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The Forgotten Islands Of The Louisiade Archipelago

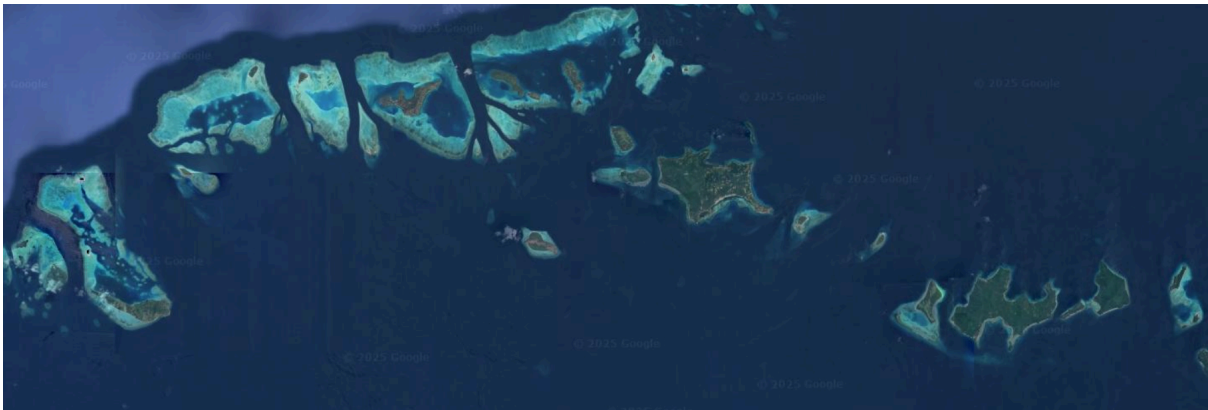
The Louisiades Archipelago is a remote island chain made up of hundreds of islands stretching over 400km east of the Papua New Guinea mainland. Its geographical isolation has helped to preserve its rich Melanesian culture and the area is host to an incredibly distinct and thriving Canoe culture. Within the Archipelago each island group has its own unique languages, canoe designs and traditions - one thing everyone has in common is a love of paddling. Each year in November the [National Kenu and Kundu Festival](#) occurs in Alotau highlighting the diversity and richness of canoe culture in the region.

Local people of the Louisiades rely on the ocean for food and transport; they are practically born with a paddle in hand. They have a deep understanding of the winds, tides and currents in ways that most of us can not imagine.

The Calvados Islands

Within the Louisiades lie a chain of atolls called the Calvados Islands. This chain is our kayaking objective and an awe-inspiring place to paddle. These islands feel totally isolated, like a place time forgot. The local people travel by dugout canoe and sailing outriggers and rely on a subsistence lifestyle of fishing and farming. The locals are warm and inviting to our visits and if the charm of these people is not enough, the islands themselves offer just rewards for the adventurous traveller.

At the eastern end of the Calvados, the islands are larger and more geologically volcanic, but as you travel west through the chain the islands shrink to idyllic atolls surrounded with amazingly vibrant fringing reefs bordered by deep blue sea trenches. The Louisiades Archipelago is a rich marine ecosystem teeming with sea life from small colourful reef fish to large pelagic species and marine mammals.



A satellite snapshot of the Calvados Islands chain

Often we camp on the beach near a homestead or village, and the land-owners may join us to tell stories by the campfire. There is a culture of reciprocity in these islands and people will generously bring gifts of coconuts, fruit, vegetable or fish. If you are seeking a remote, wilderness trip where you will not see another soul for days on end, this may not be the trip for you.

Our visits to these islands are a continually developing conversation with local people, where we seek to know if our visits are positive, desirable, and what the community needs from us moving ahead. Some things that have been identified as goals that our visitation can help with are improving access to education, healthcare and water given the remote locale.

Trip Itinerary

This trip takes place on the open ocean, and the Coral Sea is renowned for changeable weather including the winds and swells. We ask all team members to be dynamic as individuals and offer their strengths to the paddle group regarding the flexibility mother nature often demands in the itinerary. Rest assured that your leaders are out there to guide you along the best and safest experience possible.

The Itinerary below is only a rough plan and is subject to change due to group dynamics, weather, unforeseen delays and other situations that may cause alterations in travel plans. Paddle distances vary each day but you can expect paddle distances up to 20km per day. A high-level of personal responsibility and stewardship is expected to ensure the safety and contentment of yourself, the team, our hosts and the land-owners.

