the far end. It's in a bad neighbourhood, but it's fair value.

Jessie Wyatt House (Map p77; ☎ 325 3646; Taurama Rd, Boroko; s/tw per person K70/60) Run by the Country Women's Association, this churchy place is clean, quiet and homely with a communal kitchen, free tea and coffee, and a fridge in each room. It's patronised mostly by Papua New Guineans and it's a good place to meet locals. The rooms are few and in high demand. Check in between 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday and 8am and noon Saturday only.

our pick **Mapang Missionary Home** (Map p77; ☎ 325 5251; mapang@daltron.com.pg; Lahara Ave, Boroko; dm/s/d incl breakfast K70/110/140; 🏠) Mapang, in central Boroko, is clean as a whistle and run by an affable Kiwi missionary couple – it's the best budget option in Moresby. It has a communal lounge, kitchen and library, and comes with complimentary broadband internet wired to each room so you can plug in your laptop. With a couple of family rooms, Mapang caters mostly to church workers and is often full so book well ahead. The interior is smoke-free and the whole premises is an alcohol-free zone, but there are no curfews and, provided you're quiet and respectful, they don't mind what you get up to offsite. Where do I sign?

Midrange

Ponderosa Family Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 323 4888; Nuana Rd, Gordons; d/f K115/175). This was once an Air

Niugini residence. It's simple, clean and friendly, and in a quiet area.

Weigh Inn Hotel (Map p75; ☎ 321 7777; theweighinn@global.net.pg; Poreporena Fwy; r K150-180; 🏠) This place has good-value rooms with TV, fridge and phone, behind a popular poker-machine palace.

our pick **Comfort Inn** (Map p77; ☎ 325 5091; comfortinn@daltron.com.pg; Mairi Pl, Boroko; d incl breakfast K176-220, apt K340-395; 🏠) In a quiet location two minutes' walk from central Boroko, and with terrific friendly service and comfortable if rather unloved rooms, this is the best-value midrange option in the city. The garden and pool are a quiet sanctuary from Moresby's hustle and bustle, and the meals (lunch and dinner K30) aren't bad. It's unlicensed, but you can stow your own in the room fridges. This inn has none of the pretensions of the big hotels, and with a lick of paint (and a bar and internet café), Comfort Inn would be a classic backpacker haven.

Hideaway Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 323 6888; www.accommodationpng.com.pg; Tamara Rd, Six Mile; d K175-280, ste K330; 🏠) This place is in Six Mile, which is a dodgy neighbourhood, but otherwise it's great value. The compact but spotless standard rooms and vast suites are comfortable and the hotel facilities are excellent. The hotel minibus will chauffeur you wherever you want to go, but it's not a safe area to wander around alone. The attached Spirit Room (meals K35; open 6am to 10pm) restaurant is consistently good.

Shady Rest Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 323 0000; www.shadyrest.com.pg; Taurama Rd, Boroko; d K190-210; 🏠) This has bars, good restaurants (see opposite) and decent rooms; it's a solid option. It also offers 'day use' rates which might mean that some of the patrons are there to share a good time, not a long time.

Lamana Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 323 2333; www.lamanahotel.com.pg; off Waigani Dr, Hohola; d K275-320, apt K310; 🏠) The rooms here are large and comfortable, and the service is good. If nightclubbing is your thing, then the attached Gold Club (p81) will be an attraction. The Palazzo restaurant is good too.

Gateway Hotel (Map pp70-1; ☎ 325 3855; www.coralseahotels.com.pg; Morea-Tobo Rd, Seven Mile; d 280-455, apt K505; 🏠) Located one minute's drive from the airport, this member of the Coral Sea chain is a Moresby institution, with comfortable if slightly worn rooms, and there are plenty of facilities. There are a couple of bars

and restaurants; the Rattle 'n' Hum pizzeria downstairs serves passable pizzas to a mixed local crowd.

