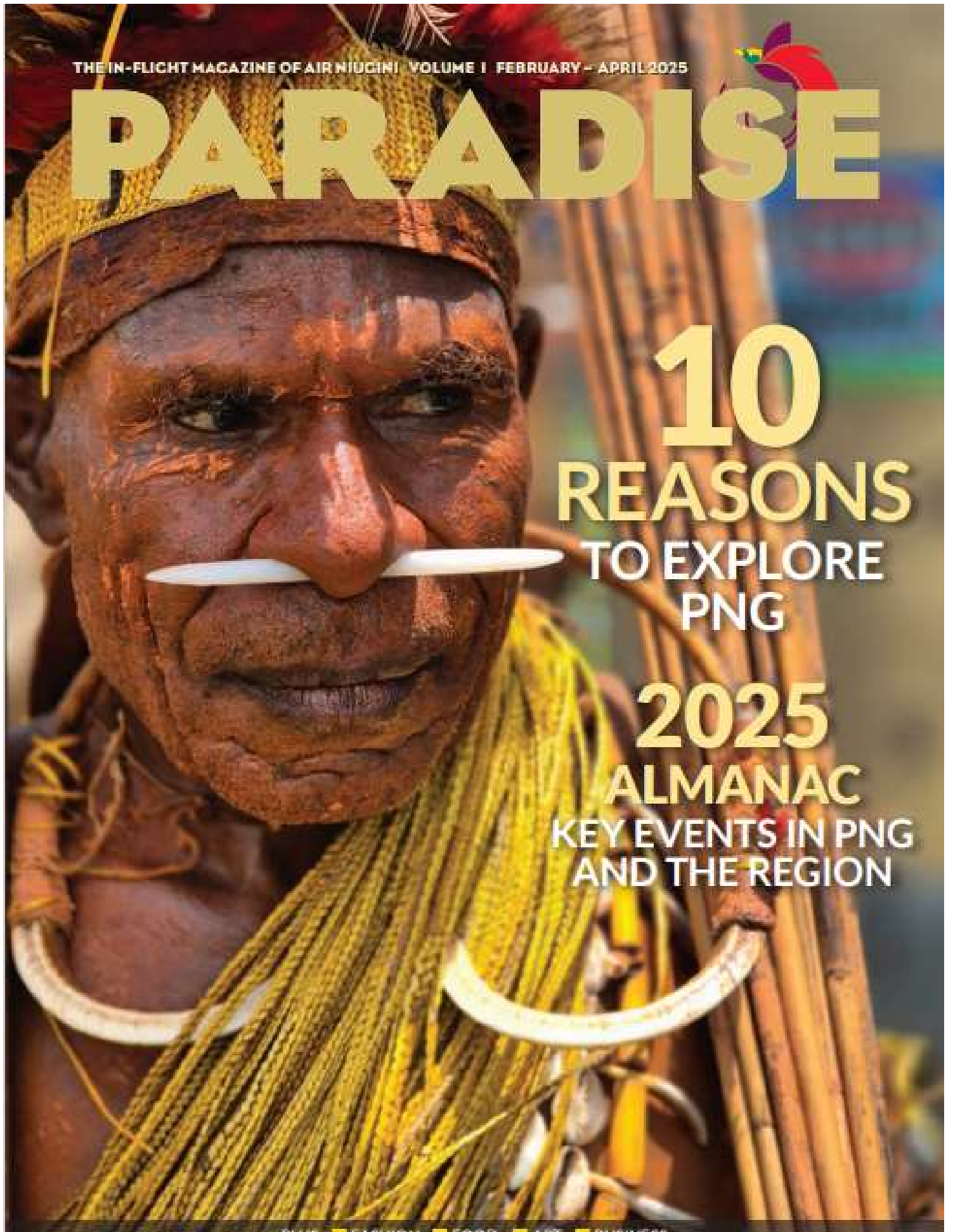




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PARADISE

10
REASONS
TO EXPLORE
PNG

2025
ALMANAC
KEY EVENTS IN PNG
AND THE REGION

PLUS ■ FASHION ■ FOOD ■ ART ■ BUSINESS

10 REASONS TO EXPLORE PNG

Marisa Howden has lived much of her life in Papua New Guinea, and recently released her first novel set in the country. Here, she provides a perspective of what makes PNG so attractive for visitors, from the volcanoes to cultural shows, diving, surfing and much more.

