

PACIFIC & ASIA

Louisiade Archipelago: Calvados Islands

Tropical Paddling Adventure

11 day trip itinerary



Louisiade Archipelago: Calvados Islands



11 day trip 8 days kayaking

The Louisiade Archipelago is a string of idyllic islands stretching over 160 kms between the the Coral and Solomon Seas. The islands lie about 200 kms southeast of the Papua New Guinea mainland and about 500 nautical miles north-east of Cairns. Within the Louisiades is a chain of atolls, called the Calvados islands, and this is where we base our adventure. The Calvados islands are inhabited by some of the friendliest people imaginable and their island home is a tropical paradise of white sandy beaches, coral atolls and swaying coconut palms. We paddle from one picturesque island to the next, camping on stunning beaches and snorkelling coral reefs teeming with fish. This is a trip for the adventurous paddler looking for a remote destination far removed from the modern world.

A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

Day 1: Fly to Misima Island. Trip briefing. Overnight at Misima Guest House.

Days 2-9: Kayak through the Calvados Island chain. Camping. B • L • D

Day 10: Return to Misima Island. Overnight at Misima Guest House. B • L

Day 11: End of trip arrangements. B

Meeting Place and Time

The trip briefing with your guide/s will take place on Misima Island on Day 1. All participants should book the early morning flight from Port Moresby to Misima Island on Day 1. Please contact our office for the flight details.

How to Get There

Qantas, Virgin Australia and Air Niugini fly from east coast Australia to Port Moresby. Air Niugini also fly to Port Moresby from multiple Asian and Pacific cities. At the time of writing, the only flight from Australia that arrives into Port Moresby in time to connect with the early morning flight to Misima is from Cairns (Day 1 of itinerary). Participants might like to consider flying via Cairns in order to avoid a pre-trip stopover in Port Moresby. The direct service from Cairns to Port Moresby is with Air Niugini, with a current departure of 6.30am and a flight time of about one and a half hours. The flight from Port Moresby to Misima Island is with PNG Air. It currently departs at 8.55am and takes about two and a half hours. The flight from Misima back to Port Moresby on Day 11 of the itinerary departs at noon, arriving at 2.35pm. Flights can be booked through a travel agent or through airline websites. If you require accommodation in Port Moresby we recommend the Raintree Lodge. Room rates include airport transfers and breakfast. Pre and post trip accommodation in Port Moresby is not included in the trip cost.

<http://www.airniugini.com.pg>

<http://www.pngair.com.pg/en/>

<http://www.raintreelodgepng.com>

Fitness and Kayaking Details

Previous paddling experience is required to participate on this trip. An average paddle day will be approximately 15-20 kms but this will depend on weather, tides, logistics and group preference.

Participants will be required to be physically active in a tropical environment. Island travel in Papua New Guinea often requires an open mindset and a robust personality. We prefer participants to be water confident, have third world travel experience and able to work as part of a team.

In general, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling. It's a good idea to begin some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming well before the trip. If you have not paddled recently, we highly recommend some practice before your trip and we may be able to suggest a local operator for kayak hire and/or tuition near your home.

This is an expedition for the adventurous and as a member of the expedition team you will be required to help with daily camp duties.

Due to the impossibility of accessing modern hard-shell kayaks in the Louisiades, we will be using folding kayaks. The preferred model is the Incept K50.

<http://www.incept.co.nz/products/k50-pacific>

The K50 is a quality made inflatable sea kayak and a world leader in its design and features. It paddles surprisingly fast and has sufficient storage space for an extended expedition trip. It folds up and fits inside a backpack and its dry weight is 21kg. This kayak has opened the door for exploratory sea kayaking due to the fact that it easily fits inside a bag and can be checked aboard a flight.

You will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks.

Trip Briefing

Your guides will run a comprehensive pre-departure briefing on Day 1 of the itinerary at Misima Island. This briefing is usually conducted at the Misima Guest House and will outline the paddle plan, gear packing and any other relevant information. At the briefing participants will be provisioned with their folding double kayaks, paddling gear and camping equipment.

Alternatively, if the entire group is flying from Cairns, Australia, then a pre-arranged briefing can be conducted in Cairns. Cairns briefings are usually conducted at the Reef Palms Resort 41/47 Digger Street, Cairns at 5:00pm the evening before Day 1.

Sometimes participants will be required to fly with some expedition equipment and dry food provisions. This will be arranged by our partners, Coral Sea Kayaking, prior to the trip and will depend on participants flight schedule and baggage allowance. Air Niugini has an international baggage allowance of 30kg plus 10kg extra for sporting goods. We do ask that participants are considerate about the amount of personal gear they travel with. Due to the tropical nature of the expedition we encourage people to travel light.

Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Please note that airline schedules, weather, logistical conditions, group preference and unforeseen delays can cause alterations to our itinerary.

Day 1: Fly from Port Moresby to Misima Island with PNG Air. The flight from Port Moresby to Misima takes approximately two and a half hours and we land on the island's remote airstrip. On arrival into Misima the group will transfer to the guest house for the trip briefing. The rest of the day is spent buying provisions, gear prepping and exploring Misima Island. We stay at the Misima Guest House and use their facilities. Lunch and dinner is not included today.

NO MEALS INCLUDED / MISIMA GUEST HOUSE

Day 2: We'll load the gear onto two motor boats for a three hour trip to Humaun Island, on the eastern end of the Calvados Islands. On arrival, we'll unload and say goodbye to the motor boat crew. We'll set up camp, rig kayaks and spend the rest of the afternoon getting acquainted with our craft by circumnavigating Humaun Island. We'll enjoy our first beach camp tonight.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Days 3-9: Paddle west through the Calvados islands, camping on Idyllic atolls, snorkelling vibrant coral reefs and visiting indigenous villages.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Points of interest we will potentially visit and islands we may camp at include:

- Humaun Island.
- Gigila Village and Gigila primary school.
- Paradise Cove (great snorkelling).
- Panaumala Island (Panaumala village visit).
- The Blue Lagoon.
- Gilia Island / Sam's place (visit a traditional coral/shell jeweller and participate in a village feast).

- Manta ray point / Liawan Island-hopefully snorkel with mantas.
- Pananiu Island.
- Motorina Island / Motorina Elementary school.
- Panarora Island (great snorkelling).
- Picnic Island (great snorkelling).
- Utian Island/ Utian Village (village tour).
- Panatawal Island (great snorkelling).
- Panorama Island.
- Panasia Island (amazing limestone caves).

Day 10: This morning we roll up the kayaks and pack our gear onto a traditional sailing outrigger called a Sailau. We'll enjoy the cruise back to Utian Island where we meet the motor boats for the trip to Misima Island. We stay at the Misima Guest House and use their facilities tonight. Dinner not included.

B • L /OVERNIGHT AT MISIMA GUEST HOUSE

Day 11: Spend the morning exploring the forests of Misima Island before a midday flight to Port Moresby (if departing today).
End of trip arrangements.

B /ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

The Country and its People

The Louisiade Archipelago is situated between Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Within the Louisiades lies the chain of atolls called the Calvados Islands. The local islanders live in grass huts and rely on a subsistence lifestyle of fishing and farming. They travel by dugout canoe and sailing outriggers and live a life steeped in a rich Melanesian culture.

The Calvados Islands are predominantly trading islands and money as we know it is of little value to the locals. To acquire fresh produce to supplement our expedition menu we will trade a variety of goods, such as fishing line and hooks, nails, lighters, swimming goggles and masks. These are valuable items in the islands, where the nearest shop may be a full day sail away. The locals love the opportunity to trade as due to the remoteness of the islands they do not have access to most of these goods. We benefit with fresh vegetables, fish and perhaps even a lobster or two!

In the eastern end of the archipelago the islands are larger and more volcanic but as you travel west through the chain the islands shrink to idyllic little atolls. The small islands are surrounded with vibrant fringing reefs bordered by deep blue sea trenches. The archipelago teems with sea life, from small colourful reef fish to large pelagic species and marine mammals.

Climate

As the Calvados islands are mostly low lying atolls, they generally have their own micro climate and are unrelated to the weather at Misima Island (Misima often catches rain due to its mountainous topography). The Calvados chain is mostly dry and sunny a large part of the year, but always be prepared for some



rain. A south easterly trade wind blows which helps when travelling east to west in our kayaks. Most commonly we'll encounter a following sea as the south easterlies pushes us west to Paniaia Island. We can expect day time temperatures of between 25 -30 degrees celsius with generally high humidity. The water temperature is around 25-28 degrees celsius.

Trip Organisation

Paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures. It's a good idea to pack your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tents so that loading for departure can be organised. On a paddling day we'd like to be on the water before 9:00am and arrive into camp by mid afternoon. It's important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

When camping, you will be expected to unload your own boats, set up tents and perhaps each night a few can help with preparing the evening meal.