Ela Beach Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 321 2100; www.coralseahotels.com.pg; Ela Beach Rd, Ela Beach; d K314-347, apt from K347; 🏠) Also operated by the Coral Sea group, this hotel has recently had a nice refit, but aside from the prime beachfront location, the rooms are overpriced. Its redeeming features include the excellent Beachside Brasserie restaurant and Ozzie's Bar (p81), one of Moresby's best live-music venues.

Top End

All rooms in this bracket come with satellite TV and minibar. Reception is open 24 hours and in-room internet access can be arranged for about K80 for 10 hours, or you can use the hotel business centres for between K30 and K40 per hour. Moresby's deluxe hotels are mostly patronised by visiting business people and are expensive in anyone's language. It's worth asking for any sort of corporate discount you can think of.

Airways Hotel & Apartments (Map pp70-1; ☎ 324 5200; www.airways.com.pg; Jackson's Pde, Seven Mile; r K577-787, ste K1650; 🏠) Airways is the pick of the top-end hotels, pitching itself as the perfect place for the visitor who wants nothing to do with Port Moresby. It has spectacular views over the airport and the poolside lounge-and-bar area is lovely. Airways offers luxury rooms (ranging from standard rooms through to suites) and classy amenities two minutes from the airport. There are two restaurants, the wonderful KC's Deli (open 7am to 7pm) and bars including Balus Casino Bar, with pool tables and live entertainment, and the Dakota Lounge, inside an old DC-3. Even if you're not staying at the Airways, it's worth dropping by for lunch or a drink.

Holiday Inn (Map p77; ☎ 303 2000; www.holidayinn.com.au; Islander Dr, Hohola; r K605-770, ste K1120; 🏠) This place is comfortable enough with all the facilities you'd expect from an international hotel, but it's in a bad area and not worth the price tag.

Crowne Plaza (Map p75; ☎ 309 3000; www.crowneplaza.com; cnr Douglas & Hunter Sts, Town; r K649-930; 🏠) This is right in the heart of Town and has commanding views from its nine floors of neatly fitted-out rooms. The standard rooms are not all that big, but you could throw a party in the executive suites and apartments, which come with free use of the club lounge.

There is wi-fi access throughout the building, restaurants, bars, a café and the Pondo Tavern nightclub.

EATING & DRINKING

Moresby's restaurant scene has come a long way in recent years. After a few weeks in the provinces eating *kaukau* (sweet potato), rice and *tinpis* (tinned fish), travellers will find the Moresby dining options are a blessing. There are some excellent restaurants in Port Moresby, but little to fill the void between *kai* bars (takeaway food bars) and pricey restaurants. There are a few coffee shops that prepare fresh sandwiches and light meals, but, like the *kai* bars, they're closed by night-time so the hotels and restaurants are the only option for an evening meal. You can indulge your urge for fresh fish and seafood at Moresby's hotels and restaurants, and there are many good Asian restaurants that cater to the large Asian expat community.

Beer (*bia*) is ubiquitous and SP brews, Export, Ice and Brown, are very good. However, wine, imported from Australia, is much less common and you'll pay at least K45 for the cheapest bottle.

Restaurants

Roundhouse Restaurant (Map p77; ☎ 325 8899; Okari St, Boroko; meals K18-35; 🍷 10am-2pm & 5-10pm; 🏠) For authentic Chinese food, this is pretty good and the lunchtime deals (K15) are excellent value. The Sunday dim sum (yum cha) is popular.

Port Moresby Golf Club (Map p77; ☎ 325 1868; Waigani Dr, Waigani; meals K25-40; 🏠) Upstairs is the Restaurant 168 where some interesting Malay and Indian dishes are served – better than the dull surroundings might suggest.

Jepello (Map p77; ☎ 323 6800; Inki St, Hohola; meals K25-50; 🍷 10am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat; 🏠) Just off Waigani Dr, behind the Intercoiler Station in another dodgy area, is Jepello, Moresby's best Italian restaurant. The fresh pastas and wood-fired pizzas are good, but leave room for the homemade gelato.