1 HISTORY

Rabaul is the place to soak up PNG's extensive history. Once the capital of New Guinea, the town was the colonial epicentre of trade and society up until World War 2. The New Guinea Club in Rabaul has historical information and artefacts, while the war museum in nearby **Kokopo** is home to military memorabilia such as tanks and guns.

The Australian war cemeteries across the country are well worth a visit as they commemorate the thousands of lives lost in PNG during the world wars. **Bitu Paka War Cemetery** outside Kokopo honours servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives on the Gazelle Peninsula after the Japanese invasion in January 1942. **Lee War Cemetery** contains the graves of soldiers in the New Guinea campaign, while the **Bomana War Cemetery** in Port Moresby pays tribute to those who died fighting in Papua and Bougainville in World War 2.

The **PNG National Museum and Art Gallery** in Port Moresby is also worth a visit, home to an impressive collection of artefacts, archaeological finds, contemporary art and historical information.

A trip to **Wau** and **Bulolo** is worthwhile for anyone interested in tracking PNG's gold-mining history, which dates to the 1900s.





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2 CULTURE

Attending one of PNG's many shows is the best way to engage in the country's rich cultural heritage.

Every October, Lae hosts the country's biggest cultural event, the **Morobe Show**. Spectators gather to witness more than 100 cultural groups perform their *sing-sings* (traditional dances) in a mesmerising display of colour and song.

For a more intimate experience, **Mount Hagen** and **Goroka** host their shows in August and September where an eclectic mix of Highlands tribes gather to showcase their unique customs and *bilas* (traditional dress).

You'll be sure to see towering, feathered headdresses and mud-slicked men from the Asaro tribe who will jump and jive in beat with the *kundu* drums. Held in **Kokopo** each July, the **National Mask and Warwagira Festival** is another must-do. See the arrival of the *duk-duk*s (Tolai men in costumes) at dawn before being bedazzled by the **Baining** mountain tribe's fire dancers in the evening. ➤

The Morobe Show attracts more than 100 cultural groups (left); children play on the remains of an old army tank at the war museum at Kokopo (above).





3 DIVING

Diving in PNG is colourful, no matter where you go, but **Kimbe**, **Milne Bay** and **Tufi** are home to world-class dive resorts. Enjoy the diversity of dive sites, including barrier reefs, coral walls, coral gardens, patch reefs, fringing reefs, seagrass beds, coral atolls and wreck dive sites. Live-aboard options are available for the enthusiasts who want to travel further afield to the pristine outer reefs.

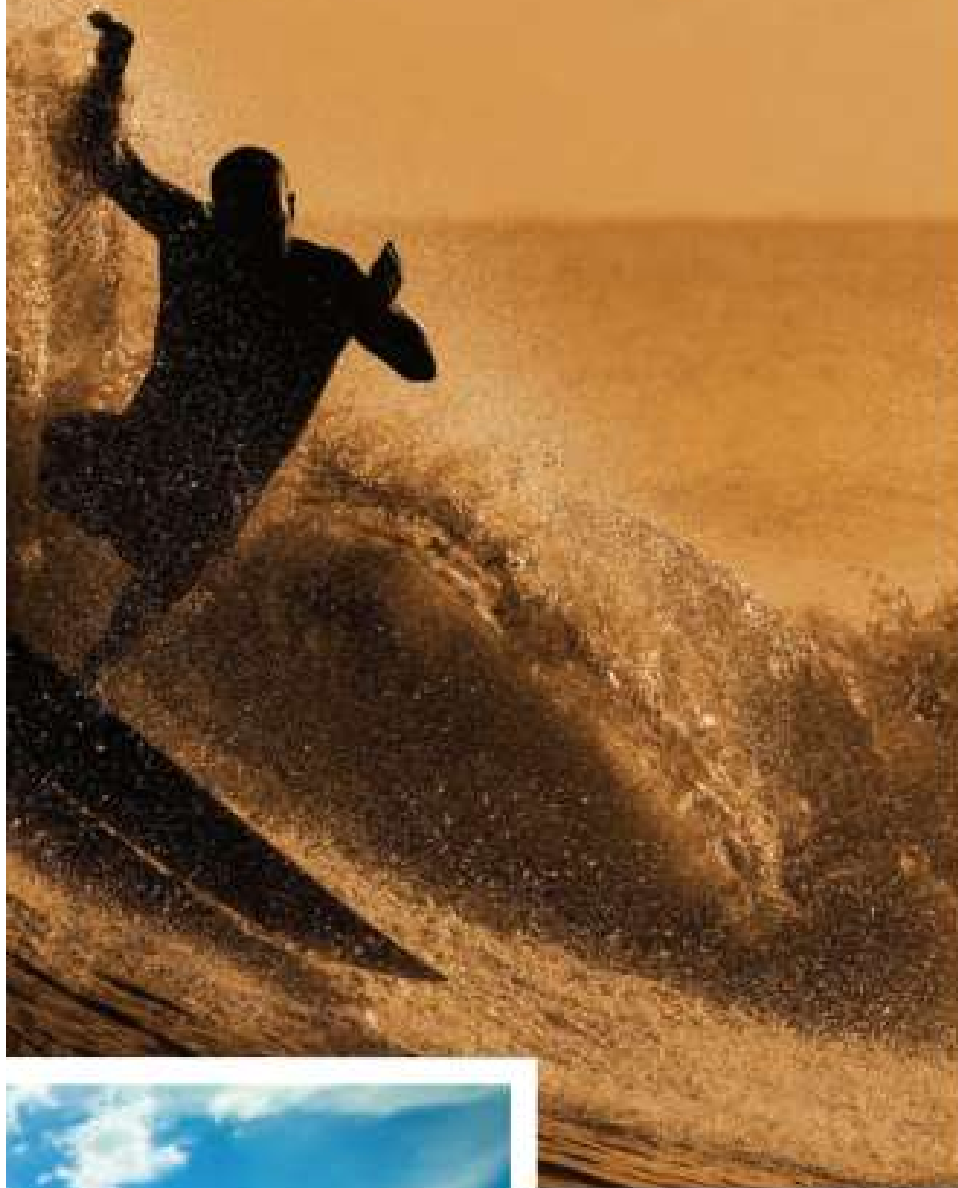
Kimbe is known for its pelagics, soft corals, fans and unusual critters; and **Walindi Plantation Resort**, which is located there, is one of PNG's longest-operating dive resorts. Enjoy beachfront bungalows before being whisked away to reefs that are home to more than half of the coral species in the world. Additional activities such as volcano climbs and thermal river swimming are available.