The Calvados Islands have infamous strong tidal currents ripping between them. These tides will dictate the ebb and flow of every day of this expedition.

12 day Journey (group meets in Alotau and finishes in Alotau)

Day 1.

AM flight to Alotau and airport pickup.

First team briefing in the early afternoon at Napatana Lodge.

Then go to buy provisions in the local market, pack food, equipment and prepare kayaking gear.

6PM - We will have a Welcome Dinner Banquet at Napatana Lodge.

Pack personal items into your personal drybag (approx. 30L capacity, please pack light).

Twin share accommodation is provided at Napatana Lodge.

Day 2.

Morning briefing over breakfast at Napatana Lodge.

Final packing of expedition gear and food onto our charter boat.

Lunch in Alotau.

3PM Departure on our charter Boat.

We will sleep aboard our charter Boat tonight as we motor through the night.

Day 3

Breakfast at anchor & potential snorkel stopover at the WW2 Fighter Plane at Panapompom Lagoon.

Afternoon dropoff at Panamaula Island.

Rig kayaks, setup camp and inductions to expedition life.

Days 4 - 10

Paddle west along Calvados Island chain, camping and wandering idyllic beaches, snorkeling vibrant coral reefs and visiting homesteads and villages. This may include cultural activities / displays organised in collaboration with local communities which could be cultural dances, cultural practices and fishing.

Day 11.

Now at the Western end of the Calvados Chain, somewhere near Panasea Island, we will de-rig our kayaks and load these onto our charter boat. You may then have the option to ride on a traditional Sailau (sailing canoe) between some of the atolls.

We then make our way back to Brooker Island, the heart of the Calvados chain, for a farewell banquet in Brooker Village and end of trip celebration before going to sleep onboard our vessel.

Day 12.

We set sail in the wee hours of the morning, motoring through the dawn until we make a stop to visit the Conflict Islands Turtle Hatchery. Lunch at anchor, and then continue motoring. We arrive back in Alotau late this evening and can sleep aboard till morning.

Day 13.

AM dropoff at Airport.

Flights back to Port Moresby and home.

**Day 13 is a travel day and is not considered part of your journey with Coral Sea Kayaking.*

Expedition Dynamics in the Louisiades

As idyllic as the Louisiades might sound, this destination is remote and arguably one of the world's last great sea kayaking frontiers. It is a true expedition and only for the adventurous soul. As a member of the expedition team you will be required to chip in and help out on all facets to make this expedition a success, and you will only 'get out what you put in' as they say. This will include, but is not limited to moving and setting up equipment, packing and preparing food, setting up camps and managing a clean water supply. You will need to be flexible and adaptable, as required by any travel in PNG. It is your responsibility to get to the start location and to help solve any problems associated with getting your journey back on track if you encounter delays.

Difficulty & Fitness Level

The Calvados expedition is geared towards fit, experienced kayakers. Tidal currents are incredibly strong in this area which means that every passage between atolls is a **must make passage**. The consequences of missing an atoll would mean being swept into the Coral Sea which would be uncomfortable at best, and dire at worst.

To minimise the risk of these crossings, as a minimum we require:

- Good paddle fitness: Ability to paddle at a moderately strong pace for up to 3 hours.
- Self Rescue experience: Ability to right and re-enter your kayak quickly (<10min) in deep water if a capsize has occurred. (This is something most people with reasonable fitness are capable of doing with minimal training).
- Good water confidence and desire to take on the challenges that mother nature throws at us (wind, swell & current).

Once we add heat stress, humidity, wild dogs and venomous wildlife to the extreme remoteness of this location; it becomes clear why this expedition should not be undertaken lightly. Protracted and complicated rescue is a given should it become necessary.

You may be required to be physically active all day in an exposed tropical environment and to work together in a team dynamic. Like many remote travel destinations, travel in Papua New Guinea can sometimes be rough, so it requires an open mindset and robust personality. This is not a 'tour' moving between well established checkpoints and it does not have a fixed itinerary. We will need to collectively adapt to the places that we visit.

Weather in the Islands

In October and November we can expect humid days with temperatures between 25-35 degrees Celsius and some days of rain. The tiny atolls of the Calvados chain experience fast moving weather and are exposed to the whim of the Coral Sea. Drought and food scarcity are not uncommon here, meaning we not only have to be self-sufficient, but must also consider what we should bring to share.