Grand Palace (Map p77; ☎ 311 2826; RH Hypermart Bldg, Kennedy Rd, Gordons; meals K25-70; 🍷 11am-2pm & 6-10pm; 🏠) This is the top spot for Chinese cuisine. Try the yum cha or the beautifully presented steamed whole coral trout.

Daikoku (Map p75; ☎ 321 0255; Andersons Foodland Bldg, Harbour City; meals K25-90; 🍷 10am-10pm; 🏠) In a feed-off between Ichizen and Daikoku, we

narrowly chose this to be the best Japanese restaurant in Moresby – outstanding! The sushi, sashimi and other Japanese favourites are very good. At dinner, chefs will prepare your meal on a hotplate at your table with great skill and showmanship. Lunchtime bento boxes cost K23.

Ang's Restaurant (Map p77; ☎ 323 0863; Munahu St, Gordons; meals K30-50; ☎ 7.30am-10pm; ☎) Ang's is locked up like Fort Knox; this part of Gordons is unsavoury after dark. But it's worth the trip for excellent Chinese food at reasonable prices. The *tôm yam* soup is just right.

Ichizen (Map p75; ☎ 320 3000; 1st fl, Steamships Plaza, Champion Pde, Town; meals K30-75; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-10.30pm Sat & Sun; ☎) The teppanyaki, sushi and sashimi are expertly prepared, and artfully arrayed on the plate. A delicious lunchtime bento box costs K26.

Rattle 'n' Hum Pizzeria (Map pp70-1; ☎ 327 8162; Morea-Tobo Rd, Seven Mile; meals K35; ☎) This serves sloppy pizzas in a convivial, family-friendly atmosphere.

our pick Asia Aromas (Map p75; ☎ 321 4780; Ground fl, Steamships Plaza, Champion Pde, Town; meals K35-60; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-10pm Sat, 9.30am-2.30pm Sun; ☎) The Chinese and Thai dishes and friendly service here are so good it's worth booking ahead to secure an evening table. The Thai prawns with lemongrass and chilli are fantastic. This place is popular with the Moresby's glitterati, cabinet ministers, expats and the well-to-do, so you never know who'll you will be sitting next to. Refreshingly, the prices are more sweet than sour.

Beachside Brasserie (Map p75; ☎ 321 2100; Ela Beach Rd, Ela Beach; meals K35-60; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm; ☎) The pleasant brasserie in Ela Beach Hotel (p79) is a good choice for moderately priced food. The pizzas (K25 to K49) are the best in town. They serve good seafood and a whopping 500g steak for K60.

Cellar (Map p77; ☎ 323 0000; Taurama Rd, Boroko; meals K45-60; ☎ 6am-10pm; ☎) This tastefully decorated, softly lit place at the Shady Rest Hotel serves a good mix of dishes including steak (K52), fish (K40), oysters (K40) and several Indian dishes. There's a wide selection of good wine.

If you're needing a caffeine fix, the following coffee shops are where to go:

Cafe (Map p75; ☎ 309 3000; Crowne Plaza Hotel, cnr Douglas & Hunter Sts, Town; ☎ 6.30am-10pm; ☎) The lunchtime buffet is good but it's not cheap.

Espresso Bar (Map p75; ☎ 321 6600; Ground fl, Deloitte Tower, Douglas St, Town; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat; ☎) This place provides good coffee and light meals.

Mr B Coffee Shop (Map p77; ☎ 325 5411; 1st fl, Brian Bell Plaza, Boroko; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; ☎) Quiet and cool, this is a refuge from the filth and craziness of the Boroko streets. Freshly made sandwiches, pastries, light meals and good Goroka coffee.

Quick Eats

There are all manner of *kai* bars around, with Boroko being the *kai* capital. The better options are listed here.

Ela Beach Cafe (Map p75; ☎ 685 3918; Bramell St, Ela Beach; meals K9-15; ☎ 8am-11.30pm) At the west end of Ela Beach, this rustic-looking eatery has coffee, beer and lunches of simple *kai*.