Tawali Leisure and Dive Resort outside **Alotau** is in a secluded area of Milne Bay. Considered the birthplace of muck dives, Milne Bay has twice as much marine biodiversity as Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Additional activities such as birdwatching and skull cave tours are available.

Tufi Resort is another remote dive operation, well known for its spectacular fjords and drop offs. From World War 2 wrecks to outer reefs with 30-metre visibility, there is a wide array of species to see, while the wonderful array of sponges and shelf corals in the fjords present a truly different diving environment.

Taking a dip in the refreshing and clear water near **Tufi Resort** (above); catching a wave near **Nusa Island Retreat** (right).





4 SNORKELLING

Snorkeling sites are plentiful along PNG's coast. Colourful reefs fringe the coastline and **Madang** is the perfect place to start. The **Madang Resort** dive shop can cater to all your snorkeling needs and resort staff will whisk you around the harbour to picturesque islands such as Kranket and Pig, where you're met with crystal-clear waters and bounties of corals and fish. A picnic lunch can be arranged, followed by an afternoon of kayaking or simply relaxing.

Salamaua is Lee's best-kept snorkeling secret and is home to shallow reefs and wrecks, while **Loloeta Island Resort** is an easy option for pristine reefs close to Port Moresby.

5 SURFING

Surfers come from all around the world to ride PNG's uncrowded breaks, with most going to **Kavieng** and **Vanimo**. Surf season runs from November to April and accommodation books out well in advance.

Nusa Island Retreat at Kavieng is one of the country's most popular surf lodgings, with a variety of reef breaks accessed by short boat transfers. The eco-friendly resort has a variety of accommodation, from overwater bungalows to garden huts. The lodge also caters for people keen to fish.

On the border of Indonesia, **Vanimo Surf Lodge** has traditional beachfront huts near the village of Lido.

Considered one of the safest surf locations in PNG, the breaks are predominantly over sand, rock and limestone bottoms. ➤



Overwater bungalows at Nusa Island Retreat (left); PNG has a diversity of dive sites (right).



6 SCENERY

It is hard to put into words just how breathtaking PNG's scenery is. You're guaranteed to encounter spectacular wilderness, as well as be enchanted by friendly people along the way.

For those in Port Moresby, a drive to **Koitaki Country Club** near Sogeri will give you a glimpse of the start of the Kokoda Trail and **Varirata National Park**.

Those in Lae have the Highlands at their disposal, with drives to Goroka and Bulolo usually under four hours.

