

Kokoda Trail

This information is intended as a guide only and is not to be used as a substitute for professional medical advice.

Recommendations on vaccinations and medications requires assessment on an individual basis taking into account factors such as your medical history, your itinerary, length of stay and style of travel. You should ideally see us **4-6 weeks** before your trip.

The Kokoda Trail is a 96 kilometre overland track in Papua New Guinea. It can take anywhere from 4 to 12 days to complete, depending on fitness and rest time involved. It is a physically demanding activity and a good level of fitness is required. Temperature and humidity are high, and the route is often very wet due to tropical downpours.

Stay healthy and safe

Unclean food and water can cause travellers' diarrhoea and other diseases. Reduce your risk by sticking to these habits!

<p>Eat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food that is cooked & served hot • Hard-cooked eggs • Fruits and vegetables you have washed in clean water or peeled yourself • Pasteurized dairy products 	<p>Don't Eat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food served at room temperature • Food from street vendors • Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs • Raw or undercooked meat or fish • Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables • Unpasteurized dairy products • "Bushmeat" (monkeys, bats, other wild game)
<p>Drink</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottled water that is sealed • Water that has been disinfected • Ice made with bottled or disinfected water • Carbonated drinks • Hot coffee or tea • Pasteurized milk 	<p>Don't Drink</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap or well water • Ice made with tap or well water • Drinks made with tap or well water (eg. reconstituted juice) • Unpasteurized milk

Prevent insect-related illnesses

PNG has high rates of insect-bourne diseases such as **malaria and dengue fever**. You should discuss malaria prevention options with your doctor.

In addition, you can reduce your risk of insect bites by taking these steps:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use a repellent that contains 20% or more DEET for protection that lasts up to several hours.
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (eg. boots, pants, socks, tents). Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- Stay and sleep in air-conditioned or screened rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.

Vaccines and Medications

All travellers

- Routine vaccines** Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip, such as:
- measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine
 - diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine
 - varicella (chickenpox) vaccine
 - polio vaccine
 - influenza vaccine

Most travellers

- Hepatitis A** **Highly recommended.** You can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in this country, regardless of where you are eating or staying.
- Typhoid** **Recommended for most travellers.** You can get typhoid through contaminated food or water, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.
- Malaria** Medication to prevent malaria is **crucial** for the Kokoda trail. You should take prescription medicine before, during, and after your trip to prevent malaria. It is also important to continue with the medication for the recommended period upon return to Australia.

Some travellers

- Hepatitis B** You can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood products. You should get this vaccine if you might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.
- Japanese encephalitis** Japanese encephalitis can occur in PNG year-round. It is not usually recommended for a trek of up to 10 days, but may be indicated if you expect to spend longer in the region. You may need this vaccine if:
- Your trip will last more than a month, depending on where in the country you are going and what time of year you are traveling.
 - You plan to spend extended periods in rural areas or will be spending a lot of time outdoors
- Rabies** Rabies can be found in dogs, bats, and other mammals in this country, but it is not a major risk to most travellers. The vaccine is only recommended for these groups:
- Travellers involved in outdoor and other activities in remote areas that put them at risk for animal bites (such as adventure travel and caving).
 - People who will be working with or around animals (such as veterinarians, wildlife professionals, and researchers).
 - People who are taking long trips or moving to remote areas
- Influenza** Exposure to influenza in airports and while commuting is common. Vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu, and is especially important if you are at risk of flu-related complications.

Other health concerns

- Dehydration** Temperature and humidity are high on the Kokoda trail, and the route is often wet due to tropical downpours. Heavy sweating causes rapid loss of fluid and body salts, which if not corrected can lead to fatal consequences. The risk is compounded if you are sick or catch diarrhoea. You should make sure you have access to clean water supplies and frequent hydrate yourself with electrolyte solutions.
- Hookworm** Wearing enclosed footwear during your trek is essential to prevent hookworm. Hookworms penetrate through intact skin such as walking with bare feet in undeveloped areas, and can cause severe gastrointestinal and skin infections.
- Parasitic infections** Parasites and helminths such as roundworm and whipworm are commonly transmitted by poor sanitary practices. You can minimize your risk of picking these up by following the health eating and drinking habits listed on page 1.
- Tinea** Tinea (fungal skin infections) can occur readily in trekkers due to the high humidity and temperature. Feet are especially prone, so it is essential to dry your socks and shoes every night. Carrying an antifungal cream is also recommended.
- Dengue fever** Dengue fever is common in PNG. There is no vaccination, so taking the mosquito-avoidance measures listed on page 1 is essential.

Things to consider packing

Your doctor may advise you to take prescription or over-the-counter drugs with you on your trip in case you get sick. These may include:

Prescription medicines	Over-the-counter medicines	Supplies to prevent illness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Any medications you take regularly <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-malaria medications <input type="checkbox"/> Mild sleeping tablets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhoea medicine <input type="checkbox"/> Antihistamines <input type="checkbox"/> Motion sickness medicine <input type="checkbox"/> Cough suppressants <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine for pain and fever (eg. paracetamol, ibuprofen) <input type="checkbox"/> Mild laxatives <input type="checkbox"/> Antifungal cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitiser <input type="checkbox"/> Water purification tablets <input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen

After your trip

Our doctors can help if you are not feeling well after your trip. Be sure to tell us about your travel, including where you went and what you did on your trip. Also tell us if you were bitten or scratched by an animal while traveling.

Malaria is always a serious disease and may be deadly. If you develop a fever either while traveling in a malaria-risk area or after you return home (for up to 6 months), you should seek immediate medical attention.