Yun Sue Restaurant (Map p77; ☎ 325 6011; off Waigani Dr, Waigani; meals K10) Serves good, cheap and large Chinese lunches.

Self-Catering

Koki Market (off Map pp70-1) and the Boroko 'World Trade Centre' market (Map p77) behind the post office are the places to head for a good range of fruit and veg, plus fresh seafood. The bustling Gordons Market (Map p77), one of the largest in the country, has an excellent selection of vegetables and fruit.

There are numerous supermarkets around Port Moresby and they're all well stocked.

ENTERTAINMENT

After the 1994 volcanic eruptions in Rabaul, PNG's thriving music industry relocated to Port Moresby. There are some excellent musicians gigging in the capital; some are graduates of the University of PNG's music school. While it's not New York City, Port Moresby has a few live-music venues and some discos and nightclubs. The *Post Courier* publishes the 'What's On' entertainment guide on Wednesday. What little live music there is in Port Moresby will be found in a nightclub or the yacht club.

Royal Papua Yacht Club (Map p75; ☎ 321 1700; Poreporena Fwy; ☎) This large airy place is the last bastion of post-colonial white elitism – you won't see any grassroots here. Pity because it's a nice place with a pleasant deck for sitting, drinking cold beer and watching the harbour. The food is good and reasonably priced (K22 to K40), and the club is decorated with lots

of interesting WWII photos and maritime memorabilia. There's sometimes live music, but otherwise it's a steady diet of easy-listening 'yacht rock' through the speakers, such as Eagles, Toto, Christopher Cross. You're supposed to have a member sign you in, but a little charm (and white skin) should see you in.

Gold Club (Map p77; ☎ 323 2333; Lamana Hotel; off Waigani Dr, Hohola; ☎ 11am-5am) This club has live music a couple of nights a week, but otherwise it's given over to DJs and dancing. The open-air dance floor surrounded by layers of bars gives the impression that this could, actually, be in New York City. The music is good and there's no riff-raff. A top spot.

Ozzie's Bar (Map p75; ☎ 321 2100; Ela Beach Hotel, Ela Beach; ☎ 9am-2am) This has live music Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, and it's a laid-back and unprepossessing place where you can mix it with the locals who love to dance.

Pondo Tavern (Map p75; ☎ 309 3000; cnr Douglas & Hunter Sts, Town; ☎ 11am-4.30am) Underneath the Crowne Plaza Hotel; more milling than dancing.

Mustang Sally's (Map p77; ☎ 323 0000; Taurama Rd, Boroko; ☎ 9am-2am) Attached to the Shady Rest Hotel (p78), this offers a more 'genuine' PNG experience – raw and spirited. If you're offended by loud music, the odd swinging pool cue or women of the night, best to steer clear.

SHOPPING

Milan, Paris, New York City...Port Moresby? Ah, no. There are no designer shoes, very little clothing, and apart from betel nut and its condiments, there's not much to buy. Artisans used to sell carvings and paintings outside the big hotels, but they've all been shoed away. Across the road from the Gateway Hotel (p78) in Six Mile and the Holiday Inn (p79) in Hohola there are often art displays; mostly contemporary paintings. The bigger hotels have gift shops which stock some nice pieces, but we prefer to buy directly from the makers themselves.

Look out for paintings by John and Chris Kauage, sons of the late Mathias Kauage, PNG's most famous artist (see p45), as well as works by John Siune – all highly collectable.

Handicrafts Market (Map p77; Tabari Pl, Boroko; ☎ 8am-5pm) Boroko's dusty central square is the best place to buy *bilums*, Highland hats, carvings, kina-shell breast plates, shell jewellery and the like. Moresby's sellers are used to the ways of tourists and will happily engage in

some friendly negotiation, but protracted haggling is considered rude. See p299 for more on bargaining.