Alternatively, **Madang** is less than five hours drive from Lae as you coast through the **Markham** and **Ramu Valleys**, which are hugged with lime-green hills that look like something out of Middle Earth from the movie *Lord of the Rings*.

From Madang, the North Coast Highway will take you to the mouth of the **Sepik River** along a coral-fringed coastline. ➤

A waterfall at Sogeri.



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Rapoipo Plantation Resort received 2018 Traveller's Choice Top 25 Hotels in the South Pacific being TripAdvisor's most prestigious award. In 2020 Rapoipo was given the Hall of Fame award recognising 8 consecutive years of consistent Excellent rating from travellers.

Located just 10 minutes from the airport and 5 minutes from the township of Rabaul, the Resort has an absolute beachfront with stunning views of Vanuatu volcano overlooking the crystal clear waters and islands of Rabaul, Sol Islands, Tully "The Land of the Unexpected", a wide variety of attractions are best enjoyed at Rapoipo Plantation Resort.

Visit the ash buried town of Rabaul once considered "The Pearl of the South Pacific" and encounter the 500km Japanese war tunnels and relics left from World War II. Climb a volcano, discover the unspoiled islands, dive in turquoise waters with excellent clarity, snorkel or swim on our beach approximately 20 metres from your room, experience our Spa menu or simply relax in our amazing pool.

Enjoy fresh lobster and fish caught in our unpolluted waters by our local fishermen using traditional handline methods ensuring sustainability. Western, Asian, Thai and international cuisine are amongst our specialties.

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7 FISHING

Anglers are spoilt for choice in PNG, with options varying from game to river fishing. Anglers come from around the world to **Baia Sportfishing Lodge in West New Britain** to catch the mighty Papuan black bass. The lodge caters for 12 people with comfortable accommodation, and four rivers to fish from.

The remote **Bensbach Wilderness Lodge** near the border of Papua is known as the barramundi capital of the world. Set against sweeping plains with an abundance of wildlife, it is an amazing backdrop to take on these fighting fish.

Hoisting in a fish in PNG. Anglers come from around the world to catch Papuan black bass.



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8 BIRDWATCHING

Birdwatchers travel from around the world to view PNG's 700 species of birds, including the majestic raggiana bird of paradise. From tiny whistlers to giant flightless omnivores, and even the world's only poisonous bird species, PNG's birdwatching options are as diverse as its culture.

While birdwatching is available across the country, **Rondon Ridge** at **Mount Hagen** and **Ambua Lodge** in **Tari** are two locations that cater specifically to birdwatching tours. Located in the Highlands, their comfortable lodgings are a perfect base for twitchers.

Port Moresby Nature Park is home to a variety of birds, including a walk-through aviary with birds of paradise and cassowaries. It is PNG's only internationally recognised wildlife park and sets the benchmark in PNG for tourism, animal welfare and community nature-based education.

9 TREKKING

The **Kokoda Trail** is PNG's most famous track, renowned for its 96 kilometres of terrain that snakes through the rugged mountainous region of the Owen Stanley Ranges.

Thousands of trekkers hit the track each year to pay homage to the soldiers who fought during World War 2. The trek is no easy feat and can be organised with one of the many tour groups such as **Adventure Kokoda** and **Kokoda Spirit**.

If you're looking to summit the highest peak in the Oceania region, **Mount Wilhelm** will be sure to get your legs burning. Reaching a staggering 4500 metres, a climb up Mount Wilhelm is not for the faint hearted and can take several days as you ascend from **Betty's Lodge** to base camp, before trying your luck at summiting.

The weather can be fickle, but on a good day those determined enough to make it to

the top will be met with panoramic views across the PNG Highlands down to Madang. Guides are a must and can be arranged through Betty's Lodge.

Easier day hikes are also available throughout PNG, including volcano climbs in Rabaul and Kimbe, and walks to secluded waterfalls in places such as **Sogerri** and **Busama**. Guided village walks are available at nearly every resort or lodge in the country. ➤



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10 SAILING AND CRUISING

The wind picks up in Port Moresby between March and November, allowing for optimal sailing conditions. The **Royal Papua Yacht Club** offers weekly lessons, and visitors of any ability can enjoy the various fleets, divisions, locations and competitions.

Cruising is the perfect choice to see more of PNG in an easily accessible way. Options vary from the big operators such as Carnival, which visits the major ports of **Alotau** and **Rabaul**, to bespoke tours such as those on the **Sepik Spirit**, which plies the Sepik River. ■

Major cruise lines provide easy access to PNG and call in at ports such as Alotau and Rabaul.



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