Snorkelling & Fishing

There are some opportunities for snorkeling along the route. There are many drift dives off small beaches which make use of the strong currents that pass through the area. Sometimes we may anchor offshore and slide straight out of our kayaks into the water for an opportunistic snorkel as well. It should be noted however, that whenever you are outside of the lagoons, currents are strong and may wrap around beaches.

It is possible to fish along the route, trawling lures or line / rod fishing. If engaging in fishing, you should have prior experience to manage this (the middle of the Coral Sea is not the place to begin). If trawling from a kayak or spear fishing you will need to carry your own dive knife and have it accessible on your person to manage the risk of entanglement. Spear fishing is possible, but should be undertaken by experts only with extreme caution. Dropoffs can be close to shore and large predatory species move through the area.

Safety

Although Papua New Guinea is notorious as a place troubled with crime, corruption and hostilities; the Louisiades is a different matter altogether. 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 we have never encountered any hostility from the locals or felt actively worried about our safety, we have only encountered kindness and enriching cultural traditions.

This is not the case in Port Moresby. Although it has improved recently, Port Moresby is still considered a potentially dangerous place for travelers and we strongly recommend you avoid walking the streets, especially at night. Our itinerary sometimes demands that travelers spend one night in Port Moresby due to the flight schedules. Our personal recommendation for an affordable and friendly stay with a little character is Raintree Lodge in Port Moresby. It is close to the airport and located within a compound. We strongly recommend that you arrange to use the hotel transport shuttle when moving between the Hotel and Airport.

While we consider the Louisiades quite a safe society, the island groups operate independently of each other and the mainland. It is imperative we show respect and patience in visiting this place.

Flights

Coral Sea Kayaking does not arrange transport to and from the expedition. This is because this expedition is geared towards independent, self-reliant travelers. Travel in PNG requires patience,

with fuel rationing through 2024 causing havoc for flight schedules, resulting in delays or cancellations.

Sometimes participants will be asked to fly with some expedition equipment and dry food provisions. This will be arranged by Coral Sea Kayaking prior to the trip and will depend on participants' flight schedule and baggage allowance.

In the case of missed flights, the Calvados chain is too far removed from Alotau for a straggler to catch up with the trip. Ensure you have left enough time for all flight connections to get to Alotau on time.

If the flight into Alotau on Day 1 is cancelled or delayed, and several (or all) members of the team have not arrived on time; departure on Day 2 may be delayed at Trip Leader discretion.

Travel Insurance

Coral Sea Kayaking insists that **all** participants on the expedition have travel insurance that covers at a minimum: comprehensive medical and trip cancellation and advises insurance which covers flight delays and cancellations if possible.

Some of the key activities that we will undertake on this journey which must be covered include:

- Sea Kayaking
- Snorkelling
- Sailing
- Motor Boating
- Hiking (under 500m elevation)
- Camping

The Sea Kayaking Expedition

Guides will usually set up a Chatgroup (often on WhatsApp) in the weeks prior to the expedition. This will help us to accommodate last minute changes that are a part of travelling in PNG.

Pre-departure meeting

Your trip leaders will run briefings on day one in Alotau (starting around 2pm, once the afternoon flight has arrived). These briefings will be conducted at Napatana Lodge and will outline cultural considerations, the paddle plan, gear packing and any other relevant information as well as answer questions and concerns that you may have on arrival. At these briefings, you will be provisioned with drybags and key information to help you pack.

Craft of Choice

We utilise a fleet of Australian made Australis Komodo Sea Kayaks for all our trips in the Louisiades Archipelago. Tried and tested, these plastic double sea kayaks are 7.4m long and are very sea worthy. These are the perfect vessels out here because the modular design can break apart when we need to transport them in a ship's cargo hold or on motor boats.

In country medical concerns

We ask that all participants are fit and healthy for this expedition with no injury or illness that could restrict their involvement in the everyday activity of a sea kayak expedition. The Louisiades is a lengthy medivac to definitive medical care. In serious cases an aircraft may be dispatched from Australia or Port Moresby. Guides

carry appropriate expedition medical kits and satellite communications to manage a prolonged extraction.

Malaria is present in Alotau and could be present at times on the Calvados islands. We recommend participants take appropriate prophylactic medication precautions. When deciding which anti-malarial medication is right for you, consider talking to your doctor about the usage of doxycycline, which may also have dual benefits of fighting infection from coral cuts and other scrapes you may encounter on the journey.