Ela Beach Craft Market (Map p75; ☎ 325 2838; Ela Beach International School, Ela Beach Rd, Ela Beach; ☎ 7am-noon last Saturday of every month) This is the best market in PNG, with all the paintings, carvings, baskets, shells and weavings you can poke a *koteka* (penis gourd) at. Barbecued food and traditional dancers (about 10am) contribute to the carnival atmosphere.

Port Moresby Grammar School Craft Market (off Map p77; ☎ 323 6577; Leander St; ☎ 8am-noon 2nd Saturday of every month) Another monthly event with good crowds and a party atmosphere.

PNG Arts (Map p77; ☎ 325 3976; Poreporena Fwy, Gordons; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) The long-running PNG Arts warehouse has a huge collection of wares from all over the country. The prices are reasonable, credit cards are accepted and freight and documentation can be organised.

Beyond Art (Map p75; ☎ 320 2257; Champion Pde, Town; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) In Town, Beyond Art is small and pricy.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Flights link Port Moresby to virtually everywhere in PNG and anywhere Air Niugini flies internationally (see p306). For routes and prices, see p313. Just before our visit, third-string domestic carrier Airlink, which serviced many small and remote airstrips, went broke – leaving a significant hole in the domestic air-travel scene. Many of Airlink's routes were marginally profitable anyway, so it remains to be seen if another flyer takes them up. Port Moresby is also home to many charter fixed-wing and helicopter flyers – if you have the cash there's nowhere you can't get to.

Some airline offices in Port Moresby:

Air Niugini (Map p75; ☎ 327 3444; www.airniugini.com.pg; Ground fl, MMI House, Champion Pde, Town)

Airlines PNG (Map p75; ☎ 325 0555; www.apng.com; 1st fl, Pacific Place, Musgrave St, Town)

MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship; Map p75; ☎ 325 2668; www.maf.org.au; General Aviation section, Jackson's International Airport)

Qantas (Map p75; ☎ 321 1200; www.qantas.com.au; Cuthbertson St, Town)

Boat

There are no regular passenger boats sailing out of Port Moresby. Many freighters do have

passenger facilities, but none of the shipping companies is currently officially allowing passengers. The situation seems to change frequently so asking around at the wharves might get you a berth. If you want to go to the Gulf, ask around the smaller boats at the jetties north of the main wharf. Heading east towards Milne Bay you, could go to Kupiano (Map pp86–7) and look for a small boat or canoe. A series of hops along the south coast could, after nights in villages and days waiting under palm trees, get you to Alotau (p109).

Car

You can't really drive anywhere else from Port Moresby (except Kerema). There are several companies renting cars and 4WDs in Port Moresby. See below for details.

PMV

Rural PMVs leave from Gordons Market (Map p77) and head west as far as Kerema (K40, five hours) and east along the Magi Hwy. PMVs also leave here for Bomana War Cemetery (opposite; bus 16) and destinations along the Sogeri Rd.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The hotel minibus is the easiest way to get between the airport and where you're staying. All but the smallest establishments have one and if you contact them ahead, or call from the airport, you'll soon have a free ride. In the international terminal arrivals hall, go into the NCD Tourist Office where you can use the phone for free. In the domestic terminal, buy a phonecard from the shop beside the café.

Taxis wait outside both terminals and, unless you spot a **Scarlet Taxi** (☎ 323 4266), some of which have meters (that actually work), you'll need to negotiate the fare before you leave. A taxi to Waigani or Boroko should cost K20, and to Town it's about K30. The third option is to take a PMV, but you need to be very confident or desperately short of cash, or both, to do this if you don't know the city. PMVs leave from about 50m east of the international terminal and cost K0.70. PMV 10 takes you to Town via Four Mile (Boroko).

Car & 4WD

The airport is full of companies renting cars and 4WDs, and the major names also have

offices in several top-end hotels. Prices start at around K175 per day and K0.80 per km for a manual Mitsubishi Lancer (plus insurance at K50 per day for a collision damage waiver excess of K2000). Port Moresby can be a confusing place to navigate at first, so be sure to have a map and take out full insurance. Police check points are common after dark but shouldn't be a problem if you have your license. For more information, see p317.

Some rental companies and their central reservation numbers:

Avis (Map pp70-1; ☎ 324 9400; www.avis.com.pg) Offices at the airport (domestic and international terminals).
Friendly Car Hire (☎ 683 6238) Utikas Pok runs this small operation – much cheaper than the big boys – and he'll deliver a car to you.
Hertz (Map pp70-1; ☎ 302 6822; sales@leasemaster.com.pg) Desks at the airport and Gateway Hotel.
Thrifty (Map p77; ☎ 325 5550) Offices at the airport, Airways Hotel & Apartments and Lamana Hotel.

PMV

Port Moresby has an efficient PMV (public motor vehicle) service, though you'll see very few white faces in the windows. Most expats will advise against using PMVs, but they're quite safe provided you stick to certain routes and be careful about where you disembark. PMVs run frequently from about 6am to 6pm but stop suddenly at nightfall; be careful not to be caught out. The flat fare is K0.70 for any trip around Moresby, near or far. The main interchange point is Manu Autoport (Map p77) in Boroko; look for the pedestrian overpass and crowds of people. In Town, the main stop is on Douglas St, and at Gordons it's near Gordons Market. PMVs get crowded at peak hours and especially on Friday evening.

PMVs run set routes and have route numbers (and sometimes the destination itself) painted on the front. They go both ways. Some useful routes include the following:

Route 4 From Hanuabada, through Town, Koki and Boroko to Gordons Market.
Route 7 From Gerehu, past Waigani, Gordons and Erima to Seven Mile.
Route 9 From Gerehu and Waigani to Four Mile/Boroko, East Boroko and then to Three Mile (this is the bus to get from Boroko to UPNG & the Botanical Gardens).
Route 10 From Hanuabada to Town, Badilly, Sabama, Manu, Three Mile, Four Mile/Boroko (Jessie Wyatt House; past the hospital and the CWA Hostel), and on to the airport at Seven Mile. Avoid getting on or off in the Kila Kila and Sabama areas, which are relatively unsafe.

Route 11 From Town to Two Mile Hill, Boroko, Waigani (not all stop at the government offices) and Morata.

Route 12 From Gerehu to Waigani, Hohola, Three Mile and Manu.

Route 15 From Tokarara to the government buildings in Waigani, Gordons, Erema, Seven Mile, Six Mile, Five Mile and Four Mile/Boroko to Hohola.

Route 16 From Gordons Market out to Bomana Prison, past the War Cemetery.

Route 17 From Gordons, Four Mile/Boroko, Three Mile, Sabama to Bari.

For more information on PMVs, see p318.

Taxi

Port Moresby has no shortage of taxis, and you'll usually be able to find one outside a hotel or the airport, and in Boroko. Sample fares include: Town to Boroko, K20; Town to Waigani, K20; Town to the airport, K30. *Mosbi's* taxis are in poor repair, some are unlicensed and frequent roadside police checks are the bane of drivers' lives. Petrol is expensive and many taxi drivers barely eke out a living.

The growing number of **Scarlet Taxis** (☎ 323 4266) offer a superior alternative. They're long, relatively new taxis with meters (though these often don't work), radios and drivers in ironed shirts. But the clincher: betel nut and smoking are banned.

AROUND PORT MORESBY

Although Port Moresby is also the capital of Central Province, it sits within the National Capital District (NCD). **Loloata Island** (see p90) is outside the NCD off the Magi Highway in Central Province proper, but it's only about 20km from Port Moresby and offers a great weekend escape from the dusty capital.

SOGERI ROAD

There are some interesting areas near Port Moresby along or just off the Sogeri Rd, which veers to the right (east) off the Hubert Murray Hwy a couple of kilometres past the airport. Other than Sunday you'll likely be the only people around. It's best to travel with a local out on the Sogeri Rd – there have been occasional incidents – but when we were there the road gangs were upgrading the road that curls up Mt Erima at

Varirata National Park and there was certainly no sign of trouble.

It's only 46km to Sogeri but there is enough to see to make it a full-day trip. The first stop is the large and carefully tended **Bomana War Cemetery** (Map pp70-1; ☎ 328 1536; ☎ 8am-4pm), where 4000 PNG and Australian WWII soldiers are buried; American soldiers who died in PNG were generally shipped home for burial. It's a serene yet sobering place. PMV 16 from Gordons Market (Map p77) runs past the gate.

A few kilometres past the cemetery, the road winds up the impressive **Laloki River gorge** and you're soon more than 600m above sea level. There are several viewing points looking into the gorge and up to the **Rouna Falls** and power station. Just beyond is a small store and a track leading to the rundown Kokoda Trail Motel (p84).

Right after the store is the turn-off to **Varirata National Park** (☎ 325 0195/9340; admission K5 if there's anyone staffing the gate) which, at 1000 hectares and over 800m high, is the highlight of the Sogeri Rd. It's 8km from the turn-off and you'll find six clearly marked walking trails ranging from 45 minutes to three hours long, and some excellent lookouts back to Port Moresby and the coast. The bird-watching here can be rewarding, with an array of kingfishers and Raggiana birds of paradise as highlights. It's possible to camp here, but unless you're in a large group, it's potentially unsafe. The best place is on the grass outside the derelict huts. There are pit toilets. Speak to the ranger-in-charge (if you can find him!).

A few kilometres down the dreadful Kokoda Track road (barely navigable in a 2WD in the dry season only) is a turn-off left (west) back towards Port Moresby. This is the Hombrum Bluff road that runs along the top of the Laloki River canyon wall. It leads to **Hombrum Bluff Lookout** that rises 1300m and was used as a retreat for the military brass during WWII. Below is Seventeen Mile which was an important base camp for more than 400 soldiers.

Back on the Kokoda Track road you can drive past **McDonald's Corner** where there's a small memorial that marks the start of the Kokoda Track. It was here that Australian WWII soldiers disembarked their trucks and began the long muddy march. Later the rough road was pushed further through to **Owers' Corner**, and you can drive here too...if your poor car hasn't suffered enough! Be careful out here. There are

no road signs so ask villagers, and if it rains you'll be stuck good and proper.

There's nothing worth stopping in Sogeri for, but a couple of kilometres along another diabolical dirt road the **Crystal Rapids** (admission per vehicle K7) make a pleasant swimming and picnic spot.

Sleeping & Eating

Kokoda Trail Motel (☎ 325 4403; fax 325 3322; r K65) Cheap, dirty and almost derelict, and if you don't book ahead, there'll be no food. Only if you're desperate.

Bluff Inn Motel (☎ 328 1223; fax 328 1311; Sogeri Rd; rK165; ♿) This sprawling motel, by the river at Seventeen Mile, is the only worthwhile place to stay. The rooms that sleep four (some with kitchens) are fair value.

Phoenix Bar (meals K18-24; ♻ 10am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Fri, to 10pm Sat & Sun) Attached to the Bluff Inn Motel. The best place to stop for lunch.

Getting There & Away

PMVs leave from Gordons Market (Map p77; K3) semi-regularly. The road is surfaced to Sogeri and all the way down to the Varirata National Park, however the section from Sogeri to Owers' Corner – the start of the Kokoda Track – is suitable for 4WDs only.

HIRITANO HIGHWAY

The Hiritano Hwy leaves northward from Port Moresby and goes to Brown River in Central Province, located about 40km from the capital. It's a nice spot to go for a swim. It then comes back to the coast west of Port Moresby, traditional lands of the Mekeo people known for their colourful dancing costumes and face painting, and then onward passing Yule Island (see p89), eventually reaching Kerema (see p202) in Gulf Province.