Expedition Staff

Your western guides are very experienced leaders and kayakers. The guides' role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

Travel Arrangements

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures and local operator, Coral Sea Kayaking, are not responsible for any additional charges involved. The guides will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and the guides will do their best to rectify the situation. Please understand that in this part of the world, delays and waiting are commonplace and whilst we do our best to keep to schedule, it is not always possible. We are sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole island experience.

Travel Insurance

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons, and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

Visas

All people wishing to travel to Papua New Guinea for tourism purposes must have an entry permit/visa to enter the country. Even though most citizens from Western countries can obtain a visa on arrival, we require participants to obtain a visa prior to entering PNG. This is due to the length of time it can take

obtaining a visa on arrival at Port Moresby airport. The group will need to transfer to the Misima flight in a timely fashion and cannot afford delays. Therefore, a PNG visa must be arranged prior to departure from your home country. Please contact your nearest PNG diplomatic mission for details. Passports must be valid for at least six months from date of departure from PNG.

Time & Communication

Papua New Guinea is in the same time zone as Eastern Australia. Guides will carry a satellite phone and beacons during the kayak trip. There is Digicell mobile coverage in Misima but no coverage in the Calvados Islands.

Accommodation

We'll spend two nights at the Misima Guest House. Rooms are based on twin share, although single rooms may be requested for an additional charge. All other nights are beach camping.

The Misima Guest House is the only accommodation in town and run by the lovely ladies from the women's association. The guesthouse is clean, with nice gardens, but rustic. Washing and toilet facilities are basic. The group will eat in the guesthouse 'restaurant' and use a covered site to organise and pack for the trip.

Camping equipment is supplied and includes screened tents and air mattresses.

Paddling Equipment

Participants must bring their own paddling clothing. The kayak, paddle, skirt, dry bags and PFD are supplied and included in the trip cost. The kayaks supplied are folding kayaks.

Food and Water

We'll source most of our food and provisions from local markets on Misima Island. Due to the limited choice of food supplies we mostly eat a Melanesian diet like the locals. We also fish and trade for fruit and vegetables as we paddle through the islands. The traditional Melanesian diet is very healthy and is centred around seafood and root vegetables such as taro, cassava, yams and plantain, plus plenty of coconuts!. We bring some dehydrated meals from Australia plus spices and flavourings to keep the meals tasty. All meals during the paddling trip are included in the trip cost.

We stop at villages every second day to collect tank water.

If you like to snack on trail mix or muesli/granola bars while paddling, consider bringing your own supply from home.

Generally speaking, the people of the Calvados Islands refrain from drinking alcohol. It is fine for participants to socially drink among the expedition crew but drinking in villages is frowned upon. There is a bar at Misima Guesthouse that sells local beer and spirits.

Please let the office know if you have any dietary requirements or food allergies and note these on your medical form. However, please understand it will be very difficult to provide specialist diet food products on this trip.



As with any change in diet, it is wise to accustom yourself slowly to different foods. It is recommended to wash any fruit bought in the market and to drink water from known safe sources. Please ask your guide for advice.

Cultural Considerations

It is very important to behave in a respectful way towards the local people, their land and sea. Some basic practices you should observe are:

- ask the locals if they mind being photographed.
- restrict wearing bathing suits to remote beaches.
- In villages use a sarong/shirt to cover singlet tops and brief shorts.

Conservation

It has always been our motto that “we take only photographs and leave only footprints”. We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc.

Photography

High humidity, along with paddling in a salt water environment, can damage the delicate electronics in cameras. You might consider bringing a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries as there is little opportunity to purchase batteries during our island trip. It is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it.

Money Matters

Your tour cost includes:

- Twin share accommodation at Misima Guesthouse for two nights.
- All kayaking and expedition equipment.
- Camping equipment including sleeping mats.
- Dry bags.
- All meals excluding lunch and dinners in Misima.
- Professional kayak guides.
- Trading goods.

Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Airfares (both international and domestic).
- Cairns accommodation and meals if applicable.
- Port Moresby accommodation.
- Lunch and dinners in Misima.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- PNG Visa.
- Travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as WIFI charges and laundry.

Currency

The unit of currency is the Kina. The exchange rate is approximately AU \$1 = 2.40 Kina.

Money to Bring With You

During the actual expedition there will be very little opportunity to spend money as there are no shops and generally villages maintain a subsistent trading culture. You will need cash to purchase food while in transit and dinners in Misima, which will be around 50 Kina with alcohol an additional amount. We suggest you bring AU\$200.00-AU\$250.00 worth of Kina for the trip.