Other Risks

Local people report that crocodiles are not a threat in the Calvados. There are however, sharks, barracuda and other large predatory fish species. Local people report that Box Jellyfish are not found in the region. Similar to North Queensland, Blue Bottle Jellyfish and other stinging creatures (stinging fish, snakes, conefish etc.) are certainly found in these waters. We recommend covering up when snorkeling and swimming to mitigate the risk of stings and bites. We also attempt to check-in with local leaders regularly to get a clearer understanding of what is present at our time of visitation.

Expedition Food

On this expedition we source many of our food and provisions from local markets in Alotau, followed by trading for fresh food in local villages along the route when this is possible. Our aim is to minimise the impact of our visits on local culture, and allow you a more immersive experience - therefore we often follow a local diet. The traditional Melanesian diet is very healthy and centered around seafood, greens and root vegetables like taro, cassava, yams and

plantain and of course plenty of coconuts! However, if the Calvados Islands are in the midst of drought and food scarcity, trade may be limited in which case we may resort to additional supplies from Alotau and utilise some dehydrated meals brought into the country.

All meals during the paddling trip are supplied by Coral Sea Kayaking, inclusive from Welcome Dinner on day 1 until our farewell dinner on the last evening. All other Hotel breakfasts, lunches, dinners, beverages and other supplies are at the cost of the traveler.

Trading & Cash

PNG has a culture of reciprocal giving and trade. It is a great idea to bring small items that would be useful in situations where a local person gives you a gift, or if you would like to give a gift to someone.

Low value items that are greatly appreciated could be things like fishing hooks, sinkers, bundles of ~20m fishing, eye glasses, sunglasses, small purses, bracelets, hair ribbons, toothbrush & paste.

Higher value & larger items that are greatly appreciated which we can coordinate to give as a whole group include children's clothing, school supplies (including stationary, old text books, fiction books & non fiction books, paints and sporting equipment). Snorkel masks and fins are items which can also change a life out there by enhancing families income stream - many people choose to give their own set away at the end of their trip.

There may be a possibility to buy souvenirs or carvings out on the islands. This is a great income stream for local people and can help communities buy food supplies or send children to school. Smaller items will be up to 50kina, while larger carvings, shells or jewelry could be several hundred kina. We'd recommend bringing 200-500 kina cash on the trip.

Inclusions

- Kayaking and expedition equipment
- All meals whilst on expedition
- Welcome & Farewell dinners
- All on-trip transfers including boat charters
- Professional kayak guides
- Local guides and cultural displays
- Camping fees
- Important trade items, donations & contributions for communities.
- Many more essentials specific to the route

Cost

2025 & 2026 Trip Cost: \$7200 AUD (\$900 deposit when booking)
(BYO Tent and Sleeping Pad - save \$200)

Due to high costs incurred running expeditions in remote parts of PNG, we require a minimum number of 8 people for the trip to go ahead. Arranging visas and flights in PNG can be a headache, so we strongly recommend waiting until 4 months before the trip before making any of these arrangements. This allows us to confirm all trip

details before you go through the process of setting your travels in stone.

Payment Schedule

1. Deposit at time of booking: \$900
2. 4 months prior to departure: \$3150
3. 2 months prior to departure: \$Balance \$3150

How to book your trip:

Please fill out the form at [the bottom of this page](#) then we will provide a booking link by email when a trip becomes available. On our booking page you will be able to provide us with preliminary booking information and pay a deposit to reserve your position.

You may refer to the terms and conditions for PNG trips located at the [bottom of this page](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact us for more information or to discuss suitability for the trip. We hope you will join us on this extraordinary journey through the Louisiade Archipelago 😊

Local Recommendations:

Before or After your trip:

Kwame Guesthouse

Stay at Kwame Guesthouse for a few nights before or after your trip if you would like a secluded paradise in which to unwind. A family run guesthouse 1.5 hours from Alotau situated near East Cape with great snorkeling and swimming on the doorstep.

<https://www.kwameguesthousesandactivitiespng/>

Tawali Resort

Tawali is a well established dive resort with stunning architecture and views.

<https://tawali.com/>

Accommodation In Alotau

- Napatana Lodge
- Driftwood Resort
- Waterfront Hotel
- Masurina Lodge