It is strongly recommended you acquire your Kina cash prior to departing for PNG. It's been known for Foreign Exchange counters at airports to run out of Kina. When ordering Kina, it is highly recommended that you get mainly small denominations, such as K10, K20, K50 and K100. Small denominations are preferred by villagers should you choose to make purchases in a village. There is a bank at the Port Moresby international airport, but if you are arriving in PNG outside of normal banking hours it may not be open. There is a Westpac bank in Misima but it is unreliable so don't count on changing money there.

Tips and Gifts

Our western guides do not expect tips. You may like to consider bringing exercise books, pencils and erasers to donate to the local schools or medical supplies and baby clothes for the clinics.

Security

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline voucher and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. Theft is a consideration in the islands (like at home) so it is always a good idea not to leave things unattended when in the towns or villages. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet.

Passports should be triple wrapped in zip log bags and a dry bag and carried with you.

Although Papua New Guinea has a reputation as a place troubled with crime, corruption and hostilities, the Louisiades is a world away from this scenario.

The people are genuinely friendly, welcoming and very trustworthy, going out of their way to help 'Dim Dims' (the local name for white people). After many trips to this region, the guides have never encountered any hostility from the locals or been worried about safety. They have only encountered kindness and an enriching cultural experience.

This is not the case in Port Moresby, a potentially dangerous place for the naive traveller. We recommend not walking the streets, especially at night. If participants are required to overnight in Port Moresby due to flight timetables, this is generally not too much of an issue. We recommend pre booking the Raintree Lodge which is located within a compound. Airport transfers should be pre-booked with the Lodge who use their own minivan.

Medical Matters

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately.

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

We ask that all customers are fit and healthy for this expedition with no injury or illness that could restrict their involvement in a remote sea kayak expedition. The Louisiades is a lengthy medivac to medical care. In serious cases a helicopter will be dispatched from Australia or Port Moresby.

Hygiene

Be conscious of hygiene. Regularly wash your hands, be wary of uncooked food and wash fruit or preferably peel it (with clean hands!).

Malaria and Vaccinations

Malaria is present in the Louisiades Islands but not common.

Please consult a doctor or traveller's medical centre regarding malaria medication and prevention.

Please note that some malaria medication can increase the risk of sunburn.

We advise participants to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and long trousers and socks in the evenings. Supplied tents are screened.

For entry into PNG there are no statutory vaccinations at the time of writing. However, you should check with your doctor or medical centre for current information. All travellers should be up to date with their tetanus, typhoid and hepatitis vaccinations.

Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip, it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SPF30).

- Lip protectant (SPF30+).
- Band-aid strips.
- Insect repellent.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- Antiseptic soap/liquid hand wash.

Other Concerns

The Calvados islands, unlike other parts of PNG, has very few harmful marine animals. The local inhabitants report that crocodiles are not a threat and are not found in the atolls, they also report that box jellyfish are not found in the region.

Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

To minimise our impact on the villages and the environment through which we pass, we travel self sufficiently. That means that we carry everything with us, so it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. Keep in mind that water is scarce on some of the islands and there are no shops. We will carry our own drinking water but it may be several days before we can wash with fresh water instead of salt. As we are flying with the folding kayaks and gear we ask that you pack only the essentials for the expedition. Your western guide will supply expedition bags (duffels and backpacks) to carry the kayaks and equipment. We ask that you stick to the gear list and not bring too many bulky and luxury items.

We recommend participants wear a 'travel set' of clothing that can be left at Misima Guest House, to be picked up on our return.

Gear List

Essential Items:

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- Two long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling and snorkelling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- Two t-shirts.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length trousers and shirt with long sleeves to wear during the evenings.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimwear.
- Sleeping blanket/sarong/light weight sleeping bag suitable for tropical conditions.
- Sleeping sheet/inner sheet to go over the provided sleeping mat.
- One pair of Reef shoes for paddling, Crocs, Tevas or Keens (not thongs).

- Running shoes and socks.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).
- Minimal toiletries (a bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is useful).
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries.
- Water bottles (1-2 litres)—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc. (try and avoid day packs with metal zips as they will corrode).
- Snorkelling gear (otherwise we have generic masks and snorkels available).
- Paddling gloves- a pair that covers to the tips of your fingers are recommended as exposed fingers are highly sensitive to sunburn. Cycling or sailing gloves work fine.

Optional items:

- Camera with waterproof container (if the camera is not waterproof).
- Book/cards.
- Gifts or trading goods to swap with the locals.
- Lightweight fishing gear (some landlines and lures supplied)
- Muesli/granola bars/snacks if you have a favourite from home.

Delays or Problems

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